Greetings!

In lieu of a Featured Article this issue, we are taking editorial license to extend our introductory letter to include a few extra items. As some of you know, this will be the final issue of the PEP Report that we will edit. This summer, we hand over the reins to three extraordinary scholars who we are confident will make the PEP Report better than ever.

Over the past three years, we have enjoyed working with a variety of scholars in political science and beyond the discipline to bring together different perspectives on topics important to the study of the executive branch. Our goal was to broaden the topics covered, while making issues timely, useful, and engaging. We sought to shine the spotlight on rising scholars, beginning to make their mark in the discipline. At the same time, whenever possible, we worked hard to honor the contributions of some of the Lions of presidency research who laid the scholarly foundations upon which we have built our own careers. Each issue tried to serve as a comprehensive asset for a faculty member—focusing on research, teaching, and new titles—while still being accessible and useful for those outside of the college campus.

Serving as editors of the PEP Report initially grew out of a citizenship duty to our organized section of APSA. In the end, it was truly a privilege to work with the best and brightest our area of study has to offer. You have made this task an easy one by consistently providing high quality contributions. We know the next set of editors will appreciate and benefit from the relationships that can be fostered from preparing this report.

As a bit of introduction, the next issues will be edited by Mark Major, Ian Ostrander, and Anne Pluta. Mark Major is Senior Lecturer at Penn State and Associate Director of the McCourtney Institute for Democracy. He is the author of *The Unilateral Presidency and the News Media: The Politics of Framing and Executive Power* (Palgrave, 2014). Ian Ostrander is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Texas Tech University. His work has been published in a variety of outlets including the *American Journal of Political Science* and *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. Anne Pluta is Assistant Professor of Political science at Rowan University. Her work focuses on presidential communication and rhetoric, and her most recent work appeared in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*.

We welcome Mark, Ian and Anne and wish them the best!

For our final issue, we asked participants from the recent conference on the George W. Bush Presidency (organized by PEP member Meena Bose and hosted at Hofstra University) to provide items for our Forum. The conference was engaging, and the research offered unique perspectives on a tumultuous presidency. This issue of the PEP Report highlights some of the conference’s contributions, offering a taste of a program that was broad and diverse in its assessment of the Bush presidency.

We also feature new books in political science that cover a tremendous amount of theoretical and empirical ground. The books range in focus from party power in elections to presidential spending power, and presidential rhetoric. Other
books include quite timely topics. Colin Dueck’s book offers a detailed assessment of the Obama Doctrine in the arena of foreign policy. Lori Cox Han’s book In It To Win It examines what it will take to elect a woman as President of the United States.

These books expand our understanding of the presidency and the executive branch, while serving as useful classroom texts for a variety of courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

As always, we hope you enjoy this issue of the PEP Report. While we usually request that you send any questions, commentary and feedback to us, we strongly encourage you to contact the new PEP Report editors, offering them feedback on how to improve this volume.

Cheers and many thanks!

Justin Vaughn & John Hudak
The PEP Report is published twice annually on behalf of the Presidents & Executive Politics Section of the American Political Science Association.

The PEP Report serves the scholarly community in presidential and executive politics. The editors of the Report welcomes your submissions and ideas.

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From the beginning of their terms of office, President Bush and Vice President Cheney felt that, since the reassertion of congressional prerogatives in the 1970s, presidential power had been unduly constrained. They determined to leave the office constitutionally stronger than when they came to office, and the atrocities of 9/11 gave them the opportunity to expand executive power. Four policy areas illustrate what were arguably unprecedented claims to executive power.

**Coercive Interrogation**

George W. Bush was the only U.S. president to defend publicly the right of United States personnel to torture detainees (though he denied that enhanced interrogation techniques were torture). When ordinary interrogation did not produce the “actionable intelligence” that the administration expected, under pressure from the president and vice president, interrogators used brutal procedures to attempt to coerce information from them. President Bush vigorously argued that it was essential to the war on terror to continue to pursue “the program” of coercive interrogation when he argued against the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005. Despite Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, which provides that Congress shall have the power “To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces,” the Bush administration denied that the president could be bound by public law with respect to torture and argued that the inherent authority in Article II made any attempt to constrain treatment of detainees unconstitutional.

**Habeas Corpus**

President Bush’s military order of November 13, 2001 provided that enemy combatants would be tried by military commission and that the only appeal they could make would be within the executive branch. He convinced Congress to pass the Military Commissions Act, which purported to strip federal courts of jurisdiction over habeas corpus appeals. The Supreme Court delivered several setbacks to President Bush’s claims to executive power, including Boumediene vs. Bush (553 U.S. 723, 2008), which ruled that detainees in Guantanamo had a constitutional right to habeas corpus.

**Warrantless Electronic Surveillance**

After the abuses of domestic governmental surveillance by presidents of both parties were revealed by the Church Committee in 1975,
Congress passed the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) to ensure that surveillance of Americans had some judicial oversight. A month after 9/11, in October, 2001, President Bush secretly created the President’s Surveillance Program, and authorized the National Security Agency to monitor communications related to foreign intelligence that were coming into or going out of the United States, which included US persons. In the later years of the Bush Administration, Congress amended FISA and the Patriot Act, making legal what had been previously prohibited by FISA.

The broader point here is that President Bush asserted the authority to ignore the law and created a program of domestic surveillance that was forbidden by law. When it was exposed, he argued that it was within his executive authority to do so. President Bush established a precedent for much broader surveillance of Americans (without warrants) than had existed before his presidency.

Signing Statements

Although many other presidents had issued signing statements, President George W. Bush used signing statements to an unprecedented extent. He issued more than 1000 constitutional challenges to provisions in more than 150 laws in his first six years in office. He used signing statements to assert the unilateral right of the executive to choose which provisions of laws to enforce and which to ignore, giving him in effect, and item veto.

Although President Obama forbade by executive order the use of coercive interrogation techniques, he has argued that indefinite detention without trial is necessary for some detainees. He has also accepted the necessity of NSA surveillance that is now justified in law. Even though he has used them less extensively than President Bush, he has used signing statements to assert that he is not bound by some provisions of law.

Thus the constitutional legacy of President Bush has already had an effect on President Obama, and it is likely that future presidents will build on this legacy to enhance their own executive powers.
Our approach to studying the Bush presidency is the same as our approach to studying other presidencies; we examine the rhetorical behavior of presidents from the chief legislator perspective. Insights into how presidents prioritize and reflect on particular policies can be gained through studying their policy making rhetoric. We examined Bush's rhetoric about faith-based initiatives, a policy very important to him personally. As Bush signed the Second Chance Act of 2007, he said to his audience, “I was a product of a faith-based program. I quit drinking, and it wasn’t because of a government program. It required a little more powerful force than a government program in my case.” Furthermore, Bush wanted the faith-based initiative to be part of his legacy. Addressing the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives' national conference on June 26, 2008, Bush stated, “I truly believe the Faith-Based Initiative is one of the most important initiatives of this administration.”

With any policy proposal presidents must persuade Congress to enact their legislative requests. As a result, they often use policy making rhetoric to identify a problem and propose legislative steps they believe will achieve not only a solution, but will also help them to secure a positive legacy. Just as legislators engage in credit claiming and position taking, we have found that when presidents act as chief legislators, they also engage in similar behaviors while in office. Given the personal interest in faith-based initiatives and a desire to secure a positive legacy, we expected Bush’s rhetoric about this policy to be both highly substantive and expansive.

We found, however, that Bush’s rhetoric on the faith-based initiative was neither particularly substantive, nor expansive. In particular, both with his rhetoric and his pen, he acted more as chief executive than chief legislator, relying more on his executive powers to unilaterally pursue this pet project rather quietly. While Bush had several small legislative successes associated with faith-based initiatives, Congress did not approve of many of the initiative’s broader aspects. As other presidents have also done, Bush chose to act administratively where he could when his legislative goals were not accomplished. Bush’s rhetorical behavior was unusual. When Bush talked about the various components of the initiative, his speeches were largely given to specialized audiences and did not use extensive explanation to educate his audiences about his preferences. He did not extensively claim credit for either his executive, or his legislative accomplishments in the area of the faith-based initiative. Most curiously, as
the Bush-Cheney reelection effort progressed in 2004, remarks became so cursory as to merely indicate “we stand” or “we support” faith-based groups’ fair treatment (which Bush had accomplished through executive action). As his goal of re-election was accomplished, speeches containing faith-based content declined by more than half and a majority of those speeches contained only cursory remarks.

Faith-based initiatives were personally important to Bush and he used the powers of the presidency to see that as much as possible was done to implement his goals when Congress proved largely unwilling to go along. Perhaps because the faith-based initiative engendered criticism from certain elements of his base, the Bush administration chose this curious rhetorical strategy. Only time will tell what Bush’s legacy in this area will be in twenty, thirty, or fifty years. Making policy by executive order, however, means that Bush’s faith-based legacy, to a large degree, is in the hands of his successors.

Among the many controversial aspects of George W. Bush’s presidency, questions about his ideological character and impact loom large. Even when not explicitly front and center, debates about Bush’s ideology color many of the other debates about his eight years in office. And the ways of assessing Bush’s ideology are as varied and controversial as Bush himself.

Political scientists and others have created various quantitative and spatial means of characterizing ideology, including Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal’s Nominate scores, Adam Bonica’s “Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections” (DIME), and the online “OnTheIssues” ratings. Those accounts - and Nate Silver’s attempt to combine them - all classify Bush as very conservative, often more so than Ronald Reagan. But they’re all susceptible to challenges about the sincerity of public political pronouncements and donations.

One could look at what Bush himself has said about his ideology, like in his 1999 campaign book A Charge to Keep, in which Bush...
articulated the compassionate conservative creed. And insofar as the themes of Bush’s presidential campaigns accurately reflected his ideology (e.g., a “reformer with a record,” “a culture of life,” and “an ownership society”), they too provide relevant data.

Beyond Bush’s words, his deeds may be a good indication of his deepest ideological commitments. So, one could examine his appointments, his unilateral directives, his tax cuts, a demanding standard for regulatory review, and controversial environmental policies, all of which tend to support the characterization of Bush as a doctrinaire conservative. However, Bush supported several public policies that did not easily comport with doctrinaire conservatism: the No Child Left Behind Act, African HIV/AIDS funding (PEPFAR), his immigration reform proposals, Medicare expansion, and TARP are the clearest examples.

One could also look to how other politicians, pundits, and journalists have characterized Bush’s ideology. Some of those assessments divide predictably along partisan lines, but some do not. Bill Keller of the New York Times initially saw Bush as “Reagan Lite” or a “Reagan poseur,” before concluding that Bush was the conservative real deal. Moderate Republicans also saw Bush as a far right conservative. But conservatives themselves were often very critical of Bush, as he came in for withering criticism from conservatives of all sorts. Some friendly fire is to be expected, but Bush faced a great deal of conservative scorn.

How then to arrive at a persuasive overall assessment of Bush’s ideology while also explaining most of the data, especially the pieces that do not easily fit a standard conservative characterization? Stephen Skowronek’s well-known account of recurring political contexts offers an excellent means of doing that. In Skowronek’s terms, Bush was “an orthodox innovator,” seeking to extend the shelf-life and to expand the reach of the decades-old conservative regime, to adapt it to new realities, and to further entrench it electorally. Skowronek’s framework need not be adopted wholly or uncritically, as other scholars have argued for various “orthodox innovations” of Skowronek’s account. But some form of Skowronek’s typology can plausibly explain the pieces that do not easily fit on other accounts and can also explain some of Bush’s many political difficulties, which are common for orthodox innovators.

Beyond the question of how best to characterize Bush’s ideology, there is the related question of his ideological legacy. Bush’s virtual absence from the 2008 and 2012 GOP conventions and the rise of the Tea Party indicate that conservatives have not embraced his legacy. Yet at present, it is simply be too early to tell. The remainder of Obama’s presidency and the 2016 presidential race will likely influence perceptions of Bush’s ideology and its place in history. As Bush himself said, “You never know what your history is going to be like until long after you’re gone.”
FORUM RESPONSE

DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS: HOW GEORGE W. BUSH PLAYS THE ‘BLAME GAME’

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Presidential memoirs are defensive by nature. The memoir is a final opportunity to justify the policies of their administrations. Yet despite certain advantages, these memoirs have a tenuous hold on presidential legacies. They are almost invariably criticized as self-serving, inaccurate portrayals of an administration, and sometimes questions are raised about the authorial source itself. Critiques are especially intense for presidents whose administrations are regarded as failures. While the need to recover a reputation is urgent in these cases, the former president is burdened by the anticipation of a hostile reader. In order to win the “blame game,” he must present effective defenses of his administration. Since initial assessments of the George W. Bush presidency place him among what Jean H. Baker has identified as an “irredeemable group” of “the very worst presidents,” Bush is confronted with a task similar to others in this category although his strategy is unique among presidential memoirists.

Of these “irredeemables,” five have written memoirs or autobiographies. Grant, who wrote a popular and arguably the best regarded memoir, did not play the blame game. His account ended before he entered the office. Since Coolidge’s autobiography was written before the Great Depression, he was not required to play the blame game. Presidents Buchanan, Hoover and Nixon did. All engage in strategies of blame reversal (the abolitionists were responsible for the Civil War; FDR prolonged the Depression; Democrats and the media mercilessly attacked him using Watergate as a wedge). Both Buchanan and Nixon add another strategy: Even if they engaged in blameworthy actions, these are mitigated by other praiseworthy ones. If some achievements can be claimed by a president, however, he has the chance to contain blame. But this strategy creates yet another dilemma. Readers might then ask: If you were helpless in regard to (A), why not with (B)?” Either the president was a willful actor in (A) or an incompetent one.

By organizing his presidency in terms of a series of decisions including pre-presidential ones rather than a chronological narrative, Bush is able to both highlight his own conception of the office as exceptional and to also defend his policies by altering the rules of the “blame game” as used with limited success by other memoirists. This structure places Bush on an advantageous plane. First, since “many of the decisions that reach the president desk are tough calls, with strong arguments on both sides,” Bush cannot easily be blamed for mistaken ones. Second, the president offers to explain to the reader, the “options I weighed and the principles I followed in making these decisions.”

Bush is signaling to his readers that he is prepared to defend himself against blamers by
inviting them to consider what they would have done in the same circumstances. Finally, if the Bush presidency can be focused on difficult decisions he made, he could conceivably be grouped with successful presidents who were often criticized when they made these kinds of decisions. For example, Bush defends his authorization of wiretaps by contending that Lincoln, Wilson and FDR used similar techniques in wartime.

It is unlikely that President’s Bush’s innovative use of the memoir will elevate his standing significantly, although it is possible he might escape his current status as one of the “irredeemables.” The dramatic mistakes in his presidency, from the war in Iraq to the response to Katrina and the financial crisis and the links among them that point to recklessness and/or incompetence are largely inerasable. Nevertheless, the framework of Decision Points does provide a defense of these and other decisions that has not been employed by other presidential memoirists. In particular, Bush appears to have discovered a new form of palliative excuses to deflect blame. Bush’s excuses do not rely on the “I am not responsible because I was distracted and/or not in control” but rather: “I was faced with a series of difficult decisions and here are my reasons for them and here are the mistakes I made in hindsight.” Coupled with the more traditional tactics of blame reversal and spreading the blame, Bush has played the blame game with finesse and originality, features that ironically seemed so lacking in his presidency.

I recently had the honor of taking part in a major conference on the George W. Bush presidency organized by the estimable Meena Bose. The conference featured luminaries from government, politics and academia, a number of whom had served in the George W. Bush administration.

Arguably, 9/11 at the start of the Bush presidency and the potential for a catastrophic economic liquidity crisis at end of it were the two critical events of his presidency. His response to both was the measure of his leadership and his legacy.

The conference was a chance to assess, at a distance of six years and counting, Mr. Bush’s policy contributions, mistakes and legacy. If my panel on the Bush Doctrine is representative, he remains a controversial president and to some a caricature.

The panel consisted of three papers and discussion of them by Elliot Abrams, National
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Security Council Senior Director for Near East and North African Affairs, 2002-2005. Two of the papers, one comparing the Bush to the Truman Doctrine and the other comparing the Bush to the Obama Doctrine were conventional academic papers. They laid out some research questions, brought theoretical and factual elements to bear on the questions raised and in so doing tried to sharpen our understanding of Mr. Bush's foreign policies.

There was, for example, the first formulation of the Bush Doctrine that emphasized offense as the key to prevention, a policy continued by President Obama. Mr. Abrams reminded me that Mr. Bush’s second iteration of his doctrine emphasized building democracies abroad in inhospitable places like Iraq- a very long term project for which it is unclear we were prepared. Mr. Obama has most assuredly not adapted that view.

The third paper took quite a different tact indicting Mr. Bush for a number of egregious constitutional wrongs summarized in the paper givers’ mind under the rubric of Mr. Bush’s imperial and lawless presidency. The evidence, such as it was, consisted to appeals to authority—notable John Dean and Jane Meyers of the New Yorker. Whatever else the work of these authorities might be, one would or should mistake them for scholarship.

Listening to that paper’s shallow and tendentious pronouncements, I was reminded of a talk that I gave as part of my son’s graduation ceremonies in 2004 on my then recently completed book on Mr. Bush. During the Q&A one student in the audience got up and yelled out “Bush lied-people died!” I responded, “that was one way to look at it, but there are others” and went on to try and explain the difficult dilemmas that Mr. Bush faced about the ways in which the potential for “catastrophic terrorism” (e.g., al- Qaeda with nuclear know how) had decreased the extent to which American could count on deterrence.

Mr. Abrams response to this paper on our panel was much less restrained. He said it was a “screed masquerading as an academic paper.” That was his most chartable observation. Having personally been through all the efforts to get multiple resolutions through both Congress and the United Nations he was able to rebut the Bush “imperial” presidency “lawlessness” with real facts, but as the subsequent discussion suggested, to no avail.

If two of these three papers are any indication, Mr. Bush’s reputation will benefit from a careful appraisal, removed from the fiery emotions that accompanied his decisions. If the third paper is any indication however, that careful appraisal will have to contend with fervently held ideological views that are impervious to facts or reason.
President George W. Bush had an historic transition out of office. Beginning in 2007, he started earlier focusing on transition than did his predecessors and called for a greater variety of preparations. Speaking on November 6, 2008, he explained to his staff why transition had such importance. “We face economic challenges that will not pause to let a new President settle in. This will also be America’s first wartime Presidential transition in four decades. We’re in a struggle against violent extremists determined to attack us, and they would like nothing more than to exploit this period of change to harm the American people. So over the next 75 days, all of us must ensure that the next President and his team can hit the ground running.”

There were several elements that made President Bush’s transition out of office a good one for him and for President-elect Obama. First, President Bush began his administration’s transition actions through his decision in late 2007 to get planning underway with an administration-wide effort to prepare information in the national security, foreign policy, and management areas. President Bush especially focused his attention on national security preparations and occasionally got into specific issues related to the transition. In fact, he told his aides there were specific issues he wanted to personally brief President-elect Obama when they met at the White House. In addition, beginning in late fall 2007 National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley prepared memoranda on the status of 40 foreign policy and national security issues.

Second, Chief of Staff Joshua Bolten went further than earlier administrations in getting the process started early in July well before the national party nominating conventions. Bolten organized working sessions with the representatives of Senators John McCain and Barack Obama where they dealt with issues such as how the two candidates could get early national security clearances for possible transition staff members as well as gathering personnel information. Third, Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget Clay Johnson began early to organize the information gathering process in the departments and agencies. In the spring he brought together two dozen members of the President’s Management Council to discuss what information those coming into an administration would need and, once the group decided upon the required information, sent out a memo in mid-July detailing what information all departments and agencies should gather and established the deadlines for providing it. Fourth, in addition to the planning aspect of the transition, the president and his team were ready to respond to unanticipated events and facilitate whatever responses were appropriate, including working with the president-elect.
and his team. The financial crisis loomed large for President Bush and for the two senators. The candidates and their staffs had many interchanges with the administration, especially in the latter part of the campaign and in the post-election period.

President George W. Bush’s preparations for his transition out of office followed a different model than those we have seen in earlier administrations. Equally important to the success of the Bush transition out of office, though, was Senator Barack Obama’s interest and willingness to take advantage of the planning efforts to develop information for his team as they began their preparations for office. The extensiveness of the Bush administration’s effort as well as the early planning of what the new administration would need established a path that future incumbent presidents might follow as they leave office. With national security at risk, sitting presidents are likely to view that as part of their legacy, and in keeping with that, they should prepare their successors for office. An effective handoff of power from an incumbent to his successor is an aspect of leaving the institution of the presidency in good order.


FORUM RESPONSE
QUESTIONING THE POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

How would we define the political ideology of George W. Bush? Was he, for example, a Reagan conservative with a smaller government philosophy (some would say Reagan-continued or even Reagan-light), or a neo-conservative, or a political pragmatist? None of the above fully capture the integral role that religion played in Bush’s political life.

Bush’s political ideology was framed by his deep religious views, stemming from a religious conversion in 1985 when he became a Born-again Christian focused on using the resources of government to build a “civil and moral society”. He was a compassionate conservative, who saw government as a tool to building a moral society.

Bush saw politics through a lens in which religious organizations and government could work collaboratively to build a moral society. For Bush, and I quote here from his 1999 book, A Charge to Keep, “the proper role
for government” is to build a “single, moral community”. Government, he argued, should “welcome the active involvement of people who are following a religious imperative”. Government-funded religious programs became the heart of his compassionate conservatism both during his tenure as governor of Texas and during his two terms as president.

His vision for the proper role for government was evident in his 1999 gubernatorial inauguration speech where he said that he would help Texas “to become the moral and spiritual center of the nation”. “We must rally the armies of compassion”, he said, using the resources of government to help “those armies” build the “single, moral community”.

For Bush, building his presidential administration to support faith based organizations was central to his pledge for a moral and civil society. While Cheney focused on the pro-business agenda and the national security structure, Bush focused on the faith-based agenda. In other words, the co-presidency began during the transition as each addressed their area of responsibility.

Bush had few other agenda items during his tenure as president. In fact, his presidential inaugural address in 2001 focused on building a civil society. He didn’t address tax cuts, federal regulation, immigration, or even education. His address was in metaphors, arguing for a kinder, juster nation. He never addressed smaller government, as would a Reaganite, nor did he address democracy-building, as would a neo-conservative.

Bush’s religion and relationship with God guided his faith-based presidency. He held regular prayer meetings in the White House, where most senior staff were present. Every cabinet meeting began with a prayer. Bush asked members of the cabinet or the vice president to begin the meeting by saying a prayer of their choosing.

For Bush, the world was seen through a lens of good and evil, right and wrong, found within evangelical theology. His world was built around his faith. Nothing facilitated Dick Cheney’s dramatic rise to power in the Bush administration more than the private and public role that God and religion played in George W. Bush’s life.

This simple division of labor was shaken but not shattered by the events of 9/11. While the faith-based presidency was never abandoned, it was overtaken by the war presidency. From September 11, 2001 forward, the war presidency dominated the administration. The war presidency became the center of the faith-based presidency. Good vs evil. Right vs. wrong. When he declared a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance, Bush declared that “we trust God to be our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help.”

Relating the terrorists and Osama bin Laden to evil became the focus of the faith-based war. The biblical term “evildoer” comes from the Book of Psalms. He declared that God is not neutral and supports the righteous – the United States. He suggested that the blessings of liberty, a phrase he often used to describe the war in Iraq, were part of God’s plan, which he was protecting. The “axis of evil” speech purposely used the word “evil” to reinforce the theological concept of evildoers.
Theology became a large part of Bush’s justification for the war in Iraq. Bush called for a free Iraq in large part to protect “freedom of religion” within the country. Bush believed that Saddam Hussein had repressed not only Christians but various Muslim sects. For Bush, going to war was a moral issue, protecting good from evil, protecting God’s plan for liberty, and protecting freedom of religion.

His outlook on life was most visible through a painting in the Oval Office, *A Charge To Keep*, whose message, he believed, was to serve God in all of one’s actions. That was the message he brought to his presidency and that was his ideology. He had a Charge to Keep. “Faith changes lives”, he said in his book, “and I know, because faith has changed mine”. He wanted to use the values of his faith to change lives as president. His ideology was simple and straightforward: government can improve lives, especially if faith-based values are woven into government action.

FORUM RESPONSE
NEW IN PRINT: BOOKS ABOUT THE PRESIDENCY AND EXECUTIVE POLITICS

THE PARTICULARISTIC PRESIDENT: EXECUTIVE BRANCH POLITICS AND POLITICAL INEQUALITY

In championing robust presidential leadership, Woodrow Wilson contrasted members of Congress, who are “representatives of localities,” with the president “who is the representative of no constituency, but of the whole people.” We study military base closings, transportation spending, federal natural disaster declarations, and the geographic allocation of $8.5 trillion of county-level federal grant spending from 1984 to 2008 to show that this is hardly the case. Presidents are not a universalistic counterbalance to the parochial impulses of members of Congress. Presidents have strong incentives to be particularistic: that is, to prioritize the needs and desires of some citizens over others when pursuing their policy agendas. And ultimately voters reward presidents for these efforts to divert federal resources to their communities.

Three incentives encourage presidents to be particularistic. First, while presidents have a national constituency, voters do not directly select the next president. The Electoral College does. Thus, presidents have incentives to court voters in swing states. But presidents are more than reelection-seekers. They are also partisan leaders. As such, presidents pursue policies that systematically channel federal benefits disproportionately to their core partisan base. Finally, to succeed legislatively presidents must build coalitions. To do this, presidents may reward constituencies that elect co-partisans to Congress.

We first examine policy areas where presidents have unilateral authority over distributive outcomes. For example, natural disasters are exogenous shocks to the political system. Need, alone, should govern the disaster declaration response. However, we show that electoral and partisan forces fundamentally influence presidential decision-making. The reach of particularistic forces even extends to national security policy. An analysis of base closings shows the
commander-in-chief behaving as partisan-in-chief, concentrating the costs of closures in opposition districts.

We then broaden the scope of analysis to a venue where outcomes are contested across the branches: the allocation of more than $8.5 trillion of federal grants across the country from 1984 through 2008. Presidents succeed in systematically targeting federal largesse to constituencies in swing states, core states, and to those that elect co-partisan members to Congress. In election years, swing states receive hundreds of millions of dollars in additional grant spending than uncompetitive states, all else being equal. Core states are also rewarded, and states that back the opposition punished. For large red and blue states, such as California and Texas, billions of dollars are on the line each presidential contest.

Finally, we show that voters reward presidents for these efforts. While most studies of presidential accountability focus on national factors like the state of the stock market or national levels of unemployment, we show that voters reward presidents for targeted local spending. Thus the incentives for presidential particularism originate with the voters they attempt to woo.

In contrast to the conventional wisdom, we find that these presidially induced inequalities dwarf those created by congressional parochialism. We warn that increased delegation to the president is unlikely to produce more equitable policy outcomes. Rather, the resulting inequalities will even better reflect the president’s political interests than those of members of Congress.

Measured by swing ratios, nineteenth century elections in America were more responsive to national partisan forces than those anywhere else or anytime. Small swings in the presidential vote to a party typically rewarded it with control of both the White House and Congress. Moreover, even slight shifts in party fortunes typically rewarded the winning party with offices across the nation’s state capitals. Why would elections be so responsive during the nineteenth century – an era in which few policies flowed from Washington and regionalism predominated both politically and economically? Party Ballots, Reform and the Transformation of America’s Electoral System finds
an answer in the party ticket system – the universal practice from the late 1820s until the last decade of the nineteenth century of voters publicly casting party supplied candidate tickets. Its effects were manifold on voting, on candidates’ and parties’ emphasis on mobilization, and on the organizational requirements to implement this strategy. In individual chapters, Engstrom and Kernell examine coattail voting and sharp swing ratios for elections to the House of Representatives, the Senate, governorships and enlisting newly collected data, to state legislative elections. Presidential candidates played a critical, if reluctant, role in this electoral system. They served as “reclusive focal points,” giving parties an efficient way to campaign for the vast number of offices and for the far-flung electorate, a simple mechanism for deciding what would otherwise be a myriad of choices. Party Ballots concludes by considering the historical irony that just when presidents began aspiring for leadership and candidates began actively campaigning, Australian ballot reform dismantled the electoral system founded on the party ballot. As a consequence, presidential candidates began winning by larger margins, but their shortened coattails brought fewer party colleagues.
momentum, how candidate withdrawals shape the nomination contest, and ultimately, how the accumulation of delegates determines the winner.

The fairness of the current nomination process is the topic of Chapter 3. Questions focus on low turnout levels in presidential primaries, the even lower participation rates in caucuses, biases in the apportionment of delegates across the states, and how rules used to allocate delegates to candidates shape the outcome. The implications of the demise of the government matching funds system and the rise of the Super PACs are discussed. Questions on media bias and the role of debates and straw polls close out the chapter.

Problems with trying to construct a more rational approach to the presidential nomination process are the topic of Chapter 4. Proposals to restructure the nomination calendar with regional primaries or a switch to a one-day national primary are discussed and dissected. New biases and problems that could be introduced by such reforms are illustrated.

Chapter 5 is new to the 2nd edition. It illustrates the connections between the nomination phase and the general election. Topics covered include whether primaries are divisive, how the general election campaign has moved into a spring season as candidates become unofficial nominees by mid-March, and similarities between the biases in the Electoral College and nomination rules. Chapter 6 recaps both the oddities and strengths of the early 21st Century presidential nomination process.

This book uses extraordinary new archival records to go behind the scenes at the pinnacle of American politics – the White House – to reveal what drives presidential decisions and political strategies. Our findings about the nature and orientation of presidential behavior have sobering implications for the governing doctrine of deferring to government officials that continues to hold sway as America seeks renewal. The details of today’s fiscal, financial, and national security debacles have been investigated. What has not been examined is the broader style of elite governance that contributed to America’s setbacks. The target of this book is the longstanding presumption
that government officials and presidents, in particular, pursue the national good – rather than the narrow agendas that they and their supporters favor.

Three themes emerge from our extensive research in presidential archives, interviews of senior White House officials, and analyses of evidence that was either not previously examined or not subject to rigorous study. First, successive presidents from both political parties tracked public opinion to equip them to pursue sophisticated strategies to move Americans to support them and their policies. The White House’s motivations, strategies, and tactics have concentrated on shaping and often misleading citizens in order to advantage itself and its supporters. Second, presidents claim to speak for “the people” and to serve the “public good” but we reveal the impact of narrow political segments and economic interests. Presidential appeals that tout their devotion to country and the national good can be smokescreens to promote the preferences and wants of special interests and political insiders. Third, careful analyses of rarely studied White House records reveal the impacts – and limits – of the White House’s persistent efforts to move Americans to support them. The cumulative effect of our analysis challenges venerable ideals of American democracy -- Presidents exploit the enormous and unrivaled capacities of their office to interfere with the legitimate efforts of citizens to evaluate them and to reach critical conclusions.

Our investigation of presidents makes us suspicious of pleas to leave the solution of America’s problems to governing elites on the assumption that they are devoted to responding to “the people” and to serving the country’s collective good. The starting point for re-evaluating how America makes collective decisions is the country’s reigning doctrine of elite governance.
A Citizen’s Guide to Presidential Nominations views the selection of presidential nominees as a coalition-building process within each of the two parties. The book offers a synthesis of two competing perspectives on presidential nominations—the invisible primary thesis and the campaign momentum thesis. A Citizen’s Guide analyzes competition among candidates for elite endorsements, campaign funds, public support, and primary votes in presidential nominations from 1972 to 2012. In about two-thirds of these nominations, party stakeholders—party insiders and the leaders of aligned groups—come to an early agreement on which candidate should be nominated. These campaigns are largely party-centric and coalition formation occurs through signaling and coalescence among party stakeholders along the lines argued by Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel and John Zaller in their book, The Party Decides. In other election years, however, party stakeholders remain divided or undecided about which candidate to nominate during the invisible primary. The formation of a winning coalition shifts to the caucuses and primaries and reflects campaign momentum as voters learn about candidates who can gain or lose momentum across primaries along the lines argued by John Aldrich in Before the Conventions, Larry Bartels in Presidential Primaries and the Dynamics of Public Choice and Samuel Popkin in The Reasoning Voter.

Most presidential nomination campaigns involve a mix of these scenarios. There usually is some convergence of party stakeholders before the caucuses and primaries but it is not always enough to determine the nominee. This leaves some uncertainty about which candidate will become the nominee as the scope of conflict expands to include the voters in the caucuses and primaries. My argument is that the extent of coalition coalescence during the invisible primary depends on the cohesion of the party coalitions and on the candidates who seek the nomination. The party-centric explanation seems to work when party coalitions are stable, but party coalitions evolve both in long-term and short-term patterns. In the long term, coalitions form and fragment as party constituencies realign. In the short term, nominating coalitions vary because participation in the nomination process varies with the issue agenda and the candidates who enter the race. Who runs matters. It is far easier for party coalitions to unify early when they have a candidate who has broad personal and political appeal than it is when the candidate pool is thin, which happens when the early front-runner declines to run.
Abstract: The most important individual interpreter of the United States Constitution is the President. Drawing on history, law, and political science, this book shows how Presidents have formed law by behavior that reflects their interpretations and that sets or alters precedents. Presidential interpretations are ultimately independent of the views of the other two branches of government. In a reciprocal process, presidential precedents both affect American history and are affected by it. When accepted by Congress and the people, presidential precedents become conventions that form constitutional law. The nature of the precedents results from a complex mix of each President’s personal character and political values, the problems and incentives he faces, and the influence of precedents generated by his predecessors. Presidential interpretation has proved most successful and enduring when it is animated by clear values that are shared by the American people and is pursued by pragmatic means. The book reviews both the process of formation of precedents by all forty-four Presidents and the contents of the constitutional conventions that have evolved. The presidential office that emerges from this analysis is both more and less powerful than many observers suppose.

Presidents take more guidance from interpretations of constitutional text by their predecessors than from broad statements by courts or existing evidence of the original intent of the framers. Presidents do not behave as though there is a constitutionally unitary executive branch that they may command at will. Instead, they concede much power to the Senate and to statutes organizing the executive branch, often acquiescing in the formation of independent agencies. They concentrate on controlling the constitutional cabinet (the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, and Justice) and the military, and have mostly succeeded in that effort. Presidents have interpreted their core duty to faithfully execute the laws in widely variant ways that reflect their views of the appropriate role of the federal government and their selection of groups to benefit. Treating this duty as an opportunity, Presidents interpret statutes in ways that embody their view of the Constitution. Thus, Presidents refuse to obey statutes that they deem unconstitutional. They also issue executive orders implementing their policies in myriad ways that statutes do not clearly authorize or forbid.

Presidents have frequently subordinated civil liberties to national security concerns, and have not often protected the powerless in American society. Presidents have developed emergency powers that are
extensive and sufficient, especially in foreign policy and warmaking, without ordinarily contravening clear statutory restrictions on their discretion. Presidents legitimately use their commander in chief power to employ military force unilaterally in all situations that are short of war in a conventionally understood constitutional sense. Overall, the presidential office in the hands of its occupants has evolved in ways that seem sufficient to protect both the nation and the rule of law.

For years, political experts and media pundits have speculated about when the United States would elect its first woman president. Many believed that Hillary Clinton would win the White House in 2008, and many still believe she is the inevitable choice for 2016. Clinton famously stated in January 2008 that she was “in to win,” yet the inevitability of her candidacy faded throughout the primary season as her campaign was outmatched by that of Barack Obama. Since then, we have seen Sarah Palin’s vice-presidential candidacy in 2008, as well as Michele Bachmann’s presidential campaign in 2012. While many believe that electing the first woman president is not a question of if, but who and when, media speculation on the topic has yet to move it from an interesting talking point to political reality. The question remains: Just how close are we to breaking this final political glass ceiling?

This book offers a critical analysis of the current political electoral environment and what that means for the chances of electing
a woman president in 2016 and beyond. The book relies on political science research in two relevant subfields: women and politics, and, presidential campaigns and elections. The former indicates that long-standing barriers to women’s electoral success – biases in party recruitment, fundraising, and media coverage – are diminishing, yet other barriers may still remain (most notably in the area of candidate recruitment and whether or not women choose to seek political office, thus positioning themselves into the political pipeline for higher office). The latter explains the successes and failures of recent presidential campaign strategies in all three stages as well as the institutional factors of the process: the invisible primary, the nomination process, and the general election. By merging what we as political scientists know from both literatures, an accurate portrait can emerge of the real chances (beyond media speculation) for a successful woman presidential candidate. A case study approach is used throughout the book to examine the recent campaigns of Clinton, Bachmann, Elizabeth Dole, and others to better understand what barriers may still exist for woman presidential candidates. The theoretical premise of the book rests on this question: Despite the fact that the office of the presidency continues to be viewed as a male prerogative, does a woman candidate need a unique strategy to run for president? Or, does a winning strategy already exist that can apply to a candidate regardless of gender? The answer suggests that fewer barriers may exist than some have suggested, and that we are simply waiting for the right candidate at the right political moment in time.

THE OBAMA DOCTRINE

Every modern American president has a foreign policy doctrine. We know of the Truman doctrine, the Carter doctrine, the Reagan doctrine, and the Bush doctrine. They are encapsulations of a president’s foreign policy strategy - for better or worse.

What is the Obama doctrine? The flexible quality of the current President’s foreign policy has encouraged an unusual range of theories as to its nature. But Obama’s critics misread him in saying that he has no foreign policy strategy whatsoever. The President does indeed have a kind of implicit grand strategy, and has pursued it quite consistently since entering the Oval Office, whatever the twists and turns.

President Obama has emphasized U.S. retrenchment and accommodation, using a hybrid approach that in certain cases combines with containment, engagement, assertion, integration, and even occasional - as in Libya - regime change. The strategic mixture pursued by Obama puts special emphasis on
international gestures of goodwill, combined with the gradual retrenchment of America’s military presence abroad. This approach fits not only with the President’s sincere foreign policy convictions, but with his very ambitious domestic purposes. Obama’s belief has long been that there needs to be a greater focus on domestic priorities, and in particular on the possibility of achieving progressive domestic policy legacies. His preference therefore is to retrench America’s military presence overseas, accommodate international rivalries, and focus on transformational domestic goals.

One value-added of this definition is that it incorporates domestic policy and political priorities - as governments do - into the consideration of foreign policy strategy. Since Obama’s greatest ambitions are within the domestic policy arena, he is very reluctant to risk them through international or military policies that might shatter his center-left coalition. The President therefore keeps the final strategic decisions in his own hands, in consultation with a tight inner circle of White House advisers. The resulting paradox is a highly centralized decision-making process in which clear and internally coherent foreign policy decisions are often delayed or avoided, in order to minimize domestic political risk.

Republican opposition has both impacted and responded to President Obama’s foreign policy approach. I conclude by sketching current debates within the GOP over international issues; delineate the various leading Republican foreign policy factions; and analyze the political strengths, limitations, bases of support, and policy convictions of each group in detail, referring to leading personalities and institutions as well as to extensive polling data from the Obama era. Then I discuss some possible implications for Republican Party foreign policy stands looking toward the presidential primaries and general election of 2016.
TALKING WITH THE PRESIDENT: THE PRAGMATICS OF PRESIDENTIAL LANGUAGE

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This book focuses on aspects of the language of six US Presidents: John F. Kennedy; Richard M. Nixon; Ronald W. Reagan; William J. Clinton; George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama. These have been chosen because each has been associated with certain linguistic behaviors, from rhetorical eloquence to mumbling incoherence and from lying and manipulation to linguistic incompetence. The book does not attempt any comparative analysis, and each chapter may be read independently. The main aim of the book is to attempt to outline the explanatory potential of Pragmatics for the study of presidential language. Pragmatics is seen as a branch of linguistics and its main focus is explaining how we mean more than we say, as found in areas such as irony, sarcasm, metaphor and humor. Pragmatics is a core part of everyday language use and it is applied in the same way by presidents, although the application and outcomes will be radically different.

The general history and background of Pragmatics is explained in Chapter One, and is illustrated by a variety of examples form presidential language. Chapter Two looks in detail at one of Kennedy’s famous rhetorical phrases where he makes a distinction between being a Catholic candidate as opposed to a Democratic candidate for President. The chapter challenges our common sense understanding of Kennedy’s claims and argues that there is much more going on here than we may at first have thought. In Chapter Three we revisit Nixon’s claims during and after Watergate, including an analysis of tapes only released within the last few years, and consider what insights we may gain by a pragmatic analysis of ‘lies’ and ‘lying’. Chapter Four considers the clash between claims that Reagan was “The Great Communicator’ and negative views of Reagan’s rhetorical performance. This clash is assessed in terms of Reagan as a ‘storyteller’. Chapter Five explores Clinton’s depositions in the case of Monica Lewinsky and brings a pragmatic analysis to bear upon Clinton’s arguments in the context of legal language. Chapter Six first considers whether George W. Bush suffered from some form of linguistic disorder, and then considers the pragmatics of language in the context of the Iraq war. Chapter Six considers both the successes and failures of Obama’s rhetoric, and does so mainly with a pragmatic analysis of emotional language. Chapter Eight offers an overview and calls for greater use of pragmatic analysis in the study of presidential language.
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Transaction Publishers has recently announced that Robert J. Spitzer, Distinguished Service Professor of Political Science at SUNY Cortland, has accepted the editorship of Transaction’s Presidential Briefing Book Series. He succeeds our late and much-missed colleague, Tom Langston. Spitzer, a former president of the Presidents and Executive Politics section, said “I am hopeful that the vitality of this series will itself be a lasting tribute to Tom. That being said, Transaction is an outstanding venue for this book series, and it provides a wonderful opportunity for scholars, whether new or established, to publish concise, authoritative, and accessible books on topics related to the presidency.”

With the first of the books in this series to be published this fall, and several others in the pipeline, the series publishes authoritative, significant work that provides an accessible overview of an important presidency subject. Books in the Presidential Briefing Book series should be roughly 100 to 120 pages in print, or about 30,000 to 36,000 words in length.

Publication decision-making is a priority and decisions are generally made within 45 days. Manuscript to bound-book time can be less than one year. Royalties are comparable to most book publishers. Formal inquiries and proposals can be sent to:

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