



Presidents rely on trusted advisers in making critical policy decisions. During the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, this group of advisers to President John F. Kennedy helped him decide on a naval blockade as a means of forcing the Soviet Union to withdraw its missiles from Cuba. (© Bettmann/Getty Images)

FACTORS IN PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

All presidents are expected to provide national leadership, but not all presidents are equally adept at it.²⁷ Strong presidents have typically had a clear sense of where they want to lead the country and an ability to communicate that vision effectively.²⁸ Ronald Reagan had this capacity, which helped him alter the direction of domestic and foreign policy. Jimmy Carter lacked it. In what was arguably the most important speech of his presidency, Carter said that Americans were having “a crisis of confidence” and needed to adopt a more positive attitude. At a time when Americans were struggling with rising inflation and unemployment and wanted strong leadership, Carter criticized them for being pessimistic.

Although effective leadership is a key to presidential success, it is only one component. The president operates within a system of separate institutions that share power (see “How the U.S. Differs”). Significant presidential action typically depends on the approval of Congress, the cooperation of the bureaucracy, and sometimes the acceptance of the judiciary. Because other officials have their own priorities, presidents do not always get their way. Congress in particular—more than the courts or the bureaucracy—holds the key to presidential success. Without congressional authorization and funding, most presidential proposals are nothing but ideas, empty of action. Dwight D. Eisenhower, whose personal integrity made him perhaps the most trusted president of the twentieth century,



HOW THE U.S. DIFFERS

POLITICAL THINKING THROUGH COMPARISONS

Systems of Executive Leadership

The United States instituted a presidential system in 1789 as part of its constitutional checks and balances. This form of executive leadership was not copied in Europe. European democracies adopted parliamentary systems, in which the prime minister is both chief executive and head of the legislative branch.

The policy leadership of a president differs from that of a prime minister. As the head of a separate branch of government, presidents do not share executive authority but are dependent on Congress to enact their legislative proposals. In contrast, prime ministers share executive leadership with a cabinet, but once agreement within the cabinet is reached, they typically have the support that is required to enact legislation.

Q: Which executive leadership do you think is preferable—a presidential system, in which the chief executive heads only the executive branch, or a parliamentary system, in which the chief executive heads both the executive and the legislative branches? Why?

had a keen awareness of the need to win over Congress. “I’ll tell you what leadership is,” he said. “It’s persuasion, and conciliation, and education, and patience. It’s long, slow, tough work.”²⁹

Whether a president’s initiatives succeed depends substantially on several factors, which will now be discussed.

The Force of Circumstance

During his first months in office and in the midst of the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt accomplished the most sweeping changes in domestic policy in the nation’s history. Congress moved quickly to pass nearly every New Deal initiative he proposed. In 1964 and 1965, Lyndon Johnson pushed landmark civil rights and social welfare legislation through Congress on the strength of the civil rights movement, the legacy of the assassinated President Kennedy, and large Democratic majorities in the House and Senate. When Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency in 1981, inflation and high unemployment

had greatly weakened the national economy and created a mood for change, enabling Reagan to persuade Congress to enact some of the largest taxing and spending changes in history.

From presidencies such as these has come the popular impression that presidents unilaterally decide national policy. However, each of these presidencies was marked by a special set of circumstances—a decisive election victory that gave added force to the president's leadership, a compelling national problem that convinced Congress and the public that bold presidential action was needed, and a president who was mindful of what was expected and pursued policies consistent with that expectation.

When conditions are favorable, the power of the presidency is remarkable. The problem for most presidents is that they serve at a time when conditions are not conducive to ambitious goals. Political scientist Erwin Hargrove suggests that presidential influence depends largely on circumstance.³⁰ Some presidents serve in periods when resources are scarce or when important problems are surfacing in American society but have not yet reached a critical stage. Such situations, Hargrove notes, work against the president's efforts to accomplish significant policy changes. In 1994, reflecting on budget deficits and other constraints beyond his control, President Bill Clinton said he had no choice but "to play the hand that history had dealt" him.

The Stage of the President's Term

If conditions conducive to great accomplishments occur irregularly, it is nonetheless the case that nearly every president has favorable moments. Most newly elected presidents enjoy a **honeymoon period** during which Congress, the press, and the public anticipate initiatives from the Oval Office and are more predisposed than usual to support them. Most presidents propose more new programs in their first year in office than in any subsequent year.³¹ Later in their terms, presidents may have run out of good ideas or depleted their political resources; meanwhile, the momentum of their election is gone, and sources of opposition have emerged. Even successful presidents like Johnson and Reagan had weak records in their final years. Franklin D. Roosevelt began his presidency with a remarkable period of achievement—the celebrated "Hundred Days"—that he was unable to duplicate later in his presidency.

An irony of the presidency, then, is that presidents are often most powerful when they are least experienced—during their first months in office. These months can, as a result, be times of risk as well as times of opportunity. An example is the Bay of Pigs fiasco during the first year of John F. Kennedy's presidency, in which a U.S.-backed invasion force of anticommunist Cubans was easily defeated by Fidel Castro's army.

The Nature of the Issue: Foreign or Domestic

In the 1960s, political scientist Aaron Wildavsky wrote that the nation has only one president but two presidencies: one domestic and one foreign.³² Wildavsky had found that Congress since World War II had enacted almost twice as many presidential proposals in the foreign policy area as in the domestic policy area.

Wildavsky's finding is now regarded as a product of the postwar era, a time when Republican and Democratic leaders alike were agreed on a need to contain Soviet communism and strengthen America's diplomatic, military, and economic position in the world (see Chapter 17). Today, a president's legislative success in the foreign and domestic policy areas is affected by many of the same factors, such as the partisan makeup of Congress and the strength of competing lobby groups. Presidents still have a slight edge in the foreign policy area because Congress at times will defer to presidents' foreign policy proposals in order to maintain America's credibility abroad.³³ But the level of congressional deference today is nothing remotely like it was in the postwar era.

On the other hand, presidents have considerable ability in the foreign policy area to act on their own, separate from what Congress might want. Presidents have the power, for example, to make treaty-like arrangements with other countries. The Supreme Court in 1937 ruled that *executive agreements*—which are formal agreements that presidents make on their own with foreign nations—are legally binding as long as they do not conflict with the Constitution or laws enacted by Congress.³⁴ A treaty requires Senate approval and cannot normally be voided by the president. In contrast, an executive agreement becomes law simply on the basis of the president's signature, although a subsequent president can void it. In the past eight decades, presidents have negotiated over 17,000 executive agreements—more than 15 times the number of treaties ratified by the Senate during the same period (see Figure 12-2).³⁵ These agreements span a wide range of policies, everything from military bases to cultural exchanges.

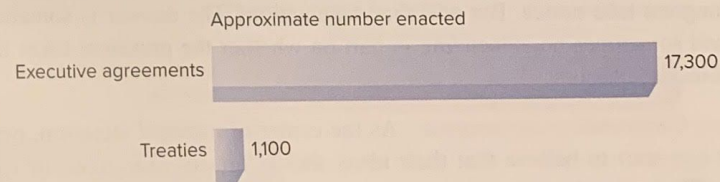


figure 12-2 FORMAL AGREEMENTS WITH OTHER NATIONS

In the past eight decades, presidents have signed over 17,000 executive agreements with other countries—more than 15 times the number of treaties ratified by the Senate during the same period. Treaties require a two-thirds vote of Senate for ratification. Executive agreements require only the signature of the president. (Source: U.S. Department of State. Figure based on the 1939–2013 period.)

In no area, however, is the president's capacity for unilateral action clearer than in the use of military force. As was noted earlier in the chapter, the United States has engaged in military action roughly 150 times since the end of World War II. In the large majority of these cases, presidents have taken the nation to war solely on their own authority. In some instances, Congress has been caught nearly by surprise. When President Ronald Reagan ordered the invasion of Grenada in 1983, for example, he waited until after the troops were on their way to tell congressional leaders. Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill was among those who were briefed by Reagan. "We weren't asked for advice," O'Neill said, "we were informed what was taking place."³⁶ Other members of Congress learned of the invasion through the media. They awakened to news that U.S. marines had landed in Grenada and were engaged in heavy fighting with the Cuban troops stationed there.

Presidents' ability to act on their own in the foreign policy arena is strengthened by their special relationship with the defense, diplomatic, and intelligence agencies. Other agencies are sometimes more responsive to Congress than to the president. The Department of Agriculture, for example, relies more heavily on the support of farm-state senators and representatives than on the president's backing. The defense, diplomatic, and intelligence agencies are different. Their missions closely parallel the president's constitutional authority as commander in chief and chief diplomat. In the period before the Iraq invasion in 2003, for example, U.S. intelligence agencies provided assessments that bolstered President Bush's assertion that Iraq's weapons systems threatened American interests. Only later did Congress discover that some of the intelligence assessments were tailored to fit Bush's claims about Iraq's weaponry.

Relations with Congress

Although the power of the presidency is not nearly as substantial as some Americans assume, the president's ability to set the national agenda is unrivaled. Whenever the president directs attention to a particular issue, members of Congress take notice. But will they take action? The answer is sometimes yes and sometimes no, depending in part on whether the president takes their interests into account.

Seeking Cooperation from Congress As the center of national attention, presidents can start to believe that their ideas should prevail over those of Congress. This reasoning invariably gets the president into trouble. Jimmy Carter had not held national office before he was elected president in 1976 and lacked a sense of how Washington operates.³⁷ Soon after taking office, Carter cut from his budget 19 public works projects that he regarded as a waste of taxpayers' money, ignoring the determination of members of Congress to obtain

CASE STUDY



Case Study

Invasion of Iraq

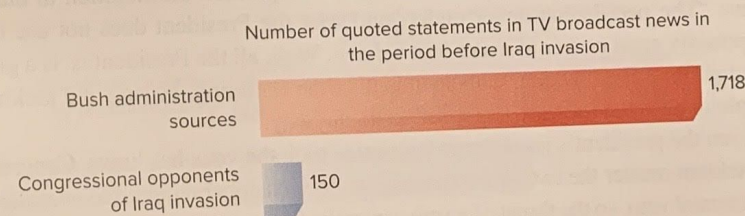
Although the U.S. system is based on checks and balances, there is an area where one branch has the upper hand. Since World War II, the United States has engaged in military hostilities more than 100 times, usually at the instigation of the president.

A case in point is the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The signal that President George W. Bush was targeting Iraq came in his 2002 State of the Union Address when he grouped Iraq with Iran and North Korea in what he called an "axis of evil." Later, Bush asked Congress for authorization to attack Iraq if it refused to turn over its weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Bush claimed Iraq had WMDs and was preparing to use them. Citing intelligence reports, Bush said, "The evidence indicates that Iraq is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program."

During the congressional debate, Senator Robert Byrd (D-West Virginia) repeatedly asked the administration to reveal its intelligence reports, but few were forthcoming. The vote in Congress, which occurred a year after the 9/11 terrorist attacks—a time when Americans were still worried about the possibility of another such attack—was one-sided. The House vote was 297–133 in Bush's favor, while the Senate vote was 77–23.

When Bush first indicated the possibility of an invasion, opinion polls indicated that less than half the public thought it was a good idea. But Bush, as the figure below indicates, was able to use the news media to carry his message. Reporters were focused so intently on the White House that Bush administration sources were quoted roughly 10 times as often as were the war's congressional opponents. By the time of the invasion, 76 percent of respondents in a Gallup poll expressed approval—with 4 of every 5 of them expressing "strong approval."

As it turned out, the Bush administration's claim that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction was faulty. Although U.S. weapons inspectors searched



Source: Estimated from Danny Hayes and Matt Guardino, "Whose Views Made News?" *Political Communication* 27 (2010), 73. Based on ABC, CBS, and NBC coverage, August 1, 2002–March 19, 2003.

Continued

high and low in Iraq for such weapons, they found none of consequence. But having started a war, the United States was caught up in it, and more than a decade later was still engaged in hostilities in the region.

Q: What checks are there on a president who is determined to take the nation to war? What are the conditions, if any, in which those checks might be powerful enough to dissuade the president from doing so?

ASK YOURSELF: What actions are available to Congress? When is Congress likely to invoke them? If the president were to order U.S. forces into combat in the face of congressional opposition, would Congress have any recourse? What about a situation where most Americans were opposed to the prospect of war? What costs would that impose on a president and the president's party? Are these costs significant enough to dissuade a president from acting?

federally funded projects for their constituents. Carter's action set the tone for a conflict-ridden relationship with Congress.

To get the help of members of Congress, the president must respond to their interests.³⁸ The most basic fact about presidential leadership is that it takes place in the context of a system of divided powers. Although the president gets most of the attention, Congress has lawmaking authority, and presidents need its cooperation to achieve their legislative goals. In 2011, after the so-called super committee—a bipartisan committee of House and Senate members—failed to reach agreement on a plan to reduce the federal budget deficit, President Obama was criticized for not forcing the committee into a decision. This criticism ignored the fact that members of Congress are separately elected and serve in a different branch of government. Presidents can cajole them but cannot require them to act. President Truman expressed the situation in blunt terms: “The people can never understand why the President does not use his supposedly great power to make ‘em behave. Well, all the President is, is a glorified public relations man who spends his time flattering, kissing and kicking people to do what they are supposed to do anyway.”³⁹

Even the president's most direct legislative tool, the veto, has limits. Congress can seldom muster the two-thirds majority in each chamber required to override a presidential veto, so the threat of a veto can make Congress bend to the president's demands. Yet, as presidential scholar Richard Neustadt argued, the veto is as much a sign of presidential weakness as it is a sign of strength, because it arises when Congress refuses to accept the president's ideas.⁴⁰ A case in point is President Obama's effort to overhaul the nation's agricultural policy. Obama promised it

would be done in 2013 but the legislative battle dragged on into 2014, as members of Congress and lobbying groups with competing interests fought over the bill's particulars. Obama threatened to veto the bill unless Congress restored planned cuts in the bill's food stamp provisions. Congress restored some of the cuts but far fewer than Obama demanded. Yet, he signed the farm bill, recognizing that he had no chance of getting Congress to pass one that was more to his liking.

Congress is a constituency that all presidents must serve if they expect to gain its support. Neustadt concluded that presidential power, at base, is “the power to persuade.”⁴¹ Like any singular notion of presidential power, Neustadt's conception has limits. Presidents at times have the power to command and to threaten. They can also appeal directly to the American people as a means of pressuring Congress. But Congress can never be taken for granted. Theodore Roosevelt expressed the wish that he could “be the president and Congress too for just ten minutes.” Roosevelt would then have had the power to enact as well as to propose legislation.

Benefiting from Partisan Support in Congress For most presidents, the next best thing to being “Congress, too” is to have a Congress loaded with members of their own party. The sources of division within Congress are many. Legislators from urban and rural areas, wealthier and poorer constituencies, and different regions of the country often have conflicting policy views. To obtain majority support in Congress, the president must find ways to overcome these divisions.

No source of support is more important to presidential success than whether the president's party controls Congress. Because the president, Senate, and House are elected separately, presidents are not guaranteed to have a Congress controlled by their party. When it is, a situation known as *unified government*, presidents have usually enjoyed considerable legislative success (see Figure 12-3). When the other party controls one or both houses, a situation known as *divided government*, presidents have had greater difficulty convincing Congress to adopt their initiatives.

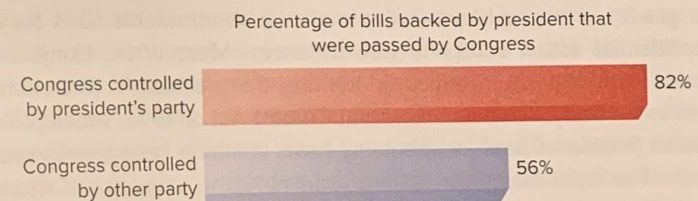


figure 12-3 PRESIDENTS' LEGISLATIVE SUCCESS

Presidents can endorse legislation but it takes Congress to enact it. Although presidents have had considerable success in getting congressional support for bills they backed, they have fared much better when their party controlled Congress than when one or both congressional chambers were controlled by the other party. (Source: Calculated by author from *Congressional Quarterly* reports from 1952 to 2015.)

In Clinton's first two years in office, backed by Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, more than 80 percent of the bills that he supported were enacted into law. After Republicans took control of Congress in 1995, Clinton's legislative success rate sank below 40 percent. Obama's success rate followed a similar downward trajectory after Republicans took control of the House in 2011. In his first two years in office, when Democrats controlled both the House and the Senate, Obama's success rate exceeded 85 percent. In 2011, with Republicans holding the House, it dropped to 32 percent and then fell to 20 percent in 2012, one of the lowest rates on record.

Without question, presidential power depends significantly on which party has the numerical majority in Congress. As the historian Arthur Schlesinger put it: "In the end, arithmetic is decisive."⁴²

Colliding with Congress On rare occasions, presidents have pursued their goals so zealously that Congress has taken steps to curb their use of power. Congress's ultimate sanction is its constitutional authority to impeach and remove the president from office. The House of Representatives decides by majority vote whether the president should be impeached (placed on trial), and the Senate conducts the trial and then votes on the president's case, with a two-thirds vote required for removal from office. In 1868, Andrew Johnson came within one Senate vote of being removed from office for his opposition to Congress's harsh Reconstruction policies after the Civil War. In 1974, Richard Nixon's resignation halted congressional proceedings on the Watergate affair that almost certainly would have ended in his impeachment and removal from office. In 1998, the House of Representatives impeached President Clinton on grounds he had lied under oath about a sexual relationship with intern Monica Lewinsky. The Senate acquitted Clinton, partly because polls indicated that most Americans did not think Clinton's behavior constituted "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors," which is what the Constitution defines as the grounds for removing a president from office.

The gravity of impeachment action makes it an unsuitable basis for curbing presidential action except in rare instances. More often, Congress has responded with legislation aimed at limiting the president's discretion. An example is the Budget Impoundment and Control Act of 1974, which prohibits a president from indefinitely withholding funds that have been appropriated by Congress. The legislation grew out of President Nixon's practice of withholding funds from programs he disliked.

Congress's most ambitious effort to curb presidential power is the War Powers Act. During the Vietnam War, Presidents Johnson and Nixon misled Congress, supplying it with intelligence estimates that painted a falsely optimistic picture of the military situation. Having been told the war was being

won, Congress regularly voted to provide the money to keep it going. However, congressional support changed abruptly in 1971 with publication in the *New York Times* of classified documents (the so-called Pentagon Papers) that revealed the White House had not been truthful about the war's progress.

In an effort to prevent future presidential wars, Congress in 1973 passed the War Powers Act. Nixon vetoed the measure, but Congress overrode his veto. The act does not prohibit the president from sending troops into combat, but it does require the president to consult with Congress whenever feasible before doing so and requires the president to inform Congress within 48 hours of the reason for the military action. The War Powers Act also requires hostilities to end within 60 days unless Congress extends the period. The act gives the president an additional 30 days to withdraw the troops from hostile territory, although Congress can shorten the 30-day period. Presidents have claimed that the War Powers Act infringes on their constitutional power as commander in chief, but the Supreme Court has not ruled on the issue, leaving open the question of whether it is a significant constraint on the president's war-making powers.

In sum, the effect of presidential efforts to circumvent congressional authority has been to heighten congressional opposition. Even if presidents gain in the short run by acting on their own, they undermine their capacity to lead in the long run if they fail to keep in mind that Congress is a coequal branch of the American governing system.

Public Support

Presidential power rests in part on a claim to national leadership, and the strength of that claim is roughly proportional to the president's public support. **Presidential approval ratings** are predictably high at the start of the president's time in office. When asked in polls whether they "approve or disapprove of how the president is doing his job," most Americans express approval during a president's first months in office. The honeymoon rarely lasts long, however. Difficult issues and adverse developments inevitably cut away at the president's public support, and more than half of post-World War II presidents have left office with an approval rating of less than 50 percent (see Table 12-4).

With public backing, the president's leadership cannot easily be dismissed by other Washington officials. When the president's public support sinks, however, officials are less inclined to accept that leadership. During his first two years in office, President George W. Bush was bolstered by public backing resulting from his handling of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In this period, Congress enacted 17 of his major initiatives, the second highest in such a short period among postwar presidents.⁴³ However, congressional opposition mounted as Bush's popularity fell in response to a deteriorating economy

Table 12-4 PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC EXPRESSING APPROVAL OF PRESIDENT'S PERFORMANCE

President	Years in Office	Average during Presidency (%)	First-Year Average (%)	Final-Year Average (%)
Harry S Truman	1945–1952	41	63	35
Dwight D. Eisenhower	1953–1960	64	74	62
John F. Kennedy	1961–1963	70	76	62
Lyndon Johnson	1963–1968	55	78	40
Richard Nixon	1969–1974	49	63	24
Gerald Ford	1974–1976	46	75	48
Jimmy Carter	1977–1980	47	68	46
Ronald Reagan	1981–1988	53	58	57
George H. W. Bush	1989–1992	61	65	40
Bill Clinton	1993–2000	57	50	60
George W. Bush	2001–2008	51	68	33
Barack Obama	2009–2016	51	58	51

Source: Averages compiled from Gallup polls.

and a worsening of the Iraq conflict. Among the Bush initiatives rejected by Congress were his social security and immigration reform proposals.

Events and Issues Public support for the president is conditioned by developments at home and abroad. International crises can result in a patriotic “rally around the flag” response that gives the president wider latitude in deciding policy. For example, when Islamic State militants in 2014 made territorial gains in Syria and Iraq, massacring Christians and moderate Muslims and beheading captives, including Americans, U.S. public opinion on military action in the region shifted. Until then, a substantial majority of Americans had opposed renewed military action in the Middle East, fearing the United States would be drawn back into an Iraq-type war. With public opinion now behind a military response, President Obama ordered a prolonged series of air strikes on the militants.

Economic conditions also play a part in a president's public support. Economic downturns invariably reduce public confidence in the president.⁴⁴ Ford, Carter, and the first President Bush lost their reelection bids when their popularity plummeted after the economy dipped. The irony, of course, is that

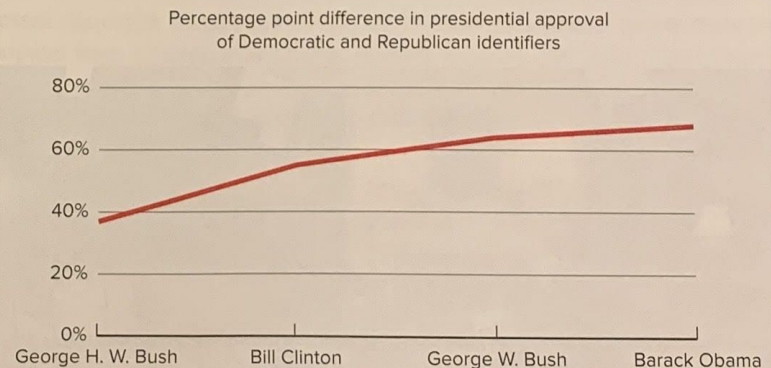
PARTY POLARIZATION



Political Thinking in Conflict

President of All the People, or Only Those from the Same Party?

Increasingly, Americans have diverged sharply in their opinions about the president's performance. As would be expected, Democrats are more likely to approve of the performance of a Democratic president and disapprove of that of a Republican president, while the reverse is true of Republicans. However, the gap in Democrats' and Republicans' opinions has widened significantly in recent years. During the three-decade period from Harry Truman's presidency in the late 1940s to Jimmy Carter's presidency in the late 1970s, the difference in the presidential approval level of Republicans and Democrats averaged roughly 35 percent. The difference now exceeds 60 percent, as can be seen in the following figure. As two *Washington Post* reporters said: “We are simply living in an era in which Democrats dislike a Republican president (and Republicans dislike a Democratic one) even before [the president] has taken a single official action.”



Q: Why has the partisan approval gap widened?

A: The reasons are many, but one of them is that Democrats and Republicans are now further apart in their opinions on controversial policy issues. When it comes to these issues, presidents typically take positions that are in line with the prevailing view in their party. As a result, their positions please most of their party's followers while displeasing, even angering, most of the other party's followers.

presidents do not have all that much control over the economy. If they did, the economy would always be strong.

The Televised Presidency An advantage that presidents have in their efforts to nurture public support is their access to the media, particularly television. Only the president can expect the networks to provide free airtime to address the nation, and in terms of the amount of news coverage, the presidency receives twice as much news coverage as Congress.

Political scientist Samuel Kernell calls it “going public” when the president bypasses bargaining with Congress and promotes “his policies by appealing to the American public for support.”⁴⁵ Such appeals are at least as old as Theodore Roosevelt’s use of the presidency as a “bully pulpit,” but they have increased substantially in recent decades. Television has made it easier for presidents to go public with their programs, though the public’s response depends partly on the president’s rhetorical skill. President Reagan was so adept at the use of television that he was labeled the “Great Communicator.” Nevertheless, presidents are unable to control everything that reporters say about them. Journalists are adept at putting their own spin on what political leaders say and generally place more emphasis on adverse developments than on positive ones.



The president receives more national media attention than do all members of Congress combined. President Barack Obama is shown here being interviewed in the Diplomatic Reception Room of the White House shortly after his 2016 State of the Union Address, which was televised live to the nation. (Source: Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

THE ILLUSION OF PRESIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT

Presidents have no choice but to try to counter negative press portrayals by putting their own spin on developments. Such efforts can carry a president only so far, however. No president can fully control his or her communicated image, and national conditions ultimately have the largest impact on a president’s public support. No amount of public relations can disguise adverse developments at home or abroad. Indeed, presidents run a risk by building up their images through public relations. By thrusting themselves into the limelight, presidents contribute to the public’s belief that they are in charge of the national government, a perception political scientist Hugh Heclo calls “the illusion of presidential government.”⁴⁶ If they are as powerful as they project themselves to be, they will be held responsible for policy failures as well as policy successes.

Because the public’s expectations are high, presidents get too much credit when things go well and too much blame when things go badly. Therein rests an irony of the presidential office. More than from any constitutional grant, more than from any statute, and more than from any crisis, presidential power derives from the president’s position as the sole official who can claim to represent the entire American public. Yet because presidential power rests on a popular base, it erodes when public support declines. The irony is that the presidential office typically grows weaker as problems mount, which is the time when strong presidential leadership is needed most.⁴⁷

SUMMARY

The presidency has become a much stronger office than the framers envisioned. The Constitution grants the president substantial military, diplomatic, legislative, and executive powers, and in each case the president’s authority has increased measurably over the nation’s history. Underlying this change is the president’s position as the one leader chosen by the whole nation and as the sole head of the executive branch. These features of the office have enabled presidents to claim broad authority in response to the increased demands placed on the federal government by changing global and national conditions.

During the course of American history, the presidential selection process has been altered in ways intended to make it more responsive to the preferences of ordinary people. Today, the electorate has a vote not only in the general election but also in the selection of party nominees. To gain nomination, a presidential hopeful must win the support of the electorate in state primaries and open caucuses. Once nominated, the candidates are eligible to receive federal funds for their general election campaigns, which today are based on Internet and televised appeals.