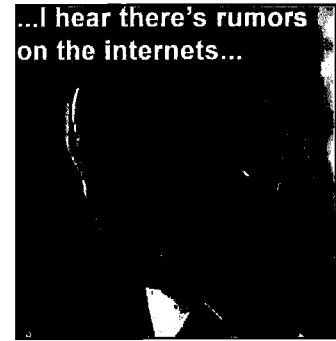
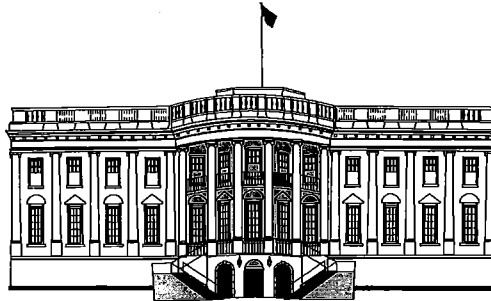


AP American Government: Unit VIII

The Executive Branch



Wednesday 1/20: Assessing Presidential Greatness Criteria (Group Activity) Articles Announced in class.

Thursday 1/21 Quiz: 368-379(Closed Book)/Assessing Greatness (Group Activity) Using Articles in class: Greenstein, Landy&Milkis, Barber and Neustadt, Street and Doctorow etc.

Friday 1/22

Summary Due: "The Presidential Difference" by Fred Greenstein (in packet) Class Discussion Begin **Frost/Nixon**

Monday 1/25
p.300 in packet.

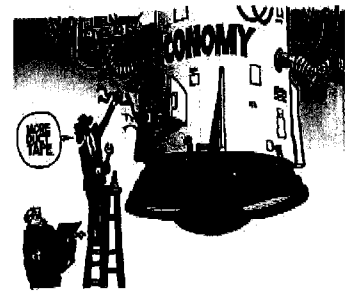
Summary due: "Presidential Power" by Neustadt in Woll, **Frost/Nixon**

Tuesday 1/26

Quiz 379-390. Movie: Frost/Nixon,

Wednesday 1/27

Critical Review due: "Presidential Greatness" by Mark Landy and Sydney Milkis. Continue ranking presidents. **Movie: Frost/Nixon**



Thursday 1/28

Quiz pp.390-406 Frost/Nixon
Note: Early Release Day

Friday	1/29	Critical Review Due: “The Presidential Character” by James David Barber. Analyze and evaluate the validity of Barber’s claims. Class discussion.
Monday	2/1	Quiz 410-422 (Closed) (to Do Bureaucrats Sabotage)
Tuesday	2/2	Answers due to questions: for “Constitutional Democracy and Bureaucratic Power, “by Woll in Woll, p.380 (questions are in unit packet) Discussion of Essay Topics for unit test in class)
Wednesday	2/3	Quiz 422-433 (open) Answers due to “Bureaucracy” by Max Weber (reading and questions in packet)
Thursday	2/4	Answers due for questions on “The Rise of the Bureaucratic State,” by Wilson (Hand over Heart), in Woll p. 355 (Question sheet in unit packet). If needed: Discuss Essay topics in class.
Friday	2/5	60 Question Multiple Choice Test-45 Minutes, Ch. 14 & 15.
Monday	2/8	Essay Format/Free-Response Test- 2 Questions 45 Minutes.

12

THE PRESIDENCY

The American presidency is a unique office. Presidents can send the most formidable military forces of the world into combat but can also have Congress reject their most treasured programs. The key to understanding this paradox is found in the system of separation of powers.

KEY TERMS

ad hoc structure
cabinet
circular structure
divided government
electoral college
executive privilege
impeachment
impoundment of funds
independent agencies

pocket veto
presidential coattails
presidential succession
pyramid structure
Twenty-fifth Amendment
Twenty-second Amendment
unified government
veto
White House office

KEY CONCEPTS

- The powers of the presidency are constrained by the separation of powers in the Constitution.
- The executive branch includes the president's personal staff, the cabinet, and many other agencies that report to him.
- Presidential power often rests on the president's ability to persuade, as well as the checks and balances he has on other branches of government.
- Presidents bring to office a program they hope to enact during their terms.
- Succession to presidents who leave office because of death, impeachment, or incapacitation has been clarified over the span of American history.

For a full discussion of the presidency, see *American Government*, 9th ed., Chapter 12 / 10th ed., Chapter 14.

DIVIDED GOVERNMENT AND THE POWERS OF THE PRESIDENCY

Unlike parliamentary systems that often assure that one party will be in power, American elections often produce divided government (a government in which one party controls the White House and a different party controls one or both houses of Congress). Even in periods of unified government (when the same party controls the White House and both houses of Congress), presidents and congresses can often work at cross-purposes. Conflicts between the president and Congress are the result of separation of powers.

The Framers of the Constitution had several fears that shaped the powers of the presidency: they feared the military power of the president; they feared presidential bribery in ensuring reelection; they feared lack of balance between the legislative and executive branches.

The electoral college was the answer to some of these fears. The original system included the following:

- Each state would choose its own method of selecting electors, whose number would match the state's number of representatives in Congress.
- Electors would meet in each state capital and vote for president and vice president.
- If no candidate won a majority, the House would decide the election, with each state delegation casting one vote.

Large states would have their say, but small states would have a minimum of three votes. Ultimately, because of our two-party system, the electoral college has worked differently than expected. Today there is a winner-take-all system in forty-eight states. Only in very rare cases does an elector vote for a presidential candidate other than the one who carried his or her state.

The Framers settled on a four-year term, and George Washington set the precedent of serving no more than two terms. Later, the Twenty-second Amendment limited the presidency to two terms. The Framers gave the president the following constitutional powers:

- serve as commander in chief of the military
- commission officers of the military
- grant reprieves and pardons for federal offences
- convene special sessions of Congress
- receive ambassadors (by implication giving the president the power to make foreign policy because he decides which ambassadors to recognize and which to ignore, as well as which countries receive U.S. ambassadors)
- faithfully execute the laws
- wield the "executive power"
- appoint officials to lesser offices

The Framers also gave the president the power to make treaties and to appoint ambassadors, judges, and high officials, but because the Senate must give its consent, these powers are shared. In addition, the Framers gave the president the power to approve legislation.

Perhaps even greater than these explicit presidential powers have been those informal powers that lie in manipulating politics and public opinion. Americans increasingly look to the president for leadership and hold him responsible for a large and growing portion of our national affairs.

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The executive branch includes four areas:

- **The White House Office** The president's closest assistants have offices in the White House, usually in its West Wing. Titles vary from administration to administration, but in general the men and women who hold these offices oversee the political and policy interests of the president. They are not confirmed by the Senate and can be hired and fired at the president's will. There are three ways that presidents can organize their personal staffs:

AP Tip

A president's leadership style, which says much about the way an administration will evolve, is often a topic on the AP exam.

- **Pyramid structure** Most assistants report through a hierarchy to a chief of staff, who then deals directly with the president. The Eisenhower, Nixon, and Reagan administrations are examples of this.
- **Circular structure** The assistants in the West Wing report directly to the president, with no screening by the chief of staff. Carter's administration is a good example. This is also known as a wheel-and-spokes structure.
- **Ad hoc structure** Task forces, committees, and informal groups of friends and advisers deal directly with the president. For example, Clinton's health care policy was headed not by a cabinet member but by First Lady Hillary Clinton.
- **The Executive Office of the President** Agencies in the Executive Office report directly to the president and perform staff services for him. Unlike the White House staff, Executive Office appointments must receive Senate confirmation. The principal agencies are the Office of Management and Budget (which assembles the budget), the Central Intelligence Agency, the Council of Economic Advisers, the Office of Personnel Management, and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

- The cabinet The cabinet is composed of the secretaries of the executive branch departments and the attorney general. There are fifteen major departments. Some of the oldest include State, Treasury, Defense, and Justice. Although not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, every president has had a cabinet. The secretaries become advocates for their departments, but they also serve at the president's will. Heads of other agencies, such as the chief of the Environmental Protection Agency, have been elevated to cabinet-level status. Some cabinet departments and secretaries are inevitably closer to the president than others.
- Independent agencies and commissions The president appoints members of agencies that have quasi-independent status. The difference between an executive agency and an independent agency is not precise. In general, heads of independent agencies serve for a fixed term and can be removed only for cause; executive agencies have heads that can be removed at any time. Examples of independent agencies include the Federal Reserve Board and the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Executive agencies include the Postal Service and all cabinet departments.

PRESIDENTIAL POWER IN ACTION

Presidents rely heavily on persuasion. The president has the only true *national* constituency of any elected office, and this can be used to enlarge his powers. Presidents have three audiences to persuade: fellow politicians and leaders in the nation's capital; party activists and officials outside of Washington; the general public.

Presidents try to transform popularity into congressional support for their programs, though this is more difficult than it used to be. Presidential coattails (by which members of Congress are elected based on the president's popularity) seem to be a thing of the past. Congressional elections are relatively insulated from presidential elections because of weakened party loyalty and the direct relationships congressional members have with constituents. Nevertheless, Congress tends to avoid the political risks of opposing a popular president by passing more of that president's legislative agenda.

Presidential popularity and its impact on getting legislative proposals passed are difficult to measure. Getting a high number of proposals passed can be misleading if the president's major bills are never passed. Presidents can get a high number of favorable bills passed by avoiding controversial measures. The timing of proposing bills is also critical. A president is generally most popular immediately after he is elected—the "honeymoon period." Most will decline in popularity as the term continues. A sluggish economy, scandal, and an unpopular war, all can hurt a president's popularity. National emergencies, such as the attacks on September 11, 2001, can give the president at least a temporary spike in popularity.

Another form of presidential power is the ability to prevent other branches of government from pushing their agendas. Presidents can use their powers by saying "no" in a number of ways:

- **The budget** The president's staff and the Office of Management and Budget put together budget proposals to present to Congress. An administration's priorities and policies show up there, and the president can say "no" by excluding agency proposals from the final budget.
- **Veto** The president can send a veto message to Congress within ten days of the bill's passage. In it he sets forth his reasons for not signing the bill. A bill that has been returned to Congress with a veto message can be passed if two-thirds of each house votes to override the veto. Congress rarely overrides vetoes. Attempts at line-item vetoes (approving some provisions of a bill but rejecting others) were made in 1996, but the Supreme Court has ruled them unconstitutional. A bill that is not signed or vetoed within ten days while Congress is still in session becomes law automatically, without the president's approval. A pocket veto occurs when the president does not sign the bill within ten days and Congress has already adjourned. The bill does not become law.
- **Executive privilege** Confidential communications between the president and his advisers do not have to be disclosed. The justification for this practice has been the separation of powers, and the need a president has for candid advice. During the Watergate scandal, President Nixon refused to turn over tape recordings of White House conversations. The Supreme Court, ruling on executive privilege for the first time, held that there was a sound basis for the practice, particularly in military and diplomatic matters, but there was no immunity from judicial process under all circumstances.
- **Impoundment of funds** From time to time presidents have refused to spend money appropriated by Congress. In response to President Nixon's impoundments in 1972, the Budget Reform Act of 1974 was passed. The act requires presidents to notify Congress of funds they do not intend to spend. Congress must agree within forty-five days to delete the item. If Congress doesn't agree with the impoundment of funds, the president is required to spend the money. The act also requires presidents to notify Congress of delays in spending.

THE PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM

Modern presidents are expected to have a program when they take office—for example, Reagan's commitment to tax cuts and larger military expenditures, Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. There are two ways for a president to develop a program. One, exemplified by Presidents Carter and Clinton, is to have a policy on almost everything. Another way, illustrated by President Reagan, is to concentrate on three or four major initiatives or themes and leave everything else to subordinates. In either case, a president's resources in developing a program include interest groups, aides, campaign advisers, federal departments and agencies, and various specialists.

A president's program will often meet many constraints. Public and congressional reactions can encourage or discourage a president's plan. The limited amount of time and attention a president can give to one program can also constrain its development. At other times, programs can be put aside when an unexpected crisis occurs. Presidents are also hampered by the fact that federal programs and the federal budget can be changed only marginally.

Virtually all modern presidents have attempted some type of reorganization of the executive branch. President George W. Bush's establishment of the Homeland Security Department is an example of a long-standing practice: presidents often reorganize because the large number of agencies that report to them can be overwhelming. It is also tempting to reorganize because it is much easier to change policy through reorganizing than through abolishing an old program or agency.

VICE PRESIDENTS AND PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION

The vice president's role is unclear. The extent to which vice presidents participate in the White House is left up to individual presidents. Vice presidents do have the constitutional role of presiding over the Senate and voting in the case of a tie. In practical terms, however, the vice president's leadership powers in the Senate are weak, especially in times of divided government.

A vice president becomes president when a president dies or is convicted of a bill of impeachment. The issue of succession also arises when a president becomes seriously ill and is unable to perform his duties. In eight historical cases, no elected official was available to succeed the new president should he subsequently die in office because there was no clear provision for a new vice president when a former one moves up to become president.

The first attempt to clarify succession was the Succession Act of 1886, which was amended in 1947. At first this designated the secretary of state as next in line for the presidency should the vice president die, followed by the other cabinet officers in order of seniority. But this meant that the president could pick his own successor by choosing the secretary of state. A 1947 amendment to the law made the Speaker of the House and the president pro tempore of the Senate next in line for the presidency. This also seemed like a poor solution because those positions are often filled based on seniority and not on executive skill.

Both problems were addressed in 1967 by the Twenty-fifth Amendment, which allows the vice president to serve as "acting president" whenever the president declares that he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office or whenever the vice president and a majority of the cabinet declare that the president is incapacitated. The amendment deals with the succession problem by requiring a vice president who assumes the presidency to nominate a new vice president. This person takes office if the nomination is confirmed by a majority vote of both houses of Congress.

Presidents can be removed upon impeachment and conviction. The House votes to indict the president. The impeached president must be convicted by a two-thirds vote of the Senate (which sits as a court, hears the evidence, and makes its decision) to be removed. Only two presidents—Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton—have ever been

13

THE BUREAUCRACY

The federal bureaucracy is a complex web of federal agencies with overlapping jurisdictions. Most people think of the bureaucracy as wasteful, confusing, and rigid. Because the bureaucracy has such a large and complex organization, it is easy to find examples supporting this view. A closer look at the bureaucracy reveals that there is satisfaction with many aspects of government services and that many of the bureaucracy's problems are the result of actions taken by Congress, the courts, and the president.

KEY TERMS

civil service	laissez-faire
competitive service	merit system
congressional oversight	National Performance Review
discretionary authority	Office of Personnel Management
excepted service	patronage
iron triangle	Pendleton Act
issue networks	red tape

KEY CONCEPTS

- The federal bureaucracy grew dramatically as a result of the Great Depression and World War II.
- Federal agencies have substantial power in setting policy.
- The characteristics of bureaucrats generally reflect those of the American public.
- Congressional oversight is an important check on the powers of the bureaucracy.
- Several impressions of the federal bureaucracy are constant subjects of reform.

For a full discussion of the bureaucracy, see *American Government*, 9th ed., Chapter 13 / 10th ed., Chapter 15.

GROWTH OF THE BUREAUCRACY

The Constitution made scarcely any provision for a bureaucracy. The president appoints the heads of executive agencies and nominates cabinet secretaries, subject to Senate confirmation. Congress has the right to appropriate money, to investigate the agencies, and to shape the laws they administer. As a result, both Congress and the president have control over the bureaucracy.

The appointment of public officials has changed over time. These appointments are significant because officials affect how laws are interpreted and the tone and effectiveness of their administration. Patronage—appointments based on political considerations—dominated appointments in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Patronage rewarded supporters, created congressional support, and built party organizations. The Pendleton Act of 1883 began a slow but steady transfer of federal jobs from the patronage system to the merit system (hiring on the basis of an individual's qualifications for the job).

After the Civil War, industrialization and the emergence of a national economy necessitated federal regulation of interstate commerce, foreshadowing the growth of government agencies. The numbers of agencies and bureaucrats grew. The new agencies provided services like administering military pensions. They did not create a huge body of regulations because:

- there was still a belief in limited government
- states' rights continued to be important
- there was a fear of concentrated discretionary power
- there was a commitment to *laissez-faire* (a freely competitive economy)

The Great Depression and World War II led to increased government activism. As a consequence, agencies took on a heightened regulatory role. The Supreme Court upheld laws that granted discretion to administrative agencies. The introduction of income taxes supported a larger bureaucracy. Most of all, the public became convinced that continuing military preparedness and ongoing social programs were in the best interests of the nation. These attitudes still prevail.

ACTIVITIES OF AGENCIES

Although there has been only a modest increase in the number of federal government employees since 1960, there has been significant growth in the number of privately contracted employees as well as state and local government employees. Far more important than any of these trends, however, is the growth of discretionary authority—the ability of agencies to choose courses of action and to make policies not set out in the statutory law.

Congress has delegated substantial authority to administrative agencies in three areas:

- paying subsidies to particular groups and organizations in society (for example, farmers, veterans, scientists, schools, universities, hospitals)
- transferring money from the federal government to state and local governments through grants
- devising and enforcing regulations for various sectors of society; particularly the economy, schools, health care, roads, and telecommunications

BUREAUCRATS

Bureaucrats—employees of agencies or bureaus—are distinct from elected officials. While in practice bureaucrats have some discretionary authority (for example, police do not arrest every lawbreaker they see), only elected officials are supposed to have discretionary authority. This explains why bureaucrats are insulated from being fired for political purposes and why bureaucrats must engage in seemingly redundant procedures and rules. These assure that policies made at the top are carried out throughout the organization and that every citizen is treated the same way.

The activities and powers of various agencies have tremendous impact on public policy. An understanding of who runs and works in those agencies is important:

- **Recruitment and retention** The federal civil service system was designed to recruit qualified people on the basis of merit and to retain and promote employees on the basis of performance. Many federal officials belong to the *competitive service*, in which they are appointed only after they have passed a written examination. Employees hired outside the competitive service are part of the *excepted service*—they are not hired based on an exam but, typically, are hired in a nonpartisan fashion. Most bureaucrats cannot be easily fired, although there are informal methods of discipline. When bureaucrats do get fired, the process of dismissal often takes more than a year.
- **Personal and professional attributes** The bureaucracy is a cross section of American society in terms of the education, sex, race, and social origins of its members. As is the case in the general workforce, African Americans and other minorities are most likely to be heavily represented in the lowest grade levels and tend to be underrepresented at the executive level. Because of the civil service system, bureaucracies were, for a long time, less discriminatory in hiring minorities and women than private businesses were. At higher levels, the typical civil servant is a middle-aged male with a college degree whose father was somewhat more advantaged than the average citizen. While career civil servants are more progovernment

than the public at large, on most policy questions they do not have extreme positions.

■ **The nature of their jobs** Career bureaucrats often differ politically from their supervisors and the political appointees who head their agencies. Nevertheless, most bureaucrats try to carry out policy, even policy with which they disagree. "Whistle-blower" legislation protects them from punitive action by supervisors for reporting waste, fraud, or abuse in their agencies. Moreover, most civil servants have highly structured jobs that make their personal attitudes irrelevant. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency attracts bureaucrats who want to protect the environment and public health as well as free marketers who want to insulate companies from unnecessary regulation. Both end up performing their jobs in similar ways. Within each agency there is a culture and informal understanding among employees about how they are supposed to act. This culture can motivate employees, but it also can make agencies resistant to change.

■ **Involvement in iron triangles and issue networks** Agencies have often used their positions to form useful power relationships with a congressional committee or an interest group. At one time scholars described the relationship between an agency, a committee, and an interest group as an iron triangle (for example, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the House and Senate committees on veterans' affairs, and veterans' organizations such as the American Legion). Through iron triangles, the self-interest of all three groups is served. Iron triangles are far less common today because politics has become too complicated. Issues involve more powerful actors than they once did because of the interchange among agencies, Congress, lobbyists, think tanks, academia, and corporations. This interchange has created issue networks—composed of members of interest groups, professors, think tanks, and media who regularly debate government policy on a certain subject. Issue networks have largely replaced iron triangles.

CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

AP Tip

The power of Congress to oversee the bureaucracy is fundamental to the system of checks and balances and is likely to appear on the AP exam.

Congressional supervision of the bureaucracy takes several forms. First, no agency can exist without congressional approval, and Congress influences agency behavior by the statutes it enacts. Second, no money can be spent unless Congress has first authorized it. Authorization legislation starts in a congressional committee and states the maximum amount of money that an agency can spend on a

given program. This may be permanent, or it may be renewed each year. Third, even funds that have been authorized cannot be spent unless they are also appropriated. The House Appropriations Committee and its various subcommittees make appropriations annually.

The House Appropriations Committee has special power over agencies. The committee can recommend an amount lower than what an agency has requested and can revise or amend an agency's budget request. Both practices have the effect of strong congressional influence on agency policy. Although the Appropriations Committee does not have the power it once did, it still is the single most powerful influence on agency spending and policy.

Congress can also investigate agencies by holding hearings. Although the power to investigate is only implied in the Constitution, the Supreme Court has consistently upheld Congress's right to investigate. Investigations are generally used as a means for checking agency discretion and also for authorizing agency actions independent of presidential preferences.

REFORMING THE BUREAUCRACY

There are five frequently mentioned problems with the bureaucracy:

- **Red tape** Too many complex rules and procedures must be followed to get something done.
- **Conflict** Some agencies seem to be working at cross-purposes with other agencies.
- **Duplication** Two government agencies seem to be doing the same thing.
- **Imperialism** Agencies tend to grow without regard to the benefits that their programs confer or the costs that they entail.
- **Waste** Agencies spend more than is necessary to buy some products and services.

These problems do exist, but they are overstated and have logical origins in the Constitution and the policy-making process. For example, conflict and duplication occur because Congress, in setting up agencies and programs, often wants to achieve a number of different, partially inconsistent goals or cannot decide which goal it values most. Red tape and waste result from the obligation of bureaucrats to execute policy in accord with the rules set by elected officials and political appointees. It is noteworthy in regard to bureaucratic problems that while people are likely to say that they have a poor opinion of "the bureaucracy," they also often say that they have had good experiences with the bureaucrats with whom they have dealt personally.

Bureaucratic reform is always difficult to accomplish. Most rules and red tape grow out of struggles between the president and Congress. Periods of divided government make matters worse. This does not mean that reform is impossible, only that it is very difficult. There have been many attempts to make the bureaucracy work better for less money. Several reforms have stressed presidential control over the bureaucracy for the sake of efficiency, accountability, and

CHAPTER I

The Presidential Difference

The President is at liberty, both in law and conscience, to be as big a man as he can.

— WOODROW WILSON, 1907

But nowadays he can not be as small as he might like.

— RICHARD E. NEUSTADT, 1960

On April 1, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower convened the National Security Council (NSC) to consider a matter of war or peace. Communist insurgents had encircled key units of the U.S.-backed French forces in Indochina at Dien Bien Phu in northwest Vietnam. Eisenhower's concern was falling dominoes. If Dien Bien Phu fell, French resistance in Indochina was likely to collapse, and other Southeast Asian nations might come under communist control. After the NSC meeting, Eisenhower confided to an associate that he was thinking about ordering an air strike to relieve the French, an action that could have led to a large-scale American military involvement in Indochina. Instead, he decided on a course of diplomatic action that

Great Britain, with its tradition of collective leadership, for example, the rare Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher, or Tony Blair is far outnumbered by the many Stanley Baldwins, Harold Wilsons, and John Majors, whose personal impact on governmental actions is at best limited.

If some higher power had set out to design a democracy in which the individual on top mattered, the result might well resemble the American political system. American chief executives have placed their stamp on the nation's policies since the founding of the Republic, but until the 1930s, Congress typically took the lead in policymaking, and the programs of the federal government were of modest importance for the nation and world.

Then came the emergence of what is commonly called the modern presidency. Under the stimulus of the New Deal, World War II, and the entrepreneurial leadership of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, there was a vast expansion of the scope and influence of the federal government. Meanwhile, the United States became a world and then a nuclear power, and the presidency underwent fundamental changes that increase the likelihood that the personal attributes distinguishing one White House incumbent from another will shape political outcomes.

The chief executive became the principal source of policy initiative, proposing much of the legislation considered by Congress. Presidents began to make an increasing amount of policy independent of the legislature, drawing on their sweeping administrative powers in an era of activist government and global leadership. The president became the most visible landmark in the political landscape, virtually standing for the federal government in the minds of many Americans. And the Executive Office of the President was created, providing the president with the organizational support needed to carry out his—and someday her—obligations.*

The power of modern American presidents manifests itself in its

*I use the masculine pronoun throughout to avoid gender-free locutions in discussing an office that has had only male incumbents at the time of writing. It is highly unlikely, however, that the presidency will remain a male bastion.

inated in the partition of Vietnam into a communist North and a communist South.

One member of Eisenhower's administration who disagreed with the decision not to take military action was the official next in the line of presidential succession, Vice President Richard M. Nixon. Would he have committed American military power in Indochina if he had been president? That can never be known with certainty, but it is likely that he would have.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson faced a similar choice. The American-backed South Vietnam government was in danger of falling to the Vietnamese communists. On January 27, Johnson's top advisers presented him with two options: seek negotiations and "salvage what we can be preserved with no major addition to our present military forces" or "use our military power in the Far East to force a change of communist policy." Johnson opted for military power, first ordering the bombing of North Vietnam and then committing a mounting U.S. ground force to combat in Vietnam. By 1968, a half-million American soldiers were mired in Southeast Asia, at which point Johnson announced that he would halt the military buildup, seek negotiations with the communists, and remove himself from the running for a second elected term.

Again the vice president did not agree with the president's decision. Shortly after the bombing began, Hubert H. Humphrey sent Johnson a confidential memorandum warning of the risk of becoming embroiled in an unpopular war in Vietnam, and urging Johnson to apply his political skills to finding a diplomatic solution. Johnson responded: Humphrey for venturing an opinion on the matter and excluded him from meetings on Vietnam until he fell in line behind the administration's military effort. Would a President Humphrey have taken a different course of action than Johnson? The answer is unknowable, but it is probable that he would have.¹

The United States is said to have a government of laws and institutions rather than individuals, but as these examples remind us, it is one in which the matter of who occupies the nation's highest office can have profound repercussions. That is not everywhere the case. In

purest form in the global arena, where their actions as commander in chief can determine the fate of the human race. This was most strikingly evident in the extended nuclear standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union that followed World War II. However, the president's latitude for independent action is even greater in the unstructured post-cold war world than it was during the cold war, when the threat of mutual destruction concentrated minds and constrained actions.

Presidential power is less potentially apocalyptic at home than abroad, but the occupant of the Oval Office is also of critical domestic importance. The power to nullify legislation gives the chief executive the capacity to thwart the will of Congress, unless his veto is overridden by two-thirds of the Senate and House of Representatives. Presidents have wide discretion over the implementation of laws and allocation of expenditures. The president's ability to command public attention and shape the national policy agenda makes him politically potent whatever his support on Capitol Hill. Even when Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton were under consideration for impeachment, they were far from politically inconsequential. They retained their formal powers; their predicaments preempted normal policymaking; and Clinton even scored significant political victories while Congress deliberated on his removal.

All of this would lead one to expect the qualities that bear on a president's leadership to be subjected to the closest possible attention. That is far from the case. To be sure, every president has been the object of a deluge of prose, first during his presidency, then in the memoirs of his associates, and later in studies based on the declassified records of his administration. Yet, much of that outpouring is directed to the ends the president sought rather than the means he used to advance them, and a large portion of it bears on the merits of his policies rather than the attributes that shaped his leadership.

Two important exceptions are Richard E. Neustadt's *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership*, which was published during Eisenhower's final presidential year, and James David Barber's *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*, which

appeared during Nixon's first term. Neustadt's interest is with the president's ability to win the support of other policymakers by revealing himself to be politically skilled, and to possess the support of the public. Barber's preoccupation is in distinguishing presidents whose emotional insecurities spill over into their official actions from those who are secure in their psychic moorings and free to channel their energies into productive leadership.² The merit of Neustadt's emphasis on political skill is made evident by the difficulties encountered by Jimmy Carter, whose policy aspirations were thwarted by his failure to adhere to the norms of Washington politics. The value of Barber's attention to the presidential psyche is illustrated by Richard Nixon, whose character flaws led to actions that made it necessary for him to resign from the presidency.*

A president's effectiveness is a function of more than his political prowess and mental health, however, and there is much to be learned by considering the full sweep of the twentieth-century modern presidential experience. My intention is to do precisely that, focusing on the leadership qualities of each of the presidents from FDR to Bill Clinton and their significance for the public and the political community.

I devote a chapter to each of my subjects, providing a concise account of his background, political style, and conduct of the presidency. I consider each chief executive on his own terms, out of a conviction that the modern presidents have been too disparate to be usefully pigeonholed. Nevertheless, I am particularly attentive to six qualities that relate to presidential job performance.

The first, which pertains to the outer face of leadership, is the president's proficiency as a *public communicator*. The second, which relates to the inner workings of the presidency, is the president's *organizational capacity*—his ability to rally his colleagues and structure their activities effectively. The third and fourth bear on the president as political operator—his *political skill* and the extent to which it is har-

*For a fuller discussion of these books, see section on Further Reading or this chapter.

...ssed to a *vision* of public policy. The fifth is the *cognitive style* with which the president processes the Niagara of advice and information that comes his way. The last is what the German sociologist Max Weber called "the firm taming of the soul" and has come to be referred to as *emotional intelligence*—the president's ability to manage his emotions and turn them to constructive purposes, rather than being dominated by them and allowing them to diminish his leadership.³

I embarked on an extended inquiry into the endlessly fascinating occupants of the modern Oval Office early in 1974, when the presidency of Richard Nixon was on the rocks. Why, I wondered, was that politically gifted chief executive, whose first term had resulted in such dramatic achievements as the opening to China and détente with the Soviet Union, succumbing to what was plainly a self-inflicted political disaster? Rather than confining myself to the enigma of Richard Nixon, I decided to examine presidential political psychology broadly, studying the full array of modern chief executives. In the following years, I immersed myself in the literature on the presidents from FDR to Bill Clinton, mined their unpublished papers, and interviewed large numbers of past and current presidential associates. I also have had informative personal encounters with several of the protagonists of my study, three of which help frame what follows.

In 1977, I led a group of undergraduates in an interview with the recently defeated Gerald Ford. Mindful of the personal toll the presidency had taken on Johnson and Nixon, I asked Ford how he dealt with the pressures of his job. His answer bespoke the even-tempered composure of a stolid son of the Midwest:

I had to have a physical outlet—swimming or some other activity—that burned up those juices that were not normally consumed during the day. . . . But I found that the pressures I had read about were not nearly as severe as I expected, as long as my staff organized them properly.⁴

The second encounter, which was with Jimmy Carter, was marked by anything but equanimity. Carter's first public appearance after step-

ping down from office in January 1981 was an informal visit to Princeton University during which he met with the students in my presidency course. One of them asked him what he had found most and least rewarding about being president. He replied by exhorting the Democratic party for not rallying behind his policies, mentioning nothing positive about his White House experience.

Another student observed that Carter had initially managed his own White House but had later appointed a chief of staff. Was this, the questioner asked, because he discovered that the demands on a president had become too great for him to administer his own presidency? For reasons that were unclear, Carter took umbrage at the question, denying that he had ever taken the highly publicized action of appointing a chief of staff. By the end of this unexpectedly contentious session, it was not hard to understand why Carter had failed to bond with the rest of the political community.

The third experience was with Bill Clinton, who had barely been in my line of vision until the final months of 1991. My first clear impression of Clinton came via C-Span. In January and February of 1992, Clinton had survived charges of adultery and draft evasion, run a stronger-than-expected race in New Hampshire, swept the southern primaries, and become the front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In March, I happened on a telecast of Clinton addressing an African American church congregation that could scarcely have been more responsive if Martin Luther King had been in the pulpit. Speaking with ease and self-assurance, Clinton issued a call for policies that would enable citizens to lift themselves by their bootstraps rather than relying on government handouts. Explaining that he was making the same proposal to audiences of whites, Clinton called on all Americans to put aside their differences and recognize their common bonds.⁵

It was an electric performance by a man who seemed on his way to a presidency of great accomplishments. Instead, Clinton went on to preside over one of the most ragged first two years in office of any modern president. He only hit his stride after his party lost control of Congress in the 1994 midterm election, when he made effective use of

the veto to seize the political initiative from the Republicans by forcing two government shutdowns.

In the spring of 1996, I had an occasion to observe Clinton in the White House. I had been invited to the signing of the law providing for the line-item veto, an authorization for the president to nullify provisions in appropriation bills. I was ushered into the Oval Office, where I joined a group of good-government advocates chosen to highlight the event. Clinton entered and launched into a prepared statement. At first, he read from cue cards, sounding somewhat mechanical, but within seconds he put the cards down, faced his audience, and addressed it with great fluency and an impressive sense of conviction.⁶

Clinton's remarks were not particularly profound (and the Supreme Court later struck down the line-item veto), but he radiated the aura of a chief executive who had come into his own and was ready to go on to a productive second term. Instead, Clinton went on to a new term marked by modest policy initiatives, the revelation that he had engaged in sexual relations with a White House intern in the presidential office, and a year consumed by his impeachment. In the process, he had provided a reminder that in the absence of emotional intelligence, the presidency is a defective instrument of democratic governance.

The concern of this book is with the leadership of the modern presidents, but it is also impossible not to be impressed by their sheer diversity. One indicator of their variety is their fathers' occupations. Roosevelt's was a Hudson River Valley country gentleman, Truman's a Missouri mule trader, Eisenhower's a Kansas mechanic, Kennedy's a Massachusetts millionaire, Johnson's a Texas politician, Nixon's a California shopkeeper. Ford's stepfather was a Michigan paint manufacturer, Carter's father was a Georgia planter, Reagan's worked in Illinois shoe stores, Bush's was a Wall Street banker and U.S. senator, and Clinton's was an itinerant southern salesman, who died before his son's birth.

A story is told about an airman who escorted Lyndon Johnson across a tarmac in Vietnam, saying, "This is your helicopter, Mr. President." "They are all my helicopters," Johnson replied. When I am

asked which president I admire most, I have come to say, "They are all my presidents." Each of the modern presidents is a source of insight, as much for his weaknesses as his strengths. The variation among them provides intellectual leverage, permitting comparisons and expanding our sense of the possible. The presidency is often described as an office that places superhuman demands on its incumbent. In fact, it is a job for flesh-and-blood human beings, who will be better equipped for their responsibilities if they and those who select them do not begin with a blank slate.

❖❖ The constitutional and statutory *authority* of the president is indeed extraordinary. However, it is more important to point out that the actual power of the president depends upon his political abilities. The president must act within the framework of a complex and diversified political constituency. He can use the authority of his office to buttress his strength, but this alone is not sufficient: Somehow he must be able to persuade those with whom he deals to follow him; otherwise, he will be weak and ineffective.

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Richard E. Neustadt PRESIDENTIAL POWER

In the United States we like to "rate" a president. We measure him as "weak" or "strong" and call what we are measuring his "leadership." We do not wait until a man is dead; we rate him from the moment he takes office. We are quite right to do so. His office has become the focal point of politics and policy in our political system. Our commentators and our politicians make a specialty of taking the man's measurements. The rest of us join in when we feel "government" impinging on our private lives. In the third quarter of the twentieth century millions of us have that feeling often.

... Although we all make judgments about presidential leadership, we often base our judgments upon images of office that are far removed from the reality. We also use those images when we tell one another whom to choose as president. But it is risky to appraise a man in office or to choose a man for office on false premises about the nature of his job. When the job is the presidency of the United States the risk becomes excessive. . . .

We deal here with the president himself and with his influence on governmental action. In institutional terms the presidency now includes 2,000 men and women. The president is only one of them. But *his* performance scarcely can be measured without focusing on *him*. In terms of party, or of country, or the West, so-called, his leadership involves far more than governmental action. But the sharpening of spirit and of values and of purposes is not done in a vacuum. Although governmental action may not be the whole of leadership, all else is nurtured by it and gains meaning from it. Yet if we treat the presidency as the president, we cannot measure him as though he were the government. Not action

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as an outcome but his impact on the outcome is the measure of the man. His strength or weakness, then, turns on his personal capacity to influence the conduct of the men who make up government. His influence becomes the mark of leadership. To rate a president according to these rules, one looks into the man's own capabilities as seeker and as wielder of effective influence upon the other men involved in governing the country.

"Presidential" . . . means nothing but the president. "Power" means his influence. It helps to have these meanings settled at the start.

There are two ways to study "presidential power." One way is to focus on the tactics, so to speak, of influencing certain men in given situations: how to get a bill through Congress, how to settle strikes, how to quiet Cabinet feuds, or how to stop a Suez. The other way is to step back from tactics on those "givens" and to deal with influence in more strategic terms: what is its nature and what are its sources? What can *this* man accomplish to improve the prospect that he will have influence when he wants it? Strategically, the question is not how he masters Congress in a peculiar instance, but what he does to boost his chance for mastery in any instance, looking toward tomorrow from today. The second of these two ways has been chosen for this [selection]. . . .

In form all presidents are leaders, nowadays. In fact this guarantees no more than that they will be clerks. Everybody now expects the man inside the White House to do something about everything. Laws and customs now reflect acceptance of him as the Great Initiator, an acceptance quite as widespread at the Capitol as at his end of Pennsylvania Avenue. But such acceptance does not signify that all the rest of government is at his feet. It merely signifies that other men have found it practically impossible to do *their* jobs without assurance of initiatives from him. Service for themselves, not power for the president, has brought them to accept his leadership in form. They find his actions useful in their business. The transformation of his routine obligations testifies to their dependence on an active White House. A president, these days, is an invaluable clerk. His services are in demand all over Washington. His influence, however, is a very different matter. Laws and customs tell us little about leadership in fact.

Why have our presidents been honored with this clerkship? The answer is that no one else's services suffice. Our Constitution, our traditions, and our politics provide no better source for the initiatives a president can take. Executive officials need decisions, and political protection, and a referee for fights. Where are these to come from but the White House? Congressmen need an agenda from outside, something with high status to respond to or react against. What provides it better than the program of the president? Party politicians need a record to defend in the next national campaign. How can it be made except by "their" Administration? Private persons with a public ax to grind may need a helping hand or they may need a grinding stone. In either case who gives more satisfaction than a president? And outside the United States, in every country where our policies and postures influence home politics, there will be people needing just the "right" thing said and done or just the "wrong" thing stopped in *Washington*. What symbolizes Washington more nearly than the White House?

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A modern president is bound to face demands for aid and service from five more or less distinguishable sources: the Executive officialdom; from Congress; from his partisans, from citizens at large, and from abroad. The presidency's clerkship is expressive of these pressures. In effect they are constituency pressures and each president has five sets of constituents. The five are not distinguished by their membership; membership is obviously an overlapping matter. And taken one by one they do not match the man's electorate; one of them, indeed, is outside his electorate. They are distinguished, rather, by their different claims upon him. Initiatives are what they want, for five distinctive reasons. Since government and politics have offered no alternative, our laws and customs turn those wants into his obligations.

Why, then, is the president not guaranteed an influence commensurate with services performed? Constituent relations are relations of dependence. Everyone with any share in governing this country will belong to one (or two, or three) of his "constituencies." Since everyone depends on him why is he not assured of everyone's support? The answer is that no one else sits where he sits, or sees quite as he sees; no one else feels the full weight of his obligations. Those obligations are a tribute to his unique place in our political system. But just because it is unique they fall on him alone. *The same conditions that promote his leadership in form preclude a guarantee of leadership in fact.* No man or group at either end of Pennsylvania Avenue shares his peculiar status in our government and politics. That is why his services are in demand. By the same token, though, the obligations of all other men are different from his own. His Cabinet officers have departmental duties and constituents. His legislative leaders head *Congressional* parties, one in either House. His national party organization stands apart from his official family. His political allies in the states need not face Washington, or one another. The private groups that seek him out are not compelled to govern. And friends abroad are not compelled to run in our elections. Lacking his position and prerogatives, these men cannot regard his obligations as his own. They have their jobs to do; none is the same as his. As they perceive their duty they may find it right to follow him, in fact, or they may not. Whether they will feel obliged *on their responsibility* to do what he wants done remains an open question. . . .

There is reason to suppose that in the years immediately ahead the power problems of a president will remain what they have been in the decades just behind us. If so there will be equal need for presidential expertise of the peculiar sort . . . that has [been] stressed [i.e., political skill]. Indeed, the need is likely to be greater. The president himself and with him the whole government are likely to be more than ever at the mercy of his personal approach.

What may the sixties do to politics and policy and to the place of presidents in our political system? The sixties may destroy them as we know them; that goes without saying. But barring deep depression or unlimited war, a total transformation is the least of likelihoods. Without catastrophes of those dimensions nothing in our past experience suggests that we shall see either consensus of the sort available to F.D.R. in 1933 and 1942, or popular demand for institutional adjustments likely to assist a president. Lacking popular demand, the natural con-

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servatism of established institutions will keep Congress and the party organizations quite resistant to reforms that could give him a clear advantage over them. Four-year terms for congressmen and senators might do it, if the new terms ran with his. What will occasion a demand for that? As for crisis consensus it is probably beyond the reach of the next president. We may have priced ourselves out of the market for "productive" crises on the pattern Roosevelt knew—productive in the sense of strengthening his chances for sustained support *within* the system. Judging from the fifties, neither limited war nor limited depression is productive in those terms. Anything unlimited will probably break the system.

In the absence of productive crises, and assuming that we manage to avoid destructive ones, nothing now foreseeable suggests that our next president will have assured support from any quarter. There is no use expecting it from the bureaucracy unless it is displayed on Capitol Hill. Assured support will not be found in Congress unless contemplation of their own electorates keeps a majority of members constantly aligned with him. In the sixties it is to be doubted . . . that pressure from electors will move the same majority of men in either House toward consistent backing for the president. Instead the chances are that he will gain majorities, when and if he does so, by ad hoc coalition-building, issue after issue. In that respect the sixties will be reminiscent of the fifties; indeed, a closer parallel may well be in the late forties. As for "party discipline" in English terms—the favorite cure-all of political scientists since Woodrow Wilson was a youth—the first preliminary is a party link between the White House and the leadership on both sides of the Capitol. But even this preliminary has been lacking in eight of the fifteen years since the Second World War. If ballot-splitting should continue through the sixties it will soon be "un-American" for president and Congress to belong to the same party.

Even if the trend were now reversed, there is no short-run prospect that behind each party label we would find assembled a sufficiently like-minded bloc of voters, similarly aligned in states and districts all across the country, to negate the massive barriers our institutions and traditions have erected against "discipline" on anything like the British scale. This does not mean that a reversal of the ballot-splitting trend would be without significance. If the White House and the legislative leadership were linked by party ties again, a real advantage would accrue to both. Their opportunities for mutually productive bargaining would be enhanced. The policy results might surprise critics of our system. Bargaining "within the family" has a rather different quality than bargaining with members of the rival clan. But we would still be a long way from "party government." Bargaining, not "discipline," would still remain the key to Congressional action on a president's behalf. The crucial distinctions between presidential party and Congressional party are not likely to be lost in the term of the next president.

❖❖ Presidential Politics

Whether the Founding Fathers intended that the president would be a king or a clerk, they clearly did not foresee the deep involvement of the presi-

I

PRESIDENTIAL GREATNESS AND DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

The scandalous politics of Bill Clinton's second term, which saw the president of the United States ensnared by revelations of an affair with a White House intern, deeply embarrassed the nation. Nonetheless, these events also provided an opportunity to revisit the most fundamental issues of leadership in contemporary American democracy: the role of public opinion in representative government, the relative weight of the executive and legislative branches of government, the uneasy relationship between a free press and democratic leadership, and the line between private morality and public authority. The role that morality and character play in presidential leadership is an especially fascinating and troubling matter. Even as he became the first president in 130 years to be impeached by the House, Bill Clinton had remarkable support among the public, which approved of the way he governed.

In truth, Clinton's resiliency testified not only to his record of achievement but also to the public's disdain for the zealotry with which the special prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, pursued the investigation of the president's peccadilloes and the alacrity with which a Congress bitterly divided by partisanship supported it. But Americans distinguished sharply between Clinton the chief executive, of whom they approved, and Clinton the man, whom they regarded as immoral and untrustworthy. Thus, even though the Senate acquitted the president on the impeachment charges, Clinton faced an erosion of credibility, which weakened severely his ability to command the nation.

That a constitutional crisis could be brought by such a tawdry episode led government officials, pundits, and a benumbed public to decry the current state of leadership in American politics—to lament the absence of great leaders like Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt as well as the fractious state of American democracy, which appeared to make such extraordinary statesmanship a chimera. This book attempts to recapture our understand-

ing of presidential greatness and to better understand those who have displayed it.

In the words of Alexander Hamilton, the American people "build lasting monuments of their gratitude" for certain presidents and not for others.¹ Only a few presidents—Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and FDR—have been deemed worthy of such enduring respect and reverence. Cities, towns, and babies are named for them. Monuments are built in their memory. They are the subjects of popular novels and TV docudramas. Even when they are reviled, they are spoken of with awe. It is almost as if they occupied a different office and lived on a different political plane from the other numerous incumbents of the presidential office, many of whom seem to be forgotten almost as quickly as they leave office.

Despite the esteem in which they are held and the almost obsessive attention paid them as individuals, America's "great" presidents have never been studied as a group.² Each of the next five chapters focuses on a specific great president, but our aim is not only to shed new light on this or that aspect of their individual careers. Rather, we hope to find some common thread that will enable us to better understand the presidential office itself—its higher possibilities as well as its necessary limitations.

The discontent aroused by the current state of American democracy may have deepened the public's wish for extraordinary leadership, but the demand for greatness far exceeds the supply. In the penultimate chapter of this book, we argue that there has been no great president since FDR, still the search goes on. Pundits and public alike are perennially in search of the next one. Almost no modern election takes place without widely expressed dissatisfaction with the mediocrity of the declared candidates and an equally widely expressed hope that some prominent figure, who at least some perceive to have the potential for greatness, will enter the race. Colin Powell is only the most recent object of this so far vain quest.

And yet for all its allure, presidential greatness is potentially a problem for democracy. The very idea of greatness serves to emphasize the vast remove between the anointed one and the people. Greatness is far more compatible with monarchy, in which a leader is required not to serve the people but to take care of them. Alexander, Peter, Catherine, and Frederick were all "great," but who would want to elect them president?

Consider the modern phenomenon of the "summit meeting." On several occasions during the Cold War, the American president met alone with his Soviet counterpart and discussed the issues that placed their two countries at odds. Often these face-to-face conversations occurred during times of

great mutual tension. Nonetheless, the American president would occasionally depart from positions established by his government and employ his own personal discretion to strike a deal. On such occasions, he was almost casual about the extent to which he spoke for America, with no real regard for the views of the citizenry. What king ever exercised greater influence over world affairs?

As we explore presidential greatness, we are compelled to ask whether they were democratically great. Were their great accomplishments compatible with the aspirations of a democratic people, or is the very term "democratic leadership" an oxymoron. The study of presidential greatness is an attempt to examine both the potentialities and the limits of democracy itself.

The president is the chief *executive*. The buck stops there. The great presidents were great because they not only brought about change but also left a legacy—principles, institutional arrangements, and policies that defined an era. As Alexander Hamilton put it, they pursued "extensive and arduous enterprises for the public benefit."³ The public elevates their memory because they reconstructed the regime in bold and enduring fashion. When decisive action was required, they took it. Even when such efforts are necessary, however, they risk weakening the capacity of citizens to fend for themselves. Indeed, some of the best presidential scholars argue that the presidency is a nondemocratic office, that the need to execute requires presidents to flout the popular will.⁴ We do not deny that there is a monarchical side to the presidency. Each of the great presidents took aggressive action in the face of crisis without full-fledged consultation with and guidance from the people. But is this the whole story? Is the president simply a constitutional monarch subject only to the discipline of infrequent elections? We think not. Even as we depict great acts of presidential decisiveness and deplore glaring examples of indecision, we hold open the possibility that there is an important democratic aspect to presidential leadership.

Democratic leadership involves the mutual interdependence of leader and led.⁵ It requires first of all that the leader remain answerable to his followers. Even as he takes bold initiatives and ignores public opinion in the short run, he must enable his followers to hold him to account in ways that are practicable and timely. Second, because leadership is inevitably paternalistic, it can redeem itself democratically only if that parental responsibility is properly exercised. Good parents encourage their children to become independent and responsible, not to remain submissive and willful. Presidential words and deeds, shape the quality and character of the citizenry. They can make the public more passive and self-regarding and submissive, or they can encourage

it to be more energetic and public spirited. Just as a parent is held responsible for the moral and practical education of his children, so a president bears a large share of responsibility for the public's civic education. A democratic leader is one who takes the public to school.⁶

By these criteria, the great presidents did indeed provide meaningful democratic leadership. Washington apart, they all were either founders or reformers of political parties. Parties, we will argue, are the most important source of democratic presidential accountability. And although the great presidents were revolutionaries, they were revolutionaries of a distinctly conservative stripe.⁷ They taught the citizenry about the need for great change but also about how to reconcile change with American constitutional traditions and purposes. Their capacity to rule and be ruled by their party, and the rhetorical capacity to tie fundamental changes to enduring political virtues, made the presidential greats great democratic presidents. Even as they transformed the country, they remained rooted in a democratic polity that had the wit and self-possession to hold them accountable. Such ties liberate, even as they bind. The great presidents were not apart from democratic politics; they mastered it.

THE PRESIDENT AS CONSERVATOR

In probing the meaning of "conservative revolution," the title "president" is intriguing. To preside is different than to lead, direct, or control. It connotes a responsibility for preserving harmony and coherence. But preside over what? Prior to the adoption of the Constitution, the title had been used for the presiding officer of Congress and of many other legislative bodies, including the Constitutional Convention.⁸ But the president created in 1787 has no specific presiding responsibilities. Rather, the notion of presiding must be understood in a broader sense. As the president's oath of office states, he has the responsibility "to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution itself." The actual language of the president's oath is included in the Constitution. These words were not written frivolously, but were intended to convey his solemn duty to preside over an entire constitutional order. This is his deepest conservative duty: to stand guard over a system that is meant to hold him in check.⁹

As James Madison noted in the famous *Federalist* No. 10, the political order created by the Constitution was a republican rather than a purely democratic one.¹⁰ By this he meant that the complex system of divided and separated powers in the Constitution had several purposes in addition to

promoting democratic rule. It was intended to mediate between partisan factions, as well as between representatives and the people, to "protect the people against their own temporary errors and delusions." Its objective was to cultivate the "cool and deliberate sense of the community . . ." to "refine and enlarge the public views."¹¹

In *Federalist* No. 71, Alexander Hamilton elaborated on the special responsibility of the president within the constitutional frame. "There are some who would be inclined to regard the servile pliancy of the executive to a prevailing current, either in the community or the legislature, as its best recommendation," he lamented. This "crude notion" of representative government failed to grasp that the "republican principle . . . did not require an unequalled complaisance to every sudden breeze of passion or every transient impulse which the people may receive from the arts of men, who flatter their prejudices to betray their interests." Rather, Hamilton argued, "when occasions present themselves in which the interests of the people are at variance with their inclinations, it is the duty of the persons whom they have appointed to be the guardians of those interests to withstand the temporary delusion in order to give them time and opportunity for cool and sedate reflection."¹¹

This sense of "guardianship" was not confined to ardent defenders of executive power such as Hamilton. Thomas Jefferson, whose concept of the president's authority was far more circumspect, was no less committed to the idea of the executive's responsibility to protect the constitutional order. Only the president could "command a view of the whole ground" and was thus deserving of the people's "support against the errors of others, who may condemn what they would not if seen in all its parts."¹²

In probing the roots of executive authority, therefore, we must try to understand the republican as well as the democratic aspects of the presidency. Yet as the guardian of the people's interests, the executive was not expected to have unlimited power. Just as the Constitution places limits on the arbitrary actions of the people, so it constrained their tribune. To prevent executive guardianship from becoming despotic, the framers regularized it as an office in a constitutional framework, juxtaposing its power with that of the judiciary and legislature. "Ambition would counteract ambition."¹³ The hope was that presidents would not simply become frustrated by the limits of power but, in upholding their powers, play a critical part in defending the people's liberties.

It was Lincoln who acknowledged that "public opinion in this country is everything."¹⁴ At the same time, he grasped that the president's constitutional duty was not merely to rouse public opinion but to temper it. The duty to temper imposes various demands on the president. For example, to

protect minority rights, the president may need to dampen the ardor of prohibitionists of whatever stripe. Or to combat the democratic disease of wishful thinking, he may need to resist approving desirable public projects that the people lack the will to pay for.

Seen in this broader light, the goal of the overall constitutional order is not merely to preserve limited government by producing "gridlock." Separation of powers and checks and balances are expected to maintain liberty not merely by throwing sand in the gears of government but by perpetuating the principle of deliberative constitutional government. The president is obligated to encourage and provoke such deliberations.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, each of the great presidents not only performed these crucial republican duties but did so in a democratic spirit by taking the people to school and explaining why great changes had to be accomplished in a manner compatible with constitutionally prescribed liberties and republican forbearance. Presiding over the first democratically elected regime change in all of human history, Jefferson used the occasion of his first inaugural to remind the people, including the bloodthirsty among his followers, that "we are all republicans, we are all federalists." Through rhetoric, he cultivated a political climate in which he could establish profound democratic changes without departing from the constitutional framework established by his Federalist predecessors. Andrew Jackson complemented his far more thoroughgoing democratization of the regime with a crucial act of constitutional statesmanship. He acted swiftly and decisively to suppress the protosecessionist efforts of the South Carolina nullifiers. And, of equal importance, he issued the Nullification Proclamation, which explained cogently and comprehensively why all Americans should make preservation of the Union their highest political priority.

Lincoln wielded this precedent in the service of the boldest of all presidentially inspired acts of inclusiveness. He discovered in the principle of Union itself a rationale for expunging the exclusionary constitutional provisions that left America "half slave and half free," a "house divided against itself." He set the standard for presidential civic education in a series of speeches that explained to the people why a house divided against itself could not endure, why defense of the Constitution actually required the freeing of the slaves.

FDR too sought to save the constitutional order by expanding it. In his Commonwealth Club address and elsewhere, he explained that the economic system would destroy itself if it were not subjected to constitutional reform and that this transformed economic constitution would be based on a new right—the right to economic security.

THE PRESIDENT AS FIRST CITIZEN

We have been using the term "conservative revolutionary" metaphorically. But one of the great presidents, the first, was a conservative revolutionary in the literal meaning of the term. George Washington led the military uprising, presided over the Constitutional Convention, and served as the first popularly elected chief executive. His bearing and his principles were so conservative that it is hard to conceive of him as a revolutionary, yet it is difficult to imagine the success of the revolutionary project, and the *novus ordo seclorum* it established, in his absence. As the chapter on Washington details, he set the precedents that made a democratic republican chief executive possible. Not only was he elected to two terms unopposed, but the certitude that he would indeed serve as the nation's first president allayed the fears of those among the Constitution writers who might otherwise have been disinclined to endorse the establishment of a strong chief executive. Although his tenure in office was hardly free of factional strife, the one matter that remained above partisan discord was the character and leadership of Washington himself. By virtue of his ability to stay above the partisan fray to keep the fragile ties of political unity from being rent asunder, he bears an uncanny resemblance to the greatest of the ancient democratic leaders, Pericles. Thucydides' description of Pericles' leadership of the Athenian democracy applies with equal force to Washington's stewardship of the infant American republic:

Pericles, because of his position, his intelligence and his known integrity could respect the liberty of the people and at the same time hold them in check. It was only he who led them, rather than they who led him, and, since he never sought power from any wrong motive, he was under no necessity of flattering them: in fact, he was so highly respected that he was able to speak angrily to them and to contradict them. Certainly, when he saw that they were going too far in a mood of over-confidence, he would bring back to them a sense of their dangers; and when they were discouraged for no good reason he would restore their confidence. So, in what was nominally a democracy, power was really in the hands of *the first citizen*.¹⁵

It is hardly a coincidence that Washington also was identified as a first citizen.¹⁶ It has a strong democratic resonance because it emphasizes a leader's identification with his fellow citizens and implies that this authority comes more from his standing among them than his power to coerce them. Indeed,

Pericles is at least as famous for what he said as for what he did. His funeral oration remains perhaps the most moving of all utterances designed to encourage democratic citizens to live up to their political obligations.

Washington was hardly an orator of Periclean dimensions. Still, in his Farewell Address, he undertook a similarly ambitious effort to educate his fellow citizens. He reminded them of their most important political responsibilities and warned them against the most appealing and therefore the most dangerous political temptations to which they were subjected.

And yet one's admiration of Washington should not blind one to the inadequacy of the model he provides of democratic presidential leadership. Thucydides' criticism of Pericles applies with equal force to him. Their success was too dependent on the absence of rivals. Both, because of their extraordinary gifts and the circumstances in which they came to rule, were able to suppress rivalry and factionalism. But they left no legacy capable of suppressing those centrifugal forces in their absence. Thucydides ends the paean to Pericles with the following dispirited observation:

But his successors, who were more on a level with each other and each of whom aimed at occupying the first place, adopted methods of demagoguery which resulted in their losing control over the actual conduct of affairs.¹⁷

PARTY

From ancient Athens to today, the disruption of democracy by rivalry and factionalism has remained endemic. Ironically, the best means for taming factionalism and reconciling rivalry with lawful rotation in power has proved to be an institution that Washington feared and despised—political party. To compound the irony, Thomas Jefferson, who shared Washington's antipathy, created the first great democratic political party. Jefferson was a better builder than he was an architect. His vision was to create the party that would end party, that would erase the Federalist-inspired perversions of the Constitution and restore and strengthen it to such an extent that constitutional liberties would no longer require partisan defense. It fell to his first while disciple, Martin Van Buren, a man who inspired few "lasting monuments," to recognize that one party would inevitably degenerate into no party and that the full defense of the Constitution required the establishment of a *party system*. The mantle of greatness was bestowed not on Van Buren, the operative and theoretician, but on the one who actually presided

over the establishment of the party system, Andrew Jackson. When that system threatened to degenerate into mere bread and circuses, Lincoln presided over the creation of a new great party of principle.

Seminal scholars of the party system such as James Ceaser, Walter Dean Burnham, and Wilson C. McWilliams have described how party came to the rescue of American constitutional democracy and how great presidents founded, led, and were disciplined by party.

James Sterling Young describes how the nonpartisan Era of Good Feelings led to an attenuation of concern for and interest in the national project. It was the Jacksonian revitalization of political life, reestablishing a vital link between local and national politics via party, that reinvigorated national attachments. More to the point, Jacksonian democracy reestablished a responsible relationship between the president and the people. Nomination and election by mass political parties gave the president the stature of a popular spokesman; equally important, the party system made the executive accountable to a collective organization with a past and a future—to a national institution that enlarged even as it restrained presidential ambition.¹⁸

Parties reflected the concern first expressed by the Anti-Federalists, and later revived by Jefferson and Madison, that the Constitution did not adequately provide for the cultivation of an active and competent citizenry. Forged on the anvil of Jeffersonian democracy, political parties were conceived as bulwarks of decentralization, as localized political associations that could provide a vital link between constitutional offices, especially the executive, and the people. They would do so by balancing state and local communities, championed by the Anti-Federalists, and the national government, strengthened by the Constitution of 1787.¹⁹

Paradoxically, patriotism in the United States would grow out of the provinces. Even as they supported a decentralization of power, political parties discouraged sectionalism. Jacksonian parties found their strength principally in the political combat of presidential elections—a battleground that encouraged partisans to overlook their differences in the interest of victory. As Van Buren recognized, party provided the only plausible means for tempting southerners and northerners to overlook their grave differences for the greater good of winning elections. This "greater good" was composed of both principle and pelf. The infamous "spoils system" was designed to give aspiring politicians of whatever region a strong incentive to stick by a party capable of winning national elections. Strict adherence to Jeffersonian political doctrine was equally vital for compelling Democrats to overlook sectionally inspired differences.

Partisan principle was also crucial for making national politics meaningful and coherent and thus for providing ordinary citizens with the means of holding representatives accountable. A mass electorate was incapable of making subtle judgments regarding policies and political personalities. It required the clear-cut statement of principles contained in the party platform and the imposition of party discipline on political representatives to turn the exercise of the franchise by ordinary citizens into a meaningful political activity.

As chapter 5 reveals, Lincoln, regarded as America's greatest president, was not a godsend who swept to victory by overawing his party and the public. Rather, he was a veteran politician and political party activist who successfully contended for nomination and election in an open, messy democratic process. His ascendance to the White House showed that presidents could not come to power without coming to terms with provincial liberties; at the same time, Lincoln's attachment to the Republican Party helped draw the country into a passionate yet deliberative debate on the slavery issue.

Thus, great presidential leadership required extraordinary partisanship, democratic leadership that leavened, rather than stood above, the hurly-burly of political life. Van Buren recognized that the threat of demagoguery was endemic to democracy and that the only way to hold would-be dictators in check was to make them beholden to those they could not control. As they developed during the nineteenth century, political parties connected the executive to popular organizations that strengthened the decentralizing features of the Constitution—Congress, as well as the states and localities. This decentralized party system ensured the existence of political “barons” at the state and local levels who possessed sufficient ability to sway their electorates that no aspiring presidential candidate could afford to ignore their prerogatives.

While checking unwonted ambition, party also proved a vital source of presidential authority. It bestowed legitimacy on the institution of the presidency. It provided presidents with a stable basis of popular support and, episodically, during periods of partisan realignment, with the opportunity to embark on ambitious projects of national reform. These episodes—our “surrogate for revolution,” as Walter Dean Burnham characterizes them—have not destroyed the Constitution but rather have strengthened the attachment between the people and the fundamental law, to ensure, as Jefferson put it, that the Constitution “belonged to the living.”²⁰

Political realignments have all taken place within the parameters set by the principles of limited constitutional government; they have all been shaped by the creed of the Declaration of Independence, which defines justice as the

“free pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness.” The great presidents have been the principal agents of these major transformations; they have engaged people in a debate about first principles. But these “extensive and arduous enterprises” have been constrained by presidents’ accountability to a popular party and dedicated to a variation on the theme of the Declaration. Indeed, these realignments became surrogate constitutional conventions: during these episodes of mass democracy, the Declaration was drawn into the vortex of a great contest of opinion that, as FDR put it, “transfused with new meaning the concepts of our constitutional fathers.”²¹

The party system survived the Civil War and served throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century as the central organizing principle of American politics and the key protector of provincial liberties. It is no accident that the last great president, FDR, was also the last great presidential party leader. FDR’s party leadership is reminiscent of one of his greatest idols, Jefferson. Like Jefferson, FDR built a powerful party, one that mobilized those who previously had been marginalized from national political life. FDR too hoped and expected that his partisan accomplishment would be temporary. But Jefferson championed a localized democracy that required the recrudescence of partisanship. In contrast, FDR and his New Deal allies transformed the Democratic Party into a way station on the road to a more centralized and bureaucratic form of democracy that focused American political life on the president and administrative agencies. Roosevelt planned his party to be the means for the creation of an administrative state that would prove more durable than a party could ever be and therefore would be more capable of providing the new programmatic rights he sought to establish.

Chapter 7, which discusses the development of the modern presidency that formed in the wake of the New Deal realignment, pays homage to FDR’s success in establishing the administrative state. But it laments the democratic losses that accrue to the victory of administration over partisan politics. To borrow William Leuchtenburg’s phrase, the American presidency remains “in the shadow of FDR.”²² We argue that the post-FDR presidential light has remained dim because a vital source of political energy—party politics—has been sapped. The chapters on the individual presidents who displayed greatness revisit times when that energy flowed more freely and may provide hints as to how it might be rekindled.

the way in which he makes decisions. From the very beginning the office was thought of in highly personal terms, for the framers of the Constitution, in part at least, built the office around the character of George Washington, who virtually everyone at the time thought would be the first occupant of the office. And evolution of the office since 1787 has added to its personal quotient. James David Barber provides a framework for the analysis of presidential character and its effect upon performance in the White House.

42

James David Barber
THE PRESIDENTIAL
CHARACTER

When a citizen votes for a presidential candidate he makes, in effect, a prediction. He chooses from among the contenders the one he thinks (or feels, or guesses) would be the best president. He operates in a situation of immense uncertainty. If he has a long voting history, he can recall time and time again when he guessed wrong. He listens to the commentators, the politicians, and his friends, then adds it all up in some rough way to produce his prediction and his vote. Earlier in the game, his anticipations have been taken into account, either directly in the polls and primaries or indirectly in the minds of politicians who want to nominate someone he will like. But he must choose in the midst of a cloud of confusion, a rain of phony advertising, a storm of sermons, a hail of complex issues, a fog of charisma and boredom, and a thunder of accusation and defense. In the face of this chaos, a great many citizens fall back on the past, vote their old allegiances, and let it go at that. Nevertheless, the citizen's vote says that on balance he expects Mr. X would outshine Mr. Y in the presidency.

This [book] is meant to help citizens and those who advise them cut through the confusion and get at some clear criteria for choosing presidents. To understand what actual presidents do and what potential presidents might do, the first need is to see the man whole—not as some abstract embodiment of civic virtue, some scorecard of issue stands, or some reflection of a faction, but as a human being like the rest of us, a person trying to cope with a difficult environment. To that task he brings his own character, his own view of the world, his own political style. None of that is new for him. If we can see the pattern he has set for his political life we

Excerpted from James David Barber, *The Presidential Character*, 2d and 3d editions (Prentice-Hall, Inc.). © 1972, 1977, 1985 by James David Barber. Reprinted by permission of the author.

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can, I contend, estimate much better his pattern as he confronts the stresses and chances of the presidency.

The presidency is a peculiar office. The founding fathers left it extraordinarily loose in definition, partly because they trusted George Washington to invest a tradition as he went along. It is an institution made a piece at a time by successive men in the White House. Jefferson reached out to Congress to put together the beginnings of political parties; Jackson's dramatic force extended electoral partisanship to its mass base; Lincoln vastly expanded the administrative reach of the office, Wilson and the Roosevelts showed its rhetorical possibilities—in fact every President's mind and demeanor has left its mark on a heritage still in lively development.

But the presidency is much more than an institution. It is a focus of feelings. In general, popular feelings about politics are low-key, shallow, casual. For example, the vast majority of Americans knows virtually nothing of what Congress is doing and cares less. The presidency is different. The presidency is the focus for the most intense and persistent emotions in the American polity. The president is a symbolic leader, the one figure who draws together the people's hopes and fears for the political future. On top of all his routine duties, he has to carry that off—or fail.

Our emotional attachment to presidents shows up when one dies in office. People were not just disappointed or worried when President Kennedy was killed; people wept at the loss of a man most had never even met. Kennedy was young and charismatic—but history shows that whenever a president dies in office, heroic Lincoln or debased Harding, McKinley or Garfield, the same wave of deep emotion sweeps across the country. On the other hand, the death of an ex-president brings forth no such intense emotional reaction.

The president is the first political figure children are aware of (later they add Congress, the Court, and others, as "helpers" of the president). With some exceptions among children in deprived circumstances, the president is seen as a "benevolent leader," one who nurtures, sustains, and inspires the citizenry. Presidents regularly show up among "most admired" contemporaries and forebears, and the president is the "best known" (in the sense of sheer name recognition) person in the country. At inauguration time, even presidents elected by close margins are supported by much larger majorities than the election returns show, for people rally round as he actually assumes office. There is a similar reaction when the people see their president threatened by crisis: if he takes action, there is a favorable spurt in the Gallup poll whether he succeeds or fails.

Obviously the president gets more attention in schoolbooks, press, and television than any other politician. He is one of very few who can make news by doing good things. His emotional state is a matter of continual public commentary, as is the manner in which his personal and official families conduct themselves. The media bring across the president not as some neutral administrator or corporate executive to be assessed by his production, but as a special being with mysterious dimensions.

We have no king. The sentiments English children—and adults—direct to the Queen have no place to go in our system but to the president. Whatever his

talents—Coolidge-type or Roosevelt-type—the president is the only available object for such national-religious-monarchical sentiments as Americans possess.

The president helps people make sense of politics. Congress is a tangle of committees, the bureaucracy is a maze of agencies. The president is one man trying to do a job—a picture much more understandable to the mass of people who find themselves in the same boat. Furthermore, he is the top man. He ought to know what is going on and set it right. So when the economy goes sour, or war drags on, or domestic violence erupts, the president is available to take the blame. Then when things go right, it seems the president must have had a hand in it. Indeed, the flow of political life is marked off by presidents: the "Eisenhower Era," the "Kennedy Years."

What all this means is that the president's main responsibilities reach far beyond administering the Executive Branch or commanding the armed forces. The White House is first and foremost a place of public leadership. That inevitably brings to bear on the president intense moral, sentimental, and quasi-religious pressures which can, if he lets them, distort his own thinking and feeling. If there is such a thing as extraordinary sanity, it is needed nowhere so much as in the White House.

Who the president is at a given time can make a profound difference in the whole thrust and direction of national politics. Since we have only one president at a time, we can never prove this by comparison, but even the most superficial speculation confirms the commonsense view that the man himself weighs heavily among other historical factors. A Wilson reelected in 1920, a Hoover in 1932, a John F. Kennedy in 1964 would, it seems very likely, have guided the body politic along rather different paths from those their actual successors chose. Or try to imagine a Theodore Roosevelt ensconced behind today's "bully pulpit" of a presidency, or Lyndon Johnson as president in the age of McKinley. Only someone mesmerized by the lures of historical inevitability can suppose that it would have made little or no difference to government policy had Alf Landon replaced FDR in 1936, had Dewey beaten Truman in 1948, or Adlai Stevenson reigned through the 1950s. Not only would these alternative presidents have advocated different policies—they would have approached the office from very different psychological angles. It stretches credibility to think that Eugene McCarthy would have run the institution the way Lyndon Johnson did.

The burden of this [argument] is that the crucial differences can be anticipated by an understanding of a potential president's character, his world view, and his style. This kind of prediction is not easy; well-informed observers often have guessed wrong as they watched a man step toward the White House. One thinks of Woodrow Wilson, the scholar who would bring reason to politics; of Herbert Hoover, the Great Engineer who would organize chaos into progress; of Franklin D. Roosevelt, that champion of the balanced budget; of Harry Truman, whom the office would surely overwhelm; of Dwight D. Eisenhower, militant crusader; of John F. Kennedy, who would lead beyond moralisms to achievements; of Lyndon B. Johnson, the Southern conservative; and of Richard M. Nixon, conciliator. Spotting the errors is easy. Predicting with even approximate accuracy is going to require some sharp tools and close attention in their use. But the experiment is

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My argument comes in layers.

First, a president's personality is an important shaper of his presidential behavior on nontrivial matters.

Second, presidential personality is patterned. His character, world view, and style fit together in a dynamic package understandable in psychological terms.

Third, a president's personality interacts with the power situation he faces and the national "climate of expectations" dominant at the time he serves. The tuning, the resonance—or lack of it—between these external factors and his personality sets in motion the dynamics of his presidency.

Fourth, the best way to predict a president's character, world view, and style is to see how they were put together in the first place. That happened in his early life, culminating in his first independent political success.

But the core of the argument . . . is that presidential character—the basic stance a man takes toward his presidential experience—comes in four varieties. The most important thing to know about a president or candidate is where he fits among these types, defined according to (a) how active he is and (b) whether or not he gives the impression he enjoys his political life.

Let me spell out these concepts briefly before getting down to cases.

PERSONALITY SHAPES PERFORMANCE

I am not about to argue that once you know a president's personality you know everything. But as the cases will demonstrate, the degree and quality of a president's emotional involvement in an issue are powerful influences on how he defines the issue itself, how much attention he pays to it, which facts and persons he sees as relevant to its resolution, and finally, what principles and purposes he associates with the issue. Every story of presidential decision-making is really two stories: an outer one in which a rational man calculates and an inner one in which an emotional man feels. The two are forever connected. Any real president is one whole man and his deeds reflect his wholeness.

As for personality, it is a matter of tendencies. It is not that one president "has" some basic characteristic that another president does not "have." That old way of treating a trait as a possession, like a rock in a basket, ignores the universality of aggressiveness, compliancy, detachment, and other human drives. We all have all of them, but in different amounts and in different combinations.

THE PATTERN OF CHARACTER, WORLD VIEW, AND STYLE

The most visible part of the pattern is style. *Style is the president's habitual way of performing his three political roles: rhetoric, personal relations, and homework.* Not to be confused with "stylishness," charisma, or appearance, style is how the president goes about doing what the office requires him to do—to speak, directly or through

media, to large audiences; to deal face to face with other politicians, individually and in small, relatively private groups; and to read, write, and calculate by himself in order to manage the endless flow of details that stream onto his desk. No president can escape doing at least some of each. But there are marked differences in stylistic emphasis from president to president. The *balance* among the three style elements varies; one president may put most of himself into rhetoric; another may stress close, informal dealing, while still another may devote his energies mainly to study and cogitation. Beyond the balance, we want to see each president's peculiar habits of style, his mode of coping with and adapting to these presidential demands. For example, I think both Calvin Coolidge and John F. Kennedy were primarily rhetoricians, but they went about it in contrasting ways.

A president's *world view* consists of his primary, politically relevant beliefs, particularly his conceptions of social causality, human nature, and the central moral conflicts of the time. This is how he sees the world and his lasting opinions about what he sees. Style is his way of acting; world view is his way of seeing. Like the rest of us, a president develops over a lifetime certain conceptions of reality—how things work in politics, what people are like, what the main purposes are. These assumptions or conceptions help him make sense of his world, give some semblance of order to the chaos of existence. Perhaps most important: a man's world view affects what he pays attention to, and a great deal of politics is about paying attention. The name of the game for many politicians is not so much "Do this, do that" as it is "Look here!"

"Character" comes from the Greek word for engraving; in one sense it is what life has marked into a man's being. As used here, *character* is the way the president orients himself toward life—not for the moment, but enduringly. Character is the person's stance as he confronts experience. And at the core of character, a man confronts himself. The president's fundamental self-esteem is his prime personal resource; to defend and advance that, he will sacrifice much else he values. Down there in the privacy of his heart, does he find himself superb, or ordinary, or debased, or in some intermediate range? No president has been utterly paralyzed by self-doubt and none has been utterly free of midnight self-mockery. In between, the real presidents move out on life from positions of relative strength or weakness. Equally important are the criteria by which they judge themselves. A president who rates himself by the standard of achievement, for instance, may be little affected by losses of affection.

Character, world view, and style are abstractions from the reality of the whole individual. In every case they form an integrated pattern: the man develops a combination which makes psychological sense for him, a dynamic arrangement of motives, beliefs, and habits in the service of his need for self-esteem.

THE POWER SITUATION AND "CLIMATE OF EXPECTATIONS"

Presidential character resonates with the political situation the president faces. It adapts him as he tries to adapt it. The support he has from the public and interest

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groups, the party balance in Congress, the thrust of Supreme Court opinion together set the basic power situation he must deal with. An activist president may run smack into a brick wall of resistance, then pull back and wait for a better moment. On the other hand, a president who sees himself as a quiet caretaker may not try to exploit even the most favorable power situation. So it is the relationship between President and the political configuration that makes the system tick.

Even before public opinion polls, the president's real or supposed popularity was a large factor in his performance. Besides the power mix in Washington, the president has to deal with a national climate of expectations, the predominant needs thrust up to him by the people. There are at least three recurrent themes around which these needs are focused.

People look to the president for *reassurance*, a feeling that things will be all right, that the president will take care of his people. The psychological request is for a surcease of anxiety. Obviously, modern life in America involves considerable doses of fear, tension, anxiety, worry; from time to time, the public mood calls for a rest, a time of peace, a breathing space, a "return to normalcy."

Another theme is the demand for a sense of *progress and action*. The president ought to do something to direct the nation's course—or at least be in there pitching for the people. The president is looked to as a take-charge man, a doer, a turner of the wheels, a producer of progress—even if that means some sacrifice of serenity.

A third type of climate of expectations is the public need for a sense of *legitimacy* from, and in, the presidency. The president should be a master politician who is above politics. He should have a right to his place and a rightful way of acting in it. The respectability—even religiosity—of the office has to be protected by a man who presents himself as defender of the faith. There is more to this than dignity, more than propriety. The president is expected to personify our betterness in an inspiring way, to express in what he does and is (not just in what he says) a moral idealism which, in much of the public mind, is the very opposite of "politics."

Over time the climate of expectations shifts and changes. Wars, depressions, and other national events contribute to that change, but there also is a rough cycle, from an emphasis on action (which begins to look too "political") to an emphasis on legitimacy (the moral uplift of which creates its own strains) to an emphasis on reassurance and rest (which comes to seem like drift) and back to action again. One need not be astrological about it. The point is that the climate of expectations at any given time is the political air the President has to breathe. Relating to this climate is a large part of his task.

PREDICTING PRESIDENTS

The best way to predict a president's character, world view, and style is to see how he constructed them in the first place. Especially in the early stages, life is experimental; consciously or not, a person tries out various ways of defining and maintaining and raising self-esteem. He looks to his environment for clues as to who he is and how well he is doing. These lessons of life slowly sink in: certain

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self-images and evaluations, certain ways of looking at the world, certain styles of action get confirmed by his experience and he gradually adopts them as his own. If we can see that process of development, we can understand the product. The features to note are those bearing on presidential performance.

Experimental development continues all the way to death; we will not blind ourselves to midlife changes, particularly in the full-scale prediction case, that of Richard Nixon. But it is often much easier to see the basic patterns in early life histories. Later on a whole host of distractions—especially the image-making all politicians learn to practice—clouds the picture.

In general, character has its main development in childhood, world view in adolescence, style in early adulthood. The stance toward life I call character grows out of the child's experiments in relating to parents, brothers and sisters, and peers at play and in school, as well as to his own body and the objects around it. Slowly the child defines an orientation toward experience; once established, that tends to last despite much subsequent contradiction. By adolescence, the child has been hearing and seeing how people make their worlds meaningful, and now he is moved to relate himself—his own meanings—to those around him. His focus of attention shifts toward the future; he senses that decisions about his fate are coming and he looks into the premises for those decisions. Thoughts about the way the world works and how one might work in it, about what people are like and how one might be like them or not, and about the values people share and how one might share in them too—these are typical concerns for the post-child, pre-adult mind of the adolescent.

These themes come together strongly in early adulthood, when the person moves from contemplation to responsible action and adopts a style. In most biographical accounts this period stands out in stark clarity—the time of emergence, the time the young man found himself. I call it his first independent political success. It was then he moved beyond the detailed guidance of his family; then his self-esteem was dramatically boosted; then he came forth as a person to be reckoned with by other people. The way he did that is profoundly important to him. Typically he grasps that style and hangs onto it. Much later, coming into the presidency, something in him remembers this earlier victory and reemphasizes the style that made it happen.

Character provides the main thrust and broad direction—but it does not determine, in any fixed sense, world view and style. The story of development does not end with the end of childhood. Thereafter, the culture one grows in and the ways that culture is translated by parents and peers shape the meanings one makes of his character. The going world view gets learned and that learning helps channel character forces. Thus it will not necessarily be true that compulsive characters have reactionary beliefs, or that compliant characters believe in compromise. Similarly for style: historical accidents play a large part in furnishing special opportunities for action—and in blocking off alternatives. For example, however much anger a young man may feel, that anger will not be expressed in rhetoric unless and until his life situation provides a platform and an audience. Style thus has a stature and independence of its own. Those who would reduce all explana-

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FOUR TYPICAL CHARACTER

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FOUR TYPES OF PRESIDENTIAL CHARACTER

The five concepts—character, world view, style, power situation, and climate of expectations—run through the accounts of presidents in [later chapters of Barber's book], which cluster the presidents since Theodore Roosevelt into four types. This is the fundamental scheme of the study. It offers a way to move past the complexities to the main contrasts and comparisons.

The first baseline in defining presidential types is *activity-passivity*. How much energy does the man invest in his presidency? Lyndon Johnson went at his day like a human cyclone, coming to rest long after the sun went down. Calvin Coolidge often slept eleven hours a night and still needed a nap in the middle of the day. In between the presidents array themselves on the high or low side of the activity line.

The second baseline is *positive-negative affect* toward one's activity—this is, how he feels about what he does. Relatively speaking, does he seem to experience his political life as happy or sad, enjoyable or discouraging, positive or negative in its main effect? The feeling I am after here is not grim satisfaction in a job well done, not some philosophical conclusion. The idea is this: is he someone who, on the surfaces we can see, gives forth the feeling that he has *fun* in political life? Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, wrote that the Roosevelts "not only understood the use of power, they knew the enjoyment of power, too. . . . Whether a man is burdened by power or enjoys power; whether he is trapped by responsibility or made free by it; whether he is moved by other people and outer forces or moves them—that is the essence of leadership."

The positive-negative baseline, then, is a general symptom of the fit between the man and his experience, a kind of register of *felt* satisfaction.

Why might we expect these two simple dimensions to outline the main character types? Because they stand for two central features of anyone's orientation toward life. In nearly every study of personality, some form of the active-passive contrast is critical; the general tendency to act or be acted upon is evident in such concepts as dominance-submission, extraversion-introversion, aggression-timidity, attack-defense, fight-flight, engagement-withdrawal, approach-avoidance. In everyday life we sense quickly the general energy output of the people we deal with. Similarly we catch on fairly quickly to the affect dimension—whether the person seems to be optimistic or pessimistic, hopeful or skeptical, happy or sad. The two baselines are clear and they are also independent of one another: all of us know people who are very active but seem discouraged; others who are quite passive but seem happy, and so forth. The activity baseline refers to what one does, the affect baseline to how one feels about what he does.

Both are crude clues to character. They are leads into four basic character

patterns long familiar in psychological research. In summary form, these are the main configurations:

Active-positive: There is a congruence, a consistency, between much activity and the enjoyment of it, indicating relatively high self-esteem and relative success in relating to the environment. The man shows an orientation toward productivity as a value and an ability to use his styles flexibly, adaptively, suiting the dance to the music. He sees himself as developing over time toward relatively well defined personal goals—growing toward his image of himself as he might yet be. There is an emphasis on rational mastery, on using the brain to move the feet. This may get him into trouble; he may fail to take account of the irrational in politics. Not everyone he deals with sees things his way and he may find it hard to understand why.

Active-negative: The contradiction here is between relatively intense effort and relatively low emotional reward for that effort. The activity has a compulsive quality, as if the man were trying to make up for something or to escape from anxiety into hard work. He seems ambitious, striving upward, power-seeking. His stance toward the environment is aggressive and he has a persistent problem in managing his aggressive feelings. His self-image is vague and discontinuous. Life is a hard struggle to achieve and hold power, hampered by the condemnations of a perfectionistic conscience. Active-negative types pour energy into the political system, but it is an energy distorted from within.

Passive-positive: This is the receptive, compliant, other-directed character whose life is a search for affection as a reward for being agreeable and cooperative rather than personally assertive. The contradiction is between low self-esteem (on grounds of being unlovable, unattractive) and a superficial optimism. A hopeful attitude helps dispel doubt and elicits encouragement from others. Passive-positive types help soften the harsh edges of politics. But their dependence and the fragility of their hopes and enjoyments make disappointment in politics likely.

Passive-negative: The factors are consistent—but how are we to account for the man's political role-taking? Why is someone who does little in politics and enjoys it less there at all? The answer lies in the passive-negative's character-rooted orientation toward doing dutiful service; this compensates for low self-esteem based on a sense of uselessness. Passive-negative types are in politics because they think they ought to be. They may be well adapted to certain nonpolitical roles, but they lack the experience and flexibility to perform effectively as political leaders. Their tendency is to withdraw, to escape from the conflict and uncertainty of politics by emphasizing vague principles (especially prohibitions) and procedural arrangements. They become guardians of the right and proper way, above the sordid politicking of lesser men.

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Active-positive presidents want most to achieve results. Active-negatives aim to get and keep power. Passive-positives are after love. Passive-negatives emphasize their civic virtue. The relation of activity to enjoyment in a President thus tends to outline a cluster of characteristics, to set apart the adapted from the compulsive, compliant, and withdrawn types.

The first four presidents of the United States, conveniently, ran through this gamut of character types. (Remember, we are talking about tendencies, broad directions; no individual man exactly fits a category.) George Washington—clearly the most important president in the pantheon—established the fundamental legitimacy of an American government at a time when this was a matter in considerable question. Washington's dignity, judiciousness, his aloof air of reserve and dedication to duty fit the passive-negative or withdrawing type best. Washington did not seek innovation, he sought stability. He longed to retire to Mount Vernon, but fortunately was persuaded to stay on through a second term, in which, by rising above the political conflict between Hamilton and Jefferson and inspiring confidence in his own integrity, he gave the nation time to develop the organized means for peaceful change.

John Adams followed, a dour New England Puritan, much given to work and worry, an impatient and irascible man—an active-negative president, a compulsive type. Adams was far more partisan than Washington; the survival of the system through his presidency demonstrated that the nation could tolerate, for a time, domination by one of its nascent political parties. As president, an angry Adams brought the United States to the brink of war with France, and presided over the new nation's first experiment in political representation: the Alien and Sedition Acts, forbidding, among other things, unlawful combinations "with intent to oppose any measure or measures of the government of the United States," or "any false, scandalous, and malicious writing or writings against the United States, or the president of the United States, with intent to defame . . . or to bring them or either of them, into contempt or disrepute."

Then came Jefferson. He too had his troubles and failures—in the design of national defense, for example. As for his presidential character (only one element in success or failure), Jefferson was clearly active-positive. A child of the Enlightenment, he applied his reason to organizing connections with Congress aimed at strengthening the more popular forces. A man of catholic interests and delightful humor, Jefferson combined a clear and open vision of what the country could be with a profound political sense, expressed in his famous phrase, "Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle."

The fourth president was James Madison, "Little Jemmy," the constitutional philosopher thrown into the White House at a time of great international turmoil. Madison comes closest to the passive-positive, or compliant, type; he suffered from irresolution, tried to compromise his way out, and gave in too readily to the "warhawks" urging combat with Britain. The nation drifted into war, and Madison wound up ineptly commanding his collection of amateur generals in the streets of Washington. General Jackson's victory at New Orleans saved the Madison ad-

ministration's historical reputation; but he left the presidency with the United States close to bankruptcy and secession.

These four presidents—like all presidents—were persons trying to cope with the roles they had won by using the equipment they had built over a lifetime. The President is not some shapeless organism in a flood of novelties, but a man with a memory in a system with a history. Like all of us, he draws on his past to shape his future. The pathetic hope that the White House will turn a Caligula into a Marcus Aurelius is as naïve as the fear that ultimate power inevitably corrupts. The problem is to understand—and to state understandably—what in the personal past foreshadows the presidential future.

❖❖ The President and the Media

The media spotlight is on the presidency more than on other governmental institutions. Theodore Roosevelt was the first president to undertake a major effort to co-opt the press, giving Washington reporters space in the White House in order to facilitate his use of them as much as to accommodate the growing presidential press corps. Teddy Roosevelt knew that the press could be an important ally of government, that publicity for presidential policies and actions could help to build public support and ease the job of his administration.

Teddy Roosevelt set a precedent for twentieth-century presidents in recognizing the power of the press and the importance of turning the political reporters' craft to the advantage of the White House by managing the news. Teddy Roosevelt's cousin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, held regular informal press conferences with reporters in the Oval Office, knowing that if he kept them informed of his programs and progress the nation would learn about and, he hoped, support the New Deal.

From the vantage point of the White House, the press, while potentially a useful conduit of managed news, is seen more as a critic than an ally. Presidents tend to view the press as the enemy with which they have to deal. Charged with the responsibility of coping with the press is the presidential press secretary, who conducts daily briefings apprising White House reporters of the president's actions and plans.

A former white House insider, George E. Reedy, portrays the world of the White House reporter and the way in which presidents view and treat the press.

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THE EAST HAMPTON STAR

East Hampton, N.Y. Shines for All Online September 9, 2004

GUESTWORDS: By E.L. Doctorow

The Unfeeling President

I fault this president for not knowing what death is. He does not suffer the death of our 21-year-olds who wanted to be what they could be. On the eve of D-Day in 1944 General Eisenhower prayed to God for the lives of the young soldiers he knew were going to die. He knew what death was. Even in a justifiable war, a war not of choice but of necessity, a war of survival, the cost was almost more than Eisenhower could bear.

But this president does not know what death is. He hasn't the mind for it. You see him joking with the press, peering under the table for the weapons of mass destruction he can't seem to find, you see him at rallies strutting up to the stage in shirt sleeves to the roar of the carefully screened crowd, smiling and waving, triumphal, a he-man.

He does not mourn. He doesn't understand why he should mourn. He is satisfied during the course of a speech written for him to look solemn for a moment and speak of the brave young Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

But you study him, you look into his eyes and know he dissembles an emotion which he does not feel in the depths of his being because he has no capacity for it. He does not feel a personal responsibility for the 1,000 dead young men and women who wanted to be what they could be.

They come to his desk not as youngsters with mothers and fathers or wives and children who will suffer to the end of their days a terribly torn fabric of familial relationships and the inconsolable remembrance of aborted life . . . they come to his desk as a political liability, which is why the press is not permitted to photograph the arrival of their coffins from Iraq.

How then can he mourn? To mourn is to express regret and he regrets nothing. He does not regret that his reason for going to war was, as he knew, unsubstantiated by the facts. He does not regret that his bungled plan for the war's aftermath has made of his mission-accomplished a disaster. He does not regret that, rather than controlling terrorism, his war in Iraq has licensed it. So he never mourns for the dead and crippled youngsters who have fought this war of his choice.

He wanted to go to war and he did. He had not the mind to perceive the costs of war, or to listen to those who knew those costs. He did not understand that you do not go to war when it is one of the options but when it is the only option; you go not because you want to but because you have to.

Yet this president knew it would be difficult for Americans not to cheer the overthrow