

Evaluating Presidential Success in the Modern Era

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by

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All presidents have been successful politicians at some time during their political career; yet all presidents have not been successful. This work seeks to understand why presidents have, and have not, been able to carry their success from previous roles into their role as president of the United States. I am interested in answering a simple question: What makes a president successful?

To answer this question I consulted with established political scientists, who directed me to a body of scholarship dedicated to the presidency. I studied these materials in the hopes of deriving a formula for presidential success. In addition to researching into presidential theory, I also embarked upon a review of the presidents during the Modern Era. By analyzing the presidents' accomplishments and failures, while simultaneously conducting research on the different theories of presidential success, I was able to develop a framework for my theory that made use of the most compelling arguments. I selected four presidents for the purposes of my research, and evaluated them against the theory I developed.

In my preliminary research on the presidency, four scholars were constantly cited in articles and books about the presidency: James David Barber, Richard Neustadt, Clinton Rossiter, and Aaron Wildavsky. Though each of these individuals offers important contributions to the scholarship about the presidency, which I have used to develop my thesis, I have elected to not include Aaron Wildavsky's notable work *The Two Presidencies*. Since Wildavsky's argument is similar to that of Rossiter, I feel that my discussion of Rossiter is sufficient for the purpose of this research.

I began my research by reviewing the works of the previously stated scholars. It was my hope that by reading these materials I would come across particular traits or characteristics of successful presidents. I expected to find qualities, such as intelligence or wisdom, to be

paramount to a president's success, yet discovered that such attributes were not discussed.

Instead, I came across a myriad of models for presidential success, ranging from a president's character to his effectiveness in particular roles.

In his notable book, The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance In The White House, Barber makes use of three personality-based properties: character, world view, and style. According to Barber, "Character is the way the a President orients himself toward life."¹ As presidents tackle tough situations, character determines their emotional responses, including feelings of confidence or rushes of insecurity. After character is Barber's discussion on "world view," which highlights the individuality of the president. "World view consists of his [president's] primary, politically relevant beliefs, particularly his conceptions of social causality, human nature, and the central moral conflicts of the time."² From this definition, world view can be understood as the president's personal beliefs and values as they relate to the social institutions that surround him. Lastly, Barber utilizes a variable he calls "style" to predict presidential success. "Style is the President's habitual way of performing his three political roles: rhetoric, personal relations, and homework. Not to be confused with "stylishness," charisma, or appearance, style is how the President goes about doing what the office requires him to do."³ It is my understanding that style allows the individual to actively exhibit their character and world view. Although Barber creates two other variables for coding presidents (power situation and climate of expectations), these variables seem to play a lesser role in Barber's work than the personality-based traits, which fuel Barber's argument for the character-based classification of presidents.

¹ Barber, James David. The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance In The White House, 4th Edition. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1993), 5.

² Ibid, 5.

³ Ibid, 5.

Whereas James David Barber believes a president's character traits serve as the most accurate predictor of success, Richard Neustadt argues that a president's ability to influence his constituents is the primary contributor to a successful administration. According to Neustadt, "His (president's) strength or weakness, then, turns on his personal capacity to influence the conduct of the men who make up government. His influence becomes the mark of leadership. To rate a President according to these rules, one looks into the man's own capabilities as seeker and wielder of effective influence upon the other men involved in governing the country."⁴ Neustadt's model of presidential power rests on the understanding that influence is derived from the president's vantage points, powers afforded to him solely because of his unparalleled position. Although Barber and Neustadt differ in their understanding of the derivations of presidential power, they share the view that success and effective rule are primarily correlated to the individual in office, rather than the situations the individual encounters.

A third scholar, Clinton Rossiter, offers another explanation of presidential power. In his book, The American Presidency, Rossiter recognizes the constitutional responsibilities of the president, yet also identifies additional responsibilities that have surfaced during the modern era, which include roles such as: Chief of Party, Voice of People, Protector of Peace, Manager of Prosperity, and World Leader.⁵ According to Rossiter, the president's success is a product of both his performance of constitutionally mandated duties, and his performance in the acquired roles. While his discussion of performance as it relates to success shares undertones with Neustadt's argument, Rossiter's explanation of the expanding responsibilities of the presidency helps to solidify the questionable logic in Neustadt's work. Whereas Neustadt fails to fully account for the significance of particular events or situations, Rossiter acknowledges the

⁴ Neustadt, Richard. Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership. (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1960), 2.

⁵ Rossiter, Clinton. The American Presidency. (The New American Library: New York, 1960), 28 – 36.

significance that events can have for the presidency. In discussing the evolution of the president's role in the legislative process, Rossiter claims:

The role of the President as active participant in every stage of the legislative process is almost wholly the creation of three twentieth-century incumbents: Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Each came at a time when the state of the Union demanded that new laws be placed on the books; none was strangled by wearing the "old school tie" of either house of Congress. The meeting of their forceful personalities with the crises of the age produced a revolution in the relations of the President to Congress and in the standards with which the American people rate his total performance.⁶

The introduction of situational factors into the discussion of presidential power and success is an important development. While Neustadt and Barber spend ample time discussing the role of personality and character, only Rossiter truly recognizes the significance of the situations in which presidents operate.

In analyzing the different theories of presidential power and success, all three scholars offer unique approaches. By identifying character traits shared by the most successful presidents of the Modern Presidency, it is possible to understand what qualities are essential to success. Yet during the process of identifying traits, it is important not to ignore the importance of the situation. Throughout a president's time in office there are a myriad of situations that occur and affect success; examples of situations include Vietnam, the Great Depression, and World War II. Therefore, I believe that a hybrid approach may offer a more insightful understanding of presidential success. By recognizing that situations play a chief role in exposing and manipulating presidential traits, and identifying the particular traits that produce success, one can understand why a certain president is successful.

My research relates only to presidents who have served during the Modern Era, which is commonly defined as beginning with Franklin Roosevelt and lasting through present day. The Modern Era offers a wide variety of characters and significant situations, and is of the most

⁶ Ibid, 106.

relevance to the scholarly writings that I rely upon for my argument. By approaching the presidents of the modern era with a model of success that incorporates both traits and situations, I have developed a list of characteristics that allow a president to operate successfully: adaptive leadership, communication, and citizen compassion.

Introduction of Variables

Adaptive Leadership

The concept of adaptive leadership, the hallmark of successful administrations, refers to the president's ability to adjust his direction or agenda depending on the current political or social climate. Adaptive leaders are inherently fluid in that they avoid taking hard positions on issues prematurely. Common among such individuals is a level of "outside-the-box" thinking, as they regularly behave in ways that alter the playing field to their advantage. In this study I will argue that adaptive leadership is a necessary ingredient in the manufacturing of public support, which is vital for a successful administration. To witness adaptive leadership, it is necessary for a situation to impose extraordinary circumstances, such as the depressed economy during the 1930s, and presidents only practice adaptive leadership when a situation demands something more than the status quo. Whereas all presidents are good leaders to some extent, in that they manage their cabinet and play a chief role in their political party, adaptive leadership dictates how well a president handles a difficult situation.

Citizen Compassion

Much like adaptive leadership, successful presidents also share a certain level of citizen compassion. Citizen compassion can be defined as: an individual's ability to relate to persons of another class, race, or group; it is the antithesis of the "Let them eat cake" mentality. Despite

belonging to exclusive societies, the most successful presidents have been able to transcend socio-economic gaps and identify with the “common man.” Although citizen compassion seems to be intertwined with the communication characteristic, citizen compassion deals with the president’s ability to receive or take in information, while the communication characteristic demonstrates the president’s ability to express himself and disseminate information.

Citizen compassion is relevant to a successful presidency because it can help attune the president to the needs of the average American citizen, which at times may be difficult to discern. By demonstrating citizen compassion, presidents develop their legislative agendas accordingly, and ultimately create good policy. From a situational standpoint, citizen compassion is an important characteristic of successful presidents because it allows them to obtain an accurate reading of public sentiment, particularly in times of uncertainty or disorder. In the midst of the Great Depression, Roosevelt demonstrated his sense of citizen compassion by recognizing in his first inaugural address that Americans were concerned with the state of the economy. Furthermore, situations are relevant to citizen compassion in that they help dictate its effectiveness. While Roosevelt’s citizen compassion helped him gain the public’s support during his first administration, he found himself out of favor several years later during his Court-packing scheme, despite still being attuned to the public’s interests.

Communication Techniques and Capabilities

The third determinant of presidential success, communication aptitude, is the most tangible characteristic of the group. Presidents’ communication skills are constantly on display in the forms of speeches, letters, or press conferences. Communication skills in themselves contribute to a president’s success, as they can help bring about desired results in Congress or with international diplomats. However, in addition the obvious advantages of good communication,

such skills also play a major role in bringing adaptive leadership and citizen compassion to the forefront. In the modern era, a president's communication skills have allowed him to showcase his adaptive leadership and citizen compassion.

Unlike the other variables, situations do not seem to directly affect a president's communication skills; instead, communication skills affect the situation. In times of anarchy, communication skills can help calm the masses. Yet the relationship between communication skills and situations is especially evident in times of controversy, when a president must explain why he is not at fault for a particular incident. In such circumstances the power of communication, or more specifically persuasion, helps a president dodge culpability. Reagan and Clinton are prime examples of how persuasion can control a situation, as both utilized their communication aptitudes to persuade the public to ignore, or look past certain affairs.

Definition of Success

The independent variables in my research all contribute to my dependent variable: success. I have chosen to identify a successful president as an individual who served at least two elected terms in Office, left the presidency in good standing with the nation, and has been highly regarded by historians. I also relied on presidential rankings conducted by *The Wall Street Journal* in 2005 and C-Span in 1999 to familiarize myself with the public's opinion about the past presidents.⁷

With these variables, I consulted Fred Greenstein's *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Styles from Roosevelt to George W. Bush*, which provided me with background information about the modern presidents. I felt that a comparative study of the presidents would be the most useful way of evaluating my theory, and decided to select two successful presidents and compare

⁷ Accessed via <http://www.opinionjournal.com/hail/rankings.html> (WSJ) and <http://www.americanpresidents.org/survey/> (C-SPAN).

them to two unsuccessful presidents. Because relatively little has been written about Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, I immediately removed them from my domain. Left with presidents Roosevelt through George H.W. Bush, I relied upon my definition of success and the presidential rankings in order to select the two most successful presidents of the era: Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan.

As for finding presidential failures to compare to my successful presidents, I was somewhat more subjective. In my initial research, I was faced with the dilemma of selecting two unsuccessful presidents from a pool of four: Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon. I used a similar approach for choosing my unsuccessful presidents, as I considered the amount of time spent in office, whether or not the president left the office in good standing with the nation, and the *Wall Street Journal* and CSPAN rankings. While Carter, Ford, and Nixon were similar in these categories, Johnson differs somewhat in that he ranks notably higher than the other individuals in the presidential rankings. Nevertheless, Johnson's catastrophe in Vietnam, despite his immense political capital after the 1964 election, made him a very intriguing candidate, and ultimately influenced my decision to study him. Left with the other three presidents, I chose Nixon. In addition to serving in office for a longer period than both Carter and Ford, which would presumably allow for more evidence, Nixon left office in very poor standing with the nation. Furthermore, I am interested in discovering why Nixon's accomplishments in foreign policy were overshadowed by his mishaps.

It should be noted that in providing evidence of the Presidents' events and experiences, I have inevitably excluded a plethora of information from my discussion. Nevertheless, I have concluded that the information I have provided is representative of the larger body of information that exists. My selection of episodes is based largely on the amount of information

that has been written about each event. I attempted to gauge the importance of a particular event by recognizing the amount of information that existed for that event, relative to the text devoted to other events. An example of this methodology can be seen through my discussion of Roosevelt's Court-packing and the exclusion of Roosevelt's relationship with trade unions, as the literature dedicated to Roosevelt and the Court far exceeds the scholarship committed to Roosevelt and trade unions.

I believe that this study will validate my argument that successful presidents require adaptive leadership, citizen compassion, and communication aptitude; I speculate that these characteristics are necessary but not sufficient for success. Therefore, I will attempt to prove that in addition to my characteristics a situational element is also necessary for success.

Franklin Roosevelt

Franklin Roosevelt entered the presidency when America was at its darkest hour. In holding the office for more than a decade, Roosevelt embodied what can be understood as a successful president. Greenstein offers insight into Roosevelt's presidency, by saying:

FDR provides a benchmark for his successors. His soaring rhetoric roused imaginations and stirred souls. He restored faith in a political system that Americans had few reasons to respect and rallied the nation and its allies in an epic conflict in which victory was by no means assured. He dominated his times, defining the terms of politics at home and abroad.⁸

According to Greenstein, Roosevelt's presidency marked a new day in politics as the executive branch surpassed the legislative branch to become the dominant force in the federal government. Despite a myriad of issues ranging from the state of the economy to the growing overseas conflicts in Europe, Roosevelt held the nation together and guided America to an era of prosperity. Yet Roosevelt's presidency was not always as glorious as most remember it to be. Despite gaining power for the executive branch, Roosevelt at times encountered difficulty while

⁸ Greenstein, Fred. The Presidential Difference: Leadership Styles from Roosevelt to George W. Bush. (The Free Press: New York, 2000) 22.

ushering his legislative packages through Congress. His battle against the Supreme Court provides a perfect example of adaptive leadership, as FDR devised a strategy to remove the Court's blockade of New Deal legislation. This display of adaptive leadership was surpassed only by FDR's maneuverings during the 1940's, as he rebuilt his tarnished public image and generated public support for World War II.

Adaptive Leadership

Roosevelt's first hundred days in office offer a remarkable era in American history. With public morale at a dismally low level, and with Congress unable to remedy the nation's deteriorating state, Roosevelt found himself in a unique situation. Recognizing FDR's situation, James David Barber claims, "The national climate of expectations was such that Roosevelt could act nearly as he wished without arousing immediate counter-pressures. And the power situation he enjoyed in Washington, with a Congress ready to whoop through bill after bill, posed little challenge to his character."⁹ With the nation in a state of disarray, and the lack of congressional restraint, Roosevelt seized the opportunity by ushering a surplus of legislation through Congress during his first 100 days in office. In his assessment of FDR's presidency, Robert DiClerico states:

The first hundred days of his administration were a bustle of activity, producing the greatest waterfall of legislation of any president in our history. Especially notable among his legislative accomplishments during the initial period were the Farm Relief Act, Banking Act, Economy Bill, Securities Act, Federal Relief Act, Railway Reorganization Act, National Recovery Act, and Agricultural Adjustment Act.¹⁰

Yet despite FDR's initial successes in the passage of numerous bills, the effectiveness of FDR's New Deal came to a halt in 1935, as the Supreme Court began to render New Deal legislation to be unconstitutional.

⁹ Barber, 289.

¹⁰ DiClerico, Robert. The American Presidency, 5th Edition. (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River: 2000), 324.

After nearly two years of unchecked power, the Supreme Court struck down a portion of the National Industrial Recovery Act, claiming that a section of the bill unconstitutionally delegated legislative power to the President. Writing for the majority of the 8-1 decision, Justice Hughes stated:

To hold that he [President] is free to select as he chooses from the many and various objects generally described in the first section, and then to act without making any finding with respect to any object that he does select, and the circumstances properly related to that object, would be in effect to make the conditions inoperative and to invest him with an uncontrolled legislative power.¹¹

The ruling marked the first questioning of FDR's authority, and served as a turning point in FDR's administration. Shortly after the decision in *Panama Refining Co.*, Roosevelt experienced similar defeats with other New Deal bills as the Court struck down legislation including the Railroad Pension Act, Farm Mortgage Law, Agricultural Adjustment Act, and Bituminous Coal Act.¹²

The transition from FDR's complete authority to his constant failures is rather difficult to comprehend. In the time span between March of 1933 when he took office, and January of 1935 when the *Panama Refining Co.* decision was handed down, FDR's clout plummeted dramatically. Robert Cushman describes FDR's decline in authority as a product of the changing social environment.

A despairing and bewildered country accepted the new legislation at its face value, or the value placed on it by the Administration, politics and opposition were "adjourned," and most of those who discussed the constitutionality of what was being done were inclined to feel that in a great national crisis the measures necessary to national self-preservation must surely fall within the proper ranges of governmental authority. The Court, however, was spared the necessity of determining the validity of the Recovery program in the tense atmosphere of national crisis. After the lapse of two years, the depression showed some signs of abatement, political opposition had revived, and a public opinion which had somewhat uncritically accepted the New Deal as the only shelter in time of storm had begun to show itself in numerous quarters decidedly skeptical. The Court, therefore, was placed in the position of examining the recovery measures in 1935 in the much more normal atmosphere of two-sided debate.¹³

¹¹ *Panama Refining Co. v. Ryan*, 293 U.S. 388 (1935)

¹² DiClerico, 325.

¹³ Cushman, Robert E. *Constitutional Law in 1934-35: The Constitutional Decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States in the October Term, 1934.* (*The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 30, No. 1.

As stated earlier, the Court's examination of New Deal legislation proved to be damaging to Roosevelt's quest for reform. "By handing down a series of decisions disrupting the New Deal, the high court had made itself the bane of FDR's existence."¹⁴ Faced with the predicament of amending his legislation and risking the chance of further defeat, Roosevelt instead elected to alter the playing field by proposing an alteration in the federal judiciary. The episode of FDR's defeat at the hands of the Court provides for an impressive display of adaptive leadership; Roosevelt departed from his original agenda of reform in the hopes of conquering the obstacle that had thus far hindered his progress. Though the idea of radically changing the makeup of the judiciary appears to be a bold, if not radical scheme, it must be viewed in the context of Roosevelt's environment in March of 1937, when he first publicly discussed increasing the size of the judiciary.¹⁵

Following Roosevelt's successful bid in 1936, during which he humiliated his opponent Alf Landon by carrying 528 of the possible 536 electoral votes, he began his second term in office with the promise to continue along the path traveled during the last administration. Despite acknowledging the increase in public morale, Roosevelt recognized the need for continued efforts.¹⁶ Suspecting that more legislation would be required to remove the social ills still plaguing U.S. citizens, Roosevelt set out to reform the Supreme Court. In his account of FDR's decision, DiClerico explains:

He took the brash step of proposing legislation to Congress that would permit the president to add an additional member to the Supreme Court for every judge who reached the age of seventy and did not avail himself of the opportunity to retire. Since there were six judges who

Feb., 1936), 51-89.

¹⁴ Shogan, Robert. Backlash: The Killing of the New Deal. (Ivan R. Dee: Chicago, 2006), 9.

¹⁵ Barber, 297.

¹⁶ Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Second Inaugural Address*. Presented: Jan. 20, 1937. (After recognizing the administration's progress, Roosevelt proceeded to identify individuals that required further attention from the government. See stanzas 24 – 28)

fell into this category, Roosevelt would be able to add six additional members and thus break the conservative hold on the Court.¹⁷

By many accounts, Roosevelt's scheme was doomed from the start. Upon presenting the bill to the highest-ranking officials in his party, FDR received only lackluster support. Venturing past the party members' unwillingness to embrace the bill, FDR also encountered opposition with the American public. "The mail pouring into congressional offices was running 9 to 1 against the plan and increasing in volume."¹⁸ FDR had made a gross miscalculation, and his mistake led many to question New Deal policy. FDR's Senate Resolution 1392, more commonly referred to as "A Bill to Reorganize the Judicial Branch of the Government", was eventually signed into law on August 26, 1937, yet not before all attempts to overhaul the Court had been stricken from the bill.¹⁹ In addition to weakening his public image, the saga proved to be detrimental to the Democratic Party, as the bill's vote exposed a wealth of uncertainty among Democratic senators.

Roosevelt's court-packing disaster splintered the Democratic Party and left his political future uncertain. However, late in the 1930s Roosevelt found himself at the forefront of an international crisis, which inevitably provided him with the support necessary to continue as president. Author Robert Divine describes the episode with great detail in his book, Roosevelt and World War II. According to Divine,

The approach of the Second World War came almost as a godsend for Roosevelt the politician. Facing a hostile coalition in Congress and unable to extend the New Deal, the President seemed destined for retirement at the end of his second term as a man who had served well but lost his touch. The war gave him a second chance as the people turned to his trusted leadership in the face of a new and complex challenge.²⁰

To understand how Roosevelt succeeded in regaining the public's support, it is necessary to examine the events that occurred prior World War II. Reviewing Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in

¹⁷ DiClerico, 325.

¹⁸ Shogan, 123.

¹⁹ Ibid, 219.

²⁰ Divine, Robert. Roosevelt and World War II. (The Johns Hopkins Press: Baltimore, 1969), 3.

1935, and paying close attention to Roosevelt's involvement in the event, provides an example of adaptive leadership.

Upon arriving in office, Roosevelt refused to develop an elaborate foreign policy. In the midst of the Great Depression, Roosevelt instead decided to focus solely on improving domestic issues. In discussing Roosevelt's agenda, Divine states, "His major desires in the mid-thirties were to achieve recovery and carry out sweeping domestic reforms; he could not jeopardize these vital goals with an unpopular foreign policy."²¹ With his effort spent resolving the ailments of the Depression, Roosevelt accepted popular sentiment by supporting isolationist policy, which had become increasingly popular since the end of World War I. According to John Wiltz, the public's demand for isolationism was the product of a newly developed perception of war. Whereas war had seemed valiant in previous years, American society during the 1920s and 1930s viewed war as a repulsive convention. Speaking on behalf of popular sentiment during the era, Wiltz states, "Reflecting on war, people in the years after 1918 were not inclined to envision cavalry charges with banners flying and sabers flashing. They saw mud, barbed wire, fear, desolation, death."²² With popular sentiment supporting isolationism, Roosevelt was forced to comply with the public's demands. Yet as the threat of war developed during the 1930s, FDR slowly developed a hawkish position, bringing the nation closer to the battlefield.

In Roosevelt's first term Germany and Italy became increasingly hostile nations. Yet despite their antagonism against other European nations, Roosevelt declined to denounce their behaviors. Yet in October of 1935, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia caused Roosevelt to develop a foreign policy platform, which by most accounts hindered Italy's aggressive behavior. Invoking

²¹ Ibid, 6.

²² Wiltz, John E. From Isolation to War, 1931 – 1941. (Thomas Y. Crowell company: New York, 1968), 10.

the recently passed Neutrality Act, Roosevelt instituted an arms embargo with both nations.²³ Along with the trade embargo, Roosevelt issued a final statement that discouraged Americans from participating in trade of any kind with the warring nations, which would come to be known as Roosevelt's *moral embargo*.²⁴ The moral embargo provides a prime example of adaptive leadership, as FDR used his political prowess to handle the delicate situation. Roosevelt's moral embargo appealed to the American public's pathos in an attempt to thwart Italy's invasion. By identifying the moral implications of aiding an aggressor, Roosevelt denounced those who profit would from war, and shaped the international dilemma into a humanitarian issue. Ultimately, Roosevelt's actions enabled him to influence the situation, while still maintaining an isolationist platform.

Citizen Compassion

As the threat of war became increasingly likely, the American public slowly reconciled their problems with Roosevelt. In the face of danger many Americans rallied around FDR, affording him a sense of confidence that few presidents have enjoyed. The public's continued support for their chief executive is likely the product of Roosevelt's unyielding citizen compassion. During his time in office, Roosevelt developed a close relationship with the public, which he constantly sought to improve upon. In *The People and the President*, authors Lawrence and Cornelia Levine discuss Roosevelt's relationship with the public.

FDR transformed the role of the federal government and the nature of the presidency. He was more exposed to and better known by the American people than any of his predecessors . . . among the many profound changes he presided over was what constituted a revolution in the pattern of communication between Americans and their Chief Executive.²⁵

While Roosevelt's communication transformation can be understood as an effort to better express his ideas to the electorate, his desire to revolutionize the relationship between the

²³ Divine, 11.

²⁴ The phrase *moral embargo* is shared by several scholars, including Divine and Wiltz.

²⁵ Levine, Cornelia & Lawrence. *The People and the President*. (Beacon Press: Boston, 2002), X.

Executive branch and the public must be explained through Roosevelt's upbringing and his social status.

Franklin Roosevelt was born into a wealthy family and spent the majority of adolescence in Hyde Park, a suburban area located near New York City. Although he belonged to a privileged class, Roosevelt's parents constantly reminded him of his civic duty. Scholar Robert McElvaine comments that, "From an early age FDR was taught that those who enjoy privilege must be willing to give back to the community, and that people of wealth, especially large land holders, should practice stewardship – conserve the land and other resources for future generations and help improve conditions for the poorer residents in their area."²⁶ In addition to the lessons received from his parents, Roosevelt received further guidance while at Groton School.

Groton was another sheltered world, but one in which well-born boys were exposed to the problems of the larger world. Under the tutelage of headmaster Endicott Peabody, Roosevelt and his schoolmates were groomed to be leaders, encouraged to be active, and taught that their duty was to work to rectify social ills.²⁷

Since Roosevelt's adolescence filled with lessons pertaining to his civic responsibility, it comes as no surprise that Roosevelt built his political career on bettering the lives of disenfranchised people. Biographer Frank Freidel claims, "Roosevelt, ever since he had first campaigned for the New York State Senate in 1910, had proclaimed himself in politics as the friend of the farmer."²⁸ Roosevelt's New Deal also reflects his desire to help the less fortunate, as the majority of New Deal legislation was aimed at providing relief to farm, rail, and factory workers. But despite the desire to help others, initially Roosevelt lacked the means necessary to communicate with the American public. Roosevelt's innovative communication techniques helped resolve this conundrum, as the President employed various methods to obtain and disseminate information.

²⁶ McElvaine, Robert. Franklin Delano Roosevelt. (CQ Press: Washington, D.C., 2002), 16.

²⁷ Ibid, 17

²⁸ Freidel, Frank. Franklin D. Roosevelt: Launching the New Deal. (Little, Brown and Company: Boston & Toronto, 1973) 86.

Communication Techniques and Capabilities

Franklin Roosevelt's communication skills allowed him to revolutionize the executive office, as he reached out to the public and foreign leaders in ways never before done. His innovative strategies helped him gain support for his agenda and did wonders for his public image. Of the numerous communication schemes employed during his tenure in office, Roosevelt is perhaps most well known for his Fireside Chat.

In order to sell his New Deal agenda, Roosevelt addressed the public through Fireside Chats. With radio serving as the primary medium of entertainment during the early 1930s, Roosevelt took his message of reform to the airways and was widely received by the American public. Much of the success came from FDR's desire to express his thoughts directly to the public, rather than allow his words to trickle from his mouth, to the media, and then eventually the public. "As a number of scholars have observed, the written word was increasingly replaced by the spoken word. Radio certainly stimulated the rise of what has been called the "rhetorical presidency," in which FDR used his speeches as "events" in and of themselves in an attempt to communicate with the public over the heads of the legislature and the newspapers."²⁹ By removing the barriers between which had previously existed between the American electorate and the federal government, FDR developed a strong relationship with the public. The myriad of letters he received during his presidency, many of them in response to his Fireside Chats, demonstrate the strength of his bond with the public.

Although creating considerable strain on his staff, during his Fireside Chats FDR encouraged his listeners to send letters to the White House. "When in the midst of one address Roosevelt

²⁹ Levine, Cornelia & Lawrence, 4

invited his audience to “tell me your troubles,” Ira Smith, the White House Chief of Mails, testified that large numbers of people “believed that he was speaking to them personally and immediately wrote him a letter.”³⁰ FDR’s encouragement created the largest influx of mail to the White House in its history; the White House mail staff labored through the roughly 5,000 letters that arrived each day.³¹ Although the letters created an incredible burden on the White House mail staff, they provided the administration with a clear channel of public opinion. “FDR especially valued these letters because, as he informed his adviser Louis Howe, who supervised the President’s correspondence both before and directly after he became President, personal mail from everyday folks, who tended to express their convictions honestly, constituted the ‘most perfect index to the state of mind of the people’.”³² Recognizing the value in receiving the letters, FDR regularly encouraged his listeners to continue writing letters.

The constant flow of mail into the White House was largely supported by the personalized response which nearly every letter received. Although only a handful of the mail made it as far as FDR’s desk, each letter received a customized response, according to author Leila A. Sussmann. “Undaunted by the greatest deluge of letters ever seen in the White House, the staff did not budge from their long standing principle: a personal letter to FDR, no matter from whom it came, deserved a careful, prompt and individual reply.”³³ The carefully worded responses played an integral part in the development of FDR’s public image, as a majority of the public was convinced that FDR had personally written each reply. Furthermore, the responses fostered confidence in the federal government and the executive for citizens suffering from the Great Depression.

³⁰ Ibid, Pg. 5

³¹ Smith, Ira. *Dear Mr. President*. (Julian Messner, Inc.: New York, 1949), 214.

³² Howe, LouisMcHenry. *The President’s Mail Bag*. (*American Magazine*. June 1934.) 23.

³³ Sussmann, Leila A. *FDR and the White House Mail*. (*The Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol 20, Issue 1: Spring 1956), 8.

While Roosevelt used his Fireside Chats to gain the support of the public, he also made use of the media to further his agenda. Scholar Michael Carew claims that, upon entering office, FDR had a wealth of experience with the media. “More than any prior president, Franklin Roosevelt had broad experience with what is now called the communications media. He had worked at his college daily newspaper, the *Harvard Crimson*, rising to editor and president in his senior year.”³⁴ With a strong understanding for the industry FDR utilized print media to express his policy ideas and further develop public support. This is most apparent in Roosevelt’s selling of the war, where he made a plethora of public statements that hinted at his desire to enter the war, or at the very least aid European allies.

When Roosevelt first spoke out publicly against the actions of Germany and Italy, his words were well documented by the print media and communicated both to the American public and foreign leaders. With the help of numerous newsmagazine editors, with whom he enjoyed close relationships, Roosevelt utilized print media to advance his foreign policy agenda.³⁵ In his famous “Saturday surprise,” Roosevelt denounced the aggressions in Europe and requested that Hitler and Mussolini not attack the 31 U.S. ally nations in the region. In return for their compliance, Germany and Italy would receive trading preference with the U.S. Although subtle in his appeal, Roosevelt’s strategic communication “put Hitler and Mussolini on the spot for what they were.”³⁶ By offering to utilize political means to solve the growing crisis in Europe, Roosevelt appeared as a diplomat, rather than a president anxious to enter the war. Wiltz claims that, “Roosevelt roused the American people to the imminence of danger, stigmatized the

³⁴ Carew, Michael. The Power to Persuade: FDR, the Newsmagazines, and Going to War, 1939 – 1941. (University Press of America: Lanham, 2005), 81.

³⁵ Ibid, 88 – 92.

³⁶ Wiltz, 71.

dictators as perpetrators of international discord, and heartened non-Axis countries in Europe.”³⁷ Through his well-planned communication, Roosevelt occupied a position that helped gain public support, while allowing him to further his policy initiative.

Conclusion

Despite numerous setbacks with the Supreme Court and the Court-packing disaster, Franklin Roosevelt is remembered as a valiant, courageous, and successful president. I believe that much of Roosevelt’s success is attributable to his satisfying of my three criteria. By practicing adaptive leadership, citizen compassion, and strategic communication, Roosevelt endured countless impediments, yet emerged victorious.

Ronald Reagan

As the son of middle class Americans, Ronald Reagan was not born into the upper echelons of society like the vast majority of presidents. Growing up in Illinois, Nixon attended public schools and after graduating from high school went on to study at nearby Eureka College. After college, Reagan made a living as a sports announcer for a local radio station and eventually signed a contract to act in films for Warner Brothers. Reagan enjoyed moderate success in Hollywood, acting in a host of “B level” movies. Reagan’s prominence catapulted him to the head of the Screen Actors Guild, where he would serve as the organization’s president. After Hollywood, Reagan went on to work for General Electric as a company spokesman. Although Reagan began his career as a liberal, voting for Franklin Roosevelt four times, during his public career Reagan evolved into a dedicated conservative.³⁸ In 1966 Reagan campaigned for and won the California governorship, where he served for eight years before entering the presidential race of 1976. After a narrow defeat from Gerald Ford, Reagan momentarily retreated from the

³⁷ Ibid, 71.

³⁸ Greenstein, 148

political arena, opting instead to host a nationally broadcast radio show. Four years after losing the Republican nomination for president to Ford, Reagan entered the White House as the nation's 40th president.

Ronald Reagan was a successful president because, although he entered office amidst a monetary crisis and a dismally low public morale, upon completion of his second term the nation had experienced an economic boom and a dramatic increase in confidence. Reagan was the first president to serve two full terms in more than 30 years and helped restore national pride and patriotism. In addition to these intangible achievements, Reagan also made a lasting accomplishment by bringing about an end to the Cold War. While his predecessors constantly attempted to combat the Cold War, either through diplomatic relations or military buildup, it was during Reagan's presidency that the Cold War finally began to wilt away. In achieving success during his presidency, Reagan exhibited adaptive leadership and citizen compassion yet relied primarily on his communication aptitudes.

Adaptive Leadership

To make good on his campaign promise of strengthening the armed services, Ronald Reagan embarked on a host of initiatives aimed at achieving military superiority. On March 23, 1983, Reagan addressed the nation to offer his reasoning for increased defense spending. According to Reagan, "We had to move immediately to improve the basic readiness and staying power of our conventional forces, so they could meet--and therefore help deter--a crisis. We had to make up for lost years of investment by moving forward with a long-term plan to prepare our forces to counter the military capabilities our adversaries were developing for the future."³⁹ Although his

³⁹ Reagan, Ronald. *Address to the Nation*. March 23, 1983. Accessed via <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2004/reagan/stories/speech.archive/defense.html>

“investment” plans were met with mixed feelings, Reagan’s missile defense plan encountered widespread skepticism.

Missile defense had become a major concern to Reagan and the Pentagon after the Soviet Premier publicly acknowledged the Soviet Union’s nuclear capabilities. According to author Walter LaFeber, “In November 1983 Andropov announced that Soviet submarines carrying nuclear weapons were now deployed in larger numbers closer to U.S. coasts. Their missiles could hit U.S. targets in less than ten minutes after launch.”⁴⁰ After weighing the significance of Andropov’s claims, Reagan set forth with his notorious Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Commonly referred to as Star Wars, SDI relied upon high intensity lasers, stationed on satellites orbiting the earth, to destroy incoming missiles.⁴¹ Almost immediately after its introduction, scientists began to identify the loopholes of the proposed defense initiative. “The plan depended on technology that lay far into the future. Indeed, according to many scientists who studied and objected to the plan, it was based on technology that would never be possible, although the futile quest for it could be unimaginably expensive and dangerously destabilizing for both the American economy and U.S. Soviet relations.”⁴² Furthermore, the problems associated with testing the defense system offered further limitations to Reagan’s proposal. In their article against the SDI, Jerome Slater and David Goldfischer argued:

Even if the various exotic technologies currently being explored by the United States (as well as by the Soviet Union) – supercomputers, software programs of unprecedented complexity, orbiting space stations, lasers or particle-beam weapons, etc. – prove to be feasible in principle, which is by no means assured, there would still be perhaps insoluble operational problems of joining the various technologies together into a complex weapons system that would have to work in near-perfect fashion the first time it was actually used in battle.⁴³

⁴⁰ LaFeber, Walter. “The Two – or Three? – Phase of U.S. – Soviet Relations.” Crisis and Confrontation. Ed. Morris H. Morley. (Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988), 29.

⁴¹ Morley, Morris. H Crisis and Confrontation. (Totowa: Rowman & Littlefield, 1988), Introduction.

⁴² Ibid, 35.

⁴³ Slater, Jerome & Goldfischer, David. *Can SDI Provide a Defense?* (Political Science Quarterly. Vol. 101, Issue 5: 1986), 841.

While the science community was hesitant to embrace the President's answer to Soviet nuclear capabilities, members of the social science community were largely against the idea of embarking upon a new chapter in the development of nuclear weaponry.

Although the vision of a nuclear-safe nation was intriguing, many philosophers and political scientists expressed disapproval of the Strategic Defense Initiative. Claiming that such an initiative would lead to universal military build-up, some scholars went so far as to state that SDI would compromise the nation's safety. In an article published in late 1984, Sidney Drell asserted, "The initiation of an intensified R&D program looking towards a declared goal is not a harmless step. Even if no system is ever deployed, increased instability can result as both sides build up their forces over necessarily long lead times to preserve their retaliatory capability and try to match each other's anticipated ABM capability."⁴⁴ Convinced that such a program would bring about more harm than good, an impressive number of social scientists spoke out against SDI. While at the time such complaints were in large part ignored by the Reagan administration, during an interview in 1995 former National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane acknowledged the compromising situation brought on by the introduction of Star Wars. According to McFarlane, "With SDI we seemed to suggest that the United States wanted to have first-strike capability. If you protect your own people and don't have to worry about getting hit, it is safe for you to attack them. If it looks that way in the Kremlin, won't they attack you before you get SDI built? So you are making the world a much less stable place."⁴⁵ The former security advisor's admission, along with the abundance of criticism from the academic community,

⁴⁴ Drell, Sidney D. Farley, Philip. Holloway, David. *Preserving the ABM Treaty: A Critique of the Reagan Strategic Defense Initiative*. (International Security. Vol. 9, Issue 2: 1984), 89.

⁴⁵ McFarlane, Robert. Reagan: The Man and His Presidency. Ed. Deborah Strober and Gerald Strober. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 249.

suggests that SDI was terminally flawed, as the potential gains in safety were surpassed by the associated dangers of Soviet retaliation.

Despite grave concerns from professional communities, Reagan continued to pursue the Strategic Defense Initiative throughout the remainder of his first term and well into his second term, as evinced by Reykjavik. In 1986, Reagan met with Mikhail Gorbachev at Reykjavik to discuss nuclear bans and disarmament, yet failed to reach an agreement after refusing to do away with the Strategic Defense Initiative. The inability to secure a meaningful agreement dealt a major blow to Reagan and SDI. As author Peter Wallison recounts, “Returning to the United States, Reagan was greeted with a barrage of complaints for allowing SDI – which was, after all, only an unproven concept – to stand in the way of a significant disarmament agreement.”⁴⁶ Along with the complaints, Reagan was also faced with a public that had become increasingly hostile to SDI.

Initially, the American public initially supported SDI. In a joint survey conducted by CBS and *The New York Times* in April 1983, 67% of respondents supported research and development of an anti-nuclear missile shield over the United States.⁴⁷ Yet after two years of waiting, and relatively little evidence that such a program would prove successful, the public’s opinion began to shift. In March 1985, a Harris poll revealed that 56% of respondents were opposed to developing a defense system that relied upon lasers.⁴⁸ With lasers constituting a major element of SDI, the survey results can be interpreted as a clear departure from the public’s widespread support only two years earlier.

⁴⁶ Wallison, Peter. Ronald Reagan: The Power and Conviction and the Success of His Presidency. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003). 68.

⁴⁷ Graham, Thomas. & Bernard Kramer. *The Polls: ABM and Star Wars Attitudes Toward Nuclear Defense, 1945 – 1985*. (The Public Opinion Quarterly. Vol. 50, Issue 1: 1986) 130.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 132.

With the Strategic Defense Initiative, and for that matter Reagan's hawkish disposition, coming under extreme fire from scholars and the general public, Reagan embarked upon a new path in his foreign policy. Since his arrival in office, Reagan had cautiously observed the Soviet Union and done much to prepare for a possible conflict between the United States and the U.S.S.R. During his first term, such preparations involved massive military spending and the development of more advanced and destructive weaponry. Yet at the start of Reagan's second term the U.S.S.R. faced an economic crisis, which presented an opportunity for Reagan to shift his foreign policy and strive for a more diplomatic relationship with the Soviets. Recognizing that disarmament would reduce the Soviet threat, Reagan began his quest to rid the world of nuclear weapons. Mindful of his critics and the dwindling support of the public for SDI, Reagan used the economic crisis to change from a policy of military superiority to one of diplomacy.

In the mid 1980s, the Soviet Union experienced several years of economic contraction. According to author John Arquilla, most of the economic misfortune was the result of government corruption and inefficiency. "The Soviets had been busily contributing to their own economic problems. First there was the matter of high-level party corruption, which saw vast sums skimmed off by key members of the ruling elite . . . In addition to the corruption, though, there were even greater costs and inefficiencies associated with the existing Soviet bureaucracy's wasteful processes."⁴⁹ With the possibility of reducing military costs, the Soviets were eager to work with the U.S. to reach arms agreements.

But while the economic downtrend served as a catalyst for change, it should not overshadow the importance of Reagan's decision to change course at the beginning of his second term.

Reagan's choice to pursue diplomacy offers an exemplary display of adaptive leadership, as he

⁴⁹ Arquilla, John. The Reagan Imprint: Ideas in American Foreign Policy from the Collapse of Communism to the War On Terror. (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 41.

maneuvered around past grievances to accomplish major disarmament treaties. Although it was not until Reagan's third meeting with Soviet Premier Gorbachev in December of 1987 that the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force Treaty (INF) was signed, Reagan's adaptive leadership allowed him to undo over 40 years of hostilities between the two nations and to produce a concrete disarmament agreement.⁵⁰

Citizen Compassion

Ronald Reagan entered office at a time when the public had nearly lost confidence in the federal government. The ever-rising unemployment and inflation rates, coupled with the highly publicized Iranian Hostage Crisis, were continuous testaments to the Carter Administration's ineffectiveness. While campaigning, Reagan pledged to rid the nation of the host of problems that had plagued the Carter Administration, while restoring America's greatness. Michael Foley recounts the period by stating, "After four failed presidencies, the time seemed ripe for radical solutions, and the mantle of respectability – even necessity – attached itself to the right wing of the Republic party."⁵¹ Reagan's sense of citizen compassion allowed him to understand the ailing state of affairs and develop a platform focused on healing the nation. Yet to understand how Reagan developed such a profound sense of citizen compassion, it is necessary to examine his background.

Whereas Franklin Roosevelt enjoyed a privileged childhood, his successful counterpart Ronald Reagan experienced a less desirable situation. Born into a modest, middle-class family in Illinois, Reagan was constantly on the move during his early years as his family relocated

⁵⁰ Ibid, 81.

⁵¹ Foley, Michael. *Presidential Leadership and the Presidency. The Reagan Years*. Ed. Joseph Hogan. (New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), 29.

several times during the first 10 years of Reagan's life. Author Adrianna Bosch captures Reagan's childhood experience by saying, "From the age of four to the age of ten, Reagan lived the life of a nomad, every year a new school, a new town, neighbors and friends left behind. The little boy had nowhere to go except within."⁵² Reagan also differed from Roosevelt in that they were afforded extremely different fathers. While Franklin's father James had enjoyed much success in his business ventures, Ronald's father Jack made his living selling shoes and never achieved the success he set out for.⁵³ To make matters worse, Jack Reagan was well known for his alcoholism. Yet despite Reagan's dismal situation, he made a name for himself in the small community of Dixon, Illinois. He excelled in extra-curricular activities, was popular among his peers, and upon graduation from high school went off to Eureka College.

Having come from humble upbringings, Reagan embodied the "average man", and despite his positions in the entertainment industry and Corporate America, Reagan never forgot his roots. Although his acting career had removed his middle-class status many years ago, upon campaigning for the presidency in 1979, Reagan acknowledged that he had not forgotten the "average man". He worked hard to win votes from traditionally Democratic voting blocs. "From the New Jersey waterfront, to a street in the Bronx, and a steel mill in Ohio, Reagan reached out to new constituencies – ethnic minorities working hard to "make it" in America, Catholics who supported his anti-abortion platform, and most important, blue-collar workers – who had traditionally voted Democrat."⁵⁴ When Reagan asked if the American public was better off than they were four years ago, such groups found themselves drifting away from Reagan's opponent Carter, along with the Democratic Party.

⁵² Bosch, Adriana. Reagan: An American Story. (New York: TV Books, 1998), 26.

⁵³ Greenstein, Fred. The Presidential Difference: Leadership Styles from Roosevelt to George W. Bush. (The Free Press: New York, 2000)

⁵⁴ Bosch, 125.

Given Reagan's close ties to the middle class, it should come as no surprise that he demonstrated impressive citizen compassion, as evinced primarily by his policy agenda. According to Bosch, upon entering office "Reagan saw a troubled America – besieged by economic problems, losing grounds to an expansionist Soviet Union, suffering from a loss of confidence in itself and even in the very office he had just assumed."⁵⁵ To combat the nation's ailments, Reagan proposed massive tax cuts and attempted to shrink government. Whereas the origins of Roosevelt's citizen compassion necessitated a deep investigation of his childhood and life experiences, the basis of Reagan's citizen compassion is easily discernable. Reagan was from a middle class family, had experienced the lifestyle of typical Americans in rural America, and never lost sight of his past. Therefore, Reagan's citizen compassion was the product of his years in Illinois, as the son of middle-class, uneducated Americans.

Communication Techniques and Capabilities

Commonly referred to as "The Great Communicator," Ronald Reagan regularly displayed impressive negotiation, oratory, and written abilities during his time in office. These skills were the fruits of Reagan's labors throughout his professional career, which began nearly 50 years before he won the Presidency. Such abilities allowed him to promote his political ideology, while also raising the public's confidence and promoting a sense of national prosperity.

Upon graduation from Eureka College, Reagan found work as a sports broadcaster for a small radio station in Iowa. His broadcasting was well received and earned him modest notoriety in the entertainment industry. Eventually, Reagan was given the opportunity to audition for Warner Brothers Studios and was offered a contract with the studio.⁵⁶ While acting undoubtedly

⁵⁵ Ibid, 145.

⁵⁶ Collins, Robert. Transforming America: Politics and Culture During the Reagan Era. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 33.

helped Reagan become a better speaker, it was more significant because it paved his way to membership, and eventually leadership of, the Screen Actor's Guild.

Reagan joined the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) in 1937 and was the association's president from 1947 – 1952 and 1959 – 60.⁵⁷ Apart from serving as a major development in his political ideology, Reagan's stint as president of SAG also introduced him to the art of negotiation. According to scholar Robert Collins, "Reagan's SAG experience was formative in that it helped him become an unusually effective negotiator. Throughout his subsequent political career Reagan relied on skills that he had developed in long Hollywood negotiating sessions with studio bosses on a variety of contentious work-related issues."⁵⁸ The skills Reagan developed while with SAG would prove to be of foremost assistance during his talks with Mikhail Gorbachev.

Similar to negotiation, Reagan also excelled in public speaking. Hired by General Electric to host a television program titled *G.E. Theater*, Reagan spoke to G.E. employees on behalf of the conglomerate. "He traveled throughout the country to speak at General Electric offices and factories. Reagan frequently acted in the program but he is best remembered as the program host and the pitchman for G.E., preaching the virtues of free enterprise."⁵⁹ During these stops Reagan perfected his public speaking talents, which were constantly exhibited throughout his political career. A classic display of Reagan's public speaking prowess occurred during the Republican National Convention in 1976, when Gerald Ford allowed Reagan to address the delegates. John Patrick Diggins provides a vivid account for the evening.

After he [Gerald Ford] had completed his acceptance speech and the applause had quieted down, Ford looked high up in the convention arena, where Reagan, Nancy and their team were seated in a skybox. Ford beckoned with his arm for Reagan to come down and the crowd shouted, "Speech! Speech!" When Reagan appeared at the podium and started to speak, the entire crowd

⁵⁷ Ibid, 35.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 35.

⁵⁹ Diggins, John Patrick. Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 76.

was standing. Reagan had no prepared text, but he spoke like a prophet, reminding his audience that he would also be addressing “people a hundred years from now, who know all about us.”

The crowd rejoiced, and when the applause died down murmurs could be heard coming from delegates who wondered if they had nominated the wrong person.⁶⁰

For the delegates less familiar with Reagan, his speech served to fortify his image. Several years later when Reagan embarked on the campaign trail once again, he relied upon his rousing speaking style to capture potential voters. According to Ronald Godwin of the Moral Majority, “He [Reagan] would give these tremendously inspiring speeches that had all the right rhetoric, that articulated the dreams, aspirations and values they [religious voters] cherished.”⁶¹ Reagan’s gift of oration proved to be an indispensable asset during his quest for the Presidency, allowing him to capture the attention of the masses and captivate his audiences.

While Reagan was well known for his negotiating and public speaking abilities, he was a powerful writer as well, which was manifested through his speeches and letters. According to author Martin Anderson, “He [Reagan] was a tremendous writer. In the early days of the campaign, he wrote all his own speeches.”⁶² As with his speeches, Reagan also preferred to write his own letters. Reagan’s letters came in two varieties: letters to constituents and friends, and letters to foreign leaders. Recounting his time with President Reagan, Peter Wallison was astonished when he discovered that the President wrote personalized responses to the letters he received. “What amazed me, however, was that the President was writing his own responses to these letters – that at least in these cases the correspondents were getting real things and not the perfunctory response of a programmed assistant in the White House Correspondence Unit.”⁶³

⁶⁰ Ibid, 159 – 160.

⁶¹ Godwin, Ronald. Reagan: The Man and His Presidency. Ed. Deborah Strober and Gerald Strober. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 28.

⁶² Anderson, Martin Reagan: The Man and His Presidency. Ed. Deborah Strober and Gerald Strober. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 31.

⁶³ Wallison, Peter. Ronald Reagan: The Power of Conviction and the Success of his Presidency. (Cambridge: Westview Press, 2003), 83.

Through his letters, Reagan maintained an open line of communication with the American public, allowing them direct access to the Executive Branch for the first time in several decades.

Examples of Reagan's letter writing are also evident in his communication with Soviet Leaders. While recovering from his assassination attempt, Reagan drafted a letter to then Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. Reagan's policy advisors and speechwriters reviewed the President's draft, making numerous edits, which eventually led to the creation of an entirely new document. Upon receiving the new letter, Reagan elected to ignore his advisors' corrections and send his original work. In discussing the letter, Diggins writes, "It was a thoughtful document that tried to get to the bottom of the dangerous distrust the United States and the USSR had toward one another."⁶⁴ Although the letter failed to secure the diplomatic relationship Reagan was hoping to establish, the document provided insight into Reagan's unique ability to communicate through writing.

While Reagan regularly utilized a variety of communication mediums, he exuded feelings of prosperity, and reverence in virtually all of his actions. Beginning with his inauguration, Reagan took steps to rebuild the glory of the presidency.

Reagan's inaugural festivities were intended to convey a mood of renewal and optimism. At an estimated cost of \$8 million, the three-day extravaganza began with a \$800,000 fireworks display at the Lincoln Memorial followed by two nights of show-business performances including Frank Sinatra, Jimmy Stewart, Rich Little and Johnny Carson. Three tons of jellybeans – Reagan's favorite candy – were flown in. At \$2,000 per night limousines had to be brought in from as far away as Atlanta, to ferry around the movie stars, millionaire Californians and conservative Midwesterners who had descended on the capital to celebrate in style.⁶⁵

The inauguration set the stage for a new era in America, as Reagan constantly attempted to exhibit American prosperity. Believing that the Executive Branch was an integral part of the nation's prosperity, Reagan went out of his way to demonstrate respect for the Office.

According to Wallison, "As always in the Oval Office, the President was impeccably dressed in

⁶⁴ Diggins, 191.

⁶⁵ Bosch, 143.

a business suit. It is now well known that, out of respect for the office, Reagan never took off his suit jacket while there.”⁶⁶ Reagan’s exhibition of prosperity and reverence were important factors in his ability to inspire the public, and his effort helped rebuild the presidential mystique.

Through his actions Reagan also communicated a sense of heroism, which was most evinced through his behavior shortly after his assassination attempt. On March 30, 1981, John Hinckley attempted to assassinate Ronald Reagan outside the Washington Hilton Hotel.⁶⁷ Although Reagan narrowly escaped death, the elderly president showed impressive exuberance, leaving the hospital less than two weeks after the failed assassination.⁶⁸ The episode proved to be a major boost in support for Reagan, as “his record-setting tax cuts were passed, and his heroic image during the crisis was solidified in the imagination of the American people.”⁶⁹ So while Reagan possessed superior communication abilities, his effectiveness as a communicator was also supported by the images of prosperity, reverence, and confidence, which he constantly sought to express.

Conclusion

As with Roosevelt, I have concluded that Reagan’s success can be explained through his display of my three qualities, with particular focus given to his communication aptitude. It is through these qualities that Reagan was able to restore pride and patriotism, while also making significant strides in foreign policy.

Lyndon Johnson

⁶⁶ Wallison, 82.

⁶⁷ Bosch, 161.

⁶⁸ Gregg II, Gary L. *Ronald Reagan and the Rebuilding of the Symbolic Presidency*. The Reagan Presidency: Assessing the Man and His Legacy. Ed. Paul Kengor & Peter Schweizer. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 141.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 141.

Born in August of 1908, Lyndon Johnson's life spanned nearly 8 decades, during which the nation experienced two world wars, a severe depression, and a handful of other significant dilemmas.⁷⁰ Johnson's childhood was spent in the heartland of Texas, where he enjoyed a modest, and at a times disadvantaged, lifestyle. Although scholarly accounts differ regarding the Johnson family's financial status, Johnson was afforded upper-echelon notoriety due to his lineage. Speaking of Johnson's kin, author Thomas Langston claims, "His ancestors and relations included a number of accomplished men and women – a college president, numerous teachers, preachers, lawyers and other professionals."⁷¹ In fact, Lyndon's father Sam served in the Texas House of Representatives, which seems to be the earliest source of Lyndon's interest in political life.⁷² Although Johnson was successful in the vast majority of his political ventures, as a president Johnson failed. Despite his domestic policy accomplishments, Johnson's disastrous handling of Vietnam overshadows his achievements. Johnson's inability to handle Vietnam was largely due to his lack of adaptive leadership. By examining Johnson's political career prior to entering the presidency, it becomes very apparent that Johnson was able to work through political quagmires, rather than relying upon adaptive leadership to resolve issues. During his presidency, Johnson attempted to apply his unyielding work ethic, as he had in the past, rather than demonstrating adaptive leadership. I believe that his failure to demonstrate adaptive leadership ultimately led to his demise. In the following section I will provide evidence that illustrates how Johnson's approach to work bore successes during his pre-presidential career, yet proved fatal for him as president.

Adaptive Leadership

⁷⁰ Woods, Randall. LBJ: Arcitechct of American Ambition. (Free Press: New York, 2006), 20, 884.

⁷¹ Langston, Thomas. Lyndon Baines Johnson. (CQ Press: Washington, D.C., 2002,) 15.

⁷² Ibid, 16.

While Johnson's early interest in politics was overshadowed by lackluster academic performance and a short stint in California, he formally entered politics in 1931 as a secretary for newly elected Richard Kleberg, who represented Texas's 14th District in the U.S. House of Representatives. As a secretary, Johnson first demonstrated his passion for work, as he single-handedly managed the entire political office. By most accounts, Kleberg was not particularly interested in politics. Instead, Kleberg had decided to participate in the special election in large part because of his business interests. Scholar Randall Woods asserts, "Richard Kleberg had little or no interest in being a congressman. He had run to represent his class and his vested interests in the national legislature and for the prestige of living large in the nation's capital."⁷³ Although Johnson offered a sharp contrast to Kleberg, the relationship served both individuals well, proving to be particularly beneficial for Johnson. According to Langston,

Johnson had the good fortune to be an ambitious young man working for an older man who had no ambition at all. Kleberg just wanted to play golf and have drinks, leaving his work to Johnson. Because Johnson loved work as much as Kleberg detested it, they made an odd but effective team, and Johnson had wide latitude to exercise his influence.⁷⁴

Through his position as secretary, Johnson quickly made inroads to various Washington politicians, while familiarizing himself with the workings of the federal government. Although Johnson tended to virtually all matters related to the 14th district, he found himself unemployed in 1935 due to his souring relationship with Kleberg's wife. Upon his dismissal from Kleberg's staff, Johnson immediately sought counsel from Texas congressmen Maury Maverick and Sam Rayburn.⁷⁵ Although neither individual was able to offer Johnson a position on their staff, both played instrumental roles in Johnson's quest to head the newly formed National Youth Administration.

⁷³ Woods, 76.

⁷⁴ Langston, 16.

⁷⁵ Unger, Debi & Irwin. LBJ: A Life. (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: New York, 1999), 52.

The National Youth Administration (NYA) was one of the many social welfare programs created during Roosevelt's New Deal. Originally the brainchild of Eleanor Roosevelt, NYA sought to provide employment to the America's youth between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, which exhibited disturbingly high levels of unemployment during the Great Depression.⁷⁶ Through his relationships with Rayburn and Maverick, Johnson was appointed director of the Texas NYA at the age of 26. Johnson's newly acquired position was significant in that it allowed him to develop political appeal. In discussing Johnson's role as director of NYA, author Robert Caro states, "His NYA job allowed Lyndon Johnson to expand not just his organization but his acquaintance."⁷⁷ Through NYA, Johnson developed relationships that would provide him with the support necessary for his future congressional campaigns. Woods also recognizes the significance of NYA in Johnson's political career. According to Woods, "Directing the National Youth Administration was a perfect fit for Johnson. It would allow him to get his name in newspapers throughout Texas as a community builder and benefactor of the state's youth."⁷⁸ The NYA was indeed a stepping-stone, as Johnson became a U.S. Representative only two years after his appointment to the organization.

With the sudden death of James Buchanan, Texas's 10th District was in need of a new representative. Johnson quickly recognized the opportunity and announced his candidacy in what would develop into an eight-way race. During the race, Johnson distinguished himself by pledging support to Roosevelt's New Deal. "Running as a hundred-percent New Dealer, promising President Franklin Delano Roosevelt support for all his policies, including the controversial presidential plan to expand the Supreme Court, Johnson won the election and the

⁷⁶ Caro, Robert. The Years of Lyndon Johnson: The Path to Power. (Alfred A Knopf: New York, 1982), 342

⁷⁷ Ibid, 361.

⁷⁸ Woods, 107.

notice of the president.”⁷⁹ In addition to his support for the New Deal, Johnson relied upon his unyielding work ethic to fend off rivals. According to Woods, “If nothing else, Johnson was determined to outwork his opponents.”⁸⁰ Johnson’s platform proved successful, as he triumphed over his competition and secured the seat. While Johnson’s support for New Deal legislation proved to increase his political viability, it also laid the framework for Johnson’s relationship with, and adoration of, with President Roosevelt.

After becoming a representative, Johnson’s continued to exhibit a strenuous work schedule. Unger claims that in working so many hours, “LBJ almost literally worked his fingers to the bone, developing a rash on his hand that cracked the skin and caused bleeding.”⁸¹ Johnson’s hard work served him well in the early stages of his political career, as he quickly rose to a position of prominence within the House. He served in the House of Representatives for roughly ten years before winning a seat in the Senate. Like his congressional race a decade earlier, Johnson had been in a frenzied state as he campaigned vigorously. Although he had become ill during the latter part of his campaign, Johnson refused medical treatment. Johnson’s reaction to his illness was typical, as he focused all his energies on outworking his opponent Coke Robert Stevenson and paid little attention to his personal wellbeing. According to Unger, Johnson’s condition had appeared before his campaign and worsened throughout the race.

Even before he announced for the Senate, Johnson had been feeling ill and complaining about abdominal pains and nausea that had usually accompanied kidney stones in the past. By the time he made his opening campaign speech, he needed painkillers to get through the evening. Undaunted, he continued to drive around the Texas panhandle making campaign speeches, dripping with perspiration from his fevers and doubled up with pain between his appearances before the public.⁸²

⁷⁹ Langston, 23.

⁸⁰ Woods, 123.

⁸¹ Unger, 69.

⁸² Ibid, 135.

Despite his deteriorating health, Johnson whole-heartedly refused medical treatment until it became absolutely necessary. It was not until the pain became unbearable that Johnson agreed to receive medical treatment, and only on the condition that he receive expedited treatment from the Mayo Clinic.⁸³ The episode offered another example of Johnson's steadfast ambition and work ethic, as he believed he was capable of working through his illness. While in the Senate, Johnson's extreme work behaviors persisted.

Johnson managed the Senate by ruthlessly driving himself and his staff. He put his office on a twenty-four-hour day, with shifts running day and night. He himself worked from sunup until the early hours of the next day, routinely talking and chain-smoking through eighteen or twenty hour days, barely pausing to inhale his meals.⁸⁴

By working long days and exerting unmatched effort, Johnson quickly rose among the Senate's ranks, and won him national recognition as a politician committed to public service.

Johnson served in the Senate for twelve years before receiving John Kennedy's invitation to run alongside him on the Democratic ticket in 1960. As Woods recalls, "The Kennedys had not really wanted him, but the Democrats had to have Texas to win the presidency, and LBJ, the Lone Star State's most famous contemporary politician, could carry Texas."⁸⁵ Johnson accepted the offer and served as vice president for three years until Kennedy's assassination. Although he had been a distant, if not absent, member of the Kennedy administration with relatively little responsibility, after the assassination Johnson found himself at the forefront of the federal government.

In assuming Kennedy's role, Johnson became heir to a host of issues which had gradually developed during the Kennedy Administration. Domestically, Johnson was forced to deal with the growing demand for civil rights and the economy's less than stellar performance over the

⁸³ Ibid, 135. Johnson consented to treatment after hearing that doctors at the Mayo Clinic had developed a new procedure for removing urethral stones without operating on patients.

⁸⁴ Schulman, Bruce J. Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism: A Brief Biography with Documents, 2nd Ed. (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2007), 46.

⁸⁵ Woods, 1.

past three years. With over 30 years of experience in politics, these issues were not particularly concerning to Johnson. Yet international policy was entirely different from domestic policy, and at times Johnson found himself unable to deal with such issues. Commenting on his performance on a diplomat, scholar Bruce Schulman comments,

Outside the nation's borders the political master seemingly lost his touch. He had to rely on the advice of experts, to navigate by abstract principles rather than by the sure instincts about that really worked and guided him so well in Congress. Often he misapplied tried-and-true techniques of domestic political combat to international problems, where they were hopelessly out of place.⁸⁶

Of the numerous foreign policy issues Johnson inherited, Vietnam proved to be the most significant obstacle to the Johnson Administration.

While in power, John Kennedy supported an independent South Vietnam. Believing that the Asian nation was an integral part in preventing the “Domino Theory,” President Kennedy sought to prevent South Vietnam from falling to communism. Although he was reluctant to send troops, Kennedy provided support to South Vietnam in a variety of forms. According to Schulman, Kennedy opted “instead to send equipment, economic assistance, and several thousand military advisers.”⁸⁷ By the time Johnson became president, the United States was well committed to the defense of South Vietnam.

In the early stages of his presidency Johnson preferred to avoid military conflict with Vietnam and was primarily focused on increasing his political viability in the 1964 election. Intrinsic in his concern was the idea that political opponents would brand him as a communist sympathizer if he failed to protect South Vietnam. According to John Bullion, Johnson's concerns were not unfounded. “Lyndon was back on the highwire. Polls confirmed his feeling that being seen as soft on Communism would hurt his popularity. So Vietnam was one of the few issues Barry Goldwater could use to narrow the gap between him and LBJ. Seeming weak

⁸⁶ Schulman, 134.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 139.

in Southeast Asia also worked to the advantage of Robert Kennedy.”⁸⁸ In addition to the electoral implication, Johnson’s Vietnam strategy was also influenced by former president Dwight Eisenhower. Washington Post White House Correspondent Edward Folliard claims that “Ike had told him [Johnson] that it would be a tragic mistake for the United States to back down and allow the Communists to achieve a victory in Southeast Asia.”⁸⁹

In a delicate balance of force, Johnson authorized bombings throughout the summer of 1964 yet refused to retaliate against North Vietnamese aggressions in November. Johnson’s inconsistent Vietnam strategy was most likely the result of his conflicting interests. While he wanted to maintain an anti-communist image, Johnson also worried about the possibility of creating unwanted conflicts. Bullion states that Johnson’s reluctance to use massive-strike capabilities was based other presidents’ experiences.

“He [Johnson] remembered how in November 1950 the Truman administration had paid no attention to Chinese warnings about American military operations close to the Yalu River. The price paid for that had been massive attacks by the Chinese army and a stalemated war. Johnson was determined to avoid giving China any provocations whatsoever in this war.”⁹⁰

With the worry of provocation fresh in his mind, Johnson chose to ignore the advice of his military advisors who argued for a surge. Johnson’s also went against those in his administration who called for a complete withdrawal from South Vietnam. Perhaps the largest peace advocate in Johnson’s administration, vice-president Hubert Humphrey pleaded with Johnson to abandon Vietnam. “In January 1965, Hubert Humphrey told LBJ that his landslide left him in the rarest of positions, where one can do as one pleases. That being so, Hubert urged negotiations leading toward American withdrawal.”⁹¹ After silencing and publicly ridiculing Humphrey, Johnson

⁸⁸ Bullion, John. Lyndon B. Johnson and the Transformation of American Politics. (Pearson Longman: New York, 2008), 93.

⁸⁹ Folliard, Edward. Lyndon: An Oral Biography. Edited by Merle Miller. (Ballantine Books: New York: 1980), 593.

⁹⁰ Bullion, 114.

⁹¹ Ibid, 108.

pressed forward with an indecisive strategy, which eventually led to a massive buildup of U.S. troops in Vietnam.

Looking back on Vietnam, some scholars referring to the conflict as Johnson's "obsession." After thirty years of political success, Vietnam proved to be the unraveling of Lyndon Johnson, who after his 1964 term declined to pursue the Democratic nomination in 1968. Although Johnson's health had been on the decline for several years, his exit from politics was most likely the result of his poor performance with Vietnam, which can be explained through his lack of adaptive leadership. While a more adaptive leader would have taken a multifaceted approach to Vietnam, in which a host of military and diplomatic strategies were employed, Johnson abandoned diplomacy for military superiority. Although Johnson claimed to desire a negotiated settlement to the Vietnam conflict, by increasing the nation's military involvement he inevitably decreased the likelihood of arranging for a peaceful settlement.

During his political career prior to the presidency, Johnson triumphed by utilizing his superior work ethic; when dealing with domestic issues, Johnson was able to "outwork" his competition in order to achieve desirable results. Nevertheless, although such tactics proved futile at the international level, Johnson relentlessly persisted. Lacking the adaptive leadership necessary to alter his situation, Johnson continued to pour effort into the Vietnam conflict, hoping that his labors would result in American victory. Eventually, Johnson's inability to practice adaptive leadership led to his demise.

Citizen Compassion

Johnson's citizen compassion was manifest throughout his career in public service. From his earliest days with NYA, Johnson worked to improve the lives of his fellow Texans, and his desire to help others increased upon his entrance into public office. According to author Robert

Dallek, as a U.S. Representative Johnson made every effort to assist his constituency. In discussing the state of the economy in Johnson's district, Dallek states:

Money was in such short supply in the early thirties that the area functioned as a barter economy . . . But Johnson found ways to help. In 1938 – 41, when hundreds of farmers couldn't qualify for Farm Security Administration loans because they had no collateral, Johnson persuaded the FS to waive the requirement and give each of 400 families a \$50 loan.⁹²

As a representative, Johnson also demonstrated citizen compassion through his support for the Marshal Ford Dam, which helped to control flooding and provide electricity to the greater Austin area.⁹³ In regards to the dam Unger claims that, "The dam affair solidified Johnson's reputation in the business community."⁹⁴

Johnson's attentiveness to the public's desires continued during his stint in the Senate. Civil rights had developed into a major domestic issue during the 1950s, and Johnson emerged as the movement's political leader. Although in his earlier days Johnson had never taken a firm position on either side of the civil rights dilemma, during the 1950s Johnson began to gravitate towards a pro-civil rights platform. As Schulman recognizes,

When the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, three-fourths of the people in Texas opposed the Court, and President Eisenhower refused to endorse the decision. Johnson, however, publicly defended the Court. Two years later, southern members of Congress issued a southern manifesto promising to resist the *Brown* decision. Johnson was one of only three southern senators who refused to sign it.⁹⁵

After acknowledging that the American public favored equal rights, Johnson set forward to help direct the passage of a civil rights legislation. Johnson went to great extremes to ensure the passage of the bill, formally known as the Civil Rights Act of 1957. As Unger recalls, "The civil rights triumph was Johnson's, requiring all the political talent he possessed in pulling together

⁹² Dallek, Robert. *Lyndon B. Johnson: Portrait of a President*. (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004), 39.

⁹³ Unger, 71.

⁹⁴ Ibid 72.

⁹⁵ Schulman, 54.

radically divergent groups, keeping his party from an open and possibly permanent split, and convincing enough Republicans to vote against the administration.”⁹⁶

As Vice President and President, Johnson continued to demonstrate citizen compassion through his unyielding support for civil rights. Despite the Kennedy Administration’s offering subdued endorsement of civil rights legislation, Johnson lobbied hard for the advancement of minority rights. According to Schulman, “In the spring of 1963, as the Kennedy administration prepared to submit civil rights legislation to Congress, Vice President Johnson broke his usual silence in high-level meetings and pressed JFK to introduce a tough, no-holds-barred bill that would end segregation in the South once and for all.”⁹⁷ Not surprisingly, upon entering the presidency, Johnson pressed forward with the intention of helping less fortunate citizens. Through his domestic agenda, which he titled the *Great Society*, Johnson believed he could improve the state of the nation by establishing work groups aimed at optimizing government performance. Scholar Hugh Davis Graham asserts, “From this commitment spring the Johnson task forces – ultimately 135 of them by present count . . . the task force device was designed to interrupt the normal bureaucratic flow, provide innovation, combat the inherent inertia and boundary maintenance of the agencies, and maximize the leverage of the presidential battalion.”⁹⁸ Ultimately the program would help those who had failed to experience the economic prosperity of the 1950s. “Although LBJ included something for everyone in his reform package, he concentrated on the unfortunate, on those who had been forgotten and passed over and passed by.”⁹⁹ Citizen compassion was an important element of politics for Johnson,

⁹⁶ Unger, 216.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 63.

⁹⁸ Graham, Hugh Davis. *The Transformation of Federal Education Policy. Exploring the Johnson Years.* Edited by Robert Divine. (University of Texas Press: Austin, 1981), 158.

⁹⁹ Schulman, 89.

and throughout his political career he frequently demonstrated his commitment to the common man.

Communication Style

Lyndon Johnson possessed impressive communication skills and regularly used his aptitudes to develop relationships with key stakeholders and propel his policy agenda. Shortly after assuming the presidency Johnson sought to unify the saddened nation. According to author Frank Cormier, “Johnson in fact wanted to make cheerleaders and devoted followers out of all Americans. In a dizzy whirl of meetings after Kennedy’s murder, day after day and often long into the night Johnson gave voice to emotional appeals for unity and support from a people traumatized by the assassination.”¹⁰⁰ By communicating with the public, Johnson helped console the Nation and bring about closure to the Kennedy tragedy.

Although Johnson openly communicated with the American public in the early stages of his presidency, Johnson and the public grew more distant over the course of his presidency. Though his communication with the public was not extraordinary, Johnson demonstrated impressive communication skills with the news media. While in office, Johnson also made appeals to White House media personnel, which he believed was necessary in order to bridge the gap between the American public and the federal government. Johnson developed a close relationship with the news media by furthering his predecessor’s “open door” policy. In the early years of his administration, Johnson hosted numerous events geared toward extending camaraderie to members of the press corp. As Cormier recalls, “Besides hunting expeditions, lake cruises and fish fries, members of the press corps, and our bosses, were treated to cocktails and sherry in the family living room upstairs at the White House, luncheons in the family dining room, safaris

¹⁰⁰ Cormier, Frank. LBJ: The Way He Was. (Doubleday & Company, Inc: Garden City, 1977), 6.

around the back yard, and dips in the White House swimming pool.”¹⁰¹ These events, along with Johnson’s appeals to the general public, offer a primary example of his communication abilities. Yet while these situations utilized Johnson’s charm and compassion to appeal to the public and the media, the former president was best known for mastering the art of persuasion.

Johnson’s overwhelming confidence allowed him to dominate conversations. Dating as far back as his days at Southwest Texas State Teacher’s College in San Marcos, Johnson would regularly control arguments with his peers. Dallek captures Johnson’s aggressive method in his book by providing an excerpt from an interview with one of Johnson’s classmates at San Marcos. As the classmate recalls, “He’d [Johnson] just interrupt you – my God, his voice would just ride over you until you stopped. He monopolized the conversation from the time he came in to the time he left.”¹⁰² Johnson’s argumentative style, which would later be referred to as “The Johnson treatment,” became a mainstay in Johnson’s political career.

The Johnson treatment was critical to Lyndon Johnson’s success as a politician, aiding him most in the Senate. By administering the Johnson treatment, Johnson would persuade his counterparts to vote for a particular policy and pledge their support to him. According to Schulman, the Johnson Treatment was a multifaceted style of communication he would utilize to persuade his peers. “He could please, tease, cajole, trade, deal, threaten – grab a man by his lapels, speak right into his face, look into his heart, and convince him that he had always wanted to vote the way LBJ was asking.”¹⁰³ Johnson’s Vice President, Hubert Humphrey, was a frequent victim of the Johnson treatment during his twenty-year professional relationship with Johnson in the Senate and the White House. In a conversation with Hubert Humphrey, columnist Robert Allen recalls,

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 52.

¹⁰² Dallek, 12.

¹⁰³ Schulman, 44.

Humphrey told me how Johnson gave him pep talks and Humphrey demonstrated saying, ‘He’d grab me by the lapels and say, “Now, Hubert, I want you to do this and that and get going,”’ and with that he would kick him in the shins hard. Then Humphrey added, “Look,” and he pulled up his trouser leg and, sure enough, he had some scars there.¹⁰⁴

Through his barrage of verbal and physical procedures, Johnson gained impressive power in the Senate and was able to advance many of his legislative policies. Although he was somewhat removed from the legislative process while in the White House, the former senator still frequently employed his notorious persuasive strategy in order to drive his policy agenda.

Following in Kennedy’s footsteps, Thomas Langston states “President Johnson urged Congress to pass a new civil rights bill and an economic stimulus bill as testaments to the slain leader’s memory. Behind the scenes, Johnson assiduously bargained and pleaded with his former colleagues in Congress.”¹⁰⁵ One of Johnson’s most memorable displays of the treatment came in June of 1965, when Johnson met with the American Medical Association to discuss Medicare and Medicaid.

On June 29, the AMA leadership assembled in the West Wing and were promptly given a large dose of the Johnson treatment. LBJ began by saying what wonderful people doctors were, recalling how the local physician in Johnson City had made numerous house calls to treat his ailing father. He stood and stretched; they stood. He sat. They sat. LBJ then delivered a moving statement about “this great nation and its obligation to those who had helped make it great and who were now old and sick and helpless through no fault of their own.” He stood again. They stood. He sat, and they followed suit, now perfectly clear as to who was in control.¹⁰⁶

Similar to how he had acted in the Senate, Lyndon Johnson utilized his communication techniques to impose his will upon others and coerce them into acting in accordance with his desires. Throughout his time in office, such skills allowed him to garner support from his constituents and his peers and enabled him to achieve legislative victories.

Conclusion

¹⁰⁴ Allen, 213.

¹⁰⁵ Langston, 32.

¹⁰⁶ Woods, 572.

Despite his superior communication skills and his numerous displays of citizen compassion, Lyndon Johnson left the presidency mired in controversy. Although he possessed two of the characteristics necessary for success, his failure to demonstrate adaptive leadership proved fatal. By lacking adaptive leadership, Johnson found himself unable to navigate the nation out of the Vietnam conflict, despite exerting immeasurable effort to remedy the situation. Ultimately, the absence of adaptive leadership in Lyndon Johnson's character led to his downfall.

Richard Nixon

Richard Milhous Nixon was born in 1913, in the small town of Whittier, California. As the son of Quaker parents living in a predominantly Quaker community, Nixon experienced a desolate childhood that stemmed from his father's stern demeanor and the death of two brothers.¹⁰⁷ Yet despite his woes, Nixon displayed a prowess for academics from a very young age and evolved into an impressive student while in high school. According to biographer Conrad Black, "He was a very strong student, who worked while his classmates relaxed. He studied with fierce determination, forcing himself to succeed whether he possessed any liking or aptitude for the subjects or not."¹⁰⁸ Nixon's astuteness won him a scholarship to an Ivy League college, yet due to financial constraints he opted to instead attend nearby Whittier College.¹⁰⁹ Nixon again prevailed in school and eventually went on to attend Duke Law School. Yet despite receiving his law degree from a prestigious university, he eventually returned home to Whittier, where he entered private practice. Less than ten years after graduating from Duke, Nixon began his political career as California's newly elected representative for the 12th District.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Black, Conrad. Richard Milhous Nixon: The Invincible Quest. (Quercus: London, 2007), 14.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 18.

¹⁰⁹ Wicker, Tom. The Nixon Years: 1969 – 1974 White House to Watergate. (Abbeville Press: New York, 1999), 10.

¹¹⁰ Black, 86.

Like Lyndon Johnson, Nixon enjoyed a quick ascent to power yet failed in his final test of political ability. I consider Nixon's presidency to be unsuccessful because many of Nixon's problems were self-imposed. Nixon lacked citizen compassion and, despite his attempts to appear as a sympathetic individual, never developed true sincerity. To make matters worse, Nixon's presidency was plagued by inferior communication skills, which were manifest in his poor relationship with the media. Yet, while Nixon lacked citizen compassion and communication skills, he was an adaptive leader throughout his political career. Research into Nixon's past reveals that his political triumphs were largely built on his ability to demonstrate adaptive leadership. Ultimately however, Nixon's adaptive leadership was not enough to secure a successful presidency.

Adaptive Leadership

Throughout his adult life, Richard Nixon was the epitome of an adaptive leader. Nixon's political career was built with his adaptive leadership, as he regularly modified his policy platform to address the most salient issues of the era. Through his adaptive leadership, Nixon excelled in a political arena which had traditionally been dominated by social elites. Although he was plagued by a general lack of confidence and a plethora of insecurities, Nixon's adaptive leadership helped guide him to political glory.

Nixon's adaptive leadership became apparent for perhaps the first time while he was attending Whittier College. While Whittier College lacked fraternities and sororities, there were several "literary societies" on campus which closely resembled Greek life. During his first semester at Whittier, Nixon failed to receive an invitation to join the Franklins, the only male literary society. Although Nixon was disappointed about not receiving an offer from the Franklins, it provided him with the opportunity to found his own literary society. According to Black, "When

he was not approached by the Franklins, he quickly accepted an invitation to be a charter member of a new group, called the Orthogonians.”¹¹¹ Through his affiliation with the Orthogonians, Nixon developed relationships with a host of individuals that served as his primary base of support during numerous student campaigns. As he had exhibited through the creation of the Orthogonians, Nixon again demonstrated adaptive leadership by adopting a host of progressive positions during his quest for the student-body presidency. Author Fawn Brodie captures Nixon’s transformation by stating,

The student [Nixon] who disliked dancing presented as a major plank in his campaign for student-body president the right of students to dance on campus. The boy who would not wear a shirt to school unless it was freshly starched now helped to organize a new fraternity where the badge of membership was an open shirt without a tie. The fastidious child who could not stand the smell of the unwashed students on the high school bus had become a scrimmager on the football field, and had won fame by being the first in the college’s history to add to the annual bonfire an outdoor privy with four rather than two holes.¹¹²

By recognizing that he needed to change in order to become a viable candidate, Nixon ventured out of his typical realm of conservatism and aloofness to gain the votes of his peers.

Nixon’s ability to recognize salient issues continued during his run for Congress. When Nixon entered politics in the mid 1940s, fears of communism were widespread throughout the nation. As Brodie recalls, “In California, as elsewhere, the American middle class as well as the far right for years had feared Communism . . . Anxiety over Soviet expansion in Europe affected both parties, but the Republicans in 1946 did their best to capitalize on it as a specifically Republican issue.”¹¹³ While prior to entering politics Nixon never demonstrated a profound repugnance for Communism, during his 1946 campaign Nixon adopted an anti-Communist platform to appeal to his electorate. Along with frequently declaring his loathing for Communism, Nixon also went so far as to characterize his opponent Jerry Voorhis as a

¹¹¹ Ibid, 28.

¹¹² Brodie, Fawn. Richard Nixon: The Shaping of his Character. (WW Norton & Company: New York, 1981), 104.

¹¹³ Ibid, 174.

Communist sympathizer. Wicker asserts that, “In victory, however, he had relentlessly pursued a tactic that was relatively new in 1946: implying that an opponent was “soft on” or dangerously ignorant about Communism, or even lacking in patriotism.”¹¹⁴ Although Nixon’s strategy may be interpreted as devious, it won him the election and afforded him a devout following. Through his recognition of the public’s fear of Communism and his adoption of an anti-Communism platform, Nixon displayed adaptive leadership.

Once in Congress, Nixon earned political clout by exploiting the public’s fear of Communism. Through his position on the House Un-American Activities Committee, Nixon shed light upon various individuals accused of supporting the Communist party. Among Nixon’s major accomplishments while in Congress was the spurring of the Alger Hiss prosecution and conviction. Hiss was a communist informant who had held various positions in the State Department and the federal government. After the Hiss conviction Nixon became a very well known political figure and opted to run for the U.S. Senate in 1950.

With Communism still a pressing issue Nixon repeated his Congressional campaign strategy by once again publicizing his opponent’s failure to confront Communism. In discussing his opponent Heather Douglas, Nixon associated her with Communist sympathizer Vito Marcantonio. On a flyer distributed throughout California by Nixon’s campaign staff, Nixon claimed, “During five years in Congress, Helen Douglas has voted 353 times exactly as has Vito Marcantonio, the notorious Communist party-line Congressman from New York How can Helen Douglas, capable actress that she is, take up so strange a role as a foe of communism?”¹¹⁵ The strategy proved successful, as Nixon coasted into the Senate. Through his adaptive

¹¹⁴ Wicker, 11.

¹¹⁵ Brodie, 240.

leadership, Nixon again recognized the most significant issues of the campaign and adopted a platform favorable to his electorate.

While Nixon pioneered himself as a leader against communist intrusion in the United States, the latter years of his political career were quite different. As a member of the Eisenhower administration Nixon evolved into an international diplomat, traveling to the Soviet Union in 1959.¹¹⁶ Upon becoming president in 1969, Nixon almost immediately set out to improve the United States' hostile relationship with the Soviet Union. Although he had been exceedingly vocal about his distaste for communism during the 1940s and 1950s, he opted to pursue diplomacy with the U.S.S.R. While Nixon's policy reversal offers an example of adaptive leadership, as he recognized the trend away from stigmatization of the Soviets and acted accordingly, his means for dealing with the U.S.S.R. offers a more profound example of adaptive leadership.

According to author James Humes, Nixon was at first skeptical about meeting with the Soviets due to his predecessors' relative failures. "Nixon viewed recent summit meetings, such as that between Kennedy and Khrushchev in Geneva in 1962 and Lyndon Johnson and Brezhnev in Glassboro, New Jersey, in 1967, as disasters."¹¹⁷ In large part, Nixon believed that Kennedy and Johnson had failed because they lacked the bargaining chips necessary to secure substantive arms agreements. For Nixon, "Such constructive diplomatic bargaining would occur only if the United States went to the conference table with some heavy cards. Nixon the strategist wanted to have two cards to strengthen his hand: the first, an ABM (antiballistic missile), the defensive weapon to repel missile strikes; and second, rapprochement with mainland China."¹¹⁸ While both proved to be useful in securing the Antiballistic Missile Treaty, Nixon's move to develop a

¹¹⁶ Humes, James. Nixon's Ten Commandments of Statecraft. (Scribner: New York, 1997), 31.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 36.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 37.

relationship with China offers an impressive display of adaptive leadership, as the President drifted from his profound anti-communist platform to achieve in areas where his predecessors had failed. In discussing Nixon's calculated move to increase communication between the U.S. and China, scholar Robert Dallek asserts,

They [Nixon and Kissinger] worried that improved relations with China might impede Soviet-American cooperation. On balance, though, they thought it would spur Moscow to be more conciliatory. It could give them greater "leverage against the Soviet Union." For Nixon, it was a triumph of realistic foreign policy thinking over his earlier knee-jerk anticommunism, which had been so useful in advancing his political career.¹¹⁹

Although Nixon repeatedly expressed his disdain for communism throughout the early stages of his political career, by exhibiting adaptive leadership he was able to overcome the hostile relationships with foreign lands and assemble international agreements.

Citizen Compassion

Attempting to quantify or even understand Richard Nixon's sense of citizen compassion is a formidable task. At first glance it may seem that Nixon altogether lacked citizen compassion, yet such a view would ignore Nixon's early political successes, which were deeply rooted in his expression of citizen compassion. In his book, *In the Arena*, Richard Nixon offers a valiant explanation as to why he entered politics. In the concluding paragraph of the chapter *Purpose*, Nixon claims, "As I look back to the time I made the decision to enter politics forty-three years ago, three goals motivated me: peace abroad, a better life for people at home, and the victory of freedom over tyranny throughout the world."¹²⁰ Nixon's second reason, "a better life for people at home," suggests that expressing citizen compassion may have been one of Nixon's chief concerns. However, while throughout his early political career Nixon demonstrated a keen sense of awareness in regards to the public's opinions, more often than not Nixon appeared to lack

¹¹⁹ Dallek, Robert. *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power*. (Harper Collins Publishers: New York, 2007). 147.

¹²⁰ Nixon, Richard. *In the Arena: a Memoir of Victory, Defeat, and Renewal*. (Simon and Schuster: New York, 1990), 119-120.

sincerity, or even character. Because he lacked any sort of emotional intelligence, a concept pioneered by Fred Greenstein, it is hard to imagine Nixon as perceptive of the public's needs. Reviewing Nixon's political career offers only trace examples of citizen compassion.

During his campaign for Congress in the mid 1940s, Nixon demonstrated citizen compassion by acknowledging the significance of communism to American voters. Although his reliance on slander proved to be a key part of his run for office, by campaigning as a hard-line anticommunist Nixon appealed to the majority of California voters who fretted over possible communist infiltration. As Dallek states, "Although intelligence and high energy were essential elements in Nixon's rise to political power, they were not enough to explain his extraordinary success. A visceral feel for what voters wanted to hear – expressions of shared values – also brilliantly served his political ambition."¹²¹ Yet despite Nixon's ability to sympathize with voters, at some point in his political career Nixon grew increasingly distant from the electorate. This distance was perhaps most evident during the 1960 presidential election, when Nixon failed to convince the electorate that he was humble candidate.

Unlike the campaigns against Voorhis, Douglas, and Stevenson, in which Nixon could present himself as an aspiring middle American battling elitists, he could not draw a similar contrast to Kennedy. True, Nixon had known poverty as a youngster, and Kennedy, the son of one of America's richest men, was more privileged than any other opponent Nixon had ever faced. But as a senator, Kennedy stood lower in the political pecking order than Vice President Nixon, and as a Catholic representing an underrepresented minority, Kennedy was more the man on the make than Nixon.¹²²

Nixon's inability to relate to voters in the 1960 election proved to be a recurring theme throughout the remainder of his political career. While 1960 offers a stark contrast with the Nixon of the 1940s who championed the electorate's concerns, many scholars believe that the presidential election against John Kennedy offers an accurate image of Richard Nixon. As many have noted, Nixon was notorious for his cold personality. According to Iwan Morgan, "Nixon

¹²¹ Dallek, 9.

¹²² Ibid, 28.

himself sometimes recognized that he came across as lacking sincerity, such as when he was bested by Kennedy in the first presidential debate in 1960.”¹²³ This recognition paved the way for Nixon’s campaign strategy in 1968, where he relied heavily upon television to reconstruct his public image.

Believing that his aloofness was to blame for his defeat in 1960, Nixon approached 1968 with the intention of developing a more amiable image. In his detailed account of Nixon’s campaign strategy, author Joe McGinnis asserts that Nixon’s staff utilized television to recreate Nixon. According to McGinnis, Nixon’s staff attempted to present Nixon as a warm and compassionate individual.¹²⁴ And while Nixon’s scheme to convince voters worked in 1968, the coldness forever remained a part of his personality. Even in the height of the infamous Watergate scandal, Nixon failed to stray from his aloof demeanor. According to Wicker, “Even in the bleakest hours, though he obviously tried, Nixon could not be a man of warmth and easy affection.”¹²⁵ Without sincerity, Nixon routinely failed to demonstrate citizen compassion throughout his presidency.

Whereas some presidents have failed to demonstrate citizen compassion because of their apathy for the American public, Richard Nixon’s failure to exhibit citizen compassion was caused by his inability to do so. It wasn’t that Nixon did not care about the public’s concerns, but rather that he lacked the interpersonal skills necessary to discern the public’s interests. Undoubtedly, Nixon’s lack of citizen compassion was detrimental to his presidency in that a distance always existed between America and the President. Nevertheless, many voters were aware of Nixon’s detachment prior to 1968 and still chose him as their leader. Because voters

¹²³ Morgan, Iwan. Nixon: Reputations. (Arnold: London, 2002), 26.

¹²⁴ McGinnis, Joe. The Selling of the President: The Classic Account of the Packaging of a Candidate. (Simon and Schuster: New York, 1969), 39.

¹²⁵ Wicker, Tom. One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream. (Random House: New York, 1991), 651.

accepted Nixon as a cold individual, his lack of citizen compassion did not play a major role in the collapse of his presidency.

Communication Skills

Lacking strong interpersonal skills, Nixon was by no means a gifted communicator. As a socially awkward individual, Nixon found himself to be an outsider in a role traditionally filled by extroverts like Kennedy or Johnson. While there are trace instances of Nixon's communication strength throughout his political career, such as the famous Checkers speech in which Nixon dispelled rumors about relying upon a secret fund, Nixon's career is generally void of noteworthy displays of communication aptitude. However, in analyzing Nixon's communication techniques it becomes very obvious that the former president harbored an intense animosity towards the news media. This section focuses on Nixon's notorious relationship with the media and the effects of that relationship on Nixon's administration.

Nixon's abhorrence of the press was a constant theme throughout the majority of his years in public office. As Thomas Johnson recalls, "Despite occasional protests to the contrary, Nixon always bore an almost pathological hatred for the press . . . The conservative Nixon believed he was the lightning rod of criticism for the liberal media and he was the victim of a double standard."¹²⁶ Nixon's distaste for the press helped foster an unpleasant relationship between the Executive Office and the media.

Although hostility for the media existed during Nixon's presidency, in the early stages of his political career Nixon developed close ties with the press. In his 1946 congressional campaign against Jerry Voorhis, Nixon received backing from the *Los Angeles Times*. Black states that,

In May 1946, Nixon made a deferential visit to the journalistic powerhouse of Southern California, the Los Angeles Times. He was received by the principal political writer, Kyle

¹²⁶ Johnson, Thomas. The Rehabilitation of Richard Nixon: The Media's Effect on Collective Memory. (Garland Publishing, Inc.: New York & London, 1995), 12.

Palmer, who liked Nixon and explicitly supported him . . . Times support was steadily amplified, as Palmer increasingly thought that Nixon might actually rid them of Voorhis.¹²⁷

While Nixon was well received by some members of the media, such as the *Times*' reporters, other newspapers were very skeptical of Nixon and perhaps even outspoken about his actions as a congressman. During the prosecution of Alger Hiss, the *Washington Post* was particularly critical of HUAC and Nixon. Although the public's approval of HUAC hovered around 70%, the *Post* published editorials questioning Nixon's investigation and HUAC procedures.¹²⁸ While the *Post*'s reactions to the Hiss trial may have spurred the dislike between Nixon and the media, matters worsened when the newspaper broke a story about Nixon possessing a secret fund backed by wealthy political supporters. According to author Russ Witcher, despite Nixon's bid for the vice presidency, "It almost crashed, however, in 1952, when Nixon became the focus of stories that accused him of having access to a campaign slush fund."¹²⁹ After Nixon denied the allegations and refused to withdraw from the Republican ticket, the *Post* published a scathing editorial in which it blasted him for imposing a burden upon the Eisenhower campaign. Published on September 25, 1952, the editorial claimed that, "Many people will continue to view the Nixon episode as evidence that the Eisenhower crusade is overtolerant of missteps within its own membership. For that reason the Senator Nixon has added a burden to the Eisenhower candidacy by his decision not to withdraw."¹³⁰ While Nixon managed to recover from the incident, he developed a loathing for the press.

In 1960, Nixon's frustration with the media became apparent when he attributed his failed bid for the presidency to the influence of media on the American electorate. Scholar Michael Genovese claims, "In his first campaign for president, Nixon blamed his loss – in part – on the

¹²⁷ Black, 78.

¹²⁸ Witcher, Russ. *Watergate and the Resignation of Richard Nixon*. Edited by Harry Jeffery and Thomas Maxwell-Long. (CQ Press: Washington, D.C., 2004) 113.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 114.

¹³⁰ "Senator Nixon's Error." *The Washington Post*. September 25, 1952, 14.

media. The debates became, in Nixon's view, more a beauty contest than a genuine exchange of ideas, and Nixon felt victimized by the media."¹³¹ After 1960, Nixon's dislike for the press was well established, and following his defeat in the California gubernatorial election of 1962 Nixon boldly voiced his disgust. In an unscheduled press conference shortly after acknowledging his loss, Nixon lashed out at the press for what he believed was years of unfair treatment. "For 16 years, ever since the Hiss case, you've had a lot of fun. You've had an opportunity to attack me and I think I've given as good as I've taken . . . as I leave you, I want you to know just think of how much you're going to be missing; you don't have Nixon to kick around anymore."¹³² While during the press conference Nixon vowed to never return to politics, six years later he was elected president. Unfortunately for Nixon, the groundwork for a miserable relationship with the Press Corps had already been laid, and the Nixon administration encountered an increasingly hostile group of reporters throughout its time in power.

Though the relationship was sour from the beginning, as President Nixon further damaged the situation by moving to squelch the media's influence on the electorate. Through the Federal Communications Commission, associates of Nixon worked to suspend broadcasting licenses for CBS radio and television news channels in Miami, Florida and Jacksonville, Florida. Meanwhile, Vice President Spiro Agnew gave several speeches which called into question the integrity of the news media.¹³³ Although Nixon went through his presidency without the media's support, or confidence for that matter, the poor relationship proved to be detrimental primarily with the surfacing of the Watergate scandal.

Before discussing the Watergate scandal as it relates to Nixon's relationship with the press, it is necessary to provide a working definition of Watergate for the purpose of my research.

¹³¹ Genovese, Michael. The Watergate Crisis. (Greenwood Press: Westport, 1999), 101.

¹³² "Nixon" The American Presidents. Narrated by Hugh Sidney. Accessible via www.pbs.org

¹³³ Genovese, 107.

Although in some scholarship Watergate refers to the break-in at the Watergate office complex, for this essay Watergate refers to the myriad of scandalous affairs that occurred during the Nixon Administration involving the Plumbers, reelection efforts, and the cover-up conspiracy. While Nixon was able to avoid disaster during his first term, the investigative efforts of Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, both reporters for the *Washington Post*, slowly uncovered the Administration's attempts to cover-up wrongdoings. The highly investigative nature of reporting was unique at the time, and Genovese indeed recognizes the dramatic change in journalism exhibited during Watergate, calling it "more intrusive, more critical, less trusting and always looking for the "gotcha" blockbuster exposé."¹³⁴ Undoubtedly, Richard Nixon was at the root of the Watergate scandal and the reporters were correct to have exposed the president's wrongdoings. Yet it seems that Nixon met his demise not because of misconduct, but instead because he failed to benefit from a decent relationship with the media.

Prior to Nixon, presidents had been involved in cover-ups, conspiracies, and other suspect activities. Perhaps most notable was President Kennedy, who misled the public during his Bay of Pigs fiasco and regularly trusted the media to keep his secret of infidelity. Yet unlike his predecessors, Nixon was the victim of a new and intrusive form of journalism because he had gone to such great lengths to limit the effects of the media on his presidency. Black seems to be in accord with my view by asserting,

If he [Nixon] had made a little more effort with the media, and not made it clear at all times that he considered it a relentlessly adversarial relationship, he would never have had the press eating from his hand, as Roosevelt and Kennedy did, and would not have been able to exact the same reverential respect as Eisenhower did, or the camaraderie that Truman, a poker-playing, whiskey swilling, straightforward extrovert, enjoyed, but he could have done much better than Johnson and avoided a good deal of tension.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Genovese, 111.

¹³⁵ Black, 581.

Although Nixon was at odds with the media throughout most of his political career, his inability to work with the media while serving as President ultimately proved fatal, as Nixon opted to resign in the midst of a certain impeachment. Although Nixon rarely exhibited citizen compassion, it was his lack of communication skills that led to his downfall. Nixon's toxic relationship with the press, which in earlier years had been only a thorn in his side, inevitably proved to be his undoing.

Conclusion

Despite practicing adaptive leadership throughout his professional career, Nixon failed as a president. Although he acknowledged his weaknesses as a politician and President, Nixon refused to correct his problems. While he made an effort to appear more compassionate to the electorate, Nixon's sincerity was a façade, and he was unable to part from his cold demeanor. His lack of citizen compassion was coupled with an inability to communicate with the media, which secured his downfall.

Final Conclusion

Although nearly forty years elapsed between Franklin Roosevelt's presidency and Ronald Reagan's presidency, both individuals were successful presidents. I believe much of their success can be attributed to their demonstration of my three characteristics. Similarly, I have concluded that both Johnson's and Nixon's failed presidencies can be explained by the absence of these characteristics. I would like to conclude my argument by comparing these individuals to one another and acknowledging situational factors which may have contributed to the presidents' successes and failures.

In regards to adaptive leadership, both Roosevelt and Reagan excelled. Roosevelt relied upon adaptive leadership to navigate past roadblocks created by the Court and foreign powers,

while Reagan demonstrated adaptive leadership in his handling of defense initiatives and foreign policy. Though both men used adaptive leadership to their advantage, I believe Reagan was a more adaptive leader than Roosevelt. Reagan's foreign policy transition was by far his largest display of adaptive leadership, and improved relations with the U.S.S.R. served as one of the hallmarks of the Reagan administration. Although Roosevelt managed to develop a popular foreign policy through the use of adaptive leadership, Reagan's gains exceed those of Roosevelt.

Despite their wildly different backgrounds, both Roosevelt and Reagan possessed citizen compassion. Roosevelt's citizen compassion was the product of numerous lessons from his parents and instructors, while Reagan's citizen compassion was in large part due to his days in the Midwest as a middle-class American. Both individuals were deeply committed to improving the quality of life in the nation, and had a keen sense for public opinion. Yet responding to the "average citizen" was surely more of a priority for Roosevelt, as evinced by his communication with the public through radio and letters. Therefore, it seems fair to label Roosevelt as displaying citizen compassion in a more profound manner than Reagan.

Lastly, in comparing the communication capabilities of Roosevelt and Reagan, no clear leader exists. Roosevelt was a strong communicator and utilized a host of vehicles to express himself to his constituents, the public, and foreign leaders. Yet Reagan was a master orator and possessed a unique ability to captivate even the most hostile audiences. While I agree with the majority of scholars who consider Reagan the superior communicator of the Modern Era, it is necessary to acknowledge Roosevelt's innovative approach to communicating with the public. By conducting his "Fireside Chats," Roosevelt opened the presidency to the public in ways never before done. Although Reagan was better at the more traditional forms of communication such as public speaking, Roosevelt's innovative approach should not go unnoticed.

Before concluding my discussion on Roosevelt and Reagan, it is necessary to discuss the situational component of each presidency and assess the impact of the situation on the presidency. In the case of Roosevelt, some of his success must be attributed to the time during which he served. Arriving in Washington during the midst of the Great Depression placed Roosevelt at, or near, the trough of a horrendous economic cycle. Because of this, Roosevelt found himself in a position where nearly all of his political maneuvers offered improvements to the status quo.

Like Roosevelt, Reagan was also the beneficiary of a particular situation. While Reagan's move from military might to diplomacy brought about a major shift in U.S – Soviet relations, Reagan was aided by the Soviet Union's economic crisis. Had the Soviet Union been able to sustain a massive military buildup without experiencing severe inflation, the cold war would have likely continued. Since Reagan's success was partially built upon his achievements with the Soviet Union, one must accept the possibility that Reagan's success came, at least in part, as a result of the era in which he served.

While I felt it necessary to compare Roosevelt's qualities to Reagan's, such a comparison does not yield significant results for Johnson and Nixon. Clearly, as I stated throughout my sections on Johnson and Nixon, Johnson never displayed adaptive leadership whereas Nixon demonstrated adaptive leadership throughout his presidency. Additionally, Nixon lacked citizen compassion and had flawed communication skills, whereas Johnson was fairly attuned to the public and was notorious for his powerful communication techniques.

In regards to the situations that Johnson and Nixon faced, they played minimal roles in their demises. With Nixon, there does not seem to be a particularly noteworthy episode that occurred during his era and had a significant impact on his presidency. I exclude Watergate from my

discussion of situations because it occurred due to Nixon's own behaviors, unlike the Great Depression or the Cold War. As for Johnson, I do not subscribe to the theory put forth by some scholars which states that Johnson's presidency was doomed from the start due to his inheritance of the Vietnam conflict. Much like Roosevelt, Johnson found himself in the midst of a difficult situation. However, unlike Roosevelt, Johnson failed to act decisively and exhibit adaptive leadership. Therefore, I believe Johnson's botched presidency was his own doing, rather than the consequence of Vietnam.

Lastly, it is appropriate to assess my variables after the completion of my research. Adaptive leadership seems to weigh in more heavily on the success of presidents than I would have thought prior to conducting my research. It seems nearly impossible for a president to be successful without possessing adaptive leadership. I believe there are two reasons that may explain the significance of adaptive leadership. First, it could be that I severely underestimated the importance of adaptive leadership in achieving success. Conversely, the concept may be too broad and encompass a space where things other than adaptive leadership are occurring. In future research, this term would require a more rigid definition.

As for citizen compassion, in my initial research I may have overvalued this concept. While successful presidents have demonstrated citizen compassion, the utility of the characteristic is minimal. Beyond allowing for presidents to discern public opinion, and tailoring their platforms and policy agendas accordingly, citizen compassion does not produce success to the degree that I previously believed.

My final variable, communication techniques and aptitudes, also requires some modification. In conducting my research I have come to understand that what I previously perceived as a single variable contains many distinct components, all of which deserve consideration. While it can be

said that Reagan universally displayed impressive communication techniques and aptitude, classifying Nixon's communication becomes more difficult. Though Nixon was a poor public speaker and lacked interpersonal skills, he was a gifted writer capable of producing his own speeches. In future research, this variable would need to be separated into distinct segments in order to evaluate the different areas of communication.

Despite these minor issues, I feel that my argument is well supported. In comparing successful presidents to unsuccessful presidents, I have demonstrated that my three qualities are a crucial part of the formula for success. In doing so, I have also proven that the absence of these qualities has played a major role in the failure of certain presidents.

In the revised edition of *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, Richard Neustadt wrote that an executive needs four main things for success: a historically relevant purpose, an understanding of power, the ability to withstand pressure, and a lasting legacy within policies and party (1991, 167). Marc Landy and Sidney M. Milkis echoed similar sentiments in their book *Presidential Greatness* (2000). They defined presidential success as bringing about bold regime change, leaving behind a legacy, revolutionizing a political party, and bearing a large share of responsibility for the public's 1982. "The Impact of the Modern Presidency on Presidential Success in the U.S. Congress." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 7 (4): 515-32. Cohen, Jeffrey E. 2012. "Presidential Incentives, Bureaucratic Control, and Party Building in the Republican Era." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 45 (4): 796-811. Shepsle, Kenneth A., and Weingast, Barry R.. 1987. Kevin Evans Research Paper What is successful presidential leadership in the modern era? In the modern United States, the role of the president has seen a continuous evolution from its inception with George Washington's independence to Barack Obama's healthcare reform. No two presidents are alike, and the beliefs and policies have varied greatly between tenures. Despite diverging views of the actual role that the president should enact, scholars such as Rossiter (1960) define the roles of the president as follows: Chief of Party, Voice of People, Protector of Peace, Manager of Prosperity, and World