Three Presidents, Three Paths: Navigating Leadership in Transformative Eras

Três Presidentes, Três Caminhos: Navegando pela Liderança em Eras Transformadoras

Anderson de Souza Sant'Anna[1] iD
Daniela Martins Diniz[2] iD

[1]Fundação Getúlio Vargas (Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo), Departamento de Administração Geral e de Recursos Humanos, São Paulo, São Paulo, Brasil.

[2]Universidade Federal de São João del Rei (UFSJ), Departamento de Ciências Administrativas e Contábeis (DECAC), São João del Rei, Minas Gerais, Brasil.

Abstract

Purpose: this article presents a comparative analysis of the leadership styles of three U.S. presidents - William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Donald Trump - examining their approaches within the context of their respective historical eras and through the lens of contemporary leadership theories.

Methodology: of a theoretical nature, this work is based on a comparative analysis of the leadership styles of three US presidents.

Research, Practical & Social implications: McKinley, a consensus-driven leader of the Progressive Era, emphasized institutional stability and collaborative decision-making. Roosevelt, his immediate successor, brought a more dynamic and charismatic style, combining robust nationalism with reformist policies that laid the foundation for contemporary presidential activism. Trump, leading in an era of political polarization and digital media dominance, disrupts traditional norms with a populist and media-centric approach. By analyzing governance, public communication, relational dynamics, and responses to crises, this study explores how their leadership styles align or diverge from contemporary approaches, such as relational leadership theories.

Originality/value: the article highlights the interplay between historical context, individual traits, and societal expectations in shaping leadership effectiveness, offering insights for both the study and practice of leadership in contemporary contexts.

Keywords: Leadership styles; Relational leadership; Political populism; Presidentialism in the United States.

Resumo

Objetivo: este artigo apresenta uma análise comparativa dos estilos de liderança de três presidentes dos EUA - William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt e Donald Trump - examinando suas abordagens no contexto de suas respectivas eras históricas e sob a ótica das teorias contemporâneas de liderança.

Contribuições:

Método: de natureza teórica, este trabalho baseia-se em uma análise comparativa dos estilos de liderança de três presidentes dos EUA.

Contribuições teóricas/práticas/sociais: McKinley, um líder consensual da Era Progressista, enfatizou a estabilidade institucional e a tomada de decisões colaborativa. Roosevelt, seu sucessor imediato, trouxe um estilo mais dinâmico e carismático, combinando um nacionalismo robusto com políticas reformistas que lançaram as bases para o ativismo presidencial contemporâneo. Trump, liderando em uma era de polarização política e domínio da mídia digital, rompe com as normas tradicionais com uma abordagem populista e centrada na mídia. Ao analisar governança, comunicação pública, dinâmica relacional e respostas à crises, este estudo explora como seus estilos

de liderança se alinham ou divergem de abordagens contemporâneas, como as teorias de liderança relacional.

Originalidade/relevância: o artigo destaca a interação entre contexto histórico, características individuais e expectativas sociais na formação da eficácia da liderança, oferecendo insights tanto para o estudo quanto para a prática da liderança em contextos contemporâneos.

Palavras-chave: Estilos de liderança; Liderança relacional; Populismo político; Presidencialismo nos Estados Unidos.

Introdução

Leadership has always played a pivotal role in shaping the course of history, reflecting societal values and responding to the challenges of the time (Bass & Bass, 2009). McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump each led the United States during periods of profound transformation, ranging from industrialization and progressivism to the digital era. By examining these three presidencies in parallel, it becomes possible to understand how leadership styles evolve across historical contexts while maintaining certain enduring elements that influence their effectiveness and public perception. In particular, comparing their leadership approaches sheds light on the interplay between individual style and the broader societal forces that shaped their presidencies (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Against this backdrop, the objective of this article is to analyze the leadership styles of William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Donald Trump within their respective historical contexts, applying contemporary leadership theories to evaluate their approaches. Specifically, it aims to: 1. Examine the personal traits and communication strategies employed by each president in shaping public perception; 2. Evaluate the policy-making approaches and governance frameworks adopted during their administrations; 3. Investigate how each leader responded to societal challenges and crises within their time; 4. Assess the degree to which their leadership styles align with contemporary theories, such as transformational, relational, and neo-charismatic leadership. These objectives are framed by the following research question: How do the leadership styles of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump compare in their responses to the societal and political challenges of their eras, and how do they align with contemporary leadership theories?

In this regard, the study addresses a gap in the leadership literature by offering a historically grounded comparative analysis of presidential leadership styles through the lens of relational and contemporary leadership theories. While much of the existing literature focuses on modern leaders or isolated historical figures, few studies

examine how leadership in transformative periods - across different centuries - can inform current theoretical frameworks.

Building on this foundation, this study focuses on analyzing how their leadership aligns with or diverges from traditional and contemporary leadership theories, such as transformational, neo-charismatic, and relational frameworks (Burns, 1978; Goleman, 1995; Uhl-Bien, 2006). What emerges from this inquiry is a recognition that leadership is not static but instead reflects the social, economic, and political dynamics of the time. For instance, the industrial boom of McKinley's era (Morgan, 2003), the reformist zeal of Roosevelt's progressive agenda (Brinkley, 2009), and the hyper-mediatized, populist climate of Trump's presidency (Ott & Dickinson, 2019) all provide rich contexts for understanding how leaders respond to and shape the world around them.

To address these questions, the article employs a comparative qualitative approach, drawing on primary and secondary sources such as speeches, policy decisions, biographies, and leadership studies. More specifically, it examines key aspects of their leadership, including their personal traits, policy approaches, communication strategies, and responses to crises (Milkis & Nelson, 2018). Additionally, it applies contemporary leadership theories to interpret their styles within a broader framework, allowing for a nuanced comparison of their methods and outcomes. For example, McKinley's steady, behind-the-scenes governance contrasts sharply with Roosevelt's dynamic, hands-on style, while, on the other hand, Trump's populist rhetoric and disruptive approach present yet another model of leadership (Skowronek, 1997).

Through this comparative analysis, the article demonstrates that while leadership styles evolve in response to changing societal contexts, certain elements - such as the ability to inspire, build relationships, and adapt to uncertainty - remain central to effective leadership (Heifetz, 1994). By integrating these insights, and situating their respective historical moments, this study applies contemporary leadership theories to their presidencies, offering a deeper understanding of how leaders navigate complexity and engage with the public.

In terms of structure, following this Introduction, the Theoretical Foundations section provides an overview of key leadership theories, such as transformational, relational, and transactional models. The Leadership in Context section examines each presidency within its unique historical era, emphasizing the economic, social, and political dynamics that influenced their leadership. The Contemporary Leadership Studies section applies modern leadership theories to the case studies, exploring how these frameworks illuminate enduring and evolving leadership practices. The Findings section analyzes

each president's leadership style, focusing on governance, public communication, relational dynamics, and crisis management, supported by theoretical insights. The Discussion reflects on the comparative analysis, highlighting key lessons for contemporary leadership and situating the findings within broader societal and technological changes. The Practical Implications section addresses the relevance of these lessons in navigating modern challenges, including globalization, political polarization, and distributed leadership models. Finally, the Conclusion synthesizes the findings, underscores the importance of historical insights for leadership studies, and identifies directions for future research.

Fundamentação Teórica

In this section, the concept of leadership is examined through both traditional and contemporary approaches, offering a framework for analyzing the distinctive styles of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump. To establish this foundation, the section outlines pivotal leadership theories, including transactional, transformational, relational, and adaptive models, and explores how these frameworks help explain the varying strategies used by leaders to navigate their unique challenges.

Leadership in Context

Building on the theoretical foundations of leadership models, this section examines how specific historical circumstances shaped the leadership practices of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978). Within this framework, the presidencies of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump span vastly different eras in American history, each marked by unique pressures and opportunities that influenced their leadership styles (Skowronek, 1997).

For instance, McKinley's presidency unfolded during the early days of the Progressive Era, a period characterized by rapid industrialization, economic expansion, and mounting calls for regulatory reforms to address growing social and economic disparities (Morgan, 2003). His leadership reflected the steady, deliberate governance favored in an age of burgeoning trust in institutional stability and national expansion. Notably, McKinley's emphasis on protective tariffs, exemplified by the Dingley Tariff Act, and his support for the Gold Standard Act illustrate his transactional leadership approach to fostering economic stability (Milkis & Nelson, 2018).

In contrast, Roosevelt rose to prominence during the post-Progressive Era, a time defined by reformist energy and heightened awareness of social justice issues (Brinkley, 2009). As a result, Roosevelt embraced a hands-on, charismatic leadership style that embodied the era's push for conservation, consumer protections, and corporate

accountability (Collin, 2007). Furthermore, his presidency was defined by a proactive approach to governance, leveraging his personality and public presence to address emerging challenges and assert America's growing influence on the global stage (Gould, 2011).

Decades later, Trump's presidency emerges in a vastly different context—the populist-digital age. This era, shaped by unprecedented connectivity, social polarization, and a backlash against traditional political establishments, places new demands on leadership (Ott & Dickinson, 2019). Trump's style, rooted in populist rhetoric and a disruptive approach to governance, reflects and amplifies these dynamics. Specifically, his embrace of social media as a primary communication tool and his emphasis on direct engagement with his base underscores the transformation of public discourse in the digital age (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018).

Taken together, these distinct historical contexts accentuate the dynamic interplay between leadership and the social, economic, and political environments in which it is practiced. While McKinley's era emphasized stability and institutional trust, Roosevelt's presidency mirrored the progressive calls for bold reforms, and Trump's tenure reflected the fragmented, media-driven realities of contemporary governance (Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999).

In light of these differences, the analysis draws on contemporary leadership theories - including complex, distributed, decentralized, ambidextrous, and enabling leadership frameworks - to interpret their styles in context (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Heifetz, 1994). To illustrate, Roosevelt's reformist energy aligns with transformational leadership and distributed decision-making, while McKinley's measured governance reflects transactional and centralized approaches. By contrast, Trump illustrates how charismatic and media-centric leadership can operate within decentralized, yet polarized, structures (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Goleman, 1995).

By exploring the intersection of context and contemporary leadership theories, this article demonstrates that leadership evolves in response to shifting societal dynamics, yet certain elements, such as the ability to inspire, adapt, and engage meaningfully with the public, remain critical. Consequently, applying complex and enabling leadership concepts to these case studies illuminates how leaders balance personal style, institutional constraints, and the demands of their era.

Through the theoretical lens of transformational, transactional, relational, and adaptive leadership, the presidencies of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump reveal both the flexibility and limitations of these frameworks. Ultimately, by situating their leadership styles within historical contexts, this section highlights the nuanced ways in which leaders balance individual agency with systemic demands. These insights pave the way for a deeper examination of how leadership

practices continue to evolve in response to contemporary challenges.

Contemporary Leadership Studies

After situating each presidency within its historical context, the next step is to interpret their leadership styles through the lens of contemporary theories that deepen our understanding of relational, adaptive, and charismatic dimensions (Uhl-Bien, 2006). At the core of these models, relational leadership highlights the importance of interpersonal dynamics and the co-construction of meaning between leaders and their followers. Leaders operating within this framework prioritize collaboration and trust, emphasizing the role of shared influence in achieving collective objectives (Fletcher, 2004). In this regard, McKinley demonstrated relational tendencies through his careful coalition-building efforts and his ability to navigate contentious political environments, fostering a sense of stability during a transformative period in U.S. history (Morgan, 2003). In contrast, Roosevelt's larger-than-life persona often balanced relational elements with a more directive style, blending charisma with the ability to connect with diverse constituencies (Brinkley, 2009).

Beyond these foundational models, other contemporary theories, such as collaborative leadership and adaptive leadership, provide additional lenses for analysis. For example, collaborative leadership centers on the leader's commitment to the needs and development of their followers, aligning closely with Roosevelt's ethos of public service and his dedication to addressing inequalities through progressive reforms like the Square Deal (Greenleaf, 1977). Meanwhile, adaptive leadership emphasizes navigating complexity and guiding organizations through change, a perspective particularly relevant to McKinley's tenure as he managed the industrial boom and the Spanish-American War (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

Furthermore, incorporating recent approaches like complex, distributed, and ambidextrous leadership deepens the analysis. Complex leadership emphasizes resilience and innovation in interconnected systems, with McKinley's focus on stability and coalition-building as an early example of managing complexity (Skowronek, 1997). Distributed leadership, prioritizing shared decision-making, contrasts with Roosevelt's centralized, personality-driven style, though notably, he effectively delegated in large-scale conservation and reform (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003).

In addition, decentralized leadership emphasizes the diffusion of authority across various levels to foster flexibility and rapid decision-making. Trump's reliance on direct engagement with his base and his use of social media as a decentralized communication tool reflect elements of this approach, albeit in a polarizing and unorthodox

manner (Ott & Dickinson, 2019). Ambidextrous leadership, which balances exploration of new opportunities with the exploitation of existing strengths, is evident in Roosevelt's simultaneous push for bold reforms of America's global influence (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). Lastly, enabling leadership emphasizes creating conditions for others to thrive by fostering collaboration, creativity, and autonomy. McKinley's measured, behind-the-scenes style arguably reflects an enabling approach, as he sought to maintain stability while allowing broader institutional processes to unfold (Goleman, 1995).

Applying contemporary leadership theories to both historical and modern figures reveals enduring traits and emerging demands in governance. While transformational and charismatic qualities remain influential (Bass & Bass, 2009), newer models emphasize complexity, shared influence, and adaptability in dynamic contexts (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Emotional intelligence and collaboration now complement decisiveness and vision, expanding the understanding of effective leadership (Goleman, 1995).

Ultimately, by examining McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump through these diverse theoretical lenses, it becomes evident that leadership styles are not static but evolve to meet the demands of their times. This evolution underscores the interplay between enduring principles - such as the ability to inspire and guide - and the necessity of embracing complexity and collaboration in navigating the challenges of an interconnected world. Leadership reflects a dynamic tension between historical context, individual agency, and societal needs, offering valuable insights for navigating the complexities of contemporary governance.

Table 1 synthesizes the key insights of contemporary leadership theories and their application to historical contexts.

Aspect	Theory	Key Insights	Example
Relational Leadership	Uhl-Bien (2006); Fletcher (2004)	Emphasizes interpersonal dynamics, trust, and shared influence to achieve collective goals.	McKinley's coalition-building and diplomacy promoted stability during industrial transformation (Morgan, 2003).
Collaborative Leadership	Greenleaf (1977)	Focuses on addressing follower needs and shared problem-solving.	Roosevelt's public service ethos and progressive reforms, including the Square Deal.
Adaptive Leadership	Heifetz, Grashow, Linsky (2009)	Guides organizations through complex changes while fostering resilience and innovation.	McKinley's management of industrialization and the Spanish-American War.

Complex Leadership	Uhl-Bien (2006)	Recognizes the unpredictable nature of systems and the importance of fostering innovation.	McKinley's focus on institutional stability reflects early complexity management.
Distributed Leadership	Bennett et al. (2003)	Prioritizes shared decision-making and the empowerment of teams.	Roosevelt delegated effectively in large-scale conservation and reform initiatives.
Decentralized Leadership	Ott Dickinson (2019)	Emphasizes the diffusion of authority for flexibility and rapid decision-making.	Trump's reliance on social media to bypass traditional communication channels.
Ambidextrous Leadership	Raisch Birkinshaw (2008)	Balances exploring new opportunities with exploiting existing strengths.	Roosevelt's reformist agenda balanced domestic reforms with America's global influence.
Enabling Leadership	Ulh-Bien Arena, (2017); Goleman (1995)	Creates conditions for others to thrive by fostering collaboration and creativity.	McKinley maintained stability while empowering broader institutional processes.

Table 1. Contemporary Leadership Theories and Historical Contexts
Source: Developed by the authors.

The application of contemporary leadership theories to case studies demonstrates the value of integrating past insights with modern frameworks. By examining the relational, charismatic, and adaptive dimensions of leadership, this section highlights the increasing relevance of collaboration and emotional intelligence in addressing the complexities of governance. Moreover, it shows how evolving theoretical lenses - such as distributed and enabling leadership - can illuminate both the strengths and limitations of leadership practices across time.

Building on these conceptual insights, the following section delves into concrete historical examples to explore how three American presidents - McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump - navigated the demands of their respective eras. Through this empirical lens, the study connects theory to practice, offering a comparative perspective on leadership under distinct socio-political conditions.

Findings

Building on both theoretical insights and historical background, this section now turns to a comparative analysis of the presidents' concrete leadership practices, drawing on governance decisions, public discourse, and relational strategies. Grounded in the theoretical frameworks previously discussed, the analysis draws on transactional, transformational, neo-charismatic, and relational leadership models to illuminate how each president's individual characteristics intersected with broader structural and cultural demands.

While McKinley exemplified transactional leadership, prioritizing stability and institutional governance, Roosevelt embodied transformational leadership, driving progressive reforms with a charismatic and hands-on approach. In contrast, Trump leveraged digital media and populist rhetoric to reflect and amplify the complexities of a hyperconnected and polarized era. By applying these theories to historical case studies, this section highlights the dynamic interplay between individual agency, societal expectations, and systemic forces in shaping effective leadership practices.

McKinley: The Consensus-Driven Strategist

William McKinley's leadership approach was characterized by an emphasis on stability, diplomacy, and the careful cultivation of institutional processes - traits that reflected the broader values of the Progressive Era (Morgan, 2003). His governance style prioritized pragmatism, continuity, and consensus-building, standing in contrast to the more assertive or disruptive styles seen in later presidencies. By adopting this measured leadership, McKinley was able to address complex challenges without resorting to radical change, positioning himself as a transitional figure between traditional and modern executive approaches.

Rather than seeking bold reform or direct public mobilization, McKinley focused on transactional governance and institutional trust. For instance, he presided over a period of economic transformation and championed policies such as the Gold Standard Act of 1900 and the Dingley Tariff Act of 1897 - measures that aimed to maintain economic predictability and foster investor confidence (Silber, 2007; Morgan, 2003). These actions underscore a leadership style grounded in results and continuity rather than confrontation or innovation, offering a stark contrast to Roosevelt's reformist drive or Trump's disruptive populism.

Diplomatically, McKinley's handling of the Spanish-American War further illustrates his emphasis on clarity, stability, and control. Initially reluctant to engage in conflict, he responded to mounting pressure with a swift, objective-oriented campaign followed by pragmatic treaty negotiations (Trask, 1996; May, 1961). Unlike Roosevelt, who often personalized executive action, McKinley's strategic restraint preserved institutional legitimacy while expanding U.S. global influence - a balance notably absent from Trump's more transactional and media-driven foreign policy style.

From a communicative standpoint, McKinley's style and coalition-building exemplify relational leadership. His calm rhetoric aimed to unify rather than polarize, consistently seeking bipartisan support and institutional cooperation (Gould, 1980). Rather than relying on charismatic engagement, he delegated visibility to political allies like Mark Hanna, choosing instead to

focus on internal negotiation and party cohesion (Morgan, 2003). This understated model of leadership emphasized trust and systemic continuity over personal visibility - sharply contrasting with Roosevelt's theatrical use of the "bully pulpit" and Trump's unfiltered digital messaging.

When analyzed through the lens of contemporary leadership theories, McKinley aligns with both transactional and relational paradigms. His focus on goal-oriented policy outcomes and rule-based governance reflects the essence of transactional leadership (Bass & Bass, 2009). Concurrently, his emphasis on collaboration, trust, and consensus-building echoes the core principles of relational leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2006; Fletcher, 2004).

In comparison with Roosevelt's moralistic and reformist energy, or Trump's emotive populism, McKinley's leadership reveals the enduring value of discretion and procedural strength. His ability to navigate industrialization, manage party dynamics, and conduct international diplomacy without personal grandstanding suggests a leadership model in which stability and restraint function as political virtues - especially during periods of structural transition.

Ultimately, by situating McKinley within these comparative and theoretical frameworks, it becomes clear that leadership efficacy may stem not only from vision and charisma, but also from the capacity to sustain institutional continuity and pragmatic coalitions in volatile times.

Roosevelt: The Charismatic Reformer

On the other hand, Theodore Roosevelt exemplified the archetype of the charismatic reformer, blending a larger-than-life personality with a relentless drive for progressive change. His leadership approach, grounded in public engagement and reformist zeal, stood in sharp contrast to the reserved pragmatism of McKinley and the polarizing populism of Trump. Through a strategic blend of charisma and vision, Roosevelt successfully mobilized support to enact systemic reforms (Dalton, 2002).

At the core of Roosevelt's leadership was his ability to directly engage the public, bypassing political intermediaries and leveraging the presidency as a "bully pulpit" to shape national discourse (Morris, 2001). His vivid rhetoric and symbolic persona - as both war hero and reformer - enabled him to build trust across diverse constituencies, marking a clear turning point from the indirect communication style of predecessors like McKinley.

In terms of policy, Roosevelt's transformational leadership is evident in his enforcement of antitrust legislation and progressive economic reforms. His decisive action against monopolies such as the Northern Securities Company exemplifies a leadership model

deeply oriented toward fairness and social justice (Brands, 2019). Whereas McKinley relied on transactional consensus-building, Roosevelt actively confronted corporate power to realign institutional priorities with the public interest.

Environmental conservation, meanwhile, became another arena for Roosevelt's visionary leadership. Rather than treating it as secondary to industrial growth, he reframed conservation as a national moral imperative - establishing enduring structures such as the United States Forest Service and expanding the system of protected lands (Brinkley, 2009). These strategic actions not only reflect long-term foresight but also sharply contrast with Trump's deregulatory environmental stance and McKinley's focus on economic predictability.

On the international stage, Roosevelt employed bold executive action to elevate U.S. global status, most notably through the construction of the Panama Canal (Collin, 2015). His approach - combining diplomacy with unilateralism - illustrates both the strengths and risks of highly centralized leadership. Whereas McKinley favored institutional collaboration and Trump often disrupted alliances, Roosevelt fused personal vision with assertive diplomacy to position the U.S. as an emerging global power.

Theoretically, Roosevelt stands as a quintessential transformational and charismatic leader. He articulated a compelling national vision, inspired collective purpose, and took bold action to reshape American governance (Bass & Bass, 2009). His Square Deal reforms, labor protections, and conservation initiatives underscore a leadership ethos committed to equity and systemic change - hallmarks of transformational leadership frameworks.

From a charismatic perspective, Roosevelt projected authenticity and emotional resonance, drawing public loyalty not merely through policy, but through dynamic performance and symbolic power (Weber, 1947). In this way, his command of media and ability to engage emotionally with the public parallels Trump's later use of social platforms - though with a contrasting aim: Roosevelt sought institutional reform and unity, while Trump's messaging often deepened divisions.

Nonetheless, Roosevelt's assertive leadership raised legitimate concerns about executive overreach. His expansive use of presidential authority, particularly in foreign affairs and antitrust actions, sometimes alienated political allies and tested the limits of Republican Party unity (Brands, 2019). These tensions reveal the enduring challenge of balancing visionary leadership with institutional checks.

In comparative perspective, Roosevelt's reformist legacy emerges as a dynamic counterpoint to McKinley's stability-focused governance and Trump's media-driven populism. His presidency illustrates how transformational and charismatic strategies can reshape public expectations of executive

power, catalyze systemic reform, and build enduring trust across political constituencies.

Trump: The Disruptive Populist

Lastly, Donald Trump's leadership marked a sharp departure from conventional presidential norms, characterized by a populist, media-centric, and polarizing style. In contrast to McKinley's institutional pragmatism and Roosevelt's reformist charisma, Trump's approach emphasized disruption, personalization, and digital immediacy - forging a distinctive yet controversial leadership identity (Fuchs, 2021).

At the center of Trump's leadership was his strategic use of social media - particularly X (formerly Twitter) - to bypass traditional media channels and engage directly with the public. This constant, unfiltered communication reshaped political discourse, making immediacy and provocation defining traits of presidential rhetoric (Ott, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2020). Where Roosevelt used the "bully pulpit" to inspire reform, Trump weaponized digital platforms to mobilize his base and dominate news cycles in real time, often at the expense of bipartisan cooperation and institutional stability.

Moreover, Trump's populist appeal was deeply rooted in adversarial narratives - "the forgotten men and women" versus the political elite - and amplified by emotionally charged issues like immigration and trade (Katz, 2020). His slogan "Make America Great Again" invoked nostalgia and national exceptionalism, resonating strongly with working-class voters. While this rhetoric recalls Roosevelt's appeals to fairness, it diverges sharply in tone and institutional objectives.

Rather than reinforcing institutional collaboration, Trump's leadership frequently challenged democratic norms. His administration relied heavily on executive orders, controversial cabinet appointments, and unilateral policy decisions - such as the withdrawals from the Paris Agreement and the Iran Nuclear Deal (Mounk, 2018). These choices illustrate a personalized and transactional leadership model, in stark contrast to McKinley's coalition-building or Roosevelt's structural reform strategies.

The divisive nature of Trump's leadership - marked by confrontational rhetoric, attacks on the press, and adversarial relations with Congress - further amplified societal polarization (Graham, 2021). While this combative style energized his core supporters, it also contributed to the erosion of institutional trust, particularly when juxtaposed with Roosevelt's unifying reforms or McKinley's emphasis on continuity and process.

From a theoretical perspective, Trump embodies aspects of both charismatic and transactional leadership - albeit reimagined for the digital age. His personal magnetism, emotional appeal, and focus on results-oriented governance - exemplified by trade renegotiations and tax reforms (Blinder, 2020)

- align with transactional theory. However, his emphasis on loyalty over collaboration often undermined the relational dimensions emphasized by McKinley and other consensus-oriented leaders (Bass & Bass, 2009).

Notably, Trump's defining innovation lies in his digital leadership model. His use of X not only engaged supporters but redefined the relationship between leader and public, challenging traditional leadership theories. Although his approach echoes Roosevelt's mastery of public communication, it simultaneously exposes the dangers of hyper-personalization and the spread of disinformation (DFRLAB, 2021).

In comparative terms, Trump's presidency illustrates both the adaptability and fragility of leadership in a hypermediated, polarized society. Unlike Roosevelt's institution-building or McKinley's consensus-seeking, Trump's model relies on confrontation and visibility as mechanisms of control. This approach underscores the power of charisma and media manipulation - but also highlights the risks of prioritizing personal branding over democratic cohesion.

When framed by contemporary leadership theories, Trump's style illustrates how leadership evolves under technological and societal pressures. At the same time, it serves as a cautionary example of how overreliance on visibility and personalism, in the absence of ethical grounding and institutional engagement, can undermine sustainable governance and public trust.

Comparative Analysis

Following the individual analysis of each president's leadership style, this section provides a comparative perspective that reveals patterns, contrasts, and shifts in how they navigated relational dynamics and institutional engagement. While all three presidents navigated complex networks of relationships to consolidate power, achieve policy objectives, and manage their public personas, they did so in markedly different ways. As this analysis demonstrates, shifting societal and institutional landscapes influenced their relational strategies, highlighting both continuities and divergences in leadership practices.

To begin with, McKinley's leadership was rooted in careful coalition-building and institutional trust. During the late 19th century, when indirect political engagement was standard, McKinley maintained strong relationships with key allies, most notably his campaign manager Mark Hanna. His relational approach prioritized stability and consensus, relying on party infrastructure and congressional negotiation to implement pro-business policies, such as the Dingley Tariff Act. This model emphasized continuity over visibility, setting him apart from both Roosevelt's assertive charisma and Trump's disruptive directness.

In contrast, Theodore Roosevelt actively embraced a more dynamic and visible leadership model. He cultivated relationships not only within the Republican Party but also directly with citizens, using the "bully pulpit" to shape public opinion and advance progressive reforms like conservation and antitrust regulation. Roosevelt's relational strategy blended coalition-building with high-energy public engagement, reflecting a transformational leadership ethos that prioritized moral legitimacy and institutional activism. Whereas McKinley sought alignment and procedural harmony, Roosevelt often provoked institutional transformation through direct confrontation with entrenched interests.

By comparison, Trump's relational dynamics departed even further from these precedents. Rather than building coalitions within institutions, Trump emphasized personal loyalty and transactional alliances, often bypassing party structures and institutional norms. His relationship with the public was highly personalized and digitally mediated, relying on unfiltered communication via platforms like X. In contrast to McKinley's indirect messaging or Roosevelt's rhetorical idealism, Trump's real-time engagement was marked by an adversarial tone and populist appeals that polarized audiences while energizing a loyal base. In effect, his style inverted Roosevelt's inclusive reformism and McKinley's cautious diplomacy, favoring disruption as a political tool.

Taken together, comparing these three leaders highlights the evolution of presidential relational strategies across historical periods. McKinley's reserved, consensus-seeking leadership gave way to Roosevelt's bold and moralizing reformism, which in turn was disrupted by Trump's polarizing and media-driven populism. Whereas McKinley emphasized institutional continuity and trust, Roosevelt activated collective identity through vision and reform, and Trump leveraged division and immediacy to maintain control of the public narrative.

Ultimately, this analysis illustrates that relational leadership is not a fixed construct but a context-dependent negotiation between personal style, institutional environment, and societal expectations. McKinley built trust through stability, Roosevelt through moral conviction and public engagement, and Trump through digital immediacy and anti-establishment rhetoric. These differing approaches not only reflect each leader's personality, but also the communicative and political tools available - and acceptable - in their respective eras.

Table 2 below synthesizes the presidents' leadership styles and relational dynamics through contemporary leadership theories.

Aspect	McKinley	Roosevelt	Trump

Leadership Style	- Transactional, emphasizing stability, coalition-building, and procedural governance (Phillips, 2003; Morgan, 2003)	- Transformational and charismatic, marked by reformist zeal, dynamic public presence, and progressive activism (Morris, 2001; Burns, 1978)	- Charismatic and transactional with populist overtones, using direct communication and media disruption (Haberman, 2022; Mudde, 2017)
Relational Dynamics	- Relied on institutional alliances (*e.g.*, Mark Hanna) and indirect communication through intermediaries (Phillips, 2003)	- Directly engaged with diverse stakeholders, using the "bully pulpit" to inspire public support for reforms (Morris, 2001)	- Prioritized personal loyalty, polarized relationships with institutions, and leveraged social media for direct engagement (Haberman, 2022)
Media and Public Engagement	- Reserved and indirect, focused on formal speeches and intermediary-led campaigns	- Charismatic and hands-on, engaged directly with the press and public to shape discourse and rally support	- Dominated media narratives through provocative, unfiltered social media posts, bypassing traditional gatekeepers (Ott Dickinson, 2019)
Ethical Focus	Pragmatic ethics, prioritizing institutional stability	- Reformist ethics, focused on social justice and the common good	- Polarizing populism, often testing ethical boundaries
Positive Ethical Actions	- Built coalitions to promote economic stability. - Pursued diplomacy to avoid the Spanish-American War initially	- Environmental conservation policies (national parks). - Used the "bully pulpit" to champion social justice and regulate monopolies	- Direct communication with voters via social media - Trade policies targeting industrial workers' interests
Ethical Criticisms	- Reluctance to address social inequalities. - Supported imperialist expansion (*e.g.*, the Philippines)	- Assertive use of executive power, potentially excessive. - Tensions between reforms and power centralization	- Amplified social and political divisions - Use of inflammatory rhetoric and dissemination of questionable information - Undermined institutional norms
Impact on Public Trust	- Built trust through stability and pragmatism - Limited public charisma led to reliance on intermediaries	- Inspired public trust through strong moral appeal and transformational vision - Reforms reinforced his role as a defender of the people	- Maintained strong support among his populist base - Eroded institutional trust among critics due to polarization and ethical conflicts
Ethical Legacy	- Remembered for institutional stability and steady governance - Criticized for expanding imperialism despite ethical concerns	- Legacy of progressive reform and environmental stewardship - Balancing ethical leadership with centralizing tendencies remains debated	- Polarizing legacy due to divisive leadership style - Demonstrated the potential - and risks - of direct, media-driven leadership

Table 2. Leadership Styles and Relational Dynamics through Leadership Approaches
Source: Developed by the authors.

Discussion

Drawing from the comparative insights above, the discussion now assesses how each leadership style aligns with or challenges existing leadership theories, particularly in light of the broader social and technological transformations of their time. Drawing upon frameworks such as transformational, relational, and charismatic leadership, the discussion highlights how leadership effectiveness is shaped by the unique demands of each historical period. McKinley's coalition-building and focus on stability underscore the importance of relational approaches in times of economic transformation, whereas Roosevelt's reformist zeal demonstrates the capacity of transformational leadership to inspire systemic change. Meanwhile, Trump's media-driven, populist leadership exemplifies the role of digital platforms in reshaping public engagement and governance. Taken together, these profiles underscore the necessity of balancing personal style, public engagement, and institutional trust to navigate societal complexities.

In comparative terms, while McKinley adopted a relational and institutional posture grounded in procedural governance and behind-the-scenes negotiation, Roosevelt leveraged personal charisma and public visibility as tools for progressive reform. By contrast, Trump rejected traditional mediation altogether, opting for a populist and digital-first model that favored immediacy and disruption over continuity. Such distinctions reflect not only divergent leadership philosophies but also evolving societal expectations regarding how leaders should engage with power and the public.

Ultimately, each president represents a unique synthesis of leadership theory and historical circumstance. McKinley demonstrated the stabilizing force of transactional and relational leadership in a context of industrial expansion; Roosevelt embodied transformational ideals that aligned with a national appetite for reform and moral clarity; and Trump revealed both the potential and the risks of charismatic populism amplified by digital technologies. Their contrasting strategies reaffirm that leadership is never one-size-fits-all, but rather a negotiation between vision, communication, and the institutional norms of the era.

Theoretical Insights

Expanding upon the comparative analysis, this section synthesizes key theoretical insights that emerge from applying leadership frameworks to the presidencies of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump. Theoretical insights into leadership, particularly when explored through a comparative lens involving historical and contemporary figures like McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump, reveal the evolving interplay between individual leadership styles,

societal expectations, and the broader frameworks of governance. By synthesizing these elements, this section provides a nuanced understanding of how leadership theories - both traditional and contemporary - intersect with real-world practices, highlighting the strengths, limitations, and adaptability of various frameworks. In doing so, this analysis deepens our appreciation of leadership's dynamic nature and its relationship to historical and societal contexts.

To begin with, one of the key theoretical insights is the enduring relevance of transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes a leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and drive meaningful change. Theodore Roosevelt's presidency exemplifies this framework. His focus on reform, conservation, and trust-busting reflected a vision for societal progress. Notably, Roosevelt's enforcement of antitrust legislation - such as the Sherman Antitrust Act - and his environmental initiatives demonstrated his ability to galvanize public support for change (Morris, 2001). Thus, his charismatic appeal and ability to articulate a compelling vision highlight transformational leadership's potential to inspire collective action during societal shifts. For current leaders, Roosevelt's example underscores the value of combining bold vision with public engagement.

In contrast, McKinley's leadership illustrates the applicability of relational and transactional leadership theories, which focus on stability, diplomacy, and coalition-building. His presidency was defined by pragmatic decision-making, consensus-building, and measured rhetoric. Accordingly, policies like the Gold Standard Act and the Dingley Tariff Act ensured economic predictability and investor confidence during industrial upheaval (Brands, 1997). These actions suggest that in periods of institutional or economic uncertainty, a relational or transactional approach can provide essential stability.

Meanwhile, Trump's leadership, marked by disruption, populism, and media-centric tactics, demands reinterpretation of charismatic and transactional leadership theories for the digital age. His use of X (formerly Twitter) to bypass media intermediaries and communicate directly with the public exemplifies the transformative impact of technology on leadership (Haberman, 2022). On the one hand, Trump's emotional appeal and branding mobilized a disaffected base. On the other, his confrontational style and institutional defiance revealed the risks of charisma untempered by ethical or relational considerations.

Over time, the evolution of leadership styles across these presidencies reflects broader theoretical shifts in the discipline. Traditional models like the "great man" theory are increasingly challenged by co-constructive and context-sensitive approaches. In this regard, relational and adaptive theories -

emphasizing collaboration, shared influence, and situational responsiveness - offer a more nuanced lens. McKinley's coalition-building, Roosevelt's vision, and Trump's digital engagement each illustrate how leadership adapts to its era.

Equally important, this comparative lens reinforces the insight that leadership is context-dependent. McKinley's diplomacy suited industrial consolidation; Roosevelt's activism matched progressive momentum; Trump's digital populism reflects hyperconnectivity and polarization. Therefore, effectiveness in leadership demands a context-sensitive strategy,

with theoretical frameworks interpreted in light of historical and technological realities.

Taken together, these insights suggest that effective leadership requires balancing personal style, institutional accountability, and responsiveness to contemporary challenges. McKinley's pragmatic stability, Roosevelt's ethical reformism, and Trump's disruptive charisma each reveal trade-offs that modern leaders must navigate.

Table 3 provides a summary of these leadership styles in comparative theoretical context.

Aspect	William McKinley	Theodore Roosevelt	Donald Trump
Historical Context	Industrialization and economic transformation necessitated a focus on institutional stability and predictability	The Progressive Era demanded bold, activist leadership to address inequality and corporate excesses	The digital age fosters polarization and rapid information flow, reshaping the dynamics of leadership engagement
Leadership Style	Transactional and relational, emphasizing stability, coalition-building, and procedural governance (Brands, 1997)	Transformational and charismatic, marked by reformist zeal, progressive activism, and public engagement (Morris, 2001)	Charismatic and transactional, with populist and media-driven elements that challenge conventional frameworks (Haberman, 2022)
Public Engagement	Relied on intermediaries like Mark Hanna to communicate indirectly and maintain institutional trust (Phillips, 2003)	Used the "bully pulpit" to engage directly with the public and build support for progressive reforms (Brands, 1997)	Leveraged social media platforms (*e.g.*, *X* [formerly Twitter]) to bypass traditional media and engage directly with supporters (Ott Dickinson, 2019)
Charismatic Appeal	Limited; focused on steady, pragmatic leadership to instill public confidence (Morgan, 2003)	Relied on personal charisma and vivid rhetoric to inspire and mobilize diverse constituencies (Morris, 2001)	Energized a disaffected base with populist rhetoric and personal branding (*e.g.*, "Make America Great Again") (Mudde, 2017)
Relational Dynamics	Fostered trust and consensus among industrialists,	Balanced direct public engagement with institutional collaboration, often	Prioritized personal loyalty, often undermining trust with institutions

	party leaders, and Congress for pragmatic governance (Hixson, 2003)	intervening decisively in labor disputes (Brands, 1997)	while maintaining strong support from his base (Haberman, 2022)
Theoretical Insights	Aligns with relational and transactional leadership theories, emphasizing stability and order (Morgan, 2003)	Exemplifies transformational leadership with visionary and progressive reforms; relational in fostering public trust (Burns, 1978)	Reflects charismatic and transactional leadership but diverges from relational leadership principles (Ott Dickinson, 2019)
Lessons for Contemporary Leaders	Stability through coalition-building and institutional processes remains crucial during periods of uncertainty	Bold vision and ethical governance can inspire systemic reform while maintaining public trust	Digital engagement strategies must balance immediacy and charisma with collaboration and ethical accountability

Table 3. McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump's Leadership Styles
Source: Developed by the authors.

Practical Implications

Having established a robust theoretical understanding, this section explores the practical implications of these leadership styles in light of contemporary political and global challenges. As the global landscape shifts, leaders must adapt to increased complexity, fragmentation, and evolving citizen expectations. This section connects lessons from historical leadership to contemporary demands.

Table 4 summarizes the practical implications of leadership theories in light of contemporary challenges, focusing on the lessons from Trump's presidency.

Aspect	Implications for Contemporary Leadership	Key Insights and Examples
Global Power Dynamics	- Leaders should prioritize adaptability, multilateral collaboration, and relational engagement to navigate emerging power structures - Moving away from zero-sum frameworks fosters trust and strengthens coalitions in a multipolar global landscape	- The rise of China through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) reflects a move toward a multipolar world (Allison, 2017) - The BRICS countries emphasize cooperative models, such as the New Development Bank (Stuenkel, 2020)
Transactional and Confrontational Leadership	- While effective in mobilizing domestic support, such approaches risk straining alliances and undermining global collaboration - A recalibrated strategy is essential to avoid exacerbating geopolitical tensions	- Trump's first term was marked by trade wars and withdrawal from agreements like the TPP, emphasizing transactional strategies (Allison, 2017)
Collaborative Leadership Models	- Leaders must embrace distributed and collaborative frameworks to foster global partnerships and shared problem-solving	- BRICS initiatives, such as the NDB, illustrate the shift toward distributed influence and cooperative economic strategies (Stuenkel, 2020)

	- Coalition-building skills are critical to navigating multipolarity effectively	
Decentralized and Ambidextrous Leadership	- Political leaders must create environments that empower diverse stakeholders, encouraging collective problem-solving and inclusive governance - Ambidextrous leadership is essential to balancing national innovation with institutional cohesion	- Businesses like Google and Microsoft demonstrate how ambidextrous leadership balances innovation and operational stability (O'Reilly Tushman, 2016)
Technological Transformation	- While digital platforms enable direct engagement, they also exacerbate polarization and conflict. - Leaders must balance immediacy with ethical and relational considerations to sustain long-term effectiveness	- Trump's reliance on social media, particularly X (formerly Twitter), exemplifies the role of digital platforms in modern leadership (Haberman, 2022)
Lessons from China's Governance	- Leaders in the U.S. must adopt an ambidextrous mindset, fostering innovation while maintaining systemic coherence. - Collaborative governance strategies can enhance national competitiveness in dynamic global markets	- China's centralized but innovative governance, including advancements in AI and renewable energy, highlights the importance of balancing exploration and exploitation (Osnos, 2021)
Geopolitical Adaptation	- Strategic collaboration with emerging economies and focus on mutual benefits (*e.g.*, trade partnerships, climate cooperation) are essential for sustained influence in global diplomacy	- Trump's America First rhetoric contrasts with the need for relational leadership to engage effectively with BRICS and other regional blocs (Allison, 2017)
Domestic Policymaking and Equity	- Enabling leadership empowers communities and leverages collective intelligence to co-create inclusive policies - Participatory governance fosters resilience and adaptability in addressing multifaceted challenges	- Addressing systemic issues like income inequality, healthcare reform, and racial justice requires enabling leadership and cross-sector collaboration
Opportunities for Recalibration	- Leaders must craft governance strategies that are sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to evolving societal and geopolitical dynamics - Balancing charisma with ethical accountability enhances long-term effectiveness	- Trump's second term offers a chance to recalibrate his leadership style, integrating relational and collaborative strategies to meet global and domestic challenges

Table 4. Practical Implications of Leadership Theories in Light of Contemporary Challenges
Source: Developed by the authors.

Finally, these reflections hold strong relevance for Latin American and Brazilian leadership, where recurring tensions between institutional continuity and charismatic disruption echo the dynamics explored in the U.S. presidencies. Indeed, cycles of democratic fragility, personalist leadership, and institutional volatility resonate with the comparative profiles of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump. Thus, examining

how leadership strategies adapt to complexity, fragmentation, and mistrust provides a valuable foundation for rethinking effective governance in transitional or polarized environments across the Global South.

Ethical Dimension of Leadership

In addition to strategic and relational elements, ethical considerations play a crucial role in shaping public trust. This section focuses on the moral dimensions embedded in the leadership approaches of each president.When examined comparatively, the ethical dimension across the three presidencies reveals how differing moral priorities and governance approaches shape public trust and institutional resilience. For instance, McKinley's ethics were grounded in pragmatic stability and institutional continuity. However, his passive stance on inequality and support for imperial expansion raised moral concerns. In contrast, Roosevelt pursued a reformist ethical agenda, emphasizing fairness, environmental stewardship, and the regulation of monopolies—though his assertive use of executive power occasionally tested democratic boundaries. Meanwhile, Trump's ethics were rooted in populist identity-building and loyalty, amplified by direct media engagement. Yet, his approach was often criticized for polarizing rhetoric, norm-breaking, and ethical ambiguity. Taken together, these divergent ethical profiles demonstrate that leadership is not only a matter of vision and strategy, but also a reflection of the values prioritized in communication, decision-making, and the exercise of power.

Conclusion

Bringing together the historical, theoretical, and ethical analyses, the conclusion synthesizes key insights and offers final reflections on the enduring lessons from McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump. In sum, the leadership styles of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump reveal distinct traits shaped by their historical contexts - McKinley's stabilizing diplomacy, Roosevelt's charismatic reformism, and Trump's disruptive populism. These differences illustrate that leadership effectiveness depends not only on personal attributes but also on alignment with the challenges of each era.

More specifically, McKinley's approach, grounded in coalition-building and institutional stability, reflected the priorities of a rapidly industrializing America. His commitment to economic predictability, as seen through policies like the Gold Standard Act of 1900, responded to the needs of a society seeking structure amidst transformation (Phillips, 2003; Morgan, 2003). By contrast, Roosevelt's reformist zeal demonstrated the influence of the Progressive Era's call for justice and accountability, as evidenced by his antitrust legislation and conservation efforts (Morris, 2001; Brands, 1997). Meanwhile, Trump's media-driven and populist leadership style, emerging in the context of the digital age, reflected

an era defined by polarization and direct engagement with a politically fragmented public.

From a theoretical perspective, this analysis carries important implications for leadership studies. By expanding the application of modern leadership theories - such as transformational, relational, and charismatic leadership - to historical contexts, scholars can gain richer insights into the evolution of leadership dynamics over time. For example, Roosevelt's charismatic ability to inspire public action aligns closely with transformational leadership theories, as discussed by Burns (1978), whereas McKinley's consensus-driven style illustrates relational and transactional leadership in action (Phillips, 2003; Morgan, 2003). Likewise, Trump's reliance on social media to bypass institutional structures highlights the role of digital platforms in shaping contemporary charismatic and populist leadership styles (Ott & Dickinson, 2019).

Looking through a historical lens, we find a valuable foundation to refine and critique contemporary leadership models, ensuring they account for the influence of context and the interplay between individual agency and systemic factors. Roosevelt's hands-on approach demonstrated the power of dynamic, vision-driven leadership to address inequality and conservation (Brands, 1997), while McKinley's careful diplomacy and trust in institutional norms illustrated the stabilizing role of procedural leadership during transitions (Phillips, 2003). Trump's focus on personal branding and disruption, in turn, highlights both the adaptability and the vulnerabilities of charismatic and transactional frameworks in today's political landscape (Mudde, 2017; Ott & Dickinson, 2019).

Accordingly, integrating historical insights into contemporary leadership practices equips leaders with tools to navigate complex challenges, emphasizing the importance of flexibility, relational engagement, and ethical governance. For instance, the relational dynamics that defined McKinley's coalition-building efforts hold lessons for leaders managing diverse political coalitions today (Hixson, 2003). Similarly, Roosevelt's progressive activism demonstrates the value of bold, ethical leadership in addressing systemic issues like climate change and economic inequality—a recurring theme in modern discussions on leadership ethics (Morris, 2001; Burns, 1978). By contrast, Trump's polarizing yet direct communication style highlights the need to balance personal charisma with collaborative governance in an era of heightened public scrutiny (Ott & Dickinson, 2019; Mudde, 2017).

Looking ahead, future research should build on this foundation by conducting comparative studies of historical and modern leadership styles across broader cultural and geopolitical settings. For example, contrasting Roosevelt's conservation efforts with modern environmental leadership - such as the Paris Climate Agreement - could provide fresh insights into how leadership

frameworks adapt across eras (Brands, 1997). Furthermore, exploring the leadership styles of figures from diverse geopolitical contexts - particularly those navigating the rise of multipolarity and regional blocs like BRICS - could deepen our understanding of how culture shapes leadership practices.

Additionally, examining the long-term impact of leadership on institutional resilience and public trust would provide a richer account of the legacies that leaders leave behind. For instance, assessing the institutional effects of McKinley's pragmatic policies or Roosevelt's progressive reforms helps illuminate how leadership can influence governance structures well beyond a single term (Phillips, 2003). Likewise, Trump's media strategy and populist rhetoric invite critical analysis on how communication style can alter public trust in democratic institutions over time (Ott & Dickinson, 2019; Mudde, 2017).

Ultimately, this cross-disciplinary and historically grounded approach has the potential to enrich both theoretical and practical understandings of leadership. As globalization, technological innovation, and social change reshape expectations, leaders must draw from historical lessons to craft governance strategies that balance innovation with stability, charisma with accountability, and authority with inclusion.

As the global landscape continues to evolve, the experiences of McKinley, Roosevelt, and Trump serve as reminders that leadership is always a reflection of its time. By learning from both their successes and shortcomings, modern leaders can develop more nuanced, resilient, and ethically grounded leadership models to confront the challenges of the 21st century.

Referências

Allison, G. (2017). *Destined for war*: Can America and China escape Thucydides's trap? Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Bass, B. M. (1990). *Bass Stogdill's handbook of leadership*: Theory, research, and managerial applications. Free Press.

Bass, B. M., & Bass, R. (2009). *The Bass handbook of leadership*: Theory, research, and managerial applications. Free Press.

Bennett, N., Wise, C., Woods, P. A., & Harvey, J. A. (2003). *Distributed leadership*: A review of literature. National College for School Leadership.

Blinder, A. S. (2020). Stimulus without debt: What history tells us about tackling the deficit. *Foreign Affairs*, 99(3), 46–55.

Brands, H. W. (1997). *T.R.*: The last romantic. Basic Books.

Brinkley, D. (2009). *The wilderness warrior*: Theodore Roosevelt and the crusade for America. Harper.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper Row.

Cohn, N., & Quealy, K. (2020, November 6). *How voter turnout in 2020 broke records in nearly every way*. The New York Times.

Collin, R. W. (2007). *The environmental protection agency*: Cleaning up America's act. Greenwood.

Conger, J. A., & Kanungo, R. N. (1998). *Charismatic leadership in organizations*. Sage.

Digital Forensic Research Lab. (2021). #ElectionWatch: The impact of disinformation on democracy. *Atlantic Council*. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org

Fletcher, J. K. (2004). The paradox of postheroic leadership: An essay on gender, power, and transformational change. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(5), 647-661.

Fuchs, C. (2021). *Donald Trump*: A critical theory perspective. Emerald Publishing.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*: Why it can matter more than IQ. Bantam Books.

Gould, L. L. (1980). *The presidency of William McKinley*. University Press of Kansas.

Gould, L. L. (2011). *The presidency of Theodore Roosevelt*. University Press of Kansas.

Graham, D. A. (2021, January 7). The lasting legacy of Donald Trump's political polarization. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com

Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). *Servant leadership*: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness. Paulist Press.

Haberman, M. (2022). *Confidence man*: The making of Donald Trump and the breaking of America. Penguin Press.

Heifetz, R. A. (1994). *Leadership without easy answers*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Heifetz, R. A., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership*: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world. Harvard Business Press.

Heritage Foundation. (2022). *Mandate for leadership 2025*: Policy prescriptions for a conservative future. Heritage Foundation. https://www.heritage.org

Hixson, W. L. (2003). *Murder, culture, and injustice*: The complex legacy of William McKinley. The Kent State University Press.

Katz, C. J. (2020). Trade policy in the Trump era: An economic nationalist agenda. *Journal of Global Trade Commerce*, 12(4), 150-162.

Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). How democracies die. Crown Publishing Group.

May, E. R. (1961). *Imperial democracy*: The emergence of America as a great power. Harcourt, Brace World.

Milkis, S. M., & Nelson, M. (2018). *The American presidency*: Origins and development, 1776-2018. CQ Press.

Morgan, H. W. (2003). *William McKinley and his America*. The Kent State University Press.

Morris, E. (2001). *Theodore Rex*. Random House.

Mounk, Y. (2018). *The people vs. democracy*: Why our freedom is in danger and how to save it. Harvard University Press.

Mudde, C. (2017). *Populism*: A very short introduction. Oxford University Press.

O'Reilly, C. A., & Tushman, M. L. (2016). *Lead and disrupt*: How to solve the innovator's dilemma. Stanford Business Books.

Osnos, E. (2021). *Wildland*: The making of America's fury. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Ott, B. L. (2017). *The age of Twitter*: Donald J. Trump and the politics of debasement. Critical Studies in Media Communication, 34(1), 59-68.

Ott, B. L., & Dickinson, G. (2019). *The Twitter presidency*: Donald J. Trump and the politics of White rage. Routledge.

Pew Research Center. (2020). *Trump outpaces Obama on Twitter engagement,* *but trails on overall following*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org

Phillips, K. L. (2003). *William McKinley*: A biography. Nova Science Publishers.

Raisch, S., & Birkinshaw, J. (2008). Organizational ambidexterity: Antecedents, outcomes, and moderators. *Journal of Management*, 34(3), 375-409.

Silber, W. L. (2007). *When Washington shut down Wall Street*: The great financial crisis of 1914 and the origins of America's monetary supremacy. Princeton University Press.

Skocpol, T., & Fiorina, M. P. (Eds.). (1999). *Civic engagement in American democracy*. Brookings Institution Press and Russell Sage Foundation.

Skowronek, S. (1997). *The politics presidents make*: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Stuenkel, O. (2020). *The BRICS and the future of global order*. Lexington Books.

Trask, D. F. (1996). *The war with Spain in 1898*. University of Nebraska Press.

Uhl-Bien, M. (2006). Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 654-676.

Anderson de Souza Sant'Anna (anderson.santanna@fgv.br), trabalhou na Concepção da proposta inicial do artigo, elaboração da fundamentação teórica do estudo, tratamento e análise dos dados teóricos e tradução do artigo para inglês

Daniela Martins Diniz (danidiniz09@yahoo.com.br)* trabalhou na revisão da fundamentação teórica do estudo, deu apoio no tratamento e análise dos dados teóricos, na elaboração, escrita e revisão do artigo
*Autor-correspondente.