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Author/s: TODD J. BARRY

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Email: editor@modernresearch.in
mrsejournal@gmail.com

Managing Editor: **Yumnam Oken Singh**



Contemporary U.S. Political Structure: Lessons Traced from 2000

TODD J. BARRY

Ph.D. Student

University of Southern Mississippi

United States

Abstract: As candidates start planning to run for United States president in 2016, the problem with contemporary American politics is gridlock, confusion, and a lack of ideas – all improvable by looking backwards to the 2000 election and its aftermath. The 2016 election may be as important as 2000, and as close electorally. With today’s polarization, it is worth considering the structure of elections, since the Electoral College inherently favors a two party system. The Founders’ vision, though, was meant to prevent radicalism. Several proposals are examined. Then, President George W. Bush’s unique and well-ordered approach to politics and management, beginning in 2000, is analyzed qualitatively. Collectively, it involved choosing one issue at a time to campaign on and legislate, which was highly successful managerially. Normatively, but scholarly, this paper traces his early life and campaign style, and how this led to strong relationships with Congress, his staff, and foreign leaders. It makes comparisons with other American figures, and with 2016 approaching, suggests that both alterations, to the Electoral College and a revised management approach, could improve government efficiency and imagination, despite an increasingly complex political environment.

Keywords: Electoral College, George W. Bush, Campaign, Political Communications, Bush Model, 2000 Presidential Election, 2016 Presidential Election.

Part I: Tweaking the United States Electoral College: Reform without Radicalism

As of January 2015, the last five years in American politics have witnessed unprecedented political gridlock between the two major parties –no major compromises, a lack of focus on the deficit, debt, and the economy, and a dearth of imagination on issues. Informal television debates between political figures on issues are rare, little news is paid to individual races and the media is dangerously divisive and partisan, controlling reality for those who choose singular sources. There is more discussion about 2016 presidential contenders than actual dialogue on issues, which is impeded by the two party system. In the United States presidential election of 1796 an amazing number of 13 candidates received electoral votes. The Founding Fathers advocated against strong parties, and warned against them for the future in the *Federalist Papers* and other documents (McPherson 2001). America has a history of 3rd party candidates, who raise important new ideas, but few of them can block the impasse of entrenched powers today. Parties currently are institutions, not fluid changing bodies like they are in other countries. And, only the leadership of the two Houses of Congress seems to make tough decisions, treating members of their caucuses like mere pawns on a chess board. There are appalling statements between Speaker and Minority Leaders such as, paraphrasing, “I’ll trade you votes from my caucus for this for so many of your caucus for that.” As former Wisconsin Senator Alan Simpson once remarked, vote trading results in not just one bad bill but two bad bills and puts on the record one’s position on an issue without a corresponding explanation. The 2016 election has the chance to be as close electorally as 2000, for former Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton enjoys only mostly name recognition right now, and may face difficulties correlated with President Barack H. Obama’s low approval ratings.

The number of parties and their operation is in large part determined by the electoral system. As third parties amount in the future, such as the Third Way, No Labels, Americans Elect, the joining of libertarian and liberal forces, and the Tea Party, just to name a few organizations, it is worth examining the system to see what changes would make sense without resulting in the radicalism that the Founders greatly feared. They believed technology would not allow candidates’ messages to

reach the voters. While parties themselves have changed how they elect: from the ‘smoke-filled’ rooms of the 19th Century Gilded Age, to the days of raucous conventions of the early-to-mid 20th Century, to the current calculating races of primaries and caucuses which move from smaller enclaves to larger stages, the Electoral College remains, both praised and derided but for reasons few voters even understand.

One of the main problems with the Electoral College is that third parties and independent candidates cannot gain support to either force political change or win – they never have, and unless there is change, they probably never will. American history has been filled with the likes of third parties, from, chronologically: the Democrat-Republicans, one of the first parties, who opposed a strong central government, the early-19th Century Whigs, who opposed strong presidents and favored tariffs, and the Know-Nothings, so-called because they opposed the secretively intellectual Free Masons. In the mid-19th Century came the Liberty Party, Free Soil Party, and early Republicans, all who raised the issue of slavery. The 19th Century ended with the People’s/Populist Party, who supported farmers and opposed the economic gold standard, and the 20th Century began with the Bull Moose Party, Theodore Roosevelt’s return to trust-busting, and the Socialists, led by Eugene Debs. This was followed by the mid-20th Century Dixiecrats and segregationists, from Strom Thurmond to George Wallace. Then, in the 1980s, John B. Anderson ran, who favored raising gasoline taxes, followed by the Reform Party with H. Ross Perot and his important issue of fiscal responsibility, and then the current Green Party, led by consumer and environmental activist Ralph Nader. Hardly any of them have even come close to succeeding, yet they have been able to raise a select number of novel issues (McPherson 2001). The key to dealing with the problems mentioned, and to changing the Electoral College, is to open the door ajar enough for a mainline third party to both be encouraged to run and be able to win, thus introducing new ideas, without being too complex that voters will not understand how they are voting. Reform must also not widen the race too much for extremists to come to power. It must also be fair, while reducing the tendency of ‘spoilers,’ making the system depend more on popular vote without opening up a ‘Pandora’s Box’ from Greek mythology.

To those unfamiliar with the system, when an American casts his or her vote on election day, they are actually voting for a party-chosen individual who, if the candidate wins that state's popular vote, will go to Washington amongst a group of 538 total electors with 270 needed to win. If no candidate garners a majority, then the Founders wrote in Article Two of the Constitution that the choice would be made by the House of Representatives, the body closest to the people. This was probably based on the thought that it would unify the country. The Senate was given the power to select the Vice-President, with the thought that a divided ticket would also be unifying in times of divisions (Greenberg and Page 2001). Certainly, the Founders must have also reasoned that the Congress would not choose extreme candidates during times of deep cleavages. Only certain states require electors to vote who they are "supposed" to vote for, or face arrest, although this has never been tested judicially and probably would not even hold (Fair Vote, Problems). Over the years, though, some electors have cast votes to make a political statement for the future such as votes for Ronald Reagan in the 1976 and for Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate John Edwards in 2004, the latter which may have been an "accident" in recording official results (Fair Vote, Faithless Electors). Several states also divide their votes proportionately while more like Pennsylvania and Colorado are considering this (Fair Vote, Past Attempts).

Change to the Electoral College must be significant enough to account for the trouble to change it or else it would be rendered meaningless. However, it should be recalled that in Germany in the 1930s, although Adolf Hitler came to power first by appointment, it was the system of divided parties that allowed his Nazi (National Socialist) party to grow in power in the German parliament with only a fraction of the vote and then usurp power when the Reichstag burned. This denied any sense of what political scientists call "legitimacy" (Kolb 2005). If the college were to be done away with completely, dozens of candidates would run, and all that would be required would be a mere modicum of the public's support. This is certainly possible considering the sudden changes in polling of Republicans during the 2012 primary in which nearly every week saw a new leader. Change must be done meaningfully but carefully.

There have been times in American history when the nation was divided. In 1824, after the “Era of Good Feelings” and the start of the “Era of the Common Man,” neither John Quincy Adams nor Andrew Jackson won a majority of the electoral vote. In the House of Representatives, Henry Clay, the “great compromiser,” threw his support behind Quincy Adams in the hopes that he himself would become the next Secretary of State. This act has since been historically called “The Corrupt Bargain.” In the Hayes-Tilden election of 1876, votes from several southern states including Florida (eerily foreshadowing 2000) were disputed, resulting in the formation of a commission to decide who all voted via party line, and the result was that the Republican Rutherford B. Hayes would become the President. They justified this constitutionally in that Supreme Court members were among the commission, but Hayes became known as, “His Fraudulency 5 to 4.” As part of the “deal” Hayes had to remove northern troops from southern states where they had been to prevent uprisings after the Civil War. In 1888, Benjamin Harrison defeated Grover Cleveland after his first term in office, through the Electoral College, only to lose to Cleveland four years later in the only non-consecutive presidency. Consequently, America has had 44 presidencies, but only 43 presidents. It is disappointing that after the 2000 election (which this author predicted almost correctly) there was no serious, academic debate held. Nearly all conservative Republicans opposed electoral reform simply because their candidate won, and liberal Democrats supported it, ostensibly because their candidate lost (McPherson 2001).

The Electoral College has other advantages. A candidate has to acquire support from all different parts of the country, and focus on regional issues, not just highly populated urban areas. However, some parts of the country that almost always vote the same way are seemingly left out of the election, never even seeing the numerous television ads that candidates purchase. Another con is that smaller states are given too much power since they automatically receive at least 3 electoral votes even if their population is too small to justify this (Fair Vote, Past Attempts). The two most serious proposals to change the Electoral College came in 1956 and 1969, across a period of intense constitutional debate and reform. The first was led by Democratic

Hubert Humphrey, Senator of Minnesota, and later Vice-President and presidential candidate, the second by Representative Emanuel Celler, Democrat from New York. Humphrey's plan would have allowed 435 electoral votes to be determined by dividing the national popular vote proportionately and then each state would cast two electoral votes. The problem with Humphrey's plan is that it would result in chaos, a mad dash of both Republican and Democratic independent candidates running while each state would award its two votes primarily to the same party every time. Smaller states would have much more power, which can hardly be considered judicious or fair. Moreover, it seems too cumbersome, complex, and confusing (Fair Vote, Past Attempts).

Representative Celler's plan, which called for a two candidate run-off if no one won 40% of the popular vote, was better but still questionable. Having a "run-off," between, for example, the top two candidates would still create confusion in the initial race. Most recently, is this not how the Muslim Brotherhood was able to come to power in Egypt after the Arab Spring? In Afghanistan, so much vote fraud forced the two competing candidates to consider joining forces. "Run-off" elections also suffer from the fact that voters will be tried upon to vote twice. While some political junkies might not mind this, other voters might be inconvenienced. Furthermore, if the election for Congress is held in the first vote then voters will know what type of Congress the new incoming President will have, which could be both positive and negative. Forty percent is an arbitrary number, but on the other hand, this process would be very simple to understand conceptually. Yet, it would still be difficult for voters trying to decide if they should support a candidate so that they could reach 40% or rather a lesser candidate that they would like to be included in the run-off. The 40% number could always be refined with further constitutional amendments, but with the difficulty of passing, which requires $\frac{2}{3}$ of both branches of Congress plus $\frac{3}{4}$ of the states this seems unlikely.

Would the 40% requirement ultimately kill the party forever? It is possible if Democrats or Republicans bi-passed their primaries and ran in the general election instead. Party leaders would probably look down upon this but over time it might become commonplace. A better plan was proposed in 1950, called the Lodge-Gossett Amendment, after the

Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. whose famous father opposed the League of Nations (Blum 1993). It would require 40% of a proportional electoral vote to win, and if not, then the House and Senate would choose the President. I would qualify this by making the run-off vote a popular election since a third party could not win in Congress. It is also questionable if a third party candidate could win 40% of a proportional electoral vote. All of these points are obviated by the fact that no electoral amendments, even those with some good qualities, were able to pass both houses with the required supermajority (Fair Vote, Past Attempts).

The proposal argued for here is reform without radicalism. It would be: to keep both the popular vote and the electoral vote, which provides a stabilizing factor, and if they differ in the election then hold a popular vote run-off between the two highest popular vote receivers. This author would even consider a run-off between the top three. This seems fair without negative wayward tendencies. A third-party candidate would only need to win either the popular vote or Electoral College in the first race to force a run-off. The decision would come down to the people, not the House of Representatives. It would allow for more choices while reducing the chance for “spoilers.” Consequently, campaign finance laws should apply primarily to the first election, so that people would feel freer as to how to vote in the second one. Crossing the threshold for future campaign financing was one reason why so many voted for Green Party candidate Ralph Nader in 2000. Seeing the totals from the first election would let independent voters determine how much their candidate needed to make up ground or whether they would be “throwing away their vote.” The popular vote would be easiest for the third parties to win and keep the race close to the people, which the Founders intended. It could possibly result in a three major party system, similar to what Germany has today, but would also be more equitable in close two-party races.

After the 2000 election, there was some talk of reforming the Electoral College, but other election concerns such as “same day” registration, making Election Day a holiday, military voting, early and Internet voting, criminals voting, reducing lines, equipment modernization, and other micro concerns, took preeminence (The

National Commission 2001). The Congress was largely Republican at the time, and had just seen their candidate emerge victorious (Whitaker and Neale 2004). Two amendments were offered by Democratic Representative Eliot Engel of New York. Both stressed the popular vote, but not getting very far, although Congress voted for a number of hearings and reports (This Calls for Reform). Most Americans, in polls, said that they were happy with the system and the outcome, and then the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 occurred, which shifted focus away from electoral reform. Today, a bill offered by former Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. for a pure popular vote lies before the House Judiciary Committee (Fair Vote, Past Attempts).

How would the scenario proposed here have affected history? Many would have been different; briefly, Vice-President Albert Gore most likely would have won the 2000 election. No one can tell which outcome would have been better historically, although this author can say with confidence that 2000 was by far the most important election of his generation. This is true despite the fact that political leaders always make the case that each election is most important, to “get out the vote.” Many derided their similarities at the time, but Bush and Gore were vastly different, and all other elections have paled in comparison. The 2016 election has the potential to be such an election. Al Gore ran a poor campaign, not addressing claims of unusual statements he made about “the union label,” his mother-in-law’s dog, and lock-boxing Social Security. He accidentally juxtaposed his work as Vice-President of reforming bureaucracy by “reinventing government” with his efforts to help establish the Internet in public schools, and telegraphed too much of his strategy to the press. Not only was Florida a missed opportunity but he lost New Hampshire, typically a Democratic state, by only percentages. Ironically, he lost because he did not talk about the environment enough like Green candidate Ralph Nader when in fact Gore was the most environmental candidate ever to run, subsequently winning the Nobel Peace Prize. In the end, President William J. Clinton failed to establish a legacy as most of his accomplishments were reversed in the next two years. Historically, the 1948 and 1960 elections were also close in the popular vote but not in the Electoral College (McPherson 2001)

It is not exactly clear what will happen with parties in the future, such as if the Republicans will split off the Tea Party or a new liberal-libertarian union will form. So a good system must take into account all possible scenarios. I can remember our good friend Tim Russert, a reporter for NBC (National Broadcast Company) who later passed away, on the 2000 election night with his drawing board, saying that it all would come down to Florida, or newsman Dan Rather with his southern colloquialisms, and I can remember my sagacious grandmother saying, “What happened to Florida? It’s making me angry.” Change must be prudent, but the last Constitutional Amendment was in 1992, regarding legislative pay. And, it passed only because Founding Fathers had agreed upon it but it was lost in the historical records. Most states control voting laws; so one must look all the way back to 1971, which set the voting age at 18 (Greenburg and Page 2001). Dozens of amendments of all sorts have been proposed since then, and about every five years there spring forth revival efforts, ranging from term limits, to line item vetoes, to flag-burning, to gerrymandering, to balanced budget amendments, to campaign finance, to gun control, to the death penalty, and to restricting violence in our culture, but none succeed entrenched powers.

There has never been a Constitutional Convention to address new amendments as outlined in Article 5, and although one would be complex and dangerous, it is worth consideration. The risks are obviated by the requirement that any amendment would still need the support of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the several states (Greenburg and Page 2001). The rules of such a Convention would have to be specified beforehand as all the Constitution says is that Congress may propose a convention and that $\frac{2}{3}$ of the states must agree. A method for choosing delegates should be used that prevents the state governments from appointing members to a national convention since the states themselves will be voting on the amendments produced by the national convention. This would instead create a division of labor, also called diversification or the French philosopher Montesquieu’s checks and balances. Political scholars must keep the long term view in mind as the Founders so wisely did. In the end, mainstream third parties cannot rely solely on changes to the Electoral College, but must build grassroots support for common sense reforms on new and important issues, which will enrich the political

environment and reduce gridlock, the tension between the parties. The 2016 race may be as important as 2000, the year 2000 of which saw the end of the tranquility of the 1990s, the year 2016 of which could see a new beginning from the years of chaos. Regardless of the electoral system, it is still a miracle that each presidential election year, 50% of the American population does the same thing at the same time – go to the polls, and decide the future. They deserve a system with the best structure but fluidity and fairness that allows them to do so.

Part II: Reevaluating the “Bush Model” for Campaigning and Governing

The year 2000, already discussed, when Vice-President Albert A. Gore lost the Electoral College presidential vote to Governor George W. Bush, was a simpler time in American politics: you could e-mail your Congress members directly without filling out labyrinthine forms online, or having to wait for your snail-mail letters to be searched for security reasons, and without receiving constant e-mails asking for money. You could also contact leaders outside of your district with ease. Yet, at this very time the “Bush model,” as referred to here, so-named after American President George W. Bush, emerged as a campaign model. It was a simple and very masculine approach to politics, and yet feminine-appealing at the same time. Candidate Bush presented a “tough guy” persona but with a moderate, new-Republican position on issues, both social and fiscal, along with a directness and message that appealed to many women voters. His slogans were the same: a hard underpinning with a gentle periphery. In both campaigning and governing, starting in 2000, he chose to deal with one issue at a time, and built strong personal relationships. Although his policies were disagreeable in this writer’s view, one must concede that these formal prototypes were highly effective in elections and management.

As the 2016 presidential election approaches from these writings in January, 2015, Republicans especially should examine this political style that was so successful from 2000. The field will be more conservative than ever such that if former Florida Governor Jeb Bush runs, currently supported by his father but not his mother, he might even be considered a moderate. Yet, the “Bush model” may still apply, guiding him through a complex primary, and then in shifting back to the center for the general election. The past two Republican contenders,

Senator John McCain, and Governor Mitt Romney, had difficulty doing this while President George W. Bush did not, the latter who moved to the right only after election. For the Democrats, the “Bush model” could be useful to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as well who needs to present a “softer” side of herself, as President Bush did, or else run into controversies surrounding her support for the Iraq War, the Benghazi attack in Libya, and diatribes from misogynists. She needs to follow this model and show a more-homely and less pedantic persona, unlike the student who in class gives ten answers to one question hoping that one of them is the right answer. This approach would trump any “iron lady” theory in the likes of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Currently not holding any position, she will face the same problems that Vice President Albert A. Gore did in separating oneself from the White House and running as your own person. Still, one should follow a lesson of not evaluating her based on one’s feelings about President William J. Clinton, whether positive or negative, because comparisons in 2000 between candidate Bush and former President George H.W. Bush ended up confusing many voters’ expectations.

In 2000, ‘Compassionate conservative,’ ‘reformer with results,’ ‘prosperity with a purpose,’ ‘a uniter not a divider,’ were all of the Bush team’s creative phrases. Economic prosperity by itself was not an end and instead was a means to helping others in society. All either alliterated or rhymed, and he rolled them all out at propitious times along the 2000 campaign, devoting several days to one topic specifically. They all created a mystique and mythology that Americans could identify with. The key was repetition. American elections are long, allowing a persona to develop. His ‘reformer’ and populist message resonated with America’s soul and appealed to former voters of H. Ross Perot, founder of the now defunct Reform Party. On top of this, President Bush was religious but without wearing it on his ‘sleeves.’ He avoided talking about abortion at all costs while on race changed the words ‘affirmative action’ to ‘affirmative access.’ President Barack H. Obama later noted, as did President William J. Clinton, that you “have to tell a story” in running. All three portrayed themselves as outsiders, an American preference.

At the same time, Bush tapped into a sense of guilt and nostalgia residual from his father President George H.W. Bush, and created an image that he would be a similar type of moderately-conservative president. Conversely, his use of W. in his name instead of Jr. declared a sense of individuality and resulted in a clever sobriquet. In 2000, Al Gore, also a “Jr.” may have been wiser to use his middle initial, but more importantly was to make the case that, regarding the economy and the surplus at that time, prosperity itself was on the ballot. With Democrats having won five out of the last six presidential popular votes Republicans should revisit the “Bush model.” They need to recognize too that greater inclusion of immigrants is needed, especially economically and as the country becomes more diverse, although this issue has plagued American political leaders for decades.

President Bush developed his identity after losing a Texas congressional race earlier in his political life in 1978, which happened he realized, because he was cast as an eastern elitist (Kettl 2003). In subsequent campaigns he would consequently go to great strides to conceal the fact that he was born in New Haven, Connecticut, when his parents lived at Yale University. This type of conduct was ironically similar to one of his heroes, Teddy Roosevelt, a “cowboy” but one who came from a wealthy New York family. President Bush pursued a “fifty-state strategy” long before the Democrats did; he spoke Spanish on the campaign trail, and, in the European tradition, began his campaign with a quasi-autobiographical book (Bush 1999).

President Bush’s style of campaigning was intensely aggressive, from attacking John McCain in South Carolina in 2000, to accusing Al Gore’s responsible fiscal policy as “fuzzy math,” to saying that Gore’s only positive quality was that “the man loves his wife,” again stressing his own personal values. Later, in 2004, Bush’s team would dramatize the “Swift Boat” ads and advertise pictures of the Senator John Kerry sailing, which was another one of the most negative elections in history. If Senator Kerry was guilty of anything it was simply that he happened not to be a very good soldier during the Vietnam War, blowing up his arm with his own grenade (O’Neill and Corsi 2004). The only campaign exception may have been his father’s in 1988, led by Lee Atwater, which aired the Willy Horton ads to attack Democratic candidate

Michael Dukakis' record on crime and the death penalty, while chiding his service in the Korean War and accusing him of sullyng the Boston harbor. In the 1980's, all liberal candidates were emphasizing coming-up with new ideas for "new programs," smaller than the ones created during the overhauls of the 1930s or 1960s.

The last two Democratic presidents, Presidents William J. Clinton and Barack H. Obama, both campaigned by expressing the need for change but did so using different words, yet each in a very positive and optimistic way. President Clinton, though, put more emphasis on explaining that change is difficult whereas President Obama continues to believe it can be accomplished by relying on himself, and not the opposition party, alone. As a community activist, President Obama stands out as exceptionally adept at raising money. After President Obama took office, America's political landscape became even more convoluted when the Supreme Court's ruling in "Citizen's United vs. Federal Election Commission" negated campaign finance laws for many types of donors, created Super PACs (Political Action Committees) for indirect contributions, and opened the door for other legal cases. The result is that today money is flowing like water from K Street, dotted by lobbying firms, and from worldwide locations. Albeit, even President John F. Kennedy campaigned for money during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis (Allison 1971) but studies show money is not the preeminent factor in elections. The United States used to spend more per year on purchases of bubble gum than elections, but they now total in the billions. As Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens once wisely said, "money is not speech," referring to a case in 2000, *Nixon v. Shrink Missouri Government PAC*, for which he wrote a concurring opinion (Legal Information Institute). Money has only made the system more byzantine.

Yet, after taking office, Bush kept the same simple model of politicking for managing, termed here the "Bush model of governing," or so-called "governing in campaign mode," phrased by his second press secretary, Scott McClellan, originally with negative connotations (McClellan 2008). Unlike other countries, the "agenda" in American politics is a complex tug-of-war structure between the President and Congress, but it is usually led by the President based on issues from the

campaign. Bush's model of governing the agenda was very effective, choosing one issue at a time, traversing the country to give speeches to develop public support, working with Congress through numerous phone calls to make sure they were debating the same issues, and then having a vote, either way up or down. Everyone was on the same page. This contrasted greatly with presidents past and future. Bush, according to analysts Peter and Rochelle Schweizer, had an "addictive personality," requiring him to "fix on something and maintain a hold on it," whether for good or for bad (Langston 2007).

President George W. Bush, who was our first president with a Master's degree in Business Administration, started to govern after his election by setting tax and budget policy, which is part of the "Bush model." This should be the first major action of any administration since it lays the stage for the economy and government revenues to come. He was able, right from the start, to win support on bills from many congressional Democrats who tend to be less dyspeptic. President Bush worked closely with both parties in Congress, often sending "thank you" cards (Kettl 2003), as opposed to President Obama, who famously uttered, "elections have consequences" after his own victory. President Obama would refuse to negotiate over taxes or the budget with Republicans, even on issues they agreed on, and complained about having to deal with representatives from "Podunkville" (Klein 2012). It was not until several years into his presidency that President Obama invited Republican leaders to the White House.

Furthermore, legislative gridlock has been promulgated by extensive use of the filibuster which under new rules no longer requires lengthy speeches and the "bringing out of the cots" for naps between speaking rotations. Now, a legislator simply needs to include his name on the Leader's tally to cumulatively stop a bill. President Bush was not aided in so much by a "9/11 unity effect," but because he sought ways to collaborate, and in second term he used his "capital," or mandate for more domestic issues. President Obama's team could have taken a page from this simpler playbook when addressing complex healthcare reform. Given the lack of focus of his administration, President Obama's mandate was more about ending wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is an observation that the failure to compromise in general from any

leader stems from a failure to know when to compromise, which partially derives from a lack of negotiating experience as well as a lack of knowledge of the history of issues (Klein 2012).

All Presidents have had their own unique way of dealing with Congress, and their staffs, from President Lyndon B. Johnson wheeling and dealing in his southern style and “Johnson treatment,” to President Franklin D. Roosevelt assigning the same tasks to multiple aides to make sure it was accomplished and see which aide was most effective (Greenberg and Page 2001). President Ronald Reagan and House Speaker Tip O’Neill often played card games, discussing issues late into the night and trading jokes. President George W. Bush rolled out his Cabinet in teams and, even though he often referred to the offices by the wrong names, the rollout was quick. He nicknamed his Cabinet officials and Congressmen in a very masculine way, almost as if playing pick-up baseball games back in Crawford, Texas, and again developing strong personal bonds (Matthews 2002).

In the tradition set by President Clinton, President Bush governed by using his Cabinet more as figure heads, with many women and minorities, but forging strong personal links. Some analysts have been critical of this approach and have called it a “team of mascots.” Still, it does give more power to lower rung department heads to help on decisions requiring more experience (Purdum 2012). Matching a leader’s skills with available positions is one trick that recent presidents have had trouble doing but this is an unfortunate overall trend. Whether President Bush’s Cabinet discussions were more free-wheeling in the precedent started by President William J. Clinton, or more structured, will be a matter of historical debate (Goodwin 2005). His Cabinet secretaries, though, especially on economics, excelled at selling his policies to the public, acting as “point men,” and he met with them frequently.

During his second term, Bush’s selection for Federal Reserve Chairman was not a “trickle down” crony but an experienced banker, Mr. Ben Bernanke. It was clear that Bush was the leader of his party and the government, whereas President Obama has been more a parliamentarian in the tradition of President Woodrow Wilson, doing

more delegating, and sometimes clashing with his fellow Democrats. In his second term, President Obama has made extensive but controversial use of executive orders, trying to circumvent Congress. Administratively, President Bush brought in officials from other than just Texas, unlike President James E. Carter did with Georgia. Many presidents have followed the advice of powerful “bosses” for administrative help: Vice-President Dick Cheney for President Bush, Chicago businesswoman Valerie Jarrett for President Obama. As for President Clinton, he often analyzed what the best structure of his schedule was, frequently revising it upon advice from a multitude of former high-ranking officials (Klein 2012).

President Bush was a former governor, which Americans tends to prefer as president perhaps for their executive experience. He had a strong relationship with his Chief of Staff, Andrew Card, who gave greater access to the President than John Sununu did in the George H.W. Bush administration (Kettle 2003). Consider President Obama, who was a Senator and had little management experience, and had tensions with fellow Chicagoans Rahm Emanuel and Bill Daley, since President Obama wanted to do “everything at once.” President Obama slipped-up at least once at a press conference early in his second term and referred to himself as “passing legislation” in Illinois which only governors can do. It is unclear when he first signed bills immediately after inauguration if it was the first time ever doing anything similar, as he appeared a little uncomfortable. He probably did do signings for his several very successful books. Both men showed more loyalty to Cabinet members than past leaders, very different from President Richard M. Nixon, for example, who held a “Saturday Night Massacre” to fire numerous dubious members, or even Soviet leaders who frequently “shook-up” members during the Cold War.

Even considering that his own party ran Congress for most of the time, President Bush was highly successful domestically by “staying on message.” He successfully passed numerous bills, more relatively than President Obama, whether one agrees with them or not. This was about $\frac{3}{4}$ of bills on which he announced his position, even into his second term and with a Democratic Congress in 2006, higher than many other presidents (Jacobs 2007). In total, these included dealing with issues

such as McCain-Feingold campaign-finance reform, stem-cell research, forming the Homeland Security Department, reforming intelligence, passing three tax cuts for individuals and businesses, as well as championing the Sarbanes-Oxley corporate reform bill. He tried to be “on-top” of the economy, sometimes talking it up to display confidence that it was improving, although in one speech, he was shown on TVs as promoting the economy when the stock market was falling sharply, a slight embarrassment. One of his first issues addressed was education, an issue particularly important to women, which he was promoting when the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack occurred.

Internationally, President Bush used the same model as when governing, choosing one issue at a time, and forming strong personal bonds with foreign leaders. He began at a rocky start, by mispronouncing French President Jacques Chirac’s name (Kettl 2003), saying that he discussed “devaluation” with the Japanese Prime-Minister instead of deflation, and accidentally embarrassing the South Korean leader at a press conference. However, he would oversee two wars, and numerous efforts to restart mid-East peace talks, despite not being successful, but he did try. Bush’s strong connections made us proud of our “special relationships.” This included, for instance, saying at Camp David that he and British Prime Minister Tony Blair “use the same toothpaste,” tossing a baseball to Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, and giving German Chancellor Angela Merkel a back massage. The Obama administration, in comparison, gave Queen Elizabeth II several DVDs and other electronic equipment, hardly fitting for a queen. Bush reused natural phrases like “keeping the peace,” with Russia, and he and President Vladimir Putin shared a unique spiritual connection, Putin having given Bush a cross, probably due to the fact that post-Cold-War Russia is becoming more religious. Sometimes, though, personal relationships have the possibility of interfering with national relationships as with the Iraq wars and the relationships between the Bushes and Saddam Hussein and other mid-East leaders (Freedman and Karsh 1992). A more mundane example of this was the controversy surrounding gifts to Bill and Hillary Clinton received at the end of President Clinton’s terms and whether the gifts belonged to them personally or to the nation, with a middle ground compromise finally being reached.

President Bush was successfully able to develop public support for wars not necessarily because of the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, but because he was a Republican, who is historically regarded as “stronger” in foreign policy. For the opposite reason the public and Congress opposed President Obama with respect to Libya and Syria. Scholars in literature refer to these expectations as “prospect theory.” In America, World Wars I and II are examples of this, wars mostly begun under Democrats. Many people might remember their grandparents telling them to be careful if you vote Democratic because there might be a war, or, “Democrats get us into wars, Republicans get us out of them.” We are now witnessing a change to this age-old paradigm. The public admired President Bush for his firm decisions and morality and he used this to garner support against Iraq, although it is strongly questionable if it was moral to invade a country which never attacked America. Unfortunately, the “quasi-militaristic” nature of his foreign-policy administration, similar to President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s (Kettl 2003), did not debate enough and led to many poor decisions, creating an “echo chamber” of opinions (Burke 207).

President Bush’s terms, continued through President Obama’s first term, were more political and complex than any presidents before. This is exemplified in the use of the words “Axis of Evil” when clearly no such adversarial treaty existed. Since presidents in the past, Washington politics today has become more vitriolic. One may recall the “wag the dog” theories surrounding President Clinton when he ordered strikes on Afghanistan, when no one seemed to believe the real reason at the time was Osama bin Laden. President George W. Bush largely increased the White House staff working in communications to over 350, says analyst Martha Kumar (Jacobs 2007), and he used polls extensively, but he used them not to formulate policies but for how to communicate to them (Kettl 2003). He even created a website in coming into office to communicate to new administration members his managing philosophy (Kettl 2003). He held frequent evening conferences in various rooms in the White House. Though fewer in number than the two preceding presidents, they were very formal and more comprehensive, and President Bush gave longer answers than those before him. He used these venues to introduce new topics and he also traveled more domestically than any president before him to promote his policies

(Edwards and King 2007). Granted, his communications were assisted by an excellent first press secretary, Ari Fleischer, who redefined the role and helped keep leaks to the press to a minimum. There was now much more “spin” than in the days of Marlin Fitzwater, President George H.W. Bush’s press secretary. President Bush governed by campaigning; even President Obama has made use of this method, remarking during the middle of his first term, “when I first began this campaign.” This indicates that even presidents today, especially with less political experience than many leaders in the past, may be finding it difficult to draw a distinction between campaigning and governing.

So perchance, with all of the technology and media outlets today, greater political promotion is necessary, and will be in the future. Still, unique venues exist for sending significant message, as President Barack Obama launched his 2008 campaign from the steps of the Illinois State House building where President Abraham Lincoln once served. President Ronald Reagan announced in 1980 near the Statue of Liberty. The George Washington Inaugural Site near Wall Street, to emphasize mending the inequality divide with Main Street, or Seneca Falls, New York, origins of the women’s rights movement, would be good choices to start 2016, especially for Hillary Clinton as she intends to emphasize her gender more than in 2008, which will help her in appearing more unique.

Unfortunately, legislatively, the newest development is Congressmen devoting more time campaigning than legislating, often leaving Washington each week after working only several days, and not getting to know the opposition. President Bush was able to accomplish this, symbolically being how he eliminated “Hail to the Chief” before the State of the Union Address so he could shake more hands of members of both parties. His largest historical mistake, according to both himself and to analysts, was perhaps Hurricane Katrina, when he got too close to a fellow official and uttered the masculine phrase, “Brownie, you’re doing a heck of a job.” He also regretted not reforming the now endangered retirement system. This author’s personal feelings are that it was harmed by his 1.5 trillion dollar tax cut, rather than paying off debt, and damaged the economy long-term, whereas Vice-President Gore in 2000 had offered a smaller and more

reasonable plan. President Obama deserves some credit for holding the line on certain taxes, with some of the Bush tax cuts expiring, and this as well as the stimulus have moved along the economy, but Social Security and Medicare are still jeopardized.

At all times of his career, American President George W. Bush was able to defy expectations and surprise opponents, which is part of the model, that of keeping expectations low, which makes any good appearance in a debate or press conference look better than it was. As an ex-president to date, the word that comes to mind is honorable in the sense that he has not questioned his successor in the press. Again, as much as many Americans disliked and even loathed his policies, his ideology, and his values, and did not care for his humor during tense times, or his lack of intellectual curiosity, including myself, this simple but efficient model for campaigning and governing can serve as lessons for those who will start their Presidential runs for 2016. Should prior President George H.W. Bush become ill or pass away before 2016, tragically, there will be an even greater sympathy effect for the Bush family.

As of January 2015, the 2016 field now looks like it may include Republicans such as Jeb Bush, Rand Paul, Marco Rubio, Chris Christie, Bobby Jindal, Mike Huckabee, Rick Santorum, Ted Cruz, Mike Lee, John Kasich, and maybe even Donald Trump, Peter King, Lindsey Graham, Dr. Ben Carson, Rick Perry, Scott Walker, Mike Pence, Carly Fiorina, or even Mitt Romney. And for the Democrats, it looks like—Hillary Clinton, Joseph Biden, Howard Dean, Martin O’Malley, Andrew Cuomo, Brian Schweitzer, and maybe even Jerry Brown, Jim Webb, Elizabeth Warren, Bernie Sanders, or Russ Feingold. Add to this anyone else who “pops up through the woodwork,” minus those who have fundraising problems early on, such that the choice may come down to vote trading at the conventions. The Republican victory in the mid-term election of 2014 may result in the Democrats being the “party of no,” aiding Republican candidates’ chances in 2016, specifically governors outside of the political fray. In today’s age of politically-inspired national and global protests, 2016 may be as significant an election as 2000, also considering that again it offers the difficult choice that 2000 did in pursuing economic stimulus or a tax-cutting,

government-reducing austerity. The current decade is bringing about much social change similar to the 1960s, but the vehicle for such change is not music and culture but rather new, complex technology. And, technology is affecting the media, causing certain stations to tailor their broadcasts towards “niche markets” of viewers, which is influencing candidates as well, especially on foreign policy (Greenberg and Page 2001).

Oftentimes, though, in politics the question is one about how to make one’s visions realized, to be transformative and lasting and not just transitional. Sometimes, I look back and remember, more in a scholarly way than sentimentally, George W. Bush and his White House administrative motif. Maybe it is possible that even in the world today, with its campaign excessiveness, all of its social media and cell phones, and from voters to government officials posting hastily typed messages to numerous websites, that America might not yet be too complicated for a version of the “Bush model” of campaigning and governing to be utilized again. But, it must involve better judgment and experienced decisions, a greater number of parties and candidates from revisiting the election system, and a confluence of newer ideas combined with a simpler style of management.

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