

## Citation metadata

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Date: Winter 2005

From: *White House Studies*(Vol. 5, Issue 1)

Publisher: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

Document Type: Article

Length: 8,136 words

## Main content

Article Preview :

### ABSTRACT

The first months of a new presidency are a unique time in American politics. It is a period of great presidential activism, with appointments and policy initiatives announced on almost a daily basis. It is a "honeymoon" period, when the president's relationships with Congress and the media are at least cordial if not deferential. It is a period when campaign promises come due and domestic politics are on everyone's mind. It can also be a period of frustration as newly elected presidents struggle with recalcitrant staffs and large unfamiliar bureaucracies. This paper examines the transition of the Forty-third president, George W. Bush, noting problems experienced and offering lessons.

### INTRODUCTION

Newly elected presidents almost always feel frustrated and inadequate in their dealings with the Congress. Washington is unfamiliar territory for presidents, especially if their only experience was at the gubernatorial level of government. The key to a successful first year in the White House is advanced planning and learning during the transition period from one administration to another. This period lasts eleven weeks just seventy-seven days. It is a frightfully short period of time to adjust to the Washington culture. Yet failure to do so will inevitably result in policy failures for the president.

What if the elected president had to survive a strong primary challenge and then engage his opponent in a razor thin election? Suppose further that the election was not over on Election Day and continued during the transition phase. Suppose a newly elected president lost more than half of the transition to this contested election. This was the plight of George W. Bush after December 13, 2000.

The 2000 presidential election represented a unique challenge for transition efforts. Due to the uncertainty of the electoral vote open transition efforts were highly criticized. For example, President Bush sought to create an image of leadership by openly discussing his possible cabinet choices in the days immediately following the undecided election--discussions criticized by the media as premature. (1)

This article will examine the effects of the short transition upon George W. Bush's policy agenda. It is the position here that certain dysfunctions can be traced to the transition period which resulted in a confusion of politics from policy. We will first present a framework for analyzing intra-party presidential transitions. Second, we briefly describe the complexity of the 2000 election and its impact upon transition efforts. Third, we assess a few impacts upon various Bush Administration policies. Fourth, we present a case study of the effects of this transition upon Iraq policy. Finally we offer some suggestions for remediating these problems traceable to a shortened or normal transition period.

### PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITIONS: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

One way of judging presidential transition is by assessing the quality and quantity of presidential appointees in place early in a presidential administration. While appointments are important (and we shall assess the Bush II Administration's progress in this area) they do not tell the entire story of a successful transition, We need a framework that...

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Eksterowicz, Anthony J., and Glenn P. Hastedt. "The George W. Bush presidential transition: the disconnect between politics and policy." *White House Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2005, p. 79+. Accessed 14 Nov. 2020.

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George W. Bush said American people should have confidence that US Presidential election was 'fundamentally fair'. At the same time the former president congratulated Joe Biden on reaching winning tally, adding that he has spoken to the Democrat. Bush also pledged to help Biden in any way he can. 'Joe Biden is a good man,' George Bush said. 15:15. Palestine's Abbas to Ask Biden to Move US Embassy Back to Tel Aviv From Jerusalem - Report. Joe Biden elected president: Live updates on the transition plan. The four secretaries — Tom Ridge and Michael Chertoff, who served under George W. Bush, and Janet Napolitano and Jeh Johnson, who served under Barack Obama — said in a joint statement that the process cannot be delayed while the Trump campaign pursues legal challenges in some states. The Presidential Transition Act requires a transition to run concurrently with any election challenges and is intended to ensure the incoming administration is prepared to handle any challenge on Day 1," they said in a statement issued through Citizens for a Strong Democracy, a nonprofit that they founded to educate voters on the safety and security of U.S. voting systems. Bush's yearly legislative domestic policy agendas. Agenda-setting is at the crux of power and influence in American politics and is a necessary first step in the policymaking process. (Anderson 2000). Generally, scholarship concurs that presidents are positioned to set the domestic policy agenda of the George W. Bush Administration. Again, dependent in part on the broader contextual environment as well as two cycles of presidential time, the president's domestic policy agenda should vary substantially. These same factors may also influence whether President.