

Reagan Reorders the Political Regime:
A Historical-Institutional Approach to Analysis

The future of reconstructive presidential leadership is in question. It is increasingly difficult to tear out and replace institutions in today's constraining environment. However, historical-institutional theory suggests that alternative leadership possibilities exist. A reconstructive president may be able to reorder the political regime through application of a "multiple modalities of change strategy." This project explores this prospect through study of Ronald Reagan's accomplishments in the Budget Battles of 1981. It applies a new analytic approach to determine if his well-known successes can be translated into the historical-institutional conceptual framework. It confirms that previously hypothesized leadership possibilities exist and demonstrates the utility of the new analytic approach. Pros and cons of modern reconstructive leadership are illuminated and the new change-framework is recommended for broader application in presidential studies.

Keywords: Presidential leadership; reconstructive presidency; historical-institutionalism; Ronald Reagan; multiple modalities of change strategy; institutional reordering.

The Reconstructive Conundrum

The continued viability of “reconstructive” presidential leadership is in doubt. It has become progressively harder for even contextually well-placed presidents to employ the “order shattering” and “order creating” style of leadership historically associated with reconstructive presidents (Skowronek 1997; Balkin 2014). This recent development is an artifact of the welfare state and the general “thickening” of the institutional environment that trails in its wake. These impediments have already distorted the reconstructive president’s ability to respond to “enervated” conditions. Debate still rages, but according to many, the reconstructive stance is being rendered impotent (Skowronek 1997, 2011, 2014; Eberly 2010; Schier 2011; Balkin 2012).

Yet, as historical-institutionalist scholars James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen persuasively argue, political actors have more ways to affect change than just ripping out and replacing—or “displacing”—institutions (2010). In fact, within an environment that affords defenders of the status quo strong veto possibilities, it is also possible to “layer” institutions or allow them to “drift.” Also possible, when veto holders’ power is low and discretion to exploit ambiguities is high, is the institutional “conversion” modality.

It thus may be possible for modern, environmentally constrained, presidents to exploit reconstructive context and successfully reorder institutions. Their success would, however, require reliance upon different means (than those stressed by Skowronek) to achieve the same ends. Computer simulation, empowered by new theory and employing Polya’s urn model to calculate effects, already suggests as much (Nichols 2014). Indeed, this recent work concludes that modern reconstructive presidents may need to utilize all the methods of change together to reorder institutions. I refer to this as employing a “multiple modalities of change strategy” (MMCS).

The fact remains, however, that Mahoney and Thelen’s theory has never been brought to bear on case study analysis of the reconstructive presidency. It is therefore unknown whether modern reconstructive presidents have actually employed the MMCS to overcome constrained conditions. If they have not, the new strategy remains an abstract leadership possibility and the utility of the new analytical

approach is unconfirmed. However, the opposite is true if the strategy is found to have been used in practice. Two important propositions gain support. First, alternate leadership possibilities do exist. Second, a new analytic approach is illuminative.

To both fill gaps and to explore theoretical and analytical possibilities, this article proceeds in three stages. First, it enables case study by intersecting the theories found in two literatures. The article thus starts with an overview of Skowronek's "regime theory" (1997, 2011) and its extension by second-wave scholars.¹ Here attention is given to the unique contextual opportunity that reconstructive presidents recurrently face and the newly emergent problem of reordering institutions in a constrained context. Then historical-institutionalist theory is reviewed (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). The four different modalities of change are discussed separately and together (as part of an overarching strategy). A new analytic approach emerges.

Second, the approach is applied within interpretive case study analysis. Here Ronald Reagan's Budget Battles of 1981 are examined. Investigation proceeds to determine if his well-known successes can be translated into the new conceptual framework. Results suggest that Reagan did, in fact, ingeniously employ the MMCS to reorder institutions under constrained conditions. He successfully practiced reconstructive leadership even as the traditional "order shattering / order creating" modality of change had become increasingly difficult to deploy.

Third, and finally, discussion proceeds. This conceptual addition to Skowronek's work illuminates three important things. First, it shines light on how the MMCS works to help a president exploit a reconstructive opportunity. Second, it illustrates the significance of vision and creativity in reconstructive presidential leadership. Third, it highlights the dangers of having norm-reordering presidents rely on means that eschew transparency and favor rule-bending.

The Problem of Modern Reconstructive Politics

Not all presidencies are created equal. This is one of the most salient and important conclusions that can be drawn from Skowronek's path-setting book, *The Politics Presidents Make* (1997).² This

statement reflects the fact that only a few presidents serve in an optimal milieu for action. Only a handful of presidents experience conditions that allow them to do categorically different things than others. Most presidents simply cannot reorder the governing philosophies, coalitional interests, and institutional arrangements that dominate public life for long stretches of time. This is not a matter of lacking skill. It is a function of needing proper context. Only “reconstructive” presidents experience this.

“Reconstructive” presidents inherit the most formidable of four possible leadership contexts within the recurrent flow of “political time.”³ These presidents win office while in opposition to a vulnerable “political regime.” They arrive late in the political time cycle when the political regime is no longer resilient to change. At this time, established commitments of ideology and interest are called into question as “failed or irrelevant responses to the problems of the day” (1997: 36). This makes the political regime enervated and vulnerable to presidentially-led reconstruction. As Skowronek emphasizes, this context uniquely provides presidents the opportunity to harmonize the order-shattering and order-creating inclinations of their office. Their circumstances therefore give them an increased ability to tear out and replace institutions.

Second wave political time scholarship suggests that reconstructive leadership concentrates on completion of three tasks: 1) shifting the main axis of partisan cleavage; 2) assembling a new majority partisan coalition; and, 3) institutionalizing a new political regime (2010: 808 Nichols and Myers 2010: 808; see also: Laing 2012; McCaffrie 2013). The first task relates to a president’s governing philosophy and entails altering the structure of political conflict within society (Schattschneider 1960; Petrocik 1981; Sundquist 1983). The second, closely related, task concentrates on the undertakings necessary to bring together different groups to form a new governing majority. Finally, the third task requires taking the institutional steps necessary to lock in both the dominance of the new majority and the president’s policy preferences via “reordering (of) political structures” (Nichols and Myers 2010: 816).

This article focuses primarily on the third task. Besides limitations of space, there are two justifications for this. First, institutionalization of a new political regime is politically and normatively very important. Indeed, it locks in partisan advantage for decades and must be thought to help return resilience to

the political regime. Institutional reordering has allowed reconstructive presidents—like Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt—to successful “remake” the political system (Skowronek 2011: 31).

The second justification for the institutional focus is the fact that Skowronek locates the problem of modern reconstructive practice within this task’s domain (1997). Specifically, it is the twentieth century’s “progressive proliferation of organized interests and independent authorities” that renders “order shattering / order creating” efforts difficult to accomplish (Skowronek 1997: 31). Said differently, Skowronek suggests that a constraining institutional environment now undermines the reconstructive president’s ability to tear out and replace institutions. Therefore, Skowronek argues that reconstructive leadership is being distorted and enfeebled and he doubts whether a contemporary president can even hope to reconstruct anymore.

Historical-Institutional Scholarship Suggests a Solution

Historical-institutionalist scholars are aware of these circumstances but have generally come to different conclusions.⁴ These (mainly comparative) researchers conclude that it is possible for political actors to affect change in constrained conditions. However, to overcome contexts that “afford defenders of the status quo increasingly strong veto possibilities” a change agent needs to exploit the micro-level institutional environment. The agent must adopt the “modality” of change that is best suited for action within it. There are four different institutional environments to contend with and, therefore, four change modalities that can be used. They are: “insurrectionary displacement,” “subversive layering,” “opportunistic conversion,” and “symbiotic (or parasitic) drift” (Mahoney and Thelen 2010).

FIGURE 1. ABOUT HERE

Displacement & Layering

Change agents possessing *low* discretionary powers (quadrants II and III) are most likely to act as insurrectionary or subversive change agents. These actors confront unambiguous rules that prohibit the exploitation of discretionary powers in interpretation or implementation of the law. Finding these avenues

for advancing their aims closed off, change agents seek to alter institutional forms via either displacement or layering.

The “displacement” modality is used when *low* discretionary actors find that the micro-level political context does not prevent alteration of the institutional status quo. They find it lacks either the especially powerful veto players (Krehbiel 1998) or numerous institutional “veto points” necessary to block change (Tsebelis 2002). In this *weak* context, *low* discretionary change agents will seek to eliminate existing institutions and replace them with new ones. In other words, they will conform to Skowronek’s image of the reconstructive president as an “order shattering / order creating” leader. They will tear out and supplant institutions.

The “layering” modality is used when *low* discretionary actors find that the political context affords defenders of the status quo *strong* veto opportunities (Schickler 2001; Thelen 2003). In this context, status quo defenders can prevent elimination or removal of institutions. In this *strong* context, *low* discretionary change agents will seek to attach or build new institutions alongside or on top of those already in existence. This famously occurred, as Jeffery K. Tulis shows, when Woodrow Wilson placed new rhetorical practice on top of a presidential office constitutionally designed for different norms of behavior (1987).

Conversion & Drift

Change agents possessing *high* discretionary powers (quadrants I and IV), are most likely to act as opportunistic or symbiotic change agents. Unlike those actors already discussed, these agents encounter ambiguous rules that afford them the opportunity to exploit discretionary powers in interpretation or implementation of the law. Because existent structures can be exploited to further desired aims, change agents will largely keep institutional forms intact while seeking to change the outcomes these forms produce. This is accomplished via either institutional conversion or drift.

The “conversion” modality is used when *high* discretionary actors find that the political context provides defenders of the status quo *weak* veto opportunities. In this *weak* context, *high* discretionary change agents will not seek to add or remove institutions. Instead, they will purposively redeploy old

institutions in new ways (Orren 1991; Mettler 1998). They will redirect them “towards more favorable functions and effects” (Mahoney and Thelen 2010: 18). Exploitation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890 serves as good example. As Hacker, Pierson, and Thelen observe (2013: 2), this legislation was redirected (via strategic court action) by the very corporations it was designed to restrain. It was converted into an instrument to help them battle against trade unions.

Finally, the “drift” modality is used when *high* discretionary actors find that the political context affords defenders of the status quo *strong* veto opportunities (Hacker 2005). In this *strong* context, status quo defenders can prevent the conversion of institutions to new uses. This forces *high* discretionary change agents to parasitically affect change via: (1) purposeful neglect of rules and norms, and / or (2) intentional failure to adapt to changing conditions. Drift occurred when the United States’ Social Security system was intentionally not reformed following social and economic change. In this way a “pay-as-you-go” system was allowed to become a “defined-contribution occupational pension” system (Belund 2007: 23).

Historical-institutionalist scholarship concludes that there is more than one way to bring about change. It further holds that institutional environment influences the modality of change that is most likely to be successfully employed in a particular micro-level context. These conclusions come out of Mahoney and Thelen’s fruitful efforts to unite a body of research that has tended to focus on the application of one change modality or another (2010).

The Multiple Modalities of Change Strategy

In contrast to this general trend with a single focus, it has recently been suggested that reconstructive presidents may need to employ more than one change modality within their efforts to institutionalize a new political regime. This is expected because the third reconstructive task entails reordering across a wide array of institutional domains. It is therefore likely for a reconstructive president to “encounter all four of Mahoney and Thelen’s institutional environments” (Nichols 2014:14).

Reconstructive presidents would then need to employ all the modalities, separately and together, to succeed in their efforts. I refer to as employment of the MMCS.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to determine if this strategy is available to more than just reconstructive presidents. However, sharing of initial thoughts on this possibility is warranted. They introduce the prospect to presidential scholarship and help clarify expectations for this project.

The office of the president was designed to appeal to leaders with broad, national ambitions. It therefore seems highly probable that many presidents will attempt to change things across a wide array of institutional domains. Logic suggests that when they do, they will need to employ the MMCS to succeed. As such, the change-framework provided by historical-institutionalist theory is very likely to apply outside the study of reconstructive presidents. This project thus introduces a new analytic approach for use by the wider presidency scholarly community, in addition to informing study of presidential leadership in political time.

More specifically, application of historical-institutional theory suggests a new leadership possibility for environmentally constrained reconstructive presidents. It does not, however, change the logic of political time. Presidents acting within a reconstructive “critical juncture” are still a breed apart (Nichols and Myers 2010: 807).⁵ This is true even if they may no longer have access to anything more than the common toolbox of modalities for affecting change. Micro-level context (the institutional environment) has never determined the president’s place in political time. Regime “vulnerability” or “enervation” (Skowronek 1997; 2011), occurring at (what must now be distinguished as) the mid-level of context, opens the reconstructive opportunity for opposition presidents.⁶ It creates the impetus for doing fundamentally different things.

Theory suggests that for reconstructive presidents to succeed in reordering institutions under constrained conditions they must employ a new strategy. Computer simulation supports this idea. It suggests that through broad, frequent, and forceful exploitation of micro-level institutional environment, constrained conditions can be overcome. However, interpretive case study is still needed to confirm that this strategy has actually been employed by a modern, encumbered, reconstructive president. This sort of

analysis is necessary to demonstrate that well-known facts are translatable into the multiple modalities conceptual framework. If they are, alternate leadership possibilities are supported and the historical-institutionalist analytic approach demonstrates utility.

Ronald Reagan Employs the MMCS under Constrained Conditions

This section presents interpretive analysis of Ronald Reagan's efforts to institutionalize a new political regime within the early reconstructive Budget Battles of 1981. This case is selected for two reasons. First, it is well accepted within political time scholarship that Ronald Reagan encountered a vulnerable regime as an opposition president (Skowronek 1997; Cook and Polsky 2005). This provided him with warrants for change that neither his predecessor nor his successors enjoyed. As such, Reagan uniquely experienced the mid-level context necessary to reorder institutions. Second, defenders of the New Deal status quo possessed historically strong veto possibilities by the time of Reagan's presidency. This was due to the "thickening" of the welfare state (Skowronek 1997). This makes Reagan unique in another way. He is, in fact, the only reconstructive president acknowledged to have faced constrained conditions.⁷ This is, of course, the micro-level context that is especially likely to engender employment of the MMCS.

This interpretive study draws from leading scholarly accounts of Reagan's early presidency (LeLoup 1982; Schick 1982; Nathan 1983; Wood and Waterman 1991; Pfiffner 1996, 2013; West 2005; Bartlett 2007; Morgan 2009). Rather than seeking to find new data, the study applies a new approach as it covers familiar ground. It thus aims to provide new evidence through translation of known fact. The study shows that the MMCS was employed by a reconstructive president. In doing so, it confirms expectations and demonstrates utility. The story surrounding the Budget Battles of 1981 is well enough known to need only brief summary. This is followed by more detailed analyses of the modalities of change employed vis-à-vis particular institutions.

Summary – The Budget Battles of 1981

Battles over budgetary issues dominated the first year of Reagan's presidency. Riding high, in the wake of Jimmy Carter's "disjunctive" presidency (Skowronek 1997), Reagan entered office promising to exploit his unique contextual opportunity. He vowed to end the malaise that America found itself mired in. Arguing that "government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem," Reagan promised to "curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment" (1982). To do so, he sought to cut taxes and non-defense spending—applying supply-side principles to help: (1) rejuvenate the economy, (2) consolidate his party's rise in fortunes, and (3) move the nation towards his conservative vision.

Reagan executed a two-pronged strategy in the Budget Battles of 1981. He innovatively used both legislative and administrative tactics to accomplish his goals (Nathan 1983; Pfiffner 1996). Legislatively, it helped that in 1980 Republicans carried the Senate for the first time in a generation and greatly reduced the Democratic majority in the House. In the Senate, new Majority Leader Howard Baker sought to "mobilize the Senate into an instrument of presidential power." In the House, the president had won more votes in the districts of many "Boll Weevil" Democrats (conservative southerners) than those Democrats had. By "running ahead" of many of these Democrats, Reagan cobbled together a narrow, but effective, congressional majority in his first year of office (Schick 1982: 18).

Reagan realized that it would take more than legislative victories to implement his vision. He therefore took an "administrative approach" to making government function the way he wanted it to in the Budget Battles. Indeed, Reagan's team probably spent more time than any other incoming administration before his in preparing for his presidency. They were thus able, in James Pfiffner's memorable use of the phrase, to "hit the ground running" (1996). The administrative approach ensured that his program would not become lost in the machinery of government. That is, by relying heavily on the appointment process, the Reagan team planned to place committed conservatives in position to execute his vision.

There were four key congressional votes in the Budget Battles of 1981. First, in May, Congress passed a concurrent resolution containing reconciliation instructions directing individual committees to revise the budget for fiscal year 1982 and cut \$48.6 billion in spending. This occurred just after Reagan

survived a would-be-assassin's bullet and launched a powerful marketing blitz to curry favor.⁸ Second, in June, the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981 passed. It actually cut \$35.1 billion in domestic spending while increasing defense spending.⁹ Third, in July, after much old-fashioned horse-trading, Congress passed the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981. It instituted across the board tax cuts to all income brackets.¹⁰ Fourth, in November, Congress included a spending cut in a hastily drawn up, emergency, continuing resolution to fund government operations. This happened after it became clear that the deficit would balloon from the original estimate of \$35 billion to \$100 billion in fiscal year 1982 (LeLoup 1982).¹¹ In all this, Reagan did not get all he wanted, but he won every major vote and creatively employed the MMCS to make it happen.

Insurrectionary Displacement

Ronald Reagan's claim to the title "reconstructive president" is suspect if institutionalizing a new political regime is solely about employing an order-shattering / order-creating modality of change. Indeed, most of Reagan's attempts at institutional elimination were only partial successes. For example, he campaigned on the insurrectionary-sounding promise to eliminate the Departments of Education and Energy. However, he had to settle for abolishing the relatively minor Community Service Administration and using an administrative technique (known as "reduction-in-force") to lay off the entire management staff of the Labor Department's Employment and Training Administration (Pfiffner 1996: 91). Even when he similarly gutted the Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration, Congress still continued to provide life-support funding (Nathan 1983). Therefore, despite some minor insurrectionary successes, it is safe to say that Reagan did not displace the institutions of government in the same way Franklin D. Roosevelt (or even Thomas Jefferson) did.

As McCaffrie suggests (2012), it is worth considering whether to give equal weight to the order creating side of the displacement equation.¹² Unlike Roosevelt's vision, Reagan's anti-statist worldview would not necessarily lead him to seek to replace every institution he removed. In this aspect, his views were perhaps more like those of Thomas Jefferson or Andrew Jackson. In fact, in some areas (e.g.,

business regulation) Reagan sought change through simple subtraction. A more nuanced understanding of displacement, allowing for asymmetrical efforts, may thus help Reagan claim additional insurrectionary credentials. However, as the historical record reveals, his efforts at simply cutting often produced only temporary results. For example, the Reagan administration initially succeeded in making significant budgetary and personnel cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency (Vig and Kraft 1984; Harris and Milkis 1989), but Congress quickly acted to restore the agency to vigor (Wood and Waterman 1991).

Reagan's poor record of removing and replacing institutions has been interpreted to suggest that his reconstruction was "more rhetorical" in nature than previous reconstructions (Skowronek 1997: 32). In one sense this is certainly true; it reflects the fact that defenders of the status quo possessed *stronger* veto capacity during Reagan's administration than during any other reconstructive opportunity. Yet in another sense, it is misleading. To locate the most important institution Reagan displaced, we must actually examine an element of the Republican governing philosophy—which, by nature, is more rhetorical in essence.

In this domain, Reagan had *low* discretionary powers to interpret old policy preferences in new ways. However, the old guard Republican veto holders were also in a historically *weak* position to thwart the efforts of a popular and insurrectionary leader to tear out and replace preferences. Therefore, this is the institutional environment within which Reagan displaced a truly significant institution. Put simply, he removed his party's fealty to the principle of "balanced budgets" and replaced it with a devotion to "tax cuts" (Morgan 2009). This insurrectionary move altered a policy goal that Republicans had staunchly held since the earliest days of the Party.

This move may not have displaced an executive department. However, by changing the scope of political conflict in society (i.e., "what the struggle was about"), its impact was anything but merely rhetorical (Schattschneider 1960; Sundquist 1983; Petrocik 1981). This removal and replacement of policy priorities effectively allowed Reagan to rally his party behind a program that gave Republicans something to offer voters besides painful spending cuts. It countered what Jude Wanniski and other supply-side advocates thought was the source of Democratic advantage, namely, using government spending to reward

a broad coalition of supporters (Bartlett 2007).¹³ Ultimately, this insurrectionary move gave Reagan the opportunity to convince a majority in Congress to follow him in layering deep tax cuts on top of mandatory spending outlays.

Subversive Layering

In 1981, the environment within the legislative arena favored efforts to subversively layer institutions. This is to say that the president held a *low* level of discretion over mandatory spending and entitlement program defenders held a *strong* veto position. Given this micro-level context, it should not be surprising that Reagan chose to layer institutions in this domain. He did this rather than attempting the insurrectionary “frontal assault on the welfare state” that some of his supporters advised (Stockman 1986).

Though perhaps disappointing to his most devout followers, Reagan advanced by placing tax cuts and defense spending increases on top of outlays for big social programs (e.g., Medicare and Social Security). These moves were offered as part of a supply-side plan to spur the economy, counter Soviet expansion, and drive the nation out of its doldrums. They were immediately questioned by opponents such as Senator Daniel Moynihan (D-NY). He accused Reagan of attempting a subversive end-around, arguing that falling revenue would force massive cuts in social spending (Bartlett 2007: 12). In this, he was at least half-correct. Revenues would fall.

The strategy of layering tax cuts on top of mandatory outlays to create pressure for spending cuts eventually become known as “starving the beast” (Bartlett 2007). In the 1960s and 1970s economists on both sides of the aisle became aware that “lower tax revenues w(ould) become a ceiling on spending” (Galbraith 1969: 381). Yet the idea of broad tax relief was not politically popular at first—even on the Republican right. To be sure, intellectuals, such as future Reagan Federal Reserve appointee Alan Greenspan, initially advocated for tax cuts unaccompanied by spending cuts. In Greenspan’s words, the idea was simply “to reduce the *momentum of expenditure* by restraining the amount of revenues available...” without fighting hard battles to curb spending (Bartlett 2007: emphasis added).¹⁴ But Republican politicians did not accept this idea until the late 1970s. And this occurred only after they had

seen efforts by Congressmen David Stockman (R-WI) and Phil Gramm (D-TX) to come up with a budget that balanced tax cuts with spending cuts (Stockman 1986; Bartlett 2007).

The “starve the beast” approach was so new that it appears that Ronald Reagan himself did not fully embrace it until January 1980. This is when he was “sent to school” to prep for the primaries and became convinced of the rightness of tax cutting by leading supporters of supply-side economic theory (Stockman 1986: 10). Prior to this, Republicans had staunchly embraced the concept of balanced budgets. This often led Republicans to agree to tax increases, turning them into “tax collector(s) for the welfare state”—as future Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-GA) was fond of saying (Dewhirst 2007: 239). Supply-siders convinced Reagan to argue instead that “raising taxes won’t balance the budget; it will encourage more government spending” (1982).

The subversive “starve the beast” strategy of layering tax cuts and defense spending on top of mandatory outlays became the centerpiece of Reagan’s new political regime, precisely because veto holders held a *strong* position. This made the insurrectionary cutting of entitlement programs politically impossible. The tax cut strategy was seen as the most practical—though certainly not the most transparent—way to curb what Reagan called America’s “extravagant spending habits” (1982).

However, in order to execute the easier part of his plan (i.e., tax cuts), Reagan still had to prove himself to moderate legislators. He had to cut some government spending. These cuts could not come from mandatory entitlement spending, servicing the national debt, or (by choice) discretionary defense spending. As a result, Reagan drew cuts from the remaining part of the budget dedicated to discretionary spending. The problem of finding big enough savings in this small slice of the budget pie was compounded by the fact that the budgetary process was traditionally considered a *strong* veto context. It gave legislative status quo defenders plenty of opportunity to forestall change. Yet, Reagan and his team found a way to overcome congressional opposition via opportunistic conversion.

Opportunistic Conversion

In the process of fighting the Budget Battles of 1981, Reagan converted several institutions. He first converted his revised fiscal year 1982 budget request into a vehicle for exacting substantial cuts. Reagan then converted the reconciliation process (outlined in the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974) into a tool for securing his cuts. He also converted a continuing resolution (to supply end-of-the-calendar-year funding for government operations) into a broad spending cut.

Before Reagan accomplished the feat, newly elected presidents did not make substantial changes to the next year's budget. There are many reasons for this. Two stand out. First, it was considered too difficult. The budget is complex and constructed through much political compromising and accommodation. For these reasons it is difficult for a new administration to alter. Second, alteration was considered too time-consuming, and the request for revision had to be submitted to Congress just six weeks after the new president took office.

Yet Congress had long before invited presidential leadership into the budgetary realm with the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921 (Morgan 2009). In addition, Congress allowed newly inaugurated presidents to request revisions to the budget. This combination gave the president *high* discretion to creatively use his revision request. It gave Congress *weak* ability to stop him from proposing whatever he wanted. Reagan took advantage of this environment. He opportunistically redeployed his budget revision request in a new way.¹⁵ He used it to cut billions in discretionary spending. In so doing he deviated from the established practice of utilizing the request to trim around the edges.

It is well recognized that budgets are important priority-establishing and agenda-setting instruments. Yet, it is easy to forget how innovative Reagan's budget revision request was. Not only did he use his request to ask for significant discretionary spending cuts, he uniquely converted the budget into an executive management tool. He used the revised budget request as the primary "drive-wheel" of policy during the administration's first year in office. The budget, not polls or socially conservative pressure groups, determined the elements of his domestic agenda that he would single-mindedly push through a divided Congress (Nathan 1983: 72).

Of the many factors that contributed to Reagan's early legislative successes, much has been made of the fortuitous circumstances he inherited. In Skowronek's telling, Jimmy Carter's presidency was clearly "disjunctive" (1997). The New Deal regime had become vulnerable to repudiation and institutional reordering. Similarly, much has been made of the communication skills that Reagan brought to bear on his reconstructive opportunity. Indeed, Reagan made the most of his ability to both electrify crowds and work the hill. He was adept at coalition building by the thousands, as well as by one legislator at a time (Schick 1982). Yet, even with these advantages, it is almost impossible to believe that Reagan could have won his budget battles without opportunistically converting the reconciliation procedure to his advantage.

"Reconciliation" is, as Allen Schick summarizes, "a procedure that compels congressional committees to report legislation conforming existing law to current budget decisions" (1982: 26). The procedure was originally designed to provide Congress with a tool to combat President Nixon's impoundment of congressionally authorized spending. However, it was not used until late in the Carter administration. Here, it was used once to cut spending \$4.6 billion and raise \$3.6 billion more in taxes (LeLoup 1982). As its Democratic authors made clear to Republicans in 1981, the procedure was written to apply to appropriations, entitlements, borrowing, and contract authority. It was not meant for authorizations. Moreover, it was specifically intended to be used at the end of the budgetary process, not at its beginning.

Yet Reagan and his team got around these constraints. As opportunistic change agents often do, they found some ambiguous language in the Impoundment Control Act that allowed them to use *high* interpretive discretion. Their reading of the Act allowed congressional allies facing relatively *weak* veto holders to convert the procedure to presidential advantage. Combined with a special rule that restricted the chance for amendment, reconciliation bound the hands of congressional leadership.

As it was designed to do, the reconciliation procedure functionally (if only temporarily) *weakened* the legislature's overall veto power. It created conditions of party-type government that emphasized lawmaking (LeLoup 1982). Reconciliation further saddled committee chairs with instructions—sometimes very detailed—on far ranging changes and cuts they needed to be made within 30 days. Finally, the tactic

also packaged the full range of budgetary issues into a single bill. This forced an up-or-down vote in Congress. Herein, legislators would be seen as standing with or against the popular new president. A showdown was created. Reagan accurately wagered he could win this kind of confrontation.

Reagan ended his first year in office with another innovative flourish. He converted a normal end of the year measure to extend funding for governmental operations into an instrument that further reduced spending. He accomplished this feat by using his own *high* discretionary veto power to reject a continuing resolution passed as stop-gap funding measure. Given the press of time and Congress' own *weak* ability to override a presidential veto, the legislature was strong-armed into converting a funding bill into something that included a spending cut. Reagan thus succeeded in opportunistically seizing another opening to convert an institution to ends previously not contemplated. In so doing, he did more than burnish his cost-cutting credentials. He changed institutional outcomes without tearing out or adding any institutions.

Symbiotic (or parasitic) Drift

A further key to what Reagan called his "strategy of spending control" was the appointment of loyal lieutenants to leadership positions throughout the federal bureaucracy. Reagan would exploit his *high* discretion in staffing matters. He appointed people who shared his economic philosophy and objectives in order to "make cabinet officers the managers of the national administration, not captives of the bureaucracy or special interests." This application of the "administrative presidency" amounted to a "revolution in attitudes" regarding the appointment power (Nathan 1983: 72). As critics rightly pointed out, this sometimes made an individual's ideology more important than his/her qualifications. It sometimes gave a pass to those who otherwise would have been disqualified based on conflict of interest or outright hostility to the departments they were to serve (Pfiffner 1996).

Yet, sometimes this was precisely the point for the Reagan administration. Under constraining conditions, it can sometimes be easier to get what you want through purposive inaction or lax enforcement than it is though legislatively (or administratively) changing the rules. This is because defenders of the status quo in the bureaucracy often possess *strong* veto power. Accordingly, Reagan's exploitation of his

appointment power should be seen as part of a plan to bring about change through what Mahoney and Thelen call “parasitic” style symbiotic drift (2010).¹⁶

As Reagan and his team realized, making government work the way they wanted it to (i.e., conservatively) required penetration of its operations and not just legislative victories. This explains Reagan’s “unprecedented interest in lower level political positions” (Nathan 1983: 76). His personnel team was involved in subcabinet appointments (assistant secretary and above). Its members even reserved the right to involve themselves in the 1,200 “Schedule C” type appointments, which are technically made by department heads and not presidents (Pfiffner 1996: 68).

Reagan used his appointment powers to facilitate slashing of the federal budget and to diminish enforcement of some federal regulations. He had created a team of personnel experts to begin working on staffing issues for his administration almost year before he was elected. Yet some positions were intentionally filled slowly or not at all. He and his team especially neglected making timely appointments in the realms of rights guaranteeing and resource management agencies (Nathan 1983; Pfiffner 1996). This had the effect of placing agencies in these realms at a disadvantage when challenging proposed spending and personnel cuts.

To further ensure that Reagan’s own appointees would support his agenda, the transition team developed an in-house training program. Cabinet and high-level appointees were often brought into a meeting with the president-elect before they knew much about their jobs. They were then “brow beaten” by future budget director David Stockman (or another senior member of Reagan’s staff) about the cuts and moves that the administration expected to see happen in their agencies or departments. Many appointees would then go on to learn about their jobs from members of Reagan’s team, rather than from individuals in the agencies they would direct. These “divide and conquer” techniques neutralized potential opposition to cuts from the bureaucracy and encouraged atrophy of regulatory vigor (Stockman 1986).

Other symbiotic tactics also parasitically undermined certain government operations. They included the use of a government-wide “hold” on spending projects, as well as a “hiring freeze” to achieve smaller government through non-completion of tasks and natural attrition of personnel. Additionally, there

were multiple instances where entire staffs were laid off or key individuals were demoted or transferred. Demoralized agencies then had no one to effectively run a regulatory program that otherwise could not be eliminated.

Finally, Reagan greatly empowered the newly created Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) to “screen rules proposed by executive branch agencies” (West 2005: 78; Friedman 1995). The “regulatory review” process provided by this office enhanced the president’s power to penetrate the bureaucracy. OIRA was charged with ensuring that agencies’ policies were consistent with Reagan’s program. (Opponents claimed that the office simply provided business interests another means to reduce regulation.)

These sorts of actions almost always produced regulatory drift, at least for a while.¹⁷ This provides evidence that the appointment power is one of the most important political instruments of bureaucratic control (Wood and Waterman 1991: 801–804; West 2005). It also demonstrates that Reagan exploited appointments like no president had before him. In doing so, he used high discretion to alter outcomes without ripping out and replacing institutions.

Confirming Expectations and Demonstrating Utility

Recent theory and simulation have suggested that modern reconstructive presidents may need to employ a MMCS to successfully reorder institutions in a constrained environment. They have highlighted reliance on a different means of change than was originally thought necessary for reconstructive success. But before now no case study had been conducted that could confirm the practice of this alternate leadership possibility. The utility of the new analytic framework had therefore not yet been fully demonstrated.

Now that the historical-institutional approach has been applied, it is time to summarize findings and reflect on them. Our case study coda confirms expected use of the MMCS. It further suggests how the strategy worked, in practice, to change politics in the Reagan Revolution era. Reflection also suggests that (1) visionary and creative presidential agency are key to success in institutionalizing a new political regime

and (2) that reliance on the MMCS is not without difficulties. Both pros and cons emerge, demonstrating how application of the historical-institutional framework can be illuminative.

Case Study Coda

Interpretive analysis suggests that Reagan did, in fact, employ a MMCS in the Budget Battles of 1981. He successfully played the insurrectionary, removing his party's primary dedication to balanced budgets and replacing it with devotion to tax cuts. This displacement of Republican governing priorities provided the impetus for the subsequent "starve the beast" strategy of layering tax cuts on top of mandatory outlays. This subversive move would not have been legislatively possible had Reagan not opportunistically deployed old institutions in new ways. He brought about discretionary spending cuts through conversion of his budget request, the reconciliation procedure, and a continuing spending resolution. Furthermore, in order to execute his supply-side vision, Reagan used the appointment power in new, symbiotic/parasitic ways. He sometimes encouraged bureaucratic atrophy and regulatory drift. Employment of all four modalities, separately and together, allowed Reagan to institutionalize a new political regime.

The first thing that tax cuts without corresponding spending cuts brought about was the deficits that opponents had warned of. This occurred almost immediately. Deficits, however, did not have the effect that some proponents of starve the beast had hoped for. They never did lower overall spending on entitlement programs. Deficits probably did no more than slow their rate of growth. However, this was not their only impact. Nor, was it the most important one.

More significantly, deficits influenced politics for the entire Reagan Revolution era by altering: (1) the central logic of budgetary debates; and (2) the mechanisms by which the New Deal majority had been perpetuated (Ginsberg and Shefter 1990). Indeed, because of looming deficits, budget discussions shifted from a bottom-up to top-down perspective. Budget talks in Reagan's regime began with a conservative focus on what could be afforded (under the pressure of red ink) rather than a liberal focus on what was wanted or needed. This undermined Congress and its demand-accommodating nature. It further favored Republican supply-side preferences for less obtrusive government.

Deficits also had the effect of undermining the Democratic coalition. As Speaker of the House, Tom Foley (D-WA), soon admitted, “tight budgets strain all the natural fault lines of the Democratic Party” (Bartlett 2007: 9). Through the pressure of deficits, Republicans found it easier to keep Democratic leaders from using spending to hold their coalition of “wild horses” together. It is therefore impossible to overestimate the importance that employing a MMCS had in achieving tax cuts, creating deficits, and exploiting Reagan’s opportunity for reconstructive success.¹⁸

Leadership possibilities that were abstract before this project are thus confirmed to exist in reality. Because of this, and the fact that constrained conditions continue to exist (and almost certainly have worsened), reconstructive presidents following Reagan should be expected to attempt to employ the strategy. Additionally, this interpretation suggests that any president attempting to bring change across multiple institutional environments can also be expected to employ a MMCS. In both cases, scholarship now has the theory and analytic framework needed to explore these scenarios.

The new approach also helps to shed light on how the MMCS actually worked to affect change at the political regime level. It suggests that altering multiple institutions can modify decision-making logics and mechanisms through which outcomes are produced. The rise of deficits changed political calculations and undermined ability to reward some constituencies. Politics were thus altered in significant ways by the second- and even third-order effects of tax cuts. Besides emphasizing the need to move beyond focus on order shattering/order creating leadership, this finding highlights the benefit of paying attention to downstream consequences. Under constrained conditions, employment of an MMSC can still have great long-term impact.¹⁹

Reflections on Reconstructive Leadership I: The Importance of Vision and Creativity

Broadly, this study’s interpretation of the Budget Battles of 1981 suggests that reconstructive presidents will no longer rely exclusively on displacement to reorder the institutions of the political regime—if, in fact, they ever did.²⁰ Odds are that these presidents will now be forced to rely heavily on subversive, opportunistic, and symbiotic modalities. More specifically, however, Reagan’s example

suggests the importance of vision and creativity in overcoming constrained conditions and exploiting a reconstructive opportunity.

Reconstructive presidents can use opportunities provided by their institutional environment to weave their way around and over roadblocks. Not only can they do this, but they probably must now do this. As the study of Reagan shows, a change modality can be applied in one micro-level context, to *weaken* veto holders in another. This is precisely what happened when conversion of the reconciliation procedure allowed Republicans to overcome the *strong* veto context in Congress. Furthermore, this is precisely why OIRA was empowered. It reduced the normally *strong* veto power that agencies have over regulatory rules.

Importantly, this suggests that while institutional environment influences presidential leadership it does not singularly determine success in reordering institutions. A reconstructive president with imagination and ingenuity can take action within one micro-context to reshape and alter the institutional environment that another action occurs within. These kinds of maneuvers may require an ability to see opportunities where others do not. They may involve heightened capacity to think in terms of causal chains. Furthermore, these sort of intricate moves might entail the employment of common tools in novel ways and in unique combinations.

All of this highlights the importance of the fact that the reconstructive president functions within a unique (mid-level) context for action. Other presidents can apply their visionary and creative talents to political problem-solving. However, only the reconstructive president opposes an enervated regime. As such, they alone act within a critical juncture. By definition this “substantially heighten(s) the probability that (their) choices will affect ... outcome(s)” (Cappocia and Keleman 2007: 348). Therefore, reconstructive presidents should still be expected to attempt to do fundamentally different things, even as they may now be restricted to achieving their ends by less spectacular means.

Study of leadership possibilities within the reconstructive context is thus demonstrated to be of crucial importance to presidential studies. Reconstructive presidents appear capable of pushing beyond the boundaries of what George Edwards calls “facilitation.” While reconstructive presidents certainly do “recogniz(e) and exploit opportunities for change” (Edwards 2009: 11), they appear to demonstrate some

capacity to create opportunities that otherwise would not exist without their imagination and ingenuity. As such, the Reagan case suggests that there may be greater space for presidential leadership to have an “event-making” impact than is sometimes believed (Hook 1943).²¹

Reflections on Reconstructive Leadership II: The Danger of Deception and Manipulation

Case study suggests that constraining environmental conditions pushed Reagan to rely on creatively employing the MMCS to reorder institutions. One potential problem with this is the fact that “the strategy requires reconstructive presidents to rely more heavily on subterfuge or exploitation of loosely constrained discretionary authority—or both—to succeed” (Nichols 2014: 19). Mahoney and Thelen have suggested that the layering and drift modalities both benefit from a degree of deception in their inception and implementation (2010). Theory also clearly stipulates that the conversion and drift modalities depend on the exploitation of ambiguous rules. It is probably with good reason that political actors using these modalities are already called subversives, opportunists and parasites.²²

The Reagan case is cautionary. One can be philosophically restrained like Reagan was and still bend the reconciliation procedure beyond the spirit and letter of the legislation. Furthermore, one can be a great communicator and still go to varying lengths to obscure the intentions of the “starve the beast” and administrative/personnel strategies from the public. It may not be surprising, then, that deception and rule-bending behavior eventually caught up with the Reagan administration in the form of the Iran-Contra scandal.²³

It is both possible, and perhaps likely, that increased reliance on the MMCS by reconstructive presidents will foster a climate wherein deceptive, rule-bending presidential behavior comes to be seen as not only expected but acceptable. It is true that presidential leadership has been strained for some time. “Imperial” presidential behavior is not new (Schlesinger 1973). Yet despite the commonness of questionable behavior, presidential reliance on misdirection and manipulation has been widely recognized as problematic. Presidents pressing the limits of their legal authority too far could expect to be broadly confronted and called to task.

Reactions to aggrandizing executive behaviors are, however, the sort of things that the leadership of reconstructive presidents can change. They are, after all, able to do categorically different things—like alter accepted norms. As Andrew Jackson demonstrated with Indian Removal, those actions necessary for a reconstructive president’s political success often become excusable in the eyes of supporters. In fact, they have a tendency to become unifying acts for the nascent majority coalition and thus desirable (Rohlskrantz 1993). As such, it would be prudent for scholars and citizens to realize that there is inherent danger in reconstructive leadership that is forced, by micro-level context, to obfuscate intentions and bend rules to succeed.

Conclusion

This essay began addressing the debate over the continued viability of the reconstructive leadership stance. It is therefore proper, in closing, to briefly consider what this study cautiously suggests about the post-1981 future of the reconstructive presidency. First, after confirming that Reagan employed the MMCS, it does not seem controversial to suggest that reconstructive presidents following him will need to attempt to use the strategy to re-order institutions as well.

Indeed, given increasingly constrained conditions, post-Reagan reconstructive presidents may need to rely even more heavily on the MMCS. Reconstructive presidents may still be able to prevail in an early legislative showdown, as Reagan did, and layer a signature policy achievement on top of or alongside the old order. More certainly, these individuals will need to exploit and creatively expand the arsenal of “administrative” options at their disposal. Change will thus be largely sought through exploitation of discretion in interpretation and implementation of the law. Any post-1981 reconstructive attempt to reorder institutions will therefore probably end up looking a lot more like Reagan’s effort than like Franklin D. Roosevelt’s. This is true regardless of whether it succeeds.

Given that the institutional environment for action has thickened since Reagan’s tenure, it is also quite possible that reliance on the drift modality will increase. Parasitic style drift exploits strong veto context by formally following rules while simultaneously subverting their spirit. It produces change by

exploiting gaps in veto holder's enforcement capacity (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). This modality is probably the least efficient of the four at affecting change. As the very term "drift" implies, it also is likely to take the longest time to feel this modality's full effect. Finally, and unfortunately, of all the change-techniques, drift is probably most likely to undermine the rule of law. It can make a mockery of the president's constitutional duty to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed."

This study cannot hope to resolve the dispute about the post-Reagan future of reconstructive leadership, since this is beyond the power of a single case study. However, the application of historical-institutional theory does lend some support to the suggestion that it may still be possible for a reconstructive president to reorder institutions in a constrained environment. While the proof remains in the pudding, the new analytic approach provides support for the proposition that the MMCS is not just an abstract leadership possibility. The strategy was actually employed by Reagan. This study thus reinforces the argument that if a change strategy works in simulation and reality, it is "theoretically only a matter of applying it strenuously or often enough" to continue to make it work (Nichols 2014: 14).²⁴

It may be impossible to know whether reconstructive leadership will continue to prevail over byzantine institutional context. One thing is certain, though: Presidentially-led reconstructive battles to reorder institutions under constrained conditions will continue to be worth watching.

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Figure 1. The Modalities of Change as Functions of Micro-Level Context

| | | <u>Characteristics of the Targeted Institution</u> | |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|
| | | Low Level of Discretion In Interpretation / Enforcement | High Level of Discretion In Interpretation / Enforcement |
| <u>Characteristics of the Political Context</u> | Weak Veto Possibilities | “Insurrectionary” Displacement | “Opportunistic” Conversion |
| | Strong Veto Possibilities | “Subversive” Layering | “Symbiotic” Drift |

(modified from Mahoney and Thelen 2010)

¹ Second-wave political time scholarship includes: Bridge (2014); Cook and Polsky (2005); Crockett (2002, 2008, 2012); Johansson (2014); McCaffrie (2012); Nichols (2011); Polsky (1997); Whittington (2007); Zinman (2011).

² The central idea behind *The Politics Presidents Make* is that presidential leadership is influenced by more than just the problems each president uniquely faces while in office (1997).

³ Two contextual factors affect leadership in political time: the ebb and flow of “regime resilience”; and the president’s relationship to the dominant coalition (in either an “affiliated” or “opposition” orientation). A two-by-two typology of leadership authority thus exists and context matters a lot to presidential leadership. Because of the fact that regime resilience does ebb and flow, recurrently, context influences multiple presidents similarly across time.

⁴ See Hall and Taylor (1996) and Pierson and Skocpol (2002) for excellent summary and description of the historical-institutional approach.

⁵ Historical-institutionalist scholars suggest that a critical juncture: (1) serves to destabilize antecedent conditions; (2) relaxes structural forces constraining agency; (3) gives a heightened role to contingent factors, and; (4) allows mechanisms of production and reproduction to produce long-lasting legacies (e.g. establish path-dependent processes). See Collier and Collier (1991); Capoccia and Kelemen (2007).

⁶ Application of historical-institutional theory makes clear that the opportunity to practice reconstructive leadership is not a function of the modalities of change that are available to respond to the challenge at any time. Reconstructive success is furthermore never, simply, a product of the skill by which change modalities are wielded. Well-directed employment of any change strategy still needs to be practiced within favorable context to accomplish the things reconstructive presidents are famous for. The opposite is also probably true of well-directed agency. Context alone should not guarantee reconstructive success. Nichols and Myers (2010) suggest the possibility of “reconstructive failure” for those presidents facing a vulnerable regime who are unable to complete the three reconstructive tasks. They offer Grover Cleveland’s second, non-consecutive, term as example in support of this hypothesis.

⁷ Scholars continue to debate how to classify President Obama in political time (see especially Skowronek 2011). At the time of this writing, most have focused on the impact of his leadership rather than nature of his opportunity and have rejected the possibility that he is a reconstructive president (Skowronek 1997, 2014; Eberly 2010; Schier 2011; Balkin 2012, 2014; Crockett 2012). For these scholars, Reagan represents the universe of applicable cases in the study of reconstructive presidents facing constrained conditions.

⁸ This version of the budget, known as Gramm-Latta I, passed the House 253–176 and the Senate 78–20.

⁹ After much acrimony in the House, this budget (Gramm-Latta II) passed 214–208. It passed the Senate 80–15.

¹⁰ This bill passed the House 238–195 and the Senate 89–5.

¹¹ This emergency bill passed 367–26 in the House and 88–1 in the Senate.

¹² McCaffrie correctly argues that we need to consider the order shattering and order creating elements of the institutionalization task separately (2012). The question is whether each element is individually necessary to success or not. The Reagan case helps push the boundaries of this debate without supplying a definitive answer.

¹³ In 1976, Jude Wanniski famously urged Republicans to adopt tax cuts as their signature policy stance in order to execute his “two Santa Clause theory” of countering the Democratic advantage (Bartlett 2007). Accordingly, Republicans needed to have tax relief gifts to shower on the electorate to counter the gifts that Democrats gave through spending. The “Roth-Kemp” tax cutting plan of 1977 followed Wanniski’s advice by calling for 30% across the board tax cuts unaccompanied by spending cuts. This plan was the blueprint for the Tax Act that passed in 1981.

¹⁴ Greenspan’s sentence ends inauspiciously: “...and trust that there is a political limit to deficit spending” (Bartlett 2007).

¹⁵ In this effort, Reagan was greatly assisted by the fact that Stockman, the president’s first Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), had already made detailed plans and preparations to enact an alternative budget.

¹⁶ Using executive appointment power uniquely can be considered an act of opportunistic conversion within a weak veto context. However, using personnel choices to control bureaucratic outputs via purposive neglect further applies the symbiotic drift strategy to the strong veto context within the bureaucracy. In this case, two modalities of change were employed to achieve drift.

¹⁷ As Nichols' computer simulation suggests (2014), drift might be the least impactful modality of change. In having the least impact on the status quo, drift might be most easily reversed. See also West (2005) on the fluctuating nature of regulatory relief achieved through exploitation of OIRA. However, as Mahoney and Thelen note, inattention to the corruptions of drift can bring about substantial alteration of the status quo. Drift can "compromise the stability of the system itself" and cause it to collapse (2010: 25).

¹⁸ The presidents following Reagan all played the roles that Skowronek's theory would expect of them during a Republican political regime. As has been noted (Skowronek 2011), the quartet of presidents that closed out the twentieth century neatly fills out all four cells of the political time typology including the: disjunctive Carter, reconstructive Reagan, "favorite son" articulator G.H.W. Bush, and preemptive Clinton. Furthermore, G.W. Bush began his presidency by playing the role of late regime "orthodox innovator" (articulator) to the hilt. Thus, political development itself continues to lend support to Skowronek's early recognition that: "Whatever the limits of the Reagan reconstruction, no president in recent times has so radically altered the terms in which prior governmental commitments are now dealt with or the conditions under which previously established interest are served" (1997: 411; see also Cook and Polsky 2005; Pfiffner 2013).

¹⁹ Reagan's example may suggest that employment of the MMCS may not be as likely to produce as immediate or "punctuated" type of change as was expected in the past. However, significant change should still come. Things that once seemed neigh impossible, like the Republicans gaining control of the House of Representatives or the explosion of the national debt under Republican leadership, should eventual come to seem almost inescapable.

²⁰ This opens the possibility that reconstructive presidents have always employed the MMCS. Surely, every reconstructive president has had to do more than displace institutions to complete the third, institutional reordering, task.

²¹ Sidney Hook (1943) describes an "event making man" as someone who exploits context for success and succeeds by bringing superior talents and skills to bear. The event making man "finds a fork in the historical road, but he also helps, so to speak, to create it. ... (his / her) actions influence subsequent developments along a quite different course than would have been followed if these actions had not been taken." Reconstructive presidents appear to fit the event making man archetype.

²² Skowronek charges Reagan with "trashing" the budgetary process in the Budget Battles of 1981 (1997: 432). However, it is probably more accurate to agree with LeLoup. He concludes that "Reagan did not scrap the legislative budget process; he simply convinced a majority in Congress to make it work for him rather than against him" (1982: 336).

²³ The problems stemming from fostering a deceptive, rule-bending, climate may not always reveal themselves right away. Rather, danger may often come from what under-supervised subordinates—possessing great admiration for the reconstructive president and his/her vision—may think a lax climate authorizes them to do (e.g. via the reconstructive president's "referent" power). See generally, Franklin (1998).

²⁴ This prospect is encouraging, especially since it quite possible that the political time cycle is not actually something that "presidents make" (Skowronek 1997). If the cycle is, instead, a regular product of the American constitutional order, it may always need the president to play the key role of system rejuvenator (Nichols 2011). In this scenario, continued practice of successful reconstructive politics is necessary to maintain the vitality and health of the American polity.