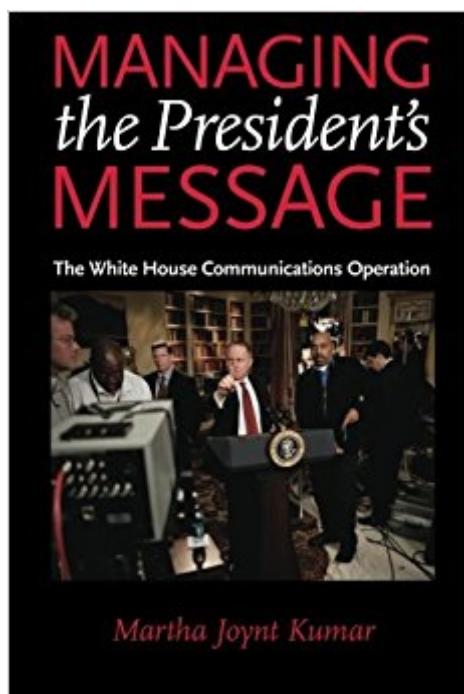


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# Managing The President's Message: The White House Communications Operation



## **Synopsis**

Political scientists are rarely able to study presidents from inside the White House while presidents are governing, campaigning, and delivering thousands of speeches. It's even rarer to find one who manages to get officials such as political adviser Karl Rove or presidential counselor Dan Bartlett to discuss their strategies while those strategies are under construction. But that is exactly what Martha Joynt Kumar pulls off in her fascinating new book, which draws on her first-hand reporting, interviewing, and original scholarship to produce analyses of the media and communications operations of the past four administrations, including chapters on George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. Kumar describes how today's White House communications and media operations can be at once in flux and remarkably stable over time. She describes how the presidential Press Office that was once manned by a single presidential advisor evolved into a multilayered communications machine that employs hundreds of people, what modern presidents seek to accomplish through their operations, and how presidents measure what they get for their considerable efforts. Laced throughout with in-depth statistics, historical insights, and you-are-there interviews with key White House staffers and journalists, this indispensable and comprehensive dissection of presidential communications operations will be key reading for scholars of the White House researching the presidency, political communications, journalism, and any other discipline where how and when one speaks is at least as important as what one says.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

"Kumar combines her years of observation in the White House press room and hours of frank discussion with current and former officials to create a fascinating and sometimes disheartening history of how [the] dance has evolved over the last century." (Jane Roh National Journal)"Having been a regular in the White House Press Room since the early years of the Clinton administration, Kumar can offer an insider's view... Political science and journalism scholars will appreciate the rich detail and scholarship here." (Library Journal)"A must-read for political junkies." (History Wire - Where the Past Comes Alive)"Some of the book is historical research, but much of it comes from the days and days that Kumar spends in the belly of the beast, hanging out in the press room in the West Wing of the White House." (Michael Hill Baltimore Sun)"Kumar's insightful *Managing the President's Message* provides much-needed insight, charting the recent changes in presidential media management strategies and in the routines practiced by the two most-recent White Houses, and provides an important addition to the academic discourse on political communication, framing, and leadership." (Political Science Quarterly)"Its place among scholarship on the presidency was quickly sealed when the presidency section of APSA awarded it the 2008 Richard E. Neustadt Award for best book on the presidency. The book is rich with detail regarding the Clinton and Bush communications and press operations... there is much to be mined in Kumar's descriptions and explanations." (Stephanie Burkhalter Political Communication)"This is a well-written and detailed book and an ideal starting place from which to study the White House communications operations before moving on to fuller autobiographical accounts or the study of individual presidencies." (Rob Griffiths Political Studies Review)"Tapping access to various administrations and the reporters who covered them, Dr. Martha Kumar traces the history of the often fractious relationship between the White House and the press, the schemes each devises to cloak or reveal information; she tells why some succeed and others fail. A valuable addition to a presidential book library." (Ken Auletta, writer for *The New Yorker* and author of *Media Man: Ted Turner's Improbable Empire*)"Kumar has nailed it. This is a scholarly and fascinating account of White House communications in the modern era. Painful as it sometimes is for past press secretaries, this is a remarkably accurate picture of how presidents deal with the press."

(Marlin Fitzwater, Press Secretary for Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush)

Winner, 2008 Richard E. Neustadt Award, Presidency Research Group, American Political Science AssociationPolitical scientists are rarely able to study presidents from inside the White House. It's even rarer to find one who manages to get officials such as political adviser Karl Rove

or presidential counselor Dan Bartlett to discuss their strategies while they are under construction. But that is exactly what Martha Joynt Kumar pulls off in this fascinating analysis of the media and communications operations of recent administrations. Laced throughout with in-depth statistics, historical insights, and you-are-there interviews with key White House staffers and journalists, this indispensable and comprehensive dissection of presidential communications operations will be key reading for scholars of the White House researching the presidency, political communications, journalism, and any other discipline where how and when one speaks is at least as important as what one says. The paperback edition includes a postscript comparing Barack Obama with Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, highlighting how Obama compares with his predecessors. Kumar shows how, although goals and strategies may be similar, Obama's use of technology indicates his willingness to adjust to new circumstances. "Kumar combines her years of observation in the White House press room and hours of frank discussion with current and former officials to create a fascinating—and sometimes disheartening—history of how [the] dance has evolved over the last century." *Political Science Quarterly* "A must-read for political junkies." *History Wire* "Provides much-needed insight, charting the recent changes in presidential media management strategies and in the routines practiced by the two most-recent White Houses, and provides an important addition to the academic discourse on political communication, framing, and leadership." *National Journal* "Tapping access to various administrations and the reporters who covered them, Dr. Martha Kumar traces the history of the often fractious relationship between the White House and the press, the schemes each devises to cloak or reveal information; she tells why some succeed and others fail. A valuable addition to a presidential book library." *Ken Auletta, writer for The New Yorker and author of Media Man: Ted Turner's Improbable Empire* "Kumar has nailed it. This is a scholarly and fascinating account of White House communications in the modern era. Painful as it sometimes is for past press secretaries, this is a remarkably accurate picture of how presidents deal with the press." *Marlin Fitzwater, Press Secretary for Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush*

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