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# “Greatness” Revisited: Evaluating The Performance of Early American Presidents in Terms of Cultural Dilemmas

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## **Abstract**

*A president's ability to resolve cultural dilemmas provides a standard by which we can judge presidential success and failure. "Great" presidents, we suggest, are those who provide solutions to cultural dilemmas. Using this criterion, we find that of the first sixteen presidents (from the founding of the republic through the Civil War), George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln qualify as great presidents. We also conclude that John Adams and James Polk, commonly considered "near great" presidents, are greatly overrated.*

What is the mark of a “great” president? Will Ronald Reagan be inducted into this select class? If not a Great then how about a Near Great president? Or will he be remembered as merely Average, or worse still, a Failure? Does he deserve a ranking higher or lower than Jimmy Carter? Lyndon Johnson? Dwight Eisenhower? Harry Truman? How does his performance compare with that of James Madison, John Tyler or Andrew Jackson? Journalists and academics will soon earnestly address themselves to the question of how our 39th president measures up against his illustrious and less than illustrious predecessors.

Polling a panel of “experts” has become the accepted way of rendering history’s judgement of presidential performance. The presidential greatness game began in earnest in 1948, when Arthur Schlesinger asked fifty-five prominent historians to grade our past presidents: A signified Great; B, Near Great; C, Average; D, Below Average; and E, Failure. Believing there to be wisdom in numbers, subsequent surveys have expanded the panel of “experts” from 571 in 1970 to 953 in 1983.<sup>1</sup>

The practice of evaluating presidential performance by polling historians is a curious one. Characteristically surveys are conducted to obtain information about the respondent, either in the form of preferences — which candidate or party do you prefer — or beliefs about the empirical world — how many members are in the House of Representatives. We do not as a rule conduct surveys to gauge the validity of a claim. Why then do we do so with respect to presidential performance? The answer is that we lack agreed upon criteria for making these judgements. If we had accepted criteria,

surveys would be superfluous (and subject to corroboration); we would need only to check presidential performance against the established yardsticks.

While these surveys have yielded interesting information about the respondents—Murray and Blessing’s poll, for instance, finds that American historians specializing in women’s history hold George Washington in much lower esteem than the sample as a whole—they are not a good tool to evaluate presidential performance. There is no reason to think the mean judgement of 1000 historians more valid than the estimate of a single scholar specializing in past presidents. In so far as our aim is to compare the performances of presidents, rather than gather information about the pollees, energies should be directed to devising appropriate criteria for evaluating performance.

The original Schlesinger survey completely sidestepped the issue of criteria to be used in appraising presidential performance. The only instructions in the first poll were that “the test in each case is *performance in office*, omitting anything done before or after.”<sup>2</sup> How one was to gauge the performance in office was left unspecified. In the absence of such criteria, the finding that president X ranked higher than president Y was difficult to interpret.

In *Presidential Greatness*, Stephen Bailey attempted to remedy this deficiency by identifying criteria through which presidents could be measured. He came up with forty-three yardsticks for measuring presidential greatness: achievement, administrative capacity, appointees, blunders, eloquence, industriousness, scandals, sensitivity, and many more.<sup>3</sup> If the Schlesinger survey suffered from a lack of guidelines as to the unit of comparability, the surfeit of tests devised by Bailey left the reader with a commendably broader view of the many facets of the presidency but equally helpless. By including everything and excluding nothing we were no better than before at evaluating presidential performance.

Often the standard of presidential greatness employs measures such as amount of legislation passed, activity in office, or number of objectives pursued. But these criteria create a pronounced bias towards activist presidents. That such criteria sneak in ideological judgements about the ends of government is indicated by Schlesinger’s conclusion that the 1962 survey showed that average or mediocre presidents “believed in negative government, in self-subordination to the legislative power.”<sup>4</sup> Why should a contemporary activist view—the presidency is best that adds functions to government and/or the presidency—be a standard for scholars?

Though acutely aware of the limitations of presidential ratings as presently conducted, we do not accept the claim that “comparing eminent figures is only a game,” or that “each [president] operated within a unique political environment.”<sup>5</sup> By taking aim at the easy target of presidential ratings, attention is deflected away from what we contend is a more significant defect—the tendency to wrap each president and his times in a unique cocoon, thereby reducing the study of the presidency to political biography. The result, as James MacGregor Burns correctly pointed out two decades ago, is that “We know everything about the Presidents and nothing about the Presidency.”<sup>6</sup> It would be both ironic and unfortunate for the most well-known effort to compare presidencies to discredit the laudable, indeed essential, goal of making comparisons among administrations. The presidential greatness game remains popular pre-

cisely because it holds up the tantalizing prospect of comparing presidencies. Our aim is to do just that.

### **Resolving Cultural Dilemmas: A Mark of Greatness**

All presidents face cultural dilemmas, albeit of different kinds and intensities. Their ability to resolve these dilemmas, we believe, provides a criterion for evaluating their performance. Our hypothesis is that presidencies can be evaluated in terms of dilemmas confronted, evaded, created or overcome. “Great” presidents are those who provide solutions to culturally induced dilemmas.

By political culture we do not mean national customs. Nor are cultures countries. All those residing in America are not, as we use the term, adherents of the same political culture. Rather we analyze politics from a perspective of cultural dissensus, i.e. the conflict between cultures or ways of life. We posit the existence of three competing political cultures: hierarchical, individualist, and egalitarian.<sup>7</sup> The type of leadership preferred and feared, and the kinds of support given to and demands made upon leaders, we hypothesize, vary by political culture.

The individualist regime is organized to maximize the scope of individual autonomy and thus minimize the need for authority. Individualist regimes perform a delicate balancing act between having leaders when they are needed and getting rid of them when they are not. Ideally, they give up only as much autonomy as the immediate engagement requires. Individualists dread most the leader who overstays his welcome. Adherents of individualist regimes know that from the leader flows the hierarchy and among its multitudinous ranks are found policemen and tax collectors. Not wanting the one, they choose not to have the other any longer than absolutely necessary. Following Groucho Marx, they believe that any leader strong enough to help them is too strong to be trusted.

Egalitarians are dedicated to diminishing differences among people. Would-be egalitarian leaders are thus in trouble before they start, for authority is a prima-facie case of inequality. Followership, to egalitarians, implies subordination of one person to another. If they push themselves forward, attempting to lead rather than merely convening or facilitating discussion, leaders will be attacked for attempting to lord it over others. Aspiring leaders must therefore dissemble, at once persuasive about the right course to follow and self-effacing, as if they were not leading at all.

Exercising leadership in a hierarchical regime is much easier. Prospective leaders are expected to lead; authority inheres in position. The regime that guides and constrains them gives consistent advice: leadership is necessary, and, therefore, should be supported. Fearing disorder, hierarchies shore up authority in every way they can. While sharing in the credit, leaders are generally absolved from blame. Differences in prestige or privilege that accompany positions of authority in a hierarchy are legitimized by the greater sacrifices required of the superior in the name of the whole. Errors are attributed to the deviance of subordinates. Because they give so much backing to leaders, however, hierarchies fear the charismatic leader who, instead of working through the hierarchy, obeying its notions of reciprocal restraints, substitutes himself for the law, thereby breaking down all previous distinctions.

Cultural theory is not a substitute for historical analysis. The instruments of policy emerge in interaction with historical experience. Believing that government was a source of inequality, for instance, egalitarians in the early republic sought to limit the central government's ability to interfere with the natural equality generated by American conditions. After the rise of corporate capitalism and the depression of the 1930s, by contrast, egalitarians came to believe that the national government was a potential source of greater equality. Historical experience had altered their beliefs about the desirability of government action, but their objective—increased equality—remained the same. Similarly, the Federalist alliance of individualism and hierarchy desired a more active national government to counter egalitarian tendencies; in the modern era, however, their Republican successors have wished for a less interventionist government because of a belief that it would engage in redistributive policies.

America has been characterized by relatively strong individualism, weak hierarchy, and waxing and waning egalitarianism. This means what Alexis de Tocqueville and Louis Hartz and Samuel Huntington have said it does: support for authority is relatively weak in America.<sup>8</sup> With egalitarians rejecting authority, individuals desiring to escape from it, and hierarchical forces too weak to impose it, presidents seeking to rely on formal authority alone are in a precarious position. This anti-authority cultural context justifies Richard Neustadt's emphasis on persuasion,<sup>9</sup> for that is what presidents must do when they cannot rely on the authority inherent in their position.

National political parties, like other complex social organizations, are composed of more than one political culture. The Democratic party under Andrew Jackson, for example, constituted an alliance of individualism and egalitarianism. United by its opposition to hierarchy, this coalition was virulently anti-authority. The Jacksonian alliance was kept together by a belief that minimal government intervention in individual lives would increase equality of condition. Despite their shared distrust of hierarchy, however, the individualist alliance with egalitarianism is problematic, for individualists may find egalitarian opposition to inequality constrains their preference for personal gain through risk-taking.

Joint rule by individualism and hierarchy, a cultural combination known in current parlance as "the establishment," is an option open to those individualists who find the alliance with egalitarianism undesirable. Individualists get sufficient order to carry on bidding and bargaining, while hierarchy gains the growth and flexibility it might otherwise lack. Despite these mutual benefits, the establishment alliance too suffers from disagreements. If individualists find the egalitarian benchmark of equality of conditions constricting, they may also be frustrated by hierarchy's penchant for rules and regulations.

The following examples are drawn from a larger project that applies this cultural analysis to all presidents from Washington through Lincoln. We have focused on early presidents in part because the passions of yesteryear have cooled sufficiently so that these presidencies are more likely to be treated dispassionately. Were we concerned with evaluating the performance of recent presidents, we fear that disagreement with the policies of these presidents would interfere with the purpose of evaluating and comparing presidencies. To those who doubt this proposition we remind them of the

angry reaction that Carter’s low ranking in a recent greatness poll drew from Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, who accused the raters of “insensitive elitism.”<sup>10</sup> Speaking ill of John Adams or James Polk, we trust, will not engender the same reaction.

### **Four Great Presidents: Washington, Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln**

We propose two primary categories of cultural dilemmas. The first involves the president with some blend of egalitarian and individualist cultural propensities. All Jeffersonian and Jacksonian presidents labored, with varying degrees of success, to square their own and their followers’ anti-authority principles with the exercise of executive authority. The second type is the president of hierarchical cultural propensities. While the precise contours of the dilemma varied with the historical situation and configuration of cultures, all hierarchical presidents struggled, in one form or another, to reconcile their, and their party’s, hierarchical cultural preferences with the anti-hierarchical ethos dominant in the society and polity. This conflict animated the presidencies of George Washington, John Adams and John Quincy Adams, as well as hamstringing Whig leaders such as Henry Clay and Daniel Webster who aspired to the presidency. Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson provided solutions to cultural dilemmas of the first type, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln to the second type.

#### *George Washington*

President-raters agree that George Washington was a great president. But wherein lies Washington’s greatness? Stripping away the myths surrounding “the godlike Washington” has left the basis of his preeminence unclear. If, as Marcus Cunliffe concludes, he was “a good man, not a saint; a competent soldier, not a great one; an honest administrator, not a statesman of genius,” what made him “an exceptional figure?”<sup>11</sup> How can good, competent and honest—a characterization which well describes Jimmy Carter—sum up to a great president?

The deepest fear of an individualist political culture, we have suggested, is the leader who overstays his welcome. Acutely conscious of this fear, Washington continually reassured his countrymen of his desire to step down immediately after he had completed his assigned task. Before assuming command of the Revolutionary armies, he told the Continental Congress that he harbored “no lust for power.” In a letter to the governors of the states upon the disbanding of the Army, Washington insisted that he had no wish to “share in public business hereafter,” longing only for “the shade of retirement.”<sup>12</sup> Both as general and as president he repeatedly declared his aversion to the glare of public life and his preference for “the shadow of my own vine and my own fig tree.”<sup>13</sup> While Washington’s public pronouncements were ideally suited to alleviate the prevalent fears of power, it was his actions—twice retiring from the most powerful office in the land—that brought him the country’s highest accolades.

By voluntarily relinquishing power, and spurning offers to make his leadership permanent, Washington became the paragon of individualist political leadership. “Commitment to a political culture,” Barry Schwartz argues, “showed up in the form of

devotion to a man.” Washington’s self-denying behavior made him a “visible symbol” of individualist values and tendencies.<sup>14</sup> In being good he thus became great. That Washington was revered for leaving office did not, however, guarantee support when he was in office.

As president, Washington’s cultural dilemma was that he was a president primarily of hierarchical propensities<sup>15</sup> in a society where individualism was predominant. With severe limits on the substance of power, Washington had to make do with the appearance of power. Painfully aware of the Revolutionary bias against central rule, Washington carefully nurtured the new government’s reputation. Before announcing federal appointments, for instance, he sought assurances that the nominee would accept in order to avoid the government being embarrassed by a candidate refusing to serve.<sup>16</sup>

Where he could, Washington presided over bargains that would create agreement among disputatious factions that he could neither control nor overawe. Unseemly disagreements among elites, he believed, undermined respect for authority. Washington supported Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton’s funding of the debt because he was persuaded by his experience under the Articles of Confederation that financial solvency was essential to gaining the respect of foreign governments and the domestic population. Rather than ask whether Hamilton’s financial schemes were equitable — as Madison and Jefferson did — Washington asked whether they would contribute to the prestige of the central government.

Washington tried to enhance the government’s image of competence and strength by employing federal power where it was not merely adequate to the purpose but overwhelming, as in the Whiskey Rebellion. So anxious were Hamilton and Washington to demonstrate federal authority, that the military force they gathered to put down the local rebellion rivaled the total fighting force of the entire Revolutionary army. Beneath the impressive appearance of strength lurked the government’s thinly disguised weakness, for the massive military force was not a well-trained national standing army, but rather a disorganized conglomeration of state militias.

It was in the realm of foreign relations that Washington was most successful in avoiding the embarrassments that might discredit central authority. The first president’s foreign policy resolved the dilemma of a hierarchical regime in a nonhierarchical context by combining a commitment to a strong central government with an appreciation for the limits of authority in America.

National defense had been a compelling argument for jettisoning the Articles of Confederation in favor of a stronger central government.<sup>17</sup> But having ceded the authority they believed necessary to secure the nation from attack, individualists and egalitarians were loathe to further extend its influence. Hoping to minimize the need for authority, Jefferson and his followers were driven to constantly downplay the threat posed by foreign nations. Great Britain, argued William Branch Giles on the House floor, was a dying hierarchy “tottering under the weight of a King, a Court, a nobility, a priesthood, armies, navies, debts, and all the complicated machinery of oppression.”<sup>18</sup> The Federalists, in contrast, desiring to promote hierarchical relations domestically, continually played up threats from abroad.

When Citizen Edmond Genêt arrived in the United States in the spring of 1793 as a special emissary from the newly-proclaimed Republic of France, he was greeted with enthusiastic popular applause. Having declared itself at war with all European monarchies, France hoped that sending Genêt to America would promote American support for the cause of “liberty, equality and fraternity.” Republicans adopted the French Revolution as akin to their own. “The liberty of the whole earth,” gushed Jefferson, hinged on the success of the French armies. Fearing that popular enthusiasm might sweep an unprepared nation into a holy war on behalf of liberty and equality, Washington responded by issuing a Proclamation of Neutrality.<sup>19</sup>

Popular antipathy towards the British was subsequently fanned by news that Britain had seized 250 unsuspecting and unarmed American ships in the West Indies. The Republican press urged retaliation; war seemed imminent. Federalists, though anxious to avoid war with Britain, were nonetheless determined that the nation be adequately prepared for that eventuality. Hamilton and his allies in Congress pressed for increased taxes and strengthened armed forces. But while Republicans in Congress were eager to adopt a hard line with respect to commercial restrictions against the British, they still refused to support efforts to strengthen national defense.

Given the opposition’s reluctance to support a build-up in national defense, Washington correctly perceived that involvement in European affairs was likely to result in a humiliated national government. Washington’s Farewell Address provided a creative solution to this dilemma. It disarmed the Republican opposition by echoing the familiar warning against “entangling alliances.” Republicans could see in these words an affirmation of their isolationism. In the Republican view, European struggles were to be avoided because power politics was the road to corruption, executive aggrandizement and standing armies.

Washington’s motivation for warning against becoming embroiled in foreign disputes, however, was radically different. He feared that the new nation, through misfortune or ideological fervor, would be drawn into a war that would thoroughly discredit the new national government. Once the revolutionary “infancy” had passed and the people had gotten over their hostility to standing armies, executive power, central government, taxation and debt, then and only then, Washington believed, would America be able to throw itself onto the global scales of power and assume a leading position in the world of nations.<sup>20</sup> In the absence of public support for peacetime preparations, Washington avoided committing American military forces to ventures that might expose the weakness beneath the carefully cultivated appearance of strength.

So successful was Washington at substituting the appearance of power for the reality of power that his successor, John Adams, was left with the erroneous impression that the president operated in a hierarchical political system. Where Washington, recognizing that hierarchy was weak in America, carefully nurtured support for authority, Adams assumed that support for authority inhered in position. The president, in Adams’ view, had only to announce the correct decision and others would obey. His solomon-like pronouncement in early 1799 to reopen negotiations with the French, throwing his party into total disarray, reflected his vision of the president as perched

atop a hierarchical structure, responsible for keeping the peace by arbitrating between the parts in the name of the whole. Not having consulted anyone prior to announcing his decision, no one had a stake in defending it. Long time congressional supporters of the President hurled abuse at Adams; cabinet members ran for cover, assuring friends that they had no part in the “insane” action.

Adams’ son, John Quincy Adams, was no better at reconciling his own hierarchical dispositions with the anti-authority bias of the political system. His presidency was severely hampered by a refusal to exploit patronage to advance his policy objectives. Believing policy to be agreed upon, and implementation a matter of neutral competence, Adams viewed his subordinates as above or apart from politics. Consequently he was unwilling to dismiss those whom he considered qualified, even if, as in the case of the postmaster general John McLean, they dispensed patronage to Adams’ opponents. It is no coincidence that John Quincy Adams, like John Adams, or, for that matter, Jimmy Carter, lasted only a single term in the presidency. These presidents were hierarchs without a hierarchy, i.e. hierarchically disposed leaders unable or unwilling to make allowances for the anti-leadership nature of the American political system.

### *Thomas Jefferson*

With Thomas Jefferson’s election in 1800, Jeffersonian Republicans (a fusion of egalitarianism and individualism) faced the task of reconciling their deep suspicion of authority with the exercise of executive power. Jefferson’s dilemma, as Lance Banning phrases it, was “to govern in accordance with an ideology that taught that power was a monster and governing was wrong.”<sup>21</sup> Aware that overt displays of presidential leadership were likely to raise the cry of executive usurpation, Jefferson opted for a covert leadership style. Jefferson’s biographer, Dumas Malone, finds his protagonist always making a “conscious effort to avoid all appearances of dictation.” The key to Jefferson’s political leadership, continues Malone, was that “he did not permit his followers to think of him as a boss at all.”<sup>22</sup> He led without appearing to do so, instructed while appearing only to suggest, guiding while seeming to defer.

Jefferson’s informal influence was carefully concealed behind a public facade of deference to Congress. In a formal Reply to notification of his election, Jefferson vowed to be “guided by the wisdom and patriotism of those to whom it belongs to express the legislative will of the nation [and] . . . give to that will a faithful execution.” His first presidential address opened by referring to Congress respectfully as “the great council” of the nation and closed with a pledge to “carry . . . the legislative judgement . . . into faithful execution.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed Jefferson’s decision to submit the annual message in writing rather than deliver it in person — a practice which many Republicans view as aping the British custom of having the monarch speak to parliament in person — was calculated to underline executive subordination to the legislative branch. Despite this formal acquiescence to Congress’ hegemony in policy-making, virtually all important legislation during Jefferson’s tenure originated in the executive branch.

While Jefferson’s messages politely suggested only the broad outlines of a program, he swiftly followed these up with private communications to legislative leaders

specifying the policy in detail. It was not unusual for Jefferson actually to draft the bill himself and then send his draft to influential and sympathetic members of Congress. Jefferson always impressed upon his congressional confidants the value of keeping his leadership of Congress hidden from public view, often asking the member to copy and then burn or return the original.<sup>24</sup>

Jefferson’s nightly dinners provided a regular opportunity to build sympathy for himself and his legislative program without appearing to issue commands. The table at these small, informal gatherings was circular, in order to break down hierarchical distinctions and facilitate an air of collegiality. It was the rare dinner guest, notes historian Robert Johnstone, who could “withstand entirely the seductive force of the president’s personality.”<sup>25</sup>

Jefferson’s distaste for public confrontation was expressed by one of his favorite maxims—“take things always by their smooth handle.” Like Dwight Eisenhower, the “hidden-hand” president he so much resembles, Jefferson would not publicly challenge even the most abusive of opponents. When John Randolph recklessly abused and villified the administration, Jefferson responded, as did Eisenhower to McCarthy, by privately undercutting rather than publicly attacking his adversary.<sup>26</sup>

Jefferson’s relations with his department heads displayed the same emphasis on persuasion, conciliation and discussion that characterized his leadership of the Republican party in Congress. Cabinet members were treated as peers rather than subordinates. “By conversing and reasoning,” claimed Jefferson, the Cabinet “scarcely ever failed . . . so to modify each other’s ideas, as to produce a unanimous result.” In fact, however, as Johnstone makes clear, Jefferson “dominated their collective proceedings and insured his final authority.”<sup>27</sup> By leading consensually the act of leadership—setting the agenda and making decisions—was disguised.

Jefferson’s “hidden-hand” leadership style resolved the dilemma of leadership in an anti-leadership culture for himself but had failed to educate his followers on the need for leadership. Jefferson’s successors, Madison and Monroe, who lacked his skill, stature or luck, were consequently unable to provide much in the way of presidential leadership. Hidden-hand leadership, as Madison soon discovered, was particularly ill-suited to preparing for and fighting a war. With the disastrous setbacks of the War of 1812 fresh in their minds, Madison and then Monroe attempted, with more success than is commonly acknowledged, to modify the dominant cultural coalition in a less virulently anti-authority direction. As the post-war retreat from Jeffersonian orthodoxy accelerated under Madison, Monroe and particularly John Quincy Adams, however, true believers issued a call for a rededication to original Jeffersonian principles.

### *Andrew Jackson*

The Jacksonian movement was a self-conscious revival of Jeffersonian political culture. Believing the central government created inequalities and suppressed competition, Jacksonians attempted to strictly limit the scope of government activity.<sup>28</sup> The Jacksonian aversion to central authority created the same presidential dilemma—reconciling anti-authority dispositions with the exercise of authority—that the Jeffersonians had had to face.

Jackson's greatness consisted in fusing an energetic chief executive with a limited central government. Presidential activism was justified in the name of limiting the activities of hierarchical institutions, the "Monster Bank," "King Caucus," even government itself. Presidential powers were to be enlisted in the battle to remove the institutional impediments to increased equality. Public participation would be increased by extending the franchise, overthrowing the Senatorial caucus system for nominating presidents, and instituting rotation in office. Terminating the privileges conferred by government upon private industry through charters and franchises would permit the unfettered operation of free enterprise and, thereby, promote equality.

Since its founding, the presidency had been regarded with widespread suspicion as the institutional representation of hierarchy. Jefferson, Madison and Monroe all were troubled by the sense that to act openly would constitute a betrayal of their anti-authority ideals. By demonstrating that the executive could be used to undermine hierarchy, Jackson smashed the link in the popular mind between the presidency and hierarchy. Where Jefferson, for instance, fearing cries of executive "corruption," had carefully masked the removal of Federalists from public office, Jackson trumpeted his removals in full view of the public, elevating the principle of rotation in office to the positive good.<sup>29</sup>

Jackson portrayed the president as mandated by the people to check concentrations of political and economic power. Rather than emboldening hierarchy, he argued, strengthening the presidency would flatten the hierarchy by increasing popular control of those in positions of authority. The concept of the mandated presidency provided an effective cover under which leaders could exercise power while denying they were doing anything more than carrying out the popular will. If the president was mandated to carry out a policy, he could not be exercising personal discretion and therefore there was no reason to fear "executive usurpation." Jackson insisted that he could hear not only the voice of the people in his elections but their precise words. The 1832 election, for instance, Jackson publicly construed as popular vindication of his Bank veto and a mandate to continue his financial policies.<sup>30</sup>

The negative power of the veto, which Jackson employed more frequently than all his predecessors combined and more than any other pre-Civil War president, fit well with the anti-authority Democratic political culture. The veto was exercised in the name of curbing power, checking the wasteful expenditures produced by the corrupting mix of public and private power in the halls of Congress. Since the veto could "only be exercised in a negative sense," Democrats reasoned that it could pose no danger to liberty.<sup>31</sup> Originally designed by the Federalists as a check upon democracy, the executive veto was now portrayed as the people's main weapon in their battle to promote equality by limiting government.

As the most visible concentration of financial and political power within the nation, the national Bank provided a compelling symbol around which to unite the two anti-authority cultures. Jackson's veto message was carefully crafted to fuse the individualist concern with economic competition with the egalitarian fear of inequalities. "The rich and powerful," Jackson declared, "too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes." Jackson acknowledged that "distinctions in society

will always exist under every just government,” but when “the laws undertake to add . . . artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities, and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their government.”<sup>32</sup> By conferring exclusive privileges on selected institutions, the government thwarted economic competition and opportunity, thereby fostering inequalities. If government would leave individuals alone, there would be an increase not only in liberty but also in equality. The belief that increased economic opportunity would produce greater equality of condition permitted egalitarians to unite with individualists, a fusion of cultures nicely captured by Charles Sellers’ label “egalitarian enterprise.”<sup>33</sup>

By slaying the “monster Bank,” however, Andrew Jackson left his Democratic successors without a visible hierarchical target around which to unite individualism and egalitarianism. Had the national Bank been retained, for instance, Martin Van Buren could have shifted blame for the depression of 1837 away from Democratic policies and onto the Bank. While both individualists and egalitarian Democrats agreed that the hierarchical Bank was noxious, they could not agree on what to do after ridding the nation of the Biddle’s Bank. Individualists had objected to the powerful central bank because it had regulated the economy, but now hoped to call off the bank war in order to unleash the entrepreneurial energies of the nation. Finding that destruction of the “monster Bank” was causing a proliferation of banks and increasing speculation, the egalitarian wing of the Democratic party, in contrast, desired to extend the war to all banks.

James Polk hoped that territorial expansion, like Jackson’s Bank war, would reunite the Democratic alliance of egalitarianism and individualism. If expansion could promote, as John O’Sullivan rhapsodized, the “universality of freedom and equality,”<sup>34</sup> Young Hickory (as Polk was called) could emulate Jackson’s forging of a cultural hybrid, while avoiding Van Buren’s fate of being torn between the two political cultures. Unfortunately for Polk, as expansion became entwined with slavery, the egalitarian wing of the Democratic party pulled back from supporting it. To egalitarian Democrats, the Slave power was analogous to the Money Power—both demonstrated that “privilege never restrains its ambition to rule.”<sup>35</sup> By alienating the more egalitarian wing, Polk’s expansionist policies drained the party of the crusading idealism that had characterized it during the 1830s and early 1840s, giving the party an increasingly southern cast. His most conspicuous failing as a political leader was an inability to grasp that, because of slavery, expansion was creating more problems than it was solving, both for the Democratic party and the nation.

The string of failed cultural solutions, and hence failed presidencies, in the decade prior to the Civil War testifies to the extraordinary impediments to presidential leadership produced by slavery. Franklin Pierce tried to reestablish the Jacksonian coalition of individualism and egalitarianism, but slavery brought to the fore the hitherto submerged tension between majority rule and the property rights of a minority. The optimistic doctrine that liberty and equality were mutually supportive, while able to soften class conflict, could not, in the end, cope with racial conflict. Millard Fillmore

hoped to hold together the Whig alliance of individualism and hierarchy, the Whiggery of William Seward and Daniel Webster, by removing slavery from the national agenda through the Compromise of 1850 and elevating national economic development to the forefront of the agenda. But Fillmore's solution reproduced the cultural contradiction within Whiggery—for how could the Whig party laud economic development and celebrate industrial capitalism as the highest stage of civilization without looking upon the South's "peculiar institution" as anything but a blight on the economic potential of the nation? Witnessing the failure of both Pierce and Fillmore to reconstitute their old cultural coalitions, James Buchanan attempted to create a new alliance that would unite the establishment against egalitarian abolitionists. But while individualists were content to protect slave property where it already existed, the issue of the expansion of slavery into the territories forced many individualists to repudiate an establishment alliance with hierarchy.

#### *Abraham Lincoln*

A loyal adherent of the Whig party for as long as it had remained in existence, Lincoln resolved its dilemma of basing government on weak hierarchy by a) operating in wartime where he could invoke the Commander in Chief clause, and b) creating a new cultural combination in which hierarchy was subordinated to individualism.

The Whigs were a cultural alliance, predominantly hierarchical, yet with a strong admixture of individualism. When economic times were hard the paternalism of the party served them well. After all, Jacksonians had offered only "cupping and bleeding" to those hurt by the depression that followed the Panic of 1837.<sup>36</sup> But, for the most part, Whiggery appeared too restrictive to a nation eager to exploit the resources of a seemingly boundless continent. Henry Clay, the Whig standard-bearer and Lincoln's political idol, lost all three presidential elections he participated in. The only Whigs' successes in presidential contests, William Henry Harrison in 1840 and Zachary Taylor in 1848, had been dependent on submerging party principles and policies in favor of popular military heroes.

Lincoln's political ambition, that "little engine that knew no rest,"<sup>37</sup> was thwarted by his identification with the Whig party. From the sobering experience of Clay's defeats in 1836 and 1844 as well as the victories of the apolitical generals in 1840 and 1848, Lincoln learned that his own personal advancement depended on creating a party that could elevate not only war heroes but an Illinois party politician to the presidential office. Making the Whig party a majority party required subordinating hierarchy to individualism. The central figure in Whiggery's metamorphosis,<sup>38</sup> Lincoln was instrumental in creating a new Republican party in which individualism was tempered but not led by hierarchy. He thus helped to give the majority culture in America—individualism—the dominant place in governing the nation. The Republican amalgam of economic individualism and social hierarchy would dominate American politics for the next half century in the same way that Jefferson and Jackson's alliance of egalitarianism and individualism had dominated the previous half century.

The Whigs only popular cause had been the cry of executive usurpation. In the

Whig mind, King Andrew signified the degeneration of egalitarianism into the charismatic leader who would replace the law with his personal wishes. Thus Whigs were torn between their hierarchical inclination to support central authority and their fear of the disruptive potential of presidential power. The result, in Whig doctrine, was an anomalous executive, one who stood for while not actually exercising authority. The chief executive was to enforce the laws of the land, but otherwise was confined within narrowly circumscribed limits—no veto power, no congressional influence. As president, Lincoln had to reconcile Whig doctrine with his will to power, restoration of the Union, and the success of the Republican party.

Were the Whigs faced only with what they considered a degeneration of democracy, a lawless executive pandering to the populace, they might have managed or, at least, survived. To the south, however, Whigs were confronted with something worse, the ultimate degeneration of hierarchical principles in the form of the master-slave relationship. Unable to abide its arbitrariness or to condone upsetting its legal status, they floundered, split not only between Northern and Southern Whigs but also (and more importantly) between the apparent necessity of giving up either their individualistic adherence to free labor or their hierarchical attachment to patriarchy. Before Lincoln freed the slaves, he had to free his party from being immobilized by this dilemma—an immoral legality, through acceptance of slavery, or an illegal moralism through its abolition.

A Lincoln presidency outside of the Civil War is inconceivable. The firing on Fort Sumter gave Lincoln the opportunity to avoid his predecessors' fate by reconciling the dilemmas handcuffing his party. The slavery issue, which had shackled the presidency in the previous decade, now served as a means for unleashing presidential power.

Lincoln wrung authority from the Commander in Chief role, the presidential oath to “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the U.S.,” as well as the constitutional injunction that the President “shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed.” “When rebellion or invasion comes,” reasoned Lincoln, “the people have, under the Constitution, made the commander in chief of their army and navy . . . the man who holds the power and bears the responsibility of . . . [deciding] what the public safety requires.” Lincoln began the Emancipation Proclamation by invoking “the power vested in me as Commander in Chief.”<sup>39</sup> On the basis of these formal roles, Lincoln distinguished his decree, which he termed “a fit and necessary war measure,” from General John Fremont’s declaration of emancipation that Lincoln condemned as “simply ‘dictatorship’.”<sup>40</sup>

Support for presidential authority, however, even during war, was far from automatic. Lincoln’s behavior as president reflected an acute awareness of the paucity of support for leadership in America. Better than any previous president, Lincoln understood that given the anti-authority cultural context, popular wrath was bound to shower down upon the national government. One of Lincoln’s accomplishments was to set up lightning rods that would protect him from bearing the full brunt of popular anger when the Union army suffered reverses. Towards this end Lincoln skillfully used the old Whig executive doctrine to shield himself from the torrent of abuse. The necessity

of exerting leadership in an anti-leadership system, in our opinion, explains the “peculiar paradox” of Lincoln’s presidency first pointed out by David Donald in his seminal essay, “Whig in the White House.”<sup>41</sup>

Donald contrasts Lincoln’s vigorous extra-legal use of executive authority in regard to his war power with his timid, obsequious, virtual non-use of presidential resources to influence domestic policy. Over a wide range of domestic policies, including the introduction of the first income tax, the creation of a Department of Agriculture, tariffs, banking, and land-grant colleges, Donald contends that Lincoln showed little interest. When his proposed appointees were turned down by the Senate, Lincoln thought it improper to resubmit their names. Donald resolves the paradox of a simultaneously strong and weak chief executive by arguing that Lincoln was unable to “rid himself of the political ideas with which he had been raised.”<sup>42</sup>

While not explicitly taking issue with Donald’s thesis, G.S. Boritt provides an interpretation of Lincoln’s behavior in the White House that undercuts Donald’s contention that Lincoln’s “political education” explains the paradox of his presidency. Lincoln, points out Boritt, faced a Congress dominated by a Republican party that was in essential agreement with Lincoln’s preferred economic policies. Therefore “there was little call for Lincoln to pressure Senators and Congressmen, to use those ‘certain indirect influences’ on behalf of ‘sound’ economics.” Lincoln did not have to work so hard because Congress was disposed to do much of what he would have liked with regard to tariffs, internal improvements, finance and homestead legislation. Boritt concludes that “Lincoln thus had the pleasure of signing into law much of the program he had worked for through the better part of his political life,” legislation that amounted to what Leonard Curry has called a “blueprint for modern America.”<sup>43</sup>

Boritt also shows that Lincoln was much more active in domestic policy than he appeared to Donald as well as to contemporaries. When it came to the establishment of a national banking system, Lincoln did attempt to influence Congress. He sent one of his private secretaries to influence wavering Senators, persuaded influential Senators to go to bat for him, talked the matter up in the Cabinet, and even seems to have cashed in on patronage, all the while exclaiming to New York financiers, “Money, I don’t know anything about ‘money’.”<sup>44</sup>

That Lincoln was not the enthralled captive of Whig doctrine that Donald portrays is indicated by Lincoln’s active involvement on behalf of the Thirteenth Amendment. Jackson-like, Lincoln informed the lame-duck session of Congress that in the recent election “the voice of the people” had been expressed in favor of the proposed amendment. He did not, however, rest content with a firmly worded message urging passage of the amendment. The president employed his considerable powers of persuasion and patronage to enlist conservative Republicans as well as wavering Democratic members to back the amendment.<sup>45</sup>

What about Lincoln’s “curious failure” to control his cabinet, which Donald sees as compelling evidence of the grip the Whig view of the presidency had on Lincoln. This interpretation neglects the tremendous advantages Lincoln reaped by keeping distance between himself and the cabinet. “When Congress showed unhappiness with executive direction,” points out Boritt, “the separation between the President and his

official family often diverted the legislators to attacking the latter. With the Cabinet absorbing much of the fire, the White House often escaped untorched.” Attorney General Edward Bates, for example, took most of the heat from the radicals for Lincoln’s decision not to enforce congressional acts confiscating the property of slave owners.<sup>46</sup>

We may be excused for believing that a man possessed of as formidable an intellect as this nation has produced was putting on his publics by his avowals of naiveté or disinterest in matters of banking, finance and foreign affairs—“you understand these things. I do not,” Lincoln told Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon Chase.<sup>47</sup> Allowing his Cabinet members to think themselves superior gave Lincoln protection against what would otherwise have been a crescendo cry of usurpation. His humble posture, the log cabin stories and the like served as a shield against the pervasive anti-authority bias.

From the individualist perspective, Lincoln’s greatness consisted in demonstrating that an individualist regime could cope with large-scale crises without a transformation in its cultural identity. Lincoln’s example offered hope that individualist regimes were not subject to an “inherent and fatal weakness;” such a regime could be strong enough to maintain its existence in an emergency without permanently altering internal social relations in a hierarchical direction. Temporary emergency leadership in times of total war, they now knew, did not lead inexorably to permanent dictatorship in peacetime.

From the hierarchical standpoint, Lincoln’s leadership was equally exemplary, but for very different reasons. In Woodrow Wilson’s view, Lincoln’s greatness lay in moving America “from a divided, self-interested contractual association to a unified, spiritual, organic state.”<sup>48</sup> Lincoln’s presidency had also recreated the alliance of a strong government with a strong executive, previously rent asunder by the party battles of the 1830s and 1840s. By elevating the prestige and expanding the prerogatives of the presidential office Lincoln left a permanent legacy on which future hierarchs would try to build.

### **Greatness Has Its Limits**

If these four presidents were great in that they resolved cultural dilemmas, they were not perfect, for their solutions had limits. Washington’s attempt to compensate for the weakness of hierarchy by stressing the appearance of strong leadership was limited because those who did not share the cultural assumptions of hierarchy often found the display of power anywhere from alarming to ridiculous. Washington was caught in a dilemma in which a mode of behavior designed to compensate for authority’s weakness often undermined it still further. For instance, while the administration expected that a firm response to the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania would increase respect for the central government, Republican leaders found it menacing that the government would arm “against people at their plows.” Washington, Jefferson lamented, had been “dazzled by the glittering of crowns and coronets.”<sup>49</sup> Far from impressing, the administration’s display of might had evoked images of oppressive monarchy. Building up authority without appearing as a George III proved extremely difficult. As Washington became increasingly identified with the hierar-

chical Federalists during his second term, his reputation was greatly tarnished; it could be mended only through the route it was gained—by once again relinquishing power.

The limits of Jefferson's "hidden-hand" strategy became apparent in his embargo policy. Rather than publicly defend the need for individuals to suffer restrictions on their freedom, Jefferson presented, in the words of Leonard Levy, "an imperturbable, almost sphinxlike silence to the nation."<sup>50</sup> The embargo produced severe economic deprivation for many segments of the public and therefore required public explanation of the need for individual sacrifice to further a collective goal. But rather than trying to rally the country around him, Jefferson, as Malone comments, "followed the general policy of keeping as much out of sight as possible."<sup>51</sup> A leadership style, which had hitherto served Jefferson so well, insured that the embargo would be a disaster. Previous Jeffersonian policies, like cutting taxes or the Louisiana Purchase, did not call for individuals to make material sacrifices nor did people need persuading that a great public good was being furthered. Well-suited to achieve popular goals, Jefferson's covert style of leadership was ill-equipped to manage unpleasant tasks that required the leader to be a public educator.

Andrew Jackson's solution of appealing directly to the people over the head of Congress was well-suited to his negative policy aims. Because he did not have a positive legislative program that required the support of a majority, he could afford to alienate Congress. The national Bank had been struck down by presidential veto, the deposits were removed without congressional approval, and the pet bank system was managed through executive fiat. But the limits of Jackson's energetic negativism became apparent when his successor, Martin Van Buren, responding to calls for positive action during the depression that followed the panic of 1837, tried to secure the Independent Treasury proposal that required congressional assent. If Van Buren was to direct the legislative process, he could not afford the provocative vetoes and the angry battles over appointments that had soured Jackson's relations with Congress.<sup>52</sup>

Even Abraham Lincoln's solutions had limitations. By keeping his war aims ambiguous so as to attract the support of all three cultures, Lincoln left his successor Andrew Johnson, with a lack of guidance as to how to proceed with reconstructing the Union. Moreover, by relying vigorously on his powers as Commander in Chief and spending money on his own, asking Congress only to ratify his actions after the fact, he made Congress eager to bring the presidency back to its constitutional position as soon as the war ended. One wonders to what extent Johnson's impeachment was a judgement on Lincoln's usurpations. In resolving one set of cultural dilemmas, great presidents may thus create insoluble dilemmas for their successors. Presidential greatness is thus intimately related to presidential failure.

### **Presidential Failure**

While presidential greatness (or, more modestly, success) is never guaranteed to any president, there are many presidents who are never in the running. This may be, as we have indicated above, on account of an intractable dilemma bequeathed by a "great" predecessor. Martin Van Buren, for instance, although the most adroit politician of his day, could not hold together individualists and egalitarians in the

aftermath of Jackson’s destruction of the national Bank. The act that helped give Jackson his mantle of greatness—destroying the “money power”—left Van Buren without a hierarchical enemy on which to blame the ensuing financial panic and depression.

Van Buren’s fate indicates that being an accomplished politician is insufficient to guarantee success in the White House. While poor politicians have rarely—if ever—been successful presidents, faltering presidencies have often come from the ranks of accomplished politicians—James Madison, James Buchanan, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, to name a few. If it is not a lack of political acumen that barred the door to greatness for these presidents what did? The usual response would be to emphasize personal features: Madison’s indecisiveness, Buchanan’s timidity, or Johnson’s self-loathing. Without minimizing the impact of personal characteristics, we remain dissatisfied by explanations that stop here.

A focus on the president’s personality fares poorly when failure in the White House comes on the heels of other political successes. Take, for instance, John Quincy Adams, who as diplomat and Secretary of State must rank among the greatest this nation has produced, yet as president was a disappointment. Explanations that focus on personality—psychological rigidity, compulsiveness—leave us wondering how such an inflexible, uncompromising man could have been the most successful diplomat of his age. Not Adams’ prickly personality, we contend, but his hierarchical propensities best explain why he could succeed so spectacularly in the realm of diplomacy yet be such an ineffective president. The hierarch’s forte, negotiating jurisdictions—who has the right to do what—and adjudicating statuses, while valuable talents for a diplomat, were ill-suited to the president’s competitive relationship with Congress and his position as the leader of a political party.

Nor will it do to explain the three failed presidencies prior to the Civil War—Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan were ranked 24th, 26th, and 27th (out of 29) in the 1948 Schlesinger poll—solely in terms of personal inadequacies. All three were accomplished politicians, particularly Buchanan who was one of the most politically experienced men ever to occupy the White House. Each offered a credible political solution to the cultural dilemma bequeathed in large part by the expansionist policies of James Polk—rated by the Schlesinger polls as a “Near Great.” In the absence of civil war, slavery proved to be an insoluble national problem. Little wonder that Lincoln seemed to welcome the onset of war.

The pattern of pre-presidential success followed by presidential failure can also be seen in the public career of James Madison. So successful as a congressional leader and constitution-maker, he is considered by many scholars to be a flop as president. The usual explanations—personal compliancy, a need for affection—can not explain his bold maneuvering in Congress and at the Constitutional Convention. Madison’s difficulties in the presidency, we contend, had more to do with the anti-authority cultural propensities of his followers than with any features of Madison’s personality. Where no one is disposed to follow, no one, no matter how psychologically healthy, can lead. When, in the aftermath of the War of 1812, people were more disposed to support authority, Madison performed ably.

Will it do, to take examples closer to home, to explain the troubled presidencies

of Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and now Ronald Reagan solely in terms of their personal shortcomings? Is the historical reading of America as a land particularly favored by providence to be replaced by a new myth of Americans as an unlucky people done in by unworthy presidents? Without denying that there is much to criticize, there is also much that might be praised: Johnson's Great Society, Nixon's opening to China, Carter's Camp David Accords, Reagan's reduction of marginal tax rates. Why, then, do we hear only that these were failed presidencies, as if that is all there was? We leave the reader with the following hypothesis: reports of failed presidencies have risen along with egalitarian movements (civil rights, feminism, environmentalism, children's rights, and the like) because dedication to reducing differences among people leads to rejection of leadership, for the very concept of leadership implies inequality. This proposition deserves at least as much consideration as that commonly given to the claim that our wonderful people mysteriously keep getting saddled with inferior presidents.

### Notes

1. Arthur M. Schlesinger, "A Yardstick for Presidents," in *Paths to the Present* (New York: MacMillan, 1949), pp. 93–111; Gary M. Maranell, "The Evaluation of Presidents: An Extension of the Schlesinger Polls," *Journal of American History* (June 1970), pp. 104–113; Robert K. Murray and Tim H. Blessing, "The Presidential Performance Study: A Progress Report," *Journal of American History* (December 1983), pp. 535–555. Other greatness polls conducted in the past decade include the U.S. Historical Society's 1977 survey of the heads of one hundred history departments (Robert E. DiClerico, *The American President*, Prentice Hall, 1979, p. 332), David L. Potter's 1981 unpublished survey of 41 historians (Murray and Blessing, p. 536), and the *Chicago Tribune's* 1982 survey of 49 presidential scholars (Steve Neal, "Our Best and Worst Presidents," *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, Jan. 10, 1982, pp. 8–13, 15, 18).
2. Thomas A. Bailey, *Presidential Greatness: The Image and the Man from George Washington to the Present* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1966), p. 24. Emphasis in original.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 262–266.
4. Arthur M. Schlesinger, "Rating the Presidents," in *Paths to the Present* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), p. 107.
5. Bailey, *Presidential Greatness*, p. 34; Curtis Arthur Amlund, "President-Ranking: A Criticism," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* (August 1964), pp. 309–315, quotation on p. 309.
6. James MacGregor Burns, *Presidential Government: The Crucible of Leadership* (New York: Avon, 1965), p. xi.
7. These categories are adapted from the work of Mary Douglas. See especially *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1970), and "Cultural Bias" in *In the Active Voice* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982). The theory is further elaborated in Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
8. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1955); Samuel P. Huntington, *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).
9. Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership* (New York: Wiley, 1980).
10. Arthur B. Murphy, "Evaluating the Presidents of the United States," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Winter 1984), p. 117.
11. Marcus Cunliffe, *George Washington: Man and Monument* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), p. 212.
12. Washington to President of Congress, December 20, 1776, in Saul K. Padover, ed., *The Washington Papers* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1955), p. 100; Circular Letter to the Governors of All the States on Disbanding the Army, June 8, 1783, in *ibid.*, pp. 206, 213.

13. See e.g. letters to Archibald Cary, June 15, 1782; to Robert Stewart, August 10, 1783; to Lafayette, February 1, 1784; to James Madison, May 20, 1792; to David Humphries, June 12, 1796; to Henry Knox, March 2, 1797; and to Oliver Wolcott, May 15, 1797; in *ibid.*, pp. 78, 79, 83, 88, 90, 91, 92, quotation on p. 83.
14. Barry Schwartz, “George Washington and the Whig Conception of Heroic Leadership,” *American Sociological Review* (February 1983), pp. 18–33, quotation on p. 30.
15. On Washington’s adherence to hierarchical Federalism, see David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 377–379.
16. James R. Perry, “Supreme Court Appointments, 1789–1801: Criteria, Presidential Style, and the Press of Events,” *Journal of the Early Republic* (Winter 1986), pp. 371–410, esp. pp. 373, 397.
17. Frederick W. Marks III, “Foreign Affairs: A Winning Issue in the Campaign for Ratification of the United States Constitution,” *Political Science Quarterly* (September 1971), pp. 444–469.
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19. Jefferson to William Short, Jan. 3, 1793, cited in Gilbert Lycan, *Alexander Hamilton & American Foreign Policy: A Design for Greatness* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), p. 134.
20. Burton Ira Kaufman, “Washington’s Farewell Address: A Statement of Empire,” in Kaufman, ed., *Washington’s Farewell Address: The View from the 20th Century* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969), pp. 169–187.
21. Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 273. See also James Sterling Young, *The Washington Community, 1800–1828* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1966), esp. p. 207.
22. Dumas Malone, *Jefferson the President: First Term, 1801–1805* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), p. 112; Dumas Malone, *Thomas Jefferson as Political Leader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), p. 34.
23. Jefferson quoted in Robert M. Johnstone, Jr., *Jefferson and the Presidency: Leadership in the Young Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 128; Malone, *First Term*, p. 95; Edward S. Corwin, *The President: Office and Powers, 1787–1957* (New York University Press, 1957), p. 18.
24. Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., *The Process of Government Under Jefferson*, chapter IX, esp. pp. 188–193.
25. Johnstone, *Jefferson and the Presidency*, pp. 144–148.
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27. Johnstone, *Jefferson and the Presidency*, pp. 86, 95–98; Cunningham, *Process of Government*, pp. 60–71, 319–320; Dumas Malone, “Presidential Leadership and National Unity: The Jeffersonian Example,” *Journal of Southern History* (February 1969), p. 16; Jefferson, quoted in Leonard D. White, *The Jeffersonians: A Study in Administrative History: 1801–1829* (New York: Free Press, 1951), p. 80.
28. Richard B. Latner, *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson: White House Politics, 1829–1837* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), pp. 7–30; Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, 1822–1832* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), pp. 12–155.
29. Jackson, according to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “ousted no greater a proportion of officeholders than Jefferson” (*The Age of Jackson*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1945, p. 47).
30. Latner, *Presidency of Jackson*, pp. 165. See also *ibid.*, p. 50; Remini, *Jackson and American Freedom*, p. 323; and Wilfred Binkley, *President and Congress* (New York: Vintage, 1962), p. 83.
31. John Ashworth, *‘Agrarians’ and ‘Aristocrats’: Party Political Ideology in the United States, 1837–1846* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1983), p. 35.
32. Remini, *Jackson and American Freedom*, pp. 367–369.
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- 1971), p. xvi. See also Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 22.
34. Schlesinger, *Age of Jackson*, p. 427. O'Sullivan coined the phrase "Manifest Destiny."
  35. Eric Foner and John Ashworth, among others, have shown that the wing of the Democratic party that was most hostile to banks, corporations, monopolies and tariffs was most attracted to the free soil cause and most likely to defect to the Republican party. See Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), esp. pp. 168–169; John Ashworth, "The Democratic-Republicans before the Civil War: Political Ideology and Economic Change," *Journal of American Studies* (December 1986), pp. 375–390, Kinsley Bingham, quoted on p. 380.
  36. Azariah Flagg to Martin Van Buren, April 10, 1837, quoted in Major L. Wilson, *The Presidency of Martin Van Buren* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1984), p. 143.
  37. William H. Herndon cited in Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (New York: Vintage, 1973), p. 118.
  38. See Howe, *Political Culture of Whigs*, chapter eleven.
  39. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), pp. 60–63.
  40. J.G. Randall, *Lincoln the President: Springfield to Gettysburg* (2 vols; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1945), II, pp. 165–166.
  41. David Donald, "Abraham Lincoln: Whig in the White House," in Norman Graebner, ed., *The Enduring Lincoln* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1959), p. 47.
  42. *Ibid.*, pp. 51–53, 60.
  43. G.S. Boritt, *Lincoln and the Economics of the American Dream* (Memphis State University Press, 1978), pp. 196–197; Leonard P. Curry, *Blueprint for Modern America: Nonmilitary Legislation of the First Civil War Congress* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968).
  44. Boritt, *Lincoln and the American Dream*, pp. 201–203.
  45. *Ibid.*, p. 299; Richard Current, *The Lincoln Nobody Knows* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1958), p. 230; Stephen Oates, "Abraham Lincoln: Republican in the White House," in John L. Thomas, ed., *Abraham Lincoln and the American Political Tradition* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), p. 106; J.G. Randall and Richard Current, *Lincoln the President: Last Full Measure* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1955), p. 309, Lincoln quoted on p. 308.
  46. Donald, "Whig in the White House," p. 59; Boritt, *Lincoln and the American Dream*, p. 228.
  47. Boritt, *Lincoln and the American Dream*, p. 199.
  48. Michael Paul Rogin, "The King's Two Bodies: Lincoln, Wilson, Nixon, and Presidential Self-Sacrifice," in J. David Greenstone, ed., *Public Values and Private Power in American Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 80.
  49. Jefferson quoted in Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and the Ordeal of Liberty* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962), p. 188; James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell, 1795–1799* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), p. 191.
  50. Leonard W. Levy, *Jefferson and Civil Liberties: The Darker Side* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 96.
  51. Malone, *Second Term*, p. 576.
  52. James C. Curtis, "In the Shadow of Old Hickory: The Political Travail of Martin Van Buren," *Journal of the Early American Republic* (Fall 1981), pp. 258–259, 263.