

2020 ONLINE SEMINARS PRESIDENTIAL COMMAND & NATIONAL SECURITY LEADERSHIP Vance Serchuk, executive director, KKR Global Institute

Over the past three years, President Trump has repeatedly provoked controversy in his efforts to wrest control of American foreign policy — coming into conflict with US national institutions and, at times, his own cabinet officers. Although this contemporary drama has often been characterized as without precedent, the question of how a President imposes his national security vision on an often recalcitrant executive branch has a long and vital history. In his classic work, *Presidential Command*, Peter Rodman — who served in multiple administrations — provides an insider's account of how a succession of commanders-in-chief employed a range of tactics and strategies, with varying degrees of success, to determine the direction of American foreign policy. When is it appropriate for the President to overrule career bureaucrats versus deferring to their expertise? What is the role of political appointees in channeling — or ignoring — Presidential direction in foreign policy? What are the trade-offs between coherence and collegiality, and between persuasion and coercion?

In this online seminar led by foreign policy scholar Vance Serchuk, students will use Rodman's case studies to explore the historical experience surrounding presidential control over foreign policy and the meaning of executive power. From Richard Nixon's secretive back channel diplomacy that bypassed the State Department to George H. W. Bush's more collaborative team-based approach, they will examine how each president's character, worldview, and management style influenced the direction of events and outcomes. They will also study the relationship between presidents and the diplomatic, military, and intelligence bureaucracies they have to deal with — and work through — and how that affects the success or failure of their policies.

While we have assigned certain sections of the book for discussion, we encourage you to read the book in its entirety.

Book:

- Peter Rodman, *Presidential Command* (2009)

Discussion Questions:

For each Administration, consider the following questions:

1. What previous experience did each President bring to the Executive, whether prior experience in government or more broadly in life? How did this influence their approach to national security policy?
2. Describe the President's management style. What was his strategy for establishing control over the Executive branch and setting the direction of his foreign policy? How successful or unsuccessful was he—and why? Do you agree or disagree with the approach he took?
3. Who were the key officials the President had working for him in national security policy? How did they interact with the President and with each other?

4. What was the foreign policy vision of the President upon taking office? What were his instincts or convictions about the world? In your judgment, how successful was the President in imprinting his foreign policy vision on the Administration he led?
5. How did the President and his Administration respond to moments of crisis? Did the management style and internal processes of each Administration serve them well or ill in such moments?

Friday, April 10, 2020

1 pm to 3 pm

Session 1: Introduction

Readings:

- Henry Kissinger, "Introduction"
- Peter Rodman, "Author's Note," Chapters 1-2

Friday, April 17, 2020

1 pm to 3 pm

Session 2: Richard Nixon

Readings:

- Chapter 3, "Richard Nixon"

Friday, April 24, 2020

1 pm to 3 pm

Session 3: Gerald Ford | Jimmy Carter

Readings:

- Chapter 4, "Gerald Ford"
- Chapter 5, "Jimmy Carter"

Friday, May 1, 2020

1 pm to 3 pm

Session 4: Ronald Reagan

Readings:

- Chapter 6, "Ronald Reagan"

Friday, May 8, 2020

1 pm to 3 pm

Session 5: George H. W. Bush

Readings:

- Chapter 7, “George H. W. Bush”

Friday, May 15, 2020

1 pm to 3 pm

Session 6: Lessons Learned

Readings:

- Chapter 10, “Lessons Learned”