The news of disarray within Bill Clinton's White House staff during his first term lends credence to scholars' claims that the transition from "electioneering to governing" is a difficult rite of passage for modern presidents. These claims, however, suggest a corollary argument: incumbent presidents should find the change from governing back to campaigning equally difficult. That is, the organizational problems evident in George Bush's ill-fated 1992 campaign may in fact be symptoms of the same transitional hazards that critics say afflict the Clinton presidency. In both cases, presidents discovered that an organization geared toward competing in the presidential primaries and winning a media-driven general election is not well suited for governing within a pluralistic system of separate institutions sharing power—and vice versa.

To date, most research on this issue has examined a newly-elected president's efforts to turn a campaign organization into an effective governing tool. This

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2 Those difficulties are chronicled below.
article, however, addresses the other side of the coin: the transition from governing back to campaigning. We argue that this transition has become more difficult in the last two decades because of the change from a party-dominated to a candidate-centered presidential selection process. The electoral reforms of the late 1960s and early 1970s have encouraged incumbent presidents to build their own personal White House staff-centered reelection campaign organizations rather than rely on the traditional party structure for tactical and logistical support.\(^5\) The result is that today, as Charlie Black, a Bush campaign operative, notes: "When you're an incumbent running for reelection, over half of the execution is at the White House, it's not in the campaign. The candidate's body, the schedule, the press, all of that, the message, the speechwriting, all of that is in the White House."\(^6\)

But White House dominance of reelection campaigns creates an organizational dilemma—one that pre-reform presidents did not confront. Because campaigning requires different skills and resources than governing, the postreform incumbents seeking a second presidential term must restructure their presidential staff. In contrast, their prereform presidential predecessors largely avoided this disruption, since they could rely on the party organization to perform many of the campaign's myriad tasks.

Using primary and secondary documents, supplemented by interviews with former presidential advisers and campaign officials, our argument proceeds in four stages. The first looks more closely at the organizational difficulties President Bush confronted during the 1992 election season. Part two provides an historical overview of reelection campaigns from Truman through Reagan, demonstrating the differences between the pre- and postreform reelection campaigns. Part three uses these observations to build a conceptual framework explaining why presidents find the transition from governing to campaigning more difficult since the electoral reforms of the 1960s and 1970s. In the concluding section, we discuss the organizational implications of these findings for incumbents seeking reelection.

**The Bush Presidential Staff, 1992**

Interviews and secondary sources help paint a thorough portrait of the organizational disruption inflicted on the Bush White House by the 1992 campaign. The key message seems to be that Bush failed to transform a White House organized

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\(^5\) By "traditional party structure," we mean state and local party chapters working in conjunction with the Democratic and Republican national party committees. By presidential "staff" we refer to those individuals formally linked to the president through hierarchical reporting relationships and whose primary incentives (pay, title, tenure, and jurisdiction) are subject to direct presidential influence. Three staff elements in particular will concern us here: the White House Office; members of the presidential cabinet composed of the heads of the major executive branch departments; and the senior members of the president's campaign organization.

to govern into one that could run a reelection campaign. “We didn't shut the White House down to run the campaign like we should have,” Marlin Fitzwater, the president's press secretary, concluded.7 Clayton Yeutter, brought on board by Bush to revamp the White House policy team, agreed: “You just can't change the policy environment and the general public's perception of your policies and the adequacies or inadequacies thereof in that short period of time. So it was too little too late.”8

Because the Bush White House failed to reorganize quickly enough for the coming campaign, the Bush/Quayle campaign staff found itself rudderless. Mary Matalin, one of the campaign’s political directors, recalls: “There was no political connection inside the White House. It was not integrated. . . . There was this wall, and we didn't even know what kind of information was getting to George Bush.”9 Charlie Black concurs: “Our problems were political, in the sense of decisions and communications capability, not grassroots . . . neither George Bush, nor John Sununu nor Dick Darman nor anybody else who was there in a position of authority is a political communicator. . . .”10

Bush’s reluctance to begin gearing up for the election, however, partly hinged on his realization that to commit to campaigning meant an inevitable loss in his governing effectiveness: “[Bush] did not want to accelerate a process where everything he said would be viewed politically. He knew the minute he crossed that line, he could not govern.”11 This is because, as campaign veteran Stuart Spencer observes, “the campaign overwhelms the White House.”12 Marlin Fitzwater, Bush's communications director, concurs: “Nobody cares about anything except reelection . . . [once the campaign begins] initiative dries up.”13

Consequently it was not until December 1991, three months after Bush filed election papers and only two months before the Iowa caucus, that the initial restructuring of the Bush staff organization began. Chief of Staff John Sununu was replaced by Samuel Skinner, formerly secretary of Transportation. Skinner’s first move was to overhaul the White House staff. He asked business consultant Eugene Croisant to conduct a thorough review of White House operations. Although Skinner's appointment was couched in terms of improving domestic policy making, journalists covering the story thought the changes were motivated by Bush’s upcoming campaign: “Since replacing John Sununu as chief of staff last month, Skinner has not yet altered any major administration policies. But he is

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7 Interview with Marlin Fitzwater, 19 May 1994. Fitzwater served as press secretary to Presidents Bush and Reagan.
8 Interview with Clayton Yeutter, 25 May 1994.
9 Royer, *Campaign for President*, 114.
10 Ibid., 115-116.
11 Ibid., 106.
12 Interview with Stuart Spencer, 13 April 1992. Spencer served as a campaign adviser to Presidents Ford and Reagan.
13 Interview with Marlin Fitzwater, 19 May 1994.
clearly moving toward important changes in personnel and organization designed specifically to rejuvenate George Bush's sagging re-election prospects."14

Skinner imported his own aides from the Department of Transportation to the White House and shifted Marlin Fitzwater from press secretary to communications director, responsible for overseeing all communications efforts.15 He also combined the White House Economic Policy Council and the Domestic Policy Council into a Policy Coordinating Group.16 Yeutter, then chairing the Republican National Committee (RNC), was recruited to head the new staff entity.17 By creating a more visible domestic counterpart to the National Security Council, the Bush team hoped to dramatize the shift in Bush's priorities from foreign to domestic issues.

But Skinner's changes did not have the desired effect. This was partly because they were resisted by holdover White House aides. Rich Bond, who headed the RNC, recalls: "[Skinner] assembled a number of people he proposed to put in those [White House] jobs and was told he couldn't do it. From that point on, Skinner never owned his own staff at the White House and no wonder it did not work."18

The result was further deterioration in relations between the campaign and White House staffs. According to David Carney, formerly director of the White House Office of Political Affairs and then field director for the Bush/Quayle campaign, "It became even worse than it was with Sununu. It was difficult to get decisions made."19 Black concurs: "We had execution problems with the White House. There were very few people there that had campaign experience, with the exception of Ron Kaufman and Sherry Rollins. . . . So you weren't on the same sheet of music, so it was a problem that related to speeches and a lot of other communication matters."20

By July 1992, amid mounting criticism of Skinner's performance, in the wake of a successful Democratic convention, and with Bush facing a 20-30 point deficit in trial heat polls, the president restructured his staff once again. Word surfaced that he would solicit the electoral assistance of his friend and five-time presidential

18 Royer, Campaign for President, 154.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 154-155.
campaign strategist, Secretary of State James Baker. On 13 August, Bush formally announced Baker's switch from the State Department to the White House to become chief of staff and senior counselor to the president. With Baker came four top aides from the State Department to serve as White House deputy chief of staff and directors of communications, policy planning, and political affairs.

Baker's transfer, coming in the midst of a heated international conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, dramatized the inherent tension between governing and campaigning. While Bush's legal counsel, C. Boyden Gray, warned Bush of the ethical dilemma posed by Baker running the campaign while officially on the White House staff, Baker's presence dramatically reenergized the Bush reelection effort. "The whole problem we had in the spring was the lack of decision-making structure. [Baker] centralized it. . . . [T]he only reason that it even held close . . . was because of his ability." Black agrees: "Our ability to execute, after Baker came on board, went from about a D-minus capability to an A-plus." But if Baker's changes proved positive for the Bush campaign, they were also too little too late. Although Clinton's lead in public opinion polls began to dissipate, he withstood a late Bush surge to win a plurality of the popular vote and the majority of the electoral vote on election day.

**STAFF SHUFFLING FROM TRUMAN THROUGH REAGAN**

The Bush example is not unusual in the postreform era, but stands in stark contrast to the prereform presidential reelection campaigns. The historical material is summarized below, beginning with the three post-FDR, prereform presidents: Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, and Lyndon Johnson.

Truman's stunning 1948 victory, of course, became the rallying cry of the Bush campaign thirty-six years later. But there was at least one major difference between the two campaigns: while Bush's was orchestrated by the White House working in conjunction with his own campaign organization, Truman's operated largely through the existing party structure. To be sure, key White House aides accompanying Truman on his famous whistle-stop tour in the fall of 1948 were

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24 David Carney in Royer, *Campaign for President*, 286.

25 Ibid., 287.

26 Due to space constraints, we have opted not to discuss FDR's three reelection campaigns, although there is much evidence to believe they were largely run through the party apparatus. For details, see James Farley, *Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years* (New York: Whittlesey House/McGraw-Hill, 1948); and Ed J. Flynn, *You're the Boss* (New York: Viking Press, 1947).
largely responsible for campaign strategy. But background research, financing, publicity, and logistical expertise were all provided by operatives working for the Democratic National Committee (DNC).

Similarly, Eisenhower's 1956 reelection bid was largely orchestrated by the RNC under the direction of Chairman Len Hall. Not only did the RNC run the 1956 reelection campaign, but in the precampaign stages it pressured President Eisenhower to seek a second term: "Whatever doubts may have been in the President's mind, or whatever family pressures may have been brought on him to serve but one term, the official party organization never wavered in its outspoken demand that he should run."

In addition to demanding that the president seek reelection, the RNC in 1955 approved plans for a late convention and a short campaign. Evidence regarding the strength of party influence can also be seen in the reaction to Eisenhower's half-hearted attempt to dump Vice President Richard Nixon from the presidential ticket; the outcry from the Republican party regulars forced Ike's retreat.

Lyndon Johnson's 1964 campaign unfolded during the transition period from party to candidate-centered elections—a transition hastened by Johnson himself. Nevertheless, the DNC, working through state and local affiliates, played an important role in his reelection campaign. The party committee essentially coordinated the state field organizations and handled finances, while senior Johnson White House aides masterminded overall strategy, speechwriting, media contacts, and "negative" advance (that is, responding to Goldwater's speeches).

As with Truman and Eisenhower, Johnson's campaign produced little electorally-induced staff turnover, although this is partly attributable to the circumstances under which LBJ became president. Feeling politically compelled to accentuate his ties to his slain predecessor, Johnson maintained a dual White House staff of Kennedy holdovers and his own loyalists until after winning election in his own right.33

After his landslide victory, Johnson moved both to weaken the national Democratic party organization and to bring it more tightly under his control.34 Johnson's efforts were followed by the series of campaign reforms cited above that set the stage for Richard Nixon's precedent-setting 1972 campaign. Nixon was the first presidential incumbent to run in the postreform era, and the first to create a personal campaign organization separate from the party structure. His decision to entrust his campaign almost entirely to his own hand-picked organization significantly accelerated what to then had been a comparatively slow erosion of the traditional parties' electoral influence.35 Under former Attorney General John Mitchell (later replaced by White House counsel Clark MacGregor), Nixon's campaign committee, infamously known by its acronym CREEP (Committee to Re-Elect the President), took responsibility for almost all campaign-related activities, including fundraising under Maurice Stans.36

According to Jeb Magruder, a member of the White House Office of Communications who later joined Nixon's campaign staff, CREEP was established to bypass the existing party apparatus: "... the problem is that the RNC is a body placed on top of fifty state chairmen, who are independent and autonomous. And I think every presidential candidate feels that he has to control his state organizations."37 Magruder was the first of many Nixon White House aides to join CREEP; by April 1972, seventeen of twenty-three senior CREEP members came from the White House staff or administration.38 Thereafter, a clear division of labor existed:

We agreed that [CREEP] would not get involved to any degree in substantive matters. . . similarly, the White House stayed out of the political organizational process. We spent our time worrying about how to put on a direct-mail campaign, how to put together an advertising agency, how to set up effective relations with the RNC. The White House worked on substantive issues that would affect policy. We kept

35 Milkis, President and Parties, 364.
38 U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary, White House Staff and President Nixon's Campaign Organizations (June 1974), 5; see also Congressional Quarterly, "Nixon Campaign: Mounting a Drive for Another Term," 27 November 1971, 2452-55.
that definition right through the end of the campaign, and I think it worked very well.  

Campaign strategy, however, remained the province of the president and his senior White House aides, particularly after Mitchell resigned as campaign manager in June 1972. A political group consisting of Robert Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, Mitchell, MacGregor, Special Counsel Harry Dent, and Bryce Harlow met weekly to formulate campaign policy. In retrospect, however, Nixon probably wished the division of labor between CREEP and the White House had been more ironclad. Some campaign operatives—most notably Chuck Colson—remained in the White House but carried on campaign-related dirty tricks. These activities, culminating in the botched Watergate break-in, ultimately led to Nixon’s downfall.

The organizational effectiveness of the Nixon campaign stands in marked contrast to the disarray characterizing the next two incumbents’ bids for reelection. In 1976, of course, President Gerald Ford had to fend off a serious intraparty challenge from Ronald Reagan. Ford began gearing up for the campaign by making significant personnel changes, beginning with the so-called Halloween Massacre in which Nelson Rockefeller was forced from the vice presidential ticket in favor of Robert Dole. Rockefeller’s departure was meant to “. . . discourage Reagan’s entry into the race and appease [Ford’s] right-wing supporters.” It was followed in November 1975 by the purge of Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger, CIA Director William E. Colby, and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger. The cabinet shakeup reverberated to Ford’s White House staff. Donald Rumsfeld (Ford’s White House chief of staff) replaced Schlesinger as Defense Secretary, while Rumsfeld’s assistant Richard Cheney inherited the White House chief of staff position.

These personnel changes had two electorally-related objectives. First, Ford sought (unsuccessfully as it turned out) to end the intrapersonnel squabbling that had characterized his first two years as president, particularly the disputes between Nixon staff holdovers, Kissinger, Robert Hartmann and Rockefeller, and Rumsfeld. Second, they were intended to demonstrate Ford’s leadership qualities,
particularly in foreign affairs where some felt he was overshadowed by Kissinger. But Reagan's primary challenge exposed serious flaws in Ford's campaign organization. An internal memo during the campaign cites the "serious White House, Administration and [President Ford Committee] organization and personnel problems" including the "poor execution by campaign and government officials. . . ." These were not really addressed until after the Republican convention, when James Baker (assisted by Stuart Spencer) became Ford's campaign director. At the same time Cheney, who had established himself atop the White House staff hierarchy, began to work more closely with the campaign organization.

The RNC's role during the Ford campaign, meanwhile, was even smaller than it had been under Nixon; it essentially performed four tasks: convention preparation, voter registration, doling out the $3.2 million allotted the party under the 1974 campaign finance law to individual campaigns, and digging up facts to be used against Jimmy Carter, Ford's opponent in the general election.

Like Ford, Carter in 1980 also survived an intra-party battle (against Senator Edward Kennedy) and kicked off his campaign with a dramatic cabinet and staff overhaul. These personnel changes were electorally motivated, as Carter openly acknowledged to Health, Education, and Welfare Secretary Joseph Califano (himself a victim of the cabinet purge): "I intend to run for office and I intend to be reelected. To get ready for this effort over the next eighteen months, personnel changes will be made in the Cabinet and the White House staff."

The Carter staff shakeup was preceded by his dramatic retreat to Camp David in the summer of 1979 for a series of meetings with officials and private citizens. The stated intent was to help Carter reassess his presidency. After descending the mountain, however, Carter ordered thirty-four cabinet members and senior White House staff members to submit letters of resignation of which five (all

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48 Howard Callaway and then C. Rogers Morton preceded Baker as campaign chair. For details, see Nessen, It Sure Looks Different, 212, 245-253; Malcolm MacDougall, We Almost Made It (New York: Crown, 1977), 5; Howell et al., Gentlemanny Attitudes, 154-55, 263-264.


from cabinet members) were accepted. The resignations were targeted toward key electoral constituencies; for instance, Secretary of Energy James R. Schlesinger’s dismissal specifically addressed Carter’s major domestic policy problem—the energy crisis. The staff shake-up was also intended to bolster Carter’s public image as chief executive and to reduce the in-fighting among his advisers.

As he purged his cabinet, Carter also revamped his much-maligned White House organization. Hamilton Jordan, the architect of Carter’s 1976 victory, became White House chief of staff. From there he essentially served as Carter’s unofficial campaign chief, assisted by press secretary Jody Powell, political affairs director Tim Kraft, media expert Gerald Rafshoon, and pollster Pat Caddell. Robert Strauss, the ostensible head of the Carter campaign organization at the time, noted that: “. . . this has never been my operation . . . the word ‘chairman’ is a misnomer. ‘Chief spokesman’ is really the role I have . . . .” Unfortunately, Jordan found it difficult to juggle campaigning with other pressing issues, particularly the return of Americans held hostage in Iran. As one senior Carter adviser noted: “It was hard—damn hard—to get anything done on the campaign then. We couldn’t get to Hamilton for final decisions.” Subsequently, after the primaries Jordan transferred from the White House to Carter’s reelection campaign. The DNC under Chair John White, meanwhile, remained largely in the background, doing fundraising, organizational work, and assisting the campaign as requested.

In retrospect, Carter’s campaign difficulties stemmed from reasons familiar to Ford and Bush: an inability to delineate the bounds of expertise between the White House and the campaign organization. As one of Carter’s national political directors, Jack Walsh, complained: “[W]hen you’re working on an incumbent campaign . . . there’s one question: is the government going to run the campaign, that is people in the administration, or will the campaign maintain its status? I came to the realization that the campaign wasn’t going to be as important as the West Wing.”

52 The five were Treasury Secretary W. Michael Blumenthal; Energy Secretary James R. Schlesinger; Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Joseph A. Califano, Jr.; Transportation Secretary Brock Adams; and Attorney General Griffin B. Bell. In addition, Patricia Roberts Harris switched from Housing and Urban Development to Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. See National Journal, “Carter Turns on the Drama—But Can He Lead?” 28 July 1979, 1237.
53 Schlesinger was perceived to be a “political liability because of long gas lines and an approaching reelection campaign.” See ibid., 1241. More generally, “[i]n rearranging his Cabinet, the President managed to satisfy the corporate community, Jews, Catholics, blacks, women, Italians and the big cities.” (National Journal, 10 November 1979, 1897).
56 Schram, “Carter,” 86.
57 For details see Hamilton Jordan, Crisis (New York: Putnam, 1982).
58 Quoted in Schram, “Carter,” 91; see also Drew, Portrait of an Election.
59 Moore, The Campaign for President: 1980 In Retrospect, 180–82.
60 Ibid., 60.
Ronald Reagan's 1984 campaign has been characterized as "the richest, strongest, most confident since Nixon's in 1972." The comparison, we believe, is not coincidental; instead, it reflects the Reagan team's ability to create an effective division of labor between the White House and the campaign organization. Reagan's senior White House staff took charge of campaign strategy, but the implementation of that strategy was left entirely to the Reagan/Bush campaign organization: "[N]o one in the White House could participate in the campaign with the exception of Jim Baker, Mike Deaver, Dick Darman, and Margaret Tutwiler. . . . Everybody else in the White House was told they could not participate in any way, shape, or form in the campaign. That meant they couldn't go over as a volunteer, that meant they couldn't be involved."62

Initially the entire White House Office of Political Affairs under Rollins was moved to the Reagan/Bush campaign staff. Thereafter, the White House coordinated campaign strategy through weekly meetings between White House aides Baker, Mike Deaver, and Richard Darman, and the campaign staff under Rollins and Lee Atwater. But Baker was careful to insure that second-level White House aides were not involved in the campaign. The RNC, meanwhile, worked primarily in the background, performing fundraising, convention planning, and party development activities.

In retrospect, it appears that the prereform candidates—Truman, Eisenhower, and LBJ—benefited by having an existing party infrastructure handle the logistics of the reelection campaign. They saw no need to drastically restructure their personal staffs as the campaign drew near. The postreform presidents, however, did not have this luxury. With the parties' demise, each opted to create their own staff of campaign experts.

**Presidential Power, Presidential Staff, and the Provision of Bargaining Expertise**

What lessons can be learned by future presidents seeking reelection? We need first to differentiate more clearly the role of presidential staff in both a governing

63 Moore, Campaign for President: The Managers Look at 1984, 100. Note also that this exodus is reflected in successive editions of the United States Government Manual; the Office of Political Affairs is listed in the 1982–1983 volume, but deleted in the following edition. Thereafter it is listed again.
64 Moore, Campaign for President: The Managers Look at 1984, 106; Goldman and Fuller, Quest for Presidency, 262.
65 Germond and Witcover, Wake Us When, 331. Indeed, to forestall appearances that government resources were being used for political purposes, Baker ordered that official White House cars not discharge passengers at Reagan campaign headquarters. (See Patterson, Ring of Power, 238.)
and an electoral context. Recall Richard Neustadt's famous dictum that presidential power—a president's effective influence on governmental outcomes—is tantamount to bargaining effectiveness. Efforts to test Neustadt's thesis have to date largely focused on presidential effectiveness in Congress, specifically regarding the passage of a president's legislative program. But in fact, suitably modified, this framework is applicable outside the legislative domain. Indeed, it can easily be extended to the electoral arena.

Consider the presidential campaign to be a form of electoral bargaining between candidates, delegates, and voters. An incumbent president seeking a desired outcome (the party's nomination and victory in the general election) must negotiate with a specific set of actors—those who control party delegates and those who vote in the November election. That is, "[a] campaign . . . implicitly offers the voters a contract: 'If elected I promise to . . . .'" To secure electoral support then, presidents bargain with delegates, interest groups, the general public, and others who can provide campaign resources. Typically, these bargains center on policy and personnel issues as reflected in party platforms and campaign promises, and political appointments such as the choice of a running mate and cabinet members. In return, presidents secure money, labor, delegates, and, ultimately, votes—the political capital by which (re)election is secured.

In contrast, campaign staff do not provide tangible reelection goods. Instead, they offer bargaining expertise—specialized knowledge that can help the president predict the likely impact of his bargaining choices on his campaign objectives. Analytically, staff-derived expertise can be distinguished from bargaining capital: the former helps presidents absorb the costs involved in negotiating bargaining details; the latter is a measure of a president's political strength.

Prior to the campaign finance and delegate selection reforms of the late 1960s and early 1970s, campaign expertise was largely the province of the traditional party structure—the loose federation of party leaders at the national, state, and local levels. The national party organization charted campaign strategy, solicited donations, and coordinated the overall reelection effort in response to presidential direction. Party officials at the state level provided the personnel and organiza-

70 Typically, advisers' expertise pertains to one of five critical bargaining arenas: voter mobilization, campaign operations, policy research, public relations, or finance. Compare to Bone, Party Committees, 58–68; and John Kessel, Presidential Campaign Politics, 2nd ed. (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1984), 105–106.
71 Compare to Paul Light, The President's Agenda (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 25–33.
72 See Bone, Party Committees, 116–123.
tional expertise—controlling blocs of delegates and helping to mobilize voters in the general election. To be sure, party officials did not dictate campaign strategy to the president; the critical decisions were made by him in close consultation with his personal advisers. But presidents relied on party members to provide the information on which those decisions were based and to see that campaign strategy was carried out.

With the transformation of political parties as a result of campaign reforms, and a loosening of constraints on presidential staff size, however, successive presidents sought to replace the party with the president’s own separate campaign organization and to control it directly from the White House. In effect, rather than rely on the existing party infrastructure, presidents began to internalize electoral expertise within their personal White House-centered campaign organizations.

The growth of the White House staff size came first, inadvertently fueled by FDR’s 1939 creation of the Executive Office of the President (EOP), including the White House Office (WHO). Although Roosevelt never intended to develop a White House-centered staff apparatus, the EOP and WHO gave his successors an institutional framework for doing just that. Almost without exception the modern presidents have sought to augment White House staff size. With more numerous staff came the potential to assume political responsibilities previously handled by the party.

This potential, however, was not fully realized until changes to the presidential selection process undercut the parties’ traditional role. The story is a familiar one. It is enough here to cite the major developments: campaign finance reform eroded the parties’ financial ties to the candidate; delegate selection shifted from closed caucuses controlled by the old-style political machine to primaries open to the party rank-and-file; the media, prompted in part by the telecommunications

73 See Edward McChesney Sait, American Parties and Elections (New York: The Century Company, 1927); Bone, Party Committees; and Cotter and Hennessy, Politics Without Party. For a first-hand glimpse of the traditional party campaign structure in action, read James Farley’s memoir, Behind the Ballots (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938), which describes his role as FDR’s primary campaign manager in 1932 and 1936. Farley simultaneously chaired the DNC and served as FDR’s postmaster-general, dispensing patronage on the president’s behalf.

74 See Cotter and Hennessy, Politics Without Power.

75 See Executive Order 8248 and Reorganization Plan I of 1939.


revolution and changing standards of coverage, supplanted the party as the mediator between candidates and the public; and a changing issue pool loosened traditional party allegiances among voters, in part by mobilizing heretofore dormant political groups. Collectively, these developments transformed the electoral process from a party-centered to a candidate-centered system.

The cumulative impact on the parties’ organized campaign role has been dramatic. Comparatively speaking, they are now more unified at the national level, with fundraising and spending control increasingly centralized within the national committees. But party influence over the presidential nominating process, particularly candidate selection, and the running of presidential campaigns, has declined. In the parties’ stead, the White House staff has assumed campaign dominance, its members taking major responsibility for providing expertise pertaining to voter mobilization, campaign strategy, spending, policy, and media relations.

This switch in the locus of campaign control has produced unintended, and perhaps undesirable consequences from the incumbent president’s perspective. Where once sitting presidents could expect the party to provide the necessary campaign expertise, now they must recruit and organize their own experts. Such a shift necessitates significant structural and personnel changes in the presidential staff.

We do not argue that governing and campaigning, and the resources required for both are mutually exclusive. Clearly, there is some overlap between the two. However, as Bradley Patterson, former assistant secretary to the Eisenhower cabinet, notes, the two missions are distinct enough to make it difficult for one organization to perform both effectively: “The virtues needed in the crucible of a campaign— are almost the opposite of the preparation needed for life within the White House.”

More specifically, we argue, to govern effectively in the American political system, one must build coalitions. This means bridging differences between actors and institutions through negotiated compromises. Coalition building,
however, is not the dominant campaign strategy under the postreform, primary-dominated electoral system. Instead, candidates mobilize factions by tailoring campaign messages to critical electoral blocs and by portraying rivals as unflatteringly as possible through high profile, frequently negative campaign tactics. As James Ceaser argues, "[T]he current system creates more incentives to promote differences among factions and fewer incentives to weld these factions together into broad and relatively harmonious coalitions."^{85}

Rather than build coalitions, then, incumbent presidents—indeed, all presidential candidates—must today mobilize factions to survive the primaries and prevail in the general election.^{86} But faction formation requires different expertise than does coalition building.^{87} For campaigning, presidents want advisers skilled at manipulating political symbols, comfortable conversing in policy abstractions, knowledgeable about electoral procedures (that is, rules governing delegate selection, campaign finance laws, and filing deadlines) and able to utilize rhetoric and (frequently) negative advertising.^{88} But governing requires different skills. Here presidents want aides steeped in policy details, sensitive to the bargaining interests of other Washingtonians, and temperamentally suited to the negotiating mode characteristic of coalition building. Consequently, during the second half of the president's term, as the White House's raison d'être changes from governing to electioneering, the demand for campaign-related as opposed to governing expertise inflicts tremendous organizational disruption.

CONCLUSION: A Need for Reform?

Since the early 1970s scholars have repeatedly cited the difficulties newly-elected presidents confront when making the transition from campaigning to governing.^{89} Less attention, however, has been paid to the problems presidents encounter in the shift from governing back to campaigning. In fact, our research suggests the two transitions are related; as the Bush and Clinton organizational adjustments cited at the outset of this article suggest, presidents find it difficult to mold and maintain a presidential staff organization that is skilled at both campaigning and

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^{86} Polsby, Consequences of Party Reform, 150–151.
^{87} Hart, Presidential Branch, 129.
^{88} These campaign characteristics are vividly illustrated in the film The War Room, which chronicles the activities of perhaps the two key members of Clinton's 1992 campaign staff: James Carville and George Stephanopoulos. Both were instrumental in engineering Clinton's victory. Stephanopoulos, however, found the transition to governing difficult; after five months he was "promoted" to a less visible White House staff post. Although Carville continued to advise the president, he never took a formal position with the Clinton White House.
governing. When parties played an integral role in the presidential electoral process, the mismatch between these two bargaining arenas was not so problematic. Presidents could rely on the White House staff for governing expertise, while utilizing the party apparatus for campaign support. However, as the party role declines and the presidential staff assumes greater responsibility for providing campaign resources, the strain of asking one institution to perform two different missions becomes more apparent. Indeed, it may partly explain why only two presidents—Nixon in 1972 and Reagan in 1984—have successfully campaigned for reelection in the postreform era through 1992. The combination of electoral reforms and the development of the institutional presidency may make it more difficult to translate presidential effectiveness in one bargaining arena to the other.

Since at least the 1950s, of course, political scientists have sought to remedy the perceived weaknesses of the American constitutional system by strengthening political parties. Our findings suggest that such efforts may be in presidents' interest if it allows them to divest the presidential staff of primary responsibility for providing campaign-related expertise. This is not to argue that presidents or their senior advisers should be expected to abdicate oversight of the presidential campaign. Instead, our point is that presidents may benefit by absolving the White House staff from assuming the dominant responsibility for providing campaign-related expertise. By vesting operational functions outside the White House, presidents can then concentrate on utilizing the presidential staff primarily as a governing tool, avoiding the organizational disruptions that the switch in presidential objectives now entails. For if there is a recurring lesson to be derived from recent presidential transitions, it is that campaigning and governing call for different skills—and thus different organizations.*

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90 If we follow Ceaser, *Presidential Selection*, 215, in dating the traditional party (or mixed) system from 1920 to 1968, only one incumbent president in this era—Herbert Hoover in 1932—was denied reelection. Three—FDR, Truman and Eisenhower—were returned to office. Johnson, of course, won election in his own right in 1964, but then dropped out of the race four years later after a disappointing showing in the New Hampshire primary. In the postreform era, two incumbents—Nixon and Reagan—successfully ran for reelection, while Ford, Carter and Bush were all defeated.


92 Indeed, our interviews suggest that this may have been the rationale behind Bush's appointment of Lee Atwater as RNC chair. As a former RNC chair himself, Bush sought a trusted and skilled strategist to revitalize that organization. Atwater's death, however, created a political void that Bush did not take the time to fill adequately. As a result, the RNC played a supportive role in the 1992 campaign. (Fitzwater interview, 19 May 1994; Frank Donatelli phone interview, 1 July 1994; and David Carney interview, 20 May 1994).

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