

Wolff's 'Fire and Fury' Shows the Founders Were Right About the Presidency

Michael Wolff's new book [*Fire and Fury*](#) is an exposé of President Trump. If even half of it is true, it is hard to not feel disgusted and terrified. Those who work with Trump in the White House paint a portrait of a man who combines moral bankruptcy with off-the-charts stupidity. Apparently, our president is a child-like narcissist, a bully who demands immediate gratification. It is reported that he is semi-literate; he doesn't read or listen. He reacts to the latest inputs, and often changes his positions pinball-like.

Some will use Wolff's book to argue for abolishing the electoral college or to simply [make it irrelevant](#). If only, they reason, the president was elected by the popular vote, then the "wiser" people who populate urban voting districts would have a larger say and Hillary Clinton would have been president.

Of course, it takes willful blindness to overlook the book's documenting of [Clinton's poor behavior](#) and apparent corruption. Disgust and fear would be warranted if she were president, too.

Those who work with Trump question his intelligence calling him a "moron"; they conclude he is unfit for the presidency. Is intelligence a sufficient quality to be President? Obama's supporters [believe him to be intelligent](#), yet his dubious initiatives hardly convince us that intelligence alone makes a good president. To broker a nuclear deal with Iran, Obama allowed a terrorist organization, [Hezbollah, to sell drugs](#) in the United States.

Outrage at the failings of Trump may be justified, but our outrage doesn't answer the question of what makes a good president. Without a clear understanding of what makes a good president, mistakes will be repeated.

With reflection, the real lesson in Wolff's book is one well understood by America's founders: Since mankind is imperfect, the power of government must be strictly limited.

America is the only country in the history of the world founded on principles and not on nationality. From that simple observation, we know that foremost the president should be a steward of America's founding principles.

Instead of being a steward of principles, many Americans think the president should be an expert on all things foreign and domestic with the ability and power to, in author Brion McClanahan's words, "solve problems in health care, jobs, wages, mortgages, gasoline prices, and a host of other domestic issues" as well as having "sole discretion over foreign policy and the decisions of war and peace."

In his book, [*The Founding Fathers Guide to the Constitution*](#) McClanahan observes that the presidency "was not meant to be the dominant branch of the general government." The Founders, he observes, "would have never supported an executive branch that could rule by decree, and the Constitution *as ratified* does not allow for unrestrained executive authority."

The idea of an all-powerful president terrified the Founders. James Madison clearly indicated in [*Federalist Paper No. 45*](#), the limited powers of government: "The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government, are few and defined."

Michael Wolff is a total loser who made up stories in order to sell this really boring and untruthful book. He used

Sloppy Steve Bannon, who cried when he got fired and begged for his job. Now Sloppy Steve has been dumped like a dog by almost everyone. Too bad! <https://t.co/mEeUhk5ZV9>

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [January 6, 2018](#)

Most Americans don't object to the unconstitutional wielding of power by the president. They object to power wielded by a president of the other party. Had Hillary Clinton had been elected it is easy to imagine her acolytes cheering her excesses as loudly as they condemn Trump's.

With widespread ignorance of the constitution, should we be surprised that presidential power keeps increasing?

The Founders were suspicious of power. "Power," John Adams said [in a letter to Thomas Jefferson](#), "must never be trusted without a check." Adams, along with other Founders, believed checks and balances were necessary to secure liberty and enable good government. They bequeathed us a constitutional republic that provides for multiple branches of government, each with delineated and limited powers and each with the power to stymie abuses of power by the other.

Arguing for checks and balances, James Madison wrote in the [Federalist Paper No. 51](#), "If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary." Humans are fallible. Individuals—in or out of government—are not angels. Individuals, no matter how well liked, cannot be counted on to know or do the right thing.

In the view of the Founders, any elected official grabbing for

unconstitutional power is unfit for the presidency. Trump may be unfit, and the Founders likely would judge the Bushes, the Clintons, and Obama as unfit, too.

The signers of the Declaration of Independence understood the “self-evident” moral principles on which this country was founded. Their understanding was informed by their reading of John Locke and philosophers of [the Scottish Enlightenment](#) such as Thomas Reid and Francis Hutcheson.

How many candidates for president read these great works of Western civilization or the writings of the Founders? How many Americans? If the number is infinitesimal, should we be surprised if the future will yield many more unqualified presidents?