NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY

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sample chapter

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New Challenges for the American Presidency

Philip John Davies

All presidents come under intense scrutiny, but the administration of George
W. Bush was always likely to draw particular attention. Part of the reason for this is
little more than the accident of timing. The constitutional provision for quadrennial
elections means that every new century will open with a presidential election and
inauguration. The turn of a century is always likely to imbue the coincident
presidential election and administration with a particular significance, or at least to put
them under a particularly powerful microscope. Centenaries prompt significant
celebrations, and fire more than usual hopes and expectations. It would not be
surprising if centennial political leaders felt more than the usual pressure of civic,
economic and political aspiration from the public and the polity.

In 1801 President Thomas Jefferson became the second of the “Virginia
dynasty” that occupied the executive office from the first presidency for the best part
of a generation, challenged before 1828 only by the Massachusetts father and son
team of John Adams and John Quincy Adams. The 1800 election was remarkable in
many ways. Adams lost, to become the first one-term president. Jefferson and his
running mate Burr received exactly the same number of Electoral College votes,
throwing the election into the House of Representatives. The House, with one vote
per delegation, sat through the night, and took thirty-six ballots before choosing, in
Alexander Hamilton’s words, “the lesser evil,” in Thomas Jefferson. The tie was an
unanticipated consequence of the growth of political organisation, and the remarkable
party discipline that was achieved among Jefferson’s supporters. The demonstration of political success was a significant step in the continuing development of political party structures. The tie also caused enough consternation to prompt the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution, ensuring that a parallel, but separate, elections process would produce future presidents and vice presidents.

Jefferson’s administration led the US into new century in which national expansion and international recognition became central to the country’s being. Having once been concerned about the potential centralisation of authority in the new nation’s constitution, Jefferson nevertheless grasped the potential that lay in the Executive office to promote the national destiny. The century’s first president’s commissioning of the Lewis and Clark expedition and execution of the Louisiana Purchase were just part of the momentum from his administration that helped propel the fledgling nation through the century towards national consolidation and international significance.

The turn of the next century did not bring a new president, since in 1901 William McKinley returned to the office he had entered first in 1897. This was nonetheless a momentous time in the nation’s politics. McKinley’s election campaigns featured spending on a scale not matched by any candidate again until Hardings’ 1920 campaign, and not exceeded consistently by both major party candidates until the 1950s. The expenditure underpinned a centrally managed and strongly organised approach brought to Republican party campaign politics by McKinley’s manager, Mark Hanna. Skilled political management and deep pockets notwithstanding, Hanna’s warnings that “there’s only one life between this madman
and the White House” did not succeed in keeping Theodore Roosevelt from the vice presidency, and when McKinley was assassinated in September 1901 the nation moved on from this tragedy with the ebullient Roosevelt at the helm.

The opening administration of the twentieth century, faced by high expectations of economic development, worries about the power of concentrated capital, contentious debates about trade isolationism, controversies about war and intervention in other nations, concerns about its appropriate place in world affairs, had to tackle these issues both within the party and more broadly on the national scene. The result was not always tidy, but Republican national strength was relatively well maintained for a further generation, and the foundation was set for what was to become labelled the “American Century.”

The opening of the twenty-first century was a time when the debate about the nation’s role in the world was again paramount, confidence in the economic underpinnings of domestic policy making was again threatened, and the battle between the major US political parties for potential long term advantage was at its most intense. Coming out of the “American Century” automatically begs the question, who or what symbolises the century upcoming. Furthermore, the nation was not just celebrating the turn of a century, but the turn of a millennium, and satellite distributed television made sure that this was a global event.

The first presidential election of the twenty-first century produced a result carrying less clarity and conviction than anyone would have hoped, although the general acceptance of the decision, with all its flaws and imprecision, is, unless it has cynically to be put down to the political apathy of the US public, a testament to a
shared belief in the peaceful transfer of power in democracies. It was widely touted that the new president had no mandate, and the fact that his losing opponent had received the support more than half a million more US voters seemed to make this pretty clear. President-elect Bush made a conscious effort to acknowledge the intensity of the contest that had put him in office, and at least in his initial statements after being awarded the victory, to stress his wish to reach out to a broad spectrum of political leaders, and a broad coalition of the politically interested public.

The challenges faced at this time were significant, even in the quiet early days of the presidency. Conducting national politics looking towards a broad-based coalition was always going to be difficult for a national Republican leader at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In the first two years of the Eisenhower presidency the Republican had paper-thin control of both chambers in the national legislature. That apart, the GOP had not occupied both legislative chambers and the presidency since the presidency of Herbert Hoover. Having suffered the overwhelming dominance of the Democrats for one generation, there had been a feeling among many Republican activists that the period since the late 1960s had seen a series of wasted and thwarted opportunities for the Republican party to take control of the agencies of government, and of the policy agenda. The margin of victory in 2000 was modest not just at the executive level, but also in the US House of Representatives, where just a handful of seats separated the parties, and in the US Senate, where the vice president’s casting vote gave the Republicans control. All that having been said, the Republican party contained activist groups strongly committed to shifting national policy agendas, who had waited a long time for this opportunity, and who were in no
mood to compromise. It would take a skilful leader to negotiate successfully between these pressures.

The broader context presented potential difficulties too. After a Clinton presidency which benefited from economic growth indicators more consistently positive than in any period of US history, there were indications even during the campaign that the boom was not going to turn into a new economics of constant growth. By spring 2001 the stock market was showing distinct weakness, especially in those high technology industries that some had predicted would become the unbridled engine of a new communications, economic and business revolution. It was already unclear whether the new administration could deliver on its promises of tax cuts without undermining the bipartisan commitment that had emerged in the 1990s to avoid the regular annual budget overspending that had been typical of much of the last half century.

With an apparently modest national electoral foundation, a party coalition that included influential elements pushing for radical changes, and a weakening economic background, the challenge of fulfilling millennial expectations appeared to demand a leader with more than usual political skills and eloquence. Reactions to George W. Bush’s early attempts to fill this role were often not generous, suggesting that many critics thought this Texan was not growing to fill the presidential office that he had taken. Judgments were inevitably partisan, as decisions that seemed rational and pragmatic to conservative Republican supporters were received as isolationist and backward looking by those liberals who had hoped for policy framed within the terms of the bipartisan rhetoric of late 2000. In practice the new administration took firm
and partisan political stances that might have been more expected from a president with a substantial electoral victory, than one coming to office amid electoral controversy. The most grievous damage suffered by the Republicans was the loss, within months, of their grip on the US Senate, and Senator Jeffords of Vermont declared himself independent of party affiliation, and returned the tiniest of controlling margins to the Democrats. At this time many in the party, the nation, and the international audience were unconvinced that President Bush was the leader who could successfully face the clear challenges of the new millennium.

All of these challenges pale in the wake of the attacks of September 11th, 2001. Although the immediate response of the executive to these attacks was not convincing, it was not long before the presidential team appeared to be assessing the remodelled landscape of challenges, and devising strategy they felt appropriate. The problems that the Bush presidency had formerly faced did not go away. For example, the stock market slide had been well established in the summer, but it steepened in the fall, and continued at various rates of acceleration through 2002 and into 2003. In December 2001 the nation saw its biggest ever bankruptcy centred in Texas, as Enron collapsed. In spring 2002 the bankruptcy record was beaten again by the implosion of WorldCom, and the reputation of the internationally respected accounting firm Arthur Andersen was so tarnished that this icon of US financial probity and power was damaged beyond repair.

These huge commercial failures might have been interpreted as indications of severe and structural economic problems, but in a country increasingly focused on the threat of international terrorism, their political impact was more limited than might
otherwise have been the case. The economy was taking a beating on many fronts, and some of this at least could be laid at the door of the attacks. Reconstruction and support were needed certainly in New York City and Washington DC, but also in the airline industry and other key locations. Reservations about budget deficits fell away in face of the inevitable and necessary costs of being visibly responsive to perceived threats and consequent public needs. The tight party political balance, especially in the Senate, became less relevant as the agenda shifted to one driven by the nation’s reaction to shocking terrorist attack, and led by the executive.

The administration made the case for a “War on Terror.” Although this might have captured the American public mood, it created problems for policy makers and practitioners. The enemy in this war is difficult to define, its motivation may not be geopolitical, and its location may not be defined by national borders, or in any way geographically. US arguments linking together elements of military intelligence pinpointed the Taliban regime of Afghanistan for special attention in a way that much of the global community found convincing. The further step of identifying Iraq as a threat so considerable as to justify an invasion found a much smaller level of international support, and leaders in Spain and the United Kingdom who gave support found themselves out of step with their electorates on this issue.

The US electorate had no such difficulty, and the 2002 mid term election campaign, in which the president took an active part, produced a swing to the Republicans consolidating its majority in the US House of Representatives, and taking clear control of the US Senate. For the first time in seventy-five years the Republicans could anticipate the possibility of more than one congressional term with
party control of both legislative chambers and the executive. Party activists were again able to polish the vision that this might be the beginning of a long and steady era of Republican success.

That possibility still relies on convincing the electorate that the Republican executive can face the new challenges of this twenty-first century, as remodelled by the national shock prompted by the terrorism of September 11th, 2001. The economic pressures on the American economy have increased in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. An economy that was already weakening has taken further hard knocks in such areas as air travel and aero engineering. Commitments to balanced budgets, and to inviolability of certain government funds, have weakened in the face of the spending priorities of a re-energised national commitment to militarised defence and pre-emption. The executive relationship with the legislature has been simplified by Republican party gains, but checks, balance, and the debating practices of the US Senate, make sure that the president is still in no position to ignore the courtesy of some negotiation with his legislative colleagues.

Richard Neustadt explores the notion that even within the complex of changing institutional and issue-based challenges that best them, presidents can themselves create, enlarge or exacerbate challenges for their own and at least the immediately subsequent administrations. The first administration of the new century failed to start smoothly not just because of the weak vote held by the Bush administration, but also by the weakness of character in taking office. The transition period was disfigured by an administration managing to appear “almost paranoid”, claims Neustadt. The rhetoric of the War on Terror is potentially mistaken, in landing an American public
that hates long wars with one that is by definition lengthy and unsatisfyingly ragged in its definition. The pre-emptive action of that War also place the administration in a difficult position in the long run, especially if, as Neustadt suspects, the dynamic behind the policy is coming from a political group of intense ideology, but modest size, who will eventually lose the support that they need. Meanwhile the former president, still young enough to take an active political role, and still charismatic enough to draw support, remains part of the political landscape. If Neustadt is right, then the next president, as well as the current president, faces challenges based on these factors.

Presidential strategy, George Edwards quotes Richard Neustadt as saying, is “not how he masters Congress in a peculiar instance, but what he does to boost his chance for mastery in any instance”. George Bush needed a strategy that would cope with his lack of a popular plurality in the election of 2000. Edwards credits the president with a bold perception that taking his case to the people would succeed, and that successfully going public, would bring the legislature along on the major policy aims of the administration. The strategy has not created a string of unalloyed policy victories, but given the limited credibility of the early days of the presidency, the Bush administration’s success in setting the policy agenda, pushing the envelope of policy demands, compromising pragmatically on results, and declaring an administration policy victory, draws favourable comment. The percentage results in terms of legislation are good, but the image of success, and of connection with the electorate that is generated by the administration is possibly more powerful even than the actual results. The mid-term elections provided an opportunity for the president
to help convert this potential into real muscle, and the resulting Republican victories, while not huge, were enough to add the value of numbers to the pre-existing strategic approach taken by the administration. Strategy notwithstanding, the frustrations of influencing the other branch remain real for the modern presidency, and in the end it may take a larger party majority to change this state of affairs dramatically.

The President has thrust upon him the role of “teacher in charge” claims Marc Landy, and the lessons to be learned about the changed international context and role of America are considerable, and not necessarily welcome. Countries act in their own self-interest, possibly counter to historical precedent, and not necessarily with great universal values as their ultimate end. It is a lesson to be learned that other countries, as well as the USA, choose to take this approach. Landy echoes a point made elsewhere in this volume by Calvin Mackenzie, that when the enemy is real but indistinct, no surrender can be obtained, and the time frame of difficult and unpleasant consequences for the nation can be extended indefinitely - indicating the necessity of further executive lead training for the public to be prepared for the long haul.

Understanding of the international context, forces, and peoples is an important part of this learning process, but this understanding is strengthened by the awareness of a presidency willing able to act decisively in the proclaimed cause of national security. While nineteenth and twentieth century presidents have “fed false hopes and impossible dreams” there is a high risk in continuing to use “false sentimentalism” in this educative process. Opponents cannot always be presented as grotesques, military might is not impregnable in every case, victory is rarely complete, and the way that international politics is shaping up in the twenty-first century suggests that
the presidency faces a new challenge in educating the American citizenry to a new a understanding of these realities.

Martha Joynt Kumar confirms that President Bush himself interprets his role at least to some degree as Landy has typified it, as a ‘teacher’ to the nation. Kumar reports that the President stated to others his own conviction that post September 11th he now had an important role in “educating the American people about the nature of this conflict.” That this event demanded a focused communications strategy is without doubt, and that the White House rallied to the needs of the moment, at least fairly quickly, is also evident. But as Kumar points out, a communications strategy is an essential part of any administration’s armoury, having one ‘is not a matter of choice’. The tension between political actors and news reporters is centuries old. The essential interplay in which politicians attempt to influence, even control, the distribution of information, and news gatherers attempt to get the information and stories that they need, continues daily. The technological changes of contemporary news gathering have put political administrations everywhere under greater scrutiny, and nowhere is this more than in open and pluralist democracies. No administration wants unpleasant surprises in the news, and all administrations prefer positive coverage. Mass communications provide the executive with an opportunity to connect with a nation of voters, rather than a handful of politicians. But the strategy devised to do this must play to the strengths of the incumbent, acknowledging the potential pitfalls, as well as the concurrent advantages presented by the burgeoning communications business.
Meanwhile inside the Beltway, partisan polarization in the US Congress continues apace, according to the analysis offered by Barbara Sinclair. The decline in partisanship that was very evident in congressional voting patterns immediately following September 2001 certainly was in part a rallying reaction on all sides to support the nation and the president. But it also reflected the issues that flew up the agenda in these weeks and months. Terrorism, reactions to terror, budgetary decisions to meet the expense of confronting terror, all came to the fore, and there was little in the way of strong partisan division on these and other issues directly relating to the perceived threats to the USA. However Sinclair points out that “on issues beyond terrorism, the effect on the level of partisanship was relatively short-lived,” the 107th Congress went on to be “about as partisan as its immediate predecessors. Voting decisions in the US House and Senate on most issues, and even on some terror-related issues, followed patterns of behaviour and influence well-established in the legislature. Any president has a careful negotiating job to undertake in the checked and balanced US system, and this is no less true in the early twenty-first century. A continuing and substantial shift in party political dominance in the legislature would make a difference, and Republicans may well be hoping that there is the potential for this to happen. In that case partisan strength across institutional boundaries would appear to create presidential opportunities, but would face the executive with different problems of negotiation with the factions of his own supporters. In either case, the traditional challenge to gather and use powers of persuasion remains very evident in the modern presidency.
Pointing out that the legislative component of the modern presidency “was not designed to be easy nor has it been for contemporary presidents,” Stephen Wayne goes on to point out that the twenty-first century presidency started in the conventional way. The challenge of the legislative process was “conditioned by the partisan, political environment, persistent institutional rivalries, and the public and congressional expectations set by the campaign” - factors which themselves change over time, but which weave through the space where presidential persuasion meets legislative process. The conventional success that a new president can expect in imposing his agenda on Congress was fulfilled reasonably well, and the disadvantage of divided government after Senator Jeffords’ defection from Republican ranks was counterbalanced legislatively by the congressional rally to the presidency after September 2001. Challenges remain nonetheless. The partisan shade of Congress will have substantial effect on the nature of this challenge over time. A president who can lead the party to dominance in the legislature as well as the executive may be fortunate enough to become “a prime minister with a partisan majority” while administrations facing divided control of government are tempted to short-circuit the system, increasing tension. In all cases the skill of the president in judging correctly all elements of the political etiquette that determines executive-legislative relations inside the Beltway.

Congressional partisanship also plays a major part in John Owens’ analysis of executive-legislative relationships in start-of-the-century Washington. But here the discussion draws the reader to examine the challenges in terms of the lessons to be learned from the differing reactions, leadership styles, and strategies of the major
players in Congress during this period – Speaker Dennis Hastert, and Senate Majority Leaders Trent Lott and Bill Frist, and all within the context of the sometimes startling leadership heritage left by former Speaker Newt Gingrich. Leadership decision-making, Owens clearly demonstrates, is conducted within a web of influences – partisan balance, elections results, public opinion, personal policy agendas just being a few. Nonetheless the modern leaders are no corks bobbing about in the maelstrom of influences, and nor are they sophisticated calculators, capable of finding and shifting to the balance point of a web whose strands might make the view opaque to the politically less perceptive. They are actors in their own right, and the choices of strategy, timing, and direction that they make are significant independent forces in the Washington decision-making process. Their judgements can make the president’s role easier, but will not always do so.

In other arenas too, the domestic scene may be no less problematical after the turn of the century than it was before. Robert McKeever quotes Senator John Cornyn’s reference to “the broken judicial confirmation process” in his analysis of the challenge faced by the presidency early in the twenty-first century in making federal judicial appointments. The judicial appointments process has become highly politicized, on ideological lines, over the past generation, as the courts have increasingly become a major location for battles over policies concerning social welfare and cultural behaviour, as well as the ever contentious areas of institutional and political demarcation. Some parallelism in party approaches to developing foreign policy approaches does not suggest any similar bipartisanship of views on the domestic scene where, suggests McKeever, it is partisan politics as usual. The
eventual re-emergence of a period of one party dominance would be one way forward, but failing this, a president wishing to pack the courts might look to McKeever’s seven-step plan. A Republican president representing a party containing strongly ideological forces, may find it difficult to follow McKeever’s advice.

Presidential personality makes a difference in facing the challenges of the modern presidency, and James Pfiffner detects in George W. Bush leadership skills that have overcome significant disadvantages, and considerable unexpected difficulties. The president’s moral certainty provided firmness of direction in the early days of his term, when he appeared to have no electoral mandate, and later, when the administration needed to create a response to the altered shape of international politics. His tendency to action helped create a military response that the US public appeared to find satisfying and appropriate. His personalisation of politics created opportunities and problems in international relations. The talents brought by Bush to the executive may have suited the moment, but are not generically beneficial, and do not form an automatically successful strategy for the modern presidency. The personality that the president brings to the executive can itself become part of the challenge.

This personalisation in the operation of the executive is significant also in John Hart’s examination of the Bush approach to national security policy and policy-making institutions. Hart reports that Bush has asserted that “All of [these institutions] must be transformed,” but in Hart’s judgement this transformation has not yet proven its adequacy in facing modern challenges. More players are involved in the system, but it is not clear to the author that the re-jigged NSC is constructed in
a way that helps the delivery of national security strategies that are being mapped and
developed to take the USA into the twenty-first century. Hart proposes
functionally-based directorates, a reduced staff, and more globally focussed approach
as being particularly relevant to modern challenges. But he also returns to the notion
of presidential individuality, and especially to the strong impression given that
President Bush allows his instincts to play an active role in many policy areas,
including national security.

As Calvin Mackenzie points out “no nation is the same at the end of the war
as it was at the beginning - nor is any arrangement of authority or power.” While he
insists, quite rightly, that there are many unknowns when trying to evaluate the
impact of the this conflict that the Bush administration has nominated as a war on
terrorism, he draws inferences both from its parallels to, and its differences with, the
last century of wars that have been faced by the USA. The lack of a geopolitical
enemy means that unconventional difficulties exist in pinpointing the site of the war,
the population who are the enemy, and the methods of attack or defence. The
motivations of the enemy are difficult to express in traditional geopolitical terms, and
if the precise start of any war can be a matter of debate, the inability to gain a
traditional surrender in the absence of a traditional military or political leadership
structure, creates the problem of never quite knowing when it is over. The war on
terrorism may therefore become intimately integrated into vast areas of American
domestic as well as foreign policy. Agency funding in many areas might be affected,
as risk and security strategy impact widely on American life. The emergence of this
‘battleground very close to home’ creates potentially “the frame and the
rationalization for the greatest enlargement of presidential power in American history”, while simultaneously opening the door to the political failure if expensive and grand gesture politics gains few results, or, even worse, fails to prevent further terrorist attacks of appalling magnitude. Twenty-first century presidents have to face these challenges as part of the reality of their administrations.

In tackling the unanticipated consequences of these new leaps in policy Richard Pious considers the twenty-first century presidency is in danger of placing an over-reliance on “prerogative power” that is potentially unsustainable over time. Precisely those unintended consequences that concern Calvin Mackenzie can undermine the expansion of presidential authority and legitimacy at home and abroad that Pious sees as necessary underpinnings for the increased presidential prerogative that has already been seen in the early years of the new century. The defence in a war against terrorism cannot be expected to be complete in its coverage, even given measures comprehensive enough to strain America’s constitutional boundaries. Crisis could be created by the institutional and policy strains. Backlash could develop, undermining the foundations of growing presidential claims of authority. Countering that, it is possible that the context of the new century is so altered that a newly enhanced presidency can emerge, not forever expanding the prerogatives of executive power, but skilled enough to take on the challenge of compromising the gains that have been made, with the realpolitik of acting within an established network of political relationships at home and abroad.

Responding to a heightened perception of the international threats to the United States with a doctrine of pre-emptive military action would seem, superficially
at least, to be a fairly simple and comprehensible reaction. It is not surprising, furthermore that some observers would consider the rhetoric of pre-emption more destabilising than comforting. Nevertheless, what John Dumbrell calls the “elemental” quality of the rhetoric is going to be strike a chord with listening publics at home and abroad. This apparently simple statement of doctrine though does take the presidency into areas ringing with complexity. Dumbrell concludes that the Bush administration has extended presidential foreign policy authority considerably, but as he documents, this has not been a tidal wave of unilateralism signalling a victory for the neoconservative imperialist policy agenda. Rather the pragmatics of policy making and its implementation has had to take account of sometimes disjointed and countervailing interests. Domestically the challenges faced by the president in reconciling competing voices within his own administration, and in gaining the co-operation and support of congress, did not disappear after the September Al-Qaeda attack, but they became temporarily less relevant. Internationally the reaction was unilateral, but stimulated a greater recognition, at least in rhetorical terms, of the value of multilateral co-operation if national threat is increasingly seen as potentially emerging from all parts of the world, and as being embedded in threats to values in all parts of the world. Not all attacks are as obvious as that of September 11th, and not all unilaterally driven reactions are generally acceptable. The challenge of continuing to grapple with this complexity while dealing with competing interests that tend to elemental visions will continue to be a challenges for an executive regardless of the apparent growth of its foreign policy authority.
The authors in this volume address the new landscape of challenges faced by the executive in the range of roles that the president performs. In a nation commonly thought of as having political parties of relatively weak ideological commitment, the president of the early Twenty-first Century finds himself trying to maintain a leadership role in a national legislature with the tightest party cohesion in decades. The particular skills needed by a party leader and national leader in this context of party tension, division over policy, potential confrontation over court appointments, yet with a bedrock of common commitment to some national needs, form one part of the content of this volume.

A president who was initially identified and criticised by many international observers as isolationist in nature has emerged to take a major and very active international role, but in a way that has proved not without controversy. The altered challenges in the president’s roles as chief executive and commander in chief made by the demands of a war on terror provide the focus for several of the authors in this volume. Their multi-faceted coverage of the tasks and the observed and potential executive reaction examine the reaction to, doctrinal basis for, implementation of, and the implications for the future conduct of a potentially permanent war.

Presidents of character, and presidents living through interesting times, often themselves leave a legacy that forms part of the challenge for succeeding administrations. The administrations of President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush are both likely to leave stamps of this kind. The construction of challenge becomes to some degree circular, as an administration’s response to external and internal challenges, guided by the character and leadership of the incumbent, redefines
the way that challenges will be faced in the future. The authors of this volume provide a most valuable examination of the current, new and emerging challenges for the modern presidency.

This volume originated from an idea floated by Professors Gary McDowell, then of the Institute for US Studies (IUSS) at the University of London, and David Nichols of Montclair State University. The IUSS partnered with the Eccles Centre for American Studies at the British Library to host a two-day meeting that brought together the international team of authors who are represented in this collection. The meeting, held at the British Library in London, attracted participants and audience members from political parties, government, journalism, and business, as well as academe. The discussions over those two days informed strongly the final form that this collection took. The thanks of the authors and editors go particularly to the Institute for US Studies, and to the Eccles Centre for American Studies, for their central role in sponsoring the event, and also to everyone who took part, and gave generous support and creative feedback.

These authors have produced a range of discussion, analysis, and argument that encourages the reader to view the modern presidency from a variety of perspectives. The collection shows that the presidency continues to play a central role in American government. The challenges that have faced President George W. Bush have been extraordinary and understanding these challenges is essential to understanding American politics and public policy. The office carries authority, but not automatic power. The personnel in the executive branch, and the political contexts within which they work, matter fundamentally. Contemporary
undergraduate and postgraduate students undertaking courses on the presidency are
well aware through their own life experience that the leadership of the United States
faces special, and in some cases dramatically new, challenges both at home and
abroad. These essays provide the intellectual frameworks through which that
experience and knowledge can be most usefully explored. The authors provide the
most contemporary analyses of the presidency, all expertly presented to inform and
stimulate all students of the modern American presidency.