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HOW TO PICK A RUNNING MATE: RETHINKING THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

SUBMITTED TO

PROFESSOR JOHN J. PITNEY, JR.

AND

DEAN GREGORY HESS

BY

JAKE A. PETZOLD

FOR

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INTRODUCTION

Vice presidential selection is one of the most covered stories of any presidential cycle. It sends the clearest message of the campaign about the presidential candidate as a decision maker. But the framework in which we discuss it is increasingly obsolete and approaching mere superstition. This thesis tracks the evolution of the selection process and criteria, particularly through its most significant changes in the twentieth century. It develops new norms for selection procedures and universal criteria.

Conventional wisdom holds that running mates do not matter in presidential voting decisions because voters do not go to the polls to vote for – or against – vice presidents. Journalists repeat this truism every four years. In 2000, *The New York Times* wrote that although vice presidential candidates become the subject of intense attention for brief periods of the summer, "That's as long as they matter because people vote for presidents, not vice presidents."[1] In 1988, commentator William Schneider said, "People don't vote for vice president. It's important to the convention, and it's important [when] there's nothing else to talk about, but in the end […] it's not important."[2] In 2008, longtime Republican strategist Ed Rollins claimed on CNN, "At the end of the day, nobody votes for vice president. All a vice president does is sort of bring your party

[1] Adam Clymer, "The Nation; Choosing a Running Mate Matters. Or, Mattered.," *New York Times*, August 20, 2000.
[2] Colin MacKenzie, "Trying to Stop Bush's Slide," *Globe and Mail*, May 21, 1988

together and make people feel good coming out of a convention."[3] But vice presidents do not need to win votes for the ticket directly to matter in elections. Voters, aided by the media, now assess running mates as reflections of the presidential candidates who choose them. Although voters appear unlikely to determine their presidential votes on whom they would rather see as vice president, vice presidential selection may play a meaningful role in shaping how voters think about the presidential nominees.

Vice presidents matter on their own as well. Nine vice presidents have succeeded to the presidency, and 14 of 44 presidents have been vice presidents, including seven of the last nineteen.[4] Today, even vice presidents who do not become president matter because they can wield policy and political influence in the White House and on Capitol Hill. Understanding how and why they get there can illuminate their behavior in office and explain the presidents they serve.[5]

For much of American history, the vice presidency has been held in low esteem. Vice presidential scholarship matched the conventional regard for the office. Political scientist and future president Woodrow Wilson reflected the collective scholarly wisdom on the vice presidency when he wrote in 1900, "The chief embarrassment in discussing his office is, that in explaining how little there is to be said about it one has evidently said all there is to say."[6] But in the second half of the twentieth century, political scientists and

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[3] *Anderson Cooper 360*, "How Far Will Hillary Take Election Fight?; Children Hidden on Texas Polygamist Ranch?," CNN, May 21, 2008, transcript, LexisNexis Academic, (accessed April 19, 2012).
[4] Thomas E. Cronin and Michael A. Genovese, *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 211.
[5] Some background research draws on my first work on the vice presidency for a paper in 2010. Here and a few other places in this thesis use language based on that paper; where this occurs, it will be noted. That paper is included at the end of the thesis. Jake Petzold, "The Modern American Vice Presidency: A BFD" (Claremont McKenna College Washington Program, 2010), 1.
[6] Woodrow Wilson, *Congressional Government: A Study in American Politics* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), xli.

authors began to pursue serious studies of the office. Yet the scholarship remains limited and intermittent.

Political scientist Joel Goldstein's 1982 book *The Modern American Vice Presidency: The Transformation of a Political Institution*, offered the first extensive update to vice presidential scholarship in several decades. It was the first comprehensive analysis of vice presidential selection and operation within a broader political context. The book considered the selection and performance of vice presidents between January 1953 and January 1981, and observed a growth in the office's stature that corresponded to general political trends: "the nationalization of politics, the increased expectations of government, the rise of the presidency, the decline of parties, and the acceptance of an international role." Goldstein also raised the previous decade's common criticisms of the vice presidency and dissected proposals for reform. Goldstein chose his timeframe to fill the gap since the previous major study, and covers a great deal of broad technological and political change that prompted extensive changes in the vice presidency. But those changes accelerated and expanded in the decades since, and Goldstein's work serves as a solid basis for contemporary studies.[7]

In 1984 political scientist Paul Light published *Vice-Presidential Power: Advice and Influence in the White House*. Light examined the vice presidencies of Nelson Rockefeller and Walter Mondale, investigating their policy influence in the White House. Light found that increased resources – including staff and access to the president, senior staff, and important information – enlarged the scope of vice presidential influence substantially for Rockefeller and to a greater degree for Mondale. His brief consideration

[7] Joel K. Goldstein, *The Modern American Vice Presidency: the Transformation of a Political Institution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

of George H.W. Bush suggested that the office's influence held in the Reagan administration.[8]

Lee Sigelman and Paul Wahlbeck's 1997 article "The 'Veepstakes': Strategic Choice in Presidential Running Mate Selection," undertook an empirical analysis of vice presidential selection. They found that coming from a big state, having participated in the presidential primaries, and differing in age from presidential nominees by more than ten years make vice presidential finalists more likely to be nominated. But they do not address the merit of using these factors in the decision process – or how candidates selected with these criteria have impacted elections.[9]

Political scientist Jody Baumgartner's 2006 book *The American Vice Presidency Reconsidered* collects extensive information on vice presidents and vice presidential candidates – particularly those since 1960. He identifies important criteria and conditions affecting the vice presidency and vice presidential selection. But the book's analysis is cursory.[10]

In 2008, *Presidential Studies Quarterly* and the University of Minnesota staged a "Symposium on the New Vice Presidency." The symposium collected the contemporary scholarship on the vice presidency in an effort to encourage more attention to the subject. One product of the project, Mark Hiller and Douglas Kriner's article "Institutional Change and the Dynamics of Vice Presidential Selection," advanced important new thinking. They identify the McGovern-Fraser reforms to the Democratic Party's

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[8] Paul C. Light, *Vice-Presidential Power: Advice and Influence in the White House* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).
[9] Lee Sigelman and Paul J. Wahlbeck, "The 'Veepstakes': Strategic Choice in Presidential Running Mate Selection," *The American Political Science Review,* 91, no. 4 (Dec., 1997): 855-64.
[10] Jody C. Baumgartner, *The American Vice Presidency Reconsidered* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006).

presidential nomination process and the Eagleton affair of 1972 as the catalysts for a reshuffling of vice presidential selection criteria. Their empirical analysis demonstrates that since the 1976 election, extensive public affairs experience became the primary determining factor in vice presidential selection. But their work on *why* the selection criteria changed leaves out *how*.[11]

No recent scholarship has brought together the emerging criteria in their historical context, evaluated the merits of such criteria, examined the political discussion around them, and explored how changes in the selection process both contributed and responded to the shifting criteria. This thesis aims to fill these gaps. In short, it seeks to explain how modern presidential nominees have chosen their running mates and how future candidates should do so.

The thesis finds that successful vice presidential selections share a process based on nine consistent elements: time, dedicated vetters, a small circle of confidants, extensive personal and political vetting, polling, interviews, secrecy, disclosure of the short list, and an announcement event. The process is meant to find a candidate who meets both the specific criteria of the presidential nominee and two universal and crucial criteria. A running mate should bolster the ticket – not balance it – by extending the presidential nominee's narrative into uncovered territory. And he or she must demonstrate competence – the ability to serve as president should the need arise, and to be a valuable White House partner to the president in the meantime.

The first chapter of this thesis addresses the selection process and the following two chapters address the two universal selection criteria. Chapter I analyzes the history of

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[11] Mark Hiller and Douglas Kriner, "Institutional Change and the Dynamics of Vice Presidential Selection," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (September 2008): 401-21.

the selection process and its modern implications. Vice presidents today are chosen quite differently from their eighteenth century forebears. The Constitution made the presidential runner up the vice president. The Twelfth Amendment, ratified in 1804, led to the practice of electing unified president-vice president tickets on separate ballots. In the mid-twentieth century, presidential nominating power came to rest more among primary voters than among convention delegates and party bosses, and the vice presidential nominating power came to rest in the democratically chosen nominees. And due to reforms in the presidential nomination process, presidential nominees had increasing amounts of time to conduct their running mate searches. The nominees' new authority in the process reshuffled the dominant criteria. The following two chapters address those criteria.

Chapter II explores the idea of ticket "balance." Balance between the presidential and vice presidential candidates along regional, factional, ideological, experiential, and religious lines once represented the primary goal of vice presidential selection, often to point of dismissing other considerations. But as conventions lost their prominence in both presidential and vice presidential nomination, candidates assumed the central role in campaigns, and mobilizing the party base became less important than persuading unaligned voters. So satisfying strategically important or disaffected wings of the party lost its utility. When pundits now discuss balancing the ticket, they should be talking about bolstering it. Instead of offsetting the characteristics of a presidential nominee, the campaign should use the running mate to carry the nominee's narrative into new territory.

Chapter III describes the emergence of competence as a factor in vice presidential selection. Because vice presidents did nearly nothing for most of the office's history, the

quality of their performance in office did not matter. And because no individual held singular authority in the selection decision, no one could be held accountable for poor choices. But with Harry Truman's sudden, unprepared ascendance to the Oval Office, the risks of presidential succession in the nuclear age became apparent. And the continued growth of federal programs following the New Deal created more government to be managed. A competent second officer became valuable to the presidency for governance considerations. But only after the process changes of the second half of the twentieth century did electoral politics encourage governance criteria in the vice presidential selection. Running mate selection came to be viewed as a nominee's "first presidential decision," and a major heuristic in evaluating his judgment. Presidential nominees who choose running mates of questionable competence suffer for their lapse in judgment.

CHAPTER I
Jimmy Carter and a New Selection Process

The "Veepstakes" has become one of the most-covered stories of modern presidential elections. In 2012, speculation about Mitt Romney's running mate pick exploded in the days immediately following rival Rick Santorum's exit from the Republican primary race – and will increase until the decision is announced.[1] When announced, the ticket will be the result of a prolonged and methodical evaluation by the Romney campaign.

Only four decades earlier, the selection process took a few hours and was the subject of little speculation. In the office's early days, the vice president was merely a byproduct of the presidential election. But as the presidential election process changed, the vice presidential selection process changed along with it. In 1976, Jimmy Carter responded to his political environment with a series of steps that became today's "Veepstakes."

Traditional Selection

Under the Constitution's original design, the second-place finisher in the Electoral College vote for president became the vice president. This system put the second-best candidate for president, in the judgment of the electors, into in the vice presidency. Should the presidency become vacant, it would be filled by someone who had been

[1] *CNN Saturday Morning*, "Secret Service Embarrassment; Plains States Brace for Storms; Battle to Win Women Voters," CNN, April 14, 2012, transcript, LexisNexis Academic, (accessed April 17, 2012).

selected for the office by a meaningful portion of the electorate.[2] The 1800 presidential election demonstrated the challenge of this scheme following the introduction of party nominations. The Democratic-Republican Party nominated Vice President Thomas Jefferson for president and former New York Senator Aaron Burr for vice president. Intending to elect this ticket, electors inadvertently cast the same number of votes for both Jefferson and Burr, leading to a dramatic standstill before former Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton pushed the voting in Jefferson's direction.[3]

The country ratified the Twelfth Amendment in 1804 to remove this constitutional confusion. The amendment required electors to "name in their ballots the person voted for as President, and in distinct ballots the person voted for as Vice-President."[4] In light of political parties' growing power, some politicians expressed worries about changing the mode of vice presidential selection. Delaware Senator Samuel White predicted:

> Character, talents, virtue, and merit will not be sought after, in the candidate. The question will not be asked, is he capable? Is he honest? But can he by his name, by his connexions, by his wealth, by his local situation, by his influence, or his intrigues, best promote the election of a President?[5]

The selection system that emerged did not allay these fears. Electors – many at the direction of state statute – cast ballots for presidents and vice presidents of the same party.[6] Party caucuses and then conventions became the dominant actors in presidential

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[2] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "On the Presidential Succession," *Political Science Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (Autumn, 1974): 490-491.
[3] Peter Onuf ed., "Thomas Jefferson: Campaigns and Elections," American President: A Reference Resource, http://millercenter.org/president/jefferson/essays/biography/3 (accessed April 8, 2012).
[4] Jody C. Baumgartner, *The American Vice Presidency Reconsidered* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 10.
[5] Schlesinger, "On the Presidential Succession," 491.
[6] Akhil Reed Amar and Vik Amar, "President Quayle," *Virginia Law Review,* 78, no. 4 (May, 1992): 922-27.

and vice presidential nominations.[7] Parties approached running mate selection by doing what parties are supposed to do: try to win elections.

The fourth and final day of conventions were typically spent on the vice presidential nomination. Following the presidential nomination on the third night, potential vice presidential candidates maneuvered for the slot and party leaders deliberated about the most electorally advantageous candidate. Names were placed in nomination and the delegates chose a nominee. The new presidential and vice presidential candidates delivered their acceptance speeches to close the convention that night.[8]

In 1920, Democratic presidential nominee Ohio Governor James Cox had unprecedented but still limited involvement with the selection of Woodrow Wilson's Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt as his running mate.[9] As the party's presidential nominee twenty years later, Roosevelt realized the strategic value of selecting his own running mate. Concerned that no other potential candidate would support the New Deal, Roosevelt instructed the convention to nominate Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace. Meeting with significant resistance, Roosevelt dispatched his wife Eleanor to the convention and made it known that he would refuse to run without Wallace.[10] Wallace became the vice presidential nominee on July 19, 1940, and

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[7] U.S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. *Presidential Elections in the United States: A Primer* by Kevin J. Coleman, Joseph E. Cantor, and Thomas H. Neale, CRS Report RL30527 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, April 17, 2000), 17-19.
[8] Congressional Research Service. *Presidential Elections*, 29-30.
[9] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered,* 26.
[10] Diane M. Blair, "No Ordinary Time: Eleanor Roosevelt's Address to the 1940 Democratic National Convention," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs,* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 203-22.

Roosevelt became the first presidential nominee to dictate his choice of running mate to the convention.[11]

By 1960, presidential nominees' prerogative to select their own running mates became the standard.[12] But how presidential nominees chose their running mates remained in flux for the next decades. Individual nominees and their political circumstances shaped the procedures candidates use to find a vice presidential nominee.

Jimmy Carter

In 1976, former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter conducted his vice presidential selection in a different fashion from any previous nominees. Most nominees since Carter have used a similar selection process.[13] His major innovations include time, public disclosure of the finalists, interviews, and the "vetting" of personal information.[*] The "Carter Model" now constitutes the elements of the "Veepstakes." Although Carter's process became the effective standard, it resulted from a particular political and personal context. The dominant factors in this context were a new public focus on the vice presidency, the timing of the primaries and convention, and Carter's political style.

The 1976 presidential election marked the end of a period of upheaval that generated unprecedented attention to the vice presidency. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy's assassination elevated Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson to the Oval Office.

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[11] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered,* 26.
[12] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered*, 3.
[13] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered*, 62-63.
[*] In 1964, Lyndon Johnson held interviews before naming Senator Hubert H. Humphrey as his running mate. But he did so under circumstances unique in the twentieth century: as a popular incumbent president guaranteed his party's nomination, but with a vacant vice presidency. So Carter was the first non-incumbent presidential candidate to conduct interviews for the ticket, and most candidates after him have done so.

The Twenty-fifth Amendment, which clarified the processes for presidential and vice presidential succession, became part of the U.S. Constitution in 1967.[14]

The 1968 Democratic National Convention hurt the Democratic Party. Johnson decided not to seek reelection as Senators Robert F. Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy ran against his policies in a divisive primary contest. On June 4, Kennedy was assassinated following his victory in the California primary. The convention nominated Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who had not entered a single primary, as violence erupted outside of the convention hall and chaos within. The fiasco prompted the Democratic Party to appoint a Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection, known as the McGovern-Fraser Commission for its chairs South Dakota Senator George McGovern and Minnesota Representative Donald Fraser. The McGovern-Fraser reforms concentrated the presidential nominating power in binding state primaries, limiting the role of party leaders and favorite son candidates. Empowered by the new rules, McGovern won the 1972 Democratic presidential nomination.[15]

McGovern began the Convention in Miami with a large pledged delegate lead, but the nomination still in doubt, pending a credentials challenge by the persevering anti-McGovern camp. Missouri Senator Thomas Eagleton joined the ticket after several Democratic politicians declined the offer.[16] But a few days later, the media began reporting Eagleton's history of mental health struggles, including a hospitalization for

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[14] Andrew Glass, "The 25th Amendment Was Ratified, Feb. 10, 1967," *Politico*, February 10, 2012.http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0212/72700.html (accessed April 17, 2012).
[15] Penn Kemble, "The New Politics," *Commentary*, December 1972, http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/the-new-politics-the-democrats/ (accessed April 17, 2012).
[16] Robert Shrum, *No Excuses: Concessions of a Serial Campaigner* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 41-45.

nervous exhaustion, for which he received electric shock therapy.[17] Amid a media firestorm, McGovern voiced "1,000 percent" support for his running mate in a press conference that one aide called "catastrophic." Eagleton failed to recall the name of the medication he was taking, managing only that it was "a little blue pill." He offered to withdraw, but McGovern allowed him to stay on the ticket and see what happened. But, as McGovern speechwriter Robert Shrum described, "The dialogue was so consumed by the Eagleton issue that nothing else the presidential candidate said would be heard."[18] Within two weeks, McGovern asked Eagleton to withdraw, citing the controversy as a distraction. An ad hoc Democratic National Committee meeting approved Kennedy brother-in-law and former Camelot figure Sargent Shriver as the new nominee. [19] McGovern identified the "Eagleton affair," as it came to be known, as the main reason for his decisive defeat. He called it "the number one news and editorial development of that campaign. It overshadowed the Watergate scandal as a subject of journalistic concern. It—not Watergate, not Vietnam, not the American economy—was *the* political story of 1972."[20]

In 1973, recently reelected Vice President Spiro Agnew faced imminent indictment on charges relating to political corruption. Although President Richard Nixon had joked about Agnew being his insurance against impeachment, the White House began to fear the prospect of a double impeachment. Over several months rumors swirled and information dripped out. By September, Nixon's team persuaded Agnew to resign.

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[17] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered*, 61.
[18] Shrum, *No Excuses*, 47.
[19] Shrum, *No Excuses*, 48-49.
[20] Mark Hiller and Douglas Kriner, "Institutional Change and the Dynamics of Vice Presidential Selection," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (September 2008): 406-407.

He pleaded nolo contendere, paid $160,000 in back taxes, and received a suspended sentence and a $10,000 fine. Nixon appointed House Majority Leader Gerald Ford to the vice presidency under the new rules of the Twenty-fifth Amendment.[21] Before he was able to move into the vice president's official residence, he succeeded to the presidency following Nixon's resignation.[22] The first (and thus far only) unelected president, Ford appointed New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller to the vice presidency under the procedures of the Twenty-fifth Amendment.[23] In 1976, Ford ran for election in his own right, but as an incumbent president running without an incumbent vice president.[24]

The selection process came into attention for the scandals of both 1972 vice presidential nominees. Most observers believed a more thorough selection process would have unearthed Agnew's and Eagleton's problems before their nominations.[25] In 1976, *The New York Times* described the situation thus: "In a way that is unprecedented in recent years, the eyes of the nation are focused on the Democratic selection for the Vice Presidency; rarely if ever in this century has the country been so conscious of the importance of the choice."[26] Concerns about the vice presidency's recent turmoil prompted scholarly, legislative, and popular proposals for reform.

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[21] Mark O. Hatfield, with the Senate Historical Office, "Spiro Theodore Agnew (1969-1973)," *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789-1993* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), pp. 481-488.
[22] Paul C. Light, "The Institutional Vice Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 13, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 201.
[23] Mark O. Hatfield, with the Senate Historical Office, "Nelson A. Rockefeller (1974-1977)," *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789-1993* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), pp. 505-512.
[24] Tom Wicker, "How to Choose a Vice President," *New York Times*, August 23, 1988.
[25] Tom Wicker, "No F.B.I. Needed to Pick Veep," *New York Times*, June 20, 1976.
[26] Editorial, "Vice-Presidential Candidate," *New York Times*, July 13, 1976.

FDR aide Benjamin V. Cohen proposed separate, simultaneous elections for president and vice president, chosen from the parties' nominees for the offices.[27] Former Massachusetts Governor Endicott Peabody suggested that vice presidential candidates be drawn only from those who participated in presidential primaries.[28] He offered that primary voters could be allowed two votes to ensure the nomination of a like-minded ticket.[29] Rosemary Ginn, chair of the GOP Delegates and Organization Committee pushed to have the vice presidential nomination precede the presidential nomination at Republican National Conventions. Under this system, candidates would run for the office in the same public fashion as presidential candidates and be chosen independently. Thus, candidates would undergo the public scrutiny that comes with a campaign and avoid a selection based on the narrow political calculations of the presidential candidate.[30] Former vice presidential nominees Representative William Miller and Sargent Shriver both supported what *Newsweek* described as "a separate-but-nearly-equal convention to nominate the Veep."[31] Senator Robert Griffin introduced a constitutional amendment that would adapt the procedures of the Twenty-fifth Amendment: presidential candidates would run solo, then, upon victory, submit their vice presidential choice to both houses of Congress for advice and consent. Representative James O'Hara and historian and Kennedy aide Arthur Schlesinger Jr. both proposed abolishing the vice presidency altogether.[32]

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[27] Schlesinger, "On the Presidential Succession," 482.
[28] Endicott Peabody, "For a Grassroots Vice-Presidency," *New York Times*, January 25, 1974.
[29] Warren Weaver, "Reforms in Choosing Running Mate Sought," *New York Times*, August 7, 1972.
[30] Weaver, "Reforms in Choosing."
[31] Sandra Salmans, Eleanor Clift, and James Doyle, "Now, the Veepstakes," *Newsweek*, June 21, 1976, 18.
[32] Editorial, "Choosing Vice President," *New York Times*, January 15, 1974.
Schlesinger, "Presidential Succession."

In response to the Eagleton fiasco, the Democratic National Committee appointed a commission headed by former Vice President Humphrey to propose changes to the process. In December 1973, the Humphrey Commission delivered its proposal to the full Democratic National Committee. According to *The New York Times*, its recommendations included a period of "at least 48 hours between selection of the party's Presidential and Vice-Presidential nominees, accommodated by adding a fifth day to future conventions," and the option to "defer the choice of a running mate for up to three weeks, [and have the DNC] act as a Vice-Presidential Convocation to consider the choice."[33]

The Institute of Politics at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government also convened a Study Group on Vice-Presidential Selection. In its June 1976 report, the Study Group's recommendations included:

- Moving the presidential nomination earlier and the vice presidential nomination later within party conventions;
- Establishing formal advisory committees within the parties, and requiring presidential contenders to submit their preferred running mates to the committees;
- Conducting FBI background checks on prospective candidates; and
- Increasing media coverage of vice presidential nominees.[34]

By 1976, none of these proposals had advanced. But under the Democrats' new nominating rules, now better established and understood, Carter secured the nomination

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[33] Associated Press, "Democrats Assay Vice-Presidency," *New York Times*, December 15, 1973.
[34] Institute of Politics, *Report of the Study Group On Vice-Presidential Selection* (Cambridge: John Fitzgerald Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1976), 10-22.

through binding primaries five weeks ahead of the Democratic National Convention. Carter thus had the one element all the reform proposals shared: more time to deliberate.

Carter's process reflected his political style. He had a reputation as methodical, analytical, deliberative – and he lived up to it.[35] This sort of decision-making reinforced Carter's campaign themes of transparency, honesty, and competence.[36] By conducting a thorough, open process, Carter demonstrated his commitment to good government. Finally, as an unconventional candidate, Carter sought any advantage he could attain. Freed from the traditions surrounding the process, he expressed eagerness to do things differently. The politics encouraged Carter to choose his running mate through a new procedure.

Although nothing precluded Carter from deciding and announcing his running mate in the traditional 24-hour period, Carter started considering the vice presidency early. The preliminary running mate search started on April 17, when Carter received a memo from his staff regarding possible procedures.[37] On June 2, Carter began sorting through a staff-prepared list of 300-400 Democratic figures.[38] This list included senators, representatives, governors, mayors, and university presidents, among others.[39]

From the early stages of the selection process, Carter relied on his close friend and attorney Charles Kirbo, in addition to campaign manager Hamilton Jordan and press

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[35] Peter Goldman, "Sizing up Carter; The Question of Character," *Newsweek*, September 13, 1976, 22.
[36] Walter R. Mears, "Image, Organization Shape Vote, Sharp Distinctions on Issues Not Seen," *Panama City News-Herald*, March 15, 1976.
Peter Goldman et al., "Carter Takes the Town," *Newsweek*, July 19, 1976, 13.
[37] Charles Mohr, "Choice of Mondale Helps to Reconcile the Liberals," *New York Times*, July 16, 1976.
[38] Kenneth Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale for Ticket," *Los Angeles Times*, July 16, 1976.
[39] Mohr, "Choice of Mondale Helps."

secretary Jody Powell.[40] According to *Newsweek*, "Kirbo is Carter's senior and most trusted adviser, a man whose values and life-style closely reflect Carter's own."[41] (Kirbo's age – 59 – also provided an advantage. Powell explained that "it would be presumptuous" for one of Carter's young top aides to interrogate senior Democratic politicians.[42])

On June 9, Carter became the apparent nominee. Facing questions about his running mate search, he said that he would probably not announce his choice until the Democratic National Convention in New York, July 12-15.[43] The Carter campaign feared the convention would be boring and thought the selection of a running mate might add some "suspense." By drawing out the process, Carter "played it for what it was worth."[44]

At the time, presidential candidates did not typically campaign publicly between securing the nomination (which occurred at the conventions) and Labor Day – allowing Carter to devote much of his time to choosing a running mate.[45] Furthermore, Carter benefited from the continuing GOP nomination battle between President Gerald Ford and former California Governor Ronald Reagan. Without needing to campaign, Carter shifted to a mature selection process while the Republicans fought.[46] And, most important, Carter believed that he had a responsibility to make the best possible decision.[47] The

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[40] Richard L. Madden, "Carter Asking Written Reports from Prospects for No. 2 Spot," *New York Times*, July 9, 1976.
[41] Daniel Chu and Eleanor Clift, "Carter's Gray Eminence," *Newsweek*, July 12, 1976, 22.
[42] Sandra Salmans, Eleanor Clift, and James Doyle, "Royal Progress," *Newsweek*, July 4, 1976, 83.
[43] Charles Mohr, "Carter Reticent on Running Mate," *New York Times*, June 10, 1976.
[44] Goldman et al., "Carter Takes the Town."
[45] Salmans, Clift, and Doyle, "Now, the Veepstakes."
[46] "Role Reversal: Democrats Unite Behind Carter but G.O.P. Battles On," *New York Times*, June 13, 1976.
[47] R.W. Apple Jr., "Carter Gives Insight on Decision-Making," *New York Times*, July 15, 1976.

recent failures of vice presidential selection loomed large. One *New York Times* piece observed that "No more Eagletons, no more Agnews," became "a staff motto."[48]

Within the first week of June, Carter narrowed the list to 24 names, then to 14, and began polling on the candidates.[49] On June 14, Carter began reading "large notebooks," which contained more detailed biographies, voting records, political analysis, and press articles.[50] The next day he began surveying about 45 "distinguished Americans" by phone.[51]

On June 17, Carter and his team held their first formal meetings on the vice presidential nomination.[52] They promised a written statement outlining the procedures, but dropped that idea within a week.[53] Although polling on 14 names, the campaign leaked 16 names to *The New York Times*. As the *Times* piece clarified, "it is known that the size of his list is essentially cosmetic. Most of those on it are not in serious contention for final consideration."[54] *Newsweek* took the analysis one step further, observing that Carter included women, African Americans, mayors, and liberals to appeal to important party constituencies.[55]

By June 20, Carter had settled on eight finalists: Senators Edmund Muskie of Maine, John Glenn of Ohio, Walter Mondale of Minnesota, Henry Jackson of

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[48] James T. Wooten, "Carter Against F.B.I. Check of Possible Running Mates," *New York Times*, June 18, 1976.
[49] Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."
[50] Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."
Wooten, "Carter Against."
Goldman et al., "Carter Takes the Town."
Kenneth Reich, "Carter Collecting Data on Potential Running Mates," *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 1976.
[51] Charles Mohr, "Carter Ends Interviews on Running Mate," *New York Times*, July 13, 1976.
Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."
[52] Kenneth Reich, "Carter to Ask 'Distinguished Americans' to Evaluate List of Possible Running Mates," *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 1976.
[53] Kenneth Reich, "Carter to Trim Running-Mate List to 5," *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 1976.
[54] Wooten, "Carter Against."
[55] Salmans, Clift, and Doyle, "Now, the Veepstakes."

Washington, Frank Church of Idaho, Adlai Stevenson III of Illinois, Abraham Ribicoff of Connecticut, and Representative Peter Rodino Jr. of New Jersey.[56] (Carter had met individually with Muskie, Jackson, and Ribicoff, among other senators, on a late June trip to Washington, D.C.[57]) Ribicoff withdrew from consideration early in the process.[58]

At the end of June, the campaign asked executive officers at Atlanta papers to discuss the candidates with journalistic colleagues in the candidates' home states and to pass along relevant information.[59] Powell also called candidates' hometown politicians and journalists directly to ask, "What's the story?" and Kirbo conferred with party leaders in Washington. Kirbo then began interviews with candidates in Washington, D.C. [60] He discussed general political and philosophical issues and principles with each candidate for about an hour, and left a two- or three-page questionnaire.[61]

Carter, Kirbo, Jordan, Powell, and former U.S. Circuit Court Judge Griffin Bell developed the questionnaire based on criteria that were important to Carter and experiences of previous national tickets.[62] Carter explained: "We've very carefully evolved a complete list of questions that I think are very probing and complete. They involve attitudes toward the [draft Democratic] platform, [and] financial investments, previous contributions or other actions which may be some embarrassment."[63] Kirbo described them as "quite probing and quite personal questions," adding to the list

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[56] Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."
[57] James T. Wooten, "Carter, in the Capital, Wins Fellow Democrats' Praise," *New York Times*, June 25, 1976.
[58] Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."
[59] Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."
[60] Sandra Salmans, Eleanor Clift, and John J. Lindsay, "Question Time," *Newsweek*, July 12, 1976, 19.
[61] Madden, "Carter Asking."
[62] Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."
[63] Kenneth Reich, "Carter Interviews to Start with Muskie," *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1976.

"income-tax returns, health, marital problems."[64] The last subject related to a concern he expressed to *The New York Times* "about the scope of the recent sex scandals on Capitol Hill," (referring to recent scandals involving prominent Congressmen Wilbur Mills and Wayne Hays).[65] According to *The New York Times*, the questionnaire also addressed "experiences in civil and criminal courtrooms," and "mental balance."[66] Two of the financial questions were:

> Have your federal or state tax returns been the subject of any audit or investigation or inquiry at any time? If so, explain.

and

> Has a tax lien or other collection procedure ever been instituted against you by federal, state or local authorities? If so, please give full details.[67]

A team of lawyers and Arthur Andersen & Co. accountants reviewed the candidates' financial reports.[68] The questionnaire concluded with the infamous "Eagleton question:"

> Without details, is there or has there been anything in your personal life which you feel, if known, may be of embarrassment in the Presidential election this year in the event you should be a candidate?
>
> What about any near relative?[69]

The campaign began collecting questionnaires July 5.[70] Muskie declined to return the questionnaire, believing that as a former governor, senior senator, and 1968 vice presidential nominee, he had already undergone vetting. The *Los Angeles Times* observed

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[64] Goldman et al., "Carter Takes the Town."
[65] Wooten, "Carter Against."
[66] Mohr, "Choice of Mondale Helps."
[67] Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."
[68] R.W. Apple Jr., "Carter Promises No. 2 Spot Will Go to 1 of 7 Queried," *New York Times*, July 12, 1976.
[69] Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."
[70] Mohr, "Choice of Mondale Helps."

that Muskie "apparently did not hurt himself with Carter by declining to fill out the form."[71]

Following a strategy session with Kirbo, Jordan, and Powell on July 3, Powell briefed reporters.[72] In the following days, Carter would interview the final candidates at his home in Plains. Although willing to meet candidates in Atlanta, Washington, New York, or their homes, he preferred Plains because there he enjoyed more privacy and comfort.[73] At this stage, *The New York Times* reported, "A highly knowledgeable source said that the three men with the best chances of being selected by Mr. Carter were [Glenn, Church, and Mondale]."[74] While remaining tight-lipped on details, the campaign would announce the meetings as they happened. The *Los Angeles Times* explained that "Carter had decided to disclose the names one by one so that if he chose to add someone else at the end of the interview period, the person would not be publicly placed in a different category from the others." Powell also announced that the campaign would disclose the names of all remaining candidates by the end of the week and would not honor any request from a candidate to keep their inclusion secret. The same *L.A. Times* piece remarked:

> The reasons for this seem clear. Carter is eager to give the press and public a chance to comment on the relative merits of the contenders before he announces his final choice […] Not only will Carter thus get some reading on public reaction to the various possibilities but he stands a greater chance of finding out if there is any devastatingly negative information on any of them.[75]

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[71] Jack Nelson, "Mondale and Muskie Believed Top Choices," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 1976.
[72] Charles Mohr, "Carter Confers on Running-Mate," *New York Times*, July 3, 1976.
[73] Reich, "Carter Collecting Data."
Salmans, Clift, and Lindsay, "Question Time."
[74] Charles Mohr, "Carter to Begin Talks on Ticket," *New York Times*, July 5, 1976.
[75] Kenneth Reich, "Running-Mate Hopefuls to Visit Carter," *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1976.

Ed Muskie and his wife arrived in Plains in the early morning hours of Monday, July 5 and joined Carter for a brief press conference.[76] According to *Newsweek* Muskie and Carter "huddled for an hour then and four more the next day, beginning with a 9 a.m. wake-up knock by the ex-governor himself at Muskie's guest-room door."[77] Around noon, Carter and Muskie took a walk around the small town, shaking hands and chatting with reporters in a strolling press conference. They described their sessions as focused not on policy issues or Muskie's qualifications, but on the presidency, the vice presidency, and relations with Congress. Although heartened by this interest, Muskie harbored some doubt about joining the ticket, knowing he would have to give up his Senate seat. "My view is that I don't make any decision until Governor Carter has made a decision." *The New York Times* reported that Carter concluded Muskie was well qualified. [78]

On the morning of Thursday, July 8, Fritz and Joan Mondale arrived in Plains to meet the Carters. Mondale and Carter discussed various issues, especially civil rights and forced school busing.[79] Their conversation then turned to the structure of the vice presidency. Informed by his close relationship with former Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Mondale shared Carter's interest in developing a stronger, more active office. Carter told him: "I think some presidents in the past were uncomfortable with the presence of their own vice president. They were worried about their mortality, and their

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[76] Charles Mohr, "Carter Describes Muskie as Qualified For Ticket," *New York Times*, July 6, 1976.
[77] Goldman et al., "Carter Takes the Town."
[78] Mohr, "Carter Describes Muskie."
[79] Walter F. Mondale with David Hage, *The Good Fight: A Life in Liberal Politics* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 161.
Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."

vice president only reminded them of it." But, he added, he did not share that discomfort.[80] Mondale impressed Carter with his preparation. Carter recalled:

> I asked him a question: What do you think the relation ought to be between the Vice President and the President? He knew what he wanted to say. He'd carefully considered it and he knew that relationship. And I said, "What do you think the relationship ought to be between the Vice President and the Cabinet?" He had a very thorough, carefully considered answer. Same thing about foreign affairs, same thing about interrelationships with Congress. He had thought about nuances of difference about a Vice President's impact dealing with the senators and House members.[81]

In his initial interview with Kirbo, Mondale mentioned that he had "mild" hypertension rendered harmless by medication. In Plains, Mondale and Carter discussed the condition and Mondale delivered a report from his physician explaining it.[82] Mondale's physician told the press that besides his blood pressure, Mondale enjoyed "absolutely top-notch health."[83]

Carter and Mondale's conversation also touched on concerns that Mondale may not have the drive for a national campaign. When Mondale abandoned his own nascent presidential bid in late 1974, he explained, "I do not have the overwhelming desire to be President which is essential for the kind of campaign that is required."[84] He also famously said "I don't want to spend the next two years in Holiday Inns."[85] But, as a *New York Times* piece described, to Carter "what were agonies for Mr. Mondale are not the price of political life but the pleasure. [Carter] is a grinding, ground-level campaigner of the pre-electronic era." The article quoted Carter saying "Running for President has not

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[80] Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 162.
[81] "Excerpts from Carter's News Conference."
[82] Apple, "Carter Promises No. 2 Spot."
[83] Nelson, "Mondale and Muskie Believed."
[84] Christopher Lydon, "Mondale Gives up Presidency Race," *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1974.
[85] George F. Will, "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Liberal," *Newsweek*, May 3, 1976, 100.

been an ordeal for me."[86] According to *Newsweek*, Mondale's apparent squeamishness for the campaign made him "suspect in Carter's Spartan eyes." The "guts question" was reportedly the main focus of Mondale's interview with Kirbo.[87] But, Carter later explained, in their interview Mondale contended that "had he thought he maintained a chance to be President he would have stuck with the race." This new tactical insight eased Carter's concerns.[88]

Carter and Mondale then walked through downtown Plains into a peanut field, discussing their backgrounds. Mondale later concluded that "it was a test—this was his community and these were his people and he wanted to see how I reacted."[89] At the end of their stroll, they talked to the press at the railroad depot. *The New York Times* reported that "Carter dismissed as unfounded" the notion that Mondale "was too liberal to be a compatible Vice-Presidential running mate."[90] He claimed "almost complete compatibility between us on the basic issues that face our country," but also asserted that he had no interest in a vice president "who would be subservient to me or so flexible that they could accommodate any position that I might take that would be different from their own."[91]

The press conference also addressed questions about the rigors of the campaign. Carter declared that "there's no doubt in my mind" that Mondale would embrace the grind of the campaign.[92] Mondale responded to a question about his Holiday Inn

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[86] Christopher Lydon, "A Candidate Also Is a Special Kind of Animal: Mondale Found He Wasn't," *New York Times*, October 26, 1975.
[87] Goldman et al., "Carter Takes the Town."
[88] Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."
[89] Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 162-163.
[90] Charles Mohr, "Carter Confers with Mondale and Glenn," *New York Times*, July 9, 1976.
[91] Kenneth Reich, "Carter Says He's Compatible with Mondale, Glenn," *Los Angeles Times*, July 9, 1976.
[92] Mohr, "Carter Confers."

comments, joking "I've checked, and they've all been redecorated. They're marvelous places to stay."[93] The *Los Angeles Times* reported "Mondale openly declared that he wanted to be Carter's running mate."[94]

After Mondale's departure, John Glenn and his wife visited Plains to spend the afternoon with Carter. Glenn arrived amid considerable hype.[95] But, as the media often reported, Glenn was a freshman senator with 18 months of experience in politics and virtually no background in foreign affairs.[96] The pair discussed major policy issues and the institution of the vice presidency, but Glenn seemed unprepared.[97]

Carter spent Friday in Plains preparing his nomination acceptance speech and fishing.[98] On Saturday, he departed for New York for the convention and the campaign completed a poll on voters' preference among the seven finalists. Rodino performed the best, followed by Muskie, with Mondale "either third or fourth," the *Los Angeles Times* reported.[99]

As Carter arrived in New York, according to *The New York Times*, "there was a growing consensus among politicians that he would select either [Mondale, Glenn, or Muskie]. Furthermore, Mr. Carter talked frequently with Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota by telephone in the last week, which seemed to point toward Mr. Mondale, who entered politics as a Humphrey protégé."[100]

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[93] Mondale, *The Good Fight*, 163.
[94] Reich, "Carter Says He's Compatible."
[95] Kenneth Reich, "Glenn Gets Invitation to Meet with Carter," *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1976.
[96] Charles Mohr, "Carter Seeing Mondale and Glenn Today on No. 2 Spot," *New York Times*, July 8, 1976.
[97] David M. Alpern and Eleanor Clift, "Grits and Fritz," *Newsweek*, July 26, 1976, 26.
[98] Kenneth Reich, "Carter Ready to Fly to N.Y. to Claim Nomination Prize," *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 1976.
[99] Times Wire Services, "Muskie Will Probably Be No. 2, O'Neill Predicts," *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1976.
[100] R.W. Apple Jr., "Carter Arrives and Establishes Convention Base," *New York Times*, July 11, 1976.

Organized labor – a key traditional Democratic constituency – strongly supported Mondale. He had strong ties to the unions, reinforced by many labor leaders' loyalty to Humphrey.[101] One AFL-CIO vice president told the *Los Angeles Times* "Mondale would be a symbol for us of Carter's real political stance." *The New York Times* reported that "many party traditionalists" promoted Muskie, "to remedy [Carter's] weakness among Roman Catholics."[102] House Democrats pushed Representative Thomas Foley of Washington, who had not been on Carter's original list of 16.[103] Several black leaders in the Democratic Party urged Carter to select a black running mate – L.A. Mayor Tom Bradley in particular.[104] Another black group held a press conference to advance Representative John Conyers Jr. of Michigan.[105] Representative Barbara Jordan of Texas staged a press conference during the convention to "disavow" emerging efforts to nominate her after activists circulated petitions for her nomination and New York Representative Bella Abzug declared Jordan her first choice for the nomination.[106]

Saturday night, Carter met with Henry Jackson for two-and-a-half hours at the campaign's headquarters hotel in New York.[107] They discussed the Middle East, defense spending, and energy, among other subjects. In their subsequent press conference, Carter and Jackson expressed agreement on defense spending cuts, despite Jackson's reputation as a hawk. Carter also revealed that Jackson was the first candidate invited to discuss the

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[101] Harry Bernstein, "Labor Likes Mondale for No. 2., Will Back Ticket Although Meany Will Stay Home," *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1976.
[102] R.W. Apple Jr., "Party Is United," *New York Times*, July 13, 1976.
[103] Jack Nelson, "Harmony, Unity Seen as Democrats Gather in N.Y.," *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1976.
[104] Paul Delaney, "Carter Makes Peace with Black Leaders and Renews Pledge of High-Level Jobs," *New York Times*, July 13, 1976.
[105] Apple, "Carter Promises No. 2 Spot."
[106] Associated Press, "Miss Jordan Disavows Drive to Nominate Her For Vice President," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 1976.
[107] Kenneth Reich, "Carter Pledges Effort to Meet Urban Needs: Arrives in N.Y.," *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1976.

vice presidency, although previous obligations had kept Jackson from visiting Plains. Carter insisted that he had still not made a decision.[108] But the *Los Angeles Times* piece observed, "Neither Jackson nor Carter gave any indication by their expression or words that they were taking the occasion all that seriously."[109]

On Sunday, July 11, Carter met with Peter Rodino for an hour and fifteen minutes. When they addressed reporters, Carter commended Rodino's leadership presiding over the Nixon impeachment proceedings as chair of the House Judiciary Committee. He declared, "I certainly find Congressman Rodino to be qualified [for the presidency] in every respect."[110] The next day, however, Rodino saw Carter again and removed himself from consideration, citing, in *The New York Times*' language, "recurring glaucoma that requires periodic treatment and would impair his ability to campaign."[111] In this meeting, Rodino supported Mondale's nomination.[112] In his presidential memoir, Carter wrote that Rodino withdrew himself because of his wife's health, not his own.[113]

Carter met with Frank Church on the morning of Monday, July 12, the first day of the convention. After their 90-minute meeting, Carter praised Church's foreign policy expertise and expressed "great admiration for him," acknowledging that Church defeated Carter in several primaries. Carter also discussed his intention to reevaluate the U.S. intelligence community if elected – an area in which Church had demonstrated

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[108] Charles Mohr, "Carter Sees No Conflict with Jackson On Defense," *New York Times*, July 11, 1976.
[109] Reich, "Carter Pledges Effort."
[110] Nelson, "Mondale and Muskie Believed."
[111] Kenneth Reich, "Rodino Says No; 6 Others Still in Race For 2nd Spot," *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1976.
[112] Apple, "Party Is United."
[113] Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, University of Arkansas (Fayetteville, AR.: University of Arkansas Press, 1995), 39.

expertise.[114] In *The New York Times*' estimation, "Senator Church, normally among the most articulate of men, seemed strangely subdued and uncomfortable" during the press conference.[115]

That afternoon, Carter held his final vice presidential interview, with Adlai Stevenson III. As with Church, they met for about 90 minutes before adjourning to a press conference.[116] In the press conference, Stevenson faced questions about his supposed "dullness." *The New York Times* reported, "Stevenson gamely and wittily parried" these queries.[117] Carter joked, "I consider dullness part of the compatibility, not part of the contrast." As only Mondale had yet done, Stevenson confirmed his unequivocal interest. The *Los Angeles Times* noted that "there seemed to be an unusually warm rapport between the two."[118]

Carter spent Tuesday working on his acceptance speech and considering the vice presidential selection. The campaign polled a large swath of its staff, yielding "overwhelming" support for Mondale.[119] Kirbo met with Glenn once more to discuss reports of potential improprieties in the Senator's financial and tax records.[120] Carter told *The New York Times*, "Obviously I am boiling it down in my mind. I am in that process. But I haven't eliminated anyone." Carter spent the evening watching the convention

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[114] Times Wire Services, "Wallace to Meet Backers in Bid to Stem Rebellion," *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 1976.
[115] Mohr, "Carter Ends Interviews."
[116] Reich, "Rodino Says No."
[117] Mohr, "Carter Ends Interviews."
[118] Reich, "Rodino Says No."
[119] Charles Mohr, "Wide Speculation: Candidate Is 'Boiling Down' in His Mind a Final Selection," *New York Times*, July 14, 1976.
[120] Jack Nelson, "McGovern and Humphrey Praise Carter, Assail Record of GOP," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 1976.

proceedings on television with Kirbo and began his "sorting process."[121] But Carter still intended to gather all his notes and "do the reviewing tomorrow."[122] Following the interview process, the rankings appeared to hold Mondale leading, followed by Muskie, Glenn, Stevenson, and Church. Jackson (and Rodino before he dropped out) appeared the least likely.[123] The campaign conducted a poll of the Alabama and Georgia delegations to gauge the potential Southern response to liberal and northern candidates.[124]

By the morning of Wednesday, July 14, Carter had "one man pre-eminent in my mind. It's conceivable that I'll change my mind—I'm not positive yet—but I don't think so."[125] That afternoon he met with nine Democratic governors who largely supported Mondale for the second spot. Carter changed earlier plans to inform the finalists of their status 24 hours in advance, instead deciding to call them right before his news conference scheduled for Thursday at 10 a.m.[126] The Carter campaign had the Secret Service install direct telephone lines to the hotel rooms of three of the finalists.[127]

On the morning of Thursday, July 15, the press focused on Mondale and Muskie as the likely choice.[128] At 8:26 a.m., Carter called Mondale to ask, "Would you like to run with me?"[129] An hour and a half later, he told a press conference at his hotel, "I have two announcements to make. One is that I've decided to accept the nomination of

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[121] Mohr, "Wide Speculation."
Apple, "Carter Gives Insight."
[122] Mohr, "Wide Speculation."
[123] Reich, "Rodino Says No."
[124] Reich, "Why Carter Picked Mondale."
[125] Apple, "Carter Gives Insight."
[126] Charles Mohr, "Candidate Silent: Mondale Named Most in Rumors—Muskie Not Ruled Out," *New York Times*, July 15, 1976.
[127] United Press International, "Senators Listen For Ring," *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1976.
Alpern and Clift, "Grits and Fritz."
[128] Mohr, "Candidate Silent."
[129] Alpern and Clift, "Grits and Fritz."

President. And the other one is that I've asked to serve as my running mate—if the delegates will approve—Senator Walter Mondale from Minnesota."[130]

Carter's process received mixed reviews during and after. One *New York Times* article remarked at the start of the convention, "It is increasingly clear that the prolonged and laborious selection process that Mr. Carter has adopted was a serious effort to gather and assess evidence and not an exercise in political courtesy or contrived suspense for the press."[131] A *Newsweek* piece claimed, "The search won Carter points for prudence," and called it "far more extensive and sophisticated than that employed by most Presidential nominees."[132] *The New York Times* thrice praised Carter's process in editorials, asserting that without dramatic reform of the process, Carter's procedure "is probably the best that could be worked out."[133]

But many observers believed Carter's process to be solely performance. Some dismissed it as "lip service" to the acknowledged challenges of the vice presidency; one *Newsweek* story wrote that Carter "uttered the proper seasonal commonplaces" about choosing his vice president differently and changing the vice presidency.[134] In 1992, Democratic nominee Governor Bill Clinton called Carter's procedure "the Noah's Ark routine."[135] A *Los Angeles Times* article declared, "Carter's search for a vice presidential

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[130] "Excerpts from Carter's News Conference Presenting Mondale as Choice For Vice President," *New York Times*, July 16, 1976.
[131] Mohr, "Carter Ends Interviews."
[132] Peter Goldman et al., "The Jimmycrats," *Newsweek*, July 26, 1976, 16.
Alpern and Clift, "Grits and Fritz."
[133] Vice-Presidential Candidate, *New York Times*, July 13, 1976.
Choosing Number Two, *New York Times*, July 9, 1976.
Mr. Carter Comes to a Party, *New York Times*, July 11, 1976.
[134] Goldman et al., "The Jimmycrats."
Goldman et al., "Carter Takes the Town."
[135] Peter Goldman et al., "Manhattan Project: 1992," *Newsweek*, November/December 1992, 40.

nominee has been one of the most unusual in history."[136] Still coverage from all corners used language like "elaborate," "mindful," "deliberate," "thorough," "painstaking," "methodical," "sound," and "a striking contrast to the hurried and soon-disastrous Vice-Presidential selection made at the 1972 convention."[137]

After the election, Carter and Mondale expanded and clarified their earlier ideas about the vice presidency and devised a new model. Mondale became a crucial general advisor in the Carter White House, totally integrated in the executive branch. Scholars and pundits credit the Carter-Mondale partnership with igniting the emergence of the vice presidency as an office of substantive responsibilities and political relevance. Their relationship shaped the institution for all subsequent vice presidents, and was only possible because of the care Carter took in selecting his partner.

The innovations Mondale and Carter instituted are prerogatives that contemporary vice presidents take for granted, including participation in all Cabinet, NSC, and Economic Policy Group meetings; a standing invitation to all political meetings; inclusion in all of the president's paper flow; a weekly private lunch; direct placement of staff within the national security and domestic policy operations; a permanent Capitol Hill staff; and a West Wing office.[138]

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[136] Nelson, "Mondale and Muskie Believed."
[137] Charles Mohr, "Carter Seeing Mondale and Glenn Today On No. 2 Spot," *New York Times*, July 8, 1976.
Mohr, "Choice of Mondale."
Wooten, "Carter Against."
Mohr, "Candidate Silent."
Choosing Number Two, *New York Times*, July 9, 1976.
[138] Paul Kengor, *Wreath Layer or Policy Player? The Vice President's Role in Foreign Policy* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2000), 86.

Carter and Mondale's partnership was good for both men, as well as for the institution of the vice presidency.[139] According to political scientist Paul Kengor, Mondale's "lauded loyalty to the president" was rewarded with Carter's consideration of his vice president as "his most senior adviser." The two also became close personal friends, with Carter calling Mondale "like a brother and a son," and Mondale remarking, "Never before has a vice president been so generously and so kindly treated by his president." Finally, "Mondale considered the role he played in elevating the stature of the vice presidency his greatest contribution during the Carter years."[140] Scholars Thomas E. Cronin and Michael A. Genovese sum up the academic consensus: "Mondale is credited with being perhaps the first in that job who regularly exercised substantive policy influence."[141] Carter and Mondale left a legacy of methodical vice presidential selection against which future processes would be judged.

Since Carter

Reagan secured the Republican nomination nearly two months in advance of the 1980 Republican National Convention and began considering his running mate choice then.[142] His campaign disavowed Carter's public process, saying "The one thing the Governor doesn't want to do, is have a re-enactment of Plains in which a lot of people were put through the humiliation of coming as supplicants to the farm country in Plains at

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[139] Petzold, "Modern American Vice Presidency," 20.
[140] Kengor, *Wreath Layer*, 88.
[141] Thomas E. Cronin and Michael A. Genovese, *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 219.
[142] William Endicott, "Reagan to Poll Party on Choice of Running Mate," *Los Angeles Times*, May 28, 1980.

all hours of the day and night."[143] Still, like Carter, the Reagan campaign conducted public opinion polling and some form of background checks, and planned the announcement for the last day of the convention.[144] But Reagan's team spent most of their time in the days before the announcement trying to structure a "co-presidency" by nominating former president Ford for vice president. When that effort collapsed, Reagan chose George H.W. Bush the traditional way: at the last minute in a convention hotel suite.[145] Despite the pick's compressed timeframe, it was made with greater care than the Eagleton decision. Bush's previous high profile positions required rigorous vetting. He served as Ambassador to the United Nations and Director of Central Intelligence – both jobs which required Senate confirmation and conferred top levels of security clearance. And as a rival in the 1980 nomination fight, the Reagan campaign had conducted opposition research on him.

In 1984, Walter Mondale's vice presidential selection process evoked Carter's procedures. In an early campaign memo on selection, Mondale's closest aide recommended many specific aspects of the Carter model, writing, "I think you should approach the process in the same way."[146] As Mondale conducted his search, observers often compared it to the 1976 system that elevated him to the national ticket.[147] (These comparisons proved faulty in the coming weeks as the media reported a string of apparent financial improprieties on the part of Ferraro and her husband. As the controversy

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[143] Howell Raines, "Reagan Studying an Opinion Poll On His Potential Running Mates," *New York Times*, July 4, 1980.
[144] Raines, "Reagan Studying an Opinion."
[145] Richard V. Allen, "George Herbert Walker Bush; The Accidental Vice President," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 30, 2000, 36.
[146] Richared Moe, "Memorandum for the Vice President, re: The Vice Presidential Selection Process," April 20, 1984, http://www.mnhs.org/library/findaids/00697_Political.xml (accessed March 30, 2012).
[147] Dan Balz and David S. Broder, "Mayor Bradley, Mondale Swap Praise in Ticket-Filling Search," *Washington Post*, June 22, 1984.

mounted, Mondale's campaign chairman admitted that the campaign spent only 48 hours reviewing the family's finances.[148])

In 1988 and since, both parties' nominees' procedures resembled Carter's more than anything that had come before.

Barack Obama

Despite its distinctive context, the Carter model became virtually standard. Some elements have changed over time and some change campaign-to-campaign. Illinois Senator Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign employed a derivative process in choosing his running mate. As the most recent successful presidential ticket, it represents a meaningful example through which to evaluate the contemporary vice presidential selection process.

As Obama wrapped up his messy primary campaign victory over New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton in May, he began planning his vice presidential search. On June 4, the day after he clinched the Democratic nomination, he announced his three-person vetting committee.[149] Washington lawyer Jim Johnson helped run Mondale's 1984 campaign and ran the running mate search for Kerry in 2004; he would lead the Obama effort as well. Former Clinton Justice Department official Eric Holder and recent Obama confidant and ally Caroline Kennedy made up the rest of the team.[150] Johnson soon left the process after a controversy erupted over a favorable mortgage rate he received from

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[148] Ralph Blumenthal, "When the Press Vetted Geraldine Ferraro," *New York Times*, September 4, 2008. http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/09/04/when-the-press-vetted-geraldine-ferraro/ (accessed April 18, 2012).
[149] John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, *Game Change: Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin, and the Race of a Lifetime* (New York: Harper, 2010), 339.
[150] David Plouffe, *The Audacity to Win: the Inside Story and Lessons of Barack Obama's Historic Victory* (New York: Viking Adult, 2009), 284.

Countrywide Financial.[151] Obama campaign manager David Plouffe said the job of the vetting team was to "manage a network of attorneys, all volunteers, who would work around the clock to complete a thorough examination of potential VP candidates [and to] meet with party leaders to get their confidential ideas on nominees."[152] Their investigation of candidates included research of public records, personal questionnaires, and interviews with family members, friends, and associates. The only other participants in the selection process were Obama, Plouffe, and chief strategist David Axelrod.[153]

The small group held their first formal meeting on vice presidential selection in early June, secluded in a hotel conference room near their campaign headquarters in Chicago. At the meeting, they discussed, according to Plouffe, "every Democratic governor and senator, some House members, prominent mayors, business leaders, and some military leaders." From this collection, they constructed a preliminary list of approximately 20 people, "a mix of state, local, and federal elected officials; some former elected officials; and a former military person or two." Hillary Rodham Clinton was on the list.[154] Obama chatted with Plouffe daily, and by the next meeting, a couple of weeks later at Holder's office, they narrowed the list to about 10.[155] In July, the campaign conducted focus-group-testing on potential candidates.[156] The next meeting at Holder's office winnowed the list to six. By early August, it was down to three: Senators Joseph Biden of Delaware and Evan Bayh of Indiana, and Governor Tim Kaine of Virginia.[157]

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[151] Plouffe, *Audacity to Win*, 286.
[152] Plouffe, *Audacity to Win*, 284.
[153] Plouffe, *Audacity to Win*, 285.
[154] Plouffe, *Audacity to Win*, 284.
[155] Plouffe, *Audacity to Win*, 285.
[156] Heilemann and Halperin, *Game Change*, 339.
[157] Plouffe, *Audacity to Win*, 288.

In the next step, Obama interviewed the candidates one-on-one. This required involving Alyssa Mastromonaco, the campaign's director of scheduling and advance, who coordinated the sub rosa sessions. Plouffe recalled an interview procedure much different from Carter's highly-publicized system:

> The meetings all took place on the road, at hotels Barack happened to be in for the night. The "targets," as we called the VP contenders, were flown in very early, squired to the hotel before Obama and the road show arrived, secreted in through back and basement entrances, bunkered in a room they could not leave, and then furtively evacuated after the meeting through an alternate exit so no press would see them on their way out.[158]

Obama met Bayh in St. Louis, Kaine in a small Indiana town, and Biden in Minneapolis.[159] As the candidate set off for a brief vacation, he dispatched Plouffe and Axelrod to meet with the finalists. In one day, they met with Biden at home in Delaware, Bayh on vacation in West Virginia, and Kaine at the Governor's mansion in Virginia.[160] They reported to Obama that all three would be strong picks, with clear advantages and potential drawbacks. But they slightly favored Biden.[161]

In the final days of the process, the media reported that Biden, Bayh, and Kaine, were the most probable nominees, with Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius, and perhaps Clinton remaining in contention.[162] When Obama returned from Hawaii on August 17, he told Plouffe and Axelrod that he had decided to select Biden. On Thursday, August 21, he informed Biden, who immediately accepted. Two days later, Obama announced his running mate directly to supporters by text message. That afternoon he and Biden and

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[158] Plouffe, *Audacity to Win*, 288.
[159] Heilemann and Halperin, *Game Change*, 340.
[160] Plouffe, *Audacity to Win*, 290-293.
[161] Plouffe, *Audacity to Win*, 294.
[162] Adam Nagourney and Jeff Zeleny, "Obama Ready to Announce Running Mate," *New York Times*, August 19, 2008.

held a rally at the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois, where Obama announced his campaign for president in February 2007.[163]

Some presidential candidates between Carter and Obama introduced new elements to the process, with varying degrees of success. Some of these elements became standard, and some proved peculiarities of the time or candidate.

In 1984, Mondale announced his selection of Representative Geraldine Ferraro in a specially staged event in the Minnesota House of Representatives four days before the Democratic National Convention met in San Francisco.[164] Since then, only Vice President George H.W. Bush in 1988 has waited until the convention began to name his running mate.[165] That year, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis invited the candidates on his short list to appear with him at campaign rallies; he and Carter remain the only candidates to have their potential running mates publicly audition for the role.[166]

In 1988, Bush chose Senator Danforth Quayle with virtually no input and no consultation among staff and advisors until the last moment. This level of secrecy was at least partially possible because Bush conducted no interviews with candidates. Although no subsequent nominee has guarded his thinking to the same degree, the Bush campaign's official silence on the nature of the process and its subjects became the standard posture for campaigns to take.[167] Accordingly, four years later, Bill Clinton

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[163] Plouffe, *Audacity to Win*, 294-297.
[164] Peter Goldman, "Struggle For the Soul," *Newsweek*, November/December 1984, 81.
[165] *National Party Conventions: 1831-2000* (Washington: CQ Press, 2000).
[166] Tom Mathews, "Last-Minute Scuffles," *Newsweek*, November 21, 1988, 79.
[167] Peter Goldman, "Squall in New Orleans," *Newsweek*, November 21, 1988, 102.

became the first nominee to conduct clandestine interviews with potential vice presidential candidates.[168]

In the eight presidential elections since 1976, nine elements have emerged as standard parts of successful vice presidential selection:

- Time – Presumptive presidential nominees typically start their processes two or three months before their nominating conventions.
- Dedicated vetters – Campaigns appoint either a team of campaign outsiders, or detail campaign staff to focus exclusively on the selection and no other aspects of the campaign.
- Small circle – Beyond the vetters, the day-to-day campaign staff and advisors involved in the decision are limited to a small number of senior figures like campaign managers, chairs, and chief strategists. But the circle is not too small – it needs to allow some dissent and to use collective judgment to check raw intuition.
- Vetting – Campaigns conduct lawyer- and accountant-driven reviews of candidates' information. Usually collected in questionnaires, the topics include financial, medical, legal, political, and personal history. The survey typically concludes with the catchall "Eagleton question."
- Polling – Campaigns conduct public opinion polls on potential running mates to determine their name recognition, favorability, and political coloration.

[168] Goldman et al., "Manhattan Project: 1992."

- Interviews – Potential running mates interview first with senior campaign officials or vetters. The final candidates for the position interview one-on-one with the presidential candidate.
- Secrecy – Campaigns conduct the search with little or no official public comment. Candidates are not discussed on the record and the specifics of the process are kept as shielded as possible until the grand reveal.
- Disclosure of short list – Despite official secrecy, campaigns leak the names of those they are seriously considering in order to measure possible media and popular response and encourage media scrutiny before it is too late.
- Announcement event – Presidential candidates now introduce their running mates at media events staged specifically for this purpose. Such events often have some touch of gimmick that separates them from typical rallies. In 1988, Vice President George H.W. Bush announced his running mate at an elaborate waterfront rally at which he arrived by riverboat.[169] In 2004, Senator John Kerry announced his running mate by unveiling the new Kerry-Edwards logo on the side of his campaign plane.[170]

Although these components represent the typical selection playbook, they do not suggest strict adherence. For instance, Obama interviewed his final candidates before his advisors did so. But departure from these steps has hurt candidates before. In 1988 George H.W. Bush suffered for skipping interviews, consulting too few people, and not leaking the

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[169] Peter Goldman, "Squall in New Orleans," *Newsweek*, November 21, 1988, 102
[170] Jim Rutenberg, "Journalists Scramble, but a Secret Is Kept (mostly) Safe," *New York Times*, July 7, 2004.

name until immediately before the announcement. In 2008, John McCain's problematic selection of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin resulted from thin vetting and involving too many people in his thinking – which led to leaks that limited his options.[171] (The problems of these running mates will be addressed in Chapter III.)

Today's selection process emerged over decades of trial and error. Since the 1972 election, presidential candidates responded to the lessons of previous candidates with new approaches. As presidential candidates became the central figures in vice presidential selection, voters and the media began to hold candidates accountable for their choices. The next chapters address the changes in selection criteria that resulted from changes in the selection process.

[171] Heilemann and Halperin, *Game Change*, 572.

CHAPTER II
Bolster, Not Balance: Rethinking the Selection Metaphor

"Balance" has been the defining reference point in vice presidential selection for most of American history. But this framework has remained the same even as the vice presidency and vice presidential selection processes have changed. Contrast on national tickets remains a component of campaign strategy, but "balance" merits reevaluation. Must candidate contrast still denote ticket balance? How does that contrast shape the campaign and contribute to winning?

Balance by the Numbers

Jody Baumgartner discusses balance in his chapter on vice presidential selection, and examines the relationship between balance and victory in the vice presidency's "modern era." His modern era begins with the 1960 election, because "this was the first year that both presidential candidates selected their own vice presidential candidates," and it has been that way since.[1] Although this standard proves problematic for defining eras of the vice presidency itself, it is meaningful for evaluating vice presidential selection, candidacies, and campaigns.

Baumgartner evaluates the "balance" of modern presidential tickets (through 2004) with six criteria: diversity, region, ideology, experience, faction, and personal traits. Politically salient traits and political coloration are not simple to measure, and

[1] Jody C. Baumgartner, *The American Vice Presidency Reconsidered* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 3.

Baumgartner's categories exaggerate some trends and miss others. For instance, he includes age in "personal characteristics" along with personal/familial reputation and style on the stump. In this context, age would be more appropriately attached to other demographic measures within "diversity." That category includes religion, gender, and "racial or ethnic background," but Baumgartner discusses ethnicity through 2004 in a way that contemporary observers would see as anachronistic. He includes "a focus on particular salient issues" in his evaluation of "ideology," but also mentions that "a presidential candidate may be lacking in a particular area of policy expertise" as he describes balancing "experience." Nevertheless, Baumgartner introduces a meaningful lens for evaluating national tickets. His most important claim holds that, according to his metrics, "the more balanced ticket won every election through 1984 and lost every election since 1988."[2]

A reorganization of Baumgartner's categories illuminates other trends. His six broad categories should be regrouped, expanded, and distilled into three general categories that can be evaluated against more specific sub-criteria. (Charts corresponding to the following analysis on balance are included as an appendix.)

Baumgartner's "diversity" category includes assorted concepts that are not alike. These "identity" markers – gender, race, religion, and ethnicity deserve separate attention. Age (or generational diversity) belongs in this identity category as well.[*] Ethnicity here follows from the definition of presidential scholars Joseph A. Pika and

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[2] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered*, 79.

[*] Although age often signifies generational diversity, it sometimes proxies for other issues as well. For instance, older politicians likely have more and more diverse experience than younger ones. It is difficult to distinguish whether 47-year-old Barack Obama chose 65-year-old Joseph Biden for his age or extensive experience. Perhaps he sought both. In 1952, 61-year-old Dwight Eisenhower's choice of 39-year-old Richard Nixon suggested that he took the possibility of succession seriously.

John Anthony Maltese. They contend that before 1960, all presidential and vice presidential candidates had to "hail from English ethnic stock."[3]

Baumgartner lumps many possible differences of experience into one general category. But experiential balance can be evaluated by several different criteria: duration of experience, experience at different levels of government (national, state, local), experience within different branches of government (executive, legislative, judicial), and experience in foreign or domestic policy.

The remaining relevant criteria can go into a "politics" category. The crucial political characteristics of national tickets include region, association with an opposing candidate of a primary battle, ideology (strictly along the liberal-moderate-conservative spectrum), and insider-outsider status.[4]

Baumgartner's general point holds up: viewed as quantifiable elements across the last 50 years, the "more" balanced tickets tended to win through the 1984 election and lose since. But the Obama-Biden ticket won in 2008, despite being "more" balanced than McCain-Palin.

Despite the frequent chatter about the potential benefits of demographic diversity on the national ticket, identity politics in presidential campaigns has a tepid history. Of the 26 national tickets since 1960, ten have included a non-Protestant, non-white, or female candidate. Of those ten, only two have won – the first, Kennedy-Johnson, and the most recent, Obama-Biden.

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[3] Joseph A. Pika and John Anthony Maltese, *The Politics of the Presidency*, 7th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2008), 49.

[4] Biographical information about presidential and vice presidential candidates comes from several sources: Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency*; L. Edward Purcell, ed., *Vice Presidents: A Biographical Dictionary*, 4th ed. (New York: Facts on File, 2010); *National Party Conventions: 1831-2000* (Washington: CQ Press, 2000).

The goal of regional balance seems to persist, as do varieties of experience. But both have become so standard as to be obvious. Local and state governments have long been common first steps in a political career. Of the 33 presidential and vice presidential candidates since 1960, 20 have started their careers in subnational government – so creating a ticket that includes both national and subnational government experience comes relatively easily.[5] Because most tickets have had such experience – like regional balance – it indicates little about a ticket's potential success. But narrowing the question to the most recent position held prior to presidential and vice presidential nomination reveals the potential benefit of having both immediate national and subnational experience on a ticket. In the 13 presidential elections since 1960, such tickets have prevailed nine times and lost only three times.

Only once in the modern era has a presidential ticket lacked a candidate with military service: Obama-Biden in 2008. Sargent Shriver was the only major-party vice presidential nominee in the modern era who did not serve in elected office prior to his candidacy.

While ideology remains a crucial element in vice presidential selection, ideologically aligned, rather than balanced tickets have won the last five elections, starting in 1992. But all of those tickets have been balanced with both a Washington "insider" and "outsider." Only one such ticket has lost, McCain-Palin in 2008.[*] But

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[5] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered,* 44-45.

[*] Although much of McCain's Senate career placed him in the ideological center, he ran for president in both 2000 and 2008 as a conservative. For instance, he told a rally in 2000, "I am a conservative, my friends, a proud conservative." At a campaign stop in 2008, he asserted, "I am a conservative Republican." By 2010, *National Journal* ranked McCain the most conservative U.S. Senator.
"Sen. John McCain Attacks Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Republican Establishment as Harming GOP Ideals," *CNN Transcripts*, February 28, 2000.
http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0002/28/se.01.html (accessed April 16, 2012).
Elisabeth Bumiller, "2 Divergent McCain Moments, Rarely Mentioned," *New York Times*, March 24, 2008.

Beltway fixture John McCain ran as a "maverick" who bucked the ways of Washington. They lost to an ideologically aligned/inside-outside ticket. (All but one of those tickets has featured generational balance; the exception was Clinton and Gore – who were both among the youngest holders of their offices.) So a holistic application of political "balance" may now entail thematic alignment in some cases.

Baumgartner's empirical approach to evaluating balance raises several important questions, as do his claims about the impact of balance. How did the "balance" trump card become a losing hand? Did it even win elections in the first place, as Baumgartner and the conventional wisdom suggest? What happened between the 1984 and 1988 elections to change the effect of ticket balance? Why do candidates and campaigns continue to seek these forms of balance if, as Baumgartner apparently demonstrates, they do not yield electoral success?

The inability of the Baumgartner approach to address these questions teaches something about the subject itself. First, balance is nearly impossible to quantify precisely. For instance, Obama and Biden shared the same type of experience (the U.S. Senate and subnational legislatures), the same gender, and similar political stances. But they differed in race, religion, and age. McCain and Palin shared the "maverick" label and Western roots, but differed in gender, type and level of experience, and age. There is no unassailable way to determine which ticket was "more balanced." Second, the ahistorical, one-size-fits-all approach disregards campaigns' contexts. The American political environment changes rapidly. It requires different strategies from different candidates at different times. "Balance" in vice presidential selection was once a simple

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Reid Wilson, "McCain's Shift Makes Him Senate's Most Conservative," *National Journal*, February 24, 2011, page nr. http://www.nationaljournal.com/magazine/mccain-s-shift-makes-him-senate-s-most-conservative-20110224 (accessed April 16, 2012).

and broad requisite; when party organizations held sole authority in nominating the national ticket, the principle of "balance" kept the parties together. But changes in the presidential nomination process, post-nomination presidential campaigns, and American political alignment have undermined the primacy of ticket "balance" in constructing a ticket. If balance remains an important criterion, it may now be a particular approach, applied on a case-by-case basis to shore up specific weaknesses, extend the presidential nominee's narrative, broaden the ticket's appeal, and round out the intellectual core of the nascent White House team.

Traditional Balance

The language of "balance" on the national ticket is a relic of the parties' heyday, when parties ran presidential campaigns. Conventions determined the nominees – Democrats even required a two-thirds vote for theirs – and the party faithful carried out the electioneering. Party loyalty drove voting decisions, and candidates behaved accordingly. But the parties were often split by ideology, regional tensions, personal loyalties, and dramatic policy differences. Historian Allan Peskin describes the challenges of this "golden age of political partisanship:"

> The very importance of parties as institutions intensified the internal struggle to control the party's machinery and shape its program. Yet, at the same time, the political imperatives of an era characterized by high voter turnout, straight ticket voting, and close national elections dictated **a strategy of mobilizing one's own adherents rather than persuading the unpersuaded**. Since one disgruntled faction could deprive the national ticket of victory by sitting on its hands, party managers were compelled to **devote the bulk of their energies to securing party unity and enthusiasm**. [emphasis added] [6]

[6] Allan Peskin, "Who Were the Stalwarts? Who Were Their Rivals?: Republican Factions in the Gilded Age," *Political Science Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (Winter 1984-1985): 703.

A promise to "balance" the ticket with the second spot could mollify a powerful faction, thus securing the nomination, unified party support through Election Day, and quite possibly sustained loyalty until the next cycle. Factions existed primarily along ideological and regional lines, as well as on some specific policy questions – but these factors often converged.

In 1880, for instance, Representative James Garfield defeated former President Ulysses S. Grant for the Republican presidential nomination. Garfield emerged as a compromise candidate amid a bitter convention in which the powerful Stalwart faction, led by New York Senator Roscoe Conkling, fought to nominate Grant for a third term. Republicans still needed to win New York, and could not do so without the Stalwarts' support. But, according to historian Thomas C. Reeves, "Conkling had little liking for Garfield, [who] had revealed a degree of affinity" for opposing factions. So the convention turned to Chester A. Arthur, "Conkling's chief lieutenant" and "a loyal Stalwart," who accepted the party's nomination for vice president. In the following months, Arthur worked closely with Conkling, Grant, and other Stalwarts to coordinate an aggressive national campaign on behalf of the Republican ticket.[7]

In 1892, former President Grover Cleveland of New York won the Democratic nomination to return to the White House. Although he continued to support the gold standard, the party began veering toward Free Silver. In an effort to shore up the emerging Silverite element, the party nominated former Illinois Representative and assistant postmaster general Adlai Stevenson for vice president. Senate historian Mark O. Hatfield explains, "As a supporter of using greenbacks and free silver to inflate the

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[7] Thomas C. Reeves, "Chester A. Arthur and the Campaign of 1880," *Political Science Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (Dec. 1969): 629.

currency and alleviate economic distress in the rural districts, Stevenson balanced the ticket headed by Cleveland."[8] Historian Leonard Schlup expanded:

> Cleveland forged a political alliance with Stevenson in 1892 in order to strengthen his chance of carrying Illinois and to placate southern farmers, upset with his sound money policies, who were flirting with the Populist party and its stand on transportation, land, and currency. Although Stevenson endorsed the conservative Democratic platform, he had acquired a reputation as a former greenbacker and a proponent of silver coinage. Cleveland expected Stevenson to campaign in the South displaying these credentials.[9]

By 1900, Stevenson returned to the national ticket, again nominated for vice president as a link between the Democrats' emerging Populist strain "and the regular element of the party." [10] But, as Schlup describes, Stevenson played a very different role in 1900: "Nominated in 1892 as a liberal to balance a slate led by a conservative, the rehabilitated Stevenson obtained renomination in 1900 as an elder conservative spokesman to equalize a ticket headed by a progressive."[11] This time Stevenson joined Silverite populist William Jennings Bryan, Cleveland's rival, on the Democratic ticket.[*]

The turn of the twentieth century saw the beginning of large shifts in presidential campaigning. These changes in turn changed the vice presidency. In the 1896 campaign, Democratic presidential nominee William Jennings Bryan delivered over 800 speeches in 27 states, more than any other candidate up to that time.[12] Republican nominee William McKinley did not match Bryan's travel, but also dealt with voters in an unprecedented

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[8] Mark O. Hatfield, with the Senate Historical Office, "Adlai E. Stevenson (1893-1897)," *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789-1993* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), pp. 279-284.
[9] Leonard Schlup, "The American Chameleon: Adlai E. Stevenson and the Quest for the Vice Presidency in Gilded Age Politics," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (Summer, 1991): 517.
[10] Hatfield, *Vice Presidents*, "Adlai E. Stevenson," 279-284.
[11] Schlup, "American Chameleon," 522.
[*] Bob Dole may represent a modern analog to Stevenson. In 1976, Dole was the conservative on a ticket with the moderate Gerald Ford; as the presidential nominee 20 years later, Dole was a moderate joined by his conservative running mate Jack Kemp.
[12] Sidney M. Milkis and Michael Nelson, *The American Presidency: Origins and Development, 1776-2007*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2008), 200-201.

fashion. McKinley's team conducted a "front porch campaign," taking to scale an innovation from President Benjamin Harrison's 1888 campaign.[13] While Bryan toured, McKinley remained at home in Canton, Ohio, receiving 750,000 visitors from 30 states on over 300 occasions. When the crowds gathered, McKinley delivered short but carefully crafted speeches from his porch.[14] William D. Harpine observes, "McKinley somehow created, out of the awesome mass of visitors, parades, and cheering—staged purely for purposes of the campaign—a feeling that he cared about each visitor, that he welcomed each one warmly to his home, that their interests were identified with one another's and with the Republican cause."[15]

In introducing direct campaigning as such, Harpine claims, "McKinley's campaign foreshadowed in its construction and in its rhetoric many of the political methods of the modern technological, mass media age."[16] But more immediately than the eventual rise of mass media, presidential scholars Sidney M. Milkis and Michael Nelson explain, the new approaches of both 1896 candidates "foretold the prominence of candidate- rather than party-centered campaigns."[17] As campaigns changed, they required different skills and attributes from the candidates. Accordingly, conventions and party organizations began to coordinate vice presidential nominations with the presidential nominees. The evolution of campaign tactics and candidate selection – and the emergence of Vice President Theodore Roosevelt as a powerful national figure – leads Baumgartner to identify 1900 as the beginning of a "transitional era" of the vice

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[13] Milkis and Nelson, *American Presidency*, 201.
[14] Milkis and Nelson, *American Presidency*, 201.
[15] William D. Harpine, "Playing to the Press in McKinley's Front Porch Campaign: The Early Weeks of a Nineteenth-Century Pseudo-Event," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 73.
[16] Harpine, 74.
[17] Milkis and Nelson, *American Presidency*, 201.

presidency. He explains that as "presidential candidates began to assert some control over the vice presidential selection process [they were able to select] candidates who were more competent, loyal to, and compatible with their running mates."[18] The traditional conception of "balance" receded as the critical ticket-building element.

Balance Begins to Fade

In 1932, Democratic National Convention delegates supporting New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt offered the vice presidential nomination to House Speaker John Nance Garner in exchange for his delegates. Garner released his delegates, the convention nominated Roosevelt and Garner, and they served two terms together in the White House.[19] By 1940, however, Roosevelt and Garner's ongoing friction precluded their continued partnership. As Garner mounted his own campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, Roosevelt accepted a draft movement for an unprecedented third term.[20] As discussed in Chapter I, he induced the Democratic convention to nominate Henry Wallace for vice president in order to put another New Dealer in the White House. Although Wallace was a former Republican from Iowa, his selection dismissed balance in favor of policy consistency on the ticket.

In 1960, Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy defeated Texan Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson, Missouri Senator Stuart Symington, Minnesota Senator Hubert Humphrey, and former Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson II for the Democratic presidential nomination. Democrats anticipated a close election against Vice President

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[18] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered*, 24.
[19] Thomas T. Spencer, "FDR's Forgotten Friend: Henry H. McPike and the 1932 Democratic Presidential Nomination," *California History* 63, no. 3 (Summer, 1984): 199.
[20] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered,* 26.

Richard Nixon, and put great emphasis on the running mate selection – especially following a bitter and divisive primary. Kennedy's selection of Johnson balanced the ticket in crucial ways. As Kennedy confidant Theodore Sorensen explained:

> Johnson had the precise biography that a young, relatively inexperienced Northeastern Catholic liberal needed to balance the Democratic ticket. Kennedy, somewhat to the left of center, regarded LBJ as somewhat to the right of center on many issues and a bridge to the Democratic Southerners, conservatives, and moderates whose support he knew he would ultimately need in the election and might otherwise have difficulty obtaining.[21]

But Kennedy also made another, unique calculation in choosing Johnson that had nothing to do with balance. Sorensen recounts,

> In a confidential memorandum to JFK and RFK one week before the 1960 convention, I put Johnson at the top of my list of possible contenders for the vice presidential slot, noting that he "helps with the farmers, Southerners and Texas; easier to work with in this position than as Majority Leader"—where JFK said Johnson "would be just impossible… Lyndon would screw me all the time."[22]

LBJ brought crucial balance to the ticket; his presence likely ensured the Democratic wins in the South and carried JFK to the White House.[23] But in choosing Johnson, Kennedy looked beyond balance and Johnson's ability to win his large home state, to the political implications for a Kennedy presidency.

In 1976, Jimmy Carter introduced the model of running mate selection that eventually became the standard. As addressed in the previous chapter, crucial elements of the model include time, direct interviews, media leaks, and scrutiny of candidates' finances, health, and other personal affairs. When Carter announced Mondale as his choice, he said that he chose Mondale because of "a great compatibility" between them

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[21] Ted Sorensen, *Counselor: a Life at the Edge of History* (New York, NY: Harper, 2008), 242.
[22] Sorensen, *Counselor*, 243.
[23] Bob Dart, "Who Cares About Vice Presidents? Not Voters," *Cox News Service*, July 6, 2004, LexisNexis Academic, (accessed April 11, 2012).

on "the major issues that face our nation," and that Mondale "would be the best person to lead this country if something should happen to me." But he also declared, "I am determined, beyond what has ever been done in this country, to put major responsibilities on the Vice President [and] I feel completely compatible with Senator Mondale." Over the selection process, Carter prepared for a partnership with his vice president, and that drove his decision. Carter also acknowledged that Mondale brought certain forms of balance to the ticket:

> He has a broad range of experience, as an Attorney General, as someone from a Northern Midwestern state, in agriculture, in finance, in social programs, and a knowledge of Washington. […] He's also been, as other Senators, involved in making major decisions concerning international affairs. [24]

While the Mondale selection largely meets the traditional criteria of balance, the process itself makes it a departure point. Extending the process, subjecting the candidates to greater scrutiny and discrimination, differentiating the selection from the rest of the convention narrative, and emphasizing the ticket's compatibility enable campaigns to consider and elevate characteristics not covered by the traditional balance criteria. When Republicans convened a month later, they staged the last major party convention to open without one presidential candidate controlling a majority of the delegates. With few exceptions, subsequent running mate selections have followed something like the Carter model. And, with few exceptions, subsequent tickets have eschewed the traditional model of balance.

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[24] Excerpts from Carter's News Conference Presenting Mondale as Choice For Vice President, *New York Times*, July 16, 1976.

Balance vs. Brand

The explosion of mass media and the emergence of *the campaign* as we know it lessened the need to appeal to voters' narrow interests and allegiances. Today's partisan atmosphere rewards a certain orthodoxy to the parties' general stances. Campaigns involve more contrast and less nuance. In this regard, too much "balance" muddles a campaign's message and weakens its case against the opposition. With more opportunity to make their case to voters more directly, parties, candidates, and campaigns began to rely less on "descriptive" factors in vice presidential selection. Far removed from that "golden age of political partisanship," campaigns must now put more resources into "persuading the unpersuaded," and less into "securing party unity and enthusiasm," in the language of historian Peskin. Campaigns focus on generating consistent messaging, narrative, and brand to make their cases to voters. Tickets no longer need East Coast *and* West Coast representation, or a civil rights supporter *and* a civil rights opponent. Examples from the last half-dozen elections illustrate the new framework and implications of balance – and the perils of disregarding them.

In 1988, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis chose Texas Senator Lloyd Bentsen as the Democratic vice presidential nominee, following a process based on Carter's. *The New York Times* article on the selection opened, "Michael S. Dukakis reached for regional and ideological balance today and selected Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas as his running mate, counting on the conservative Democrat to strike at the heart of Vice President Bush's Southern base." The article continued,

> Today's announcement suggested a man who methodically identified his political shortcomings and tried to mend them: a New Englander who recognized his vulnerability in the South, a Governor who recognized the need for Washington experience, a candidate sometimes accused of being

> left of center on foreign policy who recognized the need for philosophical balance.[25]

But in an era in which presidential candidates are responsible for their running mates, the ideological and policy daylight between Dukakis and Bentsen opened the ticket up to criticism. The weeks after the announcement saw headlines like "Bentsen's Pro-Reagan Votes May Be Problem for Dukakis," "Bush: Let Dukakis and Bentsen Debate; Vice President Points to Democrats' Ideological Differences," and "Unmatched Set; The Dukakis-Bentsen Ticket Has an Opinion for Anyone in the Party."[26] Dukakis had to confront the question "If you oppose 'x' on the other ticket, why do you put it next in line for the presidency?" Bentsen likely helped Dukakis on Election Day, rather than hurt him, but their losing ticket represents the last occurrence of a traditionally balanced ticket.

In 1992, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton shattered the traditional balance concept by selecting Tennessee Senator Al Gore as his running mate. In choosing another young Southern moderate who championed the same brand of Democratic centrism, the Clinton campaign consciously avoided the Dukakis-Bentsen split. The *Los Angeles Times*' coverage of the selection included an explanation from Clinton's pollster Stanley Greenberg:

> "The key is definition." Picking a running mate who dramatically differed from Clinton would merely confuse voters about what Clinton stands for—something that many voters already have questions about, he said.

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[25] Robin Toner, "Dukakis Picks Bentsen For Running Mate; Texan Adds Conservative Voice to Ticket; A Regional Balance," *New York Times*, July 13, 1988.
[26] Phil Gailey, "Bentsen's Pro-Reagan Votes May Be Problem for Dukakis," *St. Petersburg Times*, July 14, 1988.
Bill Peterson, "Bush: Let Dukakis and Bentsen Debate; Vice President Points to Democrats' Ideological Differences," *Washington Post*, July 22, 1988.
David E. Rosenbaum, "Unmatched Set; The Dukakis-Bentsen Ticket Has an Opinion for Anyone in the Party," *New York Times*, July 17, 1988.

> By contrast, picking a similar running mate will help voters understand who Clinton is, he said.[27]

Gore's profile contrasted with Clinton's in non-traditional ways, however. While Clinton was a governor who had never worked in Washington, Gore was the son of a senator, grew up in Washington, and had served in Congress for 16 years. He enjoyed a "family man" reputation, which mitigated the downside of Clinton's marital scandals.[28] Although intended as an attack on the decision, a Bush campaign spokeswoman summed up some of the beneficial differences on the ticket: "Bill Clinton chose not to serve in the military, so they chose someone who did. Bill Clinton's got a lousy environmental record, so they chose someone known as an environmentalist. I think they feel insecure about traditional family values and Tipper [Gore, who advocated for warning labels on provocative music] is a way to make up for that."[29] As Clinton strategist James Carville recounts, the Gore decision worked:

> Gore had been around the track once, he'd run for president. I think Clinton also felt that picking Gore was different and unexpected. The drawback was that it was two guys from the same region, but nobody viewed that as a big problem. […] The more people thought about it, Al Gore seemed like a pretty good choice: good on the environment, strong senatorial record, Vietnam War veteran, a moderate who would fit with Bill Clinton's New Democrat agenda. A good choice."[30]

The famed *Newsweek* post-election project described the tactics behind the ticket as "generational and regional pull."[31]

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[27] David Lauter, "Clinton Picks Gore as Running Mate in Break with Tradition Arkansas Governor Rejects Geographical Balance in Choosing the Tennessee Senator. Strategists Believe His Moderate Positions Can Help Unite Divided Party: Democrats," *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 1992.
[28] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered*, 77.
[29] Lauter, "Clinton Picks Gore."
[30] Mary Matalin, James Carville, and with Peter Knobler, *All's Fair: Love, War, and Running For President*, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 232.
[31] Peter Goldman and Tom Mathews, "The Inside Story: Manhattan Project 1992," *Newsweek*, November/December 1992, 40-64.

In 2000, Texas Governor George W. Bush tapped former GOP official Dick Cheney for vice president, in another of the least conventionally balanced tickets of the modern era.[32] Both represented the Republican Party's conservative wing, both resided in Texas, and both had ties to oil, and thus an association with energy policy expertise. But Cheney brought to the ticket serious experience that Bush lacked. Cheney had served as President Gerald Ford's White House Chief of Staff, in the House of Representatives for 11 years (including several years in House leadership), and as George H.W. Bush's Secretary of Defense, before launching a successful private sector career. [33]

A New Framework

At one point, Baumgartner describes balance as "some electorally valuable characteristic that the vice presidential nominee might bring to the campaign."[34] William Safire's eponymous *Political Dictionary* defines "balanced ticket" as "a slate of candidates nominated so as to appeal to as many voter groups as possible."[35] These explanations capture some of today's ticket constructing tactics, but do so within the obsolete traditional "balance" framework. The balance metaphor itself proves inherently problematic. It evokes a seesaw seeking to stay elevated and horizontal. Any element placed on the seesaw needs to be offset by its equal-weight opposite on the other side. But achieving equal-weight opposites is difficult – especially because the presidential nominee's characteristics almost universally carry more weight than those of the vice presidential nominee. And even a momentarily balanced seesaw is significantly

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[32] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered*, 78-79.
[33] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered*, 49.
[34] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered*, 72.
[35] William Safire, *Safire's Political Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA, 2008), 37.

endangered by weather. “Balance” represents an unstable foothold. Instead of balancing tickets, presidential nominees should bolster them.

Rather than balancing a seesaw, a presidential nominee should build a solid edifice. The presidential candidate’s crucial characteristics – policy positions, campaign themes, family history, alliances, loyalties, promises, goals, ideology, identity, record – constitute blocks in the political brand that drives the campaign’s narrative and messaging. This structure represents the candidate’s imperative for election. A running mate should enlarge the edifice in new directions. A presidential nominee should select a partner who contributes characteristics that add to the ticket without challenging the extant structure. A running mate’s coloration should take the ticket into uncovered territory, but connect firmly to the existing blocks. A vice presidential nominee should extend the presidential nominee’s narrative, carry his message, and reinforce the imperative driving the campaign. This structure is stable, organic, and sturdy – predictable in nearly all circumstances.

CHAPTER III
Competence and the "First Presidential Decision"

When balance declined as the primary concern in vice presidential selection, other criteria emerged in its place. As the presidential nominees' emerging authority in the selection process diminished the role of balance, it elevated competence as the major universal criterion in vice presidential selection. The decision became one of the primary measures voters use to evaluate presidential nominees' judgment. And since Carter introduced a new selection process in 1976, presidential candidates have largely succeeded in nominating competent running mates.

Throttlebottoms All

In 1976, Jimmy Carter frequently justified his elaborate vice presidential search process with the explanation that he was looking for the most able successor – and a true White House partner. Pundits dismissed these claims. James Reston wrote in *The New York Times*, for instance, "[Carter] has said all the traditional things [about qualifications and developing a substantive role]. We have heard all this before […] all [vice presidents] were promised and finally denied power."[1] But Carter eventually turned back the tide of skepticism. By the morning of his running mate announcement, *The New York Times* observed, "He has earned increasing credibility for his often repeated assertion that

[1] James Reston, "Carter and His Partner," *New York Times*, July 7, 1976.

the overridingly important consideration in his mind is to choose 'the best person to be President in case something happens to me.'"[2]

Political observers had reason to be skeptical. Presidential scholar Michael Nelson explains, "the early vice presidents make up a virtual rogues' gallery of personal and political failures."[3] For example, Vice President George Clinton, the fourth vice president and a perennial candidate for the office, earned a reputation for ineffectiveness at the beginning of his tenure in 1805. Senator William Plumer observed that as the Senate's presiding officer, Clinton appeared "altogether unacquainted" with the body's operations, he "preserve[d] little or no order," and he displayed a "clumsey awkward way of putting a question." Senator John Quincy Adams wrote, "A worse choice than Mr. Clinton could scarcely have been made."[4] Vice President Millard Fillmore succeeded to the presidency in 1850, but as one collection of vice presidential trivia explains, remains "remembered today mostly for not being remembered."[5] Woodrow Wilson's vice president Thomas Marshall did famously little, but said a lot about it. He chaired a few Cabinet meetings – the first vice president to do so since Adams – but quickly bowed out of this role, knowing he would be irrelevant. He was overshadowed on Capitol Hill by his fellow Indianans in the Senate and by Wilson, who ran his own legislative relations – poorly. When Wilson was incapacitated by a stroke in 1919, Marshall shied away from assuming presidential powers and took no steps to keep the executive branch running. Senate

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[2] Charles Mohr, "Candidate Silent: Mondale Named Most in Rumors—Muskie Not Ruled Out," *New York Times*, July 15, 1976.
[3] Michael Nelson, "Choosing the Vice President," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 21, no. 4 (Autumn, 1988): 859.
[4] Mark O. Hatfield, with the Senate Historical Office, "George Clinton (1805-1812)," *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789- 1993* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 49-58.
[5] Jeremy Lott, *The Warm Bucket Brigade: the Story of the American Vice Presidency* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 76.

historian Mark Hatfield explains, "Convinced that the president and other high-ranking officials did not take him seriously enough to listen to him, Marshall learned not to speak, not to attend meetings, and not to offer suggestions. He became the epitome of the vice president as nonentity."[6] Marshall's main vice presidential legacy became his colorful descriptions of the office:

- "I do not blame proud parents for wishing that their sons might be President of the United States. But if I sought a blessing for a boy I would not pray that he become Vice-President."[7]
- "I don't want to work [but] I wouldn't mind being Vice President again."
- "Of no importance to the administration beyond the duty of being loyal to it and ready, at any time, to act as a sort of pinch hitter; that is, when everybody else on the team had failed, I was to be given a chance."
- "Once there were two brothers. One ran away to sea; the other was elected vice president. And nothing was ever heard of either of them again."[8]

The image of the vice presidency many Americans carried was of Alexander Throttlebottom, the bumbling vice president of George Gershwin and George Kaufman's 1931 musical *Of Thee I Sing*.[9] Throughout the show, characters constantly forget the vice president's name.[10] But the political zeitgeist remembered his name, and

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[6] Mark O. Hatfield, with the Senate Historical Office, "Thomas R. Marshall (1913-1921)," *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789- 1993* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 337-343.
[7] Hatfield, "Thomas R. Marshall," 337-343.
[8] *Time*, The Vice-Presidency: Seen, Not Heard, Friday, Feb. 01, 1963, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,829748,00.html (accessed April 20, 2012).
[9] George R. Kernodle, "The Death of the Little Man," *The Carleton Drama Review* 1, no. 2 (1955 - 1956): 50.
[10] Richard D. Friedman, "Some Modest Proposals On the Vice-Presidency," *Michigan Law Review* 86, no. 7 (Jun. 1988): 1710.

"Throttlebottom" became an epithet applied to incompetent politicians, and vice presidents in particular.[11]

Even the more capable public servants who served as vice president in the office's earlier days contributed to its poor reputation. Many were aging party wisemen rewarded with a cushy retirement position – or "promoted" to the job to elegantly remove them from positions of power as they deteriorated mentally and physically. Others simply suffered from the job's irrelevance. Before FDR, vice presidents conducted little official or informal work. Instead, Henry Wilson wrote a massive history of American slavery while in office; Richard M. Johnson left Washington to run a tavern in Kentucky; William R. King took his oath of office in Cuba and died on his return voyage three weeks later.[12] Before the twentieth century, the vice presidency was usually a one-term job; even when presidents stood for reelection, parties often nominated new running mates for the ticket.[13] As the *Encyclopedia Americana* wrote, the early office "drew to the Vice Presidency second-rate men."[14] Important political leaders did not wish to sacrifice their positions for a dead-end job. Senator Daniel Webster famously declined the vice presidential nomination with the retort "I do not propose to be buried until I am really dead."[15]

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[11] E. Pendleton Herring, "American Government and Politics: First Session of the Seventy-Third Congress, March 9, 1933, to June 16, 1933," *The American Political Science Review* 28, no. 1 (Feb. 1934): 78.
William E. Leuchtenburg, "The Legacy of FDR," *The Wilson Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (Spring, 1982): 78.
[12] Jody C. Baumgartner, *The American Vice Presidency Reconsidered* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 21.
Nelson, "Choosing the Vice President," 860.
Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "On the Presidential Succession," *Political Science Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (Autumn, 1974): 479.
Mark O. Hatfield, with the Senate Historical Office, "William R. King (1853)," *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789-1993* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 181-187.
[13] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered*, 27.
[14] Molly Ivins, "Vice Presidents: Lintheads, Knaves, and Some Great Men," *New York Times*, July 12, 1976.
[15] Baumgartner, *American Vice Presidency Reconsidered*, 1.

The vice presidency's early weakness stemmed from its unique middle ground between the executive and legislative branches and from the era's selection process and criteria. As explained in Chapter II, before 1940 parties chose running mates, not candidates – and they did so with an eye to election, not incumbency.[16] *The* dominant criterion was balance – relying on descriptive allegiances, rather than persuasion or consideration of how the candidates would perform. As the selection process evolved between 1940 and 1976, the criteria changed. Balance receded – before reshaping – as other factors emerged. Political scientists Nelson and Milkis reflect the sentiment of numerous scholars of the executive branch in their matter-of-fact observation that the mid-twentieth century saw surprising "new public expectations about vice-presidential competence."[17]

Competence in the Nuclear Era

Nelson argues that Franklin Roosevelt's death and Harry Truman's succession represented a key step. The specter of vice presidential succession in the nuclear age "heightened public concern that the vice president should be a leader who was ready to step into the presidency at a moment's notice and serve ably and faithfully."[18] When General of the Army Dwight Eisenhower succeeded Truman, he brought a general's perspective on chain-of-command to the White House. He chose a running mate he trusted and told a press conference, "I personally believe the Vice President of the United States should never be a nonentity. I believe he should be used. I believe he should have a

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[16] Nelson, "Choosing the Vice President," 859.
[17] Sidney M. Milkis and Michael Nelson, *The American Presidency: Origins and Development, 1776-2007*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2008), 462.
[18] Nelson, "Choosing the Vice President," 861.

very useful job."[19] Eisenhower and Vice President Richard Nixon together devised formal procedures for vice presidential succession in the event of presidential incapacitation, reflecting Eisenhower's total confidence in his second-in-command.[20]

As radio and television – and later the internet – transformed the American media landscape, political culture responded. Candidates exploited the emerging forms with innovative advertising and image-making attempts, but they also ceded power to the media through their extensive participation. The media represent most Americans' only means of evaluating the presidential and vice presidential candidates, so how media represent candidates takes on huge importance in how voters perceive them. The more journalists and pundits call a candidate a "liberal," or a "maverick," or "inexperienced," the more voters will associate such terms with the candidate. But the media also influence voters' perceptions by asking questions. Constant conversation about whether or not a candidate is "unqualified" or "too liberal" creates the same association without the burden of proving an assertion.

As previously discussed, Carter responded to the emerging emphasis on competence with a new selection process that elevated governance criteria over electoral criteria. As Carter's search progressed, pressures and expectations mounted. By the morning of his running mate announcement, *The New York Times* concluded, "The public approval Mr. Carter has achieved so far would thus be seriously diminished by a choice seen by the country as pedestrian, or as motivated by a faith in shopworn political

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[19] Dwight D. Eisenhower: "The President's News Conference," May 31, 1955. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=10246.
[20] Paul Kengor, *Wreath Layer or Policy Player: the Vice President's Role in Foreign Policy* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000), 45.

axioms."[21] But Carter and his team continued to demonstrate a remarkable understanding of the country's mood. As he delved into the selection process, Carter foresaw the new alignment of governance and electoral factors. On the eve of his announcement, he explained, "If I make the right decision in terms of the man's ability to govern effectively without me, then that decision will ultimately be the best politics."[22] Reflecting the new circumstances of vice presidential nomination – the presidential candidate's early lock on the nomination and his authority in choosing a running mate – a *New York Times* article asserted that Carter "would have little excuse for anything less."[23] The *Los Angeles Times* expected the choice to "shed more light on [Carter's] political and personal values than any other public decision."[24] This outlook now defines the political implications of vice presidential selection. Today, vice presidential competence represents a consideration for voters and the media in evaluating presidential nominees' judgment.

Since Carter's innovations – which demonstrated and confirmed vice presidential selection as the clear prerogative and responsibility of the presidential nominee – attention to the vice presidential decision has grown. In 1976, *The New York Times* described the choice as Carter's "first major decision […] as the new party leader," and "The most important decision [he] is likely to make for a very long time to come."[25] By 1980, Democrats called it the "most important decision" of the election year as they criticized Reagan's haphazard selection process.[26] In 1984, Mondale labeled it "the most

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[21] Mohr, "Candidate Silent."
[22] R.W. Apple Jr., "Carter Gives Insight On Decision-Making," *New York Times*, July 15, 1976.
[23] Charles Mohr, "Carter Seeing Mondale and Glenn Today On No. 2 Spot," *New York Times*, July 8, 1976.
[24] Robert Shogan, "Clue to Carter Enigma Awaited Today," *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 1976.
[25] Charles Mohr, "Choice of Mondale Helps to Reconcile the Liberals," *New York Times*, July 16, 1976. Editorial, "Vice-Presidential Candidate," *New York Times*, July 9, 1976.
[26] B. Drummond Ayres Jr., "Democrats Get a Laugh and Lift at Vice-Presidential Puzzlement," *New York Times*, July 18, 1980.

important decision that a candidate for President ever makes".[27] By 1988, the Associated Press described the notion as conventional wisdom.[28] The same year, *The Washington Post* editorialized that the presidential candidates should consider their running mate selection "their first presidential decision."[29] Voters now evaluate vice presidential candidates through this lens, and presidential nominees suffer for disregarding it.

The media's role in shaping public perception and creating a narrative has proven particularly important in discussions of candidate competence. Most voters will never have the opportunity to evaluate a candidate's expertise or preparedness directly. They rely on media representations to do so, and media characterizations tend to take hold and change little.[30] The following studies of "incompetence" on the ticket reflect the media's tremendous power to shape public perception. And in presidential campaigns – particularly in regards to competence – perception trumps reality.

Dan Quayle

Scholars and pundits consider Senator Dan Quayle as one of the worst running mate choices in modern presidential politics. Although Vice President George H.W. Bush won the 1988 election, his selection of the gaffe-prone young senator hurt his campaign and his White House tenure.[31] The post-election *Newsweek* story described Quayle's initial reputation as "a man of undistinction, a playboy coasting through life like a surfer

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[27] "Excerpts from Democratic Candidates' Debate in California," *New York Times*, June 4, 1984.
[28] Donald M. Rothberg, "History of Vice Presidential Choices Looks to Shape Party Picks in '88," *Associated Press*, May 28, 1988. http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic (accessed April 4, 2012).
[29] Editorial, "The Choice of a Vice President," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1988.
[30] Howard Kurtz, "Hot off the Trail of McCain's Veep Choice," *Washington Post*, August 30, 2008.
[31] *The Capital Gang*, "Kerry's Choice of Edwards Gives Him 5 Point Bounce; Senate Intelligence Committee Condemns CIA Intelligence Leading to Iraq War; Ken Lay Indicted, Pleads Not Guilty to Charges," CNN, July 10, 2004, transcript, LexisNexis Academic, (accessed April 4, 2012).

on a wave." His performance over the course of the campaign reinforced that perception and further reduced his stature. [32]

Later in-depth research and reporting on Quayle revealed a capable, affable, and honest politician whose compounding errors sank his reputation. A prominent 1992 book on Quayle quoted an "insider": "It's tough to make the argument that he is absolutely the smartest and most qualified guy, but at the same time, this airhead stuff is really unfair. He's somewhere in between… and he's a hell of a lot closer to the top than he is to the bottom."[33] But the Quayle caricature emerged early and stuck.[34]

Following an extensive information-gathering process, Bush chose Quayle with almost no input on criteria or consultation about the decision. The pick surprised many of his closest aides, who had earlier dismissed Quayle's chances. According to *Newsweek*, Bush's top advisor, Treasury Secretary James Baker "suggested to intimates, [that Quayle] was a lightweight, too light to pass the stature test for so high an office, and he told Bush so at their last meeting on the subject."[35] The announcement event went poorly and the next few days did not go any better. As political messaging scholar Kathleen Jamieson described, "It was Bush's first major 'presidential' decision, but it looked like it was made on an impromptu basis […] He didn't look like he was in control. He didn't look presidential."[36] Criticism mounted within the Republican Party as well. As *Newsweek* reported, "Bush picked his fifth son, said [former GOP presidential candidate Representative Jack] Kemp's chairman, Ed Rollins, when he heard the news. The more

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[32] Peter Goldman, "Squall in New Orleans," *Newsweek*, November 21, 1988, 102.
[33] David S. Broder and Bob Woodward, *The Man Who Would Be President: Dan Quayle* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 181.
[34] Kurtz, "Hot off the Trail."
[35] Goldman, "Squall in New Orleans."
[36] Lloyd Grove, "Controversy Said to Hurt Convention; Specialists Say Bush Didn't Look Presidential," *Washington Post*, August 20, 1988.

common and less charitable view in New Orleans was that he had chosen his own clone – a man who would be as loyal, as malleable, and as invisible as he had been in Reagan's service."[37]

The Dukakis campaign and other Democrats responded to Quayle's selection with a two-pronged attack. They argued that Quayle's ineptitude would make his election as vice president problematic and perhaps dangerous. For instance, Dukakis's running mate, Senator Lloyd Bentsen asserted, "millions of Americans would agree that Dan Quayle is not qualified to step in and be president. But even as vice president Dan Quayle will have important responsibilities for which he lacks credentials."[38] Dukakis told a rally in October, "When a nominee selects his running mate, he's choosing the first member of his Cabinet, the first member of the National Security Council, and the first member of his diplomatic team."[39] Dukakis and fellow Democrats often compared, both implicitly and explicitly, the stature of his venerated running mate with the quality of Bush's. More often and more prominently, however, they used Quayle's selection as a criticism of Bush himself. On the stump, Dukakis raised the prospect of Supreme Court vacancies and asked, "Do you want the man who selected Dan Quayle to be making those appointments?"[40] House Democratic Whip Tony Coelho wondered, "Why did George Bush pick Daniel Quayle? That's got to be the question. His first presidential decision was Dan Quayle. Michael Dukakis' first presidential decision was Lloyd Bentsen."

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[37] Goldman, "Squall in New Orleans."
[38] Tom Sherwood, "Bensten: National Security Role for Quayle a 'Frightening Idea,'" *Washington Post*, October 27, 1988.
[39] John King, "Dukakis Says Veep Debate 'A Real Plus,' Labels Quayle 'Insecure,'" *Associated Press*, October 6, 1988. http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic (accessed April 4, 2012).
[40] King, "Dukakis Says Veep Debate."

Dukakis's campaign manager asserted directly, "The real issue is not Dan Quayle. It's George Bush and his judgment."[41]

Bush and Quayle's own staff and supporters disparaged the choice as well. *Newsweek* recounted that the highest praise Quayle's campaign team could muster was "potentially smart." Was Quayle qualified to be president? "Of course not," one of them responded.[42] On the record even, "The kindest words [Baker] could bring himself to say for public consumption were that Bush had promised only to pick a qualified running mate, not necessarily the *most* qualified."[43] Quayle's lead handler, Stu Spencer, believed that Quayle's poor performance in the vice presidential debate cost the campaign two points in the polls. Other campaign staffers told reporters they thought Quayle could lose the election for Bush.[44] *Newsweek*'s George Hackett and Howard Fineman observed that "Bush campaigned through much of the fall as if he had no running mate at all."[45]

After the vice presidential debate, the Dukakis team intensified their Quayle offensive. The following morning, Bentsen joked at a rally, "After listening to Dan Quayle for 90 minutes last night, I can understand why he kept talking about job training."[46] Burnished by his independently strong performance and by the favorable comparison, Bentsen became a more prominent part of the Dukakis pitch. Dukakis's ads largely omitted Bentsen before the debate; afterwards, they elevated him. One Democratic consultant joked that the new messaging seemed to advertise a candidate

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[41] Merrill Hartson, "Bush Gives Emotional Defense of Quayle," *Associated Press*, August 22, 1988. http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic (accessed April 4, 2012).
[42] Peter Goldman, "Lectern to Lectern," *Newsweek*, November 21, 1988, 120.
[43] Goldman, "Squall in New Orleans."
[44] Goldman, "Lectern to Lectern."
[45] George Hackett with Howard Fineman, "The 'Phantom Candidate' Has to Keep On Running," *Newsweek*, November 21, 1988, 13.
[46] Robin Toner, "Quayle Reflects Badly on Bush, Dukakis Asserts," *New York Times*, October 7, 1988.

whose "first name [was] Dukakis and his last name, Bentsen." *Newsweek* recounted that as "New spots went up attacking the choice, Bush's margin shriveled from a landslide 10 points to a bridgeable 7."[47]

In the days immediately following Quayle's selection, a Gallup poll found that 43 percent of respondents believed Quayle qualified to serve as president if it became necessary; 36 percent believed him unqualified.[48] By October, the balance more than flipped: 49 percent saw Quayle as unqualified for the presidency and a third saw him as qualified.[49] One month before the election, a poll indicated that 47 percent of voters agreed "the choice of Dan Quayle as a running mate reflects unfavorably on Bush's ability to make important presidential decisions."[50] In *The New York Times*' endorsement editorial, the paper reflected on "Mr. Bush's first big Presidential decision: picking Dan Quayle. Senator Quayle is not the buffoon depicted by partisans or parodists. Yet he is wholly unqualified to be President." A "closely balanced scale" between "two good men" favored Michael Dukakis.[51] *The Washington Post*'s influential columnist David Broder summed up the impact of Dan Quayle on the Bush candidacy:

> [Bush] failed to realize the simple fact that voters now take the vice presidency seriously. In declining to choose a candidate of the stature Dukakis found in Sen. Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, Bush raised serious and legitimate doubts about himself. In the end, he inadvertently proved his opponent's point. Competence is an issue.[52]

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[47] Goldman, "Lectern to Lectern."
[48] Gallup Institution, *Questionnaire Profile: Republican Convention*, in the Gallup Brain, http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=NEWSWEEK88271&p=3 (accessed April 4, 2012).
[49] Tom Sherwood, "Quayle Revises Answer on Succession; CIA Gets Call 'If It Is an Assassination'; Poll Suggests Debate Damage," *Washington Post*, October 11, 1988.
[50] "Bush Widening Lead Over Dukakis," *Associated Press*, October 3, 1988. http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic (accessed April 4, 2012).
[51] Editorial, "Two Good Men," *New York Times*, October 30, 1988.
[52] David S. Broder, "Bush KO'd 'Doonesbury' – and Himself," *Washington Post*, August 21, 1988.

Although Bush and Quayle won the election, Quayle was a drag on the ticket. According to Nelson and Milkis, "Quayle may have reduced [Bush's] margin of victory in the popular vote by as much as four to eight percentage points;" spread across the states, this could reasonably impact the electoral college tally.[53]

Margins in both the popular vote and Electoral College factor into the president-elect's momentum through transition, and can foster or belie claims to a mandate. Quayle played little part publicly or privately in the transition, and Bush's team did little early to try to change the vice president-elect's popular image. The outgoing Reagan-Bush team failed to invite the Quayles to Reagan's final state dinner with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, indicating Quayle's distance from the White House leadership and from foreign policy circles.[54] *The Wall Street Journal* ran a front-page feature on the abundance of jokes about Quayle.[55] *Newsweek* observed in late November, "The election has done nothing to make Quayle less a target of ridicule," and asked "Will the jokes ever stop?"[56] Speculation began during the transition that Quayle might be dropped from the ticket four years later.[57] One *New York Times* op-ed went even further, under the headline, "Dump Quayle? It Could Still Happen." In the piece, two lawyers explained the rules of the Electoral College that could allow presidential electors to vote freely for president and vice president. Given voters' preference for Bentsen as vice president by a two-to-one margin, they could elect him – or some qualified Republican – instead of Quayle. They concluded, "In five weeks, the Electoral College will face the question:

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[53] Milkis and Nelson, *The American Presidency*, 464.
[54] Donnie Radcliffe, "No Quayle on Menu for Reagan's Last White House Dinner," *Washington Post*, November 15, 1988.
[55] Ronald G. Shafer, "Voters May Have Doubts, but He Is a Hit with Comics - For Sen. Dan Quayle, Victory Doesn't End the Ridicule; Alone in the Tree House," *Wall Street Journal*, November 14, 1988.
[56] "Will the Jokes Ever Stop?," *Newsweek*, November 28, 1988, 39.
[57] Bernard Weinraub, "Quayle Takes Bush Vice Presidency as Model," *New York Times*, January 12, 1989.

Should Dan Quayle be a heartbeat away from the Presidency? The answer must be no."[58] In the days after the election, one Republican consultant indicated that in the White House, as in the campaign, "Everything Quayle does – or doesn't do – will reflect on George Bush's judgment."[59]

Quayle's poor campaign performance put him in a weak position when he took office and he continued to be marginalized throughout the Bush term.[60] He remained a constant subject of ridicule as rumors about his imminent removal from the 1992 ticket persisted .[61] In fact, the Bush team did seriously consider dumping Quayle, but determined that it would be a sign of weakness. Quayle's most remembered vice presidential moment came in the summer of 1992 as he oversaw a student spelling bee in New Jersey. When a student wrote "potato" on the chalkboard, Quayle, reading from a flashcard, "corrected" the spelling to "potatoe."[62] The incident – caught on camera – captured the public perception of Quayle as a nincompoop.

Sarah Palin

Two decades after Quayle's elevation, Alaska Governor Sarah Palin faced similar criticism. Selected by Senator John McCain to join him on the GOP ticket in 2008, she garnered comparisons to Quayle and extensive dismissals of her qualifications for the

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[58] David A. Kaplan and Gary S. Simon, "Dump Quayle? It Could Still Happen," *New York Times*, November 11, 1988.
[59] Hackett with Fineman, "The 'Phantom Candidate.'"
[60] Paul Orzulak, interview by author, April 29, 2010, Washington, D.C., digital recording.
[61] *This Week with David Brinkley*, "April 29, 1990," ABC News, April 29, 1990, transcript, LexisNexis Academic, (accessed April 19, 2012).
[62] Mark O. Hatfield, with the Senate Historical Office, "Dan Quayle (1989-1993)," Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789-1993 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), pp. 543-552.

post. Criticism came first from Democrats, before transcending party lines and eventually including prominent conservative and Republican voices.

In the hours after the announcement on August 29, House Democratic Caucus Chairman and Obama ally Rahm Emanuel issued a statement attacking Palin's inexperience and highlighting McCain's age. Mentioning McCain's 72nd birthday that day Emanuel opined, "Is this really who the Republican Party wants to be one heartbeat away from the Presidency? Given Sarah Palin's lack of experience on every front and on nearly every issue, this Vice Presidential pick doesn't show judgment: it shows political panic."[63] Senator John Kerry told ABC's *This Week*, "I think John McCain's judgment is once again put at issue, because he's chosen somebody who clearly does not meet the national security threshold, who is not ready to be president tomorrow."[64]

Republicans largely reacted positively to the pick. *The Washington Post* explained that Palin helped McCain

> consolidate his party's conservative base, which has been at best lukewarm toward his candidacy. The governor's conservative credentials are not in doubt, whether on abortion or gun rights or gay rights. The announcement of her elevation to the Republican ticket brought an outpouring of enthusiasm from the right flank of the GOP.[65]

One Republican operative on CNN emphasized Palin's executive experience, faith, energy expertise, and gender. He asserted, "It's a perfect pick. And I think Republicans, Democrats, and independents will be able to unite behind this ticket."[66] In the days

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[63] Elisabeth Bumiller et al., "McCain's V.P.: It's Palin," The Caucus: The Politics and Government Blog of The Times, entry posted August 29, 2008, http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/08/29/mccain-vice-president/# (accessed April 4, 2012).
[64] Michael Luo and Patrick Healy, "Republicans Drop Most Monday Convention Action," *New York Times*, September 1, 2008.
[65] Dan Balz, "With Pick, McCain Reclaims His Maverick Image,'" *Washington Post*, August 30, 2008.
[66] *CNN Newsroom*, "August 29, 2008," CNN, August 29, 2008, transcript, LexisNexis Academic, (accessed April 17, 2012).

following the pick, Republican voters' enthusiasm for the ticket increased from 42 percent to 60 percent and McCain took a brief lead over Obama in national polling.[67]

As the Republican National Convention opened on September 1, questions about Palin's qualifications entered the mainstream conversation. On the eve of the convention *The Washington Post* editorialized,

> The most important question Mr. McCain should have asked himself about Ms. Palin was not whether she could help him win the presidency. It was whether she is qualified and prepared to serve as president should anything prevent him from doing so. […] In this regard, count us among the puzzled and the skeptical. […] Once the buzz over Ms. Palin's nomination dies down, the hard questions about her will begin. The answers will reflect on her qualifications – and on Mr. McCain's judgment as well.[68]

Soon Republicans began to raise doubts about Palin's preparedness. The next day conservative commentator William Kristol wrote in *The New York Times* that if Palin failed to demonstrate competence, McCain's "judgment about the most important choice he's had to make this year will have been proved wanting. He won't be able to plead that being right about the surge in Iraq should be judged as more important than being right about his vice-presidential pick."[69] Former Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan wrote in her *Wall Street Journal* column,

> The Sarah Palin choice is really going to work, or really not going to work. It's not going to be a little successful or a little not […] There are only two questions.
> 1. Can she take it? […]

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[67] Frank Newport, "Republicans' Enthusiasm Jumps After Convention," *Gallup*, September 8, 2008. http://www.gallup.com/poll/110107/republicans-enthusiasm-jumps-after-convention.aspx (accessed November 8, 2011).
[68] Editorial, "Mr. McCain's Choice," *Washington Post*, August 31, 2008.
[69] William Kristol, "A Star Is Born?," *New York Times*, September 1, 2008.

> 2. And while she's taking it, […] can she put herself forward convincingly as serious enough, grounded enough, weighty enough that the American people can imagine her as vice president of the United States?[70]

This narrative – Palin needs to prove herself, answer the questions about her ability – continued into September.[71] Then Palin participated in a series of challenging interviews with network anchors. Her poor performance in the interviews sent the McCain campaign into crisis mode immediately.[72] In the following weeks, the interviews prompted waves of attacks on her competence and qualifications. Fareed Zakaria described her performance in *Newsweek* as "often, quite frankly, gibberish, […] nonsense—a vapid emptying out of every catchphrase […] that came into her head." He wondered, "Can we now admit the obvious? Sarah Palin is utterly unqualified to be vice president. […] She has never spent a day thinking about any important national or international issue, and this is a hell of a time to start." The column was titled "Palin Is Ready? Please." Zakaria concluded the column with criticism of McCain for his choice: "In these times, for John McCain to have chosen this person to be his running mate is fundamentally irresponsible. McCain says that he always puts country first. In this important case, it is simply not true."[73]

Others in politics and the media drew similar conclusions about McCain's judgment. Christopher Buckley, the son of conservative icon William F. Buckley, endorsed Obama, citing McCain's running mate choice and asking, "What on earth can

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[70] Peggy Noon, "Open Mic Night at MSNBC," *Wall Street Journal*, September 3, 2008.
[71] Jim Rutenberg, "In First Big Interview, Palin Says 'I'm Ready' for the Job," *New York Times*, September 12, 2008.
[72] John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, *Game Change: Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin, and the Race of a Lifetime* (New York: Harper, 2010), 395-404.
[73] Fareed Zakaria, "Palin Is Ready? Please,," *Newsweek*, October 6, 2008, 33.

he have been thinking?"[74] Reagan's former White House Chief of Staff, Kenneth Duberstein told MSNBC that the Palin pick "has very much undermined the whole question of John McCain's judgment."[75] *The New York Times* editorialized "If he seriously thought this first-term governor – with less than two years in office – was qualified to be president, if necessary, at such a dangerous time, it raises profound questions about his judgment."[76]

Palin's apparent incompetence contributed to an emerging picture of John McCain as erratic, desperate, and focused on winning first. Obama campaign focus groups suggested that voters began to see McCain as "unsteady, impulsive, and reckless."[77] In the final days before the election, a New York Times/CBS News poll found that 59 percent of voters believed Palin unprepared to serve as vice president; 32 percent said that the vice-presidential selection would have "a great deal of influence" on their vote for president.[78] And according to the *Times*, "voters said they had much more confidence in Mr. Obama to pick qualified people for his administration than they did in Mr. McCain."[79] Although exit polls offered mixed information about Palin's role in the election's outcome, subsequent research by political scientists suggests that she had "an extraordinarily large, and negative, impact" on McCain's performance.[80]

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[74] Christopher Buckley, "Sorry, Dad, I'm Voting For Obama," *The Daily Beast*, Oct. 10, 2008, page nr.http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2008/10/10/the-conservative-case-for-obama.html (accessed April 5, 2012).
[75] *The Rachel Maddow Show*, "October 31, 2008," MSNBC, October 31, 2008, transcript, LexisNexis Academic, (accessed April 5, 2012).
[76] Editorial, "Gov. Palin's Worldview," *New York Times*, September 13, 2008
[77] Heilemann and Halperin, *Game Change*, 393.
[78] *The New York Times/cbs News Poll: October 25-29, 2008* (New York: The New York Times, 2008), 20, http://www.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/politics/oct08e.trn.pdf (accessed April 6, 2012).
[79] Michael Cooper and Dalia Sussman, "Growing Doubts on Palin take a Toll, Poll Finds," *New York Times*, October 31, 2008.
[80] Jonathan Chait, "Did Palin Hurt Mccain?" Jonathan Chait, entry posted October 15, 2010,http://www.tnr.com/blog/jonathan-chait/78407/did-palin-hurt-mccain (accessed April 6, 2012).

Conclusion

During Jimmy Carter's running mate search in 1976, *The New York Times* editorialized that the traditional selection process and criteria were "tactically a failure [and] morally worse."[81] Because voters came to value competence in vice presidential candidates, presidential nominees now face both an ethical obligation and a political imperative to choose an able running mate. George H.W. Bush survived the Quayle drama, but the Palin debacle may put to rest the political gamble of ignoring competence as a key criterion for selection.

[81] Editorial, "Choosing Number Two," *New York Times*, July 9, 1976.

CHAPTER IV
Conclusion

In 2008, political scientists George Edwards and Lawrence Jacobs observed that recent decades saw "the transformation of the vice presidency into a pivotal new force in the Executive Office of the President and the executive branch more generally [and] a critical institutional base of power and decision making."[1] As the vice presidency grew in stature, the selection process changed to accommodate the office's new relevance. Since 1976, the influence of the vice presidency and the seriousness of the selection process ratcheted up in a reinforcing cycle: the more important vice presidents became, the more extensive and reliable the selection process became, and as the selection process improved, it yielded better vice presidents. The changes in the vice presidential selection process and criteria represent an unusual story in American politics: voters and the media forced presidential candidates to move beyond strategic political concerns and do better for the country.

The Eagleton affair and the Agnew-Nixon-Ford turmoil between the 1972 and 1976 presidential elections created a vice presidential crisis moment in the political culture. The conventional wisdom held that running mates were chosen for exclusively electoral – not governance – considerations, making it a problematic, even dangerous office ripe for potential abuse and constitutional crisis. Reform proposals from scholars, lawmakers, political operatives, former vice presidents and vice presidential candidates,

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[1] George C. Edwards III and Lawrence R. Jacobs, "The New Vice Presidency: Institutions and Politics,"*Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (September 2008): 369-70.

and the Democratic Party sought to avoid these problems by forcing new selection procedures or limiting the pool of eligible candidates. But the proposals went nowhere – initially because of political inertia in the face of a daunting constitutional challenge, and then because the naturally evolving selection process and criteria rendered them irrelevant.

After 1960, conventions merely endorsed the presumptive presidential nominees' vice presidential picks. After 1976, when conventions were no longer meaningful in the selection of presidential nominees, running mate choice became solely the prerogative of presidential nominees – and nominees had increasing amounts of time for the selection process. Candidates no longer needed to "balance the ticket" to secure the nomination at the convention, freeing them to elevate other criteria – like competence, compatibility, and loyalty.

Candidates now need to demonstrate presidential judgment in their running mate selection; they need to vouch for their running mates' ability and preparedness to serve as president should the need arise. And they must build a ticket with enough policy and political consistency to convey a clear message about their vision for the country and to ensure continuity should the vice president ascend to the Oval Office. As Carter sought to proscribe the mistakes of previous running mates, he devised a thorough selection process that yielded, as Edwards and Jacobs summarize the scholarly and popular consensus, "the most important vice president in history to that point."[2]

The success of the Carter model gave subsequent nominees no excuse for taking the decision lightly. Given nominees' now clear agency in the selection process, voters

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[2] Edwards and Jacobs, "The New Vice Presidency," 371.

and the media hold them accountable for their choices. There is now a political imperative to make the decision with an eye toward governance over electoral criteria. Without a constitutional amendment, new laws, or changes in party rules, the American political system resolved the vice presidential crisis.

By 2012, nine elements emerged as the effective standard in the vice presidential selection process:

- An extended consideration period of two to three months;
- A vetting team working exclusively on the selection;
- A small circle of participants in the process;
- Lawyer- and accountant-driven vetting of a broad range of personal information;
- Opinion polling on potential candidates;
- Interviews of the candidates by the senior campaign officials and the presumptive nominee;
- Official secrecy about the process and its subjects;
- A calculated leak of the short list; and
- A specially staged announcement event.

Although some improvisations on these themes have succeeded, evidence suggests that skipping or skimping on these elements is risky. (The exception is secrecy, which creates the potential political benefit of surprise – but this piece has not been tested, as in the last five elections no candidate has done anything different.) Some presidential nominees added additional steps that have not proven problematic. And as Carter did in 1976,

subsequent candidates should implement additional steps they deem necessary to address emerging problems.

Two criteria carry universal and lasting import in vice presidential selection: competence and ticket bolstering. The vice president has only two constitutional obligations: breaking ties in the Senate and succeeding to the presidency if necessary. Finding a candidate prepared to perform the first task is easy; finding one prepared for the second is not. But, today's politics demand vice presidents who are ready to be commander-in-chief on day one. Competence must be the first standard for candidates to meet before any other criteria are considered.

Nearly two centuries of political history suggest ticket "balance" as the crucial criterion in choosing a running mate. While some scholars and pundits continue to advance balance as the watchword of the "Veepstakes" the utility of balance largely expired as the selection process – and the electorate's expectations – changed. And descriptive "balance" on a ticket has proven meaningless in appealing to demographic groups like religious or ethnic minorities and women. Instead, presidential nominees should focus on selecting running mates of unassailable competence who bolster the ticket . Some narrow forms of traditional balance remain relevant; balance in region, insider-outsider status, immediate government experience, and age have persisted on many recent winning tickets. These should be secondary considerations to competence and bolstering the ticket.

By the time a nominee announces his running mate, he has built a political brand that drives his campaign's narrative and creates the imperative for his election. His running mate should not undermine that structure by contradicting the candidate's

political characteristics, which include policy positions, campaign themes, family history, alliances, loyalties, promises, goals, ideology, identity, and record. But total redundancy limits the ticket's appeal and preparation for the White House. So a running mate should bring something new – experience at a different level of government, association with particular policy issues, personal style. Whatever the running mate brings to the ticket should connect clearly and simply to the existing structure. A vice presidential nominee should extend the presidential nominee's narrative, carry his message, and reinforce the imperative driving the campaign.

Several other myths about vice presidential selection persist. For instance, pundits continue to highlight the potential benefit of choosing a running mate from a crucial swing state. But presidential nominees rarely choose running mates based on this criterion, and there is no evidence that running mates have carried their home states in recent decades.[3] Observers caution against choosing a running mate who might "outshine" or "upstage" the top of the ticket. There is no evidence that this has ever been a problem itself in previous campaigns. Although Sarah Palin consumed much of the attention during the final weeks of the 2008 campaign, the damage she wrought on John McCain's chances came from implications about his judgment, not her rock-star status.

The weakness of these "rules" and the continued discussion of "balance" despite its trend toward irrelevance indicate the inadequacy of the "Veepstakes" conventional wisdom. Furthermore, a competent running mate who bolsters the ticket will not always make a good vice president as well. So presidential nominees must decide what kind of

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[3] Joel K. Goldstein, "Veepwatch, Part 1: The Swing State Selection Myth," Larry J. Sabato's Crystal Ball, entry posted April 5, 2012, http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/veepwatch-part-1-the-swing-state-selection-myth/ (accessed April 18, 2012).

president-vice president relationship they envision, and what kind of compatibility that vision requires. They need to address the political context of the moment and the circumstances they would face if elected. A running mate is a statement about the presidential nominee's identity and a measure of his judgment. Whomever a presidential nominee picks, he must be prepared to defend his running mate as both his preferred White House partner and his preferred successor.

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APPENDIX A

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THE MODERN AMERICAN VICE PRESIDENCY: A BFD

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the foundation of the American Republic in 1789, nine presidents have left office before the expiration of their terms – four died of natural causes, four were assassinated, one resigned. And 14 of our 44 presidents have been vice presidents, including seven of the last nineteen.[1]

Even if they never ascend to the presidency, modern vice presidents matter. They matter because they wield influence with the president and other lawmakers. They matter because their selection tells us something about the president who chose them. And they matter because as one of two nationally elected offices in the United States, they tell us something about us.

Yet the institution of the vice presidency remains misunderstood and largely unrecognized. At the turn of the last century, the vice presidency looked the same as it had 96 years prior. But in part due to the public's indifference, in the next 96 years, it would transform drastically and rapidly. This paper will examine that growth.

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[1] Thomas E. Cronin and Michael A. Genovese, *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 211.

I will start with a survey of the office's foundations, including its constitutional origins and changes and its pre-20th Century practice. The next section – the bulk of the paper – will chart the changes to the office over the course of the 20th Century.

One of the few scholars of the vice presidency, Jody Baumgartner, recognizes a "transitional era" of the vice presidency, lasting from the start of Theodore Roosevelt's term in 1901 through the end of Richard Nixon's in 1961; he considers Lyndon Johnson the first vice president of the "modern era."[2] Paul Light, the inventor of vice presidential scholarship, calls Nelson Rockefeller the first "modern" vice president.[3] But most scholars and historians give that designation to Walter Mondale.[4]

Scholars and political observers quickly came to describe the "Mondale model" as the first defined change from the 19th Century vice presidency. Twenty years later they spoke about a new, discrete "Gore model" and after that the "Cheney model." And then they wondered for which model Joe Biden would opt.[5]

But my paper finds that there are no permanent models of the vice presidency. In the story of the modern vice presidency, each model only lasts until it is replaced by a new, expanded version. In fact, one could argue that there have been 47 discrete models of the vice presidency – the same number as there have been vice presidents. But while every vice presidency brings some new element – some "first" – one change, or even a handful of small changes do not a new model make.

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[2] Jody C. Baumgartner, *The American Vice Presidency Reconsidered* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2006), 3.
[3] Ben McGrath, "No. 1 Authority: Second Fiddle Dept.," *The New Yorker*, July 26, 2004, page nr. http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/07/26/040726ta_talk_mcgrath?printable=true (accessed May 5, 2010).
[4] Richard Albert, "The Evolving Vice Presidency," *Temple Law Review* 78, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 834-35.
[5] Albert 836.

Some vice presidencies brought revolutionary institutional changes to bear at crucial moments and in partnership with forward-thinking presidents. These administrations left their successors new models of the vice presidency – for a time. The contributions of each one of these watershed vice presidents constitute important building blocks in the institution Americans would recognize today. Without the innovations of Vice Presidents Henry Wallace, Richard Nixon, Walter Mondale, Al Gore, and Dick Cheney, the office would not have the relevance and influence it has today.

II. FOUNDATIONS

a. The Constitutional Vice Presidency

In their chapter "The American Vice Presidency" in the book *The Paradoxes of the American Presidency*, Thomas E. Cronin and Michael A. Genovese repeat the claim that the vice presidency was "an afterthought" at the Constitutional Convention.[6] They call it a "conspicuous constitutional mistake."[7] Although it was only briefly considered by the Convention – and toward the end of their agenda – the vice presidency was a deliberate response to pressing challenges in the emerging document. The office ultimately created bridged major constitutional gaps the delegates had been facing in the areas of presidential election, presidential vacancy, and Senate leadership.[8]

As the Convention designed the Electoral College, the delegates worried that electors would vote exclusively for candidates from their own states, making a majority

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[6] Cronin 209.
Harold C. Relyea, "The Executive Office of the Vice President: Constitutional and Legal Considerations," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (June 2010): 328.
[7] Cronin 209.
[8] Albert 815-816.

effectively impossible to achieve. They responded to this concern by giving electors two votes for president and requiring that they vote for at least one candidate from a different state. To discourage electors from wasting their second vote, the Convention gave both votes meaning by making the presidential runner-up the vice president.[9]

The vice presidency also solved another confounding debate about presidential selection: succession in the case of a vacancy. Early concepts considered included simply directing the Congress to establish a statutory order of succession and making the Chief Justice of the United States the designated successor. But with the addition of the vice presidency the Convention had already created a sensible solution. Because the vice president would be chosen by the same process and at the same time as the president, his succession would uphold democratic ideals while also assuring a competent and stable regime.[10]

As the Framers sought to provide the second office with at least some official duty, they injected the vice president into the debate over Senate leadership. The Senate's necessarily even number of members meant that tie votes would occasionally arise – this held especially true given the Senate's original design. The body was intended to be a sort of "council of state [or] prime presidential counseling body," originally "comprised [of] a small number of elder statesmen." With 26 members plus the vice president, ties were likely.[11] Should the chamber's permanent presiding officer be a sitting senator, giving him the tie-breaking vote would be inequitable in one of two ways. Either that senator would only be allowed to vote in the event of a tie – in which

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[9] Albert 817.
[10] Albert 820.
[11] Cronin 214.

case his state would have less representation in the senate than all the others– or that senator would vote on the controversial measure twice – giving his state in effect more representation. The appointment of a stand-alone officer to adjudicate tie votes removed the question of equal representation from the issue.[12]

The ratified Constitution described a limited vice presidency:

- "The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided."[13]
- "[The President] shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term, be elected, as follows."
- "After the Choice of President, the Person having the greatest Number of Votes of the Electors shall be the Vice President. But if there should remain two or more who have equal Votes, the Senate shall chuse from them by Ballot the Vice President."
- "In Case of the Removal of the President from Office, or of his Death, Resignation, or Inability to discharge the Powers and Duties of the said Office, the Same shall devolve on the Vice President."[14]

In plugging other structural holes with the vice presidency, the Framers created a new office that was a pastiche of paradoxes, and what one scholar describes as "an anomalous amalgam within the American constitutional order."[15] Over the two centuries since the ratification of the Bill of Rights, four of the seventeen amendments to the U.S.

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[12] Albert 821.
[13] *U.S. Constitution*. Art.I, Sec.3.
[14] *U.S. Constitution*. Art.II, Sec.1.
[15] Albert 815.

Constitution have shaped the vice presidency.[16] Theses changes addressed already-transpired and foreseen crises.

When the presidential election of 1800 resulted in an electoral tie, the selection of the president fell to the House of Representatives, despite the clear intention of the Electoral College to choose Thomas Jefferson. Concerns of home-state hegemony among the electors sufficiently allayed, Congress moved relatively quickly to revamp the election process. The 12th Amendment provides for the election of the president and vice president on separate ballots.[17]

In the 1930s, Americans confronted the tradition of crises breaking out during the four months between a presidential election and the victor's inauguration. The 20th Amendment changed that by moving the presidential and vice presidential inaugurations from March 4th to January 20th.[18]

In response to Franklin D. Roosevelt's unprecedented election to four terms as president, democratic-minded lawmakers sought to proscribe the recurrence of such a case. The 22nd Amendment limits the number of terms a president can serve to two – the precedent established by George Washington at the Republic's beginning. This change increased the likelihood of vice presidents pursuing and attaining the presidency.[19]

With the Constitution silent on the question of vice presidential succession, for the first 185 years of the Republic, when vice presidents left office, no one replaced them. By 1965, the vice presidency had been vacant for a combined 36 years.[20] The

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[16] Cronin 211.
[17] Albert 837-845.
[18] Albert 845-853.
[19] Albert 853-859.
[20] Baumgartner 2.

assassination of President John F. Kennedy and elevation of Vice President Lyndon Johnson to the Oval Office in 1963 reminded the country of the importance of clear plans of succession. Less than four years after Kennedy's assassination, the 25th Amendment devised a process for filling vice presidential vacancies: nomination by the president and confirmation by a majority of both houses of Congress. The Amendment also created a succession system to address temporary presidential incapacity and clarified that in the case of a presidential vacancy, the vice president assumes the presidency and not just its powers.[21]

b. The Historical Vice Presidency

The vice presidency of the 19th Century held nearly no potential for advancement or lasting relevance. Without influence or esteem, the vice presidential nomination usually served as a retirement gift for aging party wise men or an entirely symbolic show for unhappy corners of the party. Of the first 24 vice presidents, six died in office; one, John C. Calhoun, had terrible relationships with both the presidents he served and joined the Confederate Army.[22]

Throughout the 19th and into the 20th Century the vice presidency was an almost exclusively legislative position in perception and practice.[23] The first vice president, John Adams, performed only one executive act during his eight years in office – he also cast the most tie-breaking Senate votes of any vice president in history: 29.[24]

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[21] Albert 859-865.
[22] Baumgartner 22.
Betsy Bates, "The Vice Presidency: Is it really all that great?" *San Diego Union-Tribune*, July 9, 1984.
[23] Cronin 212.
[24] Cronin 214.

Overwhelmingly, Adams's 19th Century successors shared his experience – but with even less legislative activity. So they passed their time in office doing other things: Henry Wilson wrote three books on the slave trade in America; Hannibal Hamilin never left his home in Maine; Richard Johnson ran a tavern; and Aaron Burr killed Alexander Hamilton.[25]

For more than half of this country's history, such was the nature of its second-highest office.

III. THE MODERN VICE PRESIDENCY

a. Pre-Wallace

The start of the evolution of the vice presidency roughly coincided with the turn of the last century. Some minor changes introduced by early 20th Century vice presidents contributed to the slow growth of the office. These terms included a handful of notable "firsts."

Baumgartner identifies Theodore Roosevelt – elected in 1900 as William McKinley's second vice president – as a different sort of vice president from his predecessors and classifies him as the first vice president of the "transitional era."[26] Roosevelt served as vice president for only six months before succeeding to the presidency following McKinley's assassination. Although the first vice presidential nominee to campaign around the country, Roosevelt made no substantive changes to the

[25] Baumgartner 21.
[26] Baumgartner 23.

office.[27] Yet he brought a new tone to the position. Diana Dixon Healy described Roosevelt's role thus:

> There have been other ambitious vice-presidents: Burr, Calhoun, Nixon. And intelligent vice-presidents: Jefferson, Wallace. And charismatic vice-presidents: Stevenson, Breckinridge. There have been patriotic vice-presidents: John Adams, Andrew Johnson. And verbose vice-presidents: Humphrey, Dawes. There have been others who were lucky, who had large families, and who had wealthy, privileged backgrounds. But there had never been a vice-president who embodied all these qualities until Theodore Roosevelt.[28]

In the evolution of the modern vice presidency, Roosevelt represents the homo erectus: evolved from his Australopithecus forebears, but still steps away from his homo sapiens progeny.

Thomas Marshall left his two terms as vice president after a handful of important contributions to the office. He was the first vice president since Adams to attend a Cabinet meeting – which he did only occasionally – and chaired a series of them while President Woodrow Wilson was in Paris negotiating an end to World War I.[29] Marshall's prominent public campaigns for Democratic congressional candidates and in support of Liberty Loans marked a new addition to the vice president's portfolio. His appearance on the USS *Colorado* in 1915 also saw the first version of an unofficial vice presidential flag.[30] But the part of Marshall's vice presidential legacy most commented on today are his colorful descriptions of the office:

- "A man in a cataleptic fit; he cannot speak; he cannot move; he suffers no pain; he is perfectly conscious of all that goes on, but has no part in it."[31]

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[27] Baumgartner 28.
[28] Baumgartner 23.
[29] Cronin 214.
[30] Baumgartner 31.
[31] *Associated Press*, "What they've said about being No. 2," September 27, 2008.

- "Once there were two brothers. One ran away to sea, the other was elected Vice President of the United States, and nothing was heard of either of them again."[32]
- "A monkey cage, except that the visitors do not offer me any peanuts."[33]

President Warren Harding invited Vice President Calvin Coolidge to attend Cabinet meetings, which Coolidge regularly did, but Coolidge's vice president, Charles Dawes, declined the invitation. Vice President Charles Curtis occasionally joined President Herbert Hoover's Cabinet sessions. Since Franklin D. Roosevelt's first term, however, regular vice presidential participation in Cabinet meetings has been a continued practiced.[34]

Cabinet participation is among the reasons some consider Roosevelt's first vice president, John Nance Garner, the first modern vice president. Garner was the first vice president to travel abroad on his boss's behalf and the first to become an important link between the White House and Capitol Hill.[35] And, symbolically, the first to serve with an official vice presidential flag.[36] Yet Garner and Roosevelt had a particularly messy and treacherous relationship. By1940, Garner actually challenged his boss for their party's presidential nomination, ensuring his absence from the Democratic ticket that

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[32] Cronin 209.
[33] Garrick Utley, "Vice president's role changes over the years: Cheney may be most influential VP, but will he be memorable?" *CNN*, January 8, 2001. http://transcripts.cnn.com/2001/ALLPOLITICS/stories/01/08/changing.vp/index.html (accessed March 21, 2010).
[34] Relyea 328.
[35] Relyea 329.
[36] Baumgartner 31.

fall.[37] Garner also contributed some of the most famous descriptions of the vice presidency:

- "A spare tire on the automobile of government."[38]
- "Not worth a bucket of warm piss."[39]

b. Henry A. Wallace

As Secretary of Agriculture – like his father before him – Henry A. Wallace served as an important counselor to President Roosevelt through the Administration's first two terms. Indeed, he was considered by contemporary accounts "deputy leader of the New Deal."[40] After Roosevelt's public split with Garner at the height of his power, Roosevelt sought a trustworthy and reliable confidante to join him in his effort for a third term. Threatening to decline his party's nomination without his choice of running mate, Roosevelt demanded that the Democratic convention nominate Wallace for vice president. Unsurprisingly, the convention complied, making Henry Wallace the first running mate chosen by the presidential nominee of his party.[41]

Through the early part of Roosevelt's third term, scholars and politicians believed Wallace's selection to constitute a conscious torch-passing on the part of the president. Samuel E. Wood of the University of California wrote that "as the heir apparent of New Deal leadership," Wallace "will become, in fact, the 'assistant president' of the United

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[37] Baumgartner 26.
[38] *Time*, People: Dec. 4, 1964, Dec. 4, 1964, page nr. http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,830883,00.html (accessed March 21, 2010).
[39] Nathan L. Gonzales, "Obama, Biden Seats in Danger," *Roll Call*, July 29, 2009.
[40] Samuel E. Wood, "Henry A. Wallace and the General Welfare," *The Journal of Politics* 3, no. 4 (Nov. 1941): 452.
[41] Baumgartner 26.

States."[42] In the fall of 1940, Representative August Andresen of Minnesota, a Democrat, even made the claim in a speech to the House that "if the Democratic national ticket should happen to be successful this fall, there is little doubt that Mr. Roosevelt plans to turn the Presidency over to his running mate, Henry A. Wallace, within the next year or two." Roosevelt's verbal slip in his acceptance speech – "To you, the delegates to this convention, I express my gratitude for the selection of Henry Wallace for the high office of President of the United States" – further encouraged such speculation.[43]

Following the election, Roosevelt appointed Wallace chair of the Economic Defense Board, the Supply Priorities and Allocations Board, the War Productions Board, and the Board of Economic Welfare; according to Cronin and Genovese, these roles made Wallace "the first vice president to be assigned major administrative duties."[44] The assumption of these roles as the U.S. prepared for and entered World War II made Wallace a prominent and powerful part of the domestic policy team and an important contributor to Roosevelt's secret "war Cabinet."[45]

Wallace continued the Administration's lobbying on the Hill, but brought an imprimatur to the efforts that his predecessor lacked. Given the close alliance between Wallace and Roosevelt, legislators knew that Wallace spoke on the president's behalf in a way Garner never could.[46]

Even before his swearing-in as vice president, Wallace began aiding Roosevelt as an ambassador beyond the command of the Foreign Service or the State Department. In

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[42] Wood 450.
[43] Congressional Record.
[44] Cronin 214.
[45] Mark O. Hatfield, with the Senate Historical Office. *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789-1993* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), pp. 399-406.
[46] Hatfield 404.

1940, Wallace attended the Mexican presidential inauguration and delivered a well-received speech in Spanish. Three years later, he returned to Latin America on a tour of Costa Rica, Panama, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia. In 1944, Roosevelt sent Wallace on a high-profile trip to China and the Soviet Union.[47]

During Wallace's 1944 trip abroad, conservative elements of the Democratic Party began machinating for Wallace's removal from the ticket. By the time Wallace retuned to the U.S., Roosevelt had effectively resigned himself to Wallace's eventual departure. At the convention in Chicago, party leaders and delegates nominated Senator Harry S. Truman for the vice presidency. Roosevelt won an unprecedented fourth term and Truman became the 34th vice president on January 20th, 1945. Roosevelt died 82 days later.[48]

c. The Wallace Model

The two vice presidents following Wallace – Truman and Alben W. Barkley – inherited and maintained the prerogatives of the office Wallace had forged. Truman's brief vice presidency left little imprint on the office, but influenced his decisions to enhance the position during Barkley's tenure.

The oft-repeated detail of Truman's quick succession to the presidency following Roosevelt's death is that only after becoming president did he discover the existence of the Manhattan Project and the U.S.'s emerging nuclear capability. While one could attribute this fact to Truman's brief time serving under Roosevelt, it at least serves as an

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[47] Hatfield 403.
[48] Kenneth T. Walsh, "The First 100 Days: Harry Truman Showed Decisiveness and Intelligence," *U.S. News and World Report*, February 26, 2009. http://www.usnews.com/news/history/articles/2009/02/26/the-first-100-days-harry-truman-showed-decisiveness-and-intelligence.html (accessed May 5, 2010).

example of the estrangement between the two leaders. In fact, between their nomination in August 1944 and Roosevelt's death in April 1945, the pair met only eight times.[49]

The unpreparedness Truman experienced upon his succession to the Oval Office led him to reconsider the role of the vice presidency. During his time as president, Truman made a handful of changes to the second office and took steps to accommodate Vice President Barkley. Barkley, who had been the Democrats' Senate Minority Leader, was a "visible and popular" vice president.[50] Truman attempted to keep Wallace well-apprised of important information and events and issued an executive order providing for a new vice presidential flag and, for the first time, a vice presidential seal and coat of arms. Most concretely, Truman urged the Congress to include the vice president as a statutory member of the National Security Council upon the NSC's official establishment in 1947.[51]

d. Richard M. Nixon

Richard M. Nixon entered the vice presidency with the advantages of the Wallace innovations, the recent changes under Truman, and an aging president – Dwight D. Eisenhower – who valued clear chains-of-command. During his vice presidency, Nixon recorded few historical "firsts," but took his inherited prerogatives to an unprecedented scale.

According to Paul Kengor, Eisenhower chose Richard Nixon for three primary reasons. First, Eisenhower believed Nixon shared his political philosophy. Second,

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[49] Marie D. Natoli, "Harry S. Truman and the Contemporary Vice Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 81-82.
[50] Baumgartner 33.
[51] Natoli 83.

Eisenhower worried that his advanced age could be a political weakness, so he decided to "take the opportunity to select a vice-presidential candidate who was young, vigorous, ready to learn, and of good reputation." And third, Eisenhower saw "communist infiltration and common methods for defeating it in our country" as important issues for the next president; Nixon's investigation of Alger Hiss had made him a well-known "communist-hunter."[52]

Eisenhower brought to the White House many of the practices and approaches that served him well during his distinguished military leadership. Among these were the notion of an inclusive, active, and efficient command structure and comprehensive contingency planning. These meant a conviction that his constitutional second-in-command should serve meaningful purposes both in advancing the Administration's agenda and in preparing to govern in the case of disaster.[53] He explained during the campaign: "I personally believe the Vice President of the United States should never be a nonentity. I believe he should be used. I believe he should have a very useful job." Before entering the White House, Eisenhower promised Nixon participation "in all policy-making meetings" and "assignments to prepare him for the possibility that he might suddenly become president."[54]

The National Security Council having been formally established in 1947, Nixon attended 217 NSC meetings, presiding over 26; he attended 163 Cabinet meetings, chairing 19; and was included in the paper flow of both groups.[55] Nixon also "set the

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[52] Paul Kengor, *Wreath Layer or Policy Player? The Vice President's Role in Foreign Policy* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2000), 43.
[53] Baumgartner 30.
[54] Kengor 43.
[55] Baumgartner 30-31.

standard for midterm campaigning with his efforts in 1954 and 1958" and "took seven foreign trips to 54 countries," conducting "extended discussions with nine prime ministers, 35 presidents, five kings, two emperors, and the Shah of Iran."[56]

Nixon's line jobs on the domestic policy side included chairing the Cabinet Committee on Price Stability for Economic Growth and the President's Committee on Government Contracts.[57]

Nixon dispensed with most of the office's legislative functions – his primary original change to the vice presidency. While Vice President Barkley had presided over 50-75% of the Senate's sessions during his vice presidency, Nixon rarely took the chair in the Senate chamber.[58] He estimated that he spent 90% of his time on executive functions and 10% on legislative duties.[59]

In 1958, Eisenhower and Nixon exchanged a series of letters detailing circumstances under which Nixon should become acting president and when he should return those powers to Eisenhower. These exchanges foreshadowed the questions later addressed by the 25th Amendment.[60]

During the 1960 presidential campaign, when asked about a major idea Nixon had contributed to the administration, Eisenhower famously responded, "If you give me a week, I might think of one. I don't remember." This single comment was repeated often during the campaign and has made its way into history. But Eisenhower was actually quite pleased with his vice president's performance. According to Kengor, "The way he

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Bradley H. Patterson Jr., "Teams and Staff: Dwight Eisenhower's Innovations in the Structure and Operations of the Modern White House," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 278.
[56] Baumgartner 31-32.
[57] Baumgartner 31.
[58] Hatfield 427.
[59] Baumgartner 31.
[60] Kengor 45.

treated Nixon in both private and public, and the significant duties he assigned him, belies the view that Ike was unimpressed or displeased with his loyal vice president." The two saw each other at least "three times a week while Congress was in session." In fact, Ralph DeToledano wrote that Eisenhower once claimed, "Dick is the most valuable member of my team."[61]

e. The Nixon Model

After the Eisenhower Administration, the vice presidency entered a period of upheaval. Following Nixon, six vice presidents and 20 years intervened before another vice president served two full terms; in fact, of those six, only three even completed one whole term. For the five vice presidents who succeeded Nixon, the privileges and powers of the vice presidency remained mostly unchanged.

Lyndon B. Johnson assumed the vice presidency expecting to expand and revolutionize the office in the same way he expanded and revolutionized every job he'd ever held. But concerns within President John F. Kennedy's inner circle led them to proscribe the potential growth of the vice presidency by sidelining Johnson from legislative liaison and helping to stymie his early power grab attempts. As the outgoing Majority Leader – a post which had made him the most powerful Democrat in Washington, and probably the country – Johnson planned to keep his ornate and central Capitol office (the "Taj Mahal") and continue presiding over Senate Democratic Caucus meetings. When these plans met unexpected opposition on the Hill, Johnson abandoned them, to the White House's relief. Johnson's colossal reputation and skill set within

[61] Kengor 44-45.

Congress made Kennedy uneasy with the vice president as the lead legislative negotiator. Kennedy and his advisers believed Johnson so adept that if empowered, he could use his dual-branch foothold to take effective control of the legislative agenda.[62]

As a consolation prize of sorts, Kennedy sent Johnson on a series of high-profile international trips.[63] But his influence was negligible. He later recalled "trips around the world, chauffeurs, men saluting, people clapping, [and] chairmanships of councils, but in the end, it is nothing. I detested every minute of it."[64]

The Johnson-Kennedy relationship suffered from a dynamic on which many observers – including Harry Truman – have commented: a rivalry within the White House arising from the president and vice president's relative political equality when elected. In this particular case, Kennedy served as a senator under Johnson as Majority Leader – making him in effect a subordinate of his own running mate. Truman noted that both the president and vice president are likely to be capable politicians with their own interests and agendas, creating a mutual hesitance to trust the other.[65]

The Johnson vice presidency did bring about one important "first" that enhanced the office's power: an office suite in the executive complex. Even though Kennedy reportedly made this change "to keep [Johnson] under tighter watch," according to Paul Light, it served to extend "the vice president's proximity and visibility with the White

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[62] Jeff Shesol, interview by author, 29 April 2010, Washington, D.C., digital recording.
[63] Hatfield 458.
[64] Jeff Shesol, *Mutual Contempt: Lyndon Johnson, Robert Kennedy, and the Feud That Defined a Decade* (New York: Norton, 1997), 75.
[65] Cronin 217.

House."[66] Every vice president since Johnson has used his Old Executive Office Building suite as his primary office, while still maintaining a Capitol Hill outpost.[67]

As president, Johnson shared a familar dynamic with his second-in-command, Hubert H. Humphrey. Humphrey took the post knowing well Johnson's famous demands for and understanding of loyalty: "I want him to kiss my ass in Macy's window at high noon and tell me it smells like roses. I want his pecker in my pocket."[68] Humphrey pledged this kind of loyalty. Despite Humphrey's personal reservations about escalating the Vietnam conflict, when Johnson decided to do so, the vice president became the Administration's main defender of war policy. This position hampered – maybe even destroyed – Humphrey's chances of winning the 1960 presidential election.[69]

Nixon's vice president, Spiro T. Agnew, left little mark on the office. His greatest personal contribution appears to be his decision to resign once under indictment to spare the noble office a felony bribery conviction. Agnew was the second vice president to resign; John C. Calhoun left the office in 1832 to become a U.S. Senator from South Carolina.[70] As vice president, Agnew served as the Nixon Administration's leading attack dog, and gave political rhetoric an injection of angry alliteration, earning fame for phrases like "nattering nabobs of negativism," "pusillanimous pussyfooters," "vicars of vacillation," and "hopeless, hysterical hypochondriacs of history."[71]

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[66] Paul C. Light, "The Institutional Vice Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 201.
[67] Relyea 330.
[68] Eric Alterman, *When Presidents Lie: A History of Official Deception and Its Consequences* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 180.
[69] Marie D. Natoli, "The Humphrey Vice Presidency in Retrospect," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Fall 1982): 606.
[70] Hatfield 96.
[71] Lance Morrow, "Naysayer to the Nattering Nabobs," *Time*, Monday, Sep. 30, 1996, page nr. http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,985217,00.html (accessed May 7, 2010).

During Agnew's tenure, the vice president's executive office made its first formal appearance in the *United States Government Organization Manual 1972/73*. While mostly a symbolic shift indicating decades worth of evolution, according to Light, "the listing helped define the boundaries of an executive agency."[72] This step followed the 1969 victory of achieving a line item within the president's budget.[73] Agnew was also the first vice president allowed permanent access to government aircraft – a nondescript, windowless Air Force plane that Agnew staff called "Air Force Thirteen."[74]

On December 6, 1973, Gerald R. Ford became the first vice president to take office through the process prescribed by the 25th Amendment.[75] Yet Ford's time as vice president would be remarkably brief. Ford became the 38th President of the United States following Nixon's resignation on August 9, 1974. The Fords weren't even the Second Family long enough to move into the vice president's official residence.[76] But during his tour in the second office, Ford won an important vice presidential prerogative: staff authority. After his swearing-in, Ford decided against accepting White House staff assistance and instead hired his own counsel, national security advisor, speechwriters, and administrative aides; over the course of his vice presidency, his staff grew from 17 to 70. His practices inaugurated "the vice president's freedom to hire and fire the staffs of his choice" and constituted "the first self-contained vice president's office."[77]

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[72] Relyea 330.
[73] Light 202.
[74] Light 206.
[75] Marjorie Hunter, "Ford Sworn in as Vice President after House Approves, 387-35; He Vows Equal Justice for All: Loyalty to Nixon," *New York Times*, December 7, 1973.
[76] Bill Harris, *The First Ladies Fact Book: The Stories of the Women of the White House* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2005), 616.
[77] Light 204.

The institutionalization begun during the Ford vice presidency continued during the tenure of Ford's vice president, Nelson A. Rockefeller. Succeeding to the office almost exactly one year after his boss had, Rockefeller became the second – and thus far the last – vice president appointed under the 25th Amendment.[78] During the Rockefeller vice presidency, the organization of the vice president's office continued to expand and formalize. By the time Ford and Rockefeller left the White House, the vice president's office "was a mirror of the president's office" and had "specific chains of commands and functions." These steps succeeded in defining "the institutional identity of the vice president's office."[79]

f. Walter F. Mondale

The vice presidency Walter F. Mondale inherited had been burnished by the Ford and Rockefeller innovations, and Mondale was eager to parlay those structural changes into a new level of vice presidential influence.

Mondale entered the post with a clear-eyed understanding of – and essentially resignation to – the job's limits and frustrations. But in President Jimmy Carter, he found a partner open to the project of reshaping and enlarging the scope of the vice presidency.

Mondale's unique vice presidency began as a unique vice presidential nominee. In selecting Mondale, Carter introduced the thorough, deliberate vetting system virtually

[78] Hatfield 510.
[79] Light 205.

universal in today's "veepstakes."[80] And in October of 1976, Mondale participated in the first vice presidential debate with Senator Bob Dole.[81]

Carter used three criteria in selecting Mondale as his running mate: ability to serve as president if necessary, political and personal compatibility, and regional balance. Furthermore, Carter knew that he needed a governing partner with solid Washington experience. The partnership Mondale and Carter forged changed the nature of the vice presidency. In their earliest meetings, Mondale impressed Carter with "a list of the ways in which he could help Carter politically as his running mate," but more importantly, with an unambiguous and cogent vision of the White House figure he sought to be: "an activist vice president, enjoying a level of access that few, in any, previous occupants had attained."[82]

Following the election, Carter offered Mondale the chief of staff position – which Mondale declined because he knew "it would have consumed him" – and encouraged Mondale to take the lead in Congressional relations – a task from which Mondale also shied. Instead, Mondale envisioned himself as "a general adviser to the president" – a concept Carter eagerly supported. To their first transition planning meeting, Mondale brought "a detailed memorandum outlining the role he wanted to play in the new administration." Carter agreed heartily with all of Mondale's recommendations and added more. The ideas laid out in that meeting were executed after the inauguration.[83]

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[80] Buamgartner 94.
[81] Baumgartner 62.
[82] Kengor 85.
[83] Kengor 86.
Richard Moe, "The Making of the Modern Vice Presidency: A Personal Reflection," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (September 2008): 395.

The original innovations Mondale and Carter instituted are prerogatives contemporary vice presidents take for granted – in fact, they read like a description of Al Gore or Joe Biden's typical week as vice president. These changes included participation in all Cabinet meetings, NSC briefings, and Economic Policy Group discussions; inclusion in all of the president's paper flow, including his full daily schedule; a standing invitation to all political meetings; a weekly private lunch; direct placement of staff within the national security and domestic policy operations; a permanent Capitol Hill staff; and – perhaps most importantly – a West Wing office.[84]

Mondale White House speechwriter Marty Kaplan emphasizes certain elements of these changes as particularly important. Not only was Mondale granted a West Wing office, but "also contiguous space for his executive assistant (this was really important), plus their secretaries." And in addition to Mondale's being allowed to appoint emissaries to the main White House policy staffs, "a bunch of Mondale people – who'd been on his Senate staff, or advised him – went into key positions on Carter's staff," including Bert Carp running the Domestic Policy Council and David Aaron as Deputy NSC Director.[85]

Kaplan also pointed out "one important thing [Mondale] made sure he didn't have: line authority over anything (policy processes, task forces, commissions, initiatives, etc.)" Mondale was concerned that such assignments would weaken his big-picture influence and he "didn't want to get pulled into that kind of quicksand."[86] Furthermore, Mondale believed his value as a general adviser relied upon his independence from the

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[84] Kengor 86.
Light 207.
Marty Kaplan, e-mail message to author, May 5, 2010.
[85] Kaplan.
[86] Kaplan.

"institutional baggage or bias" which could easily come with specific policy responsibilities.[87]

Of real importance in political perception, the perks of the vice presidency rapidly grew under Mondale. These new official benefits included "White House mess privileges, better aircraft, better offices, fast printing support, and limousines." Most evidently, the Mondales were the first Second Family to live at Number One Observatory Circle, the official residence of the Vice President of the United States. These status symbols sent a message to White House, executive department, and Congressional staff that the vice president and his team were valued parts of the Administration.[88]

Light cautions that "none of the changes guarantees the vice president an active advisory role; […] nothing in the institutional framework assumes presidential willingness to listen." He cites a Carter aide to illustrate this point: "After a while, it was almost automatic for Carter to ask 'What does Fritz Mondale think about this?' It doesn't take too many questions like that before the staff goes to Fritz before the President asks."[89]

Carter and Mondale's president-vice president relationship was a good one for both men, as well as the institution of the vice presidency. Mondale's "lauded loyalty to the president" was rewarded with Carter's consideration of his vice president as "his most senior adviser." The two also apparently became close personal friends, with Carter calling Mondale "like a brother and a son," and Mondale remarking that "Never before has a vice president been so generously and so kindly treated by his president." Finally,

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[87] Moe 394.
[88] Light 205-206.
[89] Light 208-209.

"Mondale considered the role he played in elevating the stature of the vice presidency his greatest contribution during the Carter years."[90]

Cronin and Genovese sum up the claims of many scholars: "Mondale is credited with being perhaps the first in that job who regularly exercised substantive policy influence."[91]

g. The Mondale Model

All of Mondale's structural changes endured beyond the Carter Administration. His two immediate successors retained the institutional structures of the Mondale model, but served under presidents less amenable than Carter to the advice of their second officers.

In the first months, the relationship between President Ronald Reagan and his vice president, George H.W. Bush, shared some of the tensions of the Kennedy-Johnson relationship. As with Kennedy and Johnson, Reagan and Bush both sought their party's presidential nomination in a bitter and competitive primary process. As the Republican National Convention approached its close, Reagan chose Bush as his running mate after failing to agree to the terms with Gerald Ford on a co-presidency scheme. When those plans fell apart, Reagan reached out to his more moderate primary opponent to unite the party and take advantage of "the best résumé in politics." Once in the White House, Reagan hired a handful of top Bush advisers – most prominently, Bush campaign

[90] Kengor 88.
[91] Cronin 219.

manager James Baker as White House Chief of Staff – and encouraged Bush to take a West Wing office.[92]

Bush's handling of the assassination attempt on Reagan as well as his extensive efforts in support of Reagan's economic program and other partisan objectives earned the trust of the president and his team. As Bush and Reagan developed a partnership based on "the positive personal relationship, the respect, trust, and loyalty; the regular daily and weekly access," Bush's foreign policy expertise – he had been the American Ambassador to the United Nations, the de facto ambassador to China, and the Director of Central Intelligence – found its way into the Administration's operations.[93]

According to Kengor, "most observers believe that George H.W. Bush enjoyed almost as good a relationship with Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale enjoyed with Jimmy Carter." At the team's second inaugural, Reagan praised Bush as "the best Vice President this Republic has ever had."[94]

Having been a vice president himself, Bush sought to assure his vice president total integration and comfort in the new administration. But Dan Quayle entered the White House in a position of weakness after sustaining a particularly damaging campaign.

Quayle brought many dimensions of balance to President George H.W. Bush's ticket. As Kengor explains, Quayle was "conservative on cultural, economics, and

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[92] Kengor 126-127.
[93] Kengor 128.
Light 207.
[94] Kengor 220.

defense issues;" "young and energetic;" "hugely popular" in his home state of Indiana; a Baby Boomer; and the only Midwesterner on either national ticket.[95]

But Quayle quickly earned a reputation for incompetence and pomposity. His debate with Senator Lloyd Bentsen offered one of the more famous moments of recent debate history. When Quayle deflected a question about his experience by saying "I have as much experience in the Congress as Jack Kennedy did when he sought the presidency," Bentsen retorted: "I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy."[96] Quayle's tough campaign experience left him weak as he took office and throughout his term.[97]

Nevertheless, as Quayle explained, "President Bush, from the moment he took office, made it clear to everyone in the West Wing that I was to have all the access that I wanted." Bush would also continue to offer Quayle a great deal of sympathy over the course of their administration.[98]

Bush and Quayle enjoyed a friendly and comfortable relationship. They shared a "regular Thursday lunch," and Quayle oversaw a handful of domestic issues – his two top efforts were the Space and Competitiveness Councils. Although Quayle was occasionally "a clear political liability," Bush was apparently happy with his vice president's performance. However, this comity did not translate into substantive policy influence.[99]

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[95] Kengor 166.
[96] "Origin of 'No Jack Kennedy' Comment Disputed." Narr. by Robert Seigel. All Things Considered. National Public Radio, 6 June 2007, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=10785989, 5 May 2010. Transcript.
[97] Paul Orzulak, interview by author, 29 April 2010, Washington, D.C., digital recording.
[98] Kengor 167.
[99] Kengor 168-169.

h. Albert Gore Jr.

The vice presidency Albert Gore Jr. envisioned drew directly from Mondale's vice presidential experience – he even consulted Mondale's former chief of staff, Richard Moe, in the days after the 1992 election.[100] But by the time he set out on his own campaign to succeed President William J. Clinton, Gore had replaced the Mondale model with a version that included a new layer of influence.

Clinton took interest in Gore because of Gore's relative independence and moderate stances on foreign-policy issues. Both men were "New Democrats" and part of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council – and they "always viewed one another equally." But Gore brought different sorts of balance to the ticket. Gore's "solid family background" countered the rumors of Clinton's infideltities; Gore's military service in Vietnam countered criticisms of Clinton's lack of service and opposition to the draft; and Gore's broad work in arms control and other foreign policy areas in the Senate countered Clinton's dearth of hands-on international experience[101].

Gore described himself as filling a "general-advisor role" to Clinton, who included his vice president in virtually all decisions of any consequence. But their rapport included some dynamics atypical of most president-vice president relationships. The younger Gore reportedly ended up giving Clinton advice on his strenuous lifestyle and counseled the president on major managerial and staffing decisions. Gore's influence led to a series of staff changes over the course of their administration. In fact,

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[100] Moe 396.
[101] Kengor 219.

The Economist once observed, that "to some [Gore] seems more presidential than the president."[102]

In addition to these roles, Gore introduced a new element of vice presidential authority: an original personal policy agenda. As vice president, Gore led the administration's efforts on environmental policy, emerging technology, and a reinventing government campaign. According to former Gore aide Paul Orzulak, Gore's policy portfolio was not a series of line assignments handed to him by the president; rather, they were a series of issues about which Gore personally cared and on which he wished to make progress – with Clinton's blessing. In another unprecedented conferral of authority, Gore also managed some international relationships; this included chairing bilateral commissions with Russia, Egypt, and South Africa; leading nuclear non-proliferation policy; and negotiating the Kyoto Protocol.[103]

Yet, Gore's influence diminished by the end of his tenure. Clinton's indiscretions in the Monica Lewinsky scandal caused Gore moral and political discomfort.[104] As he distanced himself from the president both publicly and privately, their personal relationship suffered: according to Kengor, "by the summer of 2000, the two were hardly speaking with one another."[105]

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[102] Kengor 220-221.
[103] Orzulak.
Joel K. Goldstein, "The Rising Power of the Modern Vice Presidency," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (September 2008): 383.
[104] Orzulak.
[105] Kengor 219.

i. Richard B. Cheney

Richard B. Cheney took the vice presidential model he inherited from Gore and exploded it to a scale previously unimaginable. Empowered by President George W. Bush, Cheney wielded influence so broad and so deep – and so secret – as to be literally immeasurable.

In 2000, Bush asked Cheney, one of his top outside advisers, to lead the project of selecting a running mate. That process ended with Cheney as the nominee and on the way to becoming what Cronin and Genovese call "the most consequential vice president in American history." Scholars and political observers agree that he "transformed" the office into "a virtual shadow presidency and at times perhaps nearly a co-presidency."[106]

Because Cheney brought to the job extensive experience – eight years as a staffer in the Nixon and Ford White Houses, including two as Chief of Staff; a tour as Ford's 1976 campaign manager; 10 years in the House of Representatives, where he was elected Republican Whip, four years as Bush I's Secretary of Defense; and five years as Chairman and CEO of Halliburton – Bush II allowed his vice president broad influence and authority, including actual decision-making powers occasionally marked by dubious legality.[107]

Cheney took command of the presidential transition and the ongoing recruitment and placement of numerous "Cabinet, subcabinet, and Executive Office of the President personnel." After 9/11, Cheney took a role in shaping the administration's foreign policy

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[106] Cronin 221.
[107] Barton Gellman, *Angler: The Cheney Vice Presidency* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 162.

– especially "the overall conduct of U.S. anti-terrorism policies" and intelligence management.[108]

According to journalist Barton Gellman, on September 11, 2001, Cheney gave the order to shoot down unidentified aircraft without President Bush's authorization.[109]

Much of the Cheney vice presidency remains unknown – and will likely remain unknown for many years. Notoriously secretive, Cheney and his staff went to great lengths to keep information out of the hands of the courts, the Congress, and the public. One of their strategies was the introduction of an unofficial, extralegal classification system. The vice president's office had stamps made reading "Treat as classified," or "Treat as top secret" – designations that have no legal basis or meaning, but which will confuse investigators and archivists for years to come.[110]

Cheney's influential role appears unlikely to truly constitute a new model of the vice presidency, because it cannot endure. His authority was so great as to induce constitutional scholars to discuss a "crisis" created by "popular illegitimacy."[111] His approval rating upon leaving office was 13% and he was often characterized as a more evil version of *Star Wars*'s Darth Vader.[112] No vice president will risk such unpopularity by seeking a similar role.

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[108] Cronin 202.
[109] Gellman 119.
[110] Gellman 8.
[111] Albert 813.
[112] CBS News, "Bush's Final Approval Rating: 22 Percent," The Bush Legacy, entry posted January 16, 2009, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/01/16/opinion/polls/main4728399.shtml (accessed May 5, 2010).
Jon Stewart, "January 25, 2007: Cheney Camera 3," The Daily Show, http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/thu-january-25-2007/cheney-camera-3 (accessed May 5, 2010).

IV. CONCLUSION: Joseph R. Biden Jr.

Less than 18 months into the Barack Obama Administration is too early to judge the shape of Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s vice presidency. But the early months offer some clues about where he is headed.

According to Biden allies, Biden entered the office with the belief "that Vice President Cheney had an overly expansive view of the vice president" and "that the vice president's role is to be an adviser to the president and to be a member of the president's team, and that's how he's going to be in the job."[113] Biden has definitely rejected the Cheney model he inherited – and he is the first vice president to ever shrink the footprint of his office. But it remains unclear whether he has reverted to a previous model or is forging a new one.

Some elements of his approach are becoming evident already.

Principally, he retains the structural prerogatives established by Mondale and Gore – although, for instance, he is allowed one full time speechwriter to Gore's phalanx of four.[114]

According to news stories in *Newsweek* and the *New York Times* in the fall of 2009, Biden fulfills the general adviser role as an active participant in internal White House policy and political decisions. He plays the role of devil's advocate and takes advantage of his situation as the only person in the room that the president cannot fire.[115]

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[113] Carol E. Lee, "Biden to shrink VP role — big time," *Politico*, December 14, 2008. http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uuid=33175C17-18FE-70B2-A8C50193E774F783 (accessed March 31, 2010).
[114] Nussbaum.
[115] Holly Bailey and Evan Thomas, "An Inconvenient Truth Teller: From health-care reform to Afghanistan, Joe Biden has bucked Obama—as only a good Veep can.," *Newsweek*, October 19, 2009, page nr. http://www.newsweek.com/id/217090/output/print (accessed March 21, 2010).

Despite earlier claims that he was "unlikely to have a specific docket of issues," the president has tasked Biden with some line assignments– though all are high-profile endeavors.[116] Biden oversees the implementation of the Recovery Act, chairs the Middle Class Task Force, and manages the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. Yet one Biden aide acknowledges that such line assignments diminish his broader influence. "Because they're inherently time-consuming," Biden has less availability and fewer resources to engage with other issues and tasks.[117]

"As much as he said he didn't want it, he's very much in the Gore model" in terms of taking on specific policy responsibilities, that aide claims. This should be unsurprising given the fact that Biden's chief of staff, Ron Klain, served in the same capacity for Vice President Gore.[118] Yet one uniquely Gore innovation remains absent from Biden's vice presidency: an original agenda.

James Traub, "After Cheney: Joe Biden - Second-Most Powerful Vice President in History?" *New York Times*, October 19, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/29/magazine/29Biden-t.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print (accessed March 21, 2010).

[116] Lee.

[117] Jeff Nussbaum, interview by author, 29 April 2010, Washington, D.C., digital recording.

[118] Nussbaum.

APPENDIX B

GENDER, RACE, & RELIGION – WINNERS & LOSERS

YEAR	TICKET	Gender	Race	Religion
1960	Kennedy-Johnson	x	x	√
1964	Johnson-Humphrey	x	x	x
1968	Nixon-Agnew	x	x	x
1972	Nixon-Agnew	x	x	x
1976	Carter-Mondale	x	x	x
1980	Reagan-Bush	x	x	x
1984	Reagan-Bush	x	x	x
1988	Bush-Quayle	x	x	x
1992	Clinton-Gore	x	x	x
1996	Clinton-Gore	x	x	x
2000	Bush-Cheney	x	x	x
2004	Bush-Cheney	x	x	x
2008	Obama-Biden	x	√	√

1960	Nixon-Lodge	x	x	x
1964	Goldwater-Miller	x	x	√
1968	Humphrey-Muskie	x	x	√
1972	McGovern-Shriver	x	x	√
1976	Ford-Dole	x	x	x
1980	Carter-Mondale	x	x	x
1984	Mondale-Ferraro	√	x	√
1988	Dukakis-Bentsen	x	x	√
1992	Bush-Quayle	x	x	x
1996	Dole-Kemp	x	x	x
2000	Gore-Lieberman	x	x	√
2004	Kerry-Edwards	x	x	√
2008	McCain-Palin	√	x	x

LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE/INSIDER-OUTSIDER – WINNERS & LOSERS

YEAR	TICKET	Lib-Con	Insider-Outsider
1960	Kennedy-Johnson	√	x
1964	Johnson-Humphrey	√	x
1968	Nixon-Agnew	√	√
1972	Nixon-Agnew	√	√
1976	Carter-Mondale	√	√
1980	Reagan-Bush	√	√
1984	Reagan-Bush	√	√
1988	Bush-Quayle	√	x
1992	Clinton-Gore	x	√
1996	Clinton-Gore	x	√
2000	Bush-Cheney	x	√
2004	Bush-Cheney	x	√
2008	Obama-Biden	x	√

1960	Nixon-Lodge	√	x
1964	Goldwater-Miller	x	x
1968	Humphrey-Muskie	√	x
1972	McGovern-Shriver	√	x
1976	Ford-Dole	√	x
1980	Carter-Mondale	√	√
1984	Mondale-Ferraro	x	√
1988	Dukakis-Bentsen	√	x
1992	Bush-Quayle	√	x
1996	Dole-Kemp	√	x
2000	Gore-Lieberman	√	x
2004	Kerry-Edwards	x	x
2008	McCain-Palin	x	√

EXPERIENCE – WINNERS & LOSERS

YEAR	TICKET	Duration	Levels	Branches	Foreign-Domestic
1960	Kennedy-Johnson	√	x	x	√
1964	Johnson-Humphrey	x	√	√	√
1968	Nixon-Agnew	√	√	√	√
1972	Nixon-Agnew	√	√	√	√
1976	Carter-Mondale	√	√	√	√
1980	Reagan-Bush	x	√	√	√
1984	Reagan-Bush	x	√	√	√
1988	Bush-Quayle	√	√	√	√
1992	Clinton-Gore	x	√	√	√
1996	Clinton-Gore	x	√	√	√
2000	Bush-Cheney	√	√	√	√
2004	Bush-Cheney	√	√	√	√
2008	Obama-Biden	√	√	x	√

1960	Nixon-Lodge	√	√	√	√
1964	Goldwater-Miller	x	√	x	
1968	Humphrey-Muskie	x	√	√	√
1972	McGovern-Shriver	x		√	√
1976	Ford-Dole	x	√	√	√
1980	Carter-Mondale	√	√	√	√
1984	Mondale-Ferraro	√	√	√	√
1988	Dukakis-Bentsen	√	√	√	
1992	Bush-Quayle	√	√	√	√
1996	Dole-Kemp	√	x	√	
2000	Gore-Lieberman	x	√	√	√
2004	Kerry-Edwards	√	√	√	√
2008	McCain-Palin	√	√	√	√