

## *Contemporary Presidency*

# Presidents Meet Reporters: Is Donald Trump an Outlier among Recent Presidents?

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*Is President Donald Trump an outlier among presidents in the ways in which he meets with the press? Using comparative data for Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Trump, this article looks at how similar and different Trump is compared to his recent predecessors. While at one time presidents answered reporters' queries in presidential press conferences, today presidents have more opportunities to meet the press. All six presidents studied used three basic forums: press conferences, informal question-and-answer sessions, and interviews. They did so in ways consistent with their presidential goals and in settings in which they felt comfortable. In their first 32 months, all recent presidents employed strategies similar to ones that brought each to the presidency and then most found additional resources for communicating with the public. Except for President Trump, Presidents Reagan through Obama did so with relatively stable White House leadership teams and coordinated communications organizational structures. In this way as well as in significant others, the five previous presidents had more in common with one another than they did with President Trump.*

Keywords: president and press, White House press operations, presidential press conferences

President Donald Trump is often characterized as bent on destroying the political system as we know it without a relationship to past presidential patterns. Gerald Seib of the *Wall Street Journal* characterized Trump as “the disrupter-in-chief, the most prominent leader to rise to power by proudly taking a wrecking ball to the prevailing political system” (2019). Using communications as a signature area of his presidency, this article explores the question of whether at 32 months President Trump followed patterns of

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meeting the press established by his predecessors or blew up the ways in which a president communicates with constituents. In fact, he was both the disrupter who saw himself as throwing out a presidential handbook in what he said and did, while at the same time adopting some organizational structures and practices used by his predecessors. (See the appendix for a comprehensive listing of processes and source materials used in compiling my data for this project.)

## President Trump and His Recent Predecessors: The Communications Setting

The shell of the institutional presidency can be found in all six recent presidencies from Ronald Reagan to Trump, but the substance and the contents within that shell were different in the Trump presidency than was true with his recent predecessors. There are clear differences between President Trump and his recent predecessors in terms of the way they organized and used their White House staffs, the presidents' sense of themselves as leaders, their government service backgrounds, the nature of their constituencies, their views of the place of news organizations in our society, and the stability of their White House leadership-level staff. All of these factors have an impact on the shape of presidential communications. President Trump, for example, had many of the same White House organizational units used by his predecessors, but in contrast to most of his recent predecessors, coordination and long-range planning among the staff in those offices were not a feature of his presidency. In fact, President Trump stated he did not believe in teams. When asked about forming a team to handle communications on impeachment issues, he said: "But here's the thing: I don't have teams. Everyone is talking about teams. I'm the team" (Trump 2019a). For Donald Trump, the president and the presidency were one. He considered himself the leader and the institution of the presidency. He established rules and practices he believed relevant to his presidency. In a meeting with young students, he declared: "Then, I have Article II, where I have the right to do whatever I want as president" (Trump 2019b).

Few of those who occupied White House leadership jobs, including the president himself, had elective, executive branch, or White House experience as had Trump's predecessors. President Trump is the only president who came to office without holding elective office and/or military experience. All of his recent predecessors brought in people with White House and executive branch experience, which made it easier for the staff and for the presidents themselves to deal with the frustrations of divided power. Also basic to the differences between Trump and recent presidents was his reluctance to make the transition from campaigning to governing by building a broad base of support. Trump's communications interests revolved primarily around retaining the 46% constituent base that voted for him in 2016, not appealing to the public as a whole. Beginning in the transition period, his predecessors had made dedicated efforts to reach beyond their electoral constituency.

One of the prominent differences President Trump had with his predecessors was the division of his public presentations between those at which he answered reporters' queries and those at which he did not. Except for President Trump, Presidents Reagan

through Barack Obama were remarkably similar in the percentage of their public appearances at which they responded to reporters' queries. Even if they do not enjoy doing so, presidents accept the need and opportunity to respond to questions posed by journalists. Counting up all of a president's public utterances—speeches, weekly radio/television addresses, press conferences, interviews, exchanges with reporters—approximately one-third of the occasions at which they spoke included answering questions from one or more journalists. Presidents Obama (30%), George W. Bush (30%), George H. W. Bush (33%), and Reagan (28%) were remarkably similar in the percentage of the total occasions at which they took questions. With 39%, President Bill Clinton was slightly more inclined than the other presidents to answer questions.

At 56%, President Trump took a significantly higher number of reporters' queries than the other five presidents. That points to a basic difference in the balance he had between speeches and informal sessions with reporters. President Trump's percentage was that high because he gave comparatively fewer speeches. Ordinarily, the question-and-answer sessions with reporters serve as a complement to the speeches a president makes in which goals, immediate plans, and policies are discussed and explained. But, in Trump's case, the informal sessions with reporters were more of a substitute for set policy speeches. Topical speeches took second place in the Trump presidency to informal exchanges with reporters in which he covered whatever was on his mind at the time. He found that he did not need to have a policy speech to make television news. He could grab public attention by taking questions in informal sessions at the White House. The result was he had fewer speeches with reporters' questions than was true of all of his immediate predecessors.

Most presidents wanted to speak without questions from reporters diverting attention from their basic message. The numbers for the most recent four presidents at the end of 32 months show a similar pattern for Presidents Obama, Bush, and Clinton, but significantly fewer for Trump. The figures for remarks at which presidents spoke without taking reporters' questions are as follows: Trump, 648; Obama, 1,224; George W. Bush, 1,089; Clinton, 1,131. In the era prior to multiple cable television news channels, Presidents George H. W. Bush and Reagan had 940 and 801 speeches and remarks, respectively. With the largest number of speeches, President Obama favored settings in which he announced and expanded on his policy initiatives and presidential actions without getting sidetracked by issues raised by reporters.

Through their contrasting governing patterns, President Trump brought into focus how similar his predecessors were in their attention to broadening their constituencies, using staff to develop and relay messages, only occasionally calling out their opponents in personal terms, searching for ways to work with institutions inside and outside of government to move an articulated agenda, and rarely questioning the legitimacy of news organizations. Using the area of presidential interchanges with reporters as a way to gauge continuities and changes among recent presidents, the following study compares President Trump with Presidents Reagan through Obama at the end of September of the third year of the presidency on the communications choices they made in meeting with reporters and with the publicity organizations they assembled. First, we will examine their interchanges with reporters in the three forums they all used to answer questions. Did they use the same ones, and were there differences in their mix of preferences? Second,

we will view the development of their meetings with the press once they came into office. Did they develop new communications practices and alter how they met reporters once they came into the presidency? Third, we will compare President Trump and his recent predecessors in the organizational structure they used to support their communications initiatives. Did he follow the organizational patterns of those who preceded him?

## **Presidential Interchanges with Reporters at the End of 32 Months: Six Presidents and Three Types of Forums**

Presidents today principally use three settings to meet reporters and answer their questions. Through technological developments and an increasing public interest in hearing directly from their presidents, the number and types of forums have broadened from press conferences to include informal question-and-answer sessions and interviews. From 1913 to 1953, presidential press conferences were the only forum in which presidents regularly took questions from reporters. They were off-the-record sessions, although reporters could ask the administration for consent to publish certain quotes. Once the conferences went on the record in the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration, however, the risk of making mistakes led presidents and their staffs to find alternative venues through which to speak with journalists.

Presidents continue to hold press conferences, but they have cut the number of solo sessions and adopted the joint session with foreign and sometimes government leaders, which limits their exposure to reporters' questions from perhaps an hour in a solo session down to approximately 15 minutes of questions in a joint session. Additionally, presidents have favored informal sessions at which they answer a few questions from reporters at the beginning or end of a meeting as well as on occasions when a president is leaving or arriving by helicopter on the South Lawn of the White House complex. Increasingly in the period following on-the-record press conferences and with the rise in the popularity of television, presidents have also conducted interviews with reporters. With the development of cable television networks, presidents have increasingly taken advantage of the opportunities to use interviews to inform people of their plans and their thinking. The balance presidents have between the three types of sessions depends on their personal choices of preferred venues as well as the state of contemporary technology. Presidents want to use the latest technology to advance their goals, interests, and leadership while at the same time settling on technology they can use with ease (Figure 1).

### **Presidential Press Conferences**

President Dwight D. Eisenhower held his press conferences in the Indian Treaty Room in the Old Executive Office Building during the daytime, appearing alone answering questions. For reporters and many of those following presidential interchanges, solo press conferences held at the White House are the preferred venue to question a president.

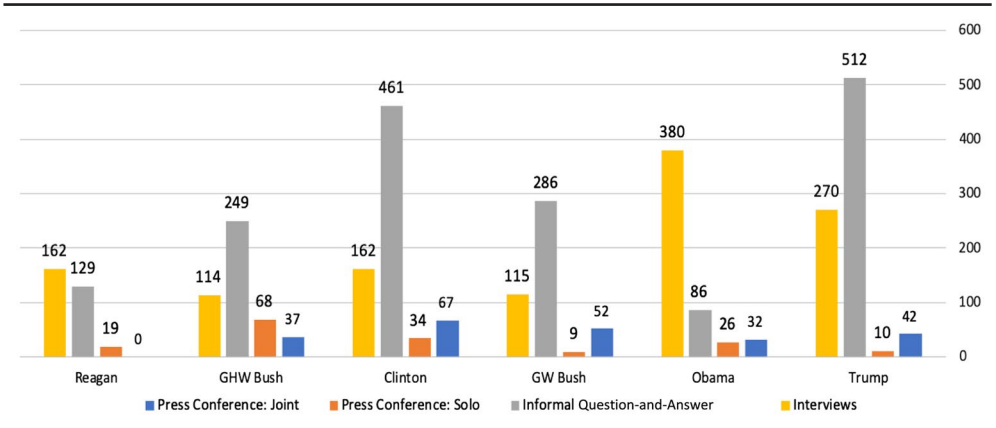


FIGURE 1. Presidential Interchanges with Reporters at the End of 32 Months.

Solo sessions test a president's level of knowledge more than do joint sessions and informal question-and-answer meetings during which he has more opportunities to deflect questions. Additionally, the solo sessions are attractive to reporters because all White House-accredited reporters can attend and theoretically will have a chance to ask a question.

Historically, solo press conferences run from half an hour to an hour, and a president covers a wide range of substantive topics, particularly on the economy, foreign and national security policy, as well as domestic initiatives. For a president, such sessions provide an opportunity to expand on their thinking on policy and on events and issues. For reporters, a solo press conference at the White House is an opportunity in a formal setting to ask questions and then follow up on them without the president easily moving to another reporter, as he can do with the informal question-and-answer sessions. Traditionally, solo press conferences held at the White House receive more media and public attention than do any other interchanges between presidents and reporters. With the attention, though, comes the risk of making mistakes.

In the 1980s, Ronald Reagan took advantage of the television networks' interest in covering news to get public attention for his policy initiatives and his leadership. He used solo press conferences held in prime time as his major conduit to the public. In the years before the development of cable networks, President Reagan's news conferences were carried on the existing networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC), which represented a national moment when people watched his East Room sessions. His successors, however, received sparing network coverage in comparison to the Reagan model. When networks emphasized evening entertainment programming, the loss of ad revenue became an increasingly important consideration for the networks' front office.

By 1996, there were three cable networks at the White House—CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News—and they were the networks that carried presidential appearances rather than the three traditional networks. Soon solo news conferences became a feature of presidential communications for only Presidents Clinton and Obama, and those were most often held in daytime hours. Additionally, as presidents increased their travel, many of

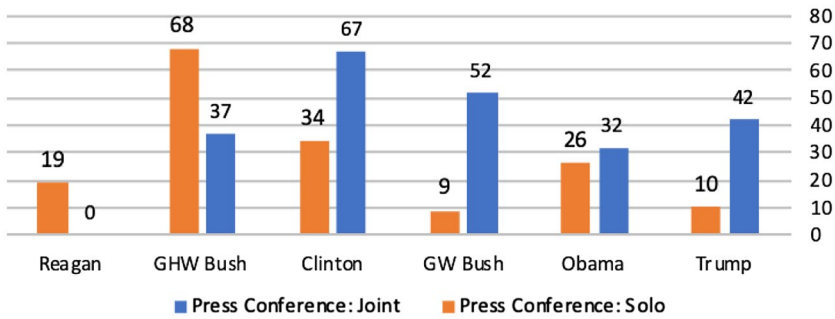


FIGURE 2. Presidential Press Conferences: Solo and Joint.

the solo sessions were held abroad where the president could speak about trip developments. Of recent presidents, Trump had the fewest White House solo sessions, with only three of his ten solo sessions held at the White House (Figure 2).

Supplementing solo sessions are the joint ones with foreign leaders that George H. W. Bush regularly held. As his successors routinely brought foreign leaders to the White House and visited them abroad, the number of joint sessions grew to their current numbers—they now far outnumber solo ones.

### Informal Question and Answer Sessions: From South Lawn to Oval Office

With the gradual demise of regular press conferences, an alternative type of press session took shape. The informal question-and-answer session with reporters was more of a spur-of-the-moment, unscheduled event than press conferences, which usually appear on a president's schedule for several days prior to the event. These unscheduled meetings, held most often on the White House complex, are a prominent feature of the Trump years. But there is a sharp difference between how President Trump and his predecessors have used these sessions. While other presidents held some informal meetings, they did so more as a way of responding to reporters between their more formal press conferences, rather than as a substitute for them. Additionally, the sessions held by Trump's recent predecessors generally dealt with unfolding events and the status of announced plans and initiatives. President Trump used them to discuss ongoing political issues and events, to air his personal grievances, as well as on occasion to level attacks on his political opponents and on news organizations, often in very specific ways. For Presidents Reagan through Obama, these meetings on the South Lawn, in the Oval Office, or in the Roosevelt and Cabinet Rooms, were sessions with a limited number of questions lasting for only a few minutes. President Trump allowed many more questions and the sessions could last for 15 to 20, and sometimes as long as 30, minutes. His single-day record for talking to the press was on December 3, 2019, during a NATO conference in London. During three informal question-and-answer sessions, he spoke with reporters for 2 hours and 1 minute.

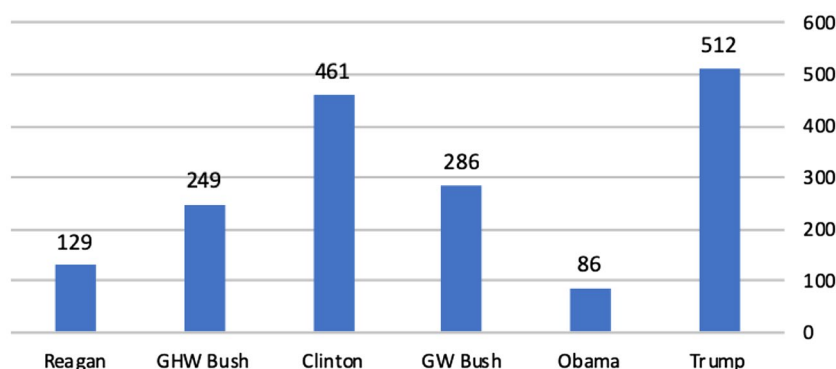


FIGURE 3. Informal Question and Answer Sessions at the End of 32 Months.

Along with Twitter, President Trump's use of these sessions was a very effective way to reach his constituents on his terms. In the question-and-answer sessions, Trump had control over timing, who was able to ask questions, whether he took follow-up queries, and how he responded to reporters questioning the veracity of what he said. Additionally, except for the South Lawn setting, the sessions were held in small areas—the Oval Office or the Cabinet and Roosevelt Rooms—in which only a small group of reporters could fit, therefore limiting coverage to a pool of reporters rather than the full White House press corps.<sup>1</sup> The informal sessions had more publicity reach than his speeches where only select clips were shown on television. They stand as a contrast with solo press conferences, which historically are structured, and where reporters have follow-up questions and can build on the questions asked by other reporters (Figure 3).

Among the places these sessions have traditionally been held, Trump favored the setting of the South Lawn prior to his trip departures on a Marine One helicopter. By the end of November 2019, he had had one hundred South Lawn question-and-answer sessions with reporters. The sessions represented something of a free-for-all at which President Trump served as the ringmaster. He took questions he wanted to weigh in on and provided answers from his viewpoint with his own set of facts. As well as with his tweets, Trump often used these opportunities to attack his perceived opponents in the strongest of terms and give his version of events. News organizations reported on his statements, including when his answers strayed from the facts, which resulted in more questions pursuing the evidence he had and followed by Trump's effort to repel what he

1. The October 2019 in-town press pool rotation consisted of 31 alphabetically listed print publications, five television networks, and 12 radio organizations, as well as the Associated Press and Reuters on a daily basis as print poolers, and C-SPAN for television. The in-town pool includes those print organizations regularly covering the White House. When there is a visiting foreign leader, there will be a foreign press pool consisting of someone from a print organization of the leader's country. There is a travel pool made up of those organizations committed to traveling with the president when he goes outside the Washington area. Considering the large expense involved with such coverage, the October travel pool consisted of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*, as well as the Associated Press, Reuters, and Agence France Presse. Also in the travel pool are five television networks (CBS, NBC, ABC, Fox, and CNN), but not C-SPAN.

considered to be personal attacks. By mid-October 2019, Glenn Kessler, who writes a fact-checking column for the *Washington Post*, catalogued 13,435 misstatements by the president, many of which became the subject of continued questioning by reporters in these informal sessions (Kessler 2019).

Because they were held at the White House, the sessions attracted a large contingent of national news organizations, which the president used as both foils and information carriers. In a typical South Lawn session on October 25, 2019, prior to a trip to speak at Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina, there were approximately 150 people on the South Lawn penned into a fairly small space where attendees competed for a prime spot from which to call out a question. As he spoke, the whir of the helicopter's motor set a tone of much action in a relatively small space, jam-packed with reporters, photographers, television video crews, press and communications staff, Secret Service, and a sprinkling of guests.<sup>2</sup> President Trump paced up and down the chained area outside the South Portico, pointing his right index finger to those whose questions he wanted to acknowledge. Deputy Press Secretary Judd Deere explained the benefit for Trump of taking questions on the South Lawn: "there is something of a Trump brand there because now, even if you are not even paying attention to TV, you hear a segment come on and you hear a helicopter hum in the background, it is usually going to involve the president taking questions. It has become a staple and a regular thing that he likes to do" (Deere 2019). In this particular case, the video of the president's 14-minute session with reporters was used by cable networks, whereas the 1-hour speech he later delivered on his Second Step program of prison reform was not.

### Presidential Interviews: A Flexible and Popular Forum

Presidential interviews with journalists are an important addition to a president's available publicity arsenal. With solo press conferences fading and the more informal sessions focused on the here and now, recent presidents increased the interviews they participated in with reporters. Of the six presidents, President Obama participated in substantially more interviews with reporters than any of his predecessors. He had 380 of them at the 32-month mark of his presidency, with Trump (270) liberally using them as well (Figure 4).

Interviews allow presidents to target the people they want to talk to and the news organizations they want to satisfy. President Obama, for example, used interviews to advance his policy initiatives requiring congressional approval, such as Trade Promotion Authority.<sup>3</sup> For President George W. Bush, interviews included speaking to foreign audi-

2. Martha Kumar, the author, was present at the October 25, 2019, South Lawn session and counted the approximate numbers of people, ladders, and sound equipment as well as the categories of participants and guests.

3. On June 3, 2015, President Obama held seriatim interviews with six reporters, five of whom were from local stations in locations the White House was targeting for support of local House members. The interviews were with Estela Casas, KVIA ABC-7, El Paso, TX; Barbara-Lee Edwards, KFMB CBS-8, San Diego, CA; Edie Lambert, KCRA, Sacramento, CA; Dennis Bounds, KING, Seattle, WA; and Karen Borta, KTVT Dallas, TX. Borta described her interview: <http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2015/06/05/cbs-11s-karen-borta-talks-about-her-interview-with-president-obama/>.



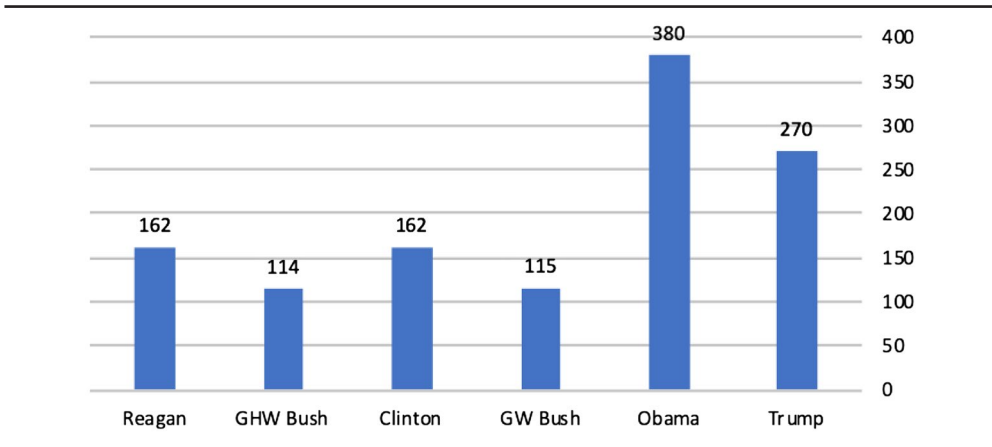


FIGURE 4. Presidential Interviews at the End of 32 Months.

ences in countries he was scheduled to visit. In a five-day, five-country trip to Europe in June 2001, Bush held interviews the day before his departure, first with five television reporters representing the five countries, followed by an interview with seven print reporters from the countries whose leaders he was meeting.<sup>4</sup>

For President Trump, interviews represented an opportunity to talk to his constituent base through national television news and, additionally, through local stations covering his political rallies and topical speeches. President Trump sometimes called in to the Fox morning show “Fox and Friends” or in the evening appeared with or phoned in to his friends and supporters, among them Fox News personalities Judge Jeanine Pirro, Sean Hannity, and Tucker Carlson. By the end of 32 months, he had done 75 interviews with Fox News and its business and sports divisions and a few local affiliates, which constituted 28% of his total interviews. Fifty-nine percent of his interviews were with television outlets, and 46% of those were with Fox News. His local interviews, however, have a different pattern. President Trump combined his national television interviews with local ones when he traveled outside Washington, DC, especially when he held political rallies. The White House Press Office worked with local media, depending of the market they were in.<sup>5</sup> Like his predecessors, he did not ignore print. Twenty-seven percent of Trump’s interviews were with print outlets. As important as television is, the reporters and presenters there often get their information from print sources, which means print

4. On June 11, 2001, President George W. Bush held a European television roundtable: Yves Thiran, RTBF (Belgium/ France); Vicente Sanclemente, TVE (Spain); Matej Surc, RTV (Slovenia); Lars Moberg, SVT (Sweden); and Greet De Keyser, VRT (Belgium/Flanders). On the same day, he also met with print reporters plus an ABC reporter: Leo Wieland, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Germany); Pedro Rodríguez, ABC; Mats Carlbon, *Dagens Nyheter* (Sweden); Mario Platero, *Il Sole 24 Ore* (Italy); Gerald Baker, *Financial Times*; Eugene Bai, *Izvestia* (Russia); Charles Lambroschini, *Le Figaro* (France); and Krzysztof Darewicz, *Rzeczpospolita* (Poland).

5. These are the Nielsen-designated media areas the White House uses to determine which individual television stations reach the target areas White House staff are trying to reach in the interviews President Trump has with local reporters: <https://mediatracks.com/resources/nielsen-dma-rankings-2019/>.

publications are not to be ignored when a president and his staff seek to influence his constituents.

The drop in print interviews had as much to do with the decline in the number of print publications, both newspapers and magazines, as it did presidential media preferences. According to research conducted by the Pew Research Center, in 1981, President Reagan's first year in office, the total circulation of U.S. daily newspapers for weekday distribution was 61,431,000, with Sunday circulation at 55,180,000. In his first year, President Clinton, for example, often had roundtable interviews with regional and local print organizations. At that time in 1993, the circulation numbers were fairly similar to the 1981 figures with weekday circulation at 59,812,000 and 62,566,000 for Sunday papers. By 2017, when President Trump came into the presidency, the numbers had dropped dramatically, with weekday circulation at 30,948,419 and Sunday papers at 33,971,695 (Pew Research Center 2019). Many newspapers no longer had a White House correspondent or even existed as print publications when Trump entered office. What has increased is presidential use of television. In the summer of 2018, 44% of adults preferred to get news from television while online sources moved into second place at 34%, with radio at 14% and print at 7% (Mitchell 2018). With the exception of Bill Clinton, recent presidents focused heavily on television for their interviews. Of all of the presidents, Clinton liked radio and used it often. With CNN as the only cable network at the White House, President Reagan focused on print interviews and secondarily on television.

During October and November of off-year elections, except for George W. Bush, most presidents from Clinton forward were active in conducting more interviews than they normally did, with most aimed toward whatever campaigns were underway. With the 9/11 attacks still fresh, Bush focused on national security and foreign policy issues, not campaigning. There was a noticeable increase in interviews during the period from Labor Day to election day for Trump, Obama, and Clinton. With less travel abroad than was true with George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Obama, Trump has the lowest percentage of interviews with foreign outlets when compared to his recent predecessors.

### **Preparing the President to Meet Reporters**

When President Reagan prepared to meet reporters in nighttime East Room press conferences, he often spent 3 days in briefings and practice sessions. For an October 19, 1983, 36-minute evening press conference, President Reagan spent 2 hours the day before in a "pre-news conference briefing with senior White House staff," the president's Daily Diary noted. Additionally, he spent almost 2 hours in briefings with his national security staff. That follows a 1-hour Cabinet meeting on the 17th where President Reagan caught up on the administration's domestic policy activities. Additionally, the day of the conference, Reagan spent another 2 hours in a pre-news conference briefing earlier in the afternoon as well as another 20 minutes directly before the conference. In the morning, he spent an hour with his leadership team, including his chief of staff and Secretary of State

George Shultz (Reagan 1983). That brought his overall press conference preparations to approximately seven and a half hours.

Informal question-and-answer sessions represent a stark contrast. In addition to timing the informal sessions to suit a president's interests, they take little presidential or staff time to prepare. When asked what preparations President Trump asked for prior to these sessions, former Press Secretary Sean Spicer said Trump knew what he wanted to do on issues and most often did not need preparation unless there was some breaking news on a topic he planned to address (Sean Spicer. 2019. Interviewed by author via phone). At the same time, he did seek information on what was going on in the media world. Deputy Press Secretary Judd Deere said: "He is briefed on the news of the day. What's driving the topics and what is he going to be asked about. Sometimes that also involves a discussion about the best approach of addressing the question or topic, but other times it is about stuff he has addressed before that just continues to drive the day" (Deere 2019). In that case, the president "already knows how he wants to address it." For press conferences, the preparations were similar, with time allotted on his schedule to go over topics and possible responses.

Interviews are sometimes spontaneous, with little presidential preparation time, as was the case with President Trump, who sometimes spontaneously called in to the presenters on "Fox and Friends," or to Sean Hannity or Jeanine Pirro. On the contrary, when he did 4-minute interviews with local reporters prior to his rallies, he came armed with information he could use about the local candidate he might be speaking for, as well as information on the ups and downs of the local economy. His staff briefed him on Air Force One on the way to the rally and refreshed him on the information right before the interview (Interview 1. 2019. Background interview by author. Washington, DC). The most preparation time was spent on press conferences. Those done with a foreign leader involve general preparation for the meeting. National Security Council staff are in the room for the prep session that Press Secretary Grisham runs with NSC staff, providing information on issues if needed (Interview 1. 2019. Background interview by author. Washington, DC).

In all three of the venues in which President Trump took questions, one area in which Press Office briefers needed to be prepared was on news coverage. "One of the questions he is going to ask is 'what's the coverage like?'" Deere (2019) said: "It may be what the headlines are in print or it may be what's driving topics on Twitter at the moment or what the 'four cable boxes' are obsessed with." The Four Boxes refers to the four cable networks that were simultaneously on the television screens throughout the White House. The quadrants represented Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, and Fox Business.<sup>6</sup> When President Trump met with reporters, he wanted to know beforehand what journalists were watching and thinking about.

Perhaps surprisingly, as interested as Trump was in how he and his issues were portrayed on television, he was an avid reader of print publications (Lippman 2019).

6. There are two additional sets of four boxes with one representing local Washington, DC, channels for Fox, NBC, CBS, ABC, and another referred to as the C-SPAN block, which has C-SPAN as well as business stations Fox Business, CNBC, and Bloomberg. It was the first set of boxes, however, that the president was most interested in hearing about.

He regularly read newspapers and magazines and often sent clips he signed to administration figures featured in the pieces. He kept up with print by reading the New York newspapers—*New York Times*, *New York Post*, *Daily News*, *Wall Street Journal*—as well as the *Washington Post*. Even though Trump called for federal government agencies to cancel their subscriptions to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, he still received articles in both newspapers from his staff (Grynbaum 2019).

While President Trump had more of these South Lawn and other informal question-and-answer sessions than his five predecessors had, they too held prep sessions whenever they met with reporters. Even in the informal sessions, press staff let the president know what questions they might expect. The difference, however, was that in several of these administrations—George H. W. Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush—the press secretaries could let the president know by late morning what questions were on journalists' minds, as they had met with White House beat reporters in the press secretary's office for the morning gaggle. The gaggle was typically a 15-minute session held around 9:00 a.m. during which reporters met in the press secretary's office to ask questions, most of them based on overnight developments (Kumar 2010). By mid-afternoon, the press secretary could also let the president know what questions had come up in the afternoon briefing. There are currently no scheduled press briefings, just ones from time to time with administration officials who appear in the Press Room.

## Presidential Learning: Meeting with Reporters

Presidents continue the communications methods they bring in with them, although they usually adjust the mix of venues as they discover which methods work most effectively during their presidency. At the same time, they also are open to adding new ways of connecting with the public.

Although the Obama White House had a presence on social media, President Trump was the first president to use it in his campaign and in governing as a primary way of enhancing his personal bond with his constituents. He regularly established his narrative for the day through his early morning tweets. Through November 30, 2019, President Trump sent out 12,722 tweets (Trump Twitter Archive n.d). That was 12 a day, 7 days a week for the whole of his presidency, with his 2019 numbers higher still. From the beginning of 2019 to the end of November, he had an average of 20 tweets a day.

As was true during the campaign, Twitter suited Trump's presidential style. When he came into office, he tweeted what was on his mind at the time as well as highlighted his successes and expressed his grievances with critics and allies. Increasingly in his second and third years, he also used Twitter to announce policies, appointments, firings, and resignations, all actions traditionally reported through presidential speeches and statements. Twitter is a forum well suited to airing grievances, calling out opponents, and floating conspiracy theories, all of which were important to fulfilling Trump's personal and political needs. Trump used tweets to level harsh attacks on his opponents in ways previous presidents were chary to do.

President Trump paid special attention to the press in his tweets. He regularly condemned news organizations via tweet for producing what he considered “fake news” (587 references) and, less frequently, labeled the press the “enemy of the people” (37 references). Trump’s recent predecessors have been frustrated by the coverage they received—or have not received—from news organizations, but they have not sought to delegitimize news organizations. They all sought to discover who in their administrations leaked information, but most often they were unsuccessful in unmasking them.

Past patterns would suggest whoever follows President Trump will use Twitter to communicate with the public, though it could be in different ways. While there are clear differences among the six presidents, there are some similarities. In their first year, presidents and their staffs test what communications strategies work for them and in which forums the president is comfortable responding to reporters. During this early period, for example, President Reagan maintained his interest in using television as he had in waging his campaign for the presidency, but he also developed two communications practices that served him well for the following 6 years. First, during his second year, he established his nighttime East Room presidential press conferences as a basic part of his outreach to the public and, second, he created a weekly radio address that he delivered live on Saturdays, most often from Camp David, where he and Nancy Reagan spent weekends while he was in office. Early in their terms, other presidents also developed additional ways of communicating with the public. George H. W. Bush, for example, made use of joint press conferences with visiting foreign leaders. Barack Obama conducted extended interviews on individual administration policy initiatives on multiple platforms. Each of the presidents increased the use of their new platform as their terms progressed.

Once a president develops a successful communications precedent, his successors are likely to follow his path. Ronald Reagan provided an example with his use of his weekly radio addresses. While President George H. W. Bush did not use them until later in his presidency, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama all delivered weekly addresses for television and radio from the early days of their presidencies. President Trump, however, tried weekly addresses in his first year, but abandoned them by the middle of his second year. George H. W. Bush brought in regular use of the joint news conference with foreign leaders and government officials. While earlier presidents sometimes used joint news conferences, especially for presenting the annual budget along with the budget director, and for an occasional session with a foreign leader, Bush made joint sessions a regular feature of presidential interchanges with reporters. He was a president particularly interested in foreign policy, and these joint sessions suited his needs. All of his successors have held more joint sessions than solo ones.

In contrast to his predecessors, during his first two and a half years in office, President Trump narrowed rather than expanded the forums he used and the occasions on which he spoke. Overall, he had fewer remarks where he took no questions from reporters than did all five of his recent predecessors; gave fewer weekly addresses than did all recent presidents except George H. W. Bush; and held fewer press conferences than all of his predecessors, except President Reagan, who did no joint sessions during his presidency. Reagan, though, did have more White House solo sessions (18) than did Trump (3), with 10 of them being

nighttime East Room ones covered by the television networks. Unlike his predecessors at this point, President Trump did not have any nighttime news conferences.

At the same time, President Trump increased his use of two forums: informal question-and-answer sessions and Twitter. In comparing his speeches and his informal question-and-answer sessions during his first calendar year and his second one, he cut down on his remarks at which he did not take reporter questions (335 down to 187), but increased the remarks and exchanges with reporters numbers during that 2-year period, from 120 to 208. He increased his tweets from 2,459 in the first calendar year to 3,568 in the second. In the first 8 months of 2019, he tweeted 4,812 times, for a total of 10,839 (Trump Twitter Archive n.d). When impeachment was accelerating as an issue in the House of Representatives and Trump's grievances grew, the number of his tweets did as well. On December 8, 2019, President Trump had 105 tweets beginning at 12:47 a.m. and ending at 11:59 p.m. (Trump Twitter Archive n.d).

An area in which President Trump held steady on an early practice, in contrast to his predecessors, was his focus on political rallies. Beginning less than a month after his inauguration and going through December 2019, his 77 political rallies form his most extensive and consistent speech category. He held at least one political rally in all but 7 of the 35 months he has been in office. In his up to 90-minute political rallies, whether campaigning for others or for himself, President Trump amplified the messages he tweeted and the points he emphasized in his question-and-answer sessions with reporters. Tweets, question-and-answer sessions, and political rallies form the core of his rhetorical kit bag. While his predecessors did not have Twitter as a publicity resource, they did follow the same principle Trump used in making use of the latest communications technology. Whether it was network or cable television, Facebook or Twitter, all recent presidents have used technology to their advantage.

## The White House Communications Organization

A major difference between President Trump and his five predecessors was the place of staff in the decision-making process. On several occasions, President Trump has commented on his being the decision maker and staff having little role to play. When asked in a South Lawn press scrum about the number of candidates who had come forward for the national security adviser position after John Bolton was fired, President Trump told the reporter he was considering 15 people. He then commented on why there were so many people interested in the job. "It's great because it is a lot of fun to work with Donald Trump. And it's very easy, actually, to work with me. You know why it's easy? Because I make all the decisions. They don't have to work" (Trump 2019d).

President Trump wanted to be seen and heard in his own voice. "He is a communicator and marketer by nature so he would rather say exactly what he has to say rather than have someone else say it," Sean Spicer observed in an interview. "He is the best communicator of what his thoughts ... are as opposed to delegating it to staff" (Sean Spicer. 2019. Interviewed by author via phone). President Trump's reluctance to have others speak for

him has proved to be a defining element in the Trump publicity operation. He did not believe he needed a communications team and gave a low priority to shaping a planning and coordinating operation.

There was little organizational coherence surrounding his communications. It was basically a seat-of-the-pants operation centered on President Trump's being sufficiently flexible to respond to unfolding events. As a businessman, he preferred the system he used when he controlled all elements of his private business, the Trump Organization. That one-man-at-the-top system is what he brought with him to the presidency. It enhanced his control of what was said and done on his behalf, but he paid a price in the lack of continuity and coordination among his leadership staff.

### **Turbulence at the White House Leadership Level**

In order to have a successful communications operation, the first item of business is coordinating policy, politics, and publicity at the leadership level of a White House. The assistants to the president are those who qualify as the leadership-level staff (Kumar 2019). This is a group of approximately 25 people as set in law and in budget, who form the principals group that makes recommendations to a president, including the chief of staff, the national security adviser, the director of legislative affairs, and the White House counsel. Assistants to the president form the staff group who deal with members of Congress, state officials, and outside groups as they speak on behalf of the president. When comparing the numbers of the assistants to the president group who have left office at 32 months in the six presidencies, the Trump White House stands out for the number of people who have come and gone in a relatively short period of time. The attrition rate was significantly higher than the levels set by Trump's predecessors. Only 9 of the 41 hired in the first year were still assistants to the president at 32 months. Combining the 57 first- and second-year assistants hired, only 16 remained at 32 months. With losses, respectively, of 78% of first-year assistants and 72% of those hired during the first 24 months, there was little continuity among top staff. Sixty-seven people cycled through the assistant positions by the end of September 2019 as compared with a previous high of 44 among the Obama assistant-level staff. With such a fast-moving turnstile, coordination was hard to do, with a constantly changing set of principals leaving the White House staff.

Presidents Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama all had separate Press Office and Office of Communications operations that, respectively, focused on daily information operations and planning and strategy (Kumar 2010). The Trump operation was different from the earlier ones in several ways. The basic difference was that President Trump viewed himself as the sole official communicator. As a result, he had a relatively far smaller publicity operation than those preceding him, with the operation having little organizational coherence. There are separate publicity offices, but with no clear way they came together with the remainder of the staff. Stephanie Grisham, who was the communications leader at 32 months, had a unique and overwhelming portfolio as assistant to the president and press secretary and communications director. In addition to serving as head of those two offices, she was responsible for the same two areas for

First Lady Melania Trump.<sup>7</sup> That pattern was at odds with those of the Obama, George W. Bush, Clinton, George H. W. Bush, and Reagan administrations. The previous presidents had most of the same offices, but the positions were consistently filled, and the organizational reporting structure was steady when there were staff changes.

### The Demise of the Press Secretary's Daily Briefing Due to "Fluid Dynamics"

In 2019, there were rarely briefings that staff could use to inform the president. Press Secretary Sarah Sanders held the last traditional daily press briefing in the Trump White House on March 11, 2019, when she came out with the acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Russell "Ross" Vought. Replacing the traditional daily press briefings were unscheduled on-the-fly sessions on the West Wing driveway when reporters stopped White House senior staff going back to their offices after their nearby television appearances, mostly on Fox News. While Kellyanne Conway and Larry Kudlow made occasional appearances on the White House driveway, Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham did not. Instead, she replaced the Press Secretary's Daily Briefing with occasional studio interviews on Fox News that did not require her to run the gauntlet of waiting reporters.

The daily briefings hit turbulent waters with the many occasions on which Trump made statements contradicting what his press secretary had recently said. That led to a situation in which reporters called into question the press secretary's credibility. In a period of several crossed-wires situations between the president and the Press Office, reporters questioned Principal Deputy Press Secretary Raj Shah as to why they should believe what came from his office. Zeke Miller of the Associated Press asked Shah (2018):

First, on Thursday, White House officials were up on the stage and they said the President would sign the omnibus legislation. On Friday morning, he threatened to veto it. Ultimately, he signed it. Ten days ago, Sarah said that H.R. McMaster had the President's confidence and support and wouldn't be leaving. Last Thursday, it was announced that he would be leaving the White House. And about two and a half weeks ago, the President expressed confidence in his attorneys. And then there was a bit of shake-up there last week. So can you talk—speak to the White House's credibility, why should we, in this room, and more importantly, the American people, trust anything that this administration is telling them?

Shah responded that they did what they could, but circumstances could change due to "fluid dynamics."

7. The units they have are the White House Office of Communications, which has no single head but has approximately six people on staff, and the White House Press Office, which has a rolling number of approximately eight to ten people at any one time with the press secretary, three deputies, and four assistant press secretaries. Traditionally headed by a deputy assistant to the president, the Office of Media Affairs has ten people covering out-of-town press, broadcast, and radio staff. The Office of Digital Strategy has another six people working on video production for the president's Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts (Judd Deere. October 8, 2019. Interviewed by author. Washington, DC). When you count Kellyanne Conway, her three assistants, and White House Photographer Shealah Craighead, and perhaps two assistants for her, you have less than three dozen staff in publicity positions. Counting a similar bank of positions in the Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama White House operations, they had, respectively 47, 52, and 69 staff members. The Trump White House has reversed the trend among administrations of an increase in the number of White House staff devoted to publicity (Kumar 2010, 320–322). Staff cutbacks, however, were White House-wide, not just with communications staff.



Well, our job, as a press office and as an administration, is to give you the best information that we have available to us, the most accurate information in a timely fashion. Sometimes the dynamics are fluid in any given situation. You mentioned some personnel matters; facts and circumstances change. We continue to give you guys the best information that we can as quickly as possible.

The situation did not improve. On September 10, 2019, for example, an updated White House schedule released at 10:55 a.m. announced a briefing with Secretary Pompeo, Secretary Mnuchin, and National Security Advisor John Bolton at the Press Briefing Room at 1:30 (White House Office of Press Secretary 2019). At 1:30, Mnuchin and Pompeo came out, but, it turned out, Bolton had been fired the previous evening, Trump said in a tweet (Trump 2019f). The Press Office was unaware of the president's decision.

With a continuing situation in which Press Office staff were caught behind on Trump's latest thinking, the daily briefing quietly dissolved. Occasional briefings still occurred during which administration officials explained a particular policy or situation, such as one that Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin held on cryptocurrency as well as several with officials from Customs and Border Protection on strengthening border security. Additionally, there were conference phone calls held under background rules calling for identifying the source(s) as "an administration official" when administration staff briefed on policy and events. But reporters could not see the briefers to judge their personal responses to questions or, in cases in which there were multiple staff speaking, identify who they were.

### **The Trump Publicity Operation: No Clear Organizational Coherence**

While responses to reporters' queries form the core of presidential communications, a president needs a well-coordinated publicity operation to successfully create, explain, and distribute the content of his messages. By the standards set by his predecessors, the Trump publicity operation had fewer staff members in its core communications offices and fewer staff members to call on as surrogates for the president and to supplement the central messages the president was featuring on a particular day.

The high staff turnover of communications directors in most recent administrations has caused message problems, but in the Trump White House there was an additional problem, as there was little organizational definition of the communications role. All of the senior communications people served at the highest staff level titled assistant to the president, but their titles and roles sharply varied. Prior to the inauguration, the communications post became a free-standing office with a director heading it (Jason Miller was named to but later declined the position, Mike Dubke, Anthony Scaramucci), part of a dual role with the press secretary position (Sean Spicer), as a deputy in the chief of staff's office (Bill Shine), as a director of strategic communications (Hope Hicks), as a senior advisor for strategic communications (Mercedes Schlapp), a separate press secretary position (Sarah Sanders, Sean Spicer), and in 2019 Stephanie Grisham headed both the communications and press offices as well as retained responsibility for Melania Trump's press and communications. An ever-changing communications setup made message coordination particularly difficult in the Trump administration.

The lack of a communications structure responsible for coordination led to significant confusion about the president's commitment to particular issue positions. Often members of Congress were left without a clear signal of where the president stood on an issue, especially when he did not support his staff. After the August 3, 2019, shooting in El Paso, Texas, and the August 4, 2019, shooting in Dayton, Ohio, for example, President Trump publicly stated he was considering strengthening background checks for gun purchasers (Trump 2019e). While he was on a campaign and fundraising trip to California, Attorney General William Barr and Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs Eric Ueland took a draft background check proposal to select members of Congress. Soon the White House was called to react to members of Congress unhappy with the proposal. Principal Deputy Press Secretary Hogan Gidley quickly distanced the White House and the president from ownership of the proposal. "This is not a White House document, and any suggestion to the contrary is completely false," he said (Levine and Everett 2019). Not only did that end the discussion, but the incident left the impression the legislative affairs director and the attorney general did not have the authority to speak for the president.

With a paucity of staff, the White House has proved lax with basic event vetting. In an East Room event associated with the August 2019 shootings in the two cities, President Trump lauded one of those heroes who stood out for his bravery in confronting the El Paso shooter. He singled out Chris Grant, who Trump said, "grabbed—listen to this—soda bottles ... and began hurling them at the gunman" (Trump 2019c). He noted that Grant was "recovering well" and his mother accepted his commendation. In fact, the Secret Service stopped Grant from entering the White House because of outstanding warrants for his arrest. In an article by Alan Goodman and Steve Nelson of the *Washington Examiner*, Sgt. Enrique Carrillo of the El Paso police commented that in addition to the warrants, Grant did not perform any heroic actions. "Nobody bothered to check with us. ... They would have been informed, as I am telling you now, that our detectives reviewed hours of video and his actions did not match his account" (Goodman and Nelson 2019).

Not having a coherent communications operation has also led to lost publicity opportunities. During the government shutdown from December 22, 2018, to January 25, 2019, except for a visit to the troops in Iraq and a couple of domestic trips with one to McAllen, Texas, for a border event and one to New Orleans to speak to farmers, President Trump stayed at the White House without using the opportunity to wage a publicity campaign while members of Congress were back in their districts. Generally, during times when Congress has been on recess for its district work periods and the summer stints out of Washington, presidents and their communications teams waged campaigns to further their policies, as there was little opposition response. Trump made little use of the time to build and manage a publicity campaign on issues other than border security.

## President Trump and His Predecessors Meet the Press

President Trump fit in with some established structural patterns of presidential–press relations. First, all recent presidents have met regularly with reporters. In fact, he

met more regularly with reporters than did his predecessors. Over half of Trump's public appearances were ones in which he took questions from reporters, whereas his five recent predecessors have taken questions in closer to a third of their appearances. Second, he fit in with the presidential pattern of taking press questions when it was convenient and in venues fitting with a particular president's personal style. There was a great deal of flexibility here as presidents chose types of forums that aligned with their presidential goals. Third, they also focused on media and communications practices that brought them to the presidency. Presidents who believed they won by using certain technologies and previously established practices continued those methods. Those ranged from Clinton using radio as he had while governor of Arkansas to Trump using Twitter. Their choices were influenced by available technology both for their campaign and then for their presidencies. Once they came into office, all six of the recent presidents made adjustments both in their balance of speeches and meetings with reporters as well as adding technologies and practices they found suited their goals and fit with their strategies.

At the same time that there are similarities, there are substantially more differences, which are ones basic to a presidency and how the incumbent does business. Looking at the interactions between the six presidents and news organizations, one comes to appreciate how similar President Trump's predecessors were. First, Trump sought to delegitimize news organizations in his tweets and press encounters as well as in his political rallies. Of the six presidents, only Trump referred to the press as "fake news" and "enemy of the people." The others were vexed by press reporting but made few efforts to limit reporting, except in those cases they deemed as threats to national security. Second, Trump's five predecessors sought to move from their electoral base to developing general support among the public as a whole. President Trump did not seek to do that. He focused on communicating with and energizing his base rather than moving to a broader constituency.

The result of his focus was an unprecedented lack of movement in the president's job approval numbers, with no reach beyond his 2016 election supporters. The 6-point variation between his high (42.7%) and low (36.8%) numbers contrasted with the 10 other post-World War II presidents at this point in their presidencies. With their successful and sometimes unsuccessful efforts to win broad support for their initiatives, the difference between their high and low averages was 21 (Gallup 2019; Jones, 2019). The partisan job approval divide was also the greatest for Trump of any of the presidents in the post-World War II period. During October 1–13, 2019, as a part of his concentration on his conservative supporters, his Gallup job approval rating showed the extent of the difference with people who identified themselves as Republicans, giving him 87% approval, while only 5% of Democrats gave him a positive job approval number and self-identified independents recording a 34% positive rating (Gallup News 2019).

Third, President Trump was the only one of the six who had no elective experience. Rather, his background was as an owner of a private family business and as a media personality. His emphasis was on the presentation of his presidency and his leadership, rather than on detailing to the public an articulated agenda as most of his predecessors had. In an October 2019 appearance on "Fox News Sunday," Acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney explained why President Trump wanted to locate an upcoming G7 conference at his Trump National Doral Miami hotel. Mulvaney pointed to Trump's background and

interest in showmanship. “At the end of the day, he still considers himself to be in the hospitality business and he saw an opportunity to take the biggest leaders from around the world and he wanted to put on the absolute best show, the best visit he possibly could,” he said (Mulvaney 2019). With its multiple participants, his meetings with the press have an air of shows with Trump as the man on center stage.

The existence and place of a communications operation in the Trump White House stood in contrast with those of his predecessors in terms of his focus on what was currently on the news platter rather than long-range policy planning through a steady communications operation. Having a settled communications operation is crucial for a president, as the varied responsibilities of a publicity operation include gathering information from around the government, setting up presidential meetings with reporters, developing a president’s addresses and remarks, weekly radio/television addresses, and providing news organizations with administration information. Central parts of presidential communications include regular briefings by White House and administration officials concerning presidential events and policies, statements explaining administration actions, and documents distributed to the public. With a communications operation in flux and a lack of current White House press room briefing sessions with the press secretary and other administration officials to inform reporters and the public, the result was an additional focus and importance placed on President Trump’s words. Having fewer people explaining his views and coordinating with one another than was true in earlier administrations, President Trump served as his own communications director and coordinator. Thus, all of his interchanges with reporters became particularly significant for understanding the Trump presidency.

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## Appendix

The figures here are based on counts of official public events as found in White House press releases and pool reports as well as cross-checked with, first, the *Compilation of Presidential Documents* (earlier

from the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*) published by the National Archives and Records Administration (<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/cpd/2019/08>); second, the entries of public presidential utterances included in the *Public Papers of the President* as found on the American Presidency website, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws>; and third, the presidential schedule and transcripts for each day that I receive from the White House Office of the Press Secretary. My headings are based on ones used by the National Archives, though I aggregate them (Remarks and Exchanges and Exchanges without accompanying remarks) into my own categories and divide press conferences into solo and joint ones.

**PRESIDENT TRUMP'S TWEETS.** I do counts for particular time periods from the tweets archived in the Trump Twitter archive at [trumptwitterarchive.com](http://trumptwitterarchive.com). Click on "See All" to scroll through his tweets. The database is easily searchable.

**PRESS CONFERENCES.** Press conferences are divided into solo and joint sessions. The latter are usually held together with a foreign leader where each answers questions from an equal number of reporters evenly divided between the foreign and White House press corps members present. Both leaders first make statements, usually about what was discussed in their meeting, and then take questions. There are also occasional joint sessions with U.S. government officials. Solo sessions tend to be longer. I have noted how many solo sessions a president has held in the White House compound. I have also noted how many of the solo sessions were prime-time East Room press conferences. President George H. W. Bush is the first president to use joint press conferences on a regular basis, and his successors have continued the trend he began. His predecessors did so only occasionally.

**INFORMAL QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSIONS.** Except for South Lawn departures where all reporters are generally allowed, informal question-and-answer sessions are events at which only a small number of reporters representing the White House press corps—a pool—are allowed in to question the president. This category comprises the National Archives designation of "Exchanges with Reporters" at which the president may or may not make remarks at the same time. If the president has a speech that is designated by the National Archives as "Remarks and Exchange with Reporters," it is counted twice in my tabulations. A president's remarks are counted separately in the "Addresses and Remarks" category while the exchanges with reporters are also counted in the "Short Question-and-Answer Sessions."

**INTERVIEWS.** Unlike the other categories, interviews are only occasionally publicly released. They are regarded as the property of the news organization and, with some exceptions, the individual organizations control whether and when transcripts are released. For the Obama, George W. Bush, and Clinton administrations, my figures represent internal counts maintained by White House staff as well as additional interviews I found that may not have been listed on the White House file. For recent presidents, I combed online sources for interviews, used information from pool reports issued by reporters covering the president, references in reporters' stories to their discussions with the president, and information I have obtained from reporters about their direct talks with the president either by phone or in person. I include the off-the-record luncheons, dinners, and meetings presidents sometimes have with reporters because inevitably information journalists have acquired in those sessions is shared within their news organizations and sometimes makes its way into print.

For the interview numbers for George H. W. Bush and Reagan, I have used the White House Daily Diary, which is compiled from official internal records by the diarist, an employee of the National Archives and Records Administration, and the first year and a half of the Daily Diary for George H. W. Bush is available online through the Miller Center at the University of Virginia. Their diary information only goes through October 1990. The full White House Daily Diary for George H. W. Bush is available at the George H. W. Bush Library in College Station, Texas. That is the diary I used. The President's Daily Diary for Reagan is available at the Reagan Library at <https://reaganlibrary.gov/digital-library/daily-diary>. His personal diary can be purchased online. For Reagan and George H. W. Bush, the President's Daily Diary offers a more complete picture of the president's interactions with those associated with news organizations because the diaries capture the phone calls they place and those they receive. Even when they are brief, I include these phone contacts in my counts because the information exchanged between the president and the journalist will be used in some way by them and/or their news organizations in their articles or planning of their news cov-

erage. The White House Daily Diary for George W. Bush and Clinton have not yet been made public, so that excellent source is not yet available. When the diaries are available, I will go back through my lists and update with phone calls with reporters and other interviews that were not included in their internal lists. **SPEECHES.** Speeches to joint sessions of Congress, the State of the Union Address, inaugural addresses, and addresses to the nation form my category "Addresses to the Nation." The "Weekly Addresses" category includes formal radio addresses in the Reagan, George W. Bush, and Clinton administrations as well as the radio addresses in the Obama administration that are titled "Weekly Address" presented on several platforms, including YouTube and television as well as radio. Other radio addresses are included in the "Radio Addresses" category as well, such as those given by George H. W. Bush, who did not regularly do weekly radio addresses as did the other presidents. President Reagan was the first president to adopt and then maintain a practice of delivering weekly radio addresses. Except for George H. W. Bush, all of his successors have followed his practice from the early days of their administrations. Any radio addresses by any of the five presidents were put into the "Radio Addresses" category. All other remarks and speeches publicly given by the president form my "Addresses and Remarks" subcategory.

**WATCHING PRESIDENT TRUMP'S INTERCHANGES WITH REPORTERS ON FACTBA.**

**SE.** You can watch most of President Trump's on-the-record video interchanges with the press as well as speeches at [Factba.se](http://Factba.se). Click on Donald Trump and then in the dropdown menu, choose Topics and click on "Browse Speeches and Interviews."