

THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF: THE RELATIONSHIP OF
INTEREST GROUPS, MEDIA, AND PARTY POLITICS WITH THE PRESIDENT

by
Vikrum Mathur

A thesis submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in Government

Baltimore, Maryland
December 2014

© 2014 Vikrum Mathur
All Rights Reserved

Abstract

The President of the United States has a variety of instruments at his disposal that he can utilize to advance his agenda, of which three of the most prolific are interest groups, the media, and party politics. This thesis examines the manner in which various Presidents have interacted with each of these instruments, how the relationships with these elements have played out, and what advantages and disadvantages exist as a result. The methodology used for this thesis analyzes a variety of scholarly theories and works, and applies any pertinent existing theories to particular actions by different Presidents. For interest groups, results showed that each leader discussed in that section acknowledged that interest groups are important resources for realizing a Presidential agenda, although each administration interacted with interest groups differently. In terms of the interaction with the media, using Presidents Roosevelt and Obama as case studies, it was discovered that the media is a very significant resource that can be used to both disseminate important information and enhance the image of the President, establishing his legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Thus, it is important for a President to be balanced and understand the significance of these instruments when trying to achieve success with their agendas. The final element of party politics, using Reagan and Bush, also resulted in mixed impacts based on the circumstances and appeal of a leader during a particular time. The overarching conclusion was that the relationship between the President and these instruments is highly complex and yields different results based on certain motivations and opportunities.

Thesis Advisors: Dr. Dorothea Wolfson, Richard M. Skinner, Robert J. Guttman,

Dr. Benjamin Ginsberg, Dr. Ken Masugi, Dr. Douglas B. Harris

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
1. What's Your Interest? A Look At the Presidential And Interest Group Relationship.....	2
2. Watching Your Back: The Importance of The Relationship Between The President and Media.....	35
3. Party Solidarity: The Importance and Relationship of Party Politics and the Presidency.....	70
Conclusion.....	90
Curriculum Vitae.....	98

Introduction

In the wide world of policymaking, there are a plethora of instruments which can be used to influence how policy plays out in the political arena. Of these, the three most significant are interest groups, the media, and party politics. Whereas interest groups and the media are external factors which lobby and disseminate information to influence policy, party politics is internal. More specifically, it is important to examine the relationship these three factors share with the President of the United States and each of the advantages and disadvantages they provide. As he is the initiator of a specific policy agenda, and manager of the nation, one must analyze how these factors impact his role, what theories constitute the relationship the President may share with these factors, and how the impact of these factors have differed in various administrations. Understanding these, helps explain the scope, extent, and definition these truly have on the Presidency and describes how limited or strong his policymaking power plays out as a result.

In this thesis, in Chapter 1, I look at interest groups and how their relationship has played out with the President. I examine various scholarly theories, and then look at the Carter, Ford, Clinton, and Obama administrations. For my second chapter, I look at the media's relationship with the President, various scholarly theories defining this relationship, and the way these played out in the administrations of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Barack Obama. With Obama, I look at his campaign strategies and healthcare policy to explain how the media impacted them. For the third chapter, I look at the Reagan and Bush administrations to explain how party politics have played out in those regimes and what it has meant for that leader's success. I also examine scholarly theories on party politics.

Chapter 1 - What's Your Interest?: A Look At the Presidential And Interest Group

Relationship

The Importance And Motivations Of The Interest Group-Presidential Relationship

Much has been said and debated about the complexity of our nation's policy making process. Within the policy making framework, one of the entities that wields the most power is that of the executive branch of government. The executive branch carries a plethora of agendas and policy ideas when approaching the challenges that the country faces and utilizes Congress as the tool that implements those policy ideas into law. However, when attempting to surge forward with policy, the Presidency, and also Congress, have to contend with a significant external, non-governmental player that can change the destiny of any policy agenda or piece of legislation—interest groups. Interest groups cater to a particular issue area that legislation may cover, and serve to either help promote it or oppose it with their lobbying resources. The role of interest groups in the policy arena today is best defined by author Richard Gable who states, “Private interest groups and administrative agencies have come to be the principal originators of policy, while legislative groups, along with administrative and private groups, are the major shapers of public policy,”¹.

Due to the prominence of an important external factor that impacts policy such as interest groups, one must examine how the policy making process by a particular branch

¹Richard W. Gable, “Interest Groups as Policy Shapers,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 319 (1958): 84, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1032439>

of government has evolved over time and how the relationship between that branch and this factor has manifested. Author Paul Light has stated that, “Whereas the President attempts to maintain contact with party leaders, there is a conscious effort to avoid interaction with most interest groups. Unless the interest group is a key member of the President’s electoral coalition, there is only limited contact,”². For the purpose of this study, and keeping Paul Light's theory in mind, the focus will be on Presidential interaction with interest groups. In order to understand the scope of interest group impact on the Presidency, one has to recognize the importance of interest groups, what factors have contributed to the relationship the Presidency has with interest groups, how has this relationship impacted actions in specific administrations, what theorists have discovered on this relationship, and ultimately whether the current state of the relationship can be justified. As interest groups play a role in the policy making process, it is essential to examine the relationship the White House has shared with interest groups, its scope, and how that relationship has evolved and taken root in our political landscape. I do this through theoretical examination of approaches under the Carter, Ford, Clinton, and Obama administrations. Scholar John Kingdon has written extensively about the existence of interest groups in the public policy arena, including defining what circumstances enable them to establish liaisons with governmental institutions. Kingdon argues that interest groups operate in only a certain set of circumstances³. He states, “Generally, then, the lower the partisanship, ideological cast, and campaign visibility of

²Paul C. Light, *The President's Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice from Kennedy to Clinton*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 94

³John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995), 47.

the issues in a policy domain, the greater the importance of interest groups,”⁴. Kingdon’s main point underlies the idea that if a certain policy issue is not visible on a campaign agenda, does not have a root in a particular ideology, or is not prominent along partisan lines, then this gives an interest group an incentive to work towards bringing that issue to the attention of policy making bodies. Kingdon’s definition also implies that in order for an interest group to operate optimally to its goals or purpose, it has to work in an environment where ideology takes a backseat. This is a pertinent element to take note of as when the relationship between particular administrations and interest groups is examined, the role of partisanship will play a role in defining the way a relationship is played out. However, it is also important to note, that the motivations behind interest group action is not so simplistic. In other words, it is not exclusively the existence of the aforementioned scenarios that drive interest groups to establish active relationships in policy making. As John Kingdon writes regarding interest groups as policy entrepreneurs, “They could be...in interest groups...But their defining characteristic, much as in the case of a business entrepreneur, is their willingness to invest their resources...in the hope of a future return,”⁵. This basic understanding denotes that in the definition of the relationship between interest groups and governmental institutions the most significant parameter and driving factor is the element of gain.

In a broad sense, when it comes to policy, the “element of gain” can serve as a greatly beneficial tool. Authors Andreas Dür and Dirk De Bièvre state regarding interest groups, “Their participation in policymaking may improve decision-making processes by

⁴Ibid

⁵Ibid, 122.

supporting policies that are in line with citizen preferences and blocking policies that solely reflect the interests of the governing elite,”⁶. In other words, the interest group liaison with governmental entities can create mutual advantages for the two parties involved. On a basic level in terms of an advantage, Jeffrey Cohen outlines that one predominant way in which this relationship can help a President is that it can give him a new outlet of building support, or a coalition if you will, for a particular policy idea that might be stifled by certain other factors⁷. Jeffrey Cohen states, “...as the parties have polarized and the media have fragmented...presidents have turned to other sources for support, like interest groups,”⁸. Similarly, interest groups can fulfill their mission of advancing the specific cause they represent by engagement in the policy arena. Author David Lowery states, “But when organizations face uphill battles that they are unlikely to win, purely instrumental lobbying may be necessary. If, for example, core interests are threatened, even slim chances of success may necessitate lobbying,”⁹. Active efforts by interest groups to promulgate their ideas, especially through building a partnership with an entity as powerful as the President, may also better allow them to fulfill both the policy and professional objectives that they have with an extra push. As Dür and De Bièvre state on interest group influence, “The opposite case is a situation in which a group's attempts at influence are countered by lobbying efforts of other groups, public

⁶Andreas Dür and Dirk De Bièvre, “The Question of Interest Group Influence,” *Journal of Public Policy* 27, no. 1 (2007): 1, accessed May 6, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4007824>

⁷Jeffrey E. Cohen, "Interest Groups and Presidential Approval." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3: 432, accessed May 6, 2014, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=1034d5b6-b0a6-4462-bc3c-07383ab1c612%40sessionmgr4002&vid=2&hid=4105>

⁸Ibid

⁹David Lowery, “Why Do Organized Interests Lobby? A Multi-Goal, Multi-Context Theory of Lobbying,” *Polity* 39, no. 1 (2007): 39, accessed May 6, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4500263>

opinion, and political parties,”¹⁰. By liaising with a strong governmental entity, interest groups can develop a buffer against other entities which may be attempting to stifle the necessary policy goals that need to be achieved. Another potential tool that can build the relationship between interest groups and governmental entities involves that of campaign contribution, identified as a factor to consider on interest group influence by Richard A. Smith¹¹. An interest group can contribute money to a Presidential campaign, thus creating the opportunity for a mutual gain. The President can benefit from receiving monetary funds in his campaign, whereas the interest group has a chance of establishing itself in the “good books” of the President. Richard A. Smith, within the context of Congress, dismisses the actual advantage contributions hold by stating, “...it is difficult to measure the quantity and quality of the access that members of Congress actually grant lobbyists, studies rarely provide direct, quantitative evidence of the relationship between interest group campaign contributions and patterns of access granted,”¹². However, in another study, David Austen-Smith states:

“Insofar as concern over the impact of campaign contributions on policy reflects the possibility that such contributions distort the available electoral choices, the results here suggest that this concern has some justification. In the case in which no funds would be forthcoming were contributions allowed, permitting them has no effect on policy positions. In all other cases the impact on policy relative to what it would have been is unambiguously to push both candidates in a direction

¹⁰Dür and De Bièvre, “The Question of Interest Group Influence”, 8

¹¹Richard A. Smith, “Interest Group Influence in the U.S. Congress,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 20, no. 1(1995): 91, accessed May 6, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/440151>

¹²Ibid, 93

favorable to one (ordinarily, the larger) donor. In particular, in contrast to the intuition that explicit exchange models suggest, campaign contributions do not induce a more sharply distinguished choice for the electorate by driving candidates further apart and toward the extremes of the issue space (Peltzman, 1976, p. 215; Chamberlin, 1978),”¹³.

Based on the study by David Austen-Smith in contrast to the absolutist statement by Richard A. Smith, the situation type can impact whether campaign contributions have been instruments of persuasion or not. Thus, the potential impact of campaign contributions cannot be overlooked when looking at the interest group-President relationship. These are some of the core advantages within the context of “gain” that can come to an interest group-Presidential relationship. It can provide not only a better flow in policy creation fulfilling policy objectives, but governmental entities like the President can appeal to their voter base and expand the power of their stature.

In terms of a more practical advantage of the interest group-Presidency relationship stems from the ability of the former to organize the policy making spectrum into coherence. Kingdon writes, “Cohesion is another resource that gives a group some advantage in affecting the governmental agenda,”¹⁴. The ability for an interest group to pool together its resources and organize strategy for policy, aides any governmental branch with its hopeful trajectory for a policy item. However Kingdon also enumerates that it’s important to note that this particular element albeit important, cannot be

¹³David Austen-Smith, “Interest Groups, Campaign Contributions, and Probabilistic Voting,” *Public Choice* 54, no. 2 (1987): 134, accessed May 6, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30024779>

¹⁴Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 52

generalized into the assumption that interest groups are *always* able to benefit a policy agenda¹⁵. Kingdon goes on to state that, “One cohesion problem involves potential differences between leaders and followers...an impressive resource base does not necessarily insure that the group will dominate discussion of issues relevant to its interests, or get its way,”¹⁶. Therefore, a massive risk that can occur with interest group involvement is the reverse effect—rather than bringing groups together, it can also deepen divide or hinder the policy process because of a lack of connect between political leaders and group leaders. As Kingdon summarizes, “...much of interest group activity in these processes consists not of positive promotion, but rather of negative blocking,”¹⁷. Thus, interests groups can serve an important role through their access to resources and their ability to organize, but with those benefits comes a possible cost which involves deepening the divide between a leader and the group and hindering certain policies from being implemented.

Along with the aforementioned certain advantages, the interest group-Presidential relationship may also hold the stated disadvantages. Because of the various shades the interest group-governmental entities relationship can have, these two parties are inextricably linked and this collaboration is important because it has yielded particular policy results for a Presidential administration to varying degrees of success. This relationship has existed for many years among many administrations, right from Jimmy

¹⁵Ibid, 52-53.

¹⁶Ibid

¹⁷Ibid, 49.

Carter to Barack Obama, and it is imperative to examine how this relationship has manifested itself over time.

The Presidency and Interest Groups – The Past Relationship and Implications

Interest Groups and the Carter Administration

Author Mark Peterson addresses two possible systems by which Presidents approach their relationships with interest groups. One approach is known as the representational approach which aspires to emphasize the legitimacy of a leader and his reputation¹⁸. The other approach is known as the programmatic approach which simply enables a Presidential leader to utilize not his desire to fix his reputation in the eyes of the people, but to actually accomplish the legislative goals that he set out to achieve¹⁹. Peterson addresses the significant role interest groups have played in the political arena with the executive branch by discussing the Carter regime first. Peterson writes citing the process of the Carter administration, “President Jimmy Carter discovered early on that achieving legislative success would require more than assembling comprehensive solutions to the nation's problems and simply offering them to Congress on their merits, even when both houses were firmly controlled by his own party. At first Carter was stymied almost everywhere he sought congressional action”²⁰. According to Paul Light, following this period of legislative gridlock, Carter added a woman name Anne Wexler to

¹⁸Mark A.Peterson, "The Presidency and Organized Interests: White House Patterns of Interest Group Liaison," *The American Political Science Review* 86, no. 3 (1992): 613-614, accessed December 16, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1964125>

¹⁹Ibid, 613

²⁰Ibid, 612

his staff and initiated the White House Public Liaison Office²¹. Peterson mentions that when Carter took this action,

“The White House staff now ranked Carter's major legislative initiatives a new lobbying strategy that combined direct communications with members of Congress and the promotion of indirect pressures on Congress by White House-constructed coalitions of organized interests active in congressional constituencies. This new approach was designed to fuse presidential and congressional perspectives by transforming the goals and resources of like-minded interest groups into the political assets of the White House,”²².

As another product of this relationship, the interest groups became increasingly instrumental in the “...drafting of programs from the very beginning to the final bill signing,”²³.

The important thing to take away from the Carter administration’s significant increase of inclusion of interest groups delineates a very significant element to note for the executive/interest group relationship. As author John Orman writes:

“...Carter's direct interaction with interest groups was characterized by high frequency of contact with labor unions. Carter met with unions 35 times during this 30 month period...Carter met 21 times with elements from the liberal coalitions in the form of public interest groups, environmental groups and

²¹Light, *The President's Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice from Kennedy to Clinton*, 95

²²Peterson, "The Presidency and Organized Interests: White House Patterns of Interest Group Liaison", 612

²³Ibid

consumer groups. Moreover, Carter as a born again Christian also met with religious groups 21 times. He met with corporate leaders 16 times and he talked with educational interests 12 times,”²⁴.

Critics of the Presidency that advocate that he is merely a patron of the interests of interest groups, must recognize the importance of political circumstances. In the particular case of President Jimmy Carter, it did indeed create a larger role for involvement of interest groups in the policy making process, but it was a necessary consequence of Congressional gridlock. One must recognize the Carter action as a practical measure. As a legislative body, Congress is responsible for the creation of measures necessary to maintain the workings of the country, as enumerated by Article I of the Constitution²⁵. The President is responsible for administering the country, and ensuring that Congress is carrying out its job of creating policies for the welfare of society²⁶. If a circumstance arises and Congress slows its process of lawmaking, it is practical for a President to initiate an action which will continue the policy making process without hindrance. In Carter’s case, he was having difficulty getting through to Congress about his agenda, and promptly decided that working with interest groups to improve intra-institutional communication would be the key to pursuing not only the legislative ideas he had on his agenda, but also giving Congress a reason to act more in accordance with their national role. Improved communication would develop the

²⁴John Orman, "The President and Interest Group Access," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1988): 789, accessed December 17, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40574730>

²⁵Terry Jordan, *The U.S. Constitution and Fascinating Facts About It*, (Naperville: Oak Hill Publishing Company, 2002), 31-37.

²⁶*Ibid*, 38-40.

essential collaboration that needs to exist between the legislative and executive branch to administer the policy making process.

Carter's action, from a political perspective, may have also served to cement his legitimacy as a leader. The cohesion aspect with which interest group involvement brought the branches together, an element of importance earlier highlighted by Kingdon, was a smart move on his part because if the nation recognizes the coalition building and initiative a leader takes to ensure things get accomplished, it only helps legitimize his skills and usage of his office. He is supposed to be the individual that makes sure every process of the country stays in order, and whatever practical means he may use to ensure that, serves as a justification for his action. In this case, critics of the President/interest group relationship have to understand the psychology and complexity of this relationship. Here Carter was not necessarily trying to advance specific interests. Instead, he was seeking the most effective solution to reinvigorate the policy process, and his usage of interest groups broke existing barriers and set a precedent for future leaders, which was the *need* of the hour. Carter's usage of interest groups is an adequate representation of the programmatic approach to interest groups. He did not seek to improve his image; he sought to achieve the specific policy agenda he had in mind and alleviate his Congressional gridlock dilemma. As John Kingdon justifies regarding the benefits of utilizing interest groups, "Policy making is often a process of creating intellectual puzzles, getting into intellectual binds, and then extracting people from these

dilemmas,”²⁷. Critics must consider circumstance when looking at the Presidential and interest group relationship.

Interest Groups and The Ford Administration

Although it is important for critics to consider circumstances when analyzing the interaction between the White House and interest groups, that does not mean that the perspective with which Carter looked at interest groups has applied to all Presidents. A President with a distinct approach to interest groups was Carter’s predecessor Gerald Ford.

According to Mark Peterson, Ford was the true initiator of the White House Public Liaison Office (OPL)²⁸. However, Ford’s outlook towards liaising with interest groups was different. Contrary to Carter’s approach to get things done, Ford had to initiate the OPL for the sake of his career²⁹. As mentioned earlier as a possibility with Carter, Peterson acknowledges the *certainty* with which Ford used these groups to establish his legitimacy as a leader³⁰. Peterson states:

“President Ford’s political stature and legitimacy as president were threatened by Ford's selection via appointment rather than election, Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, and the increasingly problematic policies for managing the Vietnam War and an economy in deep recession...If Ford was to lead the nation free of the Watergate and Vietnam debacles, he

²⁷Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 126

²⁸Peterson, "The Presidency and Organized Interests: White House Patterns of Interest Group Liaison", 614

²⁹Ibid

³⁰Ibid

needed to project an image that was inclusive and representational of a wide variety of interests in the United States. ,”³¹.

Furthermore, Peterson acknowledges the specific strategy advocated by one of Ford’s advisors, William Baroody, during this period by stating, “Baroody planned to nurture the President's legitimacy by providing an open forum for communications between the White House and interests of all kinds (Kumar and Grossman 1986, 97),”³².

Naturally, according to Peterson, Ford utilized the representational approach to advance his policy making goals³³. The reasoning behind that is simple, when comparing Ford to Carter. As mentioned earlier, Ford was a victim of scandal, after taking the mantle from Nixon. He was not a candidate that the population had voted for and was suddenly thrust into the highest office in the nation. Being slightly unprepared for this responsibility, Ford had to scramble to put his house in order. He had to decide if he wanted to establish a new agenda or stick to plans put in motion by Nixon. Much of this chaos led to a failure of cohesion and planning on his part, so he had no choice but to try and fix his image within the legislative branch and amongst the public. If he was not able to do so, getting anything done would be impossible. As Peterson summarizes, “Given the fact that the economic and budgetary crises of the day led the President to avoid any new domestic policy initiatives, except in the area of energy policy, there was little need for programmatically based group ties,”³⁴. Thus in the case of Ford, contrary to Carter,

³¹Ibid

³²Ibid

³³Ibid, 615

³⁴Ibid

his motivation to liaise with interest groups stemmed from a desire to enhance his political perception, as opposed to accomplish items on a previously set political agenda.

Interest Groups and The Reagan Administration

Moving forward, the policy making process was completely different during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. The structure identified by Peterson as the governing party approach³⁵ is what is applied to Reagan by him³⁶. This approach delineates that a President seeks to create his “own party” within the confines of his office³⁷. In other words, he organizes his staff and interest group liaisons in a manner synonymous to party organization, and uses that to fulfill his policy making agenda. Whereas Ford and Carter utilized interest groups to move forward either a programmatic or representational aspect of their presidency, Reagan utilized his completely different political system to move forward—that of partisanship³⁸. Mark Peterson writes:

“Is it the case that the more conservative a group's policy positions, the more likely it was to work with the White House? The simple answer is a clear yes. Two-thirds of the groups who favored the most conservative position on the provision of federal services had at least occasional interactions with the Reagan White House; fewer than a quarter of the most liberal associations had such access. A similar pattern is found when groups are categorized according to their views on federal regulation. Only 4% of the groups with very liberal views on the

³⁵Ibid

³⁶Ibid, 617

³⁷Ibid, 615

³⁸Ibid, 617

provision of federal services enjoyed frequent access to the EOP, compared to 28% of the very conservative organizations.”³⁹

Based on this delineation by Peterson, Reagan’s chief action with interest groups was based on their “...ideological positions and observed differences between the two political parties relevant to their own concerns,”⁴⁰. Reagan was not concerned with pursuing policies specifically for the betterment of his reputation, nor did he witness any real danger in Congressional inaction. He instead decided to only enable those interest groups which would best represent the conservative ideology, whilst also keeping contact with liberal interest groups so as to not blatantly signal the ideological divide initiative he put into place. This method comes into direct conflict with the earlier addressed Kingdon ideal of less partisanship for better usage of interest groups. Kingdon had argued that if partisanship is low, it is more effective for interest groups to work in the policy arena. This element is one that Peterson strongly agrees with⁴¹.

Peterson argues that this Reagan methodology, albeit interesting, is not extremely effective in the long run in the policy making process⁴². The reasoning behind this is that the relationship between a President and an interest group is defined by a derived benefit that both entities would receive. If one deals with groups that already would be supportive of a certain President’s agenda, there is not much to be gained, because that resource is already garnered in the process. Instead, the focus should have been on

³⁹Peterson, "The Presidency and Organized Interests: White House Patterns of Interest Group Liaison", 617-618

⁴⁰Ibid, 618

⁴¹Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 47

⁴²Peterson, "The Presidency and Organized Interests: White House Patterns of Interest Group Liaison", 618

working collaboratively with groups that would be on the fence because getting those groups on your policymaking side would enable more efficiency in achieving the goals of a policy making agenda⁴³. Author John Orman supports Peterson's findings of group alienation with more detail. Orman states:

“The Reagan Administration on the other hand did not allow the black community as much access to President Reagan as was the case in the Carter administration... Reagan met with black groups at the early stages of his administration to try to establish a dialogue. However, by July 1, 1982 the access was closed entirely. The leading minority in the Reagan coalition is the Hispanic community. Reagan met with hispanic/latino interest groups more than any other group... After his initial thanks for electoral support, the Reagan Administration became a place where minority groups could not lobby the president in person. This was in keeping with Reagan's rhetoric about being a president for all of the American people and not a president who was tied down to narrow minority group interest,”⁴⁴.

Contrary to the element mentioned in this quote regarding Reagan's rhetoric to narrow group interests, Reagan's strategy and usage of partisanship in fact most directly addresses the criticism that Presidents act on the interests of certain interest groups. If Reagan worked so closely with only his party's ideological counterparts, he did not employ balanced policy making reasoning, and thus alienated a good chunk of necessary resources needed to achieve effectiveness in the process. Harking back to Kingdon's

⁴³Ibid

⁴⁴Orman, "The President and Interest Group Access", 788

argument, due to the establishment of a strong partisan divide, Reagan had curtailed the usefulness of interactions with interest groups because he had damaged any chance of cohesion. Peterson mentions that the start of the Reagan administration was a chaotic time of restructuring in Congress⁴⁵, and thus this time demanded cohesion and organization to achieve policy goals. Reagan potentially made a strategic mistake when he implemented idealism in his administration, and ran the risk of *increasing* opposition to his policy goals. However, another perspective of looking at Reagan's strategy, may also be that of pragmatism, where it would have not been a good use of time for both involved stakeholders to engage more. Reagan understood that many of the minority groups that he was alienating were ones that would not support his agenda anyway, so to include them more participatorily would be an exercise in policymaking futility. This theory about interest groups is supported by Heath Brown who says, "As Bacheller (1977) found in regard to lobbying on noncontroversial legislation, I expect groups that foresee little or no policy change on the horizon will be the least active, assuming that activity will be futile and potentially wasteful of group resources... These groups... are most likely to remain inactive,"⁴⁶. Based on the dichotomy of the arguments above, it seems that Reagan was selective in his work with interest groups, which could have its roots in both pragmatism or partisanship. The undeniable conclusion, however, is that Reagan was more restrictive in his relationship with interest groups than his predecessors had been, which marked a departure in the dynamics of this relationship. Interest groups

⁴⁵Peterson, "The Presidency and Organized Interests: White House Patterns of Interest Group Liaison", 619

⁴⁶ Heath Brown, "Interest Groups and Presidential Transitions," *Congress & The Presidency* 38, no. 2 (2011): 156, *MasterFILE Premier EBSCOhost* accessed December 6, 2014, DOI: 10.1080/07343469.2011.560592

began to be viewed as resources only to be utilized when they can provide a benefit in accordance to the policy of the President, as opposed to simply as entities that represent wider aspects. Peterson sums up Reagan's administration well by stating, "This begins to confirm the anticipated exclusiveness of the relationship between the Reagan White House and the interest group community and also suggests that the modern presidency is not overwhelmed with interest group solicitors,"⁴⁷.

Interest Groups and The Clinton Administration

The Clinton administration has been founded to exemplify a different aspect of the interest group-Presidential relationship. Author Stanley Renshon acknowledges an existing theory applied to Clinton called the "need to be liked" theory⁴⁸. What this theory delineates is that President Clinton's policy making strategy was bound by appeasement⁴⁹. In other words, his presidency was not governed by a programmatic desire to achieve a specific legislative agenda, nor did he seek to improve his image or create a personal party system to advance his policy making with interest groups. Instead, Renshon addresses, scholars believe that Clinton simply tried to do what others wanted him to so as to not create any ill will. Renshon shoots down the applicability of this point. He states:

"The "need to be liked theory" also fails to address another related psychological tributary of Clinton's political style, his tendency to build up and then lash out

⁴⁷Peterson, "The Presidency and Organized Interests: White House Patterns of Interest Group Liaison", 617

⁴⁸Stanley A. Renshon, "A Preliminary Assessment of the Clinton Presidency: Character, Leadership and Performance," *Political Psychology*, 15, no. 2 (1994): 381, accessed December 17, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791746>

⁴⁹Ibid

against institutions or groups who oppose his policies. The press is one example of such a group but there are others including "lobbyists," "special interests," "profiteering" drug companies, "greedy doctors," "muscle-bound" labor unions, and so on. For a man who is said to have such a strong need to be liked, the list is rather long and inclusive. I think the central emotional issue for Clinton, rather than a need to be liked is a strong need to be validated, and this need is the key to understanding the third key element of character, his stance toward others,"⁵⁰.

Based on this assessment, Clinton based some of his strategy more on ideological lines, similar to Reagan. His disengagement with groups that were not in accordance with him, also served to distance his administration from using interest groups as liaisons for policy achievement, thus putting into place Kingdon's danger about involving ideology and interest groups.

However, an interesting element to consider is that Clinton was not completely a strict politician set in his ways. He was also perceived to be a bit malleable when it came to strategy. On this subject, Renshon addresses that Clinton's big flaw was actually his inability to decide whether he should completely oppose interest groups, and satisfy critics of his ways, or work collaboratively with them to achieve certain policy goals that may have had⁵¹. Renshon states that this inability to have a cohesive strategy also hampered Clinton's ability to effectively engage with interest groups. Renshon states that despite his opposition to strong interests, Clinton's "...secretary of commerce, Ronald Brown, a Democratic party official with extensive lobbying interests (Labaton, 1992) was

⁵⁰Ibid

⁵¹Ibid, 388

prepared to throw a party for corporate lobbyists, charging \$10,000 a person for the chance at access (Labaton, 1993a). That party was canceled when criticism of it mounted (Labaton, 1993b),”⁵². It would be incorrect, however, to look at Clinton’s malleability and distance from interest groups solely as an unreasonable strategy. Like Reagan, Clinton’s philosophies had a pragmatism attached to them as well. An example of this was Clinton’s work with focus groups and the subsequent decisions he made despite consulting with these groups. Author Michael Walzer writes on this topic specifically with regard to a Republican backed welfare bill, which Clinton signed, despite it being different from what Clinton had to recognize as a potential solution⁵³. One of the reasons Clinton did this, Walzer says, is because he eventually found his version of the policy to be fiscally expensive and would require a wider set of resources to be efficient⁵⁴. However, Walzer also states that Clinton did this out of being opportunistic⁵⁵. He recognized that not only is the Republican alternative more in line with practicality, but also, he knew that this bill needed to pass and he needed to look good to do it⁵⁶ thus emphasizing the importance of, as discussed earlier, the element of gain to a President and/or interest group. Another explanation, tied to the last point, is that Clinton may have identified the partisan gridlock which existed during his tenure (it was divided government) and was willing to compromise on something like this because he

⁵²Ibid

⁵³ Michael Walzer, “Opportunism knocks,” *New Republic* 215 (1996): *OmniFile Full Text Mega (H.W. Wilson)*, EBSCOhost accessed December 7, 2014, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=598f260a-290f-436c-b8bc-210b825d5a3f%40sessionmgr4005&hid=4203&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=f5h&AN=9609037833>

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

recognized the stakes involved for himself as a leader and thus, his party. By going against his focus groups, Clinton displayed a pragmatic and bipartisan strategy in terms of this legislation. As Kingdon and Peterson argued, interest groups are significant because they can advance policy goals and improve communication between the two major branches of government, the executive and the legislative. Without that communication, not only is there a stifling of a branch's job responsibilities, but pertinent measures necessary for the country's function end up in gridlock as well. Kingdon and Peterson would probably identify Clinton's outlook towards interest groups as confused and would probably determine his approach being a poor one for interest group engagement. They would argue that the fact the he committed to liaising with interest groups, and then backed out of appeasement to critics, is a ticket to earning the distrust of coalitions that may be necessary to progress a policy agenda. The last thing any President should strategically do, if they want better engagement and better chances of success with their agendas, is alienate groups that can lobby for the ideas necessary for good policy making. This was a major drawback by Clinton, Kingdon and Peterson would argue, and that he rivals Reagan in implementing poor engagement choices. However, theorists such as Walzer feel that this may have been pragmatic, as shown with what happened with the welfare legislation, which once again displays the complexity of the relationship Presidents share with interest groups.

The Presidency and Interest Groups – The Present Perception and Implications

On January 21, 2009 President Barack Obama passed Executive Order 13490, which put into play the modern presidency's outlook towards interest groups. In brief, this initiative by the President curtailed the involvement of interest group lobbyists by a

few different means. First, it forbade any political appointee from accepting “gifts” from lobbying groups⁵⁷. Second, it forbade government employees pursuing careers in interest groups from advocating on any issue as a lobbyist during the tenure of Obama’s presidency⁵⁸. Similarly, it forbade any executive agency employee from pushing certain lobbying ideas within the government for an initial period of two years⁵⁹.

Flash forward two years later, the administration still looks upon interest groups negatively, as in 2011, the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 was amended to include new, stricter provisions. Looking at the 1995 version of the bill, most notable is section 6. This section addresses how frequently a lobbyist must report their activities, income, and issues⁶⁰. The *Lobbying Disclosure Act Guidance* states:

“Section 5(b) of the LDA requires specific information on the nature of the lobbying activities. The Lobbying Activity Section of Form LD-2 requires the registrant to:

- ⤴ Disclose the general lobbying issue area code (list 1 code per page).
- ⤴ Identify the specific issues on which the lobbyist(s) engaged in lobbying activities.
- ⤴ Identify the Houses of Congress and Federal Agencies contacted.
- ⤴ Disclose the lobbyists who had any activity in the general issue area.
- ⤴ Describe the interest of a foreign entity if applicable,”⁶¹.

⁵⁷The White House, Executive Order 13490 -- Ethics Commitments (2009), accessed December 17, 2012 http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/ExecutiveOrder-EthicsCommitments.

⁵⁸Ibid

⁵⁹Ibid

⁶⁰U.S. House of Representatives, Lobbying Disclosure Act Guidance (2012) accessed December 17, 2012 http://lobbyingdisclosure.house.gov/amended_lda_guide.html

⁶¹Ibid

Based on the tenets of the executive order and the Lobbying Disclosure Act, the modern presidency looks upon interest groups with an attitude of an iron hand. With these restrictions, the executive branch has sent a message to interest groups with regard to their large influence on the legislative process, where it has been indicated that special interests should have a limited role of influence. Through the provisions of his executive order, President Obama has addressed the concerns of critics that think government has become too interest oriented and he has sought to curtail the unfair advantage that some groups may have over others on legislators.

Although Obama instituted policies such as prohibiting previous lobbyists from pushing their ideas as new government employees, and by restricting newly exiting employees from lobbying to the government, this is not to say that Obama is completely averse to interest groups. Very much like his predecessors, like Reagan and Clinton, Obama can also be looked upon as pragmatic in his relationship with interest groups. Author Heath Brown states that one of the motivating factors for interest groups to work with a particular administration, besides simply achieving legislative goals, is that, "...interest groups look back to the outgoing administration. Groups that are consistently deprived of access will ultimately be unable to maintain the loyalty of members or supporters and eventually close. A group that saw its access to the White House diminished, policy interests harmed, or even was simply ignored by the outgoing president, will seek to regain access during a transition,"⁶². This role that this particular point plays in terms of Obama is further addressed by Brown when he emphasizes that Obama re-instituted the White House Office on Women's Health and Outreach when

⁶² Brown, "Interest Groups and Presidential Transitions", 156

groups of women advocated him to do so, after President Bush had removed it during his administration⁶³. By engaging with a group that had been marginalized by President Bush, Obama represented two interesting elements. First, his willingness to bring back an office that was removed under the previous administration which belonged to an opposing party, indicates that Obama may have looked at this action as a necessary one for cementing the credibility of his administration and his party. By supporting this group of women, Obama displayed to them that he, as the face of his party and nation, identified with their cause and was willing to work with them, where perhaps a previous leadership did not share the same value. This action can be interpreted as a partisan one for that reason. Second, Obama's re-establishment of the office indicates that he was willing to work with interest groups when he found the cause to be justified, whether for political gain or identification with the cause. This is further supported by Brown's argument that Obama while working with interest groups to determine his transition team, "...even chose the leader of a politically oriented think tank, John Podesta of the Center for American Progress (CAP), to run his transition..."⁶⁴. Brown also addresses that Obama selected strong Democratic candidates for agencies which were responsible for strong policy issues like Eric Holder with the Department of Justice, while picking a more bipartisan option in issue areas of lesser importance, like Raymond LaHood for transportation⁶⁵. In other words, Obama made these decisions through interacting with interest groups, thus displaying that he is willing to work with them when appropriate.

⁶³Ibid, 154

⁶⁴Ibid, 159

⁶⁵Ibid, 160

These were all actions, Brown says, that were a product of, "... 'the first 100 days' in office has become a feature of modern presidential politics....,"⁶⁶. Based on these ideas, Obama can be looked upon as both pragmatic and partisan because he recognized that such a measure would be beneficial to his new administration and to his party⁶⁷. The pragmatism also holds true because Obama's strict yet continuing interaction with interest groups helped him use those as a resource for moving policy and setting up a team that supports those approaches. Because he did this to cement his reputation and enhance his new role as the leader of his party and nation, Obama definitely employed a representational approach in his work with interest groups. He also instituted a form of the governing party model because by hiring someone like John Podesta to his transition team, and even Eric Holder in an important policy area, he emphasized an organization that valued stronger Democratic principles.

Both the governing party model and representational model seem to apply here, also programmatic with Obama's focus on a specific set of policy goals, but the key element here is the attempt to create an organic policy process. It's not focused on completely alienating interest groups, simply aspiring to prevent the accusations of corruption that have plagued presidencies over the years. This can enable a group to not see disengagement on part of the President, yet not become too "chummy" with his set policy goals either.

It is difficult to truly determine how Obama's strategy has worked. He is still pragmatically open to interacting with interest groups as he seems to recognize the help

⁶⁶Ibid, 158

⁶⁷Ibid, 154

they can provide in helping the policy making process move forward, but he is also maintaining just enough distance so that an interest group does not overbear the policy making agenda, though partisan motivations may have been one of his motivations for taking this action as opposed to looking at interest groups simply as negative resources. The fact that the Lobbying Disclosure Act was even implemented in the Clinton era, and recently added amendments, cements and reinforces the slight distance Obama wants to keep from the interest groups. By keeping tabs on the various issues lobbyists are advocating for, the government can stay well informed on perhaps what policy ideas strongly represent the “interests” of interest groups over necessary policy goals. That way, when engaging with them, they can utilize their resources well by liaising with the right groups, whilst avoiding more radical ones. In this respect, there is a strict balance, but it may not be one that an interest group can blatantly identify.

These measures seem to be safest ones for the policy making process, which strive to make engagement with appropriate control, yet strict enforcement of integrity. President Obama may have discovered the key and significance to balancing the highly debated relationship between the executive and interest groups.

Is The Current Relationship Justified?

With the passing and subsequent modifications to the Lobbying Disclosure Act, the Obama administration's strict application to the interest group relationship to government warrants an examination of whether this initiative is fair. After all, the policy advantages this relationship has, have been identified. However, legitimate concerns on Presidential behavior with interest groups must be taken into account, which justify the current approach the government has initiated. According to an article by Jonathan C.

Smith, one of the Presidents that was a victim of interest group influence was President Bill Clinton⁶⁸. According to Smith, in 1994,

“President Clinton held a White House Press Conference and reversed the U.S. policy of accepting Cuban immigrants into the United States...*The New Republic* contended that the president was the victim of interest group politics--in particular, the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) and its leader, Jorge Mas Canosa. The article contended that "Mas (Canosa) had pulled off the coup of his career--dictating America's new Cuba policy...This article speculated that the president's motivations for towing the Mas Canosa line revolved around electoral politics and money...Candidate Clinton also received significant financial campaign contributions,”⁶⁹.

Based on this statement, President Clinton received campaign contributions from a particular interest group and used that relationship to alter a particular policy that was already in place in the foreign policy scenario. The specific factors behind this action, Smith argues, are that, “The Clinton administration's management style also enhances the possibility of interest group politics affecting its policy. First, the administration in general and the president in particular appear to be very receptive to interest groups...second, the administration's handling of the Cuban immigration crisis was viewed by some as disorganized and chaotic,”⁷⁰. Interestingly, a series of factors

⁶⁸Jonathan C. Smith, “Foreign Policy for Sale? Interest Group Influence on President Clinton's Cuba Policy,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1998): 207-220, accessed May 6, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27551840>

⁶⁹Ibid, 207

⁷⁰Ibid, 210

discussed earlier make an appearance in this situation, however they had a negative implication on the President-interest group relationship. It seems that President here relied too much on support from a particular interest group to move his policy agenda forward, so much so that the interest group entity ultimately used its leverage over the President and subtly influenced him to make a decision grounded in the wrong ethics. Ethically, the President should engage and make a decision after appropriate interaction with all stakeholders. But here, as Smith states, “President Clinton consulted almost exclusively with the conservative elements of this community during the crisis. This deprived the president of alternative viewpoints, some of which he probably would have preferred, and gave the CANF the role as sole spokesman for the Cuban-American community,”⁷¹. Smith further states, “Through a rigorous examination of contemporary media, journal, and book sources on the subject, what is found is that the CANF did have some influence, although not nearly so much as popular media suggests. Furthermore, the actions of the Clinton administration in consulting only the CANF deprived it of other perspectives within the Cuban-American community. In this way, the administration added to the power of the CANF and, consequently, increased its influence,”⁷².

Based on these points by Smith, the strict approach by President Obama is completely justified. The simple reason behind this is that if an element such as a “campaign contribution” can enable a President to make a sweeping policy change without widespread consideration, then that sets a dangerous precedent of what campaign

⁷¹Ibid, 216

⁷²Ibid, 208

contributions could mean. As Smith succinctly puts it, “Interest groups can influence foreign policy,”⁷³.

Conclusion

The relationship that interest groups and the President share is multifaceted as it contains differing motivations and circumstances that dictate how that relationship is played out. In a highly complex policy making process, the existence of this coalition building between governmental and non-governmental entities further complicates the movement of the political machine. Looking at the relationships different presidential administrations have shared with interest groups, it is safe to conclude that Paul Light’s theory of disengagement of the relationship between the executive branch and interest groups is too simplistic. Disengagement may most certainly occur, which may be intentional or inadvertent, but each leader also recognizes that interest groups can be significant resources when it comes to fulfilling aspects of a Presidential agenda. Although some administrations have maintained more of a distance from interest groups than others like Reagan, Clinton, and Obama, the acknowledgment of dealing with interest groups one way or another is a point that must be noted. The truth is that interest groups are a key component in the administration of any President, though they can approach that relationship in different ways. The manner in which a President engages with interests groups can be programmatic, representational, governing party based, or aloof. Each of the leaders discussed in this chapter have used interest groups as a resource, whether through engagement or distance, to advance their specific policy agendas. Reagan and Clinton are examples of leaders who employed both partisanship

⁷³Ibid, 217

and ideology to fulfill their agendas, which may have been pragmatic methods to tackle a divided Congress and keep away interest groups which would oppose their goals. Obama also is an example who used executive action to curtail interest group activity in Congress, so that he could advance his policy goals without competing interests having strong influence over legislators who are on the other side of the aisle. Ford is a different example than the aforementioned because he used his interest group relationship to enhance his tenure by building more bridges with them and helping them move his policies through the legislative process. Finally, Carter also used them to legitimize his leadership by fostering an environment of engagement which would help balance the journey of his policies through a gridlocked Congress.

The analysis presented in this work is simply the tip of the iceberg when examining this relationship and the many implications it has for the policy making process and the relationship between these entities. However, contrary to Light's argument that interest groups are not integral to the policy process and President's tend to not view them as significant, for the past 3 decades, interest groups have been an integral party in the agenda for the executive branch as evidenced by the roles Presidents such as Carter, Ford, Reagan, Clinton, and Obama.

Works Cited

Austen-Smith, David. "Interest Groups, Campaign Contributions, and Probabilistic Voting." *Public Choice* 54, no. 2 (1987). Accessed May 6, 2014.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30024779>.

Brown, Heath. "Interest Groups and Presidential Transitions," *Congress & The Presidency*, 38, no. 2 (2011): 156, *MasterFILE Premier*

EBSCOhost accessed December 6, 2014, DOI:

10.1080/07343469.2011.560592

E. Cohen, Jeffrey. "Interest Groups and Presidential Approval." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3. Accessed May 6, 2014.

<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=1034d5b6-b0a6-4462-bc3c-07383ab1c612%40sessionmgr4002&vid=2&hid=4105>.

Dür, Andreas and De Bièvre, Dirk. "The Question of Interest Group Influence." *Journal of Public Policy* 27, no. 1 (2007). Accessed May 6, 2014.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4007824>.

W. Gable, Richard. "Interest Groups as Policy Shapers." *Annals of the American*

Academy of Political and Social Science 319 (1958). Accessed May 5, 2014.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1032439>.

Jordan, Terry. *The U.S. Constitution and Fascinating Facts About It*. Naperville: Oak Hill Publishing Company, 2002.

W. Kingdon, John. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995.

C. Light, Paul. *The President's Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice from Kennedy to Clinton*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Lowery, David. "Why Do Organized Interests Lobby? A Multi-Goal, Multi-Context Theory of Lobbying." *Polity* 39, no. 1 (2007). Accessed May 6, 2014.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4500263>.

Orman, John. "The President and Interest Group Access." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. 18. no. 4 (1988). Accessed December 17, 2012.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40574730>.

A.Peterson, Mark. "The Presidency and Organized Interests: White House Patterns of Interest Group Liaison." *The American Political Science Review*. 86. no. 3 (1992). Accessed December 16, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1964125>.

A.Renshon, Stanley. "A Preliminary Assessment of the Clinton Presidency: Character, Leadership and Performance." *Political Psychology*. 15. no. 2 (1994). Accessed December 17, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791746>.

C. Smith, Jonathan. "Foreign Policy for Sale? Interest Group Influence on President Clinton's Cuba Policy." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1998). Accessed May 6, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27551840>.

A. Smith, Richard . "Interest Group Influence in the U.S. Congress." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 20, no. 1(1995). Accessed May 6, 2014.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/440151>.

Walzer, Michael. "Opportunism knocks," *New Republic*, 215 (1996): *OmniFile Full Text Mega (H.W. Wilson)*, EBSCOhost Accessed December 7, 2014.
<http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=598f260a-290f-436c-b8bc-210b825d5a3f%40sessionmgr4005&hid=4203&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=f5h&AN=9609037833>.

The White House, "Executive Order 13490 -- Ethics Commitments."

Accessed December 17, 2012.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/ExecutiveOrderEthicsCommitments

U.S. House of Representatives, "Lobbying Disclosure Act Guidance." Accessed

December 17, 2012.

http://lobbyingdisclosure.house.gov/amended_lda_guide.html.

Chapter 2 - Watching Your Back: How The Importance of The Relationship Between The President and Media

The key manner in which the public receives information on the agenda and work of the President comes from the media. In its current form, the media is comprised of many different sources whether it be print (newspapers, magazines) or electronic (websites, social networks) and constitutes both journalistic and personal media. Yet, the media has not only been a source of information for the public but also as a resource for policymakers and the President. Speculation about the media's role in shaping policy has been debated, particularly with regard to being used as a tool in assisting and working with the President in shaping and promoting his political agenda. This subject has been the fodder for a variety of theorists, who hold a plethora of views. One noteworthy view is provided by authors George C. Edwards III and B. Dan Wood who state when discussing Presidential agenda setting, "The White House invests substantial energy and time in attempting to shape the media's attention,"⁷⁴. Another significant scholar, Paul C. Light, states about the media, "One is perhaps most surprised to find the *media* amongst the three bottom sources. The media is usually viewed as a critical participant in the agenda process...Yet, for the White House staffs...viewed the media more as a source of pressure than as a supplier of ideas,"⁷⁵. It is important to note the dichotomy between these two different theories, particularly the latter. Based on Light's theory, although the

⁷⁴George C. Edwards and B. Dan Wood, "Who Influences Whom? The President, Congress, and the Media," *The American Political Science Review* 93, no. 2 (June 1999): 328, 328, accessed October 8, 2014, http://www.unc.edu/~fbaum/teaching/PLSC541_Fall06/Edwards%20and%20Wood%20APSR%201999.pdf

⁷⁵Paul C. Light, *The President's Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice from Kennedy to Clinton*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 95-96

media does not assist a President in shaping his policy agenda, they do provide external force to take action on certain policy initiatives.

Although Light acknowledges the existences of some sort of link, albeit small, between the President and the media, it cannot be overlooked that the President can, if properly strategized, use the media as a forum to promote his policies. This strategy can serve to ultimately enhance his public image and legitimize his role as a leader. Alternately, the media can negatively impact the success of a Presidential agenda or specific policy goal as well, creating roadblocks for the implementation of that particular aspect.

A pertinent basic element to consider about the theories from Light and Edwards and Wood is to examine the extent to which their conclusions are true. Light implies that that the media and President only have a somewhat peripheral relationship. In other words, we have to look at under what circumstances can a President use the media to effectively lead either a specific policy item or general policies to success and enhance his image. If this relationship has been built in various capacities over time, what does this say about the President and his relationship with the media? Is it really an unimportant source?

To consider the answers to these questions, it is important to examine how this relationship has played out in particular Presidential administrations. For the purposes of this study, we will first address the basic reasons why media is in an important element to look at in relationship to politics and then we will examine President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as an example of a President who used it successfully to enhance both his public image and policies. Then we will examine the views of the Barack Obama

administration towards the media, how media was used for Obama's campaigns, and how interaction with the media within the context of his policy on healthcare impacted its success and Obama's image as a leader. President Obama in particular is an apt subject for examination because he exemplifies the modern Presidency and conveys the most recent application of the media/President relationship. I theorize that the success and impact of this relationship on presidential policy goals can come from the ability of a President to build a coalition which legitimizes his public image and thus develops a confidence within involved parties (such as Congress) for policy success. However, if not handled properly, this relationship can also backfire and thus prove that ultimately the media is an independent entity out to behave only with its own interests. Thus, the extent to which a President is able to do tread a self-serving influential line with the media and its usage, governs the fruitfulness of this relationship, as supplemented by Jeffrey S. Peake, "Presidential success and power in the policy process is likely to increase if the President is able to influence congressional, media, and public attention to issues,"⁷⁶.

Why Is The Media A Factor To Look At? – A Look At Some Theories

Author John W. Kingdon in his book *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* succinctly addresses some of the main reasons why the media should be considered an important factor when looking at the political realm⁷⁷. Echoing Paul C. Light, Kingdon states, "Media are often portrayed as powerful agenda setters. Mass media clearly do

⁷⁶Jeffrey S. Peake, "Presidential Agenda Setting In Foreign Policy," *Political Research Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (Mar., 2001): 70, accessed July 24, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/449208>

⁷⁷John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995)

affect the public opinion agenda,”⁷⁸. The reason it is important to note the “public opinion” point is best outlined by Kingdon's statement that, “...media attention to an issue affects legislators' attention, partly because members follow mass media like other people, and partly because media affects their constituents...Active policy makers often express their disdain for media sensationalism,”⁷⁹. From these statements one of the important things that comes out is that what the media portrays, even if lawmakers look at some of the portrayals as extreme, they consider them keenly because it impacts not only their work but also their standing and chances for re-election. These factors, particularly that of re-election, could be applied to a President as well since he is also an elected official and is answerable to the citizens of the nation as constituents. As President Barack Obama states in his 2006 book “The Audacity of Hope”, “But for the politician who is worried about keeping his seat, there is a third force that pushes and pulls at him, that shapes the nature of political debate and defines the scope of what he feels he can and can't do, the positions he can and can't take...that force is the media,”⁸⁰. Because of those concerns, the President has to maintain a certain standard of a relationship with the various mediums of the media because he knows that they could portray him and his initiatives in a negative or positive light. Paul Light supports this by stating, “First, we know the Presidents pay attention to it. Issues that appear in either print or electronic media are accorded some status on that basis alone. Second, newspapers and television often provide useful summaries of activities of Congress, the bureaucracy, and the public; ideas that originate in these sources often reach the President through the

⁷⁸Ibid, 57

⁷⁹Ibid, 58

⁸⁰Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006), 120

media,”⁸¹. Furthermore, Edwards and Wood state, “...presidential approval is strongly influenced by elite opinion as brought to the public’s attention in the mass media,”⁸².

Kingdon also argues that the media is important because it gives a mediating method to connect various entities that otherwise may not be aware of the other's passion on a certain issue and can enhance movement on that issue⁸³. In other words, for example, if an animal rights group is passionate for a specific cause but do not know that the President is working on an initiative that advances that cause, the media can report it and bring the awareness between the two parties. The President would then also know which groups he can count on to pressurize and spread awareness with Congress. Thus, the ability to connect to the general public, spread a message, and provide information delineate the very important role the media can play in the political arena and thus give the President a multitude of reasons to seek out collaboration with them and shape his image to his advantage. Authors Marion Just and Anne Crigler support this argument by stating, “The media and other officials construct different images of the president. In a reciprocal process, how the president and other officials construct his image finds its way into the press and then to the public, and how the media portray the president may influence how other officials and the public think about the president. Throughout an administration, the public's image of the president is a crucial ingredient of political power. These are the parameters which will be used in the study to characterize the

⁸¹Light, *The President's Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice from Kennedy to Clinton*, 96

⁸²Edwards and Wood, “Who Influences Whom? The President, Congress, and the Media”, 329

⁸³Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 60

meaning of the relationship between the media and the President,”⁸⁴. Thus, the overarching element to remember when analyzing the dynamics of the relationship between the President and the media is how it ultimately portrays the image of the leader and whether such a portrayal undermines or stimulates a particular policy goal.

FDR: Fireside Chats As An Instrument Of Media Usage

Media forms have evolved over time in many ways, but one of the pioneers to use it to project policy ideas to the public (and governmental institutions) was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. During his administration, Roosevelt was wracked by a variety of challenges. On the one hand, he had to contend with American involvement in World War II⁸⁵, while on the other the nation was desperately seeking economic recovery after the “The Great Depression”⁸⁶. It thus became imperative for Roosevelt to seek a strategy through which he could not simply connect with the public and Congress on his plans to tackle these issues, but also showcase his legitimacy by projecting himself as someone who is in touch and willing to try new means by which he could carry his message. The method by which Roosevelt decided would be best to present his ideas was known as the “Fireside Chats” conducted via radio⁸⁷.

⁸⁴Marion Just and Ann Crigler, “Leadership Image-Building: After Clinton and Watergate”, *Political Psychology* 21, no. 1 (Mar., 2000): 180, accessed July 23, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3792070>

⁸⁵Richard W. Steele, “The Great Debate: Roosevelt, the Media, and the Coming of the War, 1940-1941”, *The Journal of American History* 71, no. 1 (Jun., 1984): 69-92, accessed July 23, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1899834>

⁸⁶“New Deal”, *History.com*, 2009, accessed July 24, 2014, <http://www.history.com/topics/new-deal>

⁸⁷Lumeng (Jenny) Yu. “The Great Communicator: How FDR’s Radio Speeches Shaped American History”, *The History Teacher* 39, no. 1 (Nov. 2005): 90, accessed July 23, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30036746>

Author Richard W. Steele states regarding Roosevelt at wartime, "Roosevelt's public information strategy reflected in large measure the ambiguous situation he confronted... Maintaining public support without limiting his freedom of action naturally suggested to the president the traditional propaganda of patriotic platitudes, atrocity stories, and glorification of "the cause" that had worked well in the past. But the utility of that approach had suffered in the general disillusionment with American participation in World War I...Roosevelt consciously shied away from the now repudiated forms of government propaganda, choosing instead to "sell" the administration's position through an "informational" propaganda strategy,"⁸⁸. Based on Steele's statement, Roosevelt had to devise a mass strategy that would not only connect him with the public, but also truly convince them that his decisions were correct. During his tenure as Governor of New York, Roosevelt had utilized radio to enhance his role as Governor by keeping the citizens of the state informed of his initiatives, as well as, to move his policies through the legislature⁸⁹. In his article on Roosevelt's original usage of radio, Geoffrey Storm writes, "During his two gubernatorial terms, Roosevelt found that the reaction elicited by his radio addresses was useful as leverage to skirt an obstructionist Republican legislature. He also came to see such reaction as a means of weighing popular opinion,"⁹⁰. At that time, the form of radio was the format by which information could be disseminated in the best possible manner, as Lumeng (Jenny) Yu states, "Radio brought

⁸⁸Steele, "The Great Debate: Roosevelt, the Media, and the Coming of the War, 1940-1941", 69-70

⁸⁹Geoffrey Storm, "FDR and WGY: The Origins of the Fireside Chats", *New York History* 88, no.2 (2007): 177-178, accessed July 23, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23183311>

⁹⁰Storm, "FDR and WGY: The Origins of the Fireside Chats", 178

news alive, but left people free to create images in their imagination,”⁹¹. Keeping his successful efforts as a Governor in mind, Roosevelt then decided to use the radio as President⁹².

One of the most famous, and perhaps most significant, usages of radio by President Roosevelt can be linked to his “Day of Infamy” speech⁹³. As stated earlier, on the foreign policy front, Roosevelt had to find a way to convince a public who was frustrated with World War I that going to war this time was the best way forward. Roosevelt decided to give a speech via his “Fireside Chats” appealing to the public and Congress that war be declared following Pearl Harbor⁹⁴. In his speech, Roosevelt stated, “Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 -- a date which will live in infamy -- the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan... As commander in chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense... I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us... I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire,”⁹⁵.

⁹¹Yu, “The Great Communicator: How FDR’s Radio Speeches Shaped American History”, 89

⁹²Storm, “FDR and WGY: The Origins of the Fireside Chats”, 177-178

⁹³Yu, “The Great Communicator: How FDR’s Radio Speeches Shaped American History”, 89

⁹⁴Ibid, 91

⁹⁵Jennifer Rosenberg, “Day of Infamy Speech”, About.com, 20th Century History, accessed July 24, 2014, <http://history1900s.about.com/od/franklindroosevelt/a/Day-Of-Infamy-Speech.htm>

Regarding the impact of the speech, Lumeng (Jenny) Yu summarizes:

“The power of his "Day of Infamy" speech led the nation to unite behind the President's call to war, and his fireside chats gained him support from the people for innovative and controversial social programs. . .It was the first time that citizens felt as if they knew their president as a friend. . .Later, with the advent of war, the press was even more deferential; support of the war effort meant not second-guessing the president. His relationship with the press was one source of FDR's strength as a communicator.

The other was his relationship with the public. As with any successful politician, FDR's power came from the people. Radio provided him with a direct link to his voting public and the next generation of voters. . .His use of radio helped him win people's hearts. Even those who did not support his programs and presidency found it difficult to counteract the impact of the intimacy of his radio addresses,”⁹⁶.

According to John Kingdon’s theory on media importance, the key elements he addressed were its ability to reflect public opinion, serve as a source of information, and connect entities that otherwise may not know they have a mutual interest⁹⁷. In this case of Roosevelt, we see that Roosevelt was able to use the medium to address public concerns. He did not necessarily “reflect” public concerns through his use, but instead sought to pacify them through a means by which he could project his initiatives and assure them that he knew what was best for the nation, after a difficult time. His personal use of the

⁹⁶Yu, “The Great Communicator: How FDR’s Radio Speeches Shaped American History”, 89-90

⁹⁷Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 57-61

radio gave the public a chance to see “his perspective”, as opposed to one sided reports by the media⁹⁸ and thus gave people a direct source of information on the Presidency. In some ways, this can be considered landmark as the public now had a primary source to look at for executive information rather than reliance only on the media. The President also was able to use this to enhance his image and legitimacy by establishing that personal connection necessary to be a good leader, and “reserve” your spot with your constituents. Through the elements of disseminating information publicly and asserting his image via his radio chats, Roosevelt was able to use the media to build a successful effort of support for his initiatives. He proved that working with the media was possible to legitimize the Presidential role and connect with the people whom sought a strong executive and information. By doing so, Roosevelt fulfilled two of the reasons of media importance delineated by Kingdon, and also Jeffery Peake⁹⁹, and showed that the media can be an important source for the President when used correctly.

The Obama Campaign – A Look At Obama-Social Media Usage During Campaigns

As stated earlier, Jeffrey Peake stated that the power of a President and his ability to achieve his policy goals comes from his ability to influence factors such as the media and the public¹⁰⁰ which is a significant conclusion to come to because the primary goal of any President is to ensure not only the success of his policy, but to legitimize his image. Legitimacy only comes when, for the most part, the public and legislative bodies recognize the importance of specific policy ideas through support of the same. Naturally,

⁹⁸Yu, “The Great Communicator: How FDR’s Radio Speeches Shaped American History”, 89-90

⁹⁹Jeffrey S. Peake, “Presidential Agenda Setting In Foreign Policy,” *Political Research Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (Mar., 2001): 70 accessed July 24, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/449208>

¹⁰⁰Peake, “Presidential Agenda Setting In Foreign Policy,” 70

a leader cannot guarantee unanimous backing for everything he does, but there are strategies that he can use to convince, sway, and build up coalitions to move an idea along and make sure the proper force is applied to those whom oppose it. The only way a leader can bring attention to something that is of importance to him (and to the running of the nation) is to utilize novel tactics and means which strive to engage those parties to whom the leader wants to appeal to. As President Obama himself stated on the media, “I-like every politician at the federal level-am almost entirely dependent on the media to reach my constituents,”¹⁰¹. President Obama, especially, realized that gone are the days where simply televised debates and newspaper/magazine ads are enough to establish the necessity to meet certain policy goals. Something new and fresh had to be done, and through his own initiative and work with his staff, Obama found the answer he was looking for.

The first public platform that an aspiring candidate for President uses to establish his/her policy goals comes in the form of the campaign. As Bruce Bimber aptly states, “Election campaigns are communication campaigns. Throughout the sweep of democratic history, changes in communication environments have precipitated adaptation on the part of the parties and other intermediary organizations that link citizens to democratic institutions, as well as on the part of the citizens themselves,”¹⁰². President Obama was no different when he opted to utilize his presidential campaigns, particularly for his second term, to lay out his policy framework for the future. However, in order to both

¹⁰¹Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*, 121

¹⁰²Bruce Bimber, “Digital Media in the Obama Campaigns of 2008 and 2012: Adaptation to the Personalized Political Communication Environment”, *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* (May 2014): 130, accessed August 27, 2014, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19331681.2014.895691#.VDsNOGddUbA>

secure a victory and ensure that he had the means to define his policy agenda, Obama and his campaign team decided to use a new approach to garner support.

Bruce Bimber writes in terms of Obama, “His use of social media was no more than one of many factors in his win in 2008, while his campaign’s adaptation to new technical possibilities had a more distinct effect on his success in 2012,”¹⁰³. Under the context of social media, Obama made videos on Youtube, as well as sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Flickr¹⁰⁴. By using these new technologies, for both 2008 and 2012, Bimber states, “...the new political communication environment permitted Obama to embrace social-movement-like enthusiasm and personalized entrepreneurialism among his supporters while also running a highly disciplined, centrally organized campaign...the Obama campaign exploited data analytics to engage in an unprecedented level of personalized message-targeting in a handful of state, in order to win a closer election with highly honed, state-by-state tactics,”¹⁰⁵. Specifically, strategy wise, in 2008, Bimber writes that Obama sought to use media as, “...a strategic decision to embrace a wide variety of communication opportunities and to integrate these with the fundamental tasks of the campaign...,”¹⁰⁶. This strategy, and the motivation behind it, shifted slightly in 2012, as Andrew Romano states,

“The plan for 2012, according to Axelrod, is to tout the president’s achievements while also recognizing that “people are less interested in a tote sheet of what has

¹⁰³Ibid, 131

¹⁰⁴Ibid, 134

¹⁰⁵Ibid, 131

¹⁰⁶Ibid, 134

been accomplished” than in “how we, and alternatively how the other side, would approach the larger economic challenges” facing the middle class... To figure out who each of us is, and what each of us wants, Slaby and his team are constructing a “microlistening” and computer modelling programme that will comb online and off-line behaviour patterns for voter information, then use it to personalise every interaction we have with the campaign: fundraising, volunteering, persuasion, mobilisation.”¹⁰⁷.

Since he used individual messages to reach his voters and used a novel campaign emphasizing the individuality of voters, Obama exhibited how engagement with those whom you represent yields successful results for maintaining your image and displaying yourself as a “normal person” whom can best represent policy interests. When that connection is made, the task of garnering support for your initiatives becomes easier because the people know that they can trust you. The usage of social media in this case was a big contributor to Obama’s successful campaigns in both 2008 and 2012. This is what the Kingdon theory, discussed earlier, underlies. Under the Kingdon theory, a leader’s desire to engage more with his constituents to maintain his image and ensure possible reelection¹⁰⁸, was what Obama effectively did at the campaign level. Thus, through the use of social media, Obama was able to meet his goals and displayed how media usage for engagement can help achieve certain leadership goals.

The Obama Campaign – A Brief Note On Obama’s Relationship With The Print and Visual Press

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Romano, “Yes we can, can’t we?”, *The Irish Examiner*, January 14, 2012, accessed October 12, 2014, <http://www.irishexaminer.com/analysis/yes-we-can-cant-we-180136.html>

¹⁰⁸ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy*, 57-61

Obama's effective usage of social media to establish a connect with the people was not as effectively translated to his relationship with the media during his campaigning days before his first term. Author Reid Cherlin states about Obama in 2008, "Even as Obama was showing off an electrifying knack for motivating and organizing people, his team was beginning to grapple with what was quite obviously a media world in the throes of reinvention. To start with, there was Politico, a website founded just as the race began. Opinionated, grabby and lightning-quick, Politico played to the adrenaline junkie in every reader with content that was cheap to produce and a subject -- the vagaries of political fortune -- that was inexhaustible. Obama's advisers detested Politico from the start, accurately recognizing its potential to wreak havoc on their carefully crafted narratives, and to inspire their competitors to indulge in the same bad habits,"¹⁰⁹. Furthermore, Cherlin outlines that after a particularly negative article on Obama in The Huffington Post, Obama and his team decided to stay away from the media as much as possible and focus more on the personal interactions with the voting base¹¹⁰. Thus, during his campaign, Obama adopted a strict approach to the media, in contrast to his more open nature of usage of social media for personal interactions with constituents, thus emphasizing the importance he on legitimacy through connect and not through the delineations by a third party medium which operated solely on its need to deliver content for consumerism.

¹⁰⁹Reid Cherlin, "The Presidency and The Press", *Rolling Stone* no. 1215: 33 (August 14, 2014), accessed October 7, 2014, *MasterFilePremier*;EBSCOhost, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=97243329&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

¹¹⁰Ibid

The Obama Administration – The Media and President’s Relationship In General Terms

After looking at Obama’s campaign strategies and before we proceed and take a look at the specifics of Obamacare and the interplay between Obama and the media during that time, it is important to examine viewpoints and actions taken by the President to define his stance on that relationship after his election.

One of the most important directives that Obama issued during his administration was the Open Government Initiative in 2009¹¹¹, which symbolizes his overarching views on his relationship with the public via media. In a memo to his cabinet, Obama wrote, “My Administration is committed to creating an unprecedented level of openness in Government. We will work together to ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration. Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government,”¹¹². He goes on to outline that the cornerstone of this policy would be to make sure that government is transparent, participatory, and collaborative¹¹³. Harking back to the theory that Presidents can use the media to legitimize their image by establishing a connect with their constituents, this was such a representation by Obama. By initiating this measure, Obama displayed his willingness to not only engage various media forms to disseminate his policy goals, but also to enhance his image as a “man of the people” and augment a

¹¹¹John T. Snead, “Social media use in the U.S. Executive Branch,” *Government Information Quarterly* Vol. 30, no. 1 (January 2013), 56, accessed October 10, 2014, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0740624X12001438>

¹¹²Barack Obama, “Memorandum For The Heads Of Executive Departments and Agencies,” January 21, 2009, The White House Office of The Press Secretary, http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/20090121/2009_transparency_memo.pdf

¹¹³Ibid

citizen's involvement with their government and their leader. As John T Snead states, "Agencies invest resources to increase published government information through their websites, adopt social media as mechanisms to increase public participation with the information... Individuals are actively visiting agency websites... and using agency adopted social media to stay informed of agency activities. Interactions between agency personnel and the public through agency adopted social media suggest that government use of social media is a potential viable means to increase public participation with government... Essentially the Obama administration is committed to increasing transparency and openness in government and this commitment is based in part on the ideal that transparency and openness occurs when an informed public interacts with and informs government policy making processes and has a broadened level of access to government information,"¹¹⁴. Thus, by emphasizing the importance and open nature of social media, Obama enhanced public participation in his administration, cementing his image in the eyes of the public as a leader who cares for his people and gives them the governmental information they seek.

Although Obama used social media to his advantage effectively, his relationship with the print and press media has been of a rocky nature. In essence, there has been an evolution in the extent to which his relationship with the media has escalated for the worse, which has brought days of stinging criticism in the post-election time period from 2008 onwards. In his article in the Huffington Post, author Jason Grill describes a few incidents with quotes by the President which reveal his views on media opposition¹¹⁵.

¹¹⁴Snead, "Social media use in the U.S. Executive Branch," 56-57

¹¹⁵Jason Grill, "How Three U.S. Presidents Reacted To Adversity And The Media," *The Huffington Post*, June 2, 2013, accessed October 11, 2014, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jason-grill/baiting-political->

One of the examples Grill cites pertains to the time period when the President was in hot water over his place of birth¹¹⁶. Grill writes,

“The political noise became so loud that President Obama held a press conference on April 27, 2011 at the White House to make a statement on the release of a full detailed version of his birth certificate. The president stated he watched for over two and half years with bemusement and was puzzled with the degree at which the noise kept on going...

Normally, a president would not comment on issues such as these, given all the political accusations and baiting that takes place in the press and in Washington DC. However, this time he did because the matter had taken over the political dialogue and taken away from important policy issues that were facing the country. These issues were being drowned out by the chatter about the birth certificate,”¹¹⁷.

This became one of the first instances which contributed to the friction between Obama and the media, which hadn't existed as much during his days of campaigning. In fact, Obama characterized the media circus by stating, “We do not have time for this silliness. We've got better stuff to do. I've got better stuff to do. We've got big problems to solve. And I'm confident that we can solve them, but we're going to have to focus on them—not on this,”¹¹⁸. This continued when a rumor was proliferated by the press that President

[piece_b_3369191.html?utm_hp_ref=tw](#)

¹¹⁶Ibid

¹¹⁷Ibid

¹¹⁸Ibid

Obama was a follower of Islam¹¹⁹. In order to tackle this, when Obama did interact in public or before the media, he tactfully addressed these claims, as Grill writes, “President Obama took the bait from a small majority of Americans and the press; however he was able to handle the moment in a well-delivered and thoughtful manner...President Obama has also taken the bait and faced adversity in a lighthearted manner,”¹²⁰. At this midterm juncture in his Presidential career, President Obama adopted a stance of passive admonishment to the press around him. By doing this, however, President Obama did not realize that he was slowly alienating the print/TV press and this would produce subsequent ramifications for how the press would address any policy initiative that he initiated, including Obamacare (more on that in a later section).

As it currently stands, authors Reid Cherlin¹²¹ and Michael Goodwin¹²² feel that as of 2014 there is a noticeable negative disconnect between Obama and the print/TV media. Reid Cherlin states, “...if you are a consumer of any kind of political news these days, the only impression you get is that the Obama presidency is on the verge of collapse, and that he either doesn't know or doesn't seem to care. It's a complete disconnect, and it has everything to do with how the president is covered,”¹²³. Cherlin goes on to cite an example of how when President Obama made a trip abroad and met with leaders in East Asia, his then Press Secretary Jay Carney refused to allow the media

¹¹⁹Ibid

¹²⁰Ibid

¹²¹Cherlin, “The Presidency and the Press”

¹²²Michael Goodwin, “The Media Is Turning On President Obama”, *The New York Post*, April 27, 2014, , accessed October 11, 2014, <http://nypost.com/2014/04/27/the-media-is-turning-on-president-obama/>

¹²³Cherlin, “The Presidency and Press”

to attend the meeting and take note of the content of the talks¹²⁴. Michael Goodwin offers a possible explanation as to the reason that Obama has become more distant from the media in instances such as this. He states, “With multiple crises spiraling out of control around the world, stories about the Obama presidency are taking on the air of postmortems. What went wrong, who’s to blame, what next — even The New York Times is starting to recognize that Dear Leader is a global flop... The accounts and others like them amount to an autopsy of a failed presidency,”¹²⁵. What can be inferred from Goodwin’s quote and the intimations by Cherlin is that Obama is most likely evolving his passive admonishment doctrine with the media to one of distance. Whereas before he was lightly making statements on how the media should behave, he has become more firm in his dealing with them, relegating his once affable and neutral tone to the back seat. In the context of the foreign visit situation described above, Cerlin states that Obama wanted to convey to the media that, “...you guys are scoring it like a campaign debate, and moreover, you're doing it inaccurately. He went further, telling the dozen or so reporters that what he favored was a judicious use of American power, and that his primary concern was not to get the country embroiled in situations from which it might take a decade to extract ourselves,”¹²⁶. Because of his understanding of the media as an important tool that disseminates information pertaining to his leadership, and fearing the harm that the negative press was bringing to him, Obama has decided to take a more cautious approach now to maintain a certain formal standard between himself and the media. He wants to convey their freedom of discussing his policies, yet does not want to

¹²⁴Ibid

¹²⁵Goodwin, “The Media Is Turning On President Obama”

¹²⁶Cherlin, “The Presidency and The Press”

diminish his image through negativity. He knows he cannot restrict the press, so by displaying to them a more strict exterior, Obama is defining his executive power and motivations behind his actions. The logic in this tactic is that even if the press is against him, the public who consumes the media can better understand the President's perspective behind the actions which are being publicly questioned.

One more item to consider is that the aforementioned descriptions may make it seem as if Obama's standoffishness and potential policy failures are the sole factors for the declining portrayal of Obama by the media. Goodwin, however, argues against this solitary argument as well. He writes,

"...the blame starts with the media. By giving the president the benefit of the doubt at every turn, by making excuses to explain away fiascos, by ignoring corruption, by buying the White House line that his critics were motivated by pure politics or racism, the Times and other organizations played the role of bartender to a man on a bender.

Even worse, they joined the party, forgetting the lessons of history as well as their own responsibilities to put a check on power. A purpose of a free press is to hold government accountable, but there is no fallback when the watchdog voluntarily chooses to be a lapdog,"¹²⁷.

According to Goodwin, in fact more than Obama, it is the media which is at fault for not only feeding a particular perception of Obama, but also through their over indulgence in fueling his confidence whether he was right or wrong. As a result of this immoral

¹²⁷Goodwin, "The Media Is Turning On President Obama"

encouragement and practice, since the press is supposed to report on the truth and not take any sides, Obama lost focus on how to carry himself and how to effectively make policy decisions as the Commander-in-Chief. He surrounded himself with his internal and external (media) yes men, and dug himself into deeper holes as a leader. Through this quandary, two important revelations are made. One is that this reveals how media, whether it is for or against a President, can hamper the image and policy initiatives of that leader. Secondly, it also reveals that the relationship between the modern media and Presidency is very fragile. Obama started his administration with the goal of increasing transparency and better connecting with his constituents, which he was able to accomplish, but in having a singled minded focus on only using his own media outlets to project himself, Obama distanced himself from the widespread media which he also needed to bolster his image and policy initiatives. He should have heeded any criticism that the media provided him with and should not have maintained a confident blind eye to the concerns surrounding him. Understanding those concerns would have served him better when tackling particular policy issues. Since it is, "...the media which influences the President's agenda rather than the other way around"¹²⁸, Obama would have been better served if he maintained a more cordial and neutral relationship with the media where he does not get trapped in his image, but rather seeks to better it to achieve his agenda in a more pragmatic manner.

The Story Behind Obamacare

Arguably, the most significant accomplishment of President Obama's legislative agenda over the course of his term has been the Patient Protection and Affordable Care

¹²⁸Edwards and Wood, "Who Influences Whom? The President, Congress, and the Media", 329

Act, whose popular derivation is known as Obamacare. In brief, Obamacare has been described as a law which gives "...Americans a number of new benefits, rights, and protections in regards to their healthcare, and setting up a Health Insurance Marketplace where Americans can purchase federally regulated and subsidized health insurance during open enrollment. The law also expands Medicaid, improves Medicare, requires you to have coverage in 2014 and beyond, and contains some new taxes and tax breaks, among other things,"¹²⁹. Being a policy that had its roots all the way back to the Clinton administration, the road to get this legislation passed was wrought with a plethora of legislative challenges along the way¹³⁰.

After President Obama took office, the idea of being able to provide healthcare to all became the most important aspect of his policy agenda¹³¹. He immediately began formulating a strategy to work on the measure and eventually what he decided was that he would not, "...draft a detailed reform proposal, leaving the job to Congress,"¹³². Unbeknownst to Obama, this decision would ultimately create even more hurdles in his path as eventually Congress was unable to figure out the best way forward to better American's health care system¹³³. As Will Dunham states in an article about the progression of events leading up to the passage of Obamacare, "Congress fails to meet

¹²⁹“What is Obamacare/What is Obama Care?”,OBAMACARE FACTS, <http://obamacarefacts.com/whatis-obamacare.php> (accessed October 12, 2014)

¹³⁰Will Dunham, “Timeline: Milestones In Obama’s quest for healthcare reform,” *Reuters*, March 22, 2010, accessed October 8, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/03/22/us-usa-healthcare-timeline-idUSTRE62L0JA20100322>

¹³¹Ibid

¹³²Ibid

¹³³Ibid

Obama's deadline of passing initial healthcare legislation by August, as Republican and industry opposition hardens. Republicans oppose a proposal to create a new government-run health insurance program, called the "public option," to give Americans an alternative to private insurers. During August, people opposed to Obama's healthcare ideas confront Democratic lawmakers at "town hall" style meetings around the country, some denouncing the reform proposals as socialism,"¹³⁴. Following these road bumps, after some lobbying by Obama, Obamacare finally got through its first hurdle and was approved by House of Representatives, with some changes¹³⁵. The second hurdle of clearing the Senate also followed shortly thereafter, but a new problem emerged¹³⁶. Although healthcare passed both houses, there were discrepancies between the two distinct versions of it, which needed to be ironed out¹³⁷. Partisanship began to stall the progress of the bill, thus Obama attempted to quell the bickering by finally giving to both houses what he felt an ideal version of the bill would look like¹³⁸. This did not particularly ease the tension that was already present, and only after there was a shift in partisan dynamics in the 2010 election period, were any hopes of getting Obamacare passed present¹³⁹. After a series of negotiations between Obama and party leaders from the House of Representatives and Senate, both parties eventually agreed on an identical

¹³⁴Ibid

¹³⁵Ibid

¹³⁶Ibid

¹³⁷Ibid

¹³⁸Ibid

¹³⁹Ibid

bill and Obamacare was signed into law by the President¹⁴⁰. It must also be noted that strong Democratic support was also key for the passage of Obamacare, as authors Douglas L. Kriner and Andrew Reeves conclude on Obama's healthcare policy, "Party ID is the single most powerful predictor of support for reform and the president's handling of it,"¹⁴¹.

The troubles continued, however, when members of the Republican party whom found the individual mandate element of bill unconstitutional, challenged its legality before the Supreme Court. After a long drawn out battle, Obamacare was narrowly deemed constitutional, thus seemingly putting a rest to any controversy that had been raised for the bill. In 2013, the online portal of open enrollment for registering for health insurance was unveiled, but featured a major setback as the website refused to work properly. As Noah C. Rothman says, "Healthcare.gov, the website created to allow Americans to shop for different health-care plans, crashed the instant it opened. Even those predisposed to pardon Obamacare found it necessary to express some exasperation at the inability of consumers to navigate the website,"¹⁴². Interestingly, it was at this point in the whole Obamacare journey where the media relationship which had thus far been in Obama's favor, began to take a mixed approach to his policies.

The Media and Obamacare

¹⁴⁰Ibid

¹⁴¹Douglas L. Kriner and Andrew Reeves, "Responsive Partisanship: Public Support for the Clinton and Obama Health Care Plans", <http://jhpl.dukejournals.org.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/content/39/4/717>

¹⁴²Noah C. Rothman, "A Brief History of the ObamaCare Disaster", *Commentary Magazine*, 1 January 2014, accessed October 10, 2014, <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/a-brief-history-of-the-obamacare-disaster/>

A general theory proposed by Edwards and Wood during the Clinton era states that, “In domestic policy, we find a more interactive relationship, one that appears to offer the President more opportunity for influencing agendas. On two of the three issues, education and health care, the president affects media attention in some instances...we find evidence that the president can act in an entrepreneurial fashion to focus the attention of others in the system. If an issue is not already part of ongoing media coverage...then the president may be able to set the agenda of the networks...,”¹⁴³. I find this theory, under the Obama administration, to be true, but perhaps not in the manner that one would expect. A surface reading of this theory implies that under the area of domestic policy, a President is able to fulfill smoothly the tenets of his agenda because of his strong belief in it, and because of that influence and consistent attention drawn to particular policy items, the media tends to be focused on those areas specifically, thus building up pressure in places such as the legislature to move it through as a coalition with the President. The reason that this theory may not be hundred percent accurate is that although Obamacare was a domestic policy that was completely President Obama’s brainchild which he was able to get passed through the legislature through party support and negotiation, the constitutional and implementational challenges that he faced afterwards (which are as important when gauging success) and the media circus that ensued due to that failure, somewhat hampered the impact of the law.

The panic that ensued after Obamacare’s rollout was revealed and how that affected thousands and their perceptions of the law was due to the media going into a confused tizzy. It was during this period that President Obama was not able to maintain

¹⁴³Edwards and Wood, “Who Influences Whom? The President, Congress, and the Media”, 342

the same enthusiastic image he had created for himself and his policies during his campaigning days, and instead faced a media effort which, possibly inadvertently, undermined his image as an effective leader.

In his analysis of the media reaction to the obstructions in Obamacare, author James Bowman states,

“The bad news was of course the fiasco of Obamacare, though that didn't seem too bad so long as you could persuade yourself, as the media generally did, that it was just a matter of a temporarily buggy web site and not a permanently unworkable system... The media coverage generally followed the pattern laid out by the Times in concentrating on the web site's problems -- which stood a better chance of being "fixed" than the Affordable Care Act itself -- as a way of ignoring the much larger problems of trust ("If you like your plan you can keep it"), cost (the pretense of greater "affordability" of newer policies by comparison with older ones was quietly dropped on the grounds that the old, cheaper ones were worthless anyway), and the more general unpopularity arising out of the fact that people were being forced to buy coverage they didn't want or need. Meanwhile, the President embarked on a public relations blitzkrieg in which he attempted to obscure the same public dissatisfactions by linking the Affordable Care Act to other administration desiderata, including raising the minimum wage and redistributing income, which the health care law was implicitly acknowledged to have as one of its purposes,”¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴⁴James Bowman, “Liberal, 2.0”, *New Criterion* 32, no. 5: 74, 2014, accessed October 8, 2014, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=93651317&site=ehost->

As a result of augmenting media focus on the flaws of Obamacare, the President was forced to take action and quell any concerns that were arising out of that proliferation of negative news¹⁴⁵. The strategy Obama adopted, however, was not rooted in addressing the concerns, but rather on other challenges in the nation which needed addressing¹⁴⁶. By doing this, Obama made a mistake that Goodwin discussed earlier¹⁴⁷. He did not face the criticism being offered to him, and instead chose to avoid issue with the confidence that ultimately his display of power was above the power of the media and he took that relationship for granted. This also implies, however, that the media was not solely anti-Obama during this time. Similarly, as mentioned in the earlier section with the analysis by Goodwin¹⁴⁸, author James Bowman makes the point that, “The media's willingness to come to Mr. Obama's aid in this public relations offensive may have been due to more than just their habitual championing of him and his administration,”¹⁴⁹. The implication in this statement echoes the earlier argument that the media is as much to blame for the outpouring of negativity against Obamacare as the flaws in the policy itself. Because the media supported President Obama in his strategy of diversion from the policy’s concerns, the media helped erode the legitimacy of the President by encouraging an activity in contrast to his duties. In other words, since concerns with Obamacare existed, the President should have connected with the public with the help of the media and provided

live&scope=site

¹⁴⁵Ibid

¹⁴⁶Ibid

¹⁴⁷Goodwin, “The Media Is Turning On President Obama”

¹⁴⁸Ibid

¹⁴⁹Bowman, “Liberal, 2.0”

an immediate picture of what the problems are and what can be done to fix them. He eventually did, but only after a period of controversy hit first. The President, thus, hurt his own transparency doctrine and due to the mixed proceedings by the media, harmed the implementation and effectiveness of his own important policy. Half of the battle is passing the legislation and then proving that it was the best course for the nation, and the President hurt public confidence with the upheavals that came with the latter, exacerbated by the media, whether they were with him or not. It is here that we see a shining example of how the media can hurt the policy process as well.

Obama vs. FDR – A Brief Look At What Obama Did Wrong and FDR Did Right

Obama's relationship with the press media and public/social media both had distinct outcomes. Obama was correct in his usage of social media to engage his voters and communicate with them about their concerns, fears, and his own policy ideas. By doing so, people could recognize that Obama was not only someone who wanted to make a personal connection with them, but also provide them with the information that they wanted. His Open Government Initiative was proof of the aforementioned ideas because that initiative would serve both of these purposes. However, it was his handling of the relationship with the press media where he made strategic mistakes. As the media has been defined as being one of the most crucial elements when setting a political agenda and bringing it success¹⁵⁰, Obama should have recognized that listening to the arguments of the media could only serve to help explain and inform him as to what he could do to improve his policies. He should have paid heed to the concerns that they were stating, because ultimately the public gains their knowledge through them and if they see that

¹⁵⁰Edwards and Wood, "Who Influences Whom? The President, Congress, and the Media", 342

deficiencies exist within a certain policy framework, that public loses faith in that candidate and possible party. Obama should have considered the ramifications of this before he developed a tough nature with the press during his first campaign and subsequently into the later side of his term. The disconnect that Obama so very wanted to avoid is ultimately only heightened by the distance between him and the media because if the latter provides another window to the President on public concerns and he avoids it, he essentially is ignoring the tenets of his own doctrine. Additionally, Obama should have been more careful in his alliance with certain media over another. As Goodwin argues that some media were yes men and not neutral¹⁵¹, Obama fell into a trap of carrying out some policies which proved controversial and harmed his image in the public eye. As a key component of helping build the Presidential image, the media had to and still has to be dealt with in a manner where its portrayal is balanced and where the voices of the people manifest themselves honestly to the President. Obama faced a setback in his term as President as a result of that imbalance. Thus Obama understood the theory of media importance by John Kingdon¹⁵², but should have been more neutral with it within his administration as at some level, the ideas of heeding criticism from the media and truly understanding public opinion to find solutions to problems were lost in translation in an either extremely adversarial or collaborative relationship.

Going back to FDR, I reiterate that he was successful because he fulfilled all aspects of Kingdon's media importance theory¹⁵³. As stated earlier, his use of "Fireside Chats", and the strategy behind them as a source of propaganda was what contributed to

¹⁵¹Goodwin, "The Media Is Turning On President Obama"

¹⁵²Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 57-61

¹⁵³Ibid

his popularity and legitimacy as a President. He recognized the need to use the media solely to disseminate information from his administration, because that way, people would have somewhat of a link with their leader. He also used it as a means to connect with and inform another body which he needed for assistance with policy goals, Congress, and through its revolutionary implementation, Roosevelt could obtain widespread organizational support for his ideas with parties whom he or they did not know that there was a mutual interest. Eventually, as discussed earlier, Roosevelt's call for war through this medium was ratified.

In my eyes, the success or failure of this relationship comes down to ensuring a definite partnership, whilst maintaining the power and integrity of the Presidency through cementing Presidential legitimacy with successful policy passage and implementation.

Conclusion – What Does All Of This Reveal?

Based on the information discussed, the relationship between the media and Presidency is complicated. It cannot be avoided that the media provides information to the public and President, brings attention to important elements, and creates a viewpoint on particular people and happenings. Looking at FDR and Obama, the key to success for a President is maintaining a cordial, balanced, but firm relationship with the media so as to keep in touch with public opinion so that policies reflect the concerns of the people, which in turn enhances the image and legitimacy of the President. The circumstances which call for such a partnership are rooted typically in times of crisis, election, and when policies are a strong/urgent element in an agenda. It is difficult to give a clear label to the media/President relationship, except that it varies from circumstance to circumstance and administration to administration. However, Light's theory that media is

only a peripheral element is false. Based on the impact it had in both FDR and Obama's administrations, it clearly served as a means which either helped or hindered policy success and implementation through the establishment of a certain perception. FDR was able to effectively build an engagement with the nation and members of Congress by channeling the existing sentiments and frustrations the public felt at the time of his assuming office. That engagement and cordial relationship is what established his legitimacy and gave the public a source of direct information, one of the most important functions of the media, which Roosevelt recognized. Obama recognized the importance of the media too but he marred that interaction by selectively interacting with media that was only in accordance with his views. It is because of this critical dichotomy that helped Obamacare get negative press and led many in the nation to question the success of that policy. Had Obama engage more with the media and used them as a stronger resource to connect with the public and lawmakers more about the benefits of his policies, the effectiveness of his policy would have been more at the forefront and he would have better been recognized as legitimate because of it. My hypothesis that the fruitfulness of the relationship between the media and the President is a product of mutual benefits obtained by both parties is held true by the discrepancy between Roosevelt and Obama. Roosevelt liaised with the media to give the public information, whereas the media saw the Presidential speeches as a new form of information dissemination. Obama, as outlined above, was mixed in this regard. The former worked with the media to success, and the latter did not, emphasizing the complex relationship these two parties share and how important it is for them to share it for coalition building.

Works Cited

- Bimber, Bruce. "Digital Media in the Obama Campaigns of 2008 and 2012: Adaptation to the Personalized Political Communication Environment." *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 11.2 (2014): 130-50. Taylor & Francis. Taylor & Francis Online, 12 May 2014. Web. 27 Aug. 2014.
<<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19331681.2014.895691#.VDsNOGddUbA>>.
- Bowman, James. "Liberal, 2.0." *New Criterion* 32.5 (2014): 74-77. EBSCO Host. EBSCO Host, Jan. 2014. Web. 8 Oct. 2014.
<<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=93651317&site=ehost-live&scope=site>>.
- Cherlin, Reid. "The Presidency and The Press." *Rolling Stone* 1215 (2014): 33-37. EBSCO Host. EBSCO Host, 14 Aug. 2014. Web. 7 Oct. 2014.
<<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=97243329&site=ehost-live&scope=site>>.
- Dunham, Will. "Timeline: Milestones in Obama's Quest for Healthcare Reform." *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters, 22 Mar. 2010. Web. 8 Oct. 2014.
<<http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/03/22/us-usa-healthcare-timeline-idUSTRE62L0JA20100322>>.
- Edwards, George C., and B. Dan Wood. "Who Influences Whom? The President, Congress, and the Media." *The American Political Science Review* 93.2 (1999): 327-44. JSTOR. Web. 8 Oct. 2014.
<http://www.unc.edu/~fbaum/teaching/PLSC541_Fall06/Edwards%20and%20Wood%20APSR%201999.pdf>.

Goodwin, Michael. "The Media Is Turning on President Obama." *New York Post*. New York Post, 27 Apr. 2014. Web. 11 Oct. 2014. <<http://nypost.com/2014/04/27/the-media-is-turning-on-president-obama/>>.

Grill, Jason. "How Three U.S. Presidents Reacted to Adversity and the Media." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 02 June 2013. Web. 11 Oct. 2014. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jason-grill/baiting-political-piece_b_3369191.html?utm_hp_ref=tw>.

Just, Marion, and Anne Crigler. "Leadership Image-Building: After Clinton and Watergate." *International Society of Political Psychology* 21.1 (2000): 179-98. JSTOR. JSTOR, 2000. Web. 23 July 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3792070>>.

W. Kingdon, John. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995.

Kriner, Douglas L., and Andrew Reeves. "Responsive Partisanship: Public Support for the Clinton and Obama Health Care Plans." *Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law*. Duke University Press, 19 May 2015. Web. 07 Dec. 2014. <<http://jhppl.dukejournals.org.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/content/39/4/717>>.

C. Light, Paul. *The President's Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice From Kennedy to Clinton*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

"New Deal." *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, 2009. Web. 24 July 2014. <<http://www.history.com/topics/new-deal>>.

Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. New York: Crown, 2006. Print.

Obama, Barack. "MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES." *THE WHITE HOUSE Office of the Press Secretary* (2009): n. pag. Web. 10 Oct. 2014.

<http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/news/20090121/2009_transparency_memo.pdf>.

Peake, Jeffrey S. "Presidential Agenda Setting In Foreign Policy." *Political Research Quarterly* 54.1 (2001): 69-86. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Web. 13 Oct. 2014.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/449208>>.

Romano, Andrew. "Yes We Can ... Can't We?" *Irish Examiner*. Irish Examiner, 14 Jan. 2012.

Web. 13 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.irishexaminer.com/analysis/yes-we-can-cant-we-180136.html>>.

Rosenberg, Jennifer. "Read FDR's Famous 'Day of Infamy' Speech." *About*. About.com, n.d.

Web. 24 July 2014. <<http://history1900s.about.com/od/franklinroosevelt/a/Day-Of-Infamy-Speech.htm>>.

Rothman, Noah C. "A Brief History Of The Obamacare Disaster « Commentary Magazine."

Editorial. *Commentary Magazine* 01 Jan. 2014: n. pag. *Commentary Magazine RSS*. *Commentary Magazine*, 01 Jan. 2014. Web. 10 Oct. 2014.

<<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/a-brief-history-of-the-obamacare-disaster/>>.

Snead, John T. "Social Media Use in the U.S. Executive Branch." *Government Information Quarterly* 30.1 (2013): 56-63. *ScienceDirect*. ScienceDirect. Web. 10 Oct. 2014.

<<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0740624X12001438>>.

Steele, Richard W. "The Great Debate: Roosevelt, the Media, and the Coming of the War, 1940-1941." *The Journal Of American History* 71.1 (1984): 69-92. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Web.

23 July 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1899834>>.

Storm, Geoffrey. "FDR and WGY: The Origins of the Fireside Chats." *New York History* 88.2 (2007): 176-97. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Web. 13 Oct. 2014.

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/23183311>>.

"What Is ObamaCare / What Is Obama Care?" *Obamacare Facts*. Obamacare Facts, n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2014. <<http://obamacarefacts.com/whatis-obamacare.php>>.

Yu, Lumeng (Jenny). "The Great Communicator: How FDR's Radio Speeches Shaped American History." *The History Teacher* 39.1 (2005): 89-106. *JSTOR*. JSTOR. Web. 23 July 2014. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30036746>>.

**Chapter 3 - Party Solidarity: The Importance and Relationship of Party Politics and
the Presidency**

Although interest groups and the media have been important instruments in the functioning of the office of the President and the execution of his agenda, there is a third inextricable factor which is arguably as significant in terms of its impact on the Commander-In-Chief – the political party. It has been seen time and again, and especially in the current political climate, that partisanship has been a crucial determinant in the success or failure of a Presidential agenda. As Barack Obama stated in his 2006 book “The Audacity of Hope”, that upon his swearing in as a Senator, “The country was divided, and so Washington was divided, more divided politically than at any time since before World War II...It is such...stark partisanship that has turned Americans off of politics,”¹⁵⁴. In terms of institutional dynamics, it is important to note that the President is the manager of the nation. His responsibilities lie in ensuring that every wheel that is turning the nation is moving and that the plans that need to be implemented for a smoother journey are provided by him. However, the power of the President is bound till here, as he is technically an individual who simply has the ideas but cannot personally ensure the implementation of them. It is ultimately Congress which formulates and passes policies that may or may not be in accordance with the Presidential agenda, and this often can leave the President in a strategic quandary. On the one hand, although the President has the power to veto, too much usage of it runs the risk of making his leadership seem less legitimate as he paves the way to be branded as a “roadblocker” on policy and averse to compromise. Similarly, the heightened usage of the veto power can also contribute to

¹⁵⁴Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006) 16, 40

the decline in power of that President's particular political party, as the public even begins to view them unfavorably due to the President being the ultimate face of what that party stands for.

As the President is responsible for determining an agenda and leaving it up to Congress to take action to implement those policy items legislatively, the constitution of the power of his party at that given point of time is prudent. As author Paul Light states, "Party support is the chief ingredient in presidential capital; it is the "gold standard" of congressional support,"¹⁵⁵. Keeping in mind the point by Light that having the strong backing of the party in Congress is key to the success of the Presidential agenda, it is important to examine how the relationship between political parties and the President have panned out and what that has meant for that administration. Specifically, it is important to ask, to what extent is it true that partisanship has worked for or against the perception of particular President? Is that leader looked upon as a success? Are there any instances of divided government where a President is still considered to be effective despite political disagreements? If so, why is that the case? I theorize that whereas interest groups and the media act as external factors which can influence the President, the party is an internal binder which is driven solely by the desire to achieve goals in line with its ideology, which often translates to the President. Eventually, it is the tactical precision during times of divided government which can lead the President to political success, as opposed to compromise. For the purposes of this study, I will examine policy making under the Reagan and Bush administrations which hold strong traces of divided

¹⁵⁵Paul C. Light, *The President's Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice from Kennedy to Clinton*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 27

government and the “party” will be defined in terms of only Democrats and Republicans among the President and Congress.

Why Is Party Politics An Important Factor To Examine – Some Viewpoints

Theoretically, the key thing to remember about the relationship between the Presidency and the party is the fact that the President can use a party as a means of political capital, as mentioned by Light earlier¹⁵⁶. There is nothing more important to a President, as discussed in earlier chapters, than to be viewed as legitimate, and that legitimacy only comes when a President is viewed as effective in the eyes of the public. The public views the President as effective when he achieves success in his policy agenda. Interest groups and the media can be sources of good political capital as the coalition that a President builds with them can lead to significant results, as we have explored, through lobbying and dissemination of information. But those are external sources, and ultimately it is the personal bond that a President can forge with people both in his party and the opposing party which leads to policy passage and implementation in Congress. From that angle, Light’s theory of party support and it being a “gold standard” is significant. In essence, a significant motivation for the President to heed party interests and formulate an agenda along party lines, aside from ensuring his own beliefs, is that it gives him another weapon through which he can lobby for his agenda. The reason such a weapon is particularly important is in the case of divided government, when either the President or Congress are different parties, or when Congress’ two houses themselves are divided into two parties. Under those circumstances, the President needs to have a cordial relationship with the legislature otherwise he faces Congressional gridlock at nearly

¹⁵⁶Ibid

every turn. Barack Obama outlines in summary what it could turn out to be like for a President who has to face divided government as he states, “As a member of the majority, you will have some input in any bill that's important to you before it hits the floor. You can ask the committee chairman to include language that helps your constituents or eliminate language that hurts them. You can even ask the majority leader or the chief sponsor to hold the bill until a compromise more to your liking is reached. If you are in the minority party, you have no such protection. You must vote yes or no on whatever bill comes up, with the knowledge that it's unlikely to be a compromise that either you or your supporters consider fair or just,”¹⁵⁷.

Paul Light takes his analysis about the importance of party one step further by stating, “Presidents and staffs tend to view party support as critical in the day-to-day conduct of domestic affairs...in the closed world of Washington politics, the party comes into play virtually every day of the term. Party support thereby becomes the central component of the President's capital,”¹⁵⁸. Based on this analysis, the importance of party relationships and understanding between the President and Congress is one acknowledged by not only the President, but the entire White House political staff, because they understand that it is only through building a connection with parties that a President can move his agenda through Congress. Additionally, understanding of party platforms, both for his own and the one opposing him, enables a President to better initiate strategy that can help agenda items which may be in danger due to conflicting viewpoints. Light further states, “In measuring potential legislative support, Presidents

¹⁵⁷Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*, 130

¹⁵⁸Paul C. Light, *The President's Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice from Kennedy to Clinton*, 27

inevitable must return to the congressional parties. Though party seats do not guarantee automatic support, they are the primary basis for influence...Members of Congress work with the President because it is to their mutual advantage,”¹⁵⁹. This adds to another motivation to the why the President must tread a careful but unavoidable line when trying to balance party politics with Congress. It is as mutually beneficial as working with interests groups and the media because it ensures the fulfillment of various ideologies which cement not only party standing and affiliation, but legitimacy of power as well. When that connection fails, partisanship reigns supreme and stifles progress, undermining the legitimacy of the President.

In his book *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* author John Kingdon outlines the basic structure and significance of parties in the realm of politics. He states, “Political parties might affect policy agendas through the content of their platforms, the impact of their leadership in Congress and more generally in the country the claim they might have on their adherents, and the ideologies they represent. Much as in the case of campaign promises, a party platform might form the core of an agenda for a subsequent administration of that party,”¹⁶⁰. According to Kingdon, the importance of parties lies in the fact that they not only can influence policy agendas, but also that their constitution of government at a given point in time can alter the direction policy can take during a particular administration¹⁶¹. It can be derived from Kingdon's analysis, that agendas are driven by the importance they hold within the ideological sphere of a political party, thus

¹⁵⁹Ibid

¹⁶⁰John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1995), 64

¹⁶¹Ibid

pushing a President to develop initiatives that are not based solely on actions that need to be taken for the betterment of the nation, but also how those actions fit in within the goals of his party at large. As the holder of the nation's largest office, and thus the most significant face of the party, the President faces a responsibility of trying to balance sometimes dueling interests. It is this battle that eventually creates the biggest problem a President faces when dealing with one branch of Congress or full Congress with a party that is not his own.

Another point that was outlined in the previous chapter that contributes to Presidential coalition building pertains to that of being elected again, which is always a sign of victory for a party and its agenda. This sentiment is best echoed by author Constantine J. Spiliotes who states on Presidential decision making and the role of partisanship in it, "I argue that...interaction produces an *institutionally* generated incentive for responsible decision making, which often occurs at precisely the moment that one would expect a President to focus on *exogenously* generated incentives for decision making, such as reelection or legislative consensus with core partisans in Congress,"¹⁶². In summary, according to this theory, it is actually a President's underlying desire to keep his party in power and be reelected which is the motivation behind his strong drive to move policy along in Congress to success and build a coalition with its players.

Despite the importance given to party support, legitimacy, and coalition building, it is obvious that many Presidents have taken party support to an extreme and have

¹⁶²Constantine J. Spiliotes, "Conditional Partisanship and Institutional Responsibility in Presidential Decision Making", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 3, no. 3 (September 2000), 488-489, accessed November 13, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27552118>

watered down the importance of coalition building. They have developed a perception that not working together, but rather aggressively pushing for policies that satisfy only the core base of their own political parties is the one way to remain significant in the eyes of the public. In fact, extreme partisan behavior can be described as the backbone of the modern Presidency. Barack Obama echoes these concerns stated as to what the partisanship can do to the functioning of a government. He writes, "...what's troubling is the gap between the magnitude of our challenges and the smallness of our politics-the ease with which we are distracted by the petty and trivial, our avoidance of tough decisions, our seeming inability to build a working consensus to tackle any big problem,"¹⁶³. It is this concern for gridlock which should essentially drive and serve as a motivation to a President to ensure that his policy agenda is moving along in Congress. It is important to note, however, that strong partisanship was not something that has been the hallmark of a Presidency since the beginning of our nation. This is something that has come to evolve (to be discussed later). In fact, in terms of the evolution, author Richard M. Skinner defines what the Presidency looked like historically, "Through an "objective" media, presidents appeal directly to voters, over the heads of party leaders, seeking a nonpartisan image. They build ad hoc coalitions of support in Congress without regard to party lines. They preside over an executive branch staffed by nonpartisan experts more interested in policy than politics. Presidents show little interest in their party's performance in down-ballot races, let alone its long-term fate. All of these propositions held true for presidents of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, especially Dwight Eisenhower,

¹⁶³Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*, 22

Lyndon B. Johnson, and Jimmy Carter,”¹⁶⁴. In essence, the ability of a President to work together, be balanced, and work with nonpartisan coalitions has slowly diminished which may or may not be a cause for concern. It must also be noted that Skinner further writes that this shift in ideology came under Reagan era, as he states, “Beginning with Ronald Reagan, recent presidents have increasingly relied upon their parties for support both in the electorate and in the Congress. They have presented a more distinctively partisan image to voters and have found it difficult to cultivate support from the opposition. They have sought to lead their parties, using the national committees to garner support for their policies, campaigning extensively for their parties' candidates, and even seeking to mold their parties' futures,”¹⁶⁵.

The common element to take away from all of these theories is that there is unanimous recognition that parties are an important part of the function of the office of the President, especially when it comes to fulfilling an agenda. Like the media and interest groups, it can be mutually beneficial for a leader to work with members of his party and others to achieve legislative goals which get a particular job done and satisfy the ideology of the both parties. This satisfaction makes not only both parties look good, but also legitimizes the role of the President as a bridge builder to successful policy initiatives for the country. In other words, Presidents need to be able to appeal to both their own party and that of their opposition to ensure a smooth implementation of their agenda. They need to establish coalitions which cover both sides of the aisle, and reach solutions which are moderate in nature. That is the only way in which the American

¹⁶⁴Richard M. Skinner, “George W. Bush and the Partisan Presidency”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol 123, No. 4, Winter (2008-09), accessed November 10, 605, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25655567>

¹⁶⁵Ibid, 608

government can function, otherwise too extreme ideologies result in gridlock. However, as stated, there has also been a recognizable shift in the way politics plays out today between branches. Based on that shift, the study of how partisanship has played out in different divided administrations becomes all the more significant because it is important to identify whether this shift has had a negative or positive impact on the modern Presidency.

A Note on the Reagan Administration

According to Skinner, the historical root of the partisanship that exists in the modern Presidency came under the leadership of President Ronald Reagan¹⁶⁶. Skinner writes,

“... Ronald Reagan defined the partisan presidency as surely as Franklin Roosevelt did the Modern Presidency. In an era when many look back to the 1980s as a less divisive time, we must remember what a polarizing figure Reagan himself was in his times. He sought to remake the Republican Party in his conservative image and to vault it into majority status; in this mission, he repeatedly campaigned for Republican candidates. He used the Republican National Committee to win support for his programs, and he worked closely with Republican leaders in Congress...Reagan polarized the electorate more than any of his predecessors, even Richard Nixon. Through centralization of policy

¹⁶⁶Skinner, “George W. Bush and the Partisan Presidency”, 608

decisions and appointment of ideological loyalists, Reagan managed to make the executive branch a tool of conservative governance,”¹⁶⁷.

Based on this summary of Reagan’s administration by Skinner, Reagan managed to counter everything that previous Presidents had built up, when it comes to coalition building with Congress. As stated in chapter 1¹⁶⁸, Reagan was driven by a desire to establish a strong conservative base to institute his policies, which included restructuring the manner in which he ran his staff at the White House. He furthered this, as stated above in more specifics, through strong support of his fellow party members through campaigns, usage of the national Republican committee, and work solely with Republican members of Congress on legislation and political structuring in major offices. Another action attributed to Reagan during this time that was indicative of his strong partisan nature was the usage of signing statements which was, “...a White House strategy, begun in 1985, of using presidential "signing statements" to quietly but consistently expand presidential power. Statements issued as the president signed congressional legislation were now more deliberately crafted to put on the public record the president's rationale for interpreting or even ignoring particular provisions in the law he was signing,”¹⁶⁹. This was widely considered to be a radical action by Reagan as, “Reagan also passed on a presidency that was more dangerous for our constitutional order, although I am sure that was never his intention. Behind the scenes, Reagan's tenure in the White House gave a sharpened impetus to the idea of presidential

¹⁶⁷Skinner, “George W. Bush and the Partisan Presidency”, 608

¹⁶⁸See Thesis Chapter 1, section *Interest Groups and the Reagan Administration*, 12-16

¹⁶⁹Hugh Hecla, “The Mixed Legacies of Ronald Reagan”, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol 38, No.4, (December 2008), 567, accessed November 10, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41219701>

unilateralism,”¹⁷⁰. Thus, Reagan was perceived as someone putting forth a dangerous precedent as a result of his strong partisan leanings, which translated to a variety of means of pursuing his policies in that way.

Scholar Paul Kengor also further defines the motivation behind Reagan’s heavy partisan approach to government by stating, “Stephen Skowronek argues that both Reagan and FDR were partly thrust to success due to the failures of their immediate predecessors. He complements both men as “reconstructive leaders,”¹⁷¹. Of Reagan, he writes, “Devastatingly simple and viscerally seductive, Reagan's reconstructive posture quickly earned him distinction as a 'Great Communicator,' the most masterful politician in the presidency since Franklin Roosevelt,”¹⁷². It is important to note that despite partisanship being a hallmark of Reagan’s presidency, he was still perceived to be a leader who was ultimately successful. The reason, Kengo argues that Reagan was so successful as a leader was because,

“Reagan was renowned for his charm and likableness... Reagan's approval ratings, with the exception of the 1982-83 recession, were well above average, hitting 66 percent in early 1985 and remaining near that level up to the Iran-Contra fiasco. Despite Iran-Contra, he left office with Gallup Poll approval ratings above 60 per cent. Those numbers were highest for any president in the postwar era with the exception of Ike, who also exited with a rating above 60 percent...”¹⁷³.

¹⁷⁰Ibid

¹⁷¹Paul Kengor, “Comparing Presidents Reagan and Eisenhower”, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol 28, No. 2(Spring 1988), 368, accessed November 12, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27551865>

¹⁷²Ibid

¹⁷³Ibid, 369-370

Based on this idea, Reagan used not only party politics to advance his agenda, but also translated that strategically to reflect himself as a voice of change for the people. His “charm” was put to more usage because Reagan realized that simply strong party politics would not be enough to fulfill an agenda. He would need to channel the sentiments of the public, whom had been through a few frustrating administration, and really establish the connectivity necessary to make his policies and his party look good. The result of this was a successful perception of his leadership, which is best summarized by Hugh Hecló, who states,

“After two terms, Reagan left behind a presidency that was robust and widely admired...it is widely held that successful presidents lead through exercising their power to persuade. They combine an active, transformative agenda and a positive, uplifting attitude... He brought dignity, confidence, and moral conviction to the office. The vision he communicated helped restore America's confidence in itself... President Reagan was successful in the sense of effectively putting his imprint on executive branch operations. This occurred in the first instance by Reagan's being clear on the principles through which he intended to govern. ...This effect of bringing the executive branch into line with presidential preferences was bolstered by more centralized White House control over departmental political appointments, budgets and legislative proposals, judicial appointments, federal regulations, and executive orders,”¹⁷⁴.

The important thing to note about these analyses is that Reagan’s success came from an antithesis to the common theoretical order. The common belief that strong coalition

¹⁷⁴Hecló, “The Mixed Legacies of Ronald Reagan”, 566-567

building and solidarity is key to policy success was rendered moot by Reagan. Instead, he stuck solely to the idea of partisan support to advance his goals. His belief in his own power as the President and belief in the power of his own party is what enabled him to move successfully forward, at the expense of constitutional concerns. In fact during this time, Reagan's policies were viewed as so successful, that support for liberals faced a massive decline in support for their policies.¹⁷⁵ Ultimately, even though the ethics of this strategy were questionable, and some may argue Reagan as a pragmatic, Reagan was still able to legitimize himself in the eyes of the public through his assertive disposition. At a time, which was "...after a string of Presidential failures following Kennedy's murder..."¹⁷⁶, Reagan's ability to get things done is what counted. The people were starved for a leader whom would take risks and be strong. Thus, Reagan is an example of how strong partisanship could work, as long as circumstances and public identification with a leader mix to produce results that define legitimacy.

A Note On The Bush Administration

I start this section with a statement which sets the tone of what party politics was like during the course of the Bush administration. Author Richard M. Skinner states, "But since 1980, we have seen the rise of a new kind of presidency-a partisan presidency. And George W. Bush has brought this partisanship to a new extreme-perhaps to the point when practice becomes pathology,"¹⁷⁷. Barack Obama describes an apt story about Karl Rove, an important advisor to President Bush, from that time which is representative of

¹⁷⁵ Gary C. Jacobson, "The Effects of the George W. Bush Presidency on Partisan Attitudes", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 39, no. 2, 194. *International Security and Counterterrorism Reference Center*, accessed December 7, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41427356>

¹⁷⁶ Hecló, "The Mixed Legacies of Ronald Reagan", 566

¹⁷⁷ Skinner, "George W. Bush and the Partisan Presidency", 605

how party support as a source of political capital can be an effective way to fulfilling an agenda item along. He writes,

“In its first term, at least, the Bush White House was a master of such legislative gamesmanship. There's an instructive story about the negotiations surrounding the first round of Bush tax cuts, when Karl Rove invited a Democratic senator's potential support for the President's package. Bush had won the senator's state handily in the previous election-in part on a platform of tax cuts-and the senator was generally supportive of lower marginal rates. Still, he was troubled by the degree which the proposed tax cuts were skewed towards the wealthy and suggested a few changes that would moderate the package's impact,”¹⁷⁸.

Obama then goes on to describe how the Senator told Rove that he would support the bill only if certain amendments were included, which would guarantee a supermajority of Democratic votes¹⁷⁹. This proposal was countered by Rove who stated that he simply wanted “fifty one” votes, which would be just enough to fulfill the political needs of the Bush administration, while at the same time maintaining the strong partisan divide already at play¹⁸⁰. Eventually, the measure went through and the Bush partisanship line was maintained¹⁸¹.

Based on the story by Obama, this is yet another example of how party politics and partisanship need not be considered a hindrance, when it comes to looking at the

¹⁷⁸Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*, 130

¹⁷⁹Ibid

¹⁸⁰Ibid

¹⁸¹Ibid

effectiveness it plays in the Presidential agenda. Here we saw how Bush used a strategy of party détente to influence Congressional decision making. Through Karl Rove, he proved that what was important was simply getting a particular agenda item done, at the expense of building bipartisan relations in Congress. But what was it that really drove Bush to take such a firm approach and establish himself as such a partisan leader? The answer lies in the fact that Bush, "...has been intensely unpopular with Democrats. Now that his support among independents has fallen to barely more than one in four, Bush is forced to rely almost exclusively on his GOP base,"¹⁸². Based on this quote, what drove Bush to adopt this strategy of strong party support came from the fact that his legitimacy as a bipartisan began to severely wane and he needed to find a way to counter and build upon the negative perception the Democratic party had of him, of which the only way was through aggressive quelling of Democratic opposition.

Ultimately, some also argue, that the extent to which Bush's policies began to be effective with his partisan strategy were quite low. James M. McCormick, Eugene R. Wittkopf, and David M. Danna write, "Bush gained bipartisan support on 19 percent of the foreign policy votes in the House and 29 percent in the Senate, while Clinton enjoyed bipartisan support on 27 percent in the House and 32 percent in the Senate. Further, Bush's bipartisan support in both chambers was lower than that of the other post-Vietnam administrations (Ford, Carter, and Reagan),"¹⁸³. This is not to say, however, that Bush's strong roots in his party politics were still not impactful. It is stated that, "During

¹⁸²Skinner, "George W. Bush and the Partisan Presidency", 609

¹⁸³James M. McCormick, Eugene R. Wittkopf and David M. Danna , "Politics and Bipartisanship at the Water's Edge: A Note on Bush and Clinton", Vol.30, No.1, (Autumn, 1997) 138-139, accessed November 11, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3235323>

the Bush administration, party and ideology are statistically significant in both the House and the Senate, but the relative impact of ideology is greater,”¹⁸⁴.

Another example of how Bush employed party politics in his administration is delineated by Skinner. Skinner writes,

“In late 2002, the Bush White House, dissatisfied with Trent Lott's leadership and dismayed by the uproar over the senator's remarks at Strom Thurmond's 100th birthday party, helped engineer his removal as Senate Republican Leader...George W. Bush has been able to rely on a solid phalanx of Senate Republicans to block Democratic proposals, especially any effort to restrain his hand in Iraq... Both presidents selected ideologically sympathetic subordinates, centralized policy and personnel decisions in the White House, and used the OMB to curb regulatory excess. ..The Reagan and George W. Bush administrations also sought to secure greater partisan/ideological control of the judiciary...

Neither Reagan nor Bush II showed much regard for neutral competence or disinterested expertise.”¹⁸⁵.

Based on this explanation by Skinner, similar to Reagan, Bush employed a few tactics to establish his power during his administration, via sticking to his party. He filled offices with appointees that fulfilled his political goals, and pursued policies that were staunchly linked to his party.

Although Bush decided to work closely with members of his party, a question that must be considered is, what was the overall reaction to Bush's partisanship? Was his

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 143

¹⁸⁵ Skinner, 614, 616

strategy ultimately successful in the long run? This question is highly debatable. Author Gary Jacobson argues, "...every administration inevitable shapes public perceptions about who and what the president's party stands for and how well it governs when in office. All of this is arguably even truer of George W. Bush than of any recent predecessor. With few exceptions, his administration pursued a partisan agenda using partisan tactics while receiving extraordinarily high levels of support from Republican leaders in Congress and elsewhere... congressional Republicans remained largely supportive, if only because their own core Republican constituents continued to give the president high approval ratings (Jacobson 2008),"¹⁸⁶. According to Jacobson's analysis, although Bush was highly partisan during his administration, he was able to maintain his legitimacy as a leader because he was able to unify his party and the wide conservative base. Bush's ability to bring about party organization and solidarity, despite policies whose merits were strongly debated, indicates that one yardstick for measuring the success of a President's reputation is through the appeal he has to the group that supports him in the first place. The implication here is that where some theorists argue that leaders must be more balanced in their approach to policy, the ability of a President to represent a strong face to his party is also undeniable to his legitimacy¹⁸⁷. Bush displayed some levels of success as a leader due to his party politics.

It is also not so simplistic that simply Bush's strong relationship with his party lead to certain successes. As with Reagan, Bush's effectiveness as a leader has been characterized by the circumstances that have surrounded his leadership. Jacobson states

¹⁸⁶Jacobson, "The Effects of the George W. Bush Presidency on Partisan Attitudes", 173

¹⁸⁷ Ibid

that, “The terrorist attacks of 9/11, and Bush’s forceful response to them, provoked the greatest rally in public support ever observed for a President...,”¹⁸⁸ and then ultimately when Bush began his war on terror in the Middle East, this period started off high and then nosedived lower and lower¹⁸⁹. The fact that the public supported Bush’s “forceful response” to 9/11, indicates that although Bush may be acting in line with his party’s wishes, the patriotic sentiment that came during that time also helped Bush’s actions gain support from his party and across the aisle. Eventually, when that sentiment tapered and perceptions mounted about the effectiveness about the war on terror, the public divided. The main element to consider here is that Bush’s partisan behavior was not the, or only, factor in the eventual implementation of the war on terror. It was the advent of political circumstances, which Bush was pragmatically able to channel, that drove the initial support for his wartime actions.

Like Reagan, party politics played an important role in this administration. Although Bush’s policies have been viewed with mixed results, his usage of strong party based liaisons and policies enhanced his overall image during different periods of his administration, which led to success for some of them and a strong look of legitimacy at his leadership.

Conclusion

Based on these findings, party politics and ideology have had a huge impact on the Presidential agenda because of the different results they provide on Presidential policymaking. Whereas theorists argue that Presidents must engage strongly with both

¹⁸⁸Jacobson, “The Effects of the George W. Bush Presidency on Partisan Attitudes”, 174

¹⁸⁹Ibid

parties, listen to policy developments on both sides, and use that interaction to formulate neutral policy for success, the examples of Reagan and Bush show some of both. Reagan proved that through assertive determination and capitalization of public disorientation with a previous regime, policies can be successful. Reagan instituted a more closed government where the conservative ideology was given stronger preference than that of the liberal, and he used that division pragmatically to play up his policies. The public supported him because of that confidence and because of the circumstances of his election. It is an example like this which shows that a leader need not be so extremely engaged with the opposing party to be, or at least be viewed as, a success. This counters many of the theories discussed in this chapter. Bush, on the other, hand also employed partisanship but did so with mixed results. He behaved more pragmatically because he realized that his opposition will remain strong, and he applied pressure through resources like Karl Rove, to assert that dominance in Congress. However, his tactics met with mixed success and he eventually proved some of the theories proposed about collaboration to be true. Based on this analysis, the relationship between party politics and the Presidency is strong and complex as it drives the leader to behave a certain strategic way when promoting his agenda, though this motivation does not always translate to success.

Works Cited

- Heclo, Hugh. "The Mixed Legacies of Ronald Reagan." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38.4 (2008): 554-74. *JSTOR*. Web. 9 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41219701>>.
- Jacobson, Gary C. "The Effects of the George W. Bush Presidency on Partisan Attitudes." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39.2 (2009): 172-209. *JSTOR*. Web. 9 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41427356>>.
- Kingdon, John W. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. 2nd ed. New York: Harper Collins College, 1995. Print.
- Kengor, Paul. "Comparing Presidents Reagan and Eisenhower." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 28.2 (1998): 366-93. *JSTOR*. Web. 13 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27551865>>
- Light, Paul Charles. *The President's Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice from Kennedy to Clinton*. Third ed. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. Print.
- McCormick, James M., Eugene R. Wittkopf, and David M. Danna. "Politics and Bipartisanship at the Water's Edge: A Note on Bush and Clinton." *Polity* 30.1 (1997): 133-49. *JSTOR*. Web. 9 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3235323>>.
- Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. New York: Crown, 2006. Print.
- Skinner, Richard M. "George W. Bush and the Partisan Presidency." *Political Science Quarterly* 123.4 (2008-09): 605-22. *JSTOR*. Web. 9 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25655567>>.
- Spiliotes, Constantine J. "Conditional Partisanship and Institutional Responsibility in Presidential Decision Making." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30.3 (2000): 485-513. *JSTOR*. Web. 9 Jan. 2015. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27552118>>.

Conclusion

The overarching driving force for a President is successful implementation of his policy agenda, which legitimizes his role as a leader of his party and of the nation.

However, the manner in which a President achieves these policy goals and maintains his legitimacy are complex. This complexity is the result of a myriad of interactions that he has with various entities, each of which help shape and drive his policy agenda in different ways. The three of the biggest instruments of a President's policy agenda have been displayed as being interest groups, the media, and party politics. Each of these elements have maintained a different type of relationship with each President, where either he has visibly been more inclined to encourage coalitions with these groups to move his agenda forward, maintained a distance, or has faced roadblocks and adversity from working with them or from them.

With interest groups, Presidents Carter, Ford, Reagan, Clinton, and Obama each interacted differently with interest groups for achieving success in policy goals. In the analysis of Carter, we saw that Carter used an approach of achieving policy goals where his sole goal was success with legislative agenda, not particularly driven strongly by partisan interests. He interacted with interest groups openly and made sure to use them as a resource to help move along his policies and act as mediators in a Congress racked by gridlock. Although it is debatable in the long run how successful Carter was policy wise, with many actually considering his Presidency to be one of mixed results, his drive to succeed on his agenda was put into motion by utilizing interest groups as a resource for progress. His predecessor, President Ford, had a different concern to tackle. He came into office following a difficult and controversial Presidency, and the main concern he had

was his reputation as a leader. To legitimize his office, Ford used a method of engagement where his alliance with interest groups was driven by a desire to uptick his policy success and use them as a means, like Carter, to drive policy goals in Congress. Here we saw a President interact with interest groups solely for personal gain, as he needed to prove himself as a capable face of the party and policymaker. His success has also been debated on the policy front, like Carter, but Ford represented yet another example of a President's leaning on interest groups to drive his policies. Reagan used a different approach where he employed strong partisanship in the organization of the executive branch. He instituted access to interest groups to primarily those on the same page as him, and limited groups, such as minority groups, in his interactions. Some would argue that this was a mistake because more interest group interaction expands the wide network of resources a leader can use to push policies, and by disengaging, you are alienating a group that can be potentially helpful. A counterargument is that this is a form of pragmatism, where you do not waste political capital and energy on groups that will opposed you anyway. Instead, focus on strengthening those ties which are already strong for a more effective force. Clinton was similar to Reagan, some feel, with regard to pragmatism because he also engaged only with those that agreed with and often did things that were appealing to groups that he wanted to strengthen ties with, like interest groups. Some also argue that Clinton's tenure was hampered by this practice, such as Renshon, as it often made Clinton seem confused as to whom he should try to appease to move his policy ideas forward. Clinton, was driven by a desire to be appreciated by all parties he engaged in, but sometimes countered that with a perspective to only do what fulfills his policy agenda, whether that included working with or alienating many interest

groups. Most recently, Obama has displayed a strict relationship with interest groups as well. He has instituted and amended existing legislation making the impact of interest groups less within the confines of Congress. Most likely subtly driven by a partisan slant, since he has to deal with a divided Congress, Obama has taken an action that seeks to protect his policy interests by reducing the influence of those strong interest groups which can sway both his party and opposing party members to the other side of issues that he supports. This may also be looked at as a type of pragmatism like Carter, where he is doing what he can to move policy through a gridlocked Congress, or as a partisan move which seeks to make him appear a stronger representative of his party. He too, like the predecessors mentioned however, is preoccupied with legitimacy and uses a means of controlled interaction to keep involved with interest groups while not giving them too much power in policymaking.

With interest groups, leaders act based on circumstances, image related goals, and policy goals. The President has been shown to create coalitions with interest groups to fulfill his agenda only when absolutely necessary. The common driving factor between all is the element of gain that one derives from working with interest groups to move policy goals along. A variety of approaches have defined these relationships, but in recent times, administrations have gotten more strict with regard to policy, circumventing this relationship. It is important to look at this relationship and its evolution because it puts into perspective truly how much Presidents interact with interest groups as an external force when moving policy, and how much impact they can have on his idea. This understanding creates an awareness that Presidents do not solely take action with the

power of their office, but sometimes have to work with and regulate outside forces which can have just as much of an impact on policymaking.

The next instrument of interest, the media, plays both a positive and negative role in an administration. If used correctly, it can enhance a leader's image and even lead his policies to success. But if not on his side, the media can hamper the success of a leader. When looking Franklin Delano Roosevelt, he used the media successfully as a tool to promote his policies and engage the nation. He recognized that the key to being a legitimate leader, especially in a nation that had lost hope in its government, was to create an open and transparent relationship and dialogue with them. His fireside chats proved to be revolutionary, and the public's nationalistic sentiments were enhanced by his ability to establish a relationship with them through a form of mass media. By channeling an existing emotion in accordance with his own goals and policy ideas, Roosevelt proved that the media can be used as an effective tool to influence Congress and the public to gather more support. With Obama, the relationship was a lot more bumpy. During his campaigns in both 2008 and 2012, Obama identified the partnership and usage of media that could help him win. He extensively used social media and created innovative ways to engage with the public, using networks like Youtube, Twitter, and Facebook. However, it was during his Presidency, primarily, where he established another iron handed approach with the media, like he did with interest groups. Although he started his term by initializing more open interactions and access to government, Obama became more strict when a string of controversies began to mar his leadership. Elements such as where he was born to what religion he truly follows, became fodder for the media, which naturally was not looked upon favorably by Obama. At first, he patiently admonished the media for

their focus on rumors, as opposed to policy initiatives the country needed to achieve. However, as time wore on, Obama established a more distant relationship with the media by not engaging with them during certain political meetings such as one such one during his trip to Asia. This relationship was further fractured when certain elements of the media painted a negative picture of his health care policy, which is viewed to be the most significant aspect of his legacy as a leader.

Obama recognized, however, that he does need the media to relay information to the public, and thus did not disregard all of them completely. Common criticisms for Obama focus on the fact that he chose to engage with media that supported him, while disregarding those elements of media that represented opposing views to his own. These actions can be viewed as a pragmatic effort to combat any source of information given to the public that undermines his image as a legitimate leader. The important thing to take away from the second chapter is that the media has been another driver of the effectiveness of the Presidential agenda. That effectiveness comes from a view of a Presidential policy as legitimate, and if a driver of the Presidential agenda is painting a negative picture of him, he must work together or firmly with that element to insure his image is protected and that he is using that element to engage with lawmakers and the public, who can keep his support going, something Roosevelt did with his fireside chats and which Obama had mixed results with through his strict and controlled interactions post assuming office. The media is yet another factor, like interest groups, which must be analyzed as something that can affect the success or failure of Presidential policies.

On the party politics side, party affiliation has been found to have led to mixed results for success as well. As outlined in the first two chapters, this element is one that is a common motivation for leaders no matter whom they are working with. The ultimate goal of any leader is to keep his party in stronger power and achieve what the party wants. Based on the initiative of a leader, and circumstances, it has been discovered that party can affect the legitimacy, perception, and agenda of a leader. One argument is that party politics is an internal source of political capital that a leader can use to either move only his party's agenda forward, or engage with rival parties to facilitate a more successful policy run. The extent to which a leader does this can affect policy outcomes. This is most important in divided government. Another argument is that party politics is an important fabric in the day to day policymaking game at the White House, and a balanced approach to this, enables a leader to be more informed and tactical when moving agenda items along and engaging. When that engagement is not there, a President's legitimacy can be eroded as he can be viewed as someone unwilling to compromise. Some leaders fall into a partisan trap, which stifles success. If a leader can balance gridlock, the direction of policy is often more smooth.

We looked at Reagan and Bush as important examples of partisan Presidents. Reagan was found to be a successful leader due to his partisan practices because it established him as a dedicated and committed leader, who was firm, which counters traditional theory on collaboration. Furthermore, Reagan also used existing circumstances to his advantage. Bush was less successful in his efforts, but he established partisanship as a result of recognizing that his support across the aisle is at such a low anyways that he would not garner support there anyway. Depending on the situation, he also used

effective organization to rally support for his policies. Party politics is an important element to analyze because it is the most complex of all drivers. Its usage has led to success in some administrations, whereas failure in others, and it all comes down to public perception of a leader and how he uses that strategically to advance his policy goals.

To make this study better, more data needed to be research on current administrations and more research needed to be found on current administrations. It was a large challenge to find specific policy initiatives that fulfill the arguments put forth by the theorists in each chapter. I think more study could also have been made on administrations that are in the gaps between the discussed regimes to better understand how the evolution occurred further. It was particularly challenging to find scholarly work on Obama, since much of what is discussed on him is fairly recent. More detailed research on theories with regard to his administration would have been helpful for all chapters.

In conclusion, the primary objective to do this study is to understand that forces outside of Presidential control are in fact as instrumental as his own initiatives to get things done. Within those forces, the President interacts with them and liaises with them in different ways, based on circumstances, to achieve policy success, which can cement his legitimacy. Depending on how he is viewed and what he wants to achieve, the President executes actions which engage or disengage these groups. His policies also are not clear cut, as some may view them as successful or failure. With interest groups and the media, the President has to tread a careful line because he knows that they can be wonderful resources, yet at the same time, malign his work through information or false

representation. Party politics is a lot more standard and a bigger driver because the President is first answerable to those whom have chosen him as the leader of their solidarity, and thus serves as the biggest motivation for a President to serve their interests. The policymaking process is complex and the inclusion of these drivers in that process certainly cements that viewpoint. The contribution these papers have made to this study is through the collection and analysis of a variety of viewpoints which reflect whether these coalitions can be effective or not and why.

VIKRUM MATHUR

vikrummathur@yahoo.com • (301) 922-5707

DATE OF BIRTH: October 28, 1988

Washington, DC

EDUCATION:

The Johns Hopkins University

Washington, DC

Master of Arts, Government, Concentration: Legal Studies

December 2014

The George Washington University

Washington, DC

Bachelor of Arts, International Affairs, Concentration: International Development, Minor:
Communication

May 2011

CERTIFICATIONS:

- Achieved the Hindi Certificate sponsored by the Government of India for proficiency in the Hindi language in November 2006

PUBLICATIONS

- Special online contributor of Bollywood film reviews and special features for THE CAPITOL POST since September 2014