



In 1918, Wilson was on the minds of 21,000 army officers and enlisted men at Camp Sherman, Ohio.

pioneered the academic study of public administration in the United States, Wilson argued in an 1887 article for adoption of the administrative methods of European monarchies. In *The State* (1889), he warned that industrialization was allowing “the rich and the strong to combine against the poor and the weak.” A stronger state, he believed, would be a less dangerous remedy for America’s problems than more direct popular rule. He believed in the people, “in their *honesty* and *sincerity* and *sagacity*,” Wilson stated in 1891, “but I do not believe in them *as my governors*.” He feared “tyranny of the majority [more] than dictatorship,” Clements says.

Yet while professing to believe that the government regulators of labor and industry would be apolitical, Wilson knew better, Clements says. Administrators, Wilson admitted in 1891, did not merely execute public law,

they, in effect, made it—and sometimes acted in their own selfish interests. “He was not entirely comfortable with his own proposals,” Clements writes.

That may have been why Wilson then turned his thoughts to a different cure: enlarging presidential power, an expansion already begun with the Spanish-American War (1898). By 1908, he said he was convinced that the Constitution was “thoroughly workable” and that the president had become “the unifying force in our complex system, the leader both of his party and the nation.” Wilson’s experience as governor of New Jersey (1911–12) further dampened his enthusiasm for administrative reform when the state legislature—realizing it would be surrendering power to his administrators—refused to go along with his ambitious proposals.

By the time he became president, in 1913, Wilson was more convinced than ever of the importance of vigorous presidential leadership. Yet, Clements notes, virtually all the major Wilsonian reforms, such as creation of the Federal Trade Commission, relied on professional administrators, with wide discretion, for their implementation. “As Wilson had pointed out many years before, the more government was asked to do, the more it must depend on an active administration.”

This proved even truer after America’s entry into World War I in 1917, when the War Industries Board and other special agencies were set up. The danger of an expanded state now seemed much more serious to Wilson than it had when he was an academic. He feared that the government would not be “returned to the people” when the war ended: “Big Business will be in the saddle.” In part to prevent that, he abolished the wartime agencies when the conflict ended, even though, Clements says, he favored “many of the things [the agencies] wanted to do in the postwar world.”

## Mob Rule?

“The Rising Hegemony of Mass Opinion” by Paul J. Quirk and Joseph Hinchliffe, in *Journal of Policy History* (1998, No. 1), 221 N. Grand Blvd., Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Mo. 63103.

The Founding Fathers were given to dark worries about an “excess of democracy”—and now their worst fear has been realized. Mass public opinion has become “the dominant force in American politics,” claim Quirk and Hinchliffe, a political scientist and a graduate student, respectively, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Only occasionally in American history did the mass public influence the making of national policy to the extent it does today, Quirk and Hinchliffe assert. Usually, “elites” of one sort or another were in charge, even if responding at times to popular opinion. The big problem was seen as the undue influence of organized interest

groups, business, and the wealthy.

Now, however, political scientists fret about the recent rise of a “plebiscitary presidency,” in which the chief executive leads largely by making direct appeals to the public and needs immediate public approval to sustain his influence. Other political scientists worry that Congress, now more open and responsive than ever, can no longer legislate effectively.

Since the 1960s, Quirk and Hinchliffe argue, American political leaders have increasingly pandered to the “uninformed prejudices of the mass public” and slighted the counsel of “disinterested” policy experts. The authors’ long list of examples includes the failure to increase taxes or cut middle-class entitlement programs in order to reduce the large budget deficits of the 1980s and ’90s, and Washington’s high-profile but futile “war” against illegal drug traffic, waged despite evidence that efforts to prevent and treat drug abuse would be more effective.

In the 1950s, the authors explain, most citizens had little awareness of issues or ideologies, and voted largely on the basis of candidates’ personal qualities or party labels. By the late 1960s and early ’70s, however, voters

had become more educated, more ideological, and more issue oriented. Citizens with well-defined liberal or conservative views in 1973 made up 44 percent of the populace, compared with only 25 percent in 1956. But the new voters were not necessarily better informed, the authors observe. “The proportion of people who can, for example, give the name of the vice president or identify the purpose of a major domestic program has hardly changed” from what it was 50 years ago. Today’s voters may know where candidates stand on a particular issue, but they still often don’t understand the issue itself.

Politicians have become more solicitous of voters’ policy prejudices than ever, using polls to determine what those views are, the authors say. “Issue-oriented appeals, although often negative and almost always highly superficial, have become the principal currency of campaign politics.”

One plus to public opinion’s rising importance, the authors note, is that narrow special interests have lost clout. But the “downside,” they warn, is that policymaking is now “more vulnerable to popular leaders advancing dubious claims of entitlement, offering emotional release, or promoting fantasy.”

## FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

### *Declaring War*

“The War Powers Resolution: Time to Say Goodbye” by Louis Fisher and David Gray Adler, in *Political Science Quarterly* (Spring 1998), 475 Riverside Dr., Ste. 1274, New York, N.Y. 10115–1274.

Twenty-five years ago, as the conflict in Vietnam dragged on, Congress moved to reassert its constitutional authority to declare war with the War Powers Resolution. Enacted on November 7, 1973, over President Richard M. Nixon’s veto, it was ill-conceived from the start, contend Fisher, author of *Presidential War Power* (1995), and Adler, a political scientist at Idaho State University. Instead of restricting the chief executive’s power, it broadened his legal authority, giving him “unbridled discretion to go to war as he deems necessary against anyone, anytime, anywhere, for at least 90 days.”

Senator Thomas Eagleton (D.-Mo.), one of the resolution’s original sponsors, was so appalled by the watered-down version that emerged from a House-Senate conference that he voted against it. The resolution

“has been horribly bastardized to the point of being a menace,” he warned. The original Senate bill had allowed the president to initiate the use of military force only to repel or retaliate against an armed attack, or to rescue endangered Americans abroad. It required him to end the military action after 30 days if he did not have specific congressional authorization. The emasculated War Powers Resolution merely requires the president “in every possible instance” to consult with Congress before putting U.S. troops into “hostile” situations, and lets the deployment go on for up to 90 days.

Ever since, Fisher and Adler say, presidents have routinely taken unilateral military action, usually treating “consultation” as meaning “notification after the fact.” President Ronald Reagan, without seeking