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ABSTRACT

Transformative or Reconstructive Presidents, according to Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Leadership, all have legacies. Through my research, I explained why five presidents, each of whom had a legacy, were defined as transformative. In my publication, defining a transformative president, I described Reagan's legacy where he proclaimed that government was the problem was embraced by George W. Bush. (Thompson, "Transformative Presidents: A Review of Definitions focused on the Reagan Presidency, International Relations and Diplomacy, July 2015, Vol 3, No. 7, 487-925).

This paper will explain Reagan's legacy by showing how it was accepted by conservative, predecessors who campaigned and enacted policies that mirrored Reagan's. The periodic *transformation of American Government will be examined to show how Presidents H.W.* Bush, Clinton, and G.W. Bush supported Reagan policies such as entitlement reform and military buildup. I will emphasize how G.W. Bush adhered to Reagan’s public philosophy and legacy. Another way of understanding legacy as well as questioning the concept of whether transformative presidents have legacies will be to compare the current, Democratic President's legacy with Reagan's.

Neustadt was the first, notable presidential scholar to analyze positively about the existence of transformative presidents in the process of rating presidential \

leadership. He broached the idea of conceptualizing about such presidents as well leaving legacies. As for defining the concept of a legacy, Neustadt wrote that "With regard to the man's /president's/ legacy, one seeks clues in the conduct of the next administration". (Neustadt, 168). I have used the adjective transformative in defining those presidents whose administrations have changed or reconstructed the U.S. political system. Not all political scientists who have studied the presidency agree with the concept of having transformative presidents. In my publication of defining transformative presidents, only Skowronek is definitive that there have been transformative presidents. In opposition to Stephen Skowronek, George C. Edwards, III, has written that the concept of having a transformative president does not exist, believing that the possibility of "transformational leadership is the holy grail of leadership studies."(Edwards, Strategic President, 8).

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Stephen Skowronek, Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal, differed with Edwards in writing that five presidents, including Reagan were transformational. Skowronek agreed with Neustadt that transformationals had legacies, and explained why five presidents were transformatives based on utilizing periodization theory. (Thompson, Transformative Presidents.)

Transformative or Reconstructive Presidents Have Legacies

Skowronek explained how the concept of a legacy is demonstrated by his periodization theory that defined a theory of presidential leadership. Similar to much of contemporary presidential scholarship, periodization follows from Neustadt’s belief that leadership performance is critical to making the political system function. For example, Skowronek stated that “Roosevelt’s leadership had a profound effect on the political assumptions and aspirations of his successors. . . .” (Skowronek, Presidential Leadership, p. 9).

The concept of a “Legacy” is clearly defined as related to political time through periodization: “. . . presidents located in different historical periods . . . are likely to be more similar to one another in leadership challenges they face and the political effects they register . . .” (Ibid., p. 20). These periods are designated by transformative presidents who repudiate a predecessor and establish another pattern that adheres to a legacy. Skowronek linked post new deal presidents of liberal dominance that share a political coalition and has named these presidents as follows: Eisenhower, Nixon, Kennedy, Johnson and Carter. President Ronald Reagan’s leadership formulated a new legacy through repudiating the New Deal coalition. President Reagan in the 1980 election repudiated President Jimmy Carter’s administration.

The 1980 election was significant in defining a new political philosophy that advanced a clear understanding of conservative beliefs,that expressed how a new Reagan coalition would transform American politics by defining a legacy, explained in his inaugural.

Reagan’s coalition included five groups: one, southern Democrats, who as conservative Democrats realigned as a Republican electorate, two, white, moderate Democrats in the

1980 election voted for Republicans, three, white evangelicals voted for Reagan Republicans, four, the dealignment of Catholics and five blue-collar workers who

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changed from their traditional Democratic loyalties to vote for Reagan in 1980 and continued to support the new public philosophy.

Creating a new public philosophy defines the meaning of periodization, as well as how a Legacy is created. With the 1980 election, Reagan began a new “period” in presidential history. Reagan’s coalitions and public philosophy was sustained through winning three presidential elections between 1980-2004. According to Andrew R. Bush, even Clinton’s presidency was achieved as a consequence of Reagan’s policies and in this instance established the meaning of a legacy, or establishing a new “Public Philosophy. (Bush, The Presidential Election of 1980 and the Right, 163-189).

**Reagan’s Public Philosophy**

Reagan’s new Public Philosophy of changing the role of government was established through the 1981 budgetary battles, that followed the outline of the president’s priorities as outlined in his inaugural. Reagan began his speech by explaining the problems in the economy that he inherited from his predecessor.

“We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations. . .. It

distorts our economic decisions, penalizes thrift. . . But great as our tax

burden is, it has not kept pace with public spending.

In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem;

government is the problem.” (Ibid., pp.197-98).

Reagan’s public philosophy replaced Keynesian economics with Reganomics based on Arthur Laffer’s Supply-Side theory. David Stockman, together with his associates created a budget that reflected Reagan’s priorities. Stockman described the 1981 budget wars as between those who questioned how domestic spending reductions could be achieved with equally large revenue reductions. Reaganomics, according to Stockman could be defined as how to achieve economic growth by cutting the rate of domestic economic growth through reducing entitlements that accounted for the largest percentage of government spending. Stockman saw the dilemma as how would it be possible to create a balanced budget without eliminating entitlements that amounted to 90% of domestic spending. Stockman wrote that the Reagan Revolution “. . . required a frontal assault on the

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American welfare state. . ., . As the only way to pay for the massive Kemp-Roth tax cut.” (Stockman, The Triumph of Politics, 8).

Eliminating entitlements could not be eliminated without congressional approval. Supply siders argued for reducing domestic expenditures of goods and services by also reducing taxes to thereby increase supply. Stockman succeeded in achieving the economic recovery and tax cut act. At the same time, Reagan insisted that congressionally achieved entitlements such as Social Security, Medicare, Veterans Benefits, and Medicaid. The problem was that as Stockman endeavored to achieve reduced government spending and tax reduction, Reagan asked for defense spending increases.

analysis of the budget wars demonstrated how Reagan achieved reconstructive leadership through repudiating his predecessor’s economic collapse to achieve transformative leadership.

The Budget Wars were described by David Stockman in his book, The Triumph of Politics: How the Reagan Revolution Failed. Stockman explained how he convinced Congress to combine tax cuts with reduced domestic spending that required “. . . Draconian domestic cuts /that/ would be needed to maintain a reasonably balanced budget while the tax cuts were being phased in.” (Triumph of Politics., p. 71).

In his chapter, “Short Cuts to the Reagan Revolution”, Stockman wrote that Reagan came over to his new office and announced, “Let us, together, make a new beginning”. (Ibid., p. 100). In addition, he analyzed the incidents between his office, congressional elites and the Whitehouse staff to achieve the Reagan Revolution. In conclusion, Stockman described the result of the 1981 budget battles as “The false impression that you could have huge tax cuts and a big defense increase without storming the welfare state-Social Security and Medicare could easily be conveyed. (Ibid, p. 125). Stockman realized that entitlements such as Social Security amounted to 40% of the Domestic Budget. Reagan was adamant about not cutting these social benefits that Stockman explained why the budget could not be balanced without reducing the entitlements. Consequently, Reagan failed to do all that he had promised in his new public philosophy.

To achieve his tax cuts, Stockman persuaded Reagan to use supply-side economic theory, which was nothing more than “. . . trickle-down or the view that tax cuts for corporations

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and the wealthy produce beneficial effects in the lower rump of the economic ladder”. (Ibid., p. 261).

The tax cut bill, Kemp-Roth, was billed as the Economic Recovery act reduced individual income taxes by 25% over a three-year period. The purpose of Kemp-Roth was explained to Congress to stimulate economic growth by encouraging investment and productivity. As income would be curtailed, enacting a budget required reducing all domestic spending on everything except Social Security, Veterans Benefits, or Medicare.

Reagan’s Reconstructive Leadership is Questioned

Curt Nichols has also analyzed the 1981 Budget Wars in explaining Reagans Reconstructive Leadership. (Reagan Reorders the Political Regime: A Historical-

Institutional Approach to Analysis of Change”). Nichols questioned whether Reagan was reconstructive in applying the Multiple Modalities of Change to determine whether Reagan had in effect achieved a new public philosophy in reconstructing the New Deal public philosophy. Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol have described “Multiple Modalities” as a model that political scientists such as Nichols has used to explain how change in reconstructive leadership applied to Skowronek’s periodization theory, as utilized in determining whether a President created a new public philosophy in analyzing transformative leadership. (Pierson and Stocpol, “Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science,” 1).

Nichols analyzed the 1981 budget wars and followed much of what Strickland concluded about how Reagan’s priorities composed the tax cuts and spending reductions that were created through opposition from GOP and congressional elites. The question of leadership change followed entirely Skowronek’s discussion of how presidents attain transformative status through following a pattern of steps that will be reviewed in answering the question about whether transformational leadership is still possible. Nichols in following Skowronek’s model has focused on explaining whether Reagan has replaced existing institutions.

Nichols followed the 1981 Budget wars as explained by Stockman to show that while Reagan failed to end entitlements, he affected significant changes that were transformative. Nichols demonstrated that Reagan changed his party’s emphasis on a

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balanced budget to devotion to tax cuts. “This displacement of Republican governing priorities provided the impeturs for the subsequent starve the beast strategy of layering tax cuts on top of mandatory outlays.” (Nichols, “Reagan Reorders the Political Regime”, 8).

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Reagan pushed to increase defense spending. The 1981 budget battles occurred while trying to balance the budget with reduced income achieved through the tax cuts.

explained how the president transformed government by adhering to supply side economics. Both Cannon and Stockman agreed the tax cut resulted in deficit spending and the failure of the “Reagan Revolution”. (Thompson, Transformative Presidents). Stockman argued that in order to reduce high inflation rates incurred during the Carter administration, it would be necessary to end welfare expenditures and reduce taxation. Cannon explained the failure of Reaganomics and the Reagan Revolution in a detailed chapter on the 1981 budget wars. (Cannon, “Staying the Course,” in President Reagan, pp. 232-279)

The Budget wars resulted in Reagan’s attempt to achieve his priority of reducing the role of government. Stockman had accepted the blame for encouraging the use of supply-side economics to reduce deficit spending through both cutting taxes and entitlement spending. Stocman had failed to understand that because the majority of the budget was based on entitlements such as Social Security, Medicare, Veteran’s Benefits and the COLA, all programs that had been previously enacted could not be reduced. The “wars” had resulted with Congress and the media informing public opinion about cuts in programs that were sacred. Budget wars could also be explained as changing priorities to affect Reagan’s emphasis on defense spending.

But, it was impossible to reduce welfare because these expenditures could not be changed because of prior enactments could not be reduced. Still the basis of the Reagan Revolution remained with supply side economics following the public philosophy of attempting to increase economic growth by producing more natural resources, labor, capital and technology, thus increasing the supply of goods and serices. Therefore, tax increases should be reduced to achieve productivity.

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Is Transformational Leadership Still Possible: Compare Obama’s Presidency with Reagan’s.

Skowronek devoted the last chapter of his book on Presidential Leadership in Political Time by asking whether transformational leadership was still possible. He analyzed Obama’s presidency to explain the answer. Transformational presidents all begin by repudiating their predecessor. In this example, Obama rose to power, first by writing a book, The Audacity of Hope created an outline of how he hoped to change the public philosophy of Reagan’s legacy. Chapter by chapter, Obama repudiated the result of tax cut policies, particularly, George W. Bush’s tax cuts. In addition he attacked the very basis of Reagan’s “Government is not the solution of our problem; government is the problem”. (Obama, p. 147). Throughout his chapter on “Opportunity”, Obama explained how government had provided solutions to dilemmas such as the need for infrastructure, inequality, and

Depressions that require public spending, Keynesian economics and welfare policies. In his chapter on opportunity, Obama proposed changes in health care that

explored an outline of his transformational and progressive health policy, The Affordable Care Act. Obama also in his book about changing the public philosophy

he discussed an outline for repudiating the nature of Reagan’s policies of enhancing capitalism. Reagan’s legacy fundamentally embraced laissez-faire. Obama repudiated this philosophy that required that government should not interfere by regulating markets. Obama wrote that “. . . anyone who would challenge it swims against the prevailing tide.” (Obama, 150). While free market capitalism has benefitted individuals, the role of government must act in order to improve any flaws.

Obama came to power by repudiating his predecessor’s invasion of Iraq, the first time the United States unjustifiably attacked another country. Also, Bush had committed an invasion without providing taxing authority to finance the war. Obama declared during the campaign for the Democratic nomination that he had,

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unlike his primary opponent Hillary Clinton, opposed the Senate agreement to authorize war.

Obama challenged Reagan’s public philosophy, but it is not clear that he has repudiated Reagan’s inaugural, that government is not the solution. Obama has provided a solution to ending the Great Recession. But, whether he has provided an alternative statement that will change the public philosophy will be the most signicant question to answer in answering whether Obama has repudiated or changed Reagan’s public philosophy.

Transformative leaders in strengthening their proposed leadership positions strengthen their parties. Evidence for enhancing his party requires determining if Obama has changed his base in any measurable way. To answer this question, it is necessary to analyze how he was initially elected in 2008. Were there any changes in

he coalitions that have elected Democratic Presidents. Obama strengthened the Democratic party by increasing support among women and younger voters. Unlike the Reagan election in 1980, there was no dealignment of the coalitions that had elected Reagan. Obama has failed to strengthen the Democratic party.

Transformative leaders utilize opportunities to exercise leadership. In comparison

with President Reagan, Obama exercised leadership in asking Congress to expand policies to end the Great Recession. Curt Nichols has expanded on Reagan’s budgetary battles with Congress. (Nichols, “Reagan Reorders the Political Regime:

A Historical-Institutional Approach to Change”).

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Skowronek also questioned, in comparing Obama's presidency with Reagan's, whether it was still possible to have another transformative president. To be transformative, a president must in all cases maintain repudiative authority. Has Obama's administration repudiated Reagan's?

Skowronek in questioning whether it is still possible for a president to achieve transformative status analyzed the initial phase of Obama's presidency by explaining the criteria that he believed must be achieved and then contrasted with Reagans's.

Skowronek discussed the process of how presidents attain becoming transformative through repudiation. All reconstructive leaders create a new national purpose through a series of steps in discovering a “new national unity” that repudiates the predecessor’s. Steps needed to form such a vision require changing the existing political system

Curt Nichols, in several articles has explained Showronek’s analysis of the “reconstructive model of leadership” to explain transformational leadership. (“The Presidency and the Politial Ordeer: In context”, 2011).

Nichols reviewed presidential research in separating three different interpretations of the role of the president in “political time”, beginning with Neustadt’s *Presidential Power* that defined the “reform-minded tradition”. This stage created “. . . personalized explanations for presidential success or failure. . .” (Nichols, op.cit., p., 5) Has Obama repudiated Reagan's significant policies and ideology?

Reagan developed his presidency by repudiating New Deal policies, most significantly, ending entitlement and welfare. Obama reversed Reagan’s challenge to welfare by revolutionizing healthcare through the Affordable Care Act. This policy allowed delivery of health care to individuals who previously for various reasons were unable to afford health care. This Affordable Care Act revolutionized health care entitlements.

In addition, Obama has repudiated increases in military spending through changing military spending in relation to social spending. As evidenced by the creation of the

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Tea Party, Reagan's legacy continues. The Tea Party has together with Republicans controlling the House after 2010 and now dominant in the Senate have blocked Obama's policy initiatives and continue during the 2010, 2012 and 2014 elections to propose reducing taxes and protesting the growth of governme What is the basis of defining a legacy? The definition follows from presidential scholars who agree that there have been transformative presidentwho reconstruct through party building by bringing in new groups and rearranging new alliances.