Presidents and Political Time
• We’ve looked at presidents as individuals - Now,

• How much can a president really control, no matter *what* his strengths and skills?

• How much can a leader – or anyone – determine outcomes, and how much is he the prisoner of circumstances?

• How do *circumstances* affect political leadership?
All New Presidents Disrupt Politics

• The presidential oath:
• "I do solemnly swear (or affirm)
• that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States,
• and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."
This is an oath to **uphold** political order,
and to **shatter** it, too,
by exercising executive power
- Recommending new legislation
- Making new treaties
- Appointing new judges, ambassadors, and administrators
- Defending the union against new threats
“To reverse and undo what has been done by a predecessor is very often considered by a successor as the very best proof he can give of his own capacity and desert;

and in addition to this propensity, where the alteration has been as the result of public choice,

the person substituted is warranted in supposing that the dismissal of his predecessor has proceeded from a dislike to his measures,

and that the less he resembles him the more he will recommend himself to the favor of his constituents.”

Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist*, Number 72
Therefore a newly elected president has a warrant – that is, authority – to disrupt existing politics and policy.
• When the new president is from a different party from the old one, obviously he’s expected to take policy and politics in a new direction.
• But each president is standing at a different place in history—sometimes he takes over from a party that’s still popular, and sometimes he takes over from a president of his own party.

• “If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it.”

Abraham Lincoln
Springfield, Illinois, 1858
• For some presidents, the agenda is clear –
• When you succeed a president of the other party, do things differently from your predecessor

• Promise a “New Deal,” or a “New Frontier,” or a “New Dawn of Freedom”
The “Time for a Change” factor in presidential elections

Political Scientist Alan I. Abramowitz:

• “Since WW II there have been 7 presidential elections in which a party had held the White House for just one term. The incumbent party's candidate won 6 out of 7 (only Carter lost) with an average popular vote margin of 11.6 percent.

• There have been 8 elections in which a party had held the White House for two terms or more. The incumbent party's candidate won only 2 and lost 6 with an average popular vote margin of -0.9 percent.”

• “… there is about a 5 point penalty if you've held the White House for 8 years or longer”
• What kind of an election will 2008 be?
• Pew Research Center Poll, October, 2005

PEW RESEARCH CENTER POLL
"Looking ahead to the next presidential election, would you like to see a president who offers policies and programs similar to those of the Bush Administration, or would you like to see a president who offers different policies and programs?"

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Similar</th>
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<tr>
<td>All</td>
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<td>31%</td>
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<td>West</td>
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www.pollingreport.com
• *But* even if the new president succeeds a president someone from his own party, he going to want to take things in a different direction.
• Like the most highly rated president you’ve heard the least about, James K. Polk
Four Types of Circumstances in Which Presidents Find Themselves

- So presidents do not start from scratch – they come into office in existing situations
- These situations differ in two important ways:
  1. whether the existing political order is strong or weak, and
  2. whether they are affiliated with that order or opposed to it.
Four types of circumstances for new presidents

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Weak Political Order</th>
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<td>President is affiliated with the existing political order</td>
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<tr>
<td>President is opposed to the existing political order</td>
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#1: The Politics of Reconstruction

note: this does not mean “Reconstruction” Policy after the Civil War – it means “rebuilding”)

- Occurs when the existing political order is weak and vulnerable,
- and the president is from the opposing party
- The new president comes to the rescue, and reconstructs American politics
Today, Andrew Jackson looks over the President’s shoulder, outside the White House
Circumstances in Which Presidents Find Themselves

#1: The Politics of Reconstruction

Examples:

– Thomas Jefferson
– Andrew Jackson
– Abraham Lincoln
– Franklin D. Roosevelt
– Ronald Reagan

theses presidents all are considered as “great” or “very successful”
Circumstances in Which Presidents Find Themselves

#1: The Politics of Reconstruction

Connect the dots:

• **Political Parties:**
  Reconstruction presidents are associated with realignments

• **Interest Groups:**
  Reconstruction presidents are associated with “collaborative breakthrough politics” (Tichenor)
Circumstances in Which Presidents Find Themselves

#2: The Politics of Affiliation

- Occur when the existing political order is strong,
- and the president is from the same party

The “faithful son”
The “faithful son”

Examples:

• James Madison (affiliated with Jefferson’s politics)
• James K. Polk (affiliated with Jackson’s politics)
• Theodore Roosevelt (affiliated with McKinley’s politics)
• Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson (affiliated with FD Roosevelt’s politics)
• George W. Bush (affiliated with Reagan’s politics)
• These presidents’ elections depends on some of the voters who elected a predecessor of the same party

• These presidents are in a different place in history than presidents who defeat an incumbent from the other party
• These presidents, who succeed presidents from the same political party, are much more restricted in using the presidency to change the existing political order.

• They have to argue that rearticulate the existing politics and policy at a higher level of achievement.
A higher level of achievement:

• Polk, Jackson’s faithful son:
  Complete Manifest Destiny with the southwest and northwest
• Lyndon Johnson, Roosevelt’s faithful son:
  Complete the New Deal with health care, a war on poverty and civil rights
• George W. Bush, Reagan’s faithful son:
  Even larger tax cuts, add faith-based initiatives
Circumstances in Which Presidents Find Themselves

#3: The Politics of Disjunction

- Occurs when the existing political order is weak and vulnerable,
- and the president is from the same party as the president who established the political order
- He’s stuck in a potentially hopeless situation
Circumstances in Which Presidents Find Themselves

#3: The Politics of Disjunction

- John Adams (affiliated with Washington’s politics)
- Martin Van Buren, Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan (affiliated with Jackson’s politics)
- Herbert Hoover (affiliated with the Republican politics of 1896)
- Jimmy Carter (affiliated with Roosevelt’s politics)

*these presidents all are viewed as unsuccessful*
Circumstances in Which Presidents Find Themselves

#4: The Politics of Preemption

• Occurs when the existing political order is strong,
• and the president is from the opposing party

• The new president is out of step with established politics and policy
Circumstances in Which Presidents Find Themselves

#4: The Politics of Preemption

Examples:
- Andrew Johnson (out of step with Lincoln’s politics)
- Woodrow Wilson (out of step with Republican politics of 1896)
- Richard Nixon (out of step with Roosevelt’s politics)
- Bill Clinton (out of step with Reagan’s politics)

Note: 2 were impeached, and 1 resigned under threat of impeachment
George W. Bush in Political Time

"You know, I think if I had to have a mentor . . . it would have been Ronald Reagan."

George W. Bush, C-Span interview, 2005
President George W. Bush as Faithful (Political) Son

President Bush at the Reagan Library, Oct 21, 2005
President Bush’s Remarks at the dedication of the Air Force One exhibit at the Reagan Library, October 21, 2005

• “It's appropriate that this symbol of American strength and resilience and optimism has come to rest at the library that bears Ronald Reagan's name.

• After all, it was President Reagan who always reminded us that when we set our eyes on the horizon, every day is ‘morning in America.’”
“Because of Ronald Reagan's leadership, America prevailed in the 20th century's great struggle of wills.
And now in this new century, our freedom is once again being tested by determined enemies.
The terrorists who attacked us on September the 11th, 2001, are followers of a radical and violent ideology. ...
These extremists distort the idea of jihad into a call for terrorist murder against Christians and Jews and Hindus, and against Muslims from other traditions who they regard as heretics.”
“Like the ideology of communism, our new enemy is elitist, led by a self-appointed vanguard of Islamic militants that presume to speak for the Muslim masses.

Like the ideology of communism, our new enemy teaches that the innocent can be murdered to serve a political vision.

Like the ideology of communism, our new enemy pursues totalitarian aims.

Like the ideology of communism, our new enemy is dismissive of free peoples, claiming that men and women who live in liberty are weak and decadent.

And like the ideology of communism, Islamic radicalism is doomed to fail.”
The end
and the beginning