

*“Precedence and the American Presidency”*

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The American Presidency has been dramatically shaped by many prominent figures throughout history. Each of these figures has influenced the office of the president, adding traditions, expanding powers, and providing precedence for future presidential actions.

I have titled the books in my collection, “Precedence in the American Presidency.” The collection contains works that record the lives and events that have molded the American presidency into the office it is today. The volumes collected include a variety of written works, from biographies, to historical essays, to a book of collected speeches. But each work uniquely enhances the picture of the ever-evolving American presidency.

The historical writings in this collection include *The Federalist and Democracy in America*, which provide insight into the importance of the presidency for any democracy in general and the American government in particular. These works provide a historical and philosophical framework for the remainder of the collection.

For instance, in writing the *Federalist Papers*, Alexander Hamilton provides a convincing case for many of the powers of the American executive branch of government. Articles 67-77 give excellent insight into these necessary powers and how they have benefited the United States. In contrast, *Shadow* provides insight into the effect the independent counsel law has had since the presidency of Gerald Ford. With the increased scrutiny caused by this law, presidents since Ford have sought to maintain an executive privilege through secrecy and sometimes, deception.

Biographies in this collection take the obvious role of filling in the gaps of the story and enlightening the characters of history. Each president has had his own talents, strengths, and weaknesses. We see the dramatic effect each individual has had on the office of president. Washington wrote, “I walk on untrodden ground. There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent.” Thus, when Washington formed the concept of a presidential cabinet (composed of a secretary of state, secretary of war, secretary of treasury, and attorney general), he was creating an entirely new concept. Likewise, when Lincoln issued the ground-breaking Emancipation Proclamation freeing all slaves in rebellious states of the Union, he understood that this would reposition the North-South debate solely on the issue of slavery, thus changing the political terrain forevermore. After the invasion of South Korea by North Korea, Truman lobbied hard in the United Nations to gain support for action on an international scale, expanding the acceptable role of the president in international affairs. Each of these examples shows how American Presidents acted and spoke and by so doing, drastically changed the landscape that future presidents would face.

This collection documents the history, personalities, and historical issues that shaped the American Presidency. By evaluating the historical context and the characteristics of the

historical figures, we gain a better understanding of the historical evolution of the office of president.