Photo courtesy: Michael Okoniewski/Getty Images

■ A campaigning George W. Bush seeks the support of a local Police Benevolent Association.

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OPINION

A PRESIDENT'S ABILITY to get his programs adopted or implemented depends on many factors, including his leadership abilities, his personality and powers of persuasion, his ability to mobilize public opinion to support his actions, and the public's perception of his performance.

Presidential Leadership

Leadership is not an easy thing to exercise, and it remains an elusive concept for scholars to identify and measure, but it is important to all presidents seeking support for their programs and policies. Moreover, ideas about the importance of effective leaders have deep roots in our political culture. The leadership abilities of the great presidents—Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and FDR—have been extolled over and over again, leading us to fault modern presidents who fail to cloak themselves in the armor of leadership. Americans thus have come to believe that "If presidential leadership works some of the time, why not all of the time?"[33] This attitude, in turn, directly influences what we expect presidents to do and how we evaluate them (see Analyzing Visuals: Barber's Presidential

Photo courtesy: Rick McKee/Augusta Chronicle

■ Most pundits as well as the public agree that President George W. Bush grew into his office in the aftermath of 9/11.

Analyzing Visuals

BARBER'S PRESIDENTIAL PERSONALITIES

Does presidential character, which political scientist James David Barber defines as the "way the president orients himself toward life," seriously affect how a president handles his job? In an approach to analyzing and predicting presidential behavior criticized and rejected by many other political scientists, Barber has suggested that patterns of behavior, many that may be ingrained during childhood, exist and can help explain presidential behavior.

Barber believes that there are four presidential character types, based on energy level (whether the president is active or passive) and the degree of enjoyment a president finds in the job (whether the president has a positive or negative attitude). Barber believes that active and positive presidents are more successful than passive and negative presidents. Active-positive presidents, he argues, generally enjoyed warm and supportive childhood environments and are basically happy individuals open to new life experiences. They approach the presidency with a characteristic zest for life and have a drive to lead and succeed. In contrast, passive-negative presidents find themselves reacting to circumstances, are likely to take directions from others, and fail to make full use of the enormous resources of the executive office.

The table classifies presidents from Taft through George Bush according to Barber's categories. After reviewing the table, answer the following critical thinking questions based on your understanding of the president's performance in office: Would you consider Jimmy Carter, whom Barber considers an active-positive character type, a successful president? Why might some of the highest-rated presidents have character flaws? What actions or policy failures are associated with the four active-negative presidents? What factors in addition to personality could influence presidential behavior? How would you classify President Bill Clinton? President George W. Bush?

	Active	*Passive*
Positive	F. Roosevelt Truman Kennedy Ford Carter[a] Bush	Taft Harding Reagan
Negative	Wilson Hoover L. Johnson Nixon	Coolidge Eisenhower

[a]Some scholars think that Carter better fits the active-negative typology.

Source: James David Barber, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House,* 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992).

Personalities). Research by political scientists shows that presidents can exercise leadership by increasing public attention to particular issues. Analyses of presidential State of the Union Addresses, for example, reveal that mentions of particular policies translate into more Americans mentioning those policies as the most important problems facing the nation.[34]

The presidency often transforms its occupants. There is an old adage that great crises make great presidents. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's handling of the Great Depression solidified his place in American history, as did Abraham Lincoln's handling of the Civil War. Many critics argue that 9/11, transformed George W. Bush's presidency to the degree that commentators refer to the pre- and post-9/11 president.[35] President Bush not only cast himself as the strong leader of the United States but portrayed himself as the worldwide leader in the war against terrorism, transforming himself from the candidate who disavowed interest in or much knowledge of international affairs. His newfound self-confidence was what Americans look for in a time of crisis.

Frequently, the difference between great and mediocre presidents centers on their ability to grasp the importance of leadership style. Truly great presidents, such as Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt, understood that the White House was a seat of power from which decisions could flow to shape the national destiny. They recognized that their day-to-day activities and how they went about them

Comparative
Comparing Chief Executives

should be designed to bolster support for their policies and to secure congressional and popular backing that could translate their intuitive judgment into meaningful action. Mediocre presidents, on the other hand, have tended to regard the White House as "a stage for the presentation of performances to the public" or a fitting honor to cap a career.[36]

Presidential Personality and the Power to Persuade

In trying to lead against long odds, a president must not only exercise the constitutional powers of the chief executive but also persuade enough of the country that his actions are the right ones so that he can carry them out without national strife.[37] A president's personality and ability to persuade others are key to amassing greater power and authority. The power to persuade is the president's ability to gain the support of members of Congress, the public, and even foreign leaders, and thus to set the national agenda. Persuasion is key, political scientist Richard E. Neustadt says, because constitutional powers alone don't provide modern presidents with the authority to meet rising public expectations.[38]

Going Public: Mobilizing Public Opinion

On average, President Bill Clinton spoke to the public in a variety of venues about 550 times a year. President Ronald Reagan, often remembered as a master of public relations and the media, averaged 320 appearances a year; the folksy President Harry S Truman, only 88 times a year.[39] What's the difference? The postmodern president has to try to govern amid the din of several competing twenty-four-hour news channels and an Internet news cycle that makes events of an hour ago old news. This rapid change provides presidents with rare opportunities while at the same time representing daunting challenges.

Historically, even before the days of radio and television, presidents tried to reach out to the public to gain support for their programs through what President Theodore Roosevelt called the bully pulpit. The development of commercial air travel and radio, newsreels, television, and communication satellites have made direct communication to larger numbers of voters easier. Presidents, first ladies, and other presidential advisers travel all over the world to expand their views and to build personal support as well as support for administration programs.

■ President George W. Bush with former baseball great Cal Ripken and a former member of the original Girls Professional Baseball League (dramatized in the film *A League of Their Own*) at a T-Ball game on the white house lawn.

Photo courtesy: Karen O'Connor

Direct, presidential appeals to the electorate like those often made by recent presidents are referred to as "going public."[40] Going public means that a president goes over the heads of members of Congress to gain support from the people, who can then place pressure on their elected officials in Washington.

Like most presidents, Bill Clinton was keenly aware of the importance of maintaining his connection with the public. Beginning with his 1992 campaign, Clinton often appeared on *Larry King Live* on CNN. Even after becoming president, Clinton continued to take his case directly to the people. He launched his health care reform proposals, for example, on a prime-time edition of *Nightline* hosted by Ted Koppel. For an hour and a half, the president took audience questions about his health plan, impressing even those who doubted the plan with his impressive grasp of details. Moreover, at a black-tie dinner honoring radio and television correspondents, Clinton responded to criticisms leveled against him for not holding traditional press conferences by pointing out how clever he was to ignore the traditional press. "You know why I can stiff you on the press conferences? Because Larry King liberated me from you by giving me to the American people directly," quipped Clinton.[41] George W. Bush continued in the Clinton tradition of rarely holding press conferences

Global Perspective

In the Public Eye: Prime Ministers and Presidents

Many Americans might find the parliamentary system of government strange. Historically, however, new democratic regimes have had two models to choose from: the American presidential system and the British parliamentary system. (The proportion of nations adopting each type is revealed in the figure.) The American system is based on a Constitution that was the product of political creativity and compromise more than two hundred years ago. The U.S. Constitution survives essentially intact, although changes in the way various players interpret its provisions have resulted in dramatic shifts in the balance of power between the legislative and executive branches of government in Washington, D.C., and between the federal government and the states.

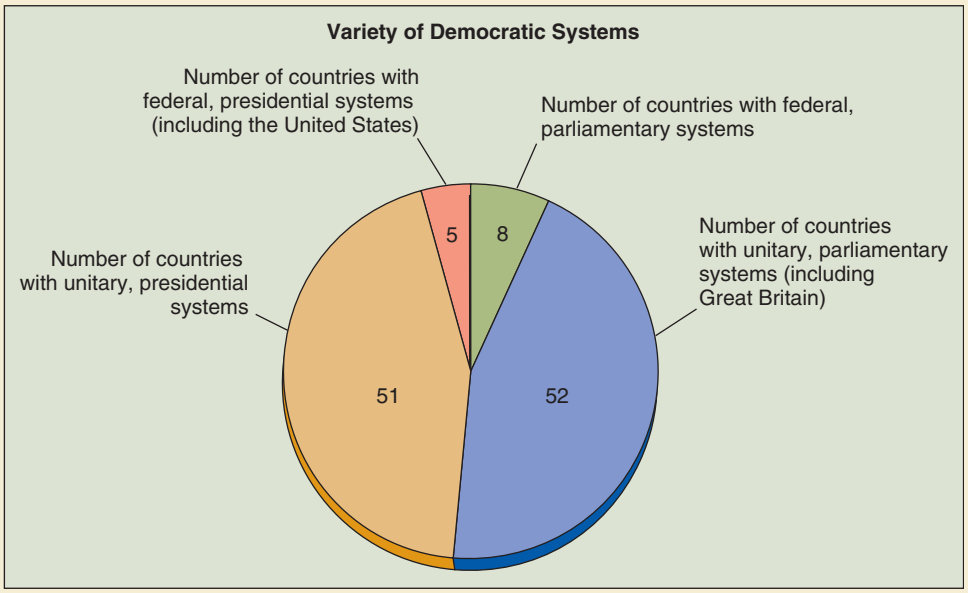
In contrast, the British system has no written constitution but is the product of a long series of agreements between the monarchy, feudal lords, the business class, trade unions, and other segments of British society, going back to the thirteenth century. The one principle that has guided British constitutional law for the past two or three centuries is "parliamentary sovereignty"—that is, that the House of Commons (and to an increasingly lesser extent, the House of Lords) governs Britain. The leadership of the House of Commons is determined by the majority party (or coalition of several parties). The British Cabinet is made up of members of Parliament (MPs) who have typically served many terms and have demonstrated their party loyalty. Led by the prime minister, who serves as the head of government, they administer each of the departments in Britain.

Because prime ministers are selected by their respective parties, most of these leaders have considerable experience and moderate temperament (with a few flamboyant exceptions). Their job security depends on making sure their party remains in the majority, and so they tend to work closely with party regulars. Leaders such as John Major of the United Kingdom and John Howard of Australia are typical in their rather cautious approach to public life. Major's predecessor, Margaret Thatcher, however, ended up alienating both the British public and the Conservative Party leadership, which voted her out of her position as head of the party, and thereby removed her as prime minister without a direct election.

Most democratic systems in the developing world have adopted the presidential system. In many instances this is a result of American influence, whereas in others it represents a concession to those who support authoritarianism rather than democracy. The separate election of a president means that his or her political support is dependent not on the legislature, but instead on personal popularity with the masses. The result is that presidential systems often produce more charismatic and independent personalities, such as populist leaders Hugo Chavez, who became the president of Venezuela in 1998, and Lula da Silva, who became the president of Brazil in 2002.

Questions

1. Does the American style of selecting leaders predispose it to picking certain types of presidents? Are they populist and flamboyant? Are they independent from political parties? Are they seasoned and experienced in national leadership?
2. What aspects of the British parliamentary system might be better than those of the U.S. presidential system?

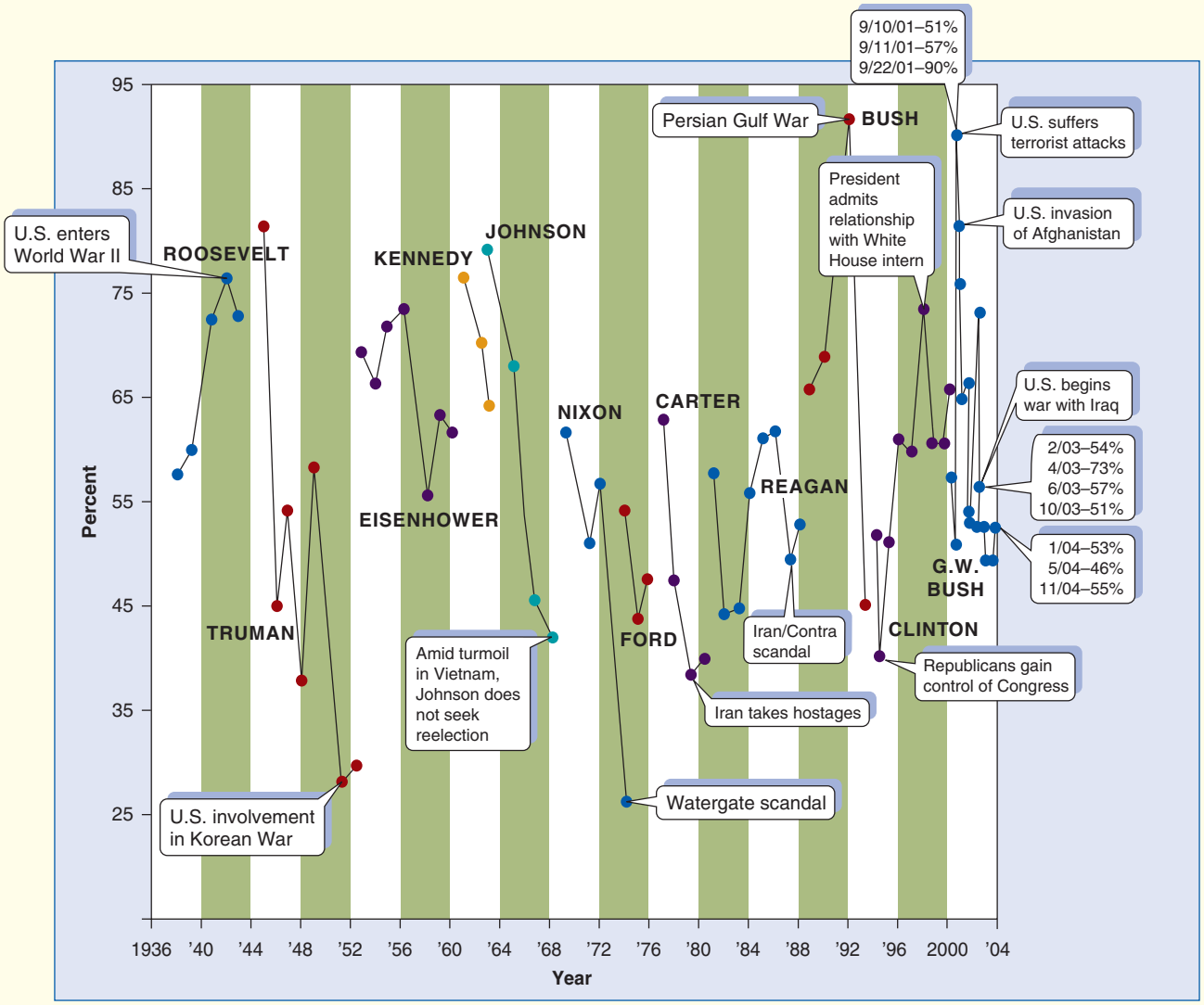


Analyzing Visuals

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL RATINGS SINCE 1938

Presidential approval ratings traditionally have followed a cyclical pattern. Presidents generally have enjoyed their highest ratings at the beginning of their terms and experienced lower ratings toward the end. Presidents George Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush, however, enjoyed popularity surges during the course of their terms. Despite the Monica Lewinsky crisis and the threat of impeachment, Clinton's approval ratings continued to rise in 1998 and 1999. They peaked at 73 percent at the end of 1998—the highest rating of his administration. Clinton left office with a 66 percent approval rating. Similarly, President George W. Bush got a spectacular and sustained boost after 9/11.

After viewing the line graph of presidential approval scores and reading the related chapter material, answer the following critical thinking questions about presidential approval: What types of events (domestic or international) tend to boost presidential approval? Why do you think that the cyclical pattern of presidential approval exists? What do you think enabled George W. Bush to sustain his high approval rating for a relatively long period after the 9/11 terrorist attacks?



Sources: USA Today (August 14, 2000): 6A. ©2000, USA Today. Reprinted by permission. "President Bush: Job Ratings," and CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll,. PollingReport.com., 2002,. accessed November 10, 2002, http://www.pollingreport.com/BushJob.htm. Updated by author.

yet trying to go directly to the people. He chose, for example, to give important speeches on the ongoing war in Iraq before receptive audiences, including ones at the National War College and the U.S. Air Force Academy.

The Public's Perception of Presidential Performance

Visual Literacy
Presidential Success in Polls and Congress

Historically, a president has the best chances of convincing Congress to follow his policy lead when his public opinion ratings are high. Presidential popularity, however, generally follows a cyclical pattern. These cycles have been recorded since 1938, when pollsters first began to track presidential popularity.

Typically, as shown in Analyzing Visuals: Presidential Approval Ratings Since 1938, presidents enjoy their highest level of public approval at the beginning of their terms and try to take advantage of this honeymoon period to get their programs passed by Congress as soon as possible. Each action a president takes, however, is divisive—some people will approve, and others will disapprove. Disapproval tends to have a cumulative effect. Inevitably, as a general rule, a president's popularity wanes, although Bill Clinton, who ended with a higher approval rating than any president in recent history, was a notable exception.

Since Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency, only four presidents have left office with approval ratings of more than 50 percent. (See Analyzing Visuals: Presidential Approval Ratings Since 1938.) Many credit this trend to events such as Vietnam, Watergate, the Iran hostage crisis, the Iran-Contra scandal, and the Iraq War, which have made the public increasingly skeptical of presidential performance. Presidents George Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush, however, experienced increases in their presidential performance scores during the course of their presidencies.

President George Bush's rapid rise in popularity occurred after the major and, perhaps more important, quick victory in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. His popularity, however, plummeted as the good feelings faded and Americans began to feel the pinch of recession. In contrast, President Bill Clinton's approval scores skyrocketed after the 1996 Democratic National Convention. More interestingly, Clinton's high approval ratings continued in the wake of allegations of wrongdoing in the Oval Office, his eventual admission of inappropriate conduct, and through his impeachment proceedings. In fact, when Clinton went to the American public and admitted that he misled them about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky, an ABC poll conducted immediately after his speech showed a 10-point jump in his job approval rating.[42]

Most presidents experience surges in popularity after major international events, but they generally don't last long. Each of the last twelve presidents has experienced at least one "rallying" point based on a foreign event. Before President George W. Bush, rallies lasted an average of ten weeks, with the longest being seven months.[43] These popularity surges allow presidents to make some policy decisions that they believe are for the good of the nation, even though the policies are unpopular with the public.

SUMMARY

BECAUSE THE FRAMERS FEARED a tyrannical monarch, they gave considerable thought to the office of the chief executive. Since ratification of the Constitution, the office has changed considerably—more through practice and need than from changes in the Constitution. In chronicling these changes, we have made the following points:

1. **The Roots of and Rules Governing the Office of President of the United States**
   Distrust of a too powerful leader led the Framers to create an executive office with limited powers. They mandated that a president be at least thirty-five years old, a natural-born citizen, and a resident of the United States for at least fourteen years, and they opted not to limit the president's term of office. To fur-

ther guard against tyranny, they made provisions for the removal of the president.

2. **The Constitutional Powers of the President**
   The Framers gave the president a variety of specific constitutional powers in Article II, including the appointment power, the power to convene Congress, and the power to make treaties. In addition, the president derives considerable power from being commander in chief of the military. The Constitution also gives the president the power to grant pardons and to veto acts of Congress.

3. **The Development and Expansion of Presidential Power**
   The development of presidential power has depended on the personal force of those who have held the office. George Washington, in particular, took several actions to establish the primacy of the president in national affairs and as true chief executive of a strong national government. But, with only a few exceptions, subsequent presidents often let Congress dominate in national affairs. With the election of FDR, however, the power of the president increased, and presidential decision making became more important in national and foreign affairs.

4. **The Presidential Establishment**
   As the responsibilities of the president have grown, so has the executive branch of government. FDR established the Executive Office of the President to help him govern. Perhaps the most key policy advisers are those closest to the president: the vice president, the White House staff, some members of the Executive Office of the President, and sometimes, the first lady.

5. **The President as Policy Maker**
   Since FDR, the public has looked to the president to propose legislation to Congress. Through proposing legislation, advancing budgets, and involvement in the regulatory process, presidents make policy.

6. **Presidential Leadership and the Importance of Public Opinion**
   To gain support for his programs or proposed budget, the president uses a variety of skills, including personal leadership, patronage, persuasion, and direct appeals to the public. How the president goes about winning support is determined by his leadership and personal style, affected by his character and his ability to persuade. Since the 1970s, however, the American public has been increasingly skeptical of presidential actions, and few presidents have enjoyed extended periods of the kind of popularity needed to help win support for programmatic change.

KEY TERMS

Cabinet, p. 285
executive agreement, p. 286
Executive Office of the President (EOP), p. 294
executive order, p. 302
executive privilege, p. 282
impeachment, p. 281
inherent powers, p. 292
line-item veto, p. 288
New Deal, p. 294
Office of Management and Budget (OMB), p. 301
pardon, p. 289
patronage, p. 301
Twenty-Fifth Amendment, p. 282
Twenty-Second Amendment, p. 280
U.S. v. *Nixon* (1974), p. 282
veto power, p. 286
War Powers Act, p. 289

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WEB EXPLORATIONS

To learn more about specific presidents, see
http://www.nara.gov/nara/president/address.html
For a chronology of the Clinton impeachment proceedings, see
http://www.washintonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/clinton/timeline.htm
For more on the vice president, see
http://www.whitehouse.gov/vicepresident/
To learn more about presidential pardons, go to
http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/pardons0a.htm
For more on the modern White House, see
http://www.whitehouse.gov/
For more on first ladies, see
www.firstladies.org/
To try your hand at balancing the budget, go to
http://www.nathannewman.org/nbs/
For more details on Watergate, see
http://watergate.info/
For more on the White House Project, see
http://www.thewhitehouseproject.org/