Regime, Routine, and Initiative in the American Presidency*

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Abstract: This paper develops a formal theory of presidential delegation. It emphasizes three theoretical elements: constitutional regime, executive routine, and individual commitment. In this model, the president and a single subordinate make choices about how much effort to invest in pursuing a policy outcome. The president has control over whether the Executive engages and who takes the initiative. The theory comports with the data from a large simulation used to test six operational expectations. It estimates the potential for executive unity of purpose as a defense against legislative power. It also proposes an operational solution to organizational continuity and suggests a routine designed to bolster it, a routine that clarifies the often cited notion of the presidential “vision thing.”

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When the founders settled on a “singular” presidency for their new constitution, they chose an institutional setting for institutional reasons. Both the New Jersey and Virginia plans proposed an executive branch overseen by a committee — by a legislative institution. That both these storied proposals agreed on a legislative form for the executive attests to its familiarity. The founders had initiated their revolution from legislative berths; most had only experienced the revolutionary governments as representatives [Wood]; and, their other constitutional choices had relied on legislative forms in the other two branches. Whatever dynamics these institutions would eventually develop, deliberation among nominal equals, decisions through voting, reliance on agendas, majorities and minorities, etc. derived from the founders’ original, comfortable choices. So, given this context, deciding to create a singular presidency constituted a signal constitutional choice, one destined to invoke different institutional dynamics. What institutional dynamics might affect the presidency, where nominal equality, decisions through voting, and the rest, cannot exist by design?

The leading advocate for this alternate tack on the executive, James Wilson, suggested one executive dynamic when he characterized the new presidency as evoking “unity of purpose;” the blending of primary and derivative authorities into a common pursuit [Madison]. By the time Wilson’s argument had matured into The Federalist Papers, Alexander Hamilton [#71; #72] paired that precept with his assumption about political motivation, the “love of fame.” Hamilton argued the combination of institutional unity and personal ambition would generate the institutional wherewithal necessary not only to realize the presidency’s prerogatives but also to protect it from likely legislative encroachments and to assure national stability. Hence, James Wilson’s unity of purpose represents a central institutional dynamic of presidential government.

Yet, political theory knows almost nothing about how unity functions. Moreover, since realizing such an institutional choice requires its translation into organizational routines, characterizing this connection between institutions, ambitions, and routines represents a central component in understanding the institutional effects on governing. In Congress, for example, routines like “reciprocity,” “deference,” and “expertise” create the foundations for accommodation, the quintessential legislative dynamic. What routines would realize executive unity in its own institutional context set to the difference between primary and derivative authority? How do those routines shape the dynamics of the presidency, especially in the use of initiative? And can this unity of purpose defend the executive against the powers lodged in the “legislative vortex” as Hamilton had hoped?

This paper addresses these questions. It models primary and derivative authority and then applies that model to a seemingly central routine associated with such differentiated authority: the

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1 Madison coined the phrase “vortex” in Federalist #48: “The legislative department is everywhere extending the sphere of its activity, and drawing all power into its impetuous vortex.” Hamilton continued the theme in #71:

In governments purely republican, this tendency is almost irresistible. The representatives of the people, in a popular assembly, seem sometimes to fancy that they are the people themselves, and betray strong symptoms of impatience and disgust at the least sign of opposition from any other quarter; as if the exercise of its rights, by either the executive or judiciary, were a breach of their privilege and an outrage to their dignity. They often appear disposed to exert an imperious control over the other departments; and as they commonly have the people on their side, they always act with such momentum as to make it very difficult for the other members of the government to maintain the balance of the Constitution.

On other congressional dynamics, Cox and McCubbins 1993 or Jones, Baumgartner, and Talbert 1993, Talbert, Jones, and Baumgartner 1995, and Baumgartner, Jones, and MacLeod 2000.
A Theory of Executive Initiative

This section defines an approach to understanding executive initiative, based in simple assumptions about how the constitution organizes choices, what operational routines presidents can call on, and how primary and derivative authorities interact. It applies these assumptions to a decision-making process revolving around the three choices mentioned earlier: to engage, to assign responsibility, and to commit personal effort. It also introduces a new concept, affinity, linking presidents and subordinates through the “public” side of their rewards from policy outcomes. The section ends having incorporated these ideas into an expected value calculus.

Other Approaches to Initiative

A number of disciplines model organizational dynamics, but they often miss critical characteristics of governing or require theory to mimic decidedly unrealistic versions of political behavior. Economics, for example, models initiative as delegation by principals to their agents as a variation on asymmetric information games. Its theories by definition assign actors disparate responsibilities united only through a production function in which one actor maximizes private benefits at another’s expense [cf. Miller 1992]. By design, then, the theories require that the primary control mechanism rests entirely on shaping private compensation. By contrast, substitutability of effort constitutes a common characteristic of governance, where the social choice function treats seemingly disparate efforts as essentially the same input (e.g., the “anonymity condition”). And while those involved in governance undoubtedly derive some utility from their private wages, they rarely encounter exclusive and discrete compensation mechanisms like those of enterprise that would
allow for easy manipulation (cf. Knott and Miller on the progressive movement in public administration). Instead, the social choice function produces utilities with a substantially “public” component and requiring oversight mechanisms and costs. Thus, while many consider them suggestive, economic theories actually diverge substantially from the principal characteristics of governance.

Some management theory also has considered initiative. The car company CEO, to take their classic example, considers making tinted windows a “standard” feature by first considering whether to take on that decision or delegate it to someone with stronger credentials. Hence, while these models retain private compensation schemes and ignore costs, they employ substitutability. The CEO, however, faces only a decision whether to delegate because, regardless of whoever gets to make that decision, the organization will comply along completely predictable lines. In effect, these management theories assume the unity of purpose presidents must struggle to obtain.

In theoretical public administration, where one might expect respect for substitutability and the vagaries of authority, analysts have taken three separate tacks. On the one hand, while traditionally focused on the relationship between authority and responsibility (see Weber or Parsons), mainstream public administration theory has recently considered the question as only a tradeoff between authority and substantive expertise (cf. Gulick or Hammond and Miller 1985). This approach follows the principals and agents approach, returning to non-substitutability. Another vein (e.g., Hult and Walcott) traces out the institutional elaboration of authority but concentrates on detailing structural innovations rather than the work routines that likely flow from them. Hence, they ignore a variety of topics, like oversight and commitment, that would appear core to administration. And, on still another hand, some have applied to authority the structural model commonly used to assess checks and balances (see Hammond and Miller 1987 or Cameron 2000) or bargaining (Baron and Ferejohn 1989). And, while these approaches have amassed a substantial, cumulating body of theoretical results, little of those have direct empirical applications, or have failed empirical testing altogether, or present an unreasonable mechanism at work (cf. Johnson; Bendor et al.; Bendor and Meirowitz; Laver, et al.; Sullivan 2011; Sullivan and de Marchi 2011).

In sum, previous research leaves substantial gaps in understanding the practice of public executives, their authority, their subordinates, and the dynamics that flow from these, while a good deal of what passes for “practice” in these theories does not resemble what politicians and their subordinates do. In contrast, the next two sections depict an expected value model of initiative that emphasizes the notion of primary and derivative authority: its institutional paths, its operational reflections, the disparate efforts it can engender, and the common benefits it evokes. Once outlined in this manner, the theory produces a decision calculus with roots in what presidents and their subordinates do and which suggests the von Stackelberg solution, with its own suggestive diagnostics about unity of purpose.

The Institutional Context — Modeling Regime, Routine, Authority

This section describes the setting for primary and derivative authority: its institutional context, its organizational setting, and its distribution of responsibility. The key elements of this setting include the sequence of decisions invoked by primary and derivative authority.

Selecting an Institutional Setting. Assume four actors (nature, president, executive subordinate, and legislative proxy) and a multistage policy process that raises and then resolves a policy issue. Nature

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3 This analysis includes McKelvey and Riezman 1992; Baron 1996; McCarty 1997; Banks and Duggan 2000; McCarty 2000a, 2000b; Snyder, et al 2005; Banks and Duggan 2006. See also Sullivan and de Marchi 2011.
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begins by raising a policy question and assigning it to a constitutional “regime,” a sequence of actions leading to a sanctioned policy choice.\(^4\) Assume only two such regimes. In the first, resembling that set out in Article I, Section 7, policy makers share authority: the president only affects outcomes but cannot dictate them — policy-makers share powers. Later, this regime carries the superscript “I.” In the second regime, resembling that described in Article II and particularly Section 2 (along with its associated court cases), the president exercises exclusive authority and effects outcomes no other constitutional actor can alter. The superscript “II” will denote this regime, the realm of “exclusive powers” [Moe and Howell].

Engaging the Executive. Having received an issue/regime assignment, then, the president decides whether and then how to engage the executive using one of its three organizational “routines.” Selecting the first routine, the president would decide to “do nothing” — not to engage the executive on the issue. If this decision occurs under Regime II (the exclusive powers), the policy process ends and the status quo results. If the decision occurs under Regime I, not engaging means only that the policy process continues to selecting an outcome other than the status quo with some prior probability reflecting the dynamics of the legislative process.\(^5\)

In a second choice of routine, the president can decide to deploy the executive under personal leadership. Following Richard Neustadt [1960], call this choice “counsel.” The president takes the initiative, or lead responsibility. In the third choice, the president can decide to deploy the executive but assigns the subordinate lead responsibility. Call that routine “delegation.” The subscripts “0,” “c,” and “d,” respectively, will denote these routines. In the expected value model to come, deploying the executive devolves to selection of the most valuable routine, given the circumstances and the likely level of efforts deployed by the two executive actors.

Deploying Primary and Derivative Authority. To deploy the executive and achieve unity of purpose, the president’s decisions eventually must evoke effort. Describing that effort affords an opportunity to clarify the meaning of primary and derivative authority. First, authority evokes responsibility, dividing executive effort in two, i.e., into who leads and who follows. Those who follow do so after observing the equilibrium choice of those who lead. And those who lead, consider the likely response of those who follow. Thus, primary and derivative authority invokes the sequential decision-making common to the Von Stakelberg solution for games of sequential leadership. In counsel, the president leads and then, observing that effort, the subordinate follows through, while in delegation, the subordinate leads and the president follows through. Second, primary and derivative authority invokes hierarchy. Thus, in addition to separate expectations about, or observation of, the other’s efforts, decisions about effort rest on the differing roles of initiator and follower, on individual assessments of the situation, and on individual preferences over benefits and costs. Finally, primary and derivative authority invokes the joint impact of efforts on outcomes — the substitutability of efforts.\(^6\) In doing so, the theory calls “direct” those returns and costs derived from one’s own actions and “passive” those derived from another’s actions.

Under Regime II, choosing to deploy the executive and committing some effort (any effort) ends the policy process with positive returns, probability equal to one. For the more complex Regime I, two further stages occur in which the familiar story of policy-making occurs — bargaining, agenda setting, lobbying, and procedural maneuver [Sullivan 1984, 1990; 2011; Jeong et al 2009; Krehbiel 1987; Beckmann 2008, 2010]. Continuing under Regime I, the executive charged with follow-through then reacts to give and take by committing another form of secondary effort: “follow-up.” Only the actor in the follower role of a routine commits this effort. For now and for simplicity, assume decisions on follow-up mirror those on follow-through. Having completed executive follow-up, the last step in

\(^4\) For now, assume no detail as to how issues arise in nature and that no actor can affect how issues map onto regimes.

\(^5\) The theory assumes that if do nothing, the final likelihood of an outcome equals its initial likelihood.

\(^6\) For now, this assumption asserts, for example, no difference between a subordinate exerting effort, e.g., who calls “for the President...” and “the President calling,” in terms of altering the likelihood of outcomes.
Regime I involves the usual relationships between the Congress and executive, resembling either a bargaining or the typical, one-dimensional spatial model (cf. Kieweit and McCubbins, Morris and Munger; Sullivan 1990; Sullivan and de Marchi 2011).7

Elaborating Decisions — Ambition, Affinity, and Costs

Having outlined a policy process and the president’s operational choices, this section steps through each of the assumptions required to generate expected utilities for both the president and the subordinate. These statements will bear a designation (e.g., 3.x) to identify them with expected utility statements for each of the routines: [3.x] for counsel, [4.x] delegation, and [5.x] do nothing. The president’s choice of how to deploy the executive will rest on a survey of the expected utilities. The appendix presents the full range of statements. For now, the presentation only elaborates the president’s returns from choosing counsel under Regime I. Having described the president’s and the subordinate’s expected utility in these ways, the theory can then solve for the equilibrium efforts each will exert. The critical elements in elaborating these decisions include using circumstance to define fame as making a difference and using the nature of association embedded in primary and derivative authority to shape utilities and executive effort.

The “Love of Fame.” Throughout the constitutional convention and the arguments for the new constitution, the Founders’ maintained executive power would depend upon their new president seeking opportunities to make a difference. Although he never attributed it exclusively to presidents, Hamilton called this motivation the “love of fame” and claimed it motivated, in the best sense, all public persons’ actions. This section translates the love of fame, for both presidents and their subordinates, as caring about their limited opportunities to affect outcomes. This assumption suggests then that they get the most return from their limited efforts when they can tip the prior balance toward an outcome they favor.

Define the prior balance as an “opportunity” $\alpha \circ \Omega_{i}^{k} \leq 1$ in regime $k$ as the likelihood of an outcome $i$ occurring without an executive effort. Then to model fame, define circumstance as: $\zeta (\Omega_i^k - (\Omega_i^k)^2) B_{ij}$. An individual’s “priority” for an outcome $i$ equals $B_{ij}$. The parameter “$\zeta$” suggests a limit on the range of anyone’s effort, always exerting only a proportion of their “full” potential.8 Using this form, utility peaks for a policy outcome when $\Omega_i^k$ nears 50/50. Using these definitions, the two regimes differ:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{In Regime I} & \quad \begin{array}{l}
[1.1] \quad \alpha \circ \Omega_{i}^{1} \leq 1 \\
[1.2] \quad \frac{\partial \Omega_{i}^{1}}{\partial E} > 0
\end{array} & \quad \text{In Regime II} & \quad \begin{array}{l}
[2.1] \quad \Omega_{i}^{II} = 0 \\
[2.2] \quad \frac{\partial \Omega_{i}^{II}}{\partial E} = 1
\end{array}
\end{align*}
\]

In Regime I (shared powers), some outcomes become policy even if the president decides not to act [1.1]. Hence, the other policy makers play an important role. Executive action improves the likelihood of success [1.2]. In Regime II (exclusive powers), an outcome cannot occur without executive effort [2.1], but any executive action makes it certain to occur [2.2].

Applying fame to circumstances, but excluding costs for the moment, produces the following summary of returns “$R_{pc}^{1}$,” for the president (p) selecting the counsel routine (c) in Regime I:

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7 Of course, that process has its simplicities and it leaves to the imagination some elements of the “normal” American constitutional struggle, in particular bicameralism and vetoes [cf. Hammond and Miller 1987].

8 Sullivan [2009, 2010] has described the details of presidential effort demonstrating that presidents and their subordinates move from one issue to another in rapid succession through a day (even during a crisis) spending a small amount of time on any given activity (even in a crisis).
\[ R_{pc}^1 = \left\{ E_{pc} \left[ (\alpha - \beta)^2 B_{pq} + (1 - \alpha)^2 \right] \right\} + \text{affinity} \left\{ (\text{follow through}) \left[ (\alpha - \beta)^2 B_{pq} + (1 - \alpha)^2 \right] \right\} + \text{affinity} \left\{ (\text{follow up}) \left[ (\alpha - \beta)^2 B_{pq} + (1 - \alpha)^2 \right] \right\} \]

In [3.1], each line describes an aspect of return associated with separate executive efforts. The first line reports direct returns from the president’s own equilibrium effort \((\alpha_{E_{pc}^1})\) at initiative and two outcomes (winning and losing), the second line reports passive returns from the subordinate’s follow-through (identified as a placeholder for now), and then the third line, passive returns from the subordinate’s follow-up. The next section describes replacing the placeholder “affinity” preceding the statement of passive returns. The section after that describes replacing the placeholders for versions of follow-through in lines 2 and 3.

The Uses for Affinity. Unity of purpose unites the utility of the president with the subordinate. The first placeholder “affinity” in [3.1] plays this role. Define affinity as \(\alpha\), where \(0 < \alpha < 1\), reporting the anticipated similarities between two utility functions.

Though affinity differs across institutions, the congressional context can provide some useful illustrations. Representatives hailing from similar (e.g., nearby) districts stand to benefit equally from a policy outcome: their common, or “public,” rewards derived from and reflecting the close fit between each neighbor’s district and that such characteristics entitle them to receive similar benefits. Likewise, executives reap rewards from similar associations and in consonance with their institutional context. The executive institution affords a president and subordinate the same public benefits of successes and failures — when one benefits from an outcome, through this association, so does the other. While legislators benefit from policy’s distributive rewards, making constituents beholden and generating trust and subsequent leeway, executive association generates a different kind of benefit, more esoteric: standing in the limelight cast by another’s success.

Association with one another has other implications beyond mutual rewards — meanings tempered, of course, by organizational routines. For example, in the legislature, a representative has better information about those sharing an affinity. The legislator can better assess these others’ intentions as coalition partners. Hence, each can expect with a high level of confidence when any prior commitment made by the other would eventually stand. So, this legislative affinity helps with predicting reliability, an important asset when planning successful accommodations. Executive affinities also have behavioral similarities. For example, executive association also suggests reliability in the form of an anticipated willingness to contribute to a common endeavor: call this “fervor.” Affinity also suggests an anticipated willingness to work in concert with one another: call that “commitment.”

Unlike the legislative setting, however, where affinity could derive from objective similarities between constituencies (reflecting, say, a conveniently simple correlation between census characteristics), in the executive setting, most likely converges with lengthy subordinate association. Having a decidedly subjective character, the President can have an affinity with the subordinate (\(\mu\)), while the subordinate can feel a different affinity (\(\sigma\)) towards the President.

Using affinity in these ways fills out the model of presidential returns (still excluding costs). The president’s affinity with the subordinate (\(\mu\)) represents the “limelight;” how closely the subordinate’s efforts will resound to the president’s benefit. Formally, affinity discounts each of the passive returns defined in the second and third lines. The subordinate’s association with the president (\(\sigma\)), affects the anticipated level of subordinate supportive efforts (i.e., the fervor of follow through and follow up). For follow through, subordinate effort under the counsel routine, \(E_{sc}^1\), parallels the

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9 Legislative “cohesiveness,” itself, reflects this presumption of reliability from close associations (affinity), although that measure typically focuses on the partisan basis of their affinities, a presumably weaker force than constituency.
The president’s initiative, $E^{1}_{pc}$, to the extent that the subordinate’s utility reflects the president’s, so: 

$$\left(\sigma E^{1}_{pc}\right)E^{1}_{sc}.$$ 

Similar substitutions take place in the third line of [3.1] (for follow-up), with some slight modifications. Subordinate follow up effort complements the president’s initiative to the extent that the two see the policy implications the same. So, this analysis models their viewpoints as the combination of two things. First, a ratio between their two priority statements, suggesting the nature of their views, and second, how well the president can anticipate the subordinate’s commitment taken as the additive inverse of affinity $(1-\alpha)$. Hence, under counsel, the subordinate’s level of follow-up would equal 

$$\left[\frac{B_s}{B_p}(1-\sigma)\right]E^{1}_{sc}.$$ 

Inserting these versions of affinity into [3.1] yields 

$$[3.2] \ R^{1}_{pc} \equiv \left\{ E^{1}_{pc}\left[\zeta((1-\alpha)(1-\alpha)B_{ip})+(\zeta((1-\alpha)^2)(1-\alpha)(1-\alpha)(1-\alpha)B_{ip})]\right]\right. 

+ \mu\left\{\left(\frac{B_s}{B_p}(1-\alpha)\right)E^{1}_{sc}\left[\zeta((1-\alpha)^2(1-\alpha)^2)B_{ip})+(\zeta((1-\alpha)^2-(1-\alpha)^2)(1-\alpha)(1-\alpha)B_{ip})]\right]\right. 

+ \mu\left\{\left[\frac{B_s}{B_p}(1-\alpha)\right]E^{1}_{sc}\left[\zeta((1-\alpha)^2(1-\alpha)^2)B_{ip})+(\zeta((1-\alpha)^2-(1-\alpha)^2)(1-\alpha)(1-\alpha)B_{ip})]\right]\right. 

The addition of affinity also creates parallel changes when specifying returns from the delegation routine [4.2]. Affinity, of course, plays no role in the “do nothing” routine.

Costs. The president’s choice of routine depends on more than benefits, of course. Assume costs come in three varieties: direct, indirect, and fixed. Following those few principal-agency models where wage rates do not accurately represent opportunities, assume that direct costs will reduce benefits at a relatively high rate as effort increases. Hence, an effort of $E^{1}_{pc}$ yields a direct cost equaling $-(E^{1}_{pc})^{2}$.

Indirect costs derive from oversight, the drag inherent in span of control over derivative authority. For example, shortly after arriving on President Lyndon Johnson’s staff and under the president’s delegation, Joseph Califano negotiated a legislative deal with Senator James Eastland. Califano (2000) recalls that after having heard about the finalized deal he had worked out, the President called him to the Oval Office for a dressing down. The President then called Eastland back and, with Califano listening, renegotiated a different agreement, dispatching Califano to finalize that arrangement. Califano’s efforts had ultimately generated presidential costs in proportion to his short time on the president’s staff. Heretofore, no model has presented a mechanism for capturing the relationship illustrated in Califano’s anecdote.10

The introduction of affinity affords just such an opportunity for modeling this element of the primary and derivative relationship. Supervisory costs for the president reflect how well the president could count on Califano as the inverse of their association $(1-\sigma)$. Hence, a president’s follow-through costs equals $-(1-\sigma)E^{1}_{pc}(E^{1}_{pc})^{2}$, so that $(1-\sigma)$ represents the president’s “supervisory burden.” Subordinates, of course, also bear similar, indirect costs associated with follow-through when they react to presidential initiative. The costs associated with responding to the president’s commitments reflect the subordinate’s relationship to the president, the inverse of the president’s affinity for the subordinate $(1-\mu)$. Hence, the president’s initiative generates a cost equal to $-(1-\mu)E^{1}_{pc}(E^{1}_{sc})^{2}$. Call $(1-\mu)$ the subordinate’s “commitment burden.”

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10 Typically, readers interpret such anecdotes as reflections on the persons involved and maybe their psychological makeup, rather than seeing these as symbolic of some aspect of their authority relationship.
Sullivan 1990 demonstrated that on presidential priorities, the administration typically starts coalition building with far fewer commitments than necessary to win. Because of fame, presidents regularly focus on those agenda items so clearly in doubt. Taking on such doubtful opportunities involves converting non-supporters to the president’s side, and, so, requires expending resources from a capital stock available as presidential favors \((F_i)\). As a simple approximation, assume the costs of favors declines as opportunity increases so that \(F(O_i) = \sin(1.5 - 2O_i)\). Adding these three kinds of costs to [3.2] yields [3.3] summarizing the president’s full returns, with the returns from failure normalized to 0:

\[
[3.3] \quad U_{pc}^I = \left[ E_{pc}^J + \mu((\sigma E_{pc}^I) E_{sc}^J) + \mu\left( \frac{B_s}{B_p} \right) (1 - \sigma) E_{sc}^J \right] \xi(O_i - O_s^J) B_p
\]

The appendix includes the parallel equations for the other regimes and routines.

**A Von Stackelberg Solution**

Although these presidential utility functions present a complex calculus, their individual components derive from reasonable expectations about subordinates and organizations. For example, presidents surely consider their own commitments against the tasks they could accomplish, using estimates of the opportunities that present themselves and the priorities they can address. And, surely their staffs’ commitments and reliability figure in as well. Complex though they appear, then, these statements should occur in any theory.

Given primary and derivative authority, the president’s choices about engaging the executive and then deploying executive routines depend upon the president’s commitment of effort and the subordinate’s as well. These patterns of effort and response also seem potentially complex. In essence, though, they resemble the kinds of interactions analyzed with a von Stackelberg solution to games of sequential followership. Originally developed to analyze how firms engaged in oligopoly, von Stackelberg’s approach generalizes to situations in which one actor goes first and others respond — just what happens with initiative and follow through. The appendix also presents the von Stackelberg solutions for each of these potential executive deployments.

**Implications for Presidential Operations**

These solutions suggest a series of conclusions about presidential operations (and probably executive operations in general). This theory of unity and initiative suggests several implications for how the presidency operates. These implications fall into three categories: when to deploy the executive, what to expect from executive commitment, and how to secure organizational continuity.

**The President’s Decision to Deploy the Executive**

Allocating responsibilities begins with the president’s basic decision to deploy the administration. The decision to deploy automatically invokes initiative. Hence, a set of simple conditions can describe these deployments. For example, the president would take no action on an issue whenever:

\[11\] Hence, \(F\) declines steeply between \(O_i = 0\) and \(O_i = 0.75\) and then \(F = 0\) for \(O_i > 0.75\); once policy becomes relatively certain, potential presidential favors become scare.
[6.0] $U^b_{pc} \geq U^b_{pc}$ and $U^b_{pd} \geq U^b_{pd}$

*Under Regime I, A Narrowed Focus.* From fame and the distribution of opportunity, few circumstances would satisfy [6.0]:

E1. Narrowed Presidential Focus: Under Regime I, a disproportionately large number of circumstances will result in the president choosing “do nothing.”

Comment. In the past decade, political scientists have played an increasingly important role in presidential transitions (cf. Kumar and Sullivan). Their analysis of presidential operations has shown that this narrowed presidential engagement has an operational reflection. Campaign transition planners regularly underestimate the demands they will face for presidential engagement especially considering the breadth of their new administration’s likely agenda (cf. Sullivan 2004a). Once at work, the scope of these unexpected demands quickly triggers a scramble to put in place routines to protect their president’s time by limiting access, by structuring more closely the materials destined for the president’s attention, by focusing more narrowly the president’s time, and by lengthening the president’s overall day [Sullivan 2010]. Several White House chiefs of staff have codified these responses into what President Reagan’s first chief, James A. Baker III, has characterized as a chief’s paramount duty: “First and foremost, your job is to say, ‘No, not this week.” Expectation 1, then, restates that practitioner’s rule of thumb (call it “Baker’s Rule”).

*Under Regime II.* For [6.0] to hold under Regime II, then:

\[
[6.01] B_{ip} E^{II}_{pc} \left(1 - E^{II}_{pc} + \mu \sigma E^{II}_{sd} + \left(-1 + \sigma\right)E^{II}_{ad}\right) < 0
\]

[foleging counsel]

\[
[6.02] B_{ip} E^{II}_{sd} \left(\mu + \left(\mu - \sigma\right)E^{II}_{pd} + \left(-1 + \sigma\right)E^{II}_{pd}^2 - \mu E^{II}_{ad}\right) < 0
\]

[foleging delegation]

These conditions translate do nothing into the particulars of $U^I_{pc}$ and $U^I_{pd}$. If $B_{ip} < 0$, then the left hand sides of [6.01] and [6.02] cannot drop below $o$ without violating a restriction on either effort or affinity. Hence, under every set of circumstances, when the president places any value on an outcome under Regime II, taking some executive action would dominate do nothing:

E2. *Expansive Appeal of Exclusive Powers:* Under Regime II, if $B_{ip} > 0$, then

\[
U^I_{pc} > U^I_{pc} \text{ or } U^I_{pd} > U^I_{pd}
\]

If $B_{ip} > 0$, “do something” always dominates do nothing. And then,

E3. *Delegation:* Under Regime II, if $B_{ip} > 0$, then $U_{pd} > U_{pd}$.

Comment. Obviously, E2 suggests that exclusive powers must have an excessive appeal (cf. Moe and Howell; Howell) and in Regime II, delegation always dominates counsel, suggesting that presidents who personally dabble in the use of their exclusive powers waste their time.

*The Range of Executive Effort*

Under Regime I and counsel, the equilibrium subordinate follow-through, $E^*_{sc} = \frac{\sigma}{2} \zeta (O_1 - O^2_1)$.

The president has a similar equilibrium response when employing delegation under Regime I. Apart from the constraint ($\zeta$), these equilibrium efforts derive exclusively from the structure of fame and affinity. Hence, the theory would imply:

\[
[6.I] \text{ If } U_{pc} > U_{pd} \text{ then } E_{pc} > E_{pd} \text{ while if } U_{pd} > U_{pc} \text{ then } E_{pd} > E_{sc}.
\]
This implication parallels the notion that taking the initiative makes clear who has primary responsibility for an outcome, and given fame, the actor charged with that initiative invests more effort:

E4. Initiative Spurs Effort. Under similar circumstances, the responsibility to take the initiative evokes greater effort than follow-through.

Comment. When he first told legislative colleagues in Texas of his intention to ascend to the speakership there and then pursue that same goal at the national level, Sam Rayburn explained his ambition by noting that authority and responsibility always went together. He wanted, he said, the responsibility that having power entailed (Hardemann and Bacon):

The Embedded Challenge to Organizational Continuity

The distinction between primary and derivative responsibilities necessarily evokes an expectation of diverging preferences. Affinity captures that divergence in theoretical terms, with potential dissatisfaction and oversight as its operational reflections. The conditions for presidential delegation and subordinate equilibrium effort also result in:

[6.2] For some \( O \), \( U_{pd}^k > U_{pc}^k \), \( U_{pd}^k > U_{pc}^k \), and \( E_{ad}^s > 0 \) and \( U_{ad}^f < 0 \)

Note that in those circumstances that satisfy [6.2], the subordinate does not shirk even though those efforts generate negative returns. Hence,

E5. Frustrated Commitment. A non-empty set of situations evoke both rational presidential delegation and negative subordinate utility.

Comment. Obviously, no organization can sustain such a result. And, some of the president’s executive deployments will generate this operational problem. This theoretical result would explain the extraordinary rate of White House turnover, which in turn implies that over time, presidents would lose operational effectiveness rather than gain it, rationalizing what heretofore Paul Light has articulated as axiomatic in his “cycle declining presidential effectiveness” [cf. Light 1999].

When they complain about how their subordinate’s efforts compound their own work (about their oversight burden), presidents often invoke the conflict between the subordinate’s own objectives and the president’s ambitions, i.e., they complain about a lack of affinity. These complaints now have a theoretical foundation and an empirical expectation:

E6. Affinity and Discontinuity. In delegation, lower affinity distinguishes between negative and positive subordinate utilities.

12 The principle underlying Rayburn’s Rule echoes what others have called the “first principle of administration” (see Simon, et al) that authority must match responsibility.
Assessing These Operational Expectations

The theory of executive initiative has produced a series of six expectations, many having a resonance in practitioners’ own accounts of their work. And as an advantage of this theory, it appears consistent with how practitioners’ see their decisions to engage, distribute responsibility, and commit effort. One difficulty arises in assessing this theory: to date, no empirical study has detailed White House operations. Hence, fully assessing these expectations in the standard way remains a few steps away. Here, the paper assesses a simulation that can determine the consistency of the proposed calculus with the expectations as set out. Assuming the consistency of the theory and its appealing reflection in practitioners’ views, the results should establish whether the theory can become an instrument for assessing solutions to the operational problems that plague administrations and which the founders hoped the singular presidency would provide for the executive.

The simulation assigns random values to the relevant variables in the calculus — values falling within the constraints set out for each variable. The simulation also assigns random values to priority (B_p, B_s) between 1 and 100. Call the combinations of these values a “situation” and for each of the approximately 65,000 simulated situations under each regime, the analysis then generates for each actor, a von Stackelberg equilibrium effort, the reaction function between initiator and the follower, and the resulting utilities. This section reports those results.

Deploying the Executive

E1. Baker’s Rule. Recall, E1 implies limited presidential engagement. For Regime I, the test considers whether applying the requirements of [6.0] dramatically narrows the numbers of situations that would invoke presidential deployment. The simulation evidence reported in Table 1 suggests that satisfying [6.0] narrows the data from 65,000 to some 600 cases under Regime I (the sum of the top two cells in the right hand column). The evidence from the simulation, then, supports E1: given an enormously varied set of potential situations, presidents would deploy the executive in a very narrow set. These findings would suggest that the often proffered advice to a president to “narrow your focus” would appear superfluous since a narrowed focus derives cleanly from the executive’s organizational dynamics.

### Table 1. Utility and Effort of Counsel & Delegation, by Regime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regime</th>
<th>Routine Responsibility</th>
<th>( U_p )</th>
<th>( V_r )</th>
<th>s. e.</th>
<th>N satisfying [6.0]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Shared Authority</td>
<td>Counsel</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>355</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>President initiates</td>
<td>.393</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subordinate follows</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>346.41</td>
<td>27.662</td>
<td>239</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>President follows</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subordinate initiates</td>
<td>.641</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Exclusive Powers</td>
<td>Counsel</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>President initiates</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subordinate follows</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>65,532</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>President follows</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subordinate initiates</td>
<td>.510</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: compiled by author.
Table 1 also suggests something about relative circumstances. By comparison with delegation, situations in which the president chooses counsel produced substantially lower utilities. Apparently, the simulation and theory suggest counsel involves situations of generally low priority — issues that only a president can choose to pursue. Hence, the theory implies that fame encourages the president to pursue some issues that staff alone would probably not choose: LBJ and civil rights, LBJ and medicare, LBJ and federal support for education, GWB and social security reform, RMN and “opening China.” By contrast, the utilities from delegation range widely with a substantial average value at 346. Among those policies that engage the executive, then, but generate the most potential benefits, presidents turn that work over to their subordinates. Hence, the simulation and the theory produces an unexpected proposition worth pursuing when examining presidential agenda decisions: a president’s reach generally exceeds that of the staff.

E2. The “Expansive Appeal” of Exclusive Powers. Under Regime II, the theory and now the simulation results reported in Table 1 suggests that when $B_{\gamma}>0$, delegation returns universally positive presidential utility (E2). Given these results, why don’t presidents simply engage in using their exclusive powers rather than struggling with those shared responsibilities found in Regime I? Table 1 suggests something of an answer. In every case under Regime II if $B_{\gamma}>0$, delegation yields utilities ranging from 0 to near 32, averaging 7. Under Regime I, and with the same values for $B_{\gamma}>0$, delegation yields a range of presidential utilities from 6 to around 11,000, averaging 346. Of course, these utilities have no specific base, but they do make sense as a comparative using the president as the anchor. By comparison with Regime I, the use of exclusive powers yields relatively unattractive presidential utilities [cf. Howell]. Hence, quite consistent with Hamiltonian fame, presidents would choose the struggle to make history in policy (high potential payoffs) than produce footnotes to it through using exclusive powers. The only actual data on presidential activities, Sullivan’s [2010] accounting of the 100 days minute-by-minute shows presidents Eisenhower through G.H.W. Bush spent almost none of their workdays on exclusive powers.

E3. Delegation Preferred to Counsel. Of course, Regime II presents a special story with respect to delegation. Table 1 reports that, consistent with E3, delegation strictly dominates counsel under every situation.

Initiative and Effort

E4. Rayburn’s Rule. This expectation suggests a distinctive pattern to effort based on the president’s decision to locate initiative. Table 1 also provides simulation data on this relationship, by reporting the average equilibrium effort associated with initiative and follow-through. Under Regime I, both executive actors commit more effort when taking the initiative than they do when following. Presidents invest about 15% more effort when taking the lead, while subordinates invest almost six times more effort when delegated the initiative than when they merely wade in to bolster the president’s lead. Given standard statistical significance (at 0.01) the data for Regime I clearly substantiates Rayburn’s Rule: those charged with authority invest more effort.

The theory and simulation also seems to illustrate an unexpected pattern to how subordinates react to initiative: they take fidelity to the president’s charge with more enthusiasm than presidents would willingly invest under their own counsel in similar situations.

The simulation data for Regime II mirrors these patterns, but in the unique manner associated with exclusive powers. Recall that with exclusive powers, the president faces no situation in which selecting counsel makes sense. Hence, the theory produces equilibrium effort only under delegation, when the subordinate takes the lead. In these situations, though, the subordinate clearly invests more effort than does the president and by a factor similar to that observed for Regime I. Hence, the evidence suggests that Rayburn’s Rule, previously considered merely an anecdote from one politician’s life, might reflect a general dynamic.
Organizational Continuity

E5. Initiative and Oversight. The theory suggests that some presidential delegations undermine long-term subordinate commitment. If some rational presidential delegations generate negative utility for the subordinate, then prolonged exposure to such disappointing situations would undermine the subordinate’s fervor. Figure 1 illustrates the simulation data on all Regime I delegations, those where maximizing the president’s utility suggests delegating to the subordinate, graphing the subordinate’s utilities against the initial probability for success ($O_i$). In the figure, dots identify those delegations from which the subordinate also receives positive utility; pluses identify $U_s^i < 0$. Clearly, the simulation demonstrates that a substantial proportion of presidential delegations lead to subordinate disappointment, even though these situations yield positive utility for the president and substantial subordinate effort in equilibrium. Thus, the simulation evidence supports the expectation of a rational, organizational discontinuity.

Figure 1. Subordinate Utility under Regime I Delegation by Initial Opportunity

Affinity in Operational Relief. Over time, these results for subordinates suggest an organizational conundrum: how can presidents delegate without driving away the subordinates they need to exercise their authority (i.e., Hamilton’s energetic executive)? In economics and public administration, disappointment with subordinate effort results from “hidden action,” an information condition. In the theoretical setting here, the organizational conundrum remains despite the fact that the theory presumes complete as well as perfect information. And because governance institutions do not depend upon private compensation schemes, the typical remedies from economics cannot ameliorate the situation.
Management theory also fails in this regard [Harvard Business School]. Many leadership theories assert that when faced with top-down decentralization, employees will attempt to “give back” their initiative, trying to push up to the primary authority decisions at their level. These theories argue that this tendency results from a standard psychological discomfort with authority, and maybe these roots exist among enterprise subordinates. The theory here presumes political subordinates want authority and, hence, their attempts to “give back” that authority must have a rational basis in utilities. Here, the evidence from the simulation suggests just such a rational basis.

Facing such a discontinuity, practitioners’ basic instincts (seemingly supported by E4) often suggest to them introducing more responsibility as a remedy. Like many enterprise executives, presidents take Rayburn’s Rule to heart. For example, President Reagan kept a Robert Woodruff quotation on his desk suggesting his adherence to its prescription: “There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he doesn’t mind who gets the credit” [Wallison]. A new memoir notes that President George H. W. Bush considered such subordinate responsibility a key to his own leadership style [Popadiuk]. And, possessing an MBA, George W. Bush considered delegation critical to his own ideas about leadership.

Yet, in this situation, spurring on subordinate effort accomplishes little because the subordinate has already achieved equilibrium in effort, and that optima still produces negative subordinate utility. So, this disappointment cannot or originate with information conditions and more delegation will not remedy it. Instead, the theory here suggests that behind discontinuity lays the association between subordinate and president: disappointment rests on the distinction between primary and derivative authority.

**Figure 2. Subordinate Utility under Regime I Delegation and Subordinate Affinity (\(\sigma\))**

To see this result, return to the simulation data presented in Figure 1 now recast into Figure 2 by reordering along the x-axis according to subordinate affinity instead of initial opportunity. As seems apparent, the likelihood that delegation generates negative utility diminishes dramatically as
subordinate affinity increases, with a turning point around $\sigma=0.4$, a relative low association with the president.\footnote{For example, the ratio of positive to negative subordinate utilities equals $\frac{1}{2}$ between $0.35$ and $0.4$ while it equals $2/1$ from $0.4$ to $0.45$.} This simulation evidence presents an almost linear relationship between increasing affinity and subordinate utility in delegation, accounting for three-quarters of the explained variance. These data then suggest that the relationship between executive actors constitutes a critical variable, if not the critical variable: organizational continuity rests on affinity.

**The Founders’ Ambitions for Parity**

The simulation results suggests the theory of initiative as outlined here seems like a good beginning for addressing the three questions posed earlier: Does the difference between primary and derivative authority generate uniquely executive dynamics? Can executive routine satisfy the founders’ ambitions that unity of purpose assure some form of parity with the legislative power? And, if it does, can White House routines maintain that unity?

**Realizing the Founders’ Ambitions for Unity and Parity**

Two institutional reasons dominated the Founders’ reliance on a singular presidency. From their experience with the revolutionary governments and the confederation that followed, the founders, led by Wilson, Hamilton, and Madison wanted to install a separate and exclusively executive institution, not turn the executive functions over to another legislative variant as initially proposed. They opted not for deliberations among equals but focus within hierarchy. Then, they hoped to juxtapose that strength against the anticipated vigor from their powerful legislative branch [Wood].

Of course, except for the occasional, extraordinary circumstances (often prompted by war), the advantage of focus would not clearly come to the fore until the calendars of the Congress and Executive synchronized with the 20th Amendment, coincident with America’s global standing first reaching an apex [Sullivan and de Marchi]. In analyzing presidential initiatives, all occurring after these changes occurred, Matthew Kerbel [1991] reported that presidential successes have corresponded to situations in which both the president and subordinates coordinated their positions or effectuated unity of purpose. This section proposes a direct measure of unity and then assesses whether the presidential engagement proposed in the theory here would promote unity sufficient to realize the founders’ ambitions for executive parity with the legislative and to theoretically account for Kerbel’s observations.

This notion of parity as defense suggests that the ability to influence the constitutional balance of power involves more than the endowments of the two institutions and more than the simple prescriptions of agenda domination (of “going first”) or veto politics, described in the political science literature [e.g., Baron/Ferejohn; Romer/Rosenthal; Rubenstein; or Cameron 1998, 2000]. More than simple endowments, power requires the organizational cohesion/unity to flex those endowments.

**Considering Executive Unity.** The analysis to this point suggests that any measure of executive unity ($T$) should rest on the difference between primary and derivative authority as well as reflecting, within the executive, the president’s preeminence. To reflect the difference between primary and derivative authority as the basis of unity, define $T$ as a ratio of efforts. When the president takes the initiative, $T$ reports the subordinate’s effort as compared with the presidents, earlier called fervor. When the president delegates, the measure reports the ratio of the subordinate’s initiative to the president’s initiative in similar situations, or subordinate commitment. Under Regime II, of course, $T$’s ratio has no meaning since no circumstances make counsel rational. Here, then, $T$ captures subordinate commitment alone.
In Regime I and when the president takes the initiative, \( \bar{T} = 0.37 \) and when the president delegates, \( \bar{T} = 1.75 \), this second score clearly reflecting Rayburn’s Rule. These values yield a weighted average for Regime I of \( \bar{T} = 0.85 \). Including an analogous weighted score from Regime II poses a problem. The relatively small utilities under Regime II make improbable the president’s engagement. However, administrations do engage in exclusive powers to some degree. For example, the White House referees inter-departmental turf wars and issues pardons. And, because of that fact, the overall weighted average should include some Regime II cases. So the overall \( \bar{T} \) includes the most extreme of Regime II cases: the two hundred cases of delegation, those situations generating the highest utilities (\( U_{1d}^{II} \geq 28.98 \)). Among these, \( \bar{T} = 0.44 \). Including only those few \( E_{1d}^{II} \), the overall \( \bar{T} = 0.83 \).

Parity in Power. Lacking any priors to assess this weighted average, however, makes it hard to reach conclusions about whether the measure of unity proposed suggests “enough” of parity with the legislative. Assessing what the challenge looks like from the legislative seems like a reasonable approach, since as an organizational question, congressional research has long measured legislative unity (cf. Roberts and Smith; Morris and Munger). Gary Cox and Mathew McCubbins (1991) have argued that beginning with a majority “party agenda,” and then asking what level of floor voting supported that agenda (thereby creating a legislative “leadership” support score) represents the best measure of cohesion. They report a cohesion score equal to 0.5. The figures on executive unity, then, and even those limited to Regime I, would suggest that, compared to legislative cohesiveness, the executive presents a competitor the founders had hoped for: considerably more unified than the legislative on those issues the president chooses to take up.

An Operational Solution to Unity

So, properly deployed, the executive would exhibit considerable unity of purpose. Yet, the results on disappointing delegation (Es) suggest a deteriorating institutional position over time.\(^{14}\) Because it generates discontinuity, using delegation to pursue a policy agenda requires attention to promoting unity. This seeming organizational necessity poses a further problem for the Executive: while the Congress maintains an on-going institution through an almost constant membership (especially during a single term), a president’s operation can change several times, reflecting this discontinuity. One third of all White House chiefs, for example, have taken over in mid-administration [Sullivan 2004b]. Hence, maintaining unity in the face of discontinuity presents a challenge that has no legislative parallel.

Within the confines of current theory,\(^{15}\) this section identifies a routine that once developed would bolster unity. It depends upon the president “handling” staff, a tradecraft of successful

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\(^{14}\) Incidentally, this decline over time could account for what others have described as the presidential “honeymoon.”

Typically, studies of the phenomenon provide only vague descriptions of a theoretical mechanism for generating this result, mechanisms primarily found with the legislative branch (among members) or in the general public. The explanation here would rest with the operations of the executive instead and on a lack of ability to follow through on initiative.

\(^{15}\) Of course, one can address this problem by changing the theory, making staff central to operations by constraining the president’s reach — or willingness to engage — to just the range of issues on which \( U_{1d}^{II} \leq 0 \).
politicians, and it rests on affecting affinity, already identified as critical to continuity. This recommendation also highlights a common operational mistake.

“Vision” in White House Operations. Often deprived of detailed observations from behind the scenes (and certainly deprived of unguarded observations) about operational routines, pundits, critics, and presidential competitors often repair to chiding the sitting president for not having “the vision thing.”

While calling on this evaluation often substitutes for offering a more substantial analysis, it turns out that the “vision thing” itself does imply a useful operational solution for continuity. To see how, distinguish first between two versions of vision, each evoking a separate notion of presidential attractiveness. The first and most common sense of “vision” resembles “ideology:” a coherent statement of the connections between collective policies and individual benefits. In campaigns, presidential candidates talk to voters about how various government policy choices (choices controlled by the candidate if elected) affect their lot. Because of that effect, the candidate argues, voters should support that candidate’s notion (or vision) of how to make those choices. Call this the “alliance version” of vision — at its base, it rests on the election exchange: votes in exchange for actions that return improvements in private utilities. The second version of vision connects another’s utility to the president’s success not through material rewards but through reflection. At its base, reflection rests on identification with the president, i.e., with association, and involves improvement in “public” utility.

Obviously, the president’s success generates material rewards for subordinates (favorable policy outcomes and, of course, the prospects of continued employment or as an advertisement for future employment opportunities). Based on the ubiquity of their campaign experiences, presidents and their principal advisors could easily conclude that bolstering unity should involve an analogous enterprise: selling subordinates on the direct benefits of success. Typically, though, campaign-like White House events aimed at subordinates, and presidential references to the benefits of success, seem to have little impact, not because the subordinates become jaded, having attended these events all too often. Instead, the distinctiveness of subordinates suggests that these efforts fall flat, not out of boredom but because the president’s subordinates appreciate them in a wholly separate way from others.

Instead, the private benefits subordinates receive through the alliance relationship pale by comparison to the rewards a subordinate reaps through mere association with their president’s successes. No one really thinks that when standing next to the President, a senior advisor gets the same sense of reward that the CEO of a government contractor gets when standing next to the same President. The subordinate reaps the rewards of association, while the contractor reaps the direct benefits of an alliance: one hitchs a wagon to a star while the other gets a return on an investment.

Instead of emphasizing the private rewards reaped by the president’s successes, what the subordinate needs to hear from the President, the “association version” of vision, emphasizes statements that focus on articulating a shared duty and a role together in making history. These kinds of presidential statements (often offered only in private settings) would make the point to subordinates that, as LBJ used to say so often to others, “I can’t run this country by myself.” Maybe subordinate association, with its resultant suggestion of inclusion and fervor in initiative, would represent an essential executive dynamic.

Operational Consequences of Affinity as Alliance. Conceived of in the alliance way, a hardnosed Chief of Staff likely considers any proposed staff interactions with the President as a drain on valuable presidential time. Consistent with this interpretation, the chief’s response would rely on Baker’s Rule: no not now. Andy Card, President Bush’s long-serving chief, for example, described his response to this scenario, referring to it his basic rule for dealing with subordinates: “just because you need to see the President,” he would say, “doesn’t mean you get to see the President” [interview with author 2001]. The theory here and the analysis from its simulation suggests this response fails to capture the full nature of these interactions, so that applying Baker’s Rule represents an exacerbation
of discontinuity. While an alliance moment surely drains the president’s time, an association moment builds organizational capacity. Scheduling each kind of moment requires applying different standards.

So, how might chiefs fold association into their routine for controlling presidential access? A typical routine that a chief could use to complement Baker’s Rule would invoke unity by following a “life-cycle” with principal subordinates. Initially, a chief would permit increased access for a wide arc of subordinates, access the president would naturally use to build affinity. Over time, the Chief would decrease that access as those subordinates become more committed (and, hence, more reliable), recognizing this increasing reliability makes access relatively less important and the drag on the president’s time caused by it relatively more important.

In what has become something of an insider tradition, though, outgoing White House Chiefs of Staff pass on to their successors a mangled bicycle wheel symbolizing a recurring initial attraction to and then evolving dissatisfaction with “spokes in the wheel” access as an operational precept (cf. George). The theory presented here not only suggests that their dissatisfaction with “spokes in the wheel,” develops for good reasons, but that those reasons might mislead chiefs. The theory suggests that, ultimately, this over extended metaphor of the bicycle wheel works against the chief’s interests and ultimately against the president’s use of the executive.

**Weakness in Theory**

The theory proposed here also has its weaknesses, more in what it does not say than what it does. For example, its model of circumstances does not properly render fame. Making a difference begins with initial circumstances, and currently the model assumes that decision-making rests on observing those circumstances, not the effects of subsequent effort on emerging circumstances. But, making a difference might more accurately rest on projecting the impact of deploying the executive across the range of initial circumstances to see what would result. The business of leader might, then, require learning about what possibilities lay over the “horizon” (a version of the vision thing often discussed in management theory).

Moreover, in the current theory, nature raises issues for the president to consider. Yet, a fuller assertion of “making a difference” would properly include consideration of presidential “reach,” the expectations summarized in estimating the effect on opportunities by engaging the executive should also include estimates after the pressing the limits of congressional and public support on that issue. Essentially the president makes a difference by proposing variations on a policy question so strong (relative to current anticipated support) as to require the president’s involvement. More important than the fact that the literature does not consider “reach” as a possibility (e.g., Light 1999), including this notion of potential accomplishment into the consideration of opportunity makes those considerations endogenous to the theory.

Even the current assumption of regimes has a clarity to it that does not exist in the real presidential world. The standard model of delegation, for example, focuses on the struggle between dual principals and expert agents — Congress delegating to an executive branch agency with policy expectations different from those of the head of the executive, in much the way the founders presumed the legislative vortex would work its perplexing influence. Variations on that model of delegation invest the presidency with an “OMB instrument” of control, dissuading the agency from following their congressional masters in executing law. The instrument then models the “effectiveness” of exclusive powers with respect to purely executive decisions about administration. The President or White House subordinates officiate these disputes which ought to appear in the model, raised by “nature,” but the regime for this sort of activity does not match either of the constitutionally derived regimes used here. In the last section, modeled this version of delegation

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16 Research on the operational consequences of spokes of the wheel vs. hierarchical staffing also suggests hierarchical staffing provides many advantages over spokes of the wheel [Sullivan 2012].
by incorporating some Regime II cases arguing that clearly presidents engage in these efforts, even though the theory clearly suggests that they do not compare with others the president could take up. Obviously, this adjustment had little effect on the value of unity of purpose, but the justification invoked what for now constitutes an extra-theoretical concern. Both these elements, of emerging circumstances and of exclusivity suggest elaborations of unity needed for a better empirical theory.
### Full Utilities and von Stackelberg Solutions

#### [3.3] Regime I, Counsel Routine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Follow through</th>
<th>Follow up</th>
<th>Circumstance Opportunity</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( U^1_{pc} )</td>
<td>( E^1_{pc} )</td>
<td>( \mu((\sigma E^1_{pc}) E^1_{sc}) )</td>
<td>( \mu\left(\frac{B_s}{B_p}\right)(1-\sigma) E^1_{sc} )</td>
<td>( \zeta(O_i-O^*_i) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( - \left[ (E^1_{pc})^2 \right] )</td>
<td>( + \left(\sigma E^1_{pc}\right) \left(E^1_{sc}\right)^2 )</td>
<td>( + \left(\frac{B_s}{B_p}\right)(1-\sigma) \left(E^1_{sc}\right)^2 )</td>
<td>( + F(O_i) )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\Gamma = \frac{\sigma}{2} \zeta(O_i-O^*_i); \quad \text{E}^*_{pc} = \frac{\zeta(-O_i+O^*_i)(-4+\zeta^2(-2\mu+\sigma)O_i-\zeta(2\mu-\sigma)\sigma^2O^*_i)}{8}; \quad \text{E}^*_{sc} = \frac{\sigma}{2} \zeta(O_i-O^*_i)
\]

#### [4.3] Regime I, Delegation Routine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Follow through</th>
<th>Follow up</th>
<th>Circumstance Opportunity</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>( \mu E^1_{sd} )</td>
<td>( \mu \left(E^1_{sd}(1-\sigma) E^1_{pd}\right) )</td>
<td>( \mu\left(\frac{B_s}{B_p}\right)(1-\mu) E^1_{pd} )</td>
<td>( \zeta(O_i-O^*_i) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( - \left[ \mu \left(E^1_{sd}\right)^2 \right] )</td>
<td>( + \left(1-\sigma\right) E^1_{sd} \left(E^1_{pd}\right)^2 )</td>
<td>( + \left(\frac{B_s}{B_p}\right)(1-\mu) \left(E^1_{pd}\right)^2 )</td>
<td>( + F(O_i) )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\Gamma = \frac{\mu}{2} \zeta(O_i-O^*_i); \quad \text{E}^*_{sd} = \frac{4+2\zeta^2\sigma O_i-\zeta^2(3\mu-2\sigma)O^*_i+2\zeta^2\mu^3O^*_i+\zeta^2\mu^3O^*_i}{8}; \quad \text{E}^*_{pd} = \frac{\mu}{2} \zeta(O_i-O^*_i)
\]

---

17 Utility functions where: \(-B^*\rightarrow\), reaction curve (\(\Gamma\)), and equilibrium efforts (\(E^*\)).
### [5.3] Regime I, Do Nothing Routine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response under Routine</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Follow through</th>
<th>Follow up</th>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>( U^1_{p0} ) ≡</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( O, B_p )</td>
<td>Returns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( U^1_{so} ) ≡</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( O, B_s )</td>
<td>Returns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\Gamma = \frac{\sigma}{2}; \quad E^*_{pc} = \frac{-2 - \mu \sigma^2}{(\sigma - \mu)\sigma^3}; \quad E^*_{sc} = \frac{\sigma}{2}
\]

### [5.4] Regime II, Do Nothing Routine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response under Routine</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Follow through</th>
<th>Follow up</th>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( U^1_{p0} ) ≡</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( 0 )</td>
<td>( B_p )</td>
<td>Returns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( U^1_{so} ) ≡</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( 0 )</td>
<td>( B_s )</td>
<td>Returns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\Gamma = \frac{\mu}{2}; \quad E^*_{sd} = \frac{1}{8}(4 - \mu^3 + 2 \mu^2 \sigma); \quad E^*_{pd} = \frac{\mu}{2}
\]
REFERENCES


