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LIFE AFTER POLITICAL DEATH: FORMER LEADERS IN WESTERN DEMOCRACIES

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Whether or not the famous claim that all political lives end in failure is true or needs qualification, the question of what comes next after high political and governmental office in contemporary Western representative democracies – whether there is life, and what sort of life, after political death – is worth asking and investigating. Political exits can be brutal and ‘the adaptation is tough from life at the top’ (Jack, 2007). Finding a new role is not easy for former leaders, something that helps to explain why, to take the example of just one country, ‘the United States has had many great presidents, but few great ex-presidents’ (Chambers, 1998, 405). There is no established role or official job-description, and the experience of predecessors in the role can be of mixed or ambiguous value as precedents, meaning that the role of former leader has been well described as ‘impossibly awkward’ (Richards, 2011). John Keane (2009) has written that ‘the subject of ex-office holders is under-theorised, under-researched, under-appreciated and – in many cases – under-regulated.’ It is a field of research, he adds, that is ‘new, undeveloped and arguably of growing importance’.

This article discusses the ways in which the phenomenon of the former leader has been approached and understood, highlighting the views of ‘practitioners’ (including some former leaders themselves) on the subject and reviewing the utility of academic typologies developed in this area. It goes on to

analyse the political afterlives of former leaders, including their relations with their successors and their political parties; then it notes the growing international opportunities available to former leaders in recent decades; discusses their money-making and business activities; and flags up the importance of health and age factors. The argument is made that the activities and roles of former leaders have to be understood in terms of a combination of individual-level choices and contextual factors relating to political and party circumstances, institutional structures, and changes in the broader environment of modern politics.

The role of former leaders is a neglected issue in the study of political leadership in representative democracies. Empirically, much more is known about the backgrounds, recruitment patterns and routes into high office of political and governmental leaders than about their 'exits' and what they do after leaving office. Normatively, the political theorists of representative democracy are silent on this subject, though Alexander Hamilton, writing in *The Federalist Papers* in 1788, conjured up a memorable image of former presidents 'wandering about the people like discontented ghosts . . . sighing for a place which they were destined never more to possess' (Hamilton, Madison and Jay, 1971, 370-371).

It is important to study former political and governmental leaders for three reasons. First, because although they may no longer be, in a sense, capital 'L' leaders, they still have the potential to – and may in practice – exercise small 'l' leadership in a variety of ways and forums (in government, politics, business and civil society, domestically and internationally). Second, because the activities of former leaders have a bearing on contentious issues about the relationship between government and politics on the one hand and private business and

financial interests on the other hand, including the regulation of potential conflicts of interest and 'revolving doors' issues, post-office restrictions on employment and/or lobbying, and so on. And third (something best appreciated historically and comparatively), because accepting the normality of leadership-retirement is an important aspect of democratic consolidation. In authoritarian regimes it can be dangerous to leave office, and the fate of many ousted former leaders underlines the point. But in established democracies leaders are permitted a more-or-less dignified 'exit' and it is rare for their opponents or the courts to 'come after' them with criminal charges (recent exceptions include Andreotti and Craxi – who fled into exile – in Italy, and Juppé and Chirac in France).

Democracy, as Lisa Anderson (2010, 65) has noted, 'depends on the willingness of its most faithful servants to abandon their roles, and this creates significant dilemmas for both their polities and themselves.' The idea that former leaders can be simply 'dump[ed] . . . on the trash heap of politics' (Schenker, 1982, 546) is too simplistic – their legacies, their relations with their successors, and in many cases their continuing (but redefined) political presence and interventions provide both problems and opportunities for modern states. 'I left office, but I did not leave politics', as one ex-US president said (Norton Smith and Walch, 1990, 175). Andrew Jack (2007) has noted that 'growing numbers of successful politicians are leaving office younger, more energetic, keen to do more in the future . . . and to continue to make a difference.'

So, what comes next for a former leader in a democracy – a prime minister or a president obliged to leave office because they have lost an election, or come to the end of their constitutionally-fixed term, or fallen ill, or lost the

backing of their party, or (more rarely) one who chooses to call it a day and voluntarily quits? There is in fact no fixed or predetermined role – they have to work it out for themselves, and what they do depends very much on personal choices and on circumstances. In the era of the career politician, the presidentialization of leadership and the political celebrity, and with intensified and personalized media coverage of politics and leaders, it has probably become more difficult for former leaders to quietly retire and fade from the scene – even if they want to, and many do not.

‘Some politicians, when you deprive them of the heroin rush of office, curl up and die’, says Jonathan Powell, a former aide to Tony Blair. ‘Others flourish’ (Powell, 2010, 305). Deprivation of power, status, public attention and high-octane political activity – combined with general ageing effects – can make letting go and retirement difficult, even traumatic. Former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans coined the term ‘relevance deprivation syndrome’, referring to the withdrawal symptoms suffered as a former leader came to terms with no longer being ‘in the loop’ and involved with decision-making. Jimmy Carter talked of ‘an altogether new, unwanted, and potentially empty life’ as he faced up to no longer being president (Brinkley, 1998, 44). ‘Two hours ago I could have said five words and been quoted in every capital of the world’, said Harry Truman shortly after leaving office. ‘Now, I could talk for two hours and nobody would give a damn’ (De Vries, 2003, 711).

On one view, former leaders are troublesome nuisances. They can only get in the way and complicate things for their successors. President Taft, in the USA in 1912, recommended the administration of a lethal ‘dose of chloroform or . . . the fruits of the lotos tree’ to protect the country from the dangers of a come

back and to relieve an ex-president 'from the burden of thinking how he is to support himself and his family, fix his place in history, and enable the country to pass on to new men and new measures' (Norton Smith and Walch, 1990, xi). Another former president, Grover Cleveland, joked that the suggestion to 'take them [ex-presidents] out and shoot them' was worthy of attention (Hecht, 1976, 310).

The nineteenth-century view was that the US president was only the 'first citizen' of the nation and, on leaving office, should 'return to his people for a dignified repose with no pension, no trappings of office, and no rewards from his term except the satisfaction of a duty performed.' A former president, it was said, 'soon sinks into the crowd or avoids neglect by retirement' (Norton Smith and Walch, 1990, 11). 'Let him become a citizen again', was how Rutherford B. Hayes (president 1877-1881) saw the role of a former occupant of the White House (Fishel, 1990). But the status of former presidents changed in the twentieth century, and the mass media and the mechanisms of celebrity kept them in the spotlight and helped to make them marketable assets (Norton Smith and Walch, 1990, 12). After Harry Truman left the White House in 1953 his view was that 'after you've served as President of the United States, you can never again expect to be a plain, ordinary citizen' (Norton Smith and Walch, 1990, 62). With staff, office allowances and travel budgets, and with their activities funded from a mixture of official and private sources, the ex-presidency, it is said, has become institutionalised – a form of public office (Chambers, 1979). More recently, globalization is argued to have made former presidents world-famous 'celebrity statesmen' and 'permanent features of the current-affairs landscape' (Bernado and Weiss, 2009, 5).

There are relatively few academic or historical studies of 'exs-' in representative democracies other than the USA. In his survey of *World Leaders*, published in 1980, Jean Blondel identified three general types of career pattern: the 'linear' careers (those leaders who move steadily to the top and stay there until 'they retire from active life'); the 'bell-shaped' careers ('in which the period of leadership is both preceded and succeeded by a different career'); and the 'rotating' leaders (politicians who remain politically active after leaving leadership positions, some becoming ministers and some even returning to the topmost office) (Blondel, 1980, 195-96). He cited Italy and the French Fourth Republic as providing examples of the latter sort of political musical chairs, providing a political afterlife and opportunities for reinvention for former leaders. About half of the leaders he studied did not appear to have any significant career in politics after having ceased to be chief executives. His data on 860 world leaders in the postwar period indicated that 37 per cent went 'back to [their] old career', 19 per cent returned to leadership positions (enjoying further terms of office at the head of government), and 8 per cent became ministers again in subsequent governments (if not 'at the top', they took up posts 'near the top' – he cited at least 32 ex-prime ministers serving in ministerial positions in subsequent governments in what he called the 'Atlantic area') (Blondel, 1980, 207, 210-13).

Blondel's typology of leaders' careers remains useful today but only in general terms. Compared to 40 years ago or longer, there are probably fewer examples of 'linear careers', largely because of the trend towards relatively younger (or at least middle-aged rather than elderly) leaders. Blondel's 'rotating' leaders, who 'come and go' and take up other ministerial positions in the interim,

are still found in a number of political systems with multi-party and coalition politics but are rare in Westminster-type systems. His category of 'bell-shaped' careers nowadays needs to be merged with his notion of a 'golden exile' (Blondel, 1980, 212), with a move to a different career after high national government office often taking the form of a position in an international organization, including the European and EU level, or on corporate boards.

In Britain, there have been historically more examples of Blondel's 'rotating' careers than might have been supposed: from the eighteenth century onwards, fourteen British prime ministers 'came back' and served in later administrations and under other prime ministers, that is over a quarter of former prime ministers. Others had a continuing political role and influence while not holding government office (in Opposition or in their parties). But, as a historical generalisation, most departing British prime ministers would fit Blondel's 'linear' career model – more or less quietly retiring or fading from front-line politics, either immediately or fairly soon after leaving office (Theakston, 2010).

As Southall and Melber (2006, 6) note, 'there is no body of political science doctrine that specifically defines the role of former heads of state and government; nor is there much laid out in legislative or constitutional frameworks.' France is an exception to the extent that article 56 of the Fifth Republic's constitution accords former presidents the right to sit as lifetime members on the Constitutional Council (which has important legal and advisory functions), but this is not compatible with holding a parliamentary seat or continued active partisanship. The British House of Lords – to which most but not all former prime ministers have gone – also provides a role and a platform

for ex-prime ministers to continue a sort of part-time involvement with politics. But there has never been an official role or formal status for former US presidents (Brinkley, 1998, 44). Former presidents have to make their own choices and decisions about their role and contributions, Gerald Ford insisted. 'Nothing in the constitution addresses the issue; there are no laws prescribing a set role for former presidents . . . history offers little in the way of tradition.' There is, said Ford, 'just very little in the way of guidance' (Norton Smith and Walch, 1990, 172).

The experience of former leaders in France has some distinctive features, including the way in which because a strong local or regional political base is important for French politicians, after leaving high national office they may have the compensation of power and patronage in their local, city or regional fiefdom, in some cases occupying powerful mayoral or regional positions for long periods. Even a former president – Giscard D'Estaing – has served as a regional council president (in the Auvergne) after leaving the Elysée. Giscard nursed hopes of a comeback after losing the presidency but went on instead to have a long 'second act' in political life, including service as a deputy in the National Assembly, as an MEP and as leader of the convention drafting the ill-fated EU constitution. For their part many former Fifth Republic prime ministers have looked to win the presidency (becoming formal candidates or else campaigning and manoeuvring within their parties in an attempt to be put on the slate), but only two have done so (Pompidou and Chirac). Others, however, have reappeared as ministers in subsequent governments under successor prime ministers and/or different presidents (Debré, Fabius, Juppé) or have stayed in politics as deputies or senators – sometimes for a long time.

Belenky (1999) identified six recurrent models or categories of ex-presidents in the USA: the *still ambitious* (who long for a comeback); *exhausted volcanoes* (who quietly retire); *political dabblers* (who give advice, campaign and fund-raise for their party); *first citizens* (who engage in dignified and non-partisan public service); *embracers of a cause* (usually a big humanitarian and/or global 'cause'); and *seekers after vindication* (those aiming to reverse history's likely negative verdict on them). These categories are not watertight and individuals may at different times seem to fit under a number of these headings. Personality, health factors, circumstances and changes in the nation's political landscape all affected the roles played by ex-presidents. Belenky predicted that most future ex-presidents would be likely to aim to play a role as *first citizens* and/or to emulate the Carter model by taking up 'worthy causes'.

Belenky's models have only limited value as a general typology, however. In many representative democracies around the world there have been examples of 'still ambitious' former leaders, but the circumstances of their exits, party dynamics and the political structures they face influence whether and in what ways and capacities they are able to return to power. The 'exhausted volcano' category seems to have limited modern applicability. Age and health factors mean some former leaders do leave the scene fairly quickly (such as Reagan in the US or Wilson in Britain). But with politicians tending to get to the top earlier and living longer, they are more likely to see and experience their 'afterlives' as years of activity and opportunity rather than as bringing down the shutters (Rice-Oxley 2007). Belenky's categories of 'political dabblers', making occasional party and political interventions (often experiencing frustration in the process), and 'first citizens', pursuing 'worthy endeavors', capture some but not all of the

activities of a great number of former leaders. But her typology does not include the money-making and business activities that increasingly loom large in the experiences of many former leaders world-wide. And under her 'embracers of a cause' label (Belenky, 1999, 158), more account needs to be taken of the way in which that activity and ambition is now often channeled and institutionalized in the form of eponymous foundations or centres.

In her survey of the field, Lisa Anderson (2010) sees former leaders as typically pursuing one of four paths: genuine retirement; work in the private/business sector; a return to public office (in national politics, or in international or regional organizations); or humanitarian action (through foundations or in the not-for-profit or non-governmental sectors). Some former leaders straddle these categories – Tony Blair, for example, being active in all of the last three ways in his post-Number 10 life.

While accepting that former presidents' personal ambitions and agendas - together with factors such as their personal persuasive abilities and the greater longevity of recent ex-presidents – are crucial in shaping their role, Schaller and Williams (2003) argue that the opportunities to exercise post presidential power and to influence politics and policy are now greater than ever and may be expanding. The modern political environment, they contend, is more conducive to post presidential influence and persuasion than ever, providing increased opportunities for: involvement in electioneering, fund-raising and campaigning; staffing successors' administrations; taking up diplomatic roles (sometimes with the incumbent's approval, at other times as 'solo freelancers'); 'ex-bully pulpit' advocacy to speak out on causes; and advising (sometimes annoying) incumbent presidents. If they choose their issues and opportunities wisely, say Schaller and

Williams (2003, p.199), former US presidents can remain relevant and have 'grown increasingly important in public issues, partisan politics, and public affairs generally.' Updegrave (2006, xv-xvi) also argued that former presidents are 'doing more' and were carving out 'growing importance and influence . . . in the US and abroad in an increasingly small world.' Globalization was increasing their opportunities to make a mark (Updegrave, 2006, xviii). 'When you leave the presidency', as Bill Clinton said, 'you lose your power but not your influence' (Skidmore, 2004, 3).

Political afterlives

Success or failure in office as a president or prime minister does not predict what may come afterwards. Some former leaders enhance their reputations through their post-office activities, but others have damaged their reputations. Some presidents or prime ministers with short and unsuccessful stints in office have gone on to have lengthy and successful 'second acts'. Historically, some of the greatest ex-US presidents were failures in the White House – John Quincy Adams, Taft, Hoover and Carter (Chambers, 1998, 405). One of Britain's least successful prime ministers (Balfour) was, as a minister under several of his successors, one of her most successful and influential former prime ministers (Theakston, 2010, 110).

The relationship between tenure in office and the nature and significance of the 'afterlife' is not, however, straightforward. The notion that long tenure at the top of government might be thought (in part) to reflect exceptional skills, talents and abilities that could help build a successful post-government 'career' of one sort or another might be borne out by the examples of world leaders such

as Tony Blair, Ruud Lubbers or Bob Hawke. But other long-serving government leaders – such as Helmut Kohl, Robert Menzies or Margaret Thatcher – had more problematic or frustrating retirement experiences. Equally, just because some government leaders with relatively short tenures as heads of government – such as Alec Douglas-Home in Britain, Joe Clark in Canada, or Shimon Peres in Israel – enjoyed success and influence in other political, governmental and public roles cannot disguise the fact that others who also did not last long in high office did not have such constructive, influential or satisfying ‘second acts’.

Returning to ministerial office after having been prime minister, to serve in the government of a successor in the topmost job, remains unusual in ‘Westminster-type’ single-party systems, with very few cases recorded in Britain, Canada and Australia in recent decades. The most successful prime-ministerial ‘retreads’ – Alec Douglas-Home and Joe Clark - had short tenures as prime minister, perhaps making it easier for them to accept a change in political and governmental seniority. In other states, where the example of the ex-PM returning as a minister has been more common (such as Italy, Belgium, Israel), multi-party coalitions have been the norm. In France, the way in which the prime-ministership is not seen as the top of the political tree perhaps opens the way for some ex-PMs to have a continuing ministerial career.

Relations between former leaders and their successors are affected by whether they are of the same or different parties, by factional politics within parties, and by the circumstances in which one leader replaces another. The more harmonious the succession process, and the more influence the former leader had on the selection of the successor, the more likely is a constructive and positive relationship, but even then the new leader must always take care to

establish their own identity and to avoid the impression of having a 'back-seat driver' around (Bynander and 't Hart, 2006, 716). When the former leader pretty quickly departs from the domestic political stage, the transition can be relatively unproblematic. In other cases, former leaders may speak out and make their views heard on particular issues where they feel strongly about the issues or about their legacy and record, but their ability to shape and influence events and party or government policy may be very limited or even non-existent in practice. Whether supporting or criticizing their successors, former leaders may in many cases not actually count for much. Examples of more difficult successions, of bitter relations with successors, and of a range of negative, obstructive or even 'saboteur' behaviour by former leaders can be found in many states: such as Heath and Thatcher in Britain; Diefenbaker, Trudeau and Mulroney in Canada; Gorton and Fraser in Australia; Adenauer in Germany; Tindemans in Belgium; the Den Uyl and Van Agt feud in the Netherlands; Ben-Gurion in Israel. Explanatory factors here include: leaders being overthrown and forced out against their will; long-serving leaders coming to believe in the myth of their own indispensability; and major shifts in ideological direction by successors or challenges to key policies. Modern media amplification and exaggeration of political and personal tensions may add to the problems. But the many former leaders who choose or are able not to become disruptive forces for instability in their domestic politics, and who stay offstage or politically fairly quiet, outnumber these cases. The choices that former leaders themselves make are thus a big part of the equation.

International activities

In recent decades growing numbers of former leaders have discovered and taken advantage of increased opportunities for new roles outside of the sphere of domestic politics in their own countries, in international and regional-level organizations (themselves proliferating) or in ad hoc, informal or short-term international roles dealing with particular issues or crises (Keane, 2009, 293-5; Anderson, 2010, 71-2). With increased globalization this phenomenon seems to have grown in importance from the 1980s onwards, prompting Keane (2009, 294) to muse about the trend as 'a new form of sinecure system for former leading office holders.' Rejected or forced out at home, some former government leaders in European states find another berth in Brussels - becoming active in politics at the EU level in appointed or elected positions. However, political bargaining and deal-making at the EU level over senior appointments may mean that a particular leader or former leader's plans or hopes are stymied because of their party background or because of the state they are from (the smaller EU states tend to be sensitive to key jobs being claimed by politicians from the bigger countries).

As with Tony Blair's Middle East envoy role, global diplomacy has also offered opportunities for some former leaders. Bill Clinton claimed his post-presidential 'dream job' was secretary-general of the United Nations, though he admitted it was not a realistic prospect (Updegrave, 2006, 246). Jimmy Carter also once said he would have taken that job if offered it (Brinkley, 1998, 474). But former leaders from smaller states have been able to find UN niches. Former Danish prime minister Poul Hartling was the UN high commissioner for refugees 1978-85, with former Dutch PM Ruud Lubbers later holding that post 2001-05.

Gough Whitlam served for three years as Australian ambassador to UNESCO in the 1980s. Former Canadian premier Joe Clark served as the UN secretary-general's special representative for Cyprus in 1993-96. Gro Harlem Brundtland, former prime minister of Norway, ran the World Health Organisation 1998-2003 and is now the UN secretary-general's special envoy on climate change. In retirement former Australian PM Malcolm Fraser was active in international efforts to end apartheid and secure reform in South Africa, chairing various UN and Commonwealth 'eminent persons' panels and high-level groups.

Collective organizations of former world leaders provide another possible avenue and channel of influence. Ex-US President Gerald Ford used to host annual meetings of the 'Vail Group', which included ex-Chancellor of Germany Helmut Schmidt, ex-British PM James Callaghan and ex-French President Giscard D'Estaing, to discuss international issues. In 1983 Schmidt helped to found the InterAction Council with over 30 former heads of state and heads of government. The Club of Madrid, founded in 2001, has an even larger membership of former leaders and is focused particularly on promoting democracy; in addition to its public programme of meetings, conferences and reports it offers confidential 'peer-to-peer advice and counselling to current leaders struggling to build or consolidate democracy'. In 2007 another group called 'The Elders' was formed, aiming to address world problems, and including Mandela, ex-UN secretary general Kofi Anan, Jimmy Carter and ex-Irish president Mary Robinson among its members. Such initiatives do mobilize the skills and experience of former leaders and have a certain moral force, but sceptics argue this model cannot work for all policy problems; that politicians in government office clearly have more ability, power and resources to make things happen; and that calling attention to a

problem is not the same as solving it. Furthermore, it has to be acknowledged that not all former leaders will have the global status or profile to qualify them for such 'all-star teams' of celebrity statesmen.

Money-making

Former presidents, Harry Truman (1961, 28) once argued, should not 'use their special experience for private and personal gain' or permit themselves to be 'used by any private interests' because of the office they had held. Many of today's former leaders, in contrast, seem only too willing to 'cash in' on their status as an ex-prime minister or ex-president, in addition to enjoying substantial official support and retirement 'perks'. John Keane (2009, 29) indeed has referred to 'gold-digging former office holders', though individual approaches to money-making have varied, as have needs and opportunities. Moving into the private sector to make money is not an entirely new phenomenon, as the example from the early 1900s of former US president Grover Cleveland, who became 'a well-paid front man for the insurance industry' (Skidmore 2004, 91), attests. But there have been more examples of former leaders' involvement with business and financial corporations from the 1970s and 1980s onwards, whereas before then few seemed preoccupied with making lots of money after they had left office. In the USA, Ford, Reagan and Clinton fit this picture; in the UK, Heath, Thatcher, Major and Blair; in Australia, Hawke; in Canada, Mulroney; in Germany, Schroeder.

Though some commentators are sceptical about what former top politicians can bring to the boardroom, their contacts, connections, name-recognition, presentational and networking skills, and ability to open doors with

foreign governments, are valuable assets, as many ex-leaders around the world have found. But the commercialization of the ex-presidency or ex-premiership raises issues about transparency, disclosure, regulation, and the boundaries of public and private behaviour (Bernado and Weiss, 2009, 290-91), as well as about how far expectations of post-office rewards might affect leaders' behaviour in office. The money-making and business activities of Mulroney, Hawke, Schroeder and Blair after they had left office generated controversy. To a large degree, much is left up to individual former leaders when it comes to assessing issues of propriety, probity and ethics (Anderson, 2010, 68, 70). In some states there are no codes of conduct or regulatory barriers, and where they do exist (as in the UK, Canada and Australia) they are typically fairly lax, imposing limited 'quarantine' periods and restrictions on the take-up of business appointments and on lobbying activities. The most important limitations are perhaps self-imposed ones, and the real sanctions and constraints are offered by potential media disclosures and reputational damage.

Age and health factors

Longevity and good health are essential (necessary but not sufficient) ingredients for a successful post-presidency or post-premiership. Modern healthcare and lifestyles mean that former leaders are tending to live longer than in the past. In many cases they are also entering and then leaving office at a younger age than their predecessors of earlier eras. The extra years they have on their hands provide greater opportunities for taking up new activities and roles after they leave office. What have been called 'restless political retirees' and 'reluctant political pensioners with continued ambitions' (Jack, 2007) cannot be

expected to just 'retire' more or less gracefully and then quietly disappear from the scene. Rather than being 'exhausted volcanoes', many former leaders still have (or soon regain, after the initial shock of losing office) considerable drive and a compulsion to succeed.

The average age at which postwar British prime ministers left that office was 63; excluding the assassinated John F. Kennedy, postwar US presidents left the White House at an average age of 64; German chancellors left office at an average age of 68; French Fifth Republic prime ministers at 56, and French presidents at average age 70. There are large variations in the figures. In all countries former leaders who leave office in their forties or just under - such as Laurent Fabius (39), Joe Clark (40), Kim Cambell (46) - are in a different position from those stepping down or forced out in their late-sixties, seventies or older - such as Adenauer (87), Churchill (80), de Gaulle (79), Reagan (78), Chirac (75), Mackenzie King (74), Menzies (72), Eisenhower (70), George H. W. Bush (69) or Kohl (68). While constraining health problems may intervene with this group, some older ex-leaders stay remarkably vigorous and active, such as George H.W. Bush, who went skydiving to celebrate his 85th birthday, and others often continue to follow politics closely even if their interventions are or become few and spasmodic.

The forty-something ex-prime minister has plenty of time in which to try to rebuild a political or public position, reinvent themselves, or to start a wholly new career in a different field. Those who are in their fifties are usually still active and energetic too. Bill Clinton (54) was the youngest former US president since Theodore Roosevelt, who became an ex-president at age 50 in 1909. Giscard D'Estaing lost the French presidency at 55 - a full two decades younger

than De Gaulle, Mitterrand and Chirac when they left the Elysée. As Fallows (2003) says: 'the younger [former leaders] are, the more opportunities they are likely to seize. They have more energy. They need more money for the years ahead. They often have more to prove. They have more time in which to carry out their plans.'

Conclusion

The activities and roles of former leaders have to be analysed on a number of levels. Belenky (1999) places much emphasis on ex-presidents' personal ambitions and agendas and on their individual characters; while not ignoring circumstances, her typology stresses 'individual capacity, disposition and ambition' (Schaller and Williams, 2003, 189). Personal, individual choices do certainly matter – Thatcher or Carter, for instance, could have chosen to go in a different direction, with probably very different consequences for them and others. There is no fixed or predetermined role for former leaders, but individual agency is only part of the picture.

Schaller and Williams (2003, 190) emphasise contextual factors giving more scope to former leaders in recent decades to exercise influence over politics, policy and public affairs after leaving office. 'The political environment today is more conducive to postpresidential persuasion than ever', they argue about the USA, but their analysis has a wider relevance (Schaller and Williams, 2003, 196).

Contextual factors need, however, to be understood as applying in three ways. First of all there is the importance of the immediate political situation in terms of the circumstances of the former leader's exit from office (voluntary,

forced etc), alongside the internal party dynamics and relations with the successor-leader (more or less harmonious). These factors leave some former leaders in a sort of political limbo, send others into a bitter political exile, or make it possible for some to play a continuing (albeit sometimes limited) political role.

Second, institutional factors structure the opportunities and choices that former leaders face. In Westminster-type systems the government-opposition ('in' or 'out') divide makes comebacks at a lower ministerial level more difficult than in those systems where coalitions are more the norm, a factor that is related to the differences between adversarial and multi-party systems. But for 'rotation' to work, former leaders may have to be more modest team-players in style and character. Specific constitutional arrangements (such as the French presidential-prime ministerial system and their strong local/regional institutions, or the British House of Lords) provide berths and opportunities not available for former leaders elsewhere.

And finally, the broader environment of modern politics, from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, has clearly opened up new opportunities and possibilities for former leaders – the intermeshing of business and government, the multiplication of international organizations and multi-level tiers of government, and changes in the mass media with the rise of celebrity star leaders all affect the sort of afterlives that former leaders can fashion for themselves. Exit from a period in high office can nowadays be seen not so much as the final end of the story as the start of a whole new chapter or chapters that are still of interest and value, and are often important and controversial.

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