

each party nominated a complete ticket in 1800, instructing its electors to cast their two votes for president for its presidential and vice presidential candidates. The intention was that both would be elected, the result was that neither was. The electors having voted as instructed, Jefferson and his vice presidential runningmate, Aaron Burr, ended up with an equal number of votes for president. This outcome was doubly vexing: not only was Jefferson the party's clear choice for president, but there was little love lost between him and Burr, who had been placed on the ticket to balance the Virginia and New York wings of the party. Under the Constitution, the House of Representatives was called upon to choose between them. It eventually did, picking Jefferson, but not before opposition party mischief-makers kept the result uncertain through thirty-six ballots. Burr was elected vice president.

One result of the election of 1800 was the Burr vice presidency, which was marked by bad relations between him and Jefferson and by various peccadillos, including a duel in which Burr shot and killed Alexander Hamilton. Another was the widespread realization that something had to be done to reform the electoral college so that it could accommodate the existence of party competition. Vice presidential selection was the problem; one obvious solution was to force electors to vote separately for president and vice president. In opposing this suggestion, which was proposed as the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution, some members of Congress argued that it would create a worse problem than it solved. Because "the vice president will not stand on such high ground in the method proposed as he does in

the present mode of a double ballot" for president, predicted Samuel Taggart, the nation could expect that "great care will not be taken in the selection of a character to fill that office." William Plumer warned that such care as was taken would be "to procure votes for the president."⁶ In truth, as the nomination of Burr indicated, the parties already had begun to degrade the vice presidency into a device for ticketbalancing. Motions were made in Congress to abolish the office, rather than continue it in a form diminished from its original constitutional status as the position awarded to the second-most qualified person to be president, but they failed by votes of 12-19 in the Senate and 27-85 in the House. Instead, the Twelfth Amendment passed and entered the Constitution in 1804.⁷

THE VICE PRESIDENCY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The development of political parties and the enactment of the Twelfth Amendment sent an already constitutionally weak vice presidency into a tailspin that lasted until the end of the nineteenth century. Party leaders, not presidential candidates (who often were not even present at national conventions and who, if present, were expected to be seen and not heard), chose the nominees for vice president, which certainly did not foster trust or respect between the president and vice president. Aggravating the tension were the main criteria that party leaders applied to vice presidential selection, namely, to placate the region or faction of the party that had been most dissatisfied with the presidential nomination, to win a state in the general election where the presidential candidate was not popular, or

both. A certain measure of comity existed between a few nineteenth century presidents and vice presidents--notably Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren, James K. Polk and George M. Dallas, Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin, Rutherford B. Hayes and William A. Wheeler, and William McKinley and Garret A. Hobart, but even in these administrations, the vice president was not invited to cabinet meetings or entrusted with important tasks.

In addition to fostering tension within the government, ticketbalancing as the main basis for vice presidential selection also placed such a stigma on the office that many politicians were unwilling to accept a nomination. (Daniel Webster, declining the vice presidential place on the Whig party ticket in 1848, said, "I do not propose to be buried until I am dead.")⁸ Those who did accept and were elected found that fresh political problems four years after their nomination invariably led party leaders to balance the ticket differently; no first-term vice president ever was renominated for a second term by a party convention. Even the office's role as president of the Senate (which most vice presidents, following Jefferson's lead and for want of anything else to do, spent considerable time performing) became ever more ceremonial as the Senate institutionalized and took greater charge of its own affairs. John C. Calhoun, was the last vice president whom the Senate allowed to appoint its committees.

Not surprisingly, then, the nineteenth century vice presidents make up a virtual rogues' gallery of personal and political failures. Because the office was so unappealing, an unusual number of the politicians who could be enticed to run for vice president were old and

in bad health. Six died in office, all of natural causes: George Clinton, Gerry, William R. King (who took his oath of office in Cuba and died the next month), Henry Wilson, Thomas A. Hendricks, and Hobart. Some vice presidents became embroiled in financial scandals: Daniel D. Tompkins was charged with keeping inadequate financial records while serving as governor of New York during the War of 1812, and Schuyler Colfax and Wilson were implicated in the Credit Mobilier scandal. Other vice presidents fell prey to personal scandals. Tompkins and Andrew Johnson were heavy drinkers. (Johnson's first address to the Senate was a drunken harangue.) Richard M. Johnson kept a series of slave mistresses, educating the children of one but selling another when she lost interest in him. Clinton, Calhoun, and Chester A. Arthur each publicly expressed his dislike for the president. Clinton refused to attend President James Madison's inauguration and openly attacked the administration's foreign and domestic policies. Calhoun alienated two presidents, John Quincy Adams and Jackson, by using his role as Senate president to subvert their policies and appointments, then resigned in 1831 to accept South Carolina's election as senator. Arthur attacked President James A. Garfield over a patronage quarrel. "Garfield has not been square, nor honorable, nor truthful . . .," he told the New York World. "It's a hard thing to say of a president of the United States, but it's only the truth"⁹ Finally, some vice presidents did not even live in Washington--Richard Johnson left to run a tavern for a year.

Nonetheless, in one area of vice presidential responsibility-- presidential succession--the nineteenth century witnessed a giant step

forward. The succession question did not even arise until 1841, when William Henry Harrison became the first president to die in office. As noted earlier, the language of the Constitution provided little guidance about whether the vice president, John Tyler, was to become president for the remainder of Harrison's term or merely acting president until a special election could be held; the records of the Constitutional Convention, which could have clarified the framers' intentions, had long been kept secret and still were not widely available. In this uncertain situation, Tyler's claim to both the office and the balance of Harrison's term was accepted with little debate, setting a precedent that the next successor president, Millard Fillmore, was able to follow without any controversy at all.

Even this bright spot in the early history of the vice presidency was tarnished. Tyler's presidency was marred by debilitating disagreements with the party, especially in Congress, and with the late president's cabinet. Fillmore and the other two nineteenth century successor presidents, Andrew Johnson and Arthur, encountered similar problems. None is regarded as having been a successful president--in the most recent and extensive round of historians' rankings, Johnson was rated a failure, Tyler and Fillmore as below average, and Arthur as average.¹⁰ Nor were any of them nominated for a full term as president in their own right, much less elected. Finally, the issue of vice presidential responsibility during periods of presidential disability remained unresolved. During the seventy-nine days that President Garfield lay comatose before dying from an assassin's bullet in 1881, for example, Vice President Arthur could only stand by helplessly, lest he be branded a usurper.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT TO TRUMAN

The rise of national news media (specifically mass circulation magazines and newspaper wire services), a new style of active presidential campaigning, and some alterations in the vice presidential nominating process moderately enhanced the status of the vice presidency during the first half of the twentieth century. In 1900, the Republican nominee for vice president, Theodore Roosevelt, became the first vice presidential candidate (and, other than William Jennings Bryan, the first member of a national party ticket) to campaign vigorously around the country. While McKinley waged a sedate "front-porch" campaign for reelection, Roosevelt gave 673 speeches to three million listeners in twenty-four states.

The national reputation Roosevelt established through travel and the media stood him in good stead when he succeeded to the presidency after McKinley's assassination in 1901. Roosevelt was able to reverse the earlier pattern of successor presidents and set a new one: he was nominated by his party for a full term as president in 1904, as were Calvin Coolidge in 1924, Harry S. Truman in 1948, Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964, and Gerald R. Ford in 1976. Roosevelt's success also may help to explain another new pattern that contrasts sharply with nineteenth century practice. Starting with James S. Sherman in 1912, every first term vice president in the twentieth century who sought a second term has been nominated for reelection. Finally, Roosevelt helped lay the intellectual groundwork for an enhanced role for the vice president in office. In an 1896 article, he argued that the president and vice president should share the same "views and principles" and that the

vice president "should always be . . . consulted by the president on every great party question. It would be very well if he were given a seat in the Cabinet . . . a [Senate] vote on ordinary occasions, and perchance a voice in the debates."¹¹

Roosevelt was unable to practice what he preached about the vice presidency. Just as party leaders had forced his nomination for vice president on President McKinley to balance the old guard and progressive wings of the party in 1900, so did they impose the nomination of old guardsman Charles W. Fairbanks on him in 1904. But the enhanced political status of the vice presidency soon began to make it a more attractive office to at least some able and experienced political leaders, such as Charles Dawes, who had held office in three administrations and won a Nobel Prize, Charles Curtis, the Senate majority leader, and John Nance Garner, the speaker of the House. And, with somewhat more talent to offer, some vice presidents were given more responsibilities by the presidents they served. John Adams had been the last nineteenth century vice president to meet with the cabinet, for example, but when Woodrow Wilson went to Europe to negotiate the Versailles treaty (the first time a president had ever left U.S. soil), he asked Vice President Thomas R. Marshall to preside in his absence. Warren G. Harding invited Coolidge to meet with the cabinet as a matter of course, as has every president since Franklin D. Roosevelt.¹²

The Roosevelt years were marked by several innovations in the vice presidency. Franklin Roosevelt, like his cousin Theodore, had both run for vice president before becoming president (he lost in 1920) and

written an article urging that the responsibilities of the vice presidency be expanded. In the article, Roosevelt had identified four roles that the vice president could helpfully perform: cabinet member, presidential adviser, liaison to Congress, and policymaker in areas that do not belong in the province" of any existing department or agency.¹³ As president, he initially had so much respect for his vice president, former House speaker Garner, that even though the conservative Texan's nomination had been imposed on Roosevelt at the 1932 Democratic convention, he relied on Garner during the first term as "a combination presiding officer, cabinet officer, personal counselor, legislative tactician, Cassandra, and sounding board."¹⁴ Most significantly, the vice president served as an important liaison from the president to Congress--it was Garner's suggestion that led to the practice, which subsequent presidents have followed, of meeting weekly with congressional leaders, with the vice president usually in attendance. Garner also undertook a goodwill mission abroad at Roosevelt's behest, another innovation that virtually all later administrations have continued. Early in the third term, Roosevelt appointed his new vice president, Henry A. Wallace (the president and Garner had a falling out during the second term), to head the Economic Defense Board, an important agency for wartime preparation that was renamed the Board of Economic Warfare and assigned major procurement responsibilities after war was declared. (Wallace's tenure was highly controversial.) As the vice president's executive responsibilities increased, the legislative role diminished--Garner was the last vice president to fulfill the office of Senate president diligently.

Finally, two modifications of the party nominating conventions fostered greater harmony between president and vice president. In 1936, at Roosevelt's insistence, the Democrats abolished their two-thirds rule for presidential nominations, which meant that candidates for president no longer had to tolerate as much trading of vice presidential nominations and other administration posts to win at the convention. (They also abolished the two-thirds rule for vice presidential nominations, reducing the degree of consensus needed for that choice as well.) Four years later, Roosevelt completed his coup by seizing the party leaders' traditional prerogative to determine nominations for vice president and making it his own. His tactic was simple: he threatened that unless the convention chose Wallace (which it was loath to do), he would not accept its nomination for a third term.

Advances in the visibility, stature, and extraconstitutional responsibilities of the vice presidency may help to explain the office's improved performance as successor to the presidency, its main constitutional role. Historians rate two of the five twentieth century successor presidents (Roosevelt and Truman) as near great, one as above average (Johnson), one as average (Ford), and only one (Coolidge) as below average.¹⁵ But for all its gains, on the eve of the mid-century the vice presidency remained a fundamentally weak office. Its constitutional status was substantially unaltered, although the Twentieth Amendment (1933) did establish the full successorship of the vice president-elect in the event of a president-elect's death. Ticketbalancing to increase the party's appeal on election day

continued to dominate vice presidential selection. All the ambiguities of the vice president's rights and duties in times of presidential disability still were unresolved, as dramatized by the ignorant-bystander role Marshall and Truman were forced to play during the severe illnesses of the two wartime presidents, Wilson and Roosevelt. Tension continued to mark some presidential pairings, at least until Franklin Roosevelt won presidential candidates the right to choose their runningmates. (Theodore Roosevelt and Fairbanks, William Howard Taft and Sherman, Coolidge and Dawes, Herbert Hoover and Curtis, and Franklin Roosevelt and Garner did not get along well during their second terms.) Even the glimmerings of enhanced vice presidential influence sometimes seemed to be no more than that: when Truman succeeded to the presidency upon Roosevelt's death, he was unaware of the existence of the atom bomb and the contents of postwar plans.

THE MODERN VICE PRESIDENCY

Truman's unpreparedness in 1945--along with the subsequent development of an ongoing cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union and the proliferation of nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missiles--heightened public concern about the vice presidency. It became clear that vice presidency should be held by leaders who were not just willing, but ready and able to step into the presidency at a moment's notice. The heightened public concern has had consequences for vice presidential selection, activity, succession and disability, and political status.

Selection

To meet the new public expectations about vice presidential competence, most modern presidential candidates have paid considerable attention to experience, ability, and political compatibility in selecting their runningmates. (Those who have not done so usually have suffered during the campaign as a result.) Winning votes on election day still is the goal, but presidential nominees realize that voters now care more about a vice presidential candidate's competence and loyalty--the ability to succeed to the presidency ably and to carry on the departed president's policies faithfully--than they do about having all regions of the country or factions of the party represented on the ticket. This realization has helped to create a climate for a stronger vice presidency. As Joel Goldstein has shown, the president is more likely to assign responsibilities to the vice president when the two are personally and politically compatible and when the president believes that the vice president has talents the administration needs.¹⁶ These conditions are more likely to be met (and have been, in each of the three most recent administrations) as a consequence of the new selection criteria.

A concern for competence and loyalty in the vice presidency also characterized the solution Congress invented to a recurring problem of the executive that the challenges of the postwar era had made seem urgent: vice presidential vacancies. The Twenty-Fifth Amendment, which established a procedure for selecting vice presidents in unusual circumstances, was passed in 1965 and ratified in 1967. Prior to then, the vice presidency had been vacant for parts of sixteen

administrations, leaving the presidency without a constitutionally designated successor. The amendment authorized the president to fill vacancies in the vice presidency by appointment, with the advice and consent of both houses of Congress. (The new procedure came in handy, albeit in circumstances its authors scarcely had imagined, in 1973, when Spiro T. Agnew resigned as vice president and was replaced by Ford, and in 1974, when Ford became president after President Richard M. Nixon resigned and appointed Nelson A. Rockefeller to fill the vacated vice presidency.)

Activity

One thing modern presidents do to reassure the nation that the vice president is prepared to succeed to the presidency is to keep them informed about matters of state. As President Dwight D. Eisenhower's remark at a news conference indicates, to do otherwise would invite public criticism: "Even if Mr. Nixon and I were not good friends, I would still have him in every important conference of government, so that if the grim reaper would find it time to remove me from the scene, he is ready to step in without any interruption."¹⁷ In 1949, at President Truman's initiative, the vice president was made a statutory member of the National Security Council. Vice presidents also receive national security briefings as a matter of course.

As a further means of reassurance, most presidents now encourage the vice president to stay active and in the public eye. Since Garner began the practice, vice presidents have traveled abroad on the president's behalf both with growing frequency--Nixon made seven

DB
Nixon
Cable
Truman

foreign trips, Hubert H. Humphrey twelve, Walter F. Mondale fourteen, George Bush (during the first term) twenty¹⁸--and in pursuit of a variety of diplomatic missions, ranging from simple expressions of American good will to talks preparatory to negotiations. Vice presidents since Garner also have met regularly with the cabinet and served, to some degree, as a legislative liaison from the president to Congress--counting votes on Capitol Hill, lobbying discreetly, and listening to complaints and suggestions.

Alben W. Barkley, who served as vice president in the Truman administration, elevated the ceremonial duties of the vice presidency to center stage. Some of these, like crowning beauty queens (a Barkley favorite) are inconsequential, but others, such as commencement addresses and appearances at events that symbolize administration goals, need not be. Nixon, whose president did not enjoy partisan politics, carved out new vice presidential responsibilities that were as insignificant as commission chair and as important as public advocate of the administration's policies, leadership, and party. The advocacy role exposed the vice president to a wide range of audiences, including interest groups, party activists, journalists, and the general public.

During the 1960s and 1970s, vice presidents began to accumulate greater institutional resources to help them fulfill their more extensive duties. Johnson, the vice president to President John F. Kennedy, gained for the vice presidency an impressive suite of offices in the Executive Office Building, adjacent to the White House; Agnew won a line item in the executive budget--between them they freed vice

presidents from their earlier dependence on Congress for office space and operating funds. Even more significant institutional gains were registered by Ford and Rockefeller, the two vice presidents who were appointed under the Twenty-Fifth Amendment and whose agreements to serve were urgently required by their presidents, for political reasons. Ford, who feared becoming too dependent on a president who might well be removed from office, persuaded Nixon to increase the vice presidential staff from seventeen to seventy. The new personnel included support staff for press relations, speechmaking, scheduling, and administration (which meant vice presidents no longer had to rely on the often unreliable White House for those functions), policy staff (enabling vice presidents to develop useful advice on matters of presidential concern), and political staff (to help vice presidents protect their interests and further their ambitions). Rockefeller secured a weekly place on the president's calendar for a private meeting.¹⁹ He also enhanced the perquisites of the vice presidency--everything from a better airplane to serve as Air Force Two to an official residence (the old Naval Observatory) and a redesigned seal for the office. (The old seal showed an eagle at rest, the new one an eagle at full wingspread with a claw full of arrows and a starburst at its head.)

The vice presidency came into full flower during Mondale's tenure in the administration of President Jimmy Carter. As a candidate in 1976, Mondale participated in the first nationally televised debate between the vice presidential candidates. His most tangible contributions to the institution during his term as vice president,

building on earlier gains, were the authorization he won to attend all presidential meetings, full access to the flow of papers to and from the president, and an office in the west wing of the White House. More important, perhaps, was that Mondale demonstrated that the vice president could serve the president (who, in Mondale's case, had selected him with unprecedented care and attention) as a valued adviser on virtually all matters of politics and public policy. Some vice presidents in each of the first three eras of the office's history, and most vice presidents in the modern era, had been consulted by their presidents on at least some important matters--Johnson on space issues, Humphrey on civil rights, Rockefeller on domestic policy, and others. But no vice president ~~ever had attained Mondale's status as a general~~ adviser to the president.

George Bush, as vice president to President Ronald Reagan, was heir to all the institutional gains in both roles and resources that his recent predecessors had won. Although he did not enter office enjoying the same sort of close personal relationship with Reagan that Mondale had with Carter, Bush worked hard and, for the most part, successfully to win the president's confidence. As Bush realized, the degree to which the new activities of the vice presidency translate into real influence within the White House still depends in large part on the president's perception of the vice president's ability, energy, and, perhaps most important, loyalty. But, because of the new vice presidential selection criteria, this perception is more likely to be favorable than at any previous time in history. And, because of the institutionalization of numerous roles and resources in the vice

presidency, the vice president has a greater opportunity than ever to be of real service to the president.

Succession and Disability

In addition to creating a procedure to fill vice presidential vacancies, the Twenty-Fifth Amendment accomplished two other purposes. One was to state explicitly the right of a successor vice president to assume the office of president and to serve for the remainder of the departed president's term, an uncontroversial measure that conferred constitutional sanction on a long established precedent. The other was to establish a set of procedures to handle the problem of presidential disability. The vice president was to be involved not only as the recipient of the powers and duties of the presidency (not the office itself) during times of presidential disability, but as the essential figure in any effort to remove governing responsibility from a president who was unable or unwilling to acknowledge a disability. This grant of power, however, has been more illusory than real. For fear of seeming unduly aggressive or ambitious, vice presidents have bent over backwards to avoid disability determinations, ceding effective control of the matter to the White House staff.

Political Status

The modern vice-presidency enjoys a curious political status. No incumbent vice president has been elected president since 1836, when Van Buren accomplished the feat. Yet, in a marked departure from previous political history, the greater talent and higher visibility of

modern vice presidents typically have made them frontrunners for their party's presidential nominations. (The Twenty-Fifth Amendment, which became part of the Constitution in 1951, also helps in some cases: by limiting presidents to two terms, it frees the vice president who serves in a second administration to step forward as a presidential candidate, as Nixon did in 1960 and Bush in 1988, without fear of unduly alienating the president.) Of the recent vice presidents, Nixon, Humphrey, and Mondale were nominated directly for president, and Truman, Johnson, and Ford were nominated for full terms after succeeding to the presidency. (Barkley, Agnew, and Rockefeller did not actively seek a presidential nomination.)

Conclusion

The curious political status of the vice presidency is a reminder that, for all its progress as an institution, some qualities of the office endure. Although new selection criteria make the nomination of vice presidential candidates who are competent to be president more likely, the recent examples of William E. Miller in 1964, Agnew in 1968 and 1972, Thomas F. Eagleton in 1972, and Geraldine A. Ferraro in 1984 indicate that older forms of ticket-balancing are not yet extinct. New selection criteria may foster greater harmony in office between president and vice president, but they do not guarantee it. (Perhaps it is not surprising that the two modern presidents who inflicted the greatest pain on their vice presidents, Johnson and Nixon, had been vice presidents themselves.)²⁰ Finally, although vice presidents enjoy more resources, responsibilities, and influence than ever before,

they do so mainly at the sufferance of the president. The price of power for a vice president can be high--unflagging loyalty, sublimation of one's own views and ambitions, and willing receptiveness to the president's beck and call. Thus, the vice presidency's political status may not be so curious after all--the very devotion to the president that wins the vice president kudos among fellow partisans may invite rejection by the broader electorate in the general election; the voters may regard the vice president as lacking the independent character and vision it seeks in its presidents.

Chapter 3

SELECTION

Most students and practitioners of American politics agree, as a matter of principle, that vice presidents should be chosen with their constitutional role as presidential successor uppermost in mind. To the extent that this belief is taken seriously, it implies two "governance" criteria for evaluating the vice presidential selection process and any proposals to alter it. One governance criterion is the competence of nominees for vice president to be president. Historically, six of nine presidential successions have occurred during the vice president's first year in office, suggesting that even the best on-the-job training is no substitute for a wise initial selection. The second governance criterion for vice presidential selection is loyalty to the policies of the president or presidential candidate, so that some measure of continuity in government is likely to be maintained after a succession.

In practice, governance criteria for vice presidential selection may or may not conflict with constitutional and democratic values that the public prizes. This fundamentally important "legitimacy" criterion has been the source, for example, of much debate about the right of nominees for president to select vice presidential running mates effectively on their own. Governance criteria also may or may not accord with the operation of the two "election" criteria that traditionally have dominated the process of choosing vice presidents.

The first, and the more important, election criteria is that the vice presidential nomination broaden the presidential candidate's appeal in the general election. The second, also significant mainly for its effect on the ticket's chances in the election, is that it unite the party in the aftermath of the presidential nominating contest.

The ideal vice presidential selection process would fulfill the governance and legitimacy criteria and would accommodate the election criteria. Stated more plainly, the process would foster the selection of competent and loyal vice presidents by constitutional and democratic means, while helping parties to unite and presidential candidates to win the general election.

All this mixing and matching of governance, legitimacy, and election criteria is complicated enough when applied to the usual method of vice presidential selection--nomination by the parties and election by the electoral college. But the laws and Constitution of the United States and the rules of the two major parties also provide three methods of unusual selection. If the vice presidency becomes vacant, the Twenty-Fifth Amendment requires the president to appoint a new vice president and obtain congressional confirmation of the candidate. If a vice presidential candidate leaves the ticket before the election, each party's rules stipulate that its national committee will choose a replacement. Finally, if no candidate for vice president receives a majority of electoral votes, the Senate is empowered by the Twelfth Amendment to choose a vice president from the two candidates who receive the greatest number of electoral votes.

USUAL SELECTION

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, party leaders, not presidential candidates, chose the parties' nominees for vice president. In order to take the outcome of the convention's presidential nominating contest into account, they selected the vice presidential nominee right afterward. Election criteria, applied in a setting that encouraged haste, invariably drove their decisions. Vice presidential nominations were used almost exclusively to balance the ticket, partly to heal the party's divisions, partly to win additional support in the general election, if only in one large state. (From 1900 to 1920, five politicians from Indiana and four from New York won vice presidential nominations, because those were two of the very few large competitive states in the country at that time.) If elected, the vice president could look forward to being replaced at the next convention, when, in an altered political setting, election criteria were likely to mandate the choice of a different vice presidential candidate who could provide the ticket with a new set of electoral balances. Until 1912, when James S. Sherman was chosen to run again with William Howard Taft, no vice president was nominated for reelection by a party convention.

Not only were governance criteria neglected in this procedure, the extreme application of election criteria actively discouraged competence and loyalty in the vice presidency. Ticket balancing as then practiced usually paired candidates from different and often opposing factions of the party--North-South, hard money-soft money, Stalwart-Progressive, and the like. Seldom did the vice president feel

much affinity for the president, or the president much trust for the vice president, after the election. The prospect of being replaced at the end of the term dissuaded talented political leaders from accepting vice presidential nominations in the first place. Politicians who hoped someday to be elected president shunned the office: except for Martin Van Buren in 1836, no nineteenth century vice president was nominated for president by a convention, not even those who succeeded to the presidency when the president died.

The first modification in the vice presidential selection process came early in the twentieth century, with the vice presidency of Theodore Roosevelt. The rise of national news media made vice presidents more visible; a new style of active electioneering made them more popular and better established among party activists. Although election criteria still determined each vice presidential nomination, they now were applied a little differently. The price within the party of dropping a vice president from the ticket became too high: in this century, none have been denied the chance to run when an incumbent president sought a second term. Governance criteria continued to be ignored, but at least competent politicians were not discouraged from accepting vice presidential nominations by the promise of a humiliating dismissal four years later. It remained unusual during the early twentieth century, but no longer was unheard of, for a leader of stature like Charles Dawes, Charles Curtis, or John Nance Garner to accept the second spot on the ticket.

An even more ~~sign~~ificant alteration in vice presidential selection came in 1940, ~~when~~ Franklin D. Roosevelt seized from party leaders the

right to choose his running mate. Roosevelt had long felt that the president should put the vice president to use in the administration-- he had written an article to that effect while running for vice president in 1920--and entrusted more responsibility to his first vice president, Garner, than has any president since George Washington. But Roosevelt and the conservative Garner (whom party leaders had placed on the ticket in 1932) had a falling out in 1937, which convinced the president that he had to pick his own vice president if he were to use the office as he desired. Roosevelt accomplished his goal by threatening to refuse the convention's nomination for a third term as president if it rejected his choice for vice president, Henry A. Wallace.¹ Although the circumstances of Roosevelt's precedent-setting power grab--his extraordinary standing in the party and unrivaled concern for the vice presidency as an office--were unusual, the transfer of the effective power to select vice presidential candidates from party leaders to presidential nominees probably was bound to occur eventually, as part of the more general rise of the twentieth-century presidency as a political institution and the simultaneous decline of parties.

Harry S. Truman's woefully unprepared succession to the presidency in 1945 was the source of further changes in the vice presidential selection process, mainly in response to heightened public concern about the ability of vice presidents in the nuclear age to fulfill their successor role ably and faithfully. By indicating that they valued standards of competence and loyalty in vice presidential selection, the public--political journalists, scholars, activists, and

voters--helped to bring these governance criteria into conformity with at least the more important of the two election criteria, namely, winning the election.

The fruits of the new emphasis on governance criteria can be seen in the roster of postwar vice presidential nominees. The postwar era has been marked by an almost complete absence of ideologically opposed running mates, and those vice presidential candidates who have differed even slightly on the issues with the heads of their tickets (as George Bush, who once described Ronald Reagan's supply-side tax proposals as "voodoo economics," did in 1980) have hastened to gloss over past disagreements and deny that any exist in the present. The record is even more compelling with regard to competence. From 1948 to 1984, the vice presidential candidate as often as not has been the more experienced member of the ticket in high government office, including John Sparkman in 1952, Estes Kefauver in 1956, Lyndon B. Johnson and Henry Cabot Lodge in 1960, and Walter F. Mondale in 1976. Around half the vice presidential nominees in this period already had sought or been prominently mentioned for the presidency at the time they were picked, and the vast majority of them later ran for their party's presidential nomination, often successfully.²

Not much is left to chance in modern vice presidential selection, at least not when the presidential nominating contest is settled, as is typical nowadays, well in advance of the convention. Jimmy Carter set a precedent in 1976 when he conducted a careful, organized preconvention search for a running mate. From a list of 400 Democratic officeholders that aides compiled for him in April, he narrowed the

pool of contenders to fourteen. Pollster Patrick Caddell tested their relative electoral strengths, and aide Charles Kirbo interviewed several of them. Prospective nominees were asked to fill out questionnaires, answering detailed inquiries about their finances, health, and personal and political lives. Carter interviewed the seven finalists in July and finally tapped Mondale at the convention. Mondale followed a similar procedure as the Democratic presidential candidate in 1984. Reagan did nothing so elaborate in 1980 because he hoped to lure former president Gerald R. Ford onto the ticket, but he and his aides did give considerable thought to the kind of running mate they wanted.

Thus, in each of the three most recent instances in which a vice presidential nomination had to be decided, the presidential candidate undertook a search well-designed to result in a reasoned, responsible selection that was sensitive to the public desire for a worthy presidential successor. Public-spiritedness may account in part for their having done so, but a more likely explanation is that they realized that the presidential candidate who pays insufficient attention to governance criteria in choosing the vice presidential nominee will suffer for it in the election. A recent study indicates that in the general election campaign, vice presidential candidates are most likely to make the front page for bad things, such as scandals or blunders.³ To select a running mate whose competence and loyalty are less than certain is to invite such coverage. It also is to hand the other party a potent issue. A Democratic commercial in 1968 displayed the words [Spiro T.] "Agnew for Vice President?" over a soundtrack of

rising laughter. The spot ended with a voice intoning, "This would be funny if it weren't so serious." In 1976, a Carter ad showed pictures of Mondale and Robert Dole, the Republican vice presidential nominee, then asked, "When you know that four of the six vice presidents have wound up being president, who would you like to see a heartbeat away from the presidency? Hmmm?" Differences in the qualifications of the candidates are also likely to appear quite clearly in the vice presidential debate, televised on all networks, that now is a regular feature of the presidential campaign. Ultimately, the price of slighting governance criteria when choosing a running mate is votes: surveys from various elections indicate that a poor vice presidential candidate can harm a ticket's chances on election day.⁴

In sum, in recent times a concern for competence and loyalty, the main governance criteria for choosing vice presidential candidates, has not so much displaced as come into harmony with the main election criterion, that of winning the general election. Governance criteria even can accommodate, at least, some traditional forms of ticketbalancing that still are practiced. Specifically, Protestant presidential candidates often choose Catholic running mates, candidates without extensive experience in the federal government usually pair themselves with Washington insiders, and, almost invariably, presidential candidates limit their choice for a vice president to political leaders from the other parts of the country.⁵

There is, to be sure, no guarantee that governance criteria will be satisfied in every nomination of a vice presidential candidate. Four sets of circumstances may impede such a choice. First,

politicians do not always see their interests clearly. Richard M. Nixon was too clever by half when, acting on the theory that a relatively unknown running mate would have few enemies and cost the ticket few votes, he chose Agnew in 1968. A second, more serious problem is that one election criterion--uniting the party--continues to bear little relation to the governance criteria for vice presidential selection. Threats from the National Organization of Women and other feminist groups to oppose a male nominee for vice president at the 1984 Democratic convention forced Mondale's hand--he feared that with a fractured party he had no hope of winning the general election. It is hard to imagine that Mondale would have picked any other third-term member of the House of Representatives without notable foreign affairs experience than Geraldine A. Ferraro. Third, conventions still select the candidate for vice president within hours of the presidential nomination. A presidential nominating contest that is unresolved going into the convention, like the George McGovern-Hubert H. Humphrey battle in 1972 or the Ford-Reagan race in 1976, tends to consume the time and attention of the candidates, making a hasty choice of a running mate in an atmosphere of frenzy and exhaustion all too likely. Finally, party leaders can make it difficult for a president even to consider removing a vice president they especially like, such as Nixon in 1956 or Agnew in 1972.

Suggested Reforms

The selection process is a frequent target of reform among students of the vice presidency. Some critics worry not so much about



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