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Presidents and populist politics

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Abstract

Populist language is a common rhetorical practice of United States Presidents. There is a breadth of literature on the study of populism and populist language, yet few studies identify populist language as reimagining the relationship between president and people. This paper identifies populist language as a political tactic of presidents and links the tactic's use to the cultivation of authority and legitimacy. A central theoretical foundation of this paper rests on Skowronek's concept of political time and authority structures. Through the use of four case studies spanning the presidencies of Andrew Jackson, Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and Donald Trump, this paper evaluates populist rhetoric in the context of providing political agency to navigating the pressures of the political authority cycle and capitalizing on mass communication technology as a vehicle for reach and connectivity. This study identifies both a recurrent and emergent pattern of populist rhetoric in an across-case analysis. Furthermore, the findings of this research suggest a greater reliance on the public presidency and raise concerns as to how populist politics can shape and alter the presidency, presidential expectations, and American democracy.

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I. A Popular Presidency

Do you think Trump made American great again? If you were to pose this question to a random American citizen you might get a scoff, an eye-roll, a defiant "NO!" You might also get a big smile, a "Hell Yeah!," or a fierce defense of Trump's greatness. Americans are divided on Trump, so divided, that some scholars and pundits label Trump's leadership as "revolutionary"[1] while others as "incendiary."[2] In the current political climate, Trump was a grenade. His cult of personality was so prolific, so pronounced, that for many Americans you either love Trump or you hate him. Trump's presidency, while tumultuous, was not revolutionary to the political order. Trump did not reconstruct American government akin to F.D.R.'s New Deal or Reagan's conservative majority. Yet, the echoes of Reagan's "Make America Great Again" are central to Trump's vision of popular leadership. This salute to a former Republican figurehead is significant. Is Trump signaling his goal to reconstruct the American political order? Certainly, many of his supporters thought he is. This rhetoric of reflection is significant, for, it appreciates Reagan's political might and signals a return to a period of greatness. It is evident the basis of Trump's rhetorical posturing is reminiscent of this period. But, why?

The lure of being a reconstructive president is difficult to avoid. Stephen Skowronek's concept of political reconstructors documents this difficult task. What Skowronek defines as 'political time' is the constant movement of the political cycle, shuffling through eras of overbearing political regimes, to lackluster keepers of the old order, to eventual challengers of the old way.[3] This cycle repeats itself time and again, pushing the political clock foreword to the next great reconstructor. Skowronek's concept of reconstructive presidents positions leaders at a moment of high political authority claim. These presidents such as F.D.R. and Reagan usher in a new era of politics and wield powerful influence in the pursuit of the new agenda. Yet, is there something more to these presidents than power granted solely through political time? Was the Reagan Era a prolific conservative awakening due solely to the shifts in the political clock, or do reconstructors necessarily bring other fruitful leadership tactics to the table? Likewise, what of

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[1] Linker, D. (2021, January 11). Can Trump's revolutionary faction be contained? Retrieved March 23, 2021, from https://theweek.com/articles/959925/trumps-revolutionary-faction-contained.
[2] Watson Coleman: Mob sparked by Trump's 'incendiary Rhetoric'. (2021, January 06). Retrieved March 23, 2021, from https://www.insidernj.com/watson-coleman-mob-sparked-trumps-incendiary-rhetoric/.
[3] Skowronek, S. (2011). *Presidential leadership in political time: Reprise and reappraisal*. University Press of Kansas, 10.

the hopeful reconstructors trapped in an era of unfavorable political time? How do presidents work within the bounds of presupposed authority claims to strengthen and shape their place in the authority cycle?

To answer these questions, first look to the politics of the reconstructors and reconstructive hopefuls. While a prolific reconstructor such as Reagan and a desired reconstructor such as Trump have their differences in style, composure, and political and historical moments, both are significant for the inspiration they animate among their supporters, the force of their rhetoric, and the cult of their character. The politics of Trump, Reagan, and F.D.R. were extremely reliant on the power of rhetoric to connect with the American people. Significant to this connective rhetoric was the influence of populism. In fact, much of these three presidents' rhetorical style was soaked in the style of populism. Trump's presidency reinvigorated populism research to provide an explanation for his explosive rhetoric and intense support. While scholars once again turn to the subject of populism to explain the Trump phenomenon, many existing studies choose to highlight case studies[4], comparative studies[5], or longitudinal studies[6] to examine the workings of populism as a rhetorical style and how presidents have and continue to use it in practice. However, scholars fail to identify populist rhetoric as a tool in the arsenal of presidential politics and prolific to the reconstructive order.

To unpack the phenomenon of populist rhetoric as a political tactic, this paper will dissect populist rhetoric from three perspectives: within presidential administrations, across presidential administrations, and from a developmental perspective. First, this paper will trace a literature review that defines populist rhetoric and links its definition with the demands of the public presidency. By demonstrating how populism is conducive to the development of popular leadership, the literature review will further explain the connection of this leadership practice to conceptions of presidential power and authority. Then, the paper will provide a replicable guide for identifying populist language in contributing to a new form of populist politics. Next, the paper will highlight four case studies to compare populist language both within cases and across cases. Finally, an analysis will follow that discusses the emergence of populist rhetoric as a new political tactic, affirm its validation of the public presidency, and discuss its implications for

[4] Bimes (2002), Brandt (2020), Holland and Fermor (2020).
[5] Howell and Moe (2020), Peetz (2019), Van de Wetering (2020), Woodwarwd (1983).
[6] Bimes and Mulroy (2004), Kazin (1998).

institutional development. Recognizing these effects poses larger questions for the study of presidential power and reconstructive presidents, the identification of new forms of presidential politics, and how presidents rhetorically link popular needs with political desires.

II. Populist Rhetoric

There is a rich collection of sources unpacking the history of presidential populism. Scholars have time and again used the philosophy of populism as an underlying motive for presidential communication styles. So, what exactly makes speech populist? Populist rhetoric borrows the core philosophy of populism (a party for the common man) while leaving its style and construction malleable to the political actor. Author Michael Kazin explains how populist language can take a variety of forms and identifications. Populist speech can customize definitions of allies and enemies to link the political desires of the speaker to the needs of a popular audience.[7] Author Gary Woodward concurs that populist language is hugely stylistic and argues that populism's glorification of the "average American" is particularly suited to the nature of American politics.[8] Mulroy and Bimes provide a suitable definition for the structure of the populist appeal. They note two main features of populist appeals: "legitimation of action by popular authority" and an "antagonistic appeal that aligns the president and the people against a special interest."[9] Namely, 'the people' and 'the interest' can form many constructions and identities. Thus, populism is often used as an umbrella term for a variety of different styles of speech. Understanding populist language to be a fluid and shapable rhetorical style is critical to this research. For, it is the malleability of populist language that provides presidents with agency to connect and relate to their desired coalition.

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[7] Kazin, M. (1998). *The populist persuasion: An American history*. Cornell University Press.
[8] Woodward, G. C. (1983). Reagan as Roosevelt: The elasticity of pseudo-populist appeals. *Communication Studies*, *34*(1), 44-5.
[9] Bimes, T., & Mulroy, Q. (2004). The Rise and Decline of Presidential Populism. *Studies in American Political Development*, *18*(2), 136–159. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898588X04000082, 138-9.

III. A Second Constitution, The Public Presidency, and the Power of Authority

A sizable body of literature underlies the style of populist rhetoric, but few authors attempt to answer why populist rhetoric is used so frequently in presidential rhetoric. To unpack this, first, it is necessary to trace existing developments in presidential power and leadership that serve to reinforce the importance of the president-people connection. Presidents that use populist rhetoric identify the people as a power source. Using populist language, presidents rationalize their actions and authority to frame political motives as flowing directly from the people's needs. In this view, the people serve as a legitimate source of presidential power. Presidential scholar Jeffrey Tulis identifies this legitimation as at odds with the traditional framing of presidential power. Tulis identifies two dueling visions of Constitutional power. The first view is labeled the founding view. This interpretation considered Article II of the Constitution as the fountain of presidential power. From this document alone can presidents discern enumerated powers and responsibilities of the office. [10] The "second constitution" provides another avenue of presidential power. In this view, presidential power flows from the democratic voice of the people, not strictly the Constitutional doctrine.[11] For, a president elected (in some part) by popular vote relies on the people both to attain office and to validate the doctrine that grants the president power. While Tulis concedes that the two constitutional visions are used interchangeably in presidential leadership, presidents in the modern era frequently resort to the progressive constitutional view. Arguably, so do presidents who practice populist rhetoric.

Tulis' concept of the second constitution is well-suited for a rhetorical tactic that consolidates power from popular support. Tulis reinforces this concept in discussion of the rhetorical presidency, where Tulis identifies Woodrow Wilson as the president that promotes and establishes reliance on the second constitution.[12] Following Wilson's presidency, Tulis argues that changes in presidential selection, increasing power and capacity of the White House press arm and staff, and the president's relationship with the media are reinforcing factors that pressure presidents to rely on "rhetorical governance."[13] Ellis touches similar points as Tulis, arguing that changes in political parties and campaign strategies are to blame for presidents "reevaluating their relationship to the mass public." As Ellis argues, presidents choose to focus on direct

[10] Tulis, J. K. (2003). The two constitutional presidencies. *The presidency and the political system*, *8*, 3.
[11] Ibid., 12.
[12] Tulis, J. K. (2017). *The rhetorical presidency*. Princeton university press, 118.
[13] Ibid., 182.

appeals to the public about issues of policy as a means to capitalize on the power of the public.[14] Likewise, Canes-Wrone's suggests that modern presidents frequently rely on the involvement of the mass public to further policy platforms. Wrone even admits that the "arousing of public opinion increases the influence of populism."[15] Finally, research by Theodore Lowi touches the heart of Tulis' conception of presidential power. Lowi supports the importance of a president-people connection, identifying a developmental tactic for the presidency to consistently rely on popular support as a means of political power.[16] Taken together, Tulis, Ellis, Wrone, and Lowi paint a picture of a presidency increasingly reliant on the mass public for political goals and objectives. All scholars concede that there is a power in public perception and that that power can be harvested by interaction with the public. These concepts of reliance on popular appeals are central to reinforcement of the public presidency.

Thus, an important aspect of popular leadership is the process of connecting with the public. As Samuel Kernell argues, trends such as Congressional polarization and divided government push presidents to "go public," or speak directly to the American people to bargain and persuade for policy outcomes. "Enlisting" the public as a force of opinion goes over the heads of traditional government entities to increase the success of presidential initiatives by the sheer force of stimulating popular sentiments.[17] Thus, as presidents rely on going public, they are faced with another obstacle to perception, the media. Scholar Elvin Lim discusses the significance of the president-media relationship, explaining how presidents undergo relationship eras with the press that automatically presuppose hostility, cooperation, and investigative desires.[18] Lim's eras help contextualize the need for presidents to sidestep the media with direct communication methods and also explain variation in president-press relations that challenges how easily presidents can interact with the media to spread populist messaging. As communication technology has become more direct and widespread it affects the reach of presidential messaging. Since populist rhetoric relies on mass perception of the president as an

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[14] Ellis, R. J. (Ed.). (1998). *Speaking to the people: The rhetorical presidency in historical perspective*. University of Massachusetts Press, 90.
[15] Canes-Wrone, B. (2010). *Who leads whom?: presidents, policy, and the public*. University of Chicago Press, *30*.
[16] Lowi, T. J. (1985). *The personal president: Power invested, promise unfulfilled*. Cornell University Press, 20.
[17] Kernell, S. (2007). *Going public: New strategies of presidential leadership* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: CQ Press.
[18] Lim, E. T. (2014). The Presidency and the media: Two faces of democracy, *The Presidency and the political system* (10), CQ Press, 261-5.

ally united against a common enemy, this suggests that the more people the president can reach and persuade the stronger the coalition.

Edwards asserts that while presidents have constraints (such as media relationship, credibility issues, directness of appeal, controversy of topic, etc.) to leading public opinion, presidents that shape and direct public opinion are more positively equipped to translate publicity to political goals.[19] Compiling the research by Tulis, Wrone, Ellis, Lowi, Kernell, and Lim, help contextualize the public presidency. Tulis provides support for how to rationalize the public as a source of power. Lowi affirms this power, identifying consistent trends in presidential reliance on popular support. Ellis and Wrone reinforce the president-people relationship as advantageous for policy goals. Finally, Kernell and Lim emphasize the presidency's need for publicity and navigating the media realm. These authors demonstrate support for the public presidency both from a perspective of valid presidential power, political agency, and media involvement. Furthermore, because populist rhetoric relies on the acceptance and reliance on courting popular opinion, there is a theoretical explanation for why populist rhetoric is so recurrent in presidential rhetoric. Because populist language is well suited for an increasingly public presidency does not mean this rhetoric is used simply in response to recent development of the public presidency. Populist rhetoric has been frequent and long standing in presidential rhetoric long before the literature identified a modern public presidency, with roots as far back as Andrew Jackson. Use of populist language provides agency for legitimation of presidential power. The continued use of populist language has promulgated the rhetorical pattern to *reinforce* the development of the public presidency.

The public presidency is a larger phenomenon that validates the use of populist rhetoric by presidents. While "going public" can be understood as moving publicly on a specific issue or policy goal, the public presidency is the larger phenomenon of presidential reliance on the public to circumvent traditional governing arenas to rely on the power of popular appeals. The basis of the public presidency is to link the president's agenda with the administration agenda. Similarity, a central goal of populist rhetoric is to legitimize presidential action and policy goals. This legitimation is important, as it contributes to presidential authority, or the perception that the

[19] Edwards, C. G. (1983). *The public presidency: The pursuit of popular support.* London and New York: Longman.

president has the right to exercise specific powers. Stephen Skowronek presents an appropriate definition and explanation of authority as it relates to power. He writes,

> "The Constitution gives the president considerable power and, one way or another, the exercise of that power changes things. Authority speaks to the political warrants for change that presidents bring to the exercise of this power, to the leadership claims incumbents can make on their own behalf for intruding upon the status quo and rearranging national politics… The priority of authority lies in determining how the exercise of presidential power will be perceived and interpreted politically."[20]

Because authority is rooted in perception, it is unique to power in that it must be cultivated rather than immediately granted by the democratic process. The cultivation of this authority is where populist-rhetoric provides political agency. Populist tactics shape presidential leadership to align with a desired perception. If the desired perception of leadership is achieved, presidents can use the authority gathered to solidify their power under the second constitution. Yet, as Skowronek continues, "The institutional power of American presidents almost always exceeds their political authority, it is easier for presidents to do things than it is for them to sustain warrants for the actions they take and the changes they instigate. Presidential agency is primarily a legitimation problem."[21] Then, the perception of authority is considerably more delicate to manage than the exercise of power. While populist rhetoric can serve as a political tactic to gather authority, it is not automatically a means to an end. Instead, authority is shaped by the speaker.

IV. Evaluating Populist Rhetoric

Then, how does the president serve to construct a sense of authority using populist language? Variables such as style and construction of the populist appeal, political time, and secular time explain the variation of presidential populist rhetoric and its usefulness as a form of politics. First, this paper turns to style and construction. How the president defines 'the people' is important to the potential of authority gathering. Importantly, perception of authority is a two-way street. While presidents must follow Skowronek's framework to perceive their authority and shape it, the people must also perceive the president as their representative. Mary Stuckey attests to the power of coalition perception writing,

> "Because although the president does speak for all of us, he doesn't actually represent the

[20] Skowronek, S. (2011). *Presidential leadership in political time: Reprise and reappraisal*. University Press of Kansas, 10.
[21] Ibid., 11.

> entire polity- He (and the pronoun is revealing) represents those interests large enough, organized enough, resource-rich enough, to merit his attention. He represents the coalition that elected him, and the one that will allow him to govern."[22]

Who the president chooses to include in his construction of the national constituency is important in forming an identity behind presidential leadership. If the coalition is discriminatory to race, gender, or class, there would be less potential compared to a coalition that promoted collectivity and inclusivity. Likewise, how the president styles himself in the image of this national identity is important to the perception of the populist appeal. As Joseph Lowndes argues, the embodiment of presidential identity is linked with political success. Emotional connections are required between president and constituent to produce a sense of relationship and mutual interest. By forging emotional ties and being relatable to a defined group, the president can draw from his coalition to gather support for political objectives.[23] Then, the structure of populist rhetoric creates the president's version of a national identity that cultivates legitimacy and targets popular perception. The construction of the common enemy can also provide the president with seized legitimacy. Julia Peetz notes the benefit of populist-style leaders as players of a "zero-sum game."[24] Peetz explains how when a president rhetorically positions themselves as an outsider against a common enemy such as a financial elite, political establishment, or big government, legitimacy can be withered away from other institutions and collected by the populist politician. Thus, constructing the identity of the coalition and the enemy has the power to both gather and steal legitimacy. These actions are fruitful for the public's perception of the president as a leader with popular interests at heart. Stuckey and Peetz's concepts of gathering legitimacy explain how language can be structured to favorably affect presidential authority. These studies explicitly demonstrate how public rhetorical leadership can be used as a tool to reinforce presidential power.

While the construction of populist appeals can set the boundaries for collecting legitimacy for presidential power, Skowronek's concept of political time explains presupposed cycles of partisan regimes that automatically grant presidents levels of authority. Political time is

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[22] Stuckey, M. E. (2004). *Defining Americans: The presidency and national identity*. University Press of Kansas, 7.
[23] Lowndes, J. (2013). Barack Obama's body: The presidency, the body politic, and the contest over American national identity. *Polity*, *45*(4), 469-498. https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1057/pol.2013.22.
[24] Peetz, J. (2019). Legitimacy as a zero-sum game: Presidential populism and the performative success of the unauthorized outsider. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 1-21. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057%2Fs41296-019-00375-3, 643.

"authority structures" of presidential action that occur in cycles over broad periods, serving as the momentum for political change. In this framework, presidents cycle through four series of authority periods, resetting the political clock and wielding the highest authority during eras of the reconstructors.[25] Importantly, these reconstructors are those that repudiate the old era and bring in the new. These presidents are interestingly suited for an analysis of presidential populism, for their high authority claims serve as strong repudiators of the old order. Reconstructors benefit from a vilification of the old order by seizing legitimacy. Likewise, having a high authority claim reinforces the need to manage the position of popular leader. This would presuppose a necessity for the president to connect, reassure, and explain how political power was being used to further popular policy goals. Much of this is done under Stuckey's framework of establishing a national identity. For, in cultivating a sense of 'the people,' presidents can use this identity to unite their own image and actions under the concept of national political need. To put differently, presidents gather political agency for decisive action by utilizing populist appeals to consolidate authority for the agenda of the new order.

Thus, Skowronek's concept of political time is uniquely suited for the study of populist rhetoric. Since populist language feeds off of the public's approval, populist rhetoric proves significant for a political cycle that is fueled by authority. It is interesting that in Skowronek's work he neglects to identify the tactic of populism as prolific to the cultivation of authority. Namely, the discussion of populist rhetoric as a form of presidential politicking is contributive to Skowronek and can serve as explanation for how presidents in low authority claims can capitalize on authority gathering through the use of populism. While presidents of many eras of political time have been identified as speakers of populist language, reconstructive presidents are undeniably prolific users of populist rhetoric. It is likely that in navigating the pressures of high authority claims, reconstructive presidents capitalize on the publicity benefits of populist style. Even if the goal of the reconstructor is not to gather more authority with populist rhetoric but to direct that authority with populist language, the practice of populist language as a political tactic could prove quite beneficial to shaping, controlling, and directing the administration's political agenda.

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[25] Skowronek, S. (2011). *Presidential leadership in political time: Reprise and reappraisal*. University Press of Kansas, 20.

Skowronek's concept of secular time also supplements the periodization of authority claims by explaining the variance and development of populism as a political form. Skowronek refers to secular time as the underlying pressures of the day that prompt political action.[26] Institutional resources and developments outside of the political authority cycle contribute to the pressures of secular time. The decisions presidents make, the increasing responsibilities of the president, and the communication and bargaining resources on hand are all examples of such pressures. Much of the literature review concerning the development of the public presidency falls under this category. While presidents are automatically subject to specific political cycles, secular variation provides agency in the form of new resources, technology, or precedents to shape and innovate presidential action. For this study, a relevant subject of variation is in mass communication structures. Because populist language relies heavily on perception, how the president distributes populist messaging is critical to potential authority gathered. As communication technology becomes more accessible and widespread, Americans and presidents alike will have increased opportunity to engage and form connections using technology. To put differently, mass communication is a vehicle for populist rhetoric. Communication variations will prove quite useful in tracing the development and change of populist language as a political tactic. Thus, in discussing populist language, political time acts as a construct while secular time provides potential for adaptation and variation.

So far, this literature review has highlighted the structure of populist appeals, the development of the public presidency, and how popular leadership is a route to legitimating power. This conversation links the structure and philosophy of populist language with an institution increasingly reliant on popular leadership and cultivating personal relationships between president and people. These theories are foundational to understanding populist rhetoric as a political tactic, used and reformed throughout many eras of presidential leadership to bolster presidential authority. To demonstrate this politicking at work, this study uses the literature review frameworks to provide a replicable toolkit for identifying and dissecting when presidents resort to the politics of populism. To perform this analysis, presidents must perform four functions:

[26] Ibid., 18-9.

1) construct the national identity,
2) identify and vilify a common enemy,
3) distribute the message, and
4) validate the message with presidential actions.

This framework will be utilized in dissecting the case studies of Jackson, F.D.R., Reagan, and Trump to demonstrate in case examples of populist language and to provide evidence for a discussion of across case variation. This analysis will not only test the theory of populist rhetoric as an authority building tool, but also demonstrate the longevity of this practice as a reoccurring political tactic throughout many eras of presidential leadership.

V. The Age of Jackson

Andrew Jackson is arguably one of the most notable presidential populists. He has achieved this status due to the power of his rhetoric, the style of his leadership, and his vigorous, combative political capacity. Jackson is an important first look at the power of populist rhetoric. Mulroy and Bimes point to Jackson as the earliest consistent subscriber to populist rhetoric. Importantly, they trace how Democratic presidents following Jackson picked up on his tactics and continued the use of populist appeals into the latter half of the 19th century.[27] Thus, Jackson serves as a proper introduction to the use populist politics. The next section will apply the populist toolkit to Jackson's rhetorical style. First, there will be a discussion of Jackson's coalition and how that coalition was postured against a common enemy. After tracing a series of populist examples, the paper will then explain Jackson's use of the newspaper to cultivate his public image and distribute his populist style. Finally, an analysis of Jackson's validation of his authority using his language will explain how his populist rhetoric was fruitful for taking executive action.

Catapulted to the presidency in 1828, the "Age of Jackson" is characterized by reform and change of the existing order.[28] Skowronek places Jackson in a political time of

[27] Bimes, T., & Mulroy, Q. (2004). The Rise and Decline of Presidential Populism. *Studies in American Political Development*, *18*(2), 136–159. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898588X04000082, 138-44.
[28] Remini, R. V. (1981). *Andrew Jackson* (Vol. 2, 1822-1832). NY: Harper & Row.

reconstruction.[29] Thus, Jackson's political moment presented him a high degree of authority claim. The events concerning Jackson's rise to the presidency acted as popular validation to Jackson's leadership. Outrage of Jackson's presidential loss in 1824 was tinder to the flame of discontent with government establishment. Bitter from the corrupt deals of the Adam's administration, the Jacksonian movement took hold in this outrage along with Jackson's insistence that corruption be rooted out of American liberty.[30] Elected by 650,000 votes to John Quincy Adams's nearly 500,000, Jackson won every state in the South and West United States in 1828.[31] Over one million people cast a vote in this election, a stark change from the 1824 turnout of barely 330,000.[32] From both turnout and votes cast for his administration, Jackson perceived his inheritance of the presidency as a popular mandate. Yet, Andrew Jackson's vision of "the people" was limited to the qualifications of 19th century democratic participants. While an impressive symbol of the turnout power of Jackson's rivalry with Adams, those one million voting Americans included no women and a minuscule percentage of races other than white.[33] The power of the white man's vote was nonetheless in full force behind Jackson.[34] Backed by this coalition, Jackson aligned himself with the interests of the common worker, farmer, laborer, and middle class American. As Stuckey described, Jackson's "rhetorical authority stemmed from his ability to articulate a view of history in which they [the people] could see themselves."[35]

While Skowronek places Jackson in a moment of high political authority, he cautions this statement, noting that reconstructors do not immediately presuppose political success.[36] Instead, Jackson still faced considerable roadblocks to implementing his reform initiatives. Accordingly, populist-style rhetoric began emerging in Jackson's national addresses as a means to reinforce support for his political objectives. Bitter from the mishap of 1824, Jackson spoke early in his presidency for his wish to amend the presidential selection method and restore the power of the people at large to American democracy. In his first annual address, Jackson's rhetoric identified

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[29] Skowronek, S. (2011). *Presidential leadership in political time: Reprise and reappraisal*. University Press of Kansas, 34-5.
[30] Ibid., 100.
[31] Cole, D. B. (1993). *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson*. University Press of Kansas, 18.
[32] Ibid., 15.
[33] Ibid., 15.
[34] Ibid., 15.
[35] Stuckey, M, E. (2004), *Defining Americans The Presidency and National Identity.* Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 46.
[36] Skowronek, S. (2011). *Presidential leadership in political time: Reprise and reappraisal*. University Press of Kansas, 34.

government elites as an enemy of the people. A considerable portion of Jackson's address cast doubt on the procedures of presidential selection, claiming it was "obvious the will of the people may not always be ascertained, or, if ascertained, may not be regarded" if election procedure was left to creatures of the government system.[37] His rhetoric calls for a revival of government to its original design "created solely for the service of the people."[38] Jackson reiterates the inadequacy of presidential selection in his second annual address, calling for a dissolution of the House of Representatives entire role in the matter. Jackson claims this body only serves to "swell the influence of particular interests to a degree inconsistent with the general good."[39] Jackson had "observed the evils" of elitism too long, and his second annual was another scathing review of his enemy. Jackson framed his political qualms with the prior regime as his crusade for the interest of the working American.

The content of Jackson's annual addresses fits the structure of populist-style. Using "the people" as a political battering ram, Jackson both solidified his coalition and defined his special interest. Skowronek lists Jackson's largest hurdle to reconstructive leadership in Jackson's fight with the National bank.[40] Interestingly enough, Jackson's populist tactics culminated during this battle. Jackson did not want to extend the charter of the National Bank for personal and political reasons. His rivalry with the bank president Nicholas Biddle and his animosity toward debt and general distrust of banks were personal factors.[41] Jackson also argued for the unconstitutionality of the institution, claiming the bank violated state's rights by taking power and taxation away from the states, and by extension, the people.[42] Jackson spoke openly of his distaste for the bank in both his first and second annual addresses, fitting his disdain for the institution as against the interests of his coalition. Jackson laid the foundation for his eventual bank veto in 1832 in his second annual in 1830, explaining his belief that of an "undoubted right to withhold his assent

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[37] Jackson, A. (1829, December 08). First Annual Message. Retrieved January 22, 2021, from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/first-annual-message-3.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Jackson, A. (1830, December 06). Second Annual Message. Retrieved January 22, 2021, from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/second-annual-message-3.
[40] Skowronek, S. (2011). *Presidential leadership in political time: Reprise and reappraisal*. University Press of Kansas, 34.
[41] Cheathem, M, R. (2018). *The coming of democracy: Presidential campaigning in the age of Jackson*, Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 70-1.
[42] Cole, D. B. (1993). *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson*. University Press of Kansas, 104.

from bills on grounds other than their constitutionality."[43] In his veto address to the Senate, Jackson degrades the legitimacy of the rich, claiming "It is to be regretted that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes," and many of our rich men have not been content with equal protection and equal benefits, but have besought us to make them richer by act of Congress."[44] He warned Americans of the danger to their civil liberties that bank reauthorization posed and identified the lower-class American worker as being exploited by the rich's monopoly in the federal bank.[45] Jackson fed upon the support of his coalition to demonize the elites of government. His bank veto was the ultimate rebuttal of a special interest.

The culmination of Jackson's populist style engulfed the bank crisis. Jackson relied on his constructed understanding of "the people" to legitimize and bolster his authority for decisive action. While this group was demographically limited, the power of working Americans was a strong coalition in an era that thirsted for democratic action. Jackson's continued rhetorical practice of framing the elites of government into an enemy for different political objectives was classic populist style. Then, padded by the influence of his authority claim, Jackson utilized populist rhetoric as a means to reinforce his presidential actions while in office. Yet, what was the reach of Jackson's populism? Most of Jackson's most vibrantly populist language was composed in addresses to Congress. In these messages, Jackson used his authority with the people to demonize his enemies directly while fighting for his political objectives. While Jackson was not successful in dismantling presidential selection, he was able to use his political authority quite strongly in asserting himself against the bank. How was he able to do so when his most critical, populist rhetoric was delivered only to Congress? Jackson relied on his annual addresses and veto message to explain his political goals to the rest of government, and to build authority in his actions as a voice of the national interest. Jackson was able to speak harsh reviews of government elites and corruption directly to the source. These actions certainly degrade legitimacy of elites, but to what degree if they are spoken only to the elites and not to the people?

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[43] Jackson, A. (1830, December 06). Second Annual Message. Retrieved January 22, 2021, from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/second-annual-message-3.
[44] Jackson, A. (1832, July 10). Veto Message [Of The Re-authorization of Bank of the United States]. Retrieved January 22, 2021, from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/veto-message-the-re-authorization-bank-the-united-states.
[45] Ibid.

Jackson still had to foster a relationship with the people for his authority to be backed fully by other actors of government, not just speak of one.

The secular constraints of Jackson's administration presented him with limited options for mass populist pandering. Yet, there was one outlet for which Jackson could resort to spread his message to the public, the newspaper. The newspaper was a significant aid in shaping Jackson's relationship with the public. Pollard claims Jackson's presidency as "the most effective employment of the press for partisan purposes in the long history of the presidency."[46] Lim's dissection of the stages of the president-press relationship point Jackson as the forefront of the era of partisan news.[47] Pollard traces Jackson's personal relationship with the press in the composure of his cabinet, specifically Francis Blair, Amos Kendall, and Isaac Hill. All three devoted Jacksonian journalists, the men's closeness with the press establishment and hand in it themselves gave Jackson an ability to steer his own news.[48] Blair in particular was a massive asset to Jackson, as he was the editor of the *Globe,* Jackson's favorite newspaper. It was early in Jackson's presidency that he established a bond with Blair, and in this bond a mutual agreement that the *Globe* would become Jackson's political mouthpiece.[49] Pollard wrote that "Blair conducted the *Globe* as a partisan sheet whose news coverage, like its opinions, were determined largely by political consideration."[50]

The newspaper was critical to controlling the Jacksonian party and binding its members closer to their leader.[51] For one, fierce partisanship in the press often led for republican newspapers to print republican politician's statements over that of their opponents, and vice versa. The *Globe* was a platform for Jackson to publish his official statements.[52] Jackson's close relationship with Blair also allowed him near complete control of how his image was circulated in the paper. This was significant for the bank war, for Blair admired the antagonism of the bank and Washington's established class, and was more than willing to write scathing rebuttals to

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[46] Pollard, J, E, (1973), *The Presidents and the Press,* New York, NY: Octagon Books, 147.
[47]Lim, E. T. (2014) The Presidency and the media: Two faces of democracy, *The Presidency and the political system* (10), CQ Press, 261.
[48] Pollard, J, E, (1973), *The Presidents and the Press,* New York, NY: Octagon Books, 147.
[49] Remini, R. V. (1981). *Andrew Jackson* (Vol. 2, 1822-1832). NY: Harper & Row, 297.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid, 298.
[52]Tebbel, J, W, and Sarah M Watts, (1985), *The Press and the Presidency from George Washington to Ronald Reagan,* Oxford University Press, 84.

Republican attacks and present Jackson and his policies to the American people.[53] Blair defined the bank as "the monster," writing, "the Jackson cause is the cause of democracy and the people against a corrupt and abandoned aristocracy."[54] While Jackson's *Globe* was popular, Jackson also had a large presence in the influence of other democratic newspapers. Often, he would use these sources in the same way as the *Globe,* promoting his image and purpose for the public.[55] In one such example in the Vermont Patriot it claimed, "He [Jackson] is opposed because he supports the interests of the whole people… because he will not uphold corrupt monopolies – because he will not become suppliant to the Aristocracy of the land!"[56] Even the rhetoric of these newspaper excerpts bears the evidence of populist-style. Their support for Jackson as the people's president was as fierce as Jackson's opponents for his misguidance of popular leadership. Thus, the control of the press was a major vehicle in delivering Jackson's purpose, voice, and identity to the American public.

How much authority did Jackson realistically amass for himself using populist rhetoric? His coalition – at the time – was a rather strong construction. Despite Jackson's tendency to leave out minorities and women, constructing "the people" as the white working-class structured Jackson's coalition to be those of the most powerful in society, voters. Jackson defined himself as a man for "the humble members of society--the farmers, mechanics, and laborers--who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their Government."[57] This connection was both personal and political for the president. Look also to Jackson's success in the political realm. The subject of Jackson's most fierce populist language, the bank veto, was not overruled. Granted, the Senate was almost perfectly split in support for Jackson, so it is unlikely that two-thirds of the vote would have been possible to flip Jackson's supporters. Yet, Jackson's veto was a rare moment where a president vetoed due purely to preference. This bold use of the power is notable and shows that Jackson did have a significant amount of legitimacy for the intention of his actions. The true testament to Jackson's authority was the formation of his coalition and how he used that coalition as a vehicle

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[53] Remini, R. V. (1981). *Andrew Jackson* (Vol. 2, 1822-1832). NY: Harper & Row, 296-7.
[54] Ibid., 377.
[55] Pollard, J, E, (1973), *The Presidents and the Press,* New York, NY: Octagon Books, 146-8.
[56] Remini, R. V. (1981). *Andrew Jackson* (Vol. 2, 1822-1832). NY: Harper & Row, 377
[57] Jackson, A. (1832, July 10). Veto Message [Of The Re-authorization of Bank of the United States]. Retrieved January 22, 2021, from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/veto-message-the-re-authorization-bank-the-united-states.

for his own political motives. Jackson's popularity with the public was both rooted in his shared beliefs with the common working man and in how he constructed his political image. Jackson's use of what he defined as 'the people's' interests is a method to legitimize the political stances he took as president. Jackson's use of populist-style language is an important moment in presidential rhetoric. The manipulation of the press and of words to derive authority was an untold source of power. The eruption of Jacksonian-style populism proved alive once again the presidency. Though, along the way, presidential populism transformed to entirely new constructions.

VI. Roosevelt and the Radio

Like Andrew Jackson, President Franklin D. Roosevelt also resorted to populist-style rhetoric during his time as president. Unlike Jackson, F.D.R.'s style was more collective, measured, and hopeful than the appeals of Jackson's populism. While Jackson and Roosevelt's populist style and coalition vary, both understood the importance of managing the media and cultivating personal messages to the American public as key foundations to political authority. Like Jackson, Roosevelt sought to reinforce this authority by the use of populist rhetoric. As in the previous section, the Roosevelt analysis will use the toolkit to trace the use of populist rhetoric. First, an analysis of the F.D.R. coalition and enemy will set the stage for Roosevelt's populist style. Next, there will follow an analysis of Roosevelt's use of the radio to broadcast his populist messaging. This medium will prove to be a potent tool for distribution. Finally, concluding remarks will summarize Roosevelt's populist style and trace how his rhetoric was effective at reinforcing his legitimacy to tackle the economic crisis.

Roosevelt's political and secular time was filled with prospects for government action. Skowronek places F.D.R. in the era of the reconstructors, like Jackson, presupposing a high authority claim.[58] Elected in the midst of the Great Depression, Roosevelt and the 73rd Congress were united in party and purpose to tackle the economic crisis of the hour.[59] Roosevelt took office and immediately started planning the course for the nation, benefited by a united government ready to deliver results to the American people.[60] During his crusade, Roosevelt

[58] Skowronek, S. (2011). *Presidential leadership in political time: Reprise and reappraisal*. University Press of Kansas, 40.
[59] Fuller, R. (2012). "Phantom of fear": the banking panic of 1933. McFarland & Company, Inc., 1.
[60] Jenkins, R & Neudstat, R. (2003). *Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (1st ed.). Times Books, 73.

frequently relied on personally directed communication with the American public to legitimize the actions he was taking to reign in economic instability and reassure the American public of his authority to lead the nation through crisis. Capitalizing on the power of the radio, Roosevelt used it as a tool of personal communication with the American public. His tactics of "championing" and "refining" Americans with his personalized rhetoric penetrated the homes of radio users nationwide. Roosevelt has been described as having "a populist's faith in the power of public opinion," a true statement to which he owes his success to the power of populist as a rhetorical tactic.[61]

Roosevelt's coalition was shaped by the widespread effects of economic disparity. The economic downturn that had engulfed the four years before F.D.R.'s election created a massive group of American workers with decaying faith due to the government's lack of action.[62] From 1929 to 1933 the GNP fell from $103 billion to $55 billion. Thousands of businesses failed. In 1933, nearly 26% of the American workforce was unemployed.[63] Dismay with the Hoover administration and hope for salvation was a widespread sentiment following F.D.R.'s election. This overwhelming need for employment and wages proved to unite a strong coalition of Americans seeking to reawaken the splendor of American life. The northern industrial worker, the southern farmer, and the wester frontiersman all found refuge under F.D.R.'s coalition of American economic security.[64] F.D.R. was welcoming to this coalition and cultivated and identified with it early on in his inauguration address and subsequent radio addresses. Unlike Jackson's vision of the "common man," Roosevelt broadened the idea to a universal quality of life for American citizens. Roosevelt referred to men, women, and children in his addresses.[65] These references to women and the family were important to the national image of security that was designed to protect all Americans. Inclusion of male and female average working citizens was an expansive coalition, but like Jackson, had its limits to race and ethnicity. Asian-Americans, American Indians, and African Americans were three such groups that received little populist-pandering by Roosevelt.[66] Despite a lack of diversity, the common interest of economic

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[61] Woodward, Gary C. (1983). "Reagan as Roosevelt: The elasticity of pseudo-populist appeals." *Communication Studies* 34(1), 55.
[62] Fuller, R. (2012). "Phantom of fear": the banking panic of 1933. McFarland & Company, Inc., 3.
[63] Roosevelt, F., Buhite, R., & Levy, D. (1992). *FDR's fireside chats* (1st ed.). University of Oklahoma Press, 5.
[64] Stuckey, M, E. (2004), *Defining Americans The Presidency and National Identity.* Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 198-9.
[65] Ibid., 214.
[66] Ibid., 217.

security was being promulgated by Roosevelt as a constitutional right of American citizenship. The intended assurance of this right to every American saddled F.D.R. with an expansive coalition of working American's determined to see relief of the hardship of the early 30s.

With economic security as the goal of government action, F.D.R. identified the enemy of his populism as the economic crisis and those responsible for it. F.D.R.'s first inaugural address is rife with populist-style pandering to his coalition and vilification of widespread economic disparity. Shaming past rulers' "stubbornness and incompetence" for reasoned leadership, Roosevelt opens his address by a call to restore the functioning of the American economy to avoid a "return of the evils of the old order."[67] F.D.R. defines his authority to "wage war" against an emergency as akin to fighting a foreign invader.[68] Roosevelt also paints his enemy not just as economic security more broadly, but targets "economic royalists" responsible for the existing wealth concentrations in American life.[69] Early on identifying his enemy, Roosevelt also pads his declaration with reference to his position as popular leader. Roosevelt claims a people's mandate (results of that election) for "direct, vigorous" action to "assume the leadership of this great army of our people dedicated to disciplined attack on our common problems."[70] He uses collective language like 'we' and 'our' to link his problems with economic instability to the same felt by the American public. United in "common difficulties," F.D.R.'s speech did much here to take away legitimacy of the old order's governmental actions that led to economic downturn as justification for his new vision for American citizens. This tactic was continued by F.D.R. in the presidency's groundbreaking use of a new media source to connect intimately with the American public, the Fireside Chats.

Then, despite being in a favorable political time, Roosevelt capitalized on his authority potential through the use of populist appeals. Yet, Roosevelt was quite fortunate in secular time as he was in political time. Lim places Roosevelt in a uniquely compatible moment of president-press relationship. Lim explains that journalists were moving from partisan motivations to public interest motivations. At the same time, the increased accessibility of news ownership equated to

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[67] Roosevelt, F. D. (1933, March 04). Inaugural Address. Retrieved January 31, 2021, from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-8.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Roosevelt, F. D. (1936, June 27). *Speech before the 1936 Democratic National Convention: A rendezvous with destiny.* Retrieved from https://www.austincc.edu/lpatrick/his2341/fdr36acceptancespeech.htm.
[70] Ibid.

a higher demand for news and an incentive for information.[71] Widespread use of the radio was a critical component to the reach of F.D.R.'s populism. Praised for his "openness and exuding of confidence," F.D.R.'s fireside chats were an excellent medium to form a relationship of trust with Americans.[72] Noted for his mastery of public opinion, the radio was a method for Roosevelt to bypass the media establishment and have his voice directly reach Americans. Roosevelt's chats also used language that an average American could comprehend, would reflect a since and "common man" tone, and were broadcast on weeknights and Sunday afternoons to accommodate the availability of a working family.[73] Roosevelt's tendency to break down complex political issues, tactfully explain his political actions, and reassure the American public of the fruitful course of the New Deal, was Roosevelt acting as both president, educator, and sympathizer to reassure and explain the object of his political goals. This authority building is quite evident in Roosevelt's chats immediately following the election during enactment of the first New Deal. In his thirty chats, F.D.R. laced populist rhetoric to reinforce his legitimacy for the New Deal and domestic issues, and later, WWII. Some of F.D.R.'s most saturated populist language occurs in the content of his first ten chats where he vilifies economic instability, posing the New Deal as its savior. These chats fully document the composure of Roosevelt's coalition, the style of his populist rhetoric, and the power it had to reinforce authority.

F.D.R.'s first fireside chat started with an opening greeting to "my friends" the American people. Delivered a few days upon entering office, F.D.R.'s first chat educated the American public on the banking crisis and explained the reasoning of his actions to remedy it. Filled with collectivist language and reasoned calculation of the risks and successes of Roosevelt's actions, he ends his address with a populist call to action claiming, "There is an element in readjustment of our financial system more important than currency… the confidence of the people themselves… Let us unite in banishing fear… It is your problem, my friends, your problem no less than it is mine. Together we cannot fail."[74] Eight weeks later, Roosevelt again went to the radio to educate, update, and gather support from the public in the face of the economic crisis. He outlines the actions of Congress in passing New Deal platforms and the efforts of his

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[71] Lim, E. T. (2014) The Presidency and the media: Two faces of democracy, *The Presidency and the political system* (10), CQ Press, 262-4.
[72] Jenkins, R & Neudstat, R. (2003). *Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (1st ed.). Times Books, 75.
[73] Roosevelt, F., Buhite, R., & Levy, D. (1992). *FDR's fireside chats* (1st ed.). University of Oklahoma Press, xviii – xix.
[74] Ibid., 16-7.

administration, relying on a perception of understanding and support resonating from the public.[75] Roosevelt closes his message, again pandering to the perceived support of the public declaring, "You [the people] have granted us [the government] wide power; you have encouraged us with a widespread approval of our purposes." He closes by explaining his personal devotion to the confidence of the people and mutual encouragement as momentum to continue assistance programs of the New Deal.[76]

Roosevelt continues to strengthen his bond with the public in his third fireside chat, praising the actions of his first one hundred days in office. A central topic in this third chat was the passing and implementation of the National Recovery Act, a bill that sought to create a coded system of proper industry practices.[77] F.D.R. spoke in support for the bill saying, "We cannot ask America to continue to face such needless hardships. It is time for courageous action, and the Recovery Bill gives us means to conquer unemployment…" He appeals to the hardships of the public as authority for the bill, later saying, "To the men and women whose lives have been darkened by the fact or fear of unemployment, I am justified in saying a word of encouragement [in reference to the Recovery bill]… that it does put people back to work."[78] F.D.R. ends his chat with a plea to support the NIRA and NRA and one last message as to his faith in the "strength of common purpose, and in the strength of unified action of the American people."[79] Roosevelt provides similar encouragement in his fourth fireside chat. Broadcast in October 1933, F.D.R. reflects on his two important economic programs, the NRA and the AAA. Roosevelt reassures the American public that a slight hiccup in the economic recovery still keeps the nation on track for stability.[80] This chat, like those prior, continued the practice of educating the public on the rationale of Roosevelt's political maneuverings. Roosevelt also continues to reference the illegitimacy of his enemy. Toward the end of his address, Roosevelt refers to the critics of his actions by saying, "You will recall the dire predictions made last spring by those who did not agree with our common policies of raising prices by direct means… Doubtless prophets of evil still exist in our midst. But government credit will be maintained…" He closes with a thanks for

[75] Ibid., 22.
[76] Ibid., 27.
[77] Ibid., 28.
[78] Ibid., 35.
[79] Ibid., 36.
[80] Ibid., 37.

the people's "patience and faith" with his leadership and assures that the country is "headed in the right direction."[81]

Roosevelt continues populist authority building in his sixth and twelfth fireside chats by reinforcing what Roosevelt understands as the great interest of the nation, security. In his sixth address, F.D.R. continues his tactic of referring to the public as "his friends" and laying reasoned praise for the New Deal.[82] Yet, Roosevelt most famously uses this chat to once again attack the enemies of the people's program. He spoke that, "Those, fortunately few in number, who are frightened by boldness, who are cowed by the necessity for making decisions, complain that all we have done is unnecessary and that all we have done is subject to great risks."[83] In the closing of his address, Roosevelt postures himself as the great force against those few in number who continue to critique and disvalue his authority to restructure economic activity. F.D.R. counters his critics with the power of his coalition's interests saying, "I prefer and I am sure you prefer that a broader definition of liberty under which we are moving forward to greater freedom, to greater security for the average man than he has ever known before in the history of America."[84] F.D.R.'s twelfth address solidifies this definition of liberty and F.D.R.'s coalition even further. Roosevelt admits to "constantly thinking" of all our people and their "human problems." He claims "You and I agree that security is our greatest need… Therefore, I am determined to do all in my power to help you attain that security."[85] The last section of his address was a classic humbling message of Roosevelt's devotion to the public. He reflects on the trust that the American people placed in his leadership, his willingness to never give up on their interests, and his dream to build "a greater, a more stable" America."[86]

The rhetorical themes of Roosevelt's fireside address are abundant with reflections on the needed security of Americans. F.D.R.'s references to avoiding fear of insecurity, the evils of past mismanagement, and looking toward a more stable country that valued the basic economic security of the average citizen create a national image as a crusader for economic stability. The strengthening of his coalition of 'average Americans' and the vilification of the economic crisis were sources from which to gather a sense of legitimate leadership. Roosevelt's consistent

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[81] Ibid., 44.
[82] Ibid., 57.
[83] Ibid., 61.
[84] Ibid., 62.
[85] Ibid., 115.
[86] Ibid., 123.

evaluation and explanation for his actions as president also clearly demonstrates how he used the fireside chats to not only gather authority through a populist rhetorical framework, but also by outright explaining why he had legitimacy for his presidential actions. The reach of Roosevelt's addresses was immense, and the intimacy of his radio appeals an almost perfect platform by which to establish his presence and interest in the lives of the American people. From this legacy, Roosevelt marked a moment of presidential populism that shifted from the antagonistic, fiery rhetoric of past populism to reconstruct the political order under the veil of security and promise. Roosevelt's use of populist rhetoric redefined the importance of popular leadership aimed at the needs of Americans. His rhetoric was legitimizing and invaluable in pursuing the New Deal. The collectivity of Roosevelt's populist style would see continuance in the eras following, and in the 1980s, experience a complete reconstruction with a conservative twist.

VII. The Great Communicator

With the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 came a new form of populism, draped in the style of F.D.R. but focused on the conservatism of the political moment. Reagan follows a similar strategy as F.D.R. in capitalizing on reach and direct communication methods to spread his populist language to the ears and eyes of all Americans. As in the previous sections, the populist toolkit predetermines the flow of the Reagan analysis section. To begin, an introduction to Reagan's election, coalition, and construction of the national identity will paint a picture of the Reagan coalition. Next, a discussion of Reagan's history as an entertainer and his powerful use of televised addresses will explain Reagan's reach as a populist speaker as well as help define what was the Reagan enemy. Finally, the Reagan section will close with an analysis of Reagan's authority gathering and his legacy as a conservative populist.

Following Skowronek's timeline of the next great reconstructor, like Jackson and F.D.R., Reagan was catapulted into the presidency with a high authority claim as conservative champion pitted against the intrusion of big government. Reagan won a sizable victory in both the Electoral College, with ninety-one percent of the vote, and the popular vote, with fifty-five percent of the vote.[87] Conservative takeover of the Senate and gains in the House padded Reagan's entrance to the presidency with not only a strong popular mandate, but also realistic means to implement the

[87] Conley, R. (2003). *Reassessing the Reagan Presidency.* Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 186.

objectives of his candidacy.[88] Reagan's success at obtaining the presidency was extremely dependent on his personality and style. Reagan's nickname of "Great Communicator" was well earned in the ease and relatability of his rhetoric. Described as establishing a "heroic presidency," author Robert Denton explains the power of Reagan's rhetoric in his reinforcement of American tradition and philosophy by projecting images of "warmth, sincerity, strength, and resolve."[89] Reagan postured himself as a man of humility and relatability, a tactic that fed directly into his populist rhetoric. Reagan's coalition was also the cultivation of the modern conservative party, extremely reliant on the power of the religious right. Yet, the sheer power of Reagan's populism has similar roots of F.D.R.'s style and broad construction. Reagan's use of the television was a recurring method of populist pandering that perfectly showcased Reagan's cool demeanor and rhetorical gift. Significant to the timeline of populist style, Reagan's practice of authority building refurbished the tactics of his predecessors along new political and technological lines.

The force that elected Reagan to office was impressive by modern standards. Reagan won forty-four states in 1980 with fifty percent of the popular vote. [90] Compared to Carter's forty-one percent, this was a strong popular mandate. Benefitting both from the dissatisfaction from the Carter administration and his own "magnetic appeal," Reagan existed in a political time that was favorable to a new governing agenda.[91] A former New Dealer, Reagan is argued to share Roosevelt's view in the government's role to take decisive action.[92] In Reagan's approach to standing firm against the abuses of big government, Reagan is reminiscent of Roosevelt's tactics but with a redefinition of the enemy. Milkis and Tichenor argue that Reagan's conservative "embrace of national administrative power" was supported by the Republican party as a means to reconcile national political leadership. [93] A critical component to Reagan's election was the emergence of a conservative, religious voting bloc. Reagan's campaign was filled with Christian

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[88] Ibid, 186.
[89] Ibid., 1, 10-1.
[90] Howison, J. (2014). *The 1980 presidential election: Ronald Reagan and the shaping of the American conservative movement.* Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 111-2.
[91] Skowronek, S. (2011). *Presidential leadership in political time: Reprise and reappraisal*. University Press of Kansas, 93.
[92] Woodward, G. C. (1983), "Reagan as Roosevelt: the elasticity of pseudo-populist appeals," *Communication Studies, 34(1),* 54.
[93] Milkis, S. M., & Tichenor, D. J. (2019). *Rivalry and reform: Presidents, social movements, and the transformation of America politics.* University of Chicago Press, 228.

themes and "fealty to American civic religion."[94] His ability to link evangelicals with conservatives created a New Right, a coalition that also attracted conservative Democrats.[95] Thus, while Skowronek notes the power of repudiation of the past president, Milkis and Tichenor demonstrate the importance of religious appeal and return to traditional values as a major pull for a new voting coalition. While Reagan's authority claim was high, his coalition was nonetheless a conservative, white, religious identity. Reagan attempted to broaden this coalition through the use of populist rhetoric. In his populist examples, Reagan attempts to expand his coalition through the lens of economic independence and the dignity of work. Yet, Reagan walked the line on issues of race by "denouncing racial prejudice while simultaneously relying upon racism embedded within parts of the conservative movement."[96] Thus, the white, conservative, religious electorate that was responsible for Reagan's election served to be an underlying identity in his populist style.

The limitations of the coalition that won Reagan the presidency were mitigated in his attempt to draw a wider authority through his populist messaging and admirable persona. Reagan benefited from the technological innovations of secular time to broaden the authority of his political moment. Lim explains Reagan's media era to be one marked by a lack of clear partners in the media establishment. In this plebiscitary era, the relationship between the media and president was increasingly more polarized and a "throwback" to the partisan era.[97] Thus, while Reagan still faced a media establishment willing to work with the president, there was also a considerable influence of partisanship. For this reason, the national explosion of television was a similarly strong communication tool like Roosevelt's radio. Television was a critical medium to Reagan's reach as populist orator. While television entered the political scene in the 1960s, the Reagan presidency cemented it as a governing tool. Yet, Reagan was no stranger to television. Reagan's political career followed many years as an actor and radio host, his art of "presenting reality" was a well-developed rhetorical tactic in Reagan's arsenal.[98] As Reagan famously referred to the presidency, "There have been times in this office when I've wondered how you

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[94] Ibid., 228.
[95] Ibid., 228-9.
[96] Milkis, S. M., & Tichenor, D. J. (2019). *Rivalry and reform: Presidents, social movements, and the transformation of America politics.* University of Chicago Press, 126.
[97] Lim, E. T. (2014) The Presidency and the media: Two faces of democracy, *The Presidency and the political system* (10), CQ Press, 264.
[98] Howison, J. (2014). *The 1980 presidential election: Ronald Reagan and the shaping of the American conservative movement.* Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 118.

could do the job if you *hadn't* been an actor."[99] Denton notes that Reagan's cool, laid-back use of the television offered positive and idealized images of himself, and his themes of heroism, faith, and patriotism.[100] Denton explained that on television, Reagan's rhetorical style was not flamboyant, rather it was simple, expressed the thoughts of common Americans, and showed a sense of humor. Speeches "written not for the eye but for the ear" postured Reagan as a potently likeable leader.[101] These skills, matched with an actor's understanding of television etiquette, transformed Reagan's public presidency to be one of media mastery.

It was the mastery of this television persona that captured the American audience following Reagan's 1980 election. It was also Reagan's rhetorical and presentation skill that was able to transcend the limits of the coalition that elected him to target the wishes, dreams, and desires of the greater American public. This cultivation and reaffirming of Reagan's authority is rampant in his populist messaging on televised public addresses. Like Roosevelt, Reagan's populist appeals were rhetorically crafted to target the common American, the middle-class worker, or the typical family unit. Combining the economic and religious concerns of his base, Reagan's populism appealed to working middle class Americans. United in a common need for a resurgence of traditional family values, less regulation, and self-government, the enemy of Reagan's populism was big government. Instead of targeting elites of business or special interests, Reagan argues that government of self-rule trumps past government practices too focused on special interests.[102] His understanding of the importance of limiting the influence and power of big government was the subject of Reagan's inaugural address, to which he famously claims…

> "In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem. From time to time we've been tempted to believe that society has become too complex to be managed by self-rule, that government by an elite group is superior to government for, by, and of the people… We hear much of special interest groups. Well, our concern must be for a special interest group that has been too long neglected. It knows no sectional boundaries or ethnic and racial divisions, and it crosses political party lines. It is made up of men and women who raise our food, patrol our streets, man our mines and factories, teach our children, keep our homes, and heal us when we're sick—

[99] Ibid., 118.
[100] Denton, R. (1988). *The primetime presidency of Ronald Reagan: the era of the television presidency.* Praeger, 64.
[101] Ibid., 66-7.
[102] Scully, M. A. (2018) Principled Rhetoric as Coalition Management: Speech in the Reconstructive Presidencies of Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan. *Polity, 50(1),* 148.

> professionals, industrialists, shopkeepers, clerks, cabbies, and truck drivers. They are, in short, "We the people," this breed called Americans."[103]

The culmination of Reagan's populism was invoked in his first address as president. In this speech, Reagan highlights the importance of all the working men and women of America, signaling his identification with them with collective language, and identifying the source of evil not in any one person, but the abuse of a government system wild on runaway spending. Author Mark Scully explains the solution of Reagan's populism not in simplifying government or making it more democratic, instead, through the institutions of civil society: the family, neighborhood, and business.[104] Since the Reagan enemy was big government, he posed the solution for his coalition as movement *away* from this institution entirely. Expressing the importance of societal infrastructure and business, Reagan targets the institutions that average people interact with most commonly. Emphasis on refurbishing core community infrastructure and not a distant and detached federal government, Reagan postures himself as a common man seeking to aid the American people in ways that can be experienced personally. Yet, while Reagan's populist subject is widespread American prosperity, the underlying solutions are those preferred by the conservatives and evangelicals of his base.

Reagan's inaugural address captured the most television viewers in the history of presidential inaugurals.[105] 41.8 million Americans watched the president speak of the crisis of government, the need for action, and the potential of the Reagan administration to create a "healthy, vigorous, growing economy that provides equal opportunity for all Americans, with no barriers born of bigotry or discrimination."[106] Despite Reagan's high claim to authority with the Christian right, Reagan's populism chooses to target reach and collectiveness to fortify his authority in the new political order. While reliant on the support of these groups, Reagan did attempt to follow the footsteps of Roosevelt and persuade the greater American public. Integral to this tactic was replicating Roosevelt's massive reach of populist rhetoric. Following the populist language of his first address, Reagan continued to utilize his large radio reach to

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[103] Reagan, R. (1981, January 20). Inaugural address. Retrieved February 04, 2021, from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-1.
[104] Scully, M. A. (2018) Principled Rhetoric as Coalition Management: Speech in the Reconstructive Presidencies of Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan. *Polity, 50(1),* 148-9.
[105] Stoll, J. (2021, January 13). U.S. presidential inaugurations - number of viewers 1969-2017. Retrieved February 04, 2021, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/250929/us-presidential-inauguration-viewer-numbers/.
[106] Reagan, R. (1981, January 20). Inaugural address. Retrieved February 04, 2021, from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-1.

continue his populist pandering. The next notable example of populist rhetoric came on February 18th, 1981 in a national address to the nation. Reagan took a stance as national educator in his discussion of the issues of the economy, breaking down the specifics of his economic recovery initiatives by outright explaining "where we are, how we got here, and how we can get back."[107] Reagan calls for the people to "chart a new course" under the threat of "economic calamity." He identifies his administration as a turning point, using collective language like 'we' and 'us' to equate his idea of economic recovery as the best path for all America. These uses of collective pronouns are continued throughout all of Reagan's public remarks. As Reagan traces the proponents of his economic recovery, he places the blame for high inflation and debt mismanagement on the shoulders of an inflated government establishment. Ending his address claiming, "Together, we can forge a new beginning for America," Reagan proposes a call to arms for the American people to unite under his conservative agenda.[108]

Reagan continues to vilify big government in his address to Congress on April 28, 1981. Broadcast to the nation, Reagan renewed his call to join in the "cooperation" of his team towards economic recovery. Reagan urges the public that the only special interest he serves is the interest of the people, and by increasing national wealth "we can begin to reward hard work and risk-taking, by forcing the Government to live within its means."[109] Reagan proposes his vision of economic recovery as "the only answer we have left" and that the American people wish his administration "to act and not in half measures."[110] His language continued to equate the mismanagement of the government budget as a sickness for which Reagan himself has the cure. Reagan also reaffirms his commitment to the people, saying, "When I took the oath of office, I pledged loyalty to only one special interest group— "We the people." Those people—neighbors and friends, shopkeepers and laborers, farmers and craftsmen—do not have infinite patience."[111] Tipping a hat to the working class, Reagan identifies economic groups similar to F.D.R.'s populist style and does so in an attempt to broaden his authority with the whole American people. These populist tactics continue on in Reagan's public, televised addresses. Reagan's

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[107] Reagan, R. (1981). Address to the nation on the economy - February 1981. Retrieved February 04, 2021, from https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/address-nation-economy-february-1981.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Reagan, R. (April 28, 1981). Address on the program for economic recovery. Retrieved February 04, 2021, from https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-28-1981-address-program-economic-recovery.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

1982 State of the Union paid homage to his first populist address as president one year prior. Reagan again attempted to gather authority from his image of the 'average American,' by posturing American security against the enemy of government spending.[112] He refers to the "autoworkers in Detroit, lumberjacks in the Northwest, steelworkers in Steubenville who are in the unemployment lines; to black teenagers in Newark and Chicago; to hard-pressed farmers and small businessmen; and to millions of everyday Americans who harbor the simple wish of a safe and financially secure future for their children" as the backbone of America.[113] Reagan identifies the enemy of "waste and fraud" and reinforces the destiny of self-governance and community in combating a government too burdened by cost to effectively manage the national interest.[114]

Just in these select examples of Reagan's televised addresses, multiple instances of populist pandering are evident. Research by Terri Bimes points to many more indications of Reagan populism, especially in televised national addresses. Bimes identified at least thirteen other major addresses and three additional State of the Union addresses that continued Reagan's use of popular rhetoric.[115] While it was the conservative right that granted Reagan an authority claim, his position as national leader quickly focused on amassing as much authority as possible from all creeds of the average American. Reagan's calls for end to bigotry and pandering to working class in all geographical and class contexts is a rhetorical ploy of collectivism not always present in the intentions of the conservative agenda. Yet, Reagan understood the importance of the leader of 'the people,' and used his political strength to further engrain in the American public the legitimacy of his economic solutions under a guise of populist relationship building.

While Reagan's likeable, down-to-Earth rhetorical practice shined in populist-style rhetoric, it was even more stunning broadcast for millions of Americans to witness from the comfort of their own home. Populist appeals provided Reagan with incredible outreach to pander and authority build with the millions of working Americans he hoped to support with his restructuring of government budgets. Reagan's continued disapproval at the harms of big government sought to tear away the foundations of its legitimacy, convincing the American

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[112] Reagan, R. (2017, May 04). January 26, 1982: State of the Union address. Retrieved February 04, 2021, from https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-26-1982-state-union-address.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Bimes, T. (2002). Ronald Reagan and the new conservative populism. University of California, Retrieved March 04, 2021, from https://escholarship.org/uc/item/08s0f26b, 23.

public it was in the collective interest to push back against such blatant disregard of self-governance. While not a typical figurehead of die-hard conservatism, evangelicalism, or racial equality, Reagan picked apart the appeals of each smaller coalition to amass one large pot of political authority. Reagan continued to reinforce his authority with the public by degrading the mistakes of the former order and reinforcing his purpose of restoring America with the average citizen in mind. Reagan owes much to populist style in positioning himself as a leader that could transcend the identity limits of the coalition that elected him. Reagan's well-spoken and humble tone clearly explained the reasoning of his policies so that any citizen could understand why and how the president chose to respond to national issues. The lure of Reagan's image, the rhetorical juggling of collectivity, and the delegitimating of existing government philosophy transformed populism into a conservative tool. As the nostalgia of Reagan's rhetorical leadership gave way to the entrance of new presidential administrations, his uses of populist rhetoric show yet another continuation of populist rhetoric as a recurring political pattern.

VIII. Twitter Tyrant

The drama of the Trump presidency owes much of its infamy to the power of populism. This paper opens with a discussion of Trump's leadership and his fast climb and fall from the presidency. Like all three presidents just covered, Trump understood the importance of the people in presidential politics. Populist rhetoric was a consistent rhetorical tool that Trump relied on to reinforce support within his coalition and to use as a force to validate his political actions. Trump is yet another example of populist rhetoric being used in a political fashion. Thus, for the final analysis section, this paper turns once more to the populist toolkit to unpack the intricacies of Trump's populist language. Following a short introduction, this section will trace the Trump coalition and enemy. Then, a discussion of Trump's entertainment past as well as the importance of Twitter as a communication platform will demonstrate how Trump utilizes the public presidency to connect and direct discussion of policy topics. Finally, this section will close with a reflection on Trump's style and populist constructions and suggest why Trump's tenure was a mismanagement of populist politics.

Winning the electoral college but losing the popular vote, the lack of an overwhelming popular mandate left Trump reliant on the strong support of his base.[116] Trump's place in Skowronek's political time has yet to be determined Yet, Trump's second impeachment and defeat by Democratic President Joe Biden do not bode well for Trump's characterization as a president bringing forth a new authority cycle. Trump's authority claim was weak upon entrance to the oval office. On election night, many Americans were shocked, outraged, and nervous to what had just been unleashed into the political system. Trump understood the strength of his base, and upon entering in a political establishment quite hostile to his outsider posture, the importance of maintaining authority was quickly a realization. Author Salvatore Babones describes Trump's populism as rooted in the perceived legitimacy of his own authority.[117] He sees himself as the root of real change and progress for the American people. It is this self-inflation that so quickly transcended into Trump's version of populist style rhetoric. Understanding himself to be the source of concrete political change, Trump consistently relied on the support of his base as a means to validate his actions throughout his tumultuous term. Yet, the divisiveness of Trump's rhetoric, his tendency to berate and shame his political rivals, and the narrowness of his vision of the 'American people' were catalysts to his downfall as populist demagogue. Importantly, Trump's use of Twitter was a critical means of delivery for his populist rhetoric, especially given his poor relationship with the traditional news media. Trump's use of the internet to make his populist claims and fortify the support of his collation were critical to his ability to make some headway in government. Yet, Trump's downfall was closely connected with his mismanagement of populist rhetoric. By studying Trump's tactics and constructions, his populist style is one remade into a phenomenon of "angry populism."[118]

Unlike the F.D.R. coalition's collectivity or Reagan's selective pandering, Trump's coalition resembles the Jacksonian construction. Authors Holland and Fermor identify the Trump coalition as reminiscent of the race, class, and gender constraints of the Jacksonian era. In their analysis, they identify that Trump mobilized a national identity that was synonymous with white,

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[116] Howell, W., & Moe, T. (2020). *Presidents, populism, and the crisis of democracy*. The University of Chicago Press, 74.
[117] Babones, S. (2018). *The new authoritarianism: Trump, populism, and the tyranny of experts*. John Wiley & Sons, 76.
[118] Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2018). Media coverage of shifting emotional regimes: Donald Trump's angry populism. *Media, Culture & Society*, *40*(5), 766-778. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0163443718772190, 766.

middle class Americans.[119] Author Wahl-Jorgenson concurs, explaining Trump's political success behind his mobilization of a "forgotten America," that includes the white, male, religious, and less educated sectors of the Rust belt and Southern America.[120] Kazin too credits Trump's populism to an enduring appeal of racialized, nationalist populism. Trump's call to "Make America Great Again" is laced with references to a return to a more harmonious, and hierarchical, racial order. As stated previously, MAGA was also a clear copy of Reagan's rhetorical style. In Trump's vilification of immigrants and criminals riddled with racist undertones, his appeals to removing elites and creatures of government were reliant on concepts of racial inferiority and supremacy.[121] While the group that elected Trump to office contained many traditional Republican voters or those simply opposed to Hillary, Trump signals who he views as the "pure" aspect of his base for his populist appeals.[122] These subjects of Trump's populist appeals are convinced of their abandonment in the political system, that the economic system is rigged against them, and that the traditional social constructs of white, middle-class, Christian America was being degraded by a new age of ideals.[123] The mobilization of anger and forgottenness was the key theme of Trump's populism. As in echoing Reagan's rhetoric, the forgotten man phrasing is reminiscent of another memorable populist reconstructor, F.D.R. Using the struggle of this demographic, the backbone of Trump's authority was posturing himself as a leader, not a politician, who had finally appeared to transcend the politics of Washington to restore a forgotten America.

Trump's calls to restore American greatness were transfixed on the enemy of the establishment. Howell and Moe identify a major theme of Trump's presidency to be the corruption of America's elites and of her government. The lobbyists, special interests, and corrupt politicians are a community Trump identifies as "the swamp," and one that his candidacy as president set eyes on early as the ultimate foe.[124] Trump's populism continued this vilification of government in a similar style as Reagan, yet with an anger and intensity unseen in the TV president. Like populists before him, Trump's identification of the failures of government both

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[119] Holland, J., & Fermor, B. (2020). The discursive hegemony of Trump's Jacksonian populism: Race, class, and gender in constructions and contestations of US national identity, 2016–2018. *Politics*, 72.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Kazin, M. (1998). *The populist persuasion: An American history*. Cornell University Press, 17-19.
[122] Howell, W., & Moe, T. (2020). *Presidents, populism, and the crisis of democracy*. The University of Chicago Press, 75.
[123] Ibid., 75-6.
[124] Ibid., 82-3.

degrade the legitimacy of government while consuming some legitimacy for his own actions. Yet, it was Trump's anger at 'the swamp' that distinguished him from populist's past. Anger was a critical part of Trump's base. Tapping into this repressed dissatisfaction of government is what many scholars point to as the great momentum of Trump's populism and his ability to be viewed as a legitimate leader of his coalition's interests.[125] Using anger as a mobilizing tool, Trump uses populist rhetoric to cultivate a sympathy of elite betrayal of the Washington bureaucracy to his key supporters. Likewise, Trump's continued harassment of Democrats and liberals also pivots these groups as an enemy. In battles over legislation and internal investigations throughout Trump's presidency, there is ample evidence of Trump's hatred and vilification of the liberal wing of politics that continues to discredit his own base for racialized, nationalistic values. Identifying enemies in his opposing political party is certainly a means of expanding Trump's collation to include more Republican voices, yet as we see in the examples of Trump's populism, his combative style was often more limiting and deconstructive to authority than constructive.

What Trump lacked in favorable political time he made up for in secular time. As 45th president, Trump came to office following years of presidential aggrandizement of power. This "steady accrual" of presidential power paired with a rising importance of presidential character and personality place Trump in an interesting moment of political agency.[126] Trump is also favored by the power of communication technology. Vital to Trump's reach as a populist was his use of social media and his history in the public eye. Donald Trump's legacy as an American television icon and celebrity were foundational to how he constructed his own image. Author Stefan Brandt links Trump's celebrity past closely with his populist practices as president. Stefan argues that Trump's populism was so effective and explosive due to his established interaction with mass media platforms such as television. Trump's reality TV persona was easily translated into his online presence, to which the spectacle of his character emphasizes "performance over factuality."[127]

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[125] Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2018). Media coverage of shifting emotional regimes: Donald Trump's angry populism. *Media, Culture & Society*, *40*(5), 766-778. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0163443718772190, 776.

[126] Kreitner, R. (2020, October 13). What history tells us about Trump's implosion and Biden's opportunity: Political scientist Stephen Skowronek discusses whether a President Biden could become an era-shaping leader. Retrieved March 04, 2021, from https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/interview-stephen-skowronek/.

[127] Brandt, S. L. (2020). Donald Trump, the Reality Show: Populism as Performance and Spectacle. *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, *50*(2), 303-321. https://doi.org/10.1007/s41244-020-00170-3, 306.

Trump's appeal is the outrageousness of his character, not the technicality of his political positions. Twitter appears to be both the savior and downfall of the Trump presidency. Trump's aggressive and sometimes comical Tweets signaling out enemies and calling for the victory of his supporters is likely the longest lasting trope of Trump's political tenure. Trump's rhetoric thrived on Twitter because it was a medium not only very direct to the American public, but also because it was a method to circumvent the mainstream media that was incredibly hostile to Trump and his policies. Toward the end of 2019, a meta-analysis by the New York Times documented that Trump had already tweeted over 11,000 times as president, a testament to the frequency of Trump's Twitter use. In over half of these 11,000 tweets, Trump attacks someone or something, with his most frequent opponents being Democrats, other political opponents, and news organizations.[128] Thus, the constant availability and reach of Twitter was an essential tool for a president so keen on constant connection with the American public. Accordingly, much of Trump's populist rhetoric was on display on this platform.

While Trump's Twitter populism is the main focus of this analysis, Trump's inaugural address is an excellent first look at the form and style of Trump's populism during the first moments of his presidency. Trump begins his address claiming, "Today's ceremony, however, has very special meaning. Because today we are not merely transferring power from one administration to another or from one party to another, but we are transferring power from Washington, DC, and giving it back to you, the people."[129] Trump then traces the faults of his enemy, saying, for too long "Washington flourished, but the people did not share in its wealth… The establishment protected itself but not the citizens of our country… We will no longer accept politicians who are all talk and no action, constantly complaining, but never doing anything about it."[130] Trump then attempts to position himself as a man of the people, declaring, "We share one heart, one home, and one glorious destiny… We, assembled here today, are issuing a new decree to be heard in every city, in every foreign capital, and in every hall of power… Do not allow anyone to tell you it cannot be done… We will not fail."[131] Like the inaugurals of

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[128] Shear, M. D., Haberman, M., Confessore, N., Yourish, K., Buchanan, L., & Collins, K. (2019, November 02). How Trump reshaped the presidency in over 11,000 Tweets. Retrieved March 04, 2021, from https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/02/us/politics/trump-twitter-presidency.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share.
[129] Trump, D. J. (2017, January 20). Inaugural address. Retrieved March 04, 2021, from https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-14.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

Jackson, F.D.R., and Reagan, Trump uses his first speech as president to lay the foundation for this populist position. Vilifying past abuses by politicians, Trump's placement of himself as a man allied with the people's interest is a classic populist-style framing of Trump's incoming political order. While Trump does attempt to unite his vision of the people with his administration's political desires, he fails to articulate a deeper understanding of who he visions as the people. To this end, Trump relies on a tool of greater reach and less formality, Twitter.

Trump's twitter feed is where much of his populist-rhetoric shines. It is on this platform that Trump continues to appeal to the characteristics of his base while shrouding his objectives in terms like "the people," or "Americans." Of all Trump's tweets while in office, 701 contained reference to "the American people," "the people," or "Americans."[132] While impossible to dissect each of these mentions in this setting, highlighting some of Trump's mentions of "the people" demonstrates how he consistently aligned himself with, what he perceives, as the needs of common Americans. On Inauguration day, Trump tweeted "January 20th 2017, will be remembered as the day the people became rulers of this nation again."[133] On June 18th 2019, Trump tweeted "Together, we are breaking the most sacred rule in Washington Politics: we are KEEPING our promises to the American People. Because my only special interest is YOU!"[134] These tweets are two of many that tie Trump's objectives with that of the people's interest. Trump's appeal against the special interests of Washington is also a blatant example of classic populist phrasing. On October 8th, 2020, Trump tweeted to this effect claiming, "…Defending ALL Americans, even those who oppose and attack me, is what I will always do as your president."[135] Here, Trump is attempting to push back on the division that so tightly entangles his image. Trump's attempts to use collective phrases and reassure the public he is allied only to the national need is a classic populist tactic to positioning personal political goals as a national necessity.

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[132] Brown, B. (2021). Trump twitter archive. Retrieved March 04, 2021, from, https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222017-01-19%22%2C%222020-12-29%22%5D&retweet=%22false%22.

[133] Ibid., https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222017-01-20%22%2C%222020-12-30%22%5D&retweet=%22false%22&searchbox=%22%5C%22the+people%5C%22%22.

[134] Ibid., https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222017-01-20%22%2C%222020-12-30%22%5D&retweet=%22false%22&searchbox=%22%5C%22the+American+people%5C%22%22.

[135] Ibid., https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222017-01-20%22%2C%222020-12-30%22%5D&retweet=%22false%22&searchbox=%22%5C%22Americans%5C%22%22.

Yet, Trump is more frequent in rhetoric that serves to reinforce division and highlight the exclusivity of his coalition. An excellent example of this is in Trump's rhetoric concerning illegal immigration. On May 4th, 2018, Trump tweeted "Democrats and liberals in Congress want to disarm law-abiding Americans at the same time they are releasing dangerous criminal aliens and savage gang members onto our streets. Politicians who put criminal aliens before American Citizens should be voted out of office!"[136] On November 12th, 2019, Trump tweeted, "Many of the people in DACA, no longer very young, are far from "angels." Some are very tough, hardened criminals."[137] Seven times Trump referred to the 2018-2019 caravan of migrants on the Southern Border as an "invasion," and repeatedly degraded Hispanics as criminals and animals.[138] Trump also practices exclusionary rhetoric to African Americans. Trump took to Twitter multiple times throughout the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, referring to those in support of the movement as "thugs" in over fourteen separate tweets.[139] Trump also referred to his 2019 impeachment proceedings as "a lynching," an incredibly insensitive phrasing to the black community.[140]

Thus, while Trump attempts to pander to "American's" more broadly, his insensitivity to race was a reoccurring rhetorical tactic that limited the diversity of Trump's populist coalition. Though, what Trump lacked in collectivity he made up for in delegitimizing his enemy. According to the New York Times's tweet meta-analysis, by 2019 half of Trump's 11,000 tweets were in the form of an attack. 4,469 attacks were aimed at Democrats, investigations, and the news media and 851 attacks were against minority groups.[141] Forty-eight times Trump used the term "enemy of the people" in his tweets.[142] Trump frequently resorted to vilifying Democrats,

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[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid., https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222017-01-20%22%2C%222020-12-30%22%5D&retweet=%22false%22&searchbox=%22%5C%22the+people%5C%22%22.
[138] Ibid., https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222017-01-20%22%2C%222020-12-30%22%5D&device=%22Twitter+for+iPhone%22&retweet=%22false%22&searchbox=%22invasion%22.
[139] Ibid., https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222017-01-20%22%2C%222020-12-30%22%5D&device=%22Twitter+for+iPhone%22&retweet=%22false%22&searchbox=%22thugs%22.
[140] Ibid., https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222017-01-20%22%2C%222020-12-30%22%5D&device=%22Twitter+for+iPhone%22&retweet=%22false%22&searchbox=%22lynching+%22.
[141] Shear, M. D., Haberman, M., Confessore, N., Yourish, K., Buchanan, L., & Collins, K. (2019, November 02). How Trump reshaped the presidency in over 11,000 Tweets. Retrieved March 04, 2021, from https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/02/us/politics/trump-twitter-presidency.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share.
[142] Brown, B. (2021). Trump twitter archive. Retrieved March 04, 2021, from, https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222017-01-20%22%2C%222020-12-30%22%5D&device=%22Twitter+for+iPhone%22&retweet=%22false%22&searchbox=%22%5C%22enemy+of+the+people%5C%22%22.

the left, and the news establishment as against the interests of the people. For example, on October 17th, 2019, Trump tweeted "The radical left tolerates no dissent, it permits no opposition, it accepts no compromise, and it has absolutely no respect for the will of the American People. They are coming after me, because I am fighting for YOU!"[143] On May 11th, 2020 Trump tweeted "ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE. Sadly, our Lamestream Media is TOTALLY CORRUPT!"[144] On September 17th, 2020, Trump tweeted, "Democrats only want BAILOUT MONEY for Blue States that are doing badly. They don't care about the people, never did!"[145] While these examples are supremely delegitimizing, the aggressive, angry tone was incredibly divisionary for Americans and a major vehicle leading to Trump's ban from the Twitter platform. Thus, while Trump was able to align himself with populist style, his ruthless commitment to the values of his base and his combative tone prevented him from meaningfully expanding his support coalition.

The story of Trump's populism is a whirlwind of rise and defeat. Following Trump's election loss in 2020 and the fallout of the Capitol Riot on January 6th, 2021, Trump disgracefully receded from the spotlight of the presidency. The Capitol Riot is only further testament to the power of populist persuasion. Those who gathered on the steps of capitol hill that January morning were fervent believers that the very swamp Trump had set out to drain was casting him out in a rigged election. Despite evidence to the contrary of this "rigging" of the 2020 election, this perception is testament to the power of Trump's words in connecting with his coalition. Trump is iconic for reinvigorating discussion of populism and mass populist movements. Yet, by dissecting Trump's populism in comparison to an institutional pattern of populist rhetoric, Trump's revitalization of populism left him disgraced by half of America. Even though Trump was granted a low authority claim, there was still potential for Trump to shape his populist rhetoric to more collective themes. Taking a combative route, Trump chose a style of Jackson without the padding of a favorable political time. While Trump was also granted opportune reach due to secular variations of communication technology, he failed to capitalize on the potential for Twitter to be a great unifying tool. Instead, Trump's aggressive energy

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[143] Ibid., https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222017-01-20%22%2C%222020-12-30%22%5D&retweet=%22false%22&searchbox=%22%5C%22the+American+people%5C%22%22.
[144] Ibid., https://www.thetrumparchive.com/?results=1&dates=%5B%222017-01-20%22%2C%222020-12-30%22%5D&retweet=%22false%22&searchbox=%22%5C%22the+people%5C%22%22.
[145] Ibid.

overtook the potential at inclusivity, and transformed his story of populist rhetoric as one of failure. In summary, Trump's handling of populist rhetoric proved only to hinder his exercise of authority as president. There is much to learn from Trump's dance with populism, namely, his example demonstrates the power of populism in incapable hands. Yet, Trump is but one mark on this history of presidential populism. Presidents long after Trump will likely learn from the mistakes of his populist anger or attempt to manage similar themes in more digestible styles.

IX. A Pattern of Populism: Across the Cases and The Developmental Story

This paper has analyzed four presidents' populist style concerning four characteristics: construction of the national identity, identification of the enemy, method of distributing rhetoric, and validating actions under presidential authority. Looking at these dissections in an *across-case* analysis reveals striking similarities and differences. First, national identity. All four presidents had their own style in defining the people. While Jackson and Trump related deeply to white, working-class America, F.D.R. and Reagan attempted to broaden this national identity. Despite F.D.R.'s collectivist language and Reagan's attempts to court moderates traditionally outside the Republican party, both F.D.R. and Reagan's core target remained the working, middle-class American. While the construction of the national identity in each of these presidents tended to vary, all four presidents had limitations of their rhetoric in aspects like race, gender, ethnicity, or origin. These findings are not altogether surprising.

Populist leaders consistently motivate the working people. Even as populism is deconstructed by presidents to fit specific enemies, the core appeal of the tactic is the power to gather legitimacy from a large swath of average Americans. Targeting this group is fruitful for presidents seeking to pad their political authority. Namely, the white, male working class is a large group of eligible and active voters. Constructing the national identity around these interests targets an important voting bloc that can afford to omit women and minorities that might not be active participants in the political realm. Yet, as Americans creep slowly into the 21st century, more women, minorities, ethnicities, and other diverse groups join the national political conversation. One of Trump's greatest downfalls was the perceived bigotry, racism, and sexism of his divisive language. Trump's failure for collectivity did considerably more damage than Jackson's simply because secular development has created a more inclusive, collective, and diverse political society. While Jackson's coalition was structured along similar identities, the

lack of political power of those outside his coalition provided little to no pressure for collectivist language. Thus, while the pattern of populism suggests a continual reliance on white, working Americans as a pandering coalition, future presidents might learn from past limitations to conform populist rhetoric to the actual characteristic structure of the American electorate.

Next, the enemy. Jackson and Trump both targeted the elites of government as the enemy of their populism. F.D.R. chose a more abstract target for his rhetoric, linking his populist language to the destruction of economic insecurity. Finally, Reagan's attack on big government has similar inflection to the Jackson and Trump enemies, but with a humbler, measured, and more simply spoken style. Thus, tone matters. Jackson's tone was aggressive in calling out his enemies. Yet, his tone was not to the scale or degree of Trump's. While each president chose to define their enemy in different ways, there is an underlying theme of rejection of the past order. Even Trump, a president with a low existing authority claim, used the benefits of populist style to position his political goals against a common enemy to construct a renewed society for the American people. Thus, the spirit of populist rhetoric is very much reconstructive. Despite lacking a characterization as a president of the reconstructive era, the enemy of populism is consistently shaped to address the wrongs of past political power. This observation supports why all of Skowronek's reconstructors resort to populist rhetoric. However, it also explains why reconstructive hopefuls might resort to the same pattern of rhetoric to unite their coalition against an opposing political force or delegitimize political actors.

Next, reach. All Jackson, F.D.R., Reagan, and Trump relied on mass communication devices as the vehicle for delivering their populist rhetoric to the American public. While Jackson was limited in available technology, his manipulation of the press and hand in newspaper printing were critical to shaping his public image and promoting his conception of the national identity. F.D.R.'s radio and Reagan's television were the next critical technological advancements to redesign the method of president-people connection. These platforms allowed Roosevelt and Reagan to reach the homes of millions of Americans. Audio and video only aided presidential cultivation of a national identity. Seeing and hearing the president transformed the presidential image from a distant individual to one that spoke in common terms. Now, presidents could be perceived as average people or genuine. Relatability was key. Finally, Trump's Twitter page was the epitome of the power of reach. Despite Trump's aggressive style, his Twitter account was constantly publicized and consistently updated so that Americans could always tune

in to the president's thoughts and actions. These methods of communication were shaped by the variations of secular time but demonstrate how technological adaptations can transform not only how presidents *connect* to the American public but also how they forge a *relationship* with the American people.

Finally, the core goal of populist rhetoric is to use constructions of enemy and ally to bolster or redefine presidential authority. This paper demonstrated how populist examples seek to define and cultivate authority from a national identity. Jackson used his populist rhetoric to validate his actions with the bank veto, a decisive and strong use of executive power that went ultimately unchallenged. F.D.R.'s populist rhetoric consistently affirmed the necessity and rationality of his New Deal Program. Like Jackson's use of the veto, the New Deal was an unprecedented and massive endeavor of presidential directive. Using populist appeals, F.D.R. explained his program in simple and effective means and affirmed its importance to protecting the American people in the face of economic crisis. Reagan's populism had a similar down-to-Earth style as Roosevelt's. Finally, Trump consistently validated his actions through populist appeals on Twitter. Whether it was degrading political enemies or defending his incendiary rhetoric, Trump used populist appeals to reinforce his authority to spearhead the needs of the American people. Thus, the recurrent use of this rhetorical style suggests that presidents consistently rely on the people as the source of presidential power. Gathering authority directly from a national perception circumvents the Constitution to rely more firmly on the support of the people to validate presidential actions.

The Jackson, F.D.R., Reagan, and Trump case studies demonstrate both a recurring and emergent pattern of populist style. First, populist rhetoric spanning from Jackson to Trump demonstrates that populism is a recurrent rhetorical tactic in the presidency as an institution. Furthermore, the case analyses demonstrated that populist rhetoric morphs to the definition of the speaker's coalition and enemy. It is likely that the flexibility of populist rhetoric has contributed to populist language's consistent reimagining by presidents. This recurrent pattern also follows the framework of Skowronek's political time. Reconstructive presidents continually relied on populist language. Furthermore, Trump's hopeful reconstruction was saturated in populist language, which suggests that populist rhetoric is a perfectly suited political tactic to battling the pressures of the authority cycle and pursuing avenues of authority cultivation. An analysis of style of populist rhetoric was important to this point. In political times when authority claims are

high and the construction of the national identity is collective, populist tactics prove quite useful in gathering authority. When national identity is fractured or when presidents have been granted a political moment of low authority claim, populist-rhetoric has more of an uphill battle. Thus, style and construction were incredibly important aspect to shaping the success of populist rhetoric's authority gathering capabilities and contributing to populist language's recurrent usage in presidential history.

The emergent pattern of populism follows Skowronek's concept of secular time and relies heavily on the use of technology. As populist language resurfaced recurrently in presidential rhetoric, technology improved reach and accessibility of the president's words. F.D.R.'s use of the radio, Reagan's use of TV, and Trump's use of Twitter all took advantage of the latest mass communications technology to have their words reach more viewers. Importantly, as technology provided more personal attention to the presidents' construction of the coalition, the enemy, and the national identity, populist rhetoric grew in potential for authority cultivation. For instance, F.D.R.'s radio chats brought his voice to the living rooms of millions of Americans. Before this, the president's words could have been read in a newspaper or heard in a public setting, but now the president's radio capabilities could provide the American people a small dose of the president's character, demeanor, and style. As technology provided visual imagery, the influence of character becomes more potent. Finally, the internet's constant accessibility allows Americans to check in on the president's words and actions at any moment of any day. The influence of this technology increases potential connectivity between president and individual. As populist language takes mass communication technology as its vehicle of delivery, presidents who can master the art of populist politics have technology platforms on hand that can reach millions. As technology continues to improve this connectivity, so too will the potential of populist authority gathering if done with the right touch.

Thus, in both the emergent and recurrent patterns of populism one overarching conclusion prevails; populist rhetoric is a form of presidential politics. While the case studies demonstrated that populist language is a tactic used throughout different presidential administrations, it also revealed how the tactic prevails within presidential administrations. In all four case studies, presidents' populist rhetoric was potent at the beginning of the administration. All the case studies documented populist language in the first major addresses and within the first months of attaining office. Big political agenda items such as Jackson's bank veto and

F.D.R.'s economic recovery plan were instances when presidents resorted to populist language. Finally, populist language (while very popular at the start of the administration) continued throughout the length of presidential terms. These observations suggest three conclusions. First, it is logical that presidents hit the ground running with populist appeals. Early in an administration a president must define his populist coalition and enemy in order to build rapport. Second, since big ticket political objectives often circulated around populist rhetoric, presidents likely saturate their language with populist style early in their tenure as a way to build rapport, establish a national identity, and focus those authority fountains on the administration's political agenda. Lastly, populist language was observed in all four years of each presidential term, which suggests that presidents consistently rely on populist rhetoric within administrations to maintain the coalition. This coalition maintenance could be important not only to future goals of the administration, but also for those presidents with an eye on reelection.

The case-by-case analysis demonstrates the effects of populist rhetoric both within and across presidential administrations. There are several critical takeaways from this project as a whole. First, the identification of populist rhetoric as a form of politics is elaborative on Skowronek's concept of political authority. This point was addressed in the discussion of populist language's recurrent pattern. Furthermore, Skowronek's work would do well to incorporate the influence of populist language as a tactic to managing the political cycle. Second, populist rhetoric validates Tulis's second constitution. While Tulis marks Wilson as the president that redirects the constitutional view, this paper demonstrates that presidents such as Jackson used the second constitution well before Wilson's shift in constitutional vision. This identification suggests the second constitutional vision having earlier uses or being embraced in small doses in years well before Wilson's tenure. Third, populist politics embrace the public presidency. Continued reliance on publicity and popular approval will reinforce the president as a political actor who constantly engages directly with the public. Finally, the role of style, skill, and vision determines how much potential populist rhetoric can provide. Comparing the style and composure of Reagan and Trump this conclusion is pronounced. Compared to Trump's style, Reagan's style and vision of his rhetoric presented a calm, relatable, and humble demeanor. It is interesting to ponder the results of Trump's authority claim if he too took a more measured approach to his rhetoric and sought collectivity and unity rather than aggression and division. Regardless, populist language has proved to challenge existing conceptions of

presidential authority and politics. The reliance on the president-person connection is pronounced, and the continued cultivation of this relationship using populist language sheds many implications on the future of presidential leadership and democracy more broadly.

X. Conclusion

Populism as a political tactic requires further study to better conceptualize the influence of the president-people relationship on the functioning of presidential power. Nonetheless, all four case studies demonstrate a consistent pattern of populist language as validation for authority and legitimation of power. Populism's emphasis on the power of the people could be both helpful and harmful to the presidency's place in the system of government. While there is value in having the peoples' opinions as a central consideration of presidential governance, it blurs the capabilities of the president under broad promises of change and scapegoating to the national interests. This touches on Richard Waterman's concept of the presidential expectations gap. Waterman defines this gap as a disconnect between the actual capacity of presidential action and what the people expect of the president.[146] Since populist rhetoric aims to persuade the public the president is not only one of them, but working toward their political goals, it necessarily reinforces an expectation for presidents to both pander and validate actions as something directly beneficial to the public. While this might appear in-line with the intentions of democratic government, in reality, presidential power is limited and checked by the other branches. To continue to reinforce that the president has unlimited power to address and tackle every public issue reconstructs the presidency to be a populist tool of unlimited power. Thus, when presidents fail to deliver on promises their approval might suffer, even if expectations were based on powers the president could not exercise alone.

What then of the new administration? President Biden is the next chapter in the ongoing saga of presidential populism. Following the Trump Presidency, Biden should navigate the waters of presidential populism carefully and with a more delicate touch than his fiery predecessor. Biden has followed suit with other populist presidents to saturate his Inaugural address with collective language and a call to unity.[147] Repeated calls to "we" the American

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[146] Waterman, R., Silva, C., & Jenkins-Smith, H. (2014). *The presidential expectations gap: public attitudes concerning the presidency.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.5470718.

[147] Biden, J. (2021, January 20). Inaugural Address. Retrieved April 14, 2021, from

people to unite in the face of division and polarization is reminiscent of populist coalition forming. Yet, Biden is faced with insurmountable division in this country. Thus, his populist efforts will likely face an uphill battle amid a country so politically fractured. Biden's political time is yet to be discovered, but his authority claim is not insignificant. Eighty-one million voters put their faith in Joe Biden, the most voters ever cast for a presidential candidate.[148] An already expansive coalition, Biden's campaign focus on diversity and inclusion is also a promising coalition construction for future populist rhetoric. While it remains to be seen if Biden will use populist language as prolifically as past reconstructors, Biden's vision of reshaping the American experience for the middle-class American is closely associated with traditional avenues of populist ideology. Already in the calm and reclusive demeanor of Biden's leadership there is hope that precedent of divise populist language has highlighted the benefits of a controlled speech and level-headed rhetorical style. No matter Biden's populist style, the politics of populist language remain alive and recurrent in the presidency and will likely rise again in the wake of key public issues or administration goals. As Americans and scholars alike continue to trace the influence and practice of presidential populism, all should keep in mind the implications of the public presidency and the power of populist language in shaping the power dynamics of American democracy.

Noting these concerns, populist presidential rhetoric has significant implications for American democracy. The more the public expects the president to nurture the public perception, the increased expectancy for presidents to practice a vigorous style of populism. Populism is a pathway to power. To continue to allow presidential power to be seen as all encompassing, that it can tackle every issue, and that it has the power to circumvent constitutional delegation to feed energy directly from the public, is harmful. As seen in recent administrations, the more strength this power has in bolstering presidential authority, the more potential it gathers for abuse and demagogic misuse. In conclusion, in identifying a pattern of populist rhetoric, there is both caution and intrigue at the power of using the people to circumvent Constitutionally granted power. Yet, the evidence is clear that presidential populist language is advantageous to swaying public perception. When spoken successfully, populist rhetoric can be the building block to

https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/inaugural-address-53.

[148] Lindsay, J. M. (2020, December 15). The 2020 election by the numbers. *Council of Foreign Relations.* Retrieved on April 14, 2021, from https://www.cfr.org/blog/2020-election-numbers.

strong public approval. When spoken unsuccessfully, populist rhetoric could prove damaging to institutional power and presidential authority. Thus, like any other means of presidential power, it is all about balance, style, and constraints of the moment. There is much more to learn from past interactions between the presidency and populism, and likely, many future variations of this rhetorical tactic shaping and reconfiguring presidential power.

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