

DomPrep Journal



Transition

Volume 17, Issue 1, January 2021

- A New Approach Needed for a New Dynamic
- Introduction to Presidential Accretive Power
- The Trump and Biden Transition and the Impact on the Administrative State
- Federalism – How It Works and Limits Presidential Power
- COVID-19 & Lack of Reconnaissance

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DomPrep Journal is electronically delivered by the IMR Group Inc., P.O. Box 810, Severna Park, MD 21146, USA; phone: 410-518-6900; email: subscriber@domprep.com; also available at www.DomPrep.com

Articles are written by professional practitioners in homeland security, domestic preparedness, and related fields. Manuscripts are original work, previously unpublished, and not simultaneously submitted to another publisher. Text is the opinion of the author; publisher holds no liability for their use or interpretation.



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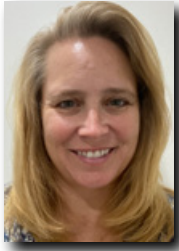


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Transition – Separating Power From Preparedness

By Catherine L. Feinman



At the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021, there was considerable discussion about the transition of [presidential power](#). As leadership roles change in many federal, state, and local agencies across the United States, new policies and plans will be implemented that will affect how the nation as a whole and the numerous communities within it will plan for and respond to future disasters. The decisions that leaders make will have significant impacts on communities, but true change comes from groups within the community.

In the domestic preparedness community, these groups include emergency management, public health, law enforcement, fire service, emergency medical services, hospitals, volunteer organizations, private sector companies, public sector agencies, military, and so on. Collaboratively, the members of this community have the knowledge and experience to face whatever future catastrophes emerge. Unfortunately, divisions still exist and planning within siloes prevents the coordination and communication needed to build robust plans and procedures. Sometimes, when disasters emerge, those in executive political power fail to implement the years of preparedness plans, drills and exercises that were already developed.

Great strides have been made for multidiscipline, multi-jurisdictional approaches to disaster preparedness. No single group can manage a disaster on its own. For example, the violent acts at the U.S. Capitol required more than just a law enforcement response. The [COVID pandemic](#) requires more than just a public health response. Wildfires require more than just a firefighting response. Dynamic times require a [new approach](#) that can transition with ever-changing environments.

The 21st year of the 21st century presents a new opportunity to transform lessons learned into actionable plans for future incidents. The president as well as other political leaders play an important role, but the real knowledge base lies with operational professionals that continue to work toward a common goal of community resilience regardless the political forces. This year is a time to transition to a truly integrated, collaborative approach to disaster preparedness that will hold strong despite future transitions of power in leadership.

Publisher's Message: A New Approach Needed for a New Dynamic

By Martin (Marty) Masiuk



DomesticPreparedness condemns the lawlessness that descended on the U.S. Capitol on January 6th. The inciteful rhetoric and behavior resulting in the criminal breach of the U.S. Capitol and personal assaults, which lead to the death of U.S. Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick and others, are inexcusable. These acts are an affront to our democratic process that is grounded in the U.S. Constitution, our commitment to the rule of law, and the belief in American exceptionalism.

Is it time to rethink low-probability/high-impact incidents? With tensions abnormally high from the pandemic, a tumultuous election period, the past summer's civil unrest, and more once-in-a-century weather incidents, there is a critical obligation to plan and train for frequent extreme scenarios by public safety, emergency management, and public health/medicine professionals. Robust interagency intelligence collection, analysis, and data sharing must provide decision makers with dependable situational predictability that allows for prudent adaptation in dynamic environments. Communication interoperability, strong mutual assistance coordination, and decisive unified command structures are essential to prepare for, prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from high-impact situations. There needs to be constant recognition that situations can and are likely to change rapidly. This awareness needs to be understood and drilled by personnel at all levels of the enterprise. One foolish gesture by an inadequately trained practitioner could have profound negative consequence.

Because of the tragic loss of lives and the erosion of trust in our democratic process, institutions and government, DomPrep calls for the lessons recently learned to be quickly incorporated by preparedness professionals for other unforeseen events. The courageous men and women of law enforcement, fire, EMS, public health/medicine, and emergency management, as well as the American people, deserve the very best in preparedness particularly during these highly dynamic times.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of 9/11. DomPrep plans to review many programs that, although established to prepare for widely known threats, now seem forgotten due to complacency. This past week's horrible incident in Washington, DC should make us all wonder: What else is broken?

An Analysis of Presidential Accretive Power – Part 1

By William H. Austin

The following analysis is a three-part article that will cover a brief history, known examples of the exercise of presidential power, and illustrative examples of actions that historians believed were controversial. This analysis helps unwind the evolution of power in what some believe to be the most powerful leader in the world: the president of the United States.



Since the nation's beginning, the power of the president has been mythologized by political parties, the press, and often by the president himself. It could be said that presidential power is a combination of the current times, past events, citizen expectations, federal law, and Supreme Court decisions.

The United States is a nation born from rebellion, aged by wars, and rife with intellectual conflict. The founding fathers carved freedom from the monarchy of the king. By instinct, they knew that someone had to be in charge. The solution was the creation of the "president." It was a complicated idea to citizens then and remains so even today.

This analysis is an inquiry into how the power of the U.S. president has evolved. The president's power is awesome yet limited by the [U.S. Constitution](#), the Supreme Court, and the political atmosphere at any given time. Throughout history, driving circumstances have forged the president's power, with the following being just a few of the mega-influencers:

- World wars
- The issue of slavery
- The concept of manifest destiny
- Remarkable new technology
- The emergence of the United States as world power
- Space exploration

These factors and thousands more have molded and shaped presidential power. This power is often thought to be a sudden expansion or acting like a king. However, the true growth of presidential power has been accretive or gradually increasing over 240 years and adaptively adjusting to the nation's changing needs.

Judging by the daily impact of this subject, it is important that every leader – especially those in any type of emergency management role – fully understand how presidential power affects their environment during a major disaster. That story begins here.

Brief History

Beginning with George Washington and including all presidents through Donald Trump, the power of a president has enlarged in an accretive manner. President Washington provided the basic structure for the president's job. He invented the stately and reserved demeanor that set the stage for how a president should act – in a time when all other countries were ruled by kings. Washington was also skilled at using public opinion, so a major achievement was managing a quarrelsome cabinet. His cabinet had only four members, but he set the precedent how the cabinet should function as the president's private trusted advisors.

Born from rebellion, aged by wars, and rife with intellectual conflict, the nation's creation of a president was a complicated idea and remains so today.

Washington also signed the first [presidential proclamation](#) on 3 October 1789, establishing the first Thanksgiving on Thursday, 26 November 1789.

An executive order by any title is authorized by the United States Constitution under Article II, Section 1, Clause 1, which states, "The executive

power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America." Executive orders and proclamations are two best known types of executive power. Washington issued a total of 8 executive orders during his eight-year term. In the first 40 years of the nation's history, a total of 15 executive orders were issued. Whether a directive (or order) has the force of law depends on the following factors:

- The president's authority to issue the directive
- A conflict with constitutional or statutory provisions
- The directive's promulgation in accordance with prescribed provisions

Additionally, presidential directives can be challenged in court or overridden by congressional action. However, this action may result in a possible infringement by one constitutional branch upon the powers of another.

The issuance of presidential proclamations followed a tradition established by British monarchs – and practiced by royal governors in North American colonies – and by their elected successors after the American Revolution.

Well-Known Examples

In U.S. history, there have been some well-known actions taken by presidents to solve problems at the time. Here are six examples of those executive actions:

- President Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery with the [Emancipation Proclamation](#) on 1 January 1863. This order declared "that all persons held as slaves within the rebellious states" are, and henceforward, shall be free.



- President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the National Labor Relations Board with Executive Order 6763.
- President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981 in 1948 ordering the racial integration of the armed forces.
- President John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 10924 establishing the Peace Corps in 1961.
- President Jimmy Carter created the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) with Executive Order 12148 in 1979.
- President George W. Bush established the Office of Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Council with [Executive Order 13228](#) on 8 October 2001. This action was in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City and at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia.

Controversial Examples

There also has been no shortage of controversial executive orders over the years. Provided below are several examples that caused extreme angst in Congress and among the general public:

- President Franklin Roosevelt used Executive Order 6102 to forbid the hoarding of gold coin, bullion, and gold certificates during the Great

Depression of the 1930s. Roosevelt also issued Executive Order 9066 during World War II authorizing the confinement of Japanese and German Americans to guarded camps.

- President Harry Truman's Executive Order 10340 put all the United States steel mills under federal control. This action was in response to a nationwide strike by steelworkers. However, the executive order was judged to be invalid by a Supreme Court ruling in 1952 because the order was not based on valid statutory authority.
- Significant policy changes with lasting effects have been created by [executive order](#), including the desegregation of public schools by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1957 and restricted public access to the papers of former presidents by George W. Bush in 2001.
- The record for overturned executive orders was set by President Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression in 1935. The Supreme Court overturned five executive orders (numbered 6199, 6204, 6256, 6284, and 6855).
- On 30 July 2014, the House of Representatives approved a resolution authorizing Speaker of the House John Boehner to sue President Barack Obama over claims that he exceeded his executive authority by changing a provision in the Affordable Care Act. Republicans objected to a delay of a mandate on employers who do not provide health care coverage. The [Affordable Care Act](#) is currently still involved with legal action pending in the Supreme Court.

The Administrative State

Presidential actions tend to overshadow the government's influence. However, the impact of the administrative state cannot be ignored. Part 2 of this analysis will explore the administrative state and what it really means to leaders and citizens. Part 2 also includes a look at President Donald Trump's impact on executive power and concludes with projections on the impact of presidential power from the next president.

Concluding this analysis, Part 3 explores the concept of federalism as it intertwines with the subject of Presidential power and that of governors and local officials nationwide.

This article is Part 1 of a three-part series on An Analysis of Presidential Accretive Power:

[Part 1 – Introduction to Presidential Accretive Power](#)

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[Part 3 – Federalism – How It Works and Limits Presidential Power](#)

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An Analysis of Presidential Accretive Power – Part 2

By William H. Austin

The intersection between populism and progressivism is often contentious and reserved. At least, that is how it has been for the last century or so. To quote Robert Kennedy, “Democracy is messy, and it’s hard. It’s never easy.” Following the analysis on the founding and history of presidential power, this article covers the transition from the outgoing populist to the more progressive incoming president.



In the past, the executive orders of any administration describe how power was used in quite different ways. However, recent demonstrations show how social media can also be used to influence millions of citizens and, when used as a disinformation weapon, endanger the concept of democracy as it is commonly known. What happens next will challenge the republic, change views about the use of social media, create new regulations and laws, and influence presidential power for years to come.

The transition between the Obama and Trump administrations was a fistic situation. However, it was peaceful in comparison to the transition from Trump to Biden. Often, the incoming president cancels as many executive orders of the previous administration as possible and issues new executive orders based on the incoming administration’s philosophy and electoral promises made during the campaign. Trump issued 14 presidential directives on his first day in office and Biden is expected to issue 15-20 presidential directives on 20 January 2021. This is one of the first and very visible illustrations of presidential power that happens in any given administration.

As Biden said while running for office, “This campaign is about reaching the soul of America.” The comment sounds familiar and is expected. However, no one could foresee what would happen next.

The power of a president both real and perceived, has been building slowly since the founding of the nation. However, there have been lurches in U.S. history causing a sudden expansion. In fact, one of those sudden lurches may be occurring now. That lurch is the expanding use of social media in everyday life and the role it may have played influencing Trump’s followers to riot and attack the United States Capitol Building, the nation’s bastion of democracy.

The nation has experienced these power lurches before. For example:

- The election of Abraham Lincoln was the tipping point on the issue of slavery that led 11 states to break away and initiate the Civil War.
- The rise of fascism in the 20th century eventually led to two world wars and the U.S. becoming a superpower.
- The election of Franklin D. Roosevelt four times led to the passage of the [22nd Amendment](#) to the Constitution on 27 February 1951. This Amendment limits the president to two terms in office.

- Issues such as civil rights, the Vietnam war, Watergate, terrorism, advanced technology, and most recently COVID-19 (just to name a few) have affected the real or influential power of a president.

History has now led to the transition of power by the outgoing Donald J. Trump and the incoming Joseph R. Biden and the continued search for the answer to the question, “Is the U.S. president really the most powerful person in the world?”

President Donald J. Trump – Power Examples

A quick look at President Donald J. Trump’s term as president would show hundreds of orders, directives, and decisions that affect most U.S. citizens. Here are six selected examples:

- *Numerous disaster proclamations* for hurricanes, flooding, and wildfires in the United States.
- *A [Stafford Act declaration](#) for COVID-19*, which was the first ever for a nationwide event. Generally, the governor of an affected state/territory or tribal chief executive of an affected Indian tribal government requests the president to approve a Stafford Act declaration and the president makes the determination in consultation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

This was a rare situation and has only happened a few times before, such as for the federal courthouse explosion in Oklahoma City and the loss of the Space Shuttle Columbia. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) remains the lead agency for the federal response to COVID-19.

To fully understand the impact of presidential power, every governmental leader (and citizen) should develop a working knowledge of the administrative state.

- *The [Defense Production Act of 1950](#)*, which was passed at the start of the Korean War and authorizes the president to force businesses to manufacture materials or products deemed necessary for the safety of the nation was also triggered by COVID-19. The pandemic resulted in nationwide unemployment from the shutdown of businesses. Congress passed the CARES Act for citizen relief and Trump backed that up by using FEMA disaster relief funds to finance extra jobless benefits by \$300 a week.
- *Immigration* basically stopped due to COVID-19 and the building of 450 miles of additional border wall between Mexico and the United States. Travel restrictions and bans were implemented for non-U.S. citizens arriving from China, Iran, and Europe. The Trump administration also effectively ended asylum at U.S. land borders by using the power given to the surgeon general to control a public health risk. (A Supreme Court ruling allowed the nationwide enforcement of the Trump administration rule that prevents most Central American migrants from seeking asylum in the United States.)
- *Space Policy Directive (SPD) 6 National Strategy for Space Nuclear Power and Propulsion (SNPP)*. This directive sets out three principles for the future development of space nuclear systems – safety, security, and sustainability.

- [Executive Order \(13943\)](#) *Addressing the Threat Posed by WeChat and TikTok*. This action addressed the spread in the United States of mobile applications by companies in China, which the Trump administration believed to be a threat to national security. (This executive order was blocked by a federal judge in California.)

President Joseph R. Biden – Proposed Change

Without a past to dissect, it is difficult to know with certainty where a new president will guide the nation in the future. However, with Biden’s 45-year experience in the federal government as a senator and vice president, it could be argued that he is a highly qualified candidate for president. Biden, like all presidents, will feel the immediate “burden of the office of president.” His priorities will be questioned, debated, and often blocked by friends as well as the opposition. Biden begins his journey facing tough issues that he himself campaigned for or against. This is the challenge of leadership and politics. Here are some difficult issues he will face:



- Getting his team on the ground and functioning quickly is a priority. He can use special authorities to get around problems. However, there are more than 4,000 positions to fill and about 1,250 of those require Senate confirmation.
- The COVID-19 response solution requires every citizen to cooperate by wearing masks and getting vaccinated. Biden also knows he cannot mandate that everyone wear a mask or get a shot. This is because the Supreme Court ruled in 2012 in [Independent Businesses v. Sebelius](#) (which concerned the Obamacare mandate) that an individual must be involved in commercial activity for the Congress to regulate them under the commerce clause. Biden has changed his position to be “wearing a mask is a patriotic duty.”
- The [SolarWinds](#) cybersecurity breach forces the Biden administration to address Russian cybersecurity threats, which affected over 18,000 organizations.
- Biden will move quickly on the [DACA](#) program to protect dreamers and to rejoin the Paris Climate Accord.
- Biden has vowed to expand the Affordable Care Act even as the Supreme Court is hearing a case that could gut it. Biden made this issue a central part of his campaign.
- Biden will be forced to reckon with social media’s impact on politics.

The Administrative State

To fully understand the impact of presidential power, every governmental leader (and citizen) should develop a working knowledge of the administrative state. This is an element of governance that touches any citizen when least expected and leaves a “How can they do that?” epiphany. Every day, news reports and images illustrate the impact the administrative state can have.

It is important to decide how the country interacts with other nations, defends itself, and builds an image as a democracy. However, there has always been a need for experts who did the work of handling the nation’s daily business – from the postal service in the beginning all the way to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or FEMA today. These agencies do not make any laws, but they do make the rules they use to manage their agencies and expeditiously deliver their services. The current phrase “follow the science” implies the need to follow the experts in dealing with COVID-19.

There are recognized guides for how the administrative state should function. The guides warn against the following actions because they represent a lack of morality of duty.

- A failure to make rules
- A failure of transparency
- An abuse of retroactivity
- A failure to make rules understandable
- Issuance of rules that contradict each other
- Rules that require people to do things they lack the power to do
- Frequent changes in rules, so that people cannot orient their actions in accordance with the rules
- A mismatch between rules as announced and rules administered

The “[administrative state](#)” has been lauded and condemned but is a vital part of the nation’s governing system. Deferring to experts is routinely used in the court system and is a major part of presidential power.

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An Analysis of Presidential Accretive Power – Part 3

By William H. Austin

There is a point in a novel or play where the hero has a true anagnorisis because the moral fault is never himself, only in outside conspirators. Some would call it fate, others call it arrogance in a man.



The nation’s founding fathers called it a “monarchy,” and they had enough of England’s unitary rule. The solution was to form a nation where no king or “man” had enough power to literally control a citizen’s life. They created America, where citizens seeking freedom could be free. It was not easy, and old norms would die slow. Also, there was another problem. Since declaring freedom from England, the 13 colonies had been operating under an Articles of Confederation.

The Confederation was a group of strong independent bodies with a weak central government. The problem had manifested itself during the American Revolution. Raising a standing army from the states to fight the British and funding the costs of feeding, arming, and supplying required war materials became so burdensome that the revolution became inauspicious to most colonists. There was still uncertainty after that. It took another decade to formulate the Ten Amendments to the Constitution before “We the People” really got started.

The concept of [federalism](#) would grow as the country grew. Along the way, it would take some serious challenges to define this unique new government. Each new development phase offered lessons for the future. The handling of Native Americans, the slavery issue, voting rights, nationwide depressions, world wars, segregation, and civil rights have provided painful learning experiences in the country’s growth.

Competitive federalism is where responsibilities are assigned based on whether the federal government or the state is thought best to handle the issue.

For the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought new and often different questions about the meaning of federalism. History will record that the handling of the nationwide disaster had many trials and tribulations. Much of what happens in general reflects the leadership and stamina in 50 different states.

The obsession with assessing President Donald Trump’s and now President Joseph Biden’s executive powers reflects a larger tension as old as the nation. The presidency today retains the awesome accretive power collected over two centuries. With 400,000 plus deaths attributed to the pandemic, Trump made claims for authorities he simply did not have. In short, the pandemic has demonstrated that the president does not have the unlimited power found in a unitary system of government and can be removed by the general population’s vote.

Federalism

Key elements of federalism include (see Table 1):

- A written constitution
- Non-centralization of government
- A real division of power to ensure neutrality and equality in the representation of various groups and interests (also, the accommodation of truly diverse groups whose differences are fundamental rather than transient)
- Direct lines of communication between the citizenry and all governments that serve them

<i>Federal governments powers</i>	<i>Federal and state (concurrent) government powers</i>	<i>State government powers</i>
Regulate foreign and interstate commerce and conduct foreign relations and make treaties	Levy taxes	Regulate intrastate commerce
Coin money and tax imports and exports	Borrow money	Establish and maintain schools
Establish and regulate the postal system	Administer courts	Establish local governments
Create and maintain armed forces	Make and enforce laws	Issue licenses, permits, and certificates
Declare war	Build roads and transportation systems	Protect public health, safety, and morals
Amend the U.S. Constitution	Take private land for public use with just compensation (eminent domain)	Maintain state militia (National Guard)
To make laws that shall be necessary and proper for carrying enumerated powers	Charter banks and corporations	Ratify amendments to the U.S. Constitution

The Constitution & State's Rights

The U.S. Constitution solved the two main issues sparking debate among the founding fathers. The nation now has checks and balances, and both the state and federal governments have power. The Constitution allows the federal government to create a unified nation and for the states to have control. Any change to the Constitution must be approved by two-thirds vote of the states before it can become a law. However, states' rights confrontations do occur periodically. For example, in [Brown vs. Board of Education](#), the Supreme Court ruled that separate school facilities based on race are inherently unequal and thus a violation of the 14th Amendment. One of the most illustrative cases of states' rights involved the Supreme Court case [Reno vs. Condon](#), which was held in November 1999. That case focused on the 1994 Driver's Privacy Protection Act (DPPA), which establishes a regulatory scheme that restricts the states' ability to disclose a driver's personal information without the driver's consent.



South Carolina's Attorney General Charlie Condon filed suit citing a violation by the federal government of the 10th Amendment. South Carolina sold the driver registration data to insurers and direct marketers. The Supreme Court ruled that, because drivers' personal information is (in this context) an article of commerce, its sale or release into the interstate stream of business is sufficient to support congressional regulation.

States, however, do have general enforcement power that permits them to enact public health regulations and quarantine requirements that far exceed any power the president or federal government have.

Local Governments

It might seem the ultimate power available to the government is a national emergency declaration by a president. However, governors, county executives, and mayors across the country who have declared states of emergency have gained even more comprehensive powers.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is not usually called on for public health emergencies. After Hurricane Katrina, efforts to improve health response during disasters shifted responsibility for pandemic and disease response to Health and Human Services (HHS) under the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act. FEMA would have a supporting role in any major national emergency, such as logistical support and equipping quarantine facilities.

Types of Federalism

Over the years, the meaning of federalism has changed several times. The changes follow the history of the nation. During the first decades of the republic, many state leaders thought that states' rights allowed states to refuse to comply with any national government that, in their view, exceeded its power. This dogma was doomed after the Civil War.

Next came a period of dual federalism. The division of labor between national and state government became the prevailing doctrine. The massive economic crises of the Great Depression accelerated the end for dual federalism.

During the New Deal of the 1930s, cooperative federalism – where both federal and state governments worked together to solve problems – held control until the 1960s. President Franklin D. Roosevelt implemented the New Deal for citizens facing massive unemployment. His argument was that the national government could restore the economy faster and better than states and local governments. By 1939, national government expenditures equaled state and local expenditures combined. The Supreme Court rejected several of Roosevelt's programs, but held up programs such as labor-management relations, minimum wages, and subsidies to farmers. Eventually, programs such as "Great Society" and "War on Poverty" spawned massive new programs funded by the national government.

Since the 1960s, the nation has experienced 60 years of competitive federalism, where responsibilities are assigned based on whether the federal government or the state is thought best to handle the issue. Under competitive federalism, funds are distributed from the national government to state and local governments with terms and conditions known as mandates. State and local governments do not like unfunded mandates where the national government tells the state what to do but provides no funding to support the program. In 1994, Congress passed a rule to bar unfunded mandates.

Why Federalism Works

Hurricane Katrina was an exceptional challenge to federalism. When the landfall occurred on 29 August 2005, it exposed many weaknesses. The disaster depicted a sense of failure that few Americans had ever felt. Live television brought the catastrophe into everyone's life. Americans, many for the first time, saw and felt stress and fear as tragic deaths were witnessed. The visual glimmer of hope was seeing the United States Coast Guard helicopters rescuing people from the rooftops.

The lessons from Katrina are not that federalism does not work, that the president is not the most powerful "man" in the world, or that the nation failed. What Katrina ultimately demonstrated is that the nation's real strength is in "We the People." Volunteers, first responders, and all levels of government united for a common mission and worked together to stabilize New Orleans. For most, there was no thought given to the concept of federalism. However, the response to Katrina involved hundreds of different federal, state, and local agencies.

History repeats itself again in the response to COVID-19. Federalism is playing a lead role in the pandemic efforts and will provide many lessons for future leaders. The lesson the nation is learning again is that federalism does not work well unless there is a strong and coordinated response from all levels of government.

As Biden explained on his first day in office, "We are currently facing four converging crises – COVID-19, the resulting economic crisis, climate change, and racial inequity." The federal government is taking action to combat these challenges, so must the states and local governments.

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[*Part 3 – Federalism – How It Works and Limits Presidential Power*](#)

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COVID-19 & Lack of Reconnaissance

By Christopher Tantlinger

The word “reconnaissance” conjures the image of sizing up the enemy and making a plan. Behind medieval history and WWII films about military battles across seas and foreign lands, military forces and commands strategized the battle with efforts revolving around reconnaissance. For many of those who diligently formulate and coordinate emergency response, planning, preparedness, mitigation, and recovery, and those who came out of the Civil Defense Era to build and mold modern emergency management, this pandemic response has elicited feelings of anger and a struggle between opinions and facts.



Pandemics are nothing new and yet [lessons have still not been learned](#). Pandemics have profoundly affected communities, which have inevitably lived through them, albeit at great cost. Each of these has had devastating effects on humanity, lessons were supposedly learned, and preparations for the next pandemic began. At the end of each of these events, communities found a root cause mitigation, identified a measure of medicine or technology, or gained enlightenment on how to deal with the virus by [advancing the human condition](#). Despite significant loss of life, [extraordinary advancements](#) have been made in healthcare coordination to manage future events.

Not Heeding The Call

Somehow though certain stakeholders have not heeded the call to do better. Those in emergency management strive to learn from the devastation of past disasters and ensure a [better response](#) in the future. They bridge the disciplinary gaps and encourage collaboration. However, some agencies have not heeded emergency management’s calls to integrate healthcare and the basic tenets of incident command into coordination efforts during an emergency. Those who have been responding to devastating wildfires have efficiently and effectively used incident command for 50 years and the fire service and emergency management have implemented and used this effective system. It works because the stakeholders and response agencies [coordinate](#) on vision, determination, and a common pathway to recovery.

Forest fires require rapid decisions as the flames spread with a virulence, force, destruction, devastation to life, environmental ravages, etc. that can happen in minutes. Scientists and epidemiologists in the throes of a pandemic must also make rapid decisions, although not necessarily at the same speed as other disasters. Even so, much can be learned about incident command and applied to any disaster, including pandemics.

For months, the highest levels of decision making at the state health care level conducting pandemic status briefings have handed down orders that have left communities of [dedicated healthcare providers](#) at the local level devastated. The simplest of duties in an all-hazards situation is to communicate and understand that all disasters happen locally, and resolutions made by conversation can actually solve problems. In many healthcare settings, there has been a lack of understanding those affected and their needs: the bed count, those clinically fighting the virus, the personal protective equipment (PPE) needs, the resources available, the unused communication networks, the extended wait for information, the ideas for efficiency,

local defined programming, and requests for just a simple answer. For many, the efforts felt futile and requests were not heard. Effective communication and a [multi-level governance](#) are necessary for navigating emergencies.

Looking Through The Wrong Lens

Data, technology, information, and towering display screens (some in high definition) all draw clear pictures when, and only when, it is scientifically populated with scholarly prescience and are used to represent the threat. This invaluable visual can be used to create a dashboard and summarize a threat matrix of the hazard and risk analysis to help prioritize the decision and create a clear vision of the path forward.

Unfortunately, some academics and agencies around the world utilized what is akin to a theatrical digital “apocalypse” showing the virus globally [blotting out civilization](#). These visuals that promote situational awareness are nothing more than a representation of life imitating art. Pandemic movies and series show this virus spreading cinematically for effect in 102 minutes or less. However, portraying COVID-19 [through this lens](#) is wrong. True representations of the spread should not be used to create fear. Emergency management is not about fear, but rather about plans and recovery – making communities whole again and returning life to or better than pre-disaster conditions.

When there is an earthquake, flood, forest fire, hurricane, or other manmade or natural hazard where damage assessments are immediately happening, the worst and hardest hit areas are identified and illustrated in emergency operation centers (EOC) or command posts. The number of casualties – real casualties – and those who may be affected and need care or assistance are all carefully defined, and resources are acquired and dispatched accordingly. Emergency managers can quickly draw an intimate map of what they know, what they think they know, and what they still need to know. Each EOC offers stakeholders a view of the true crisis map and consequential decision-making process for the event: the current situation, the next operational strategy, identified gaps, unmet needs, etc.

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In contrast, for COVID-19, decisions have often been dictated by public health professionals engaging elected officials who have never sat in a strategy or planning meeting. These decisions have not been based on ground truths from the disaster and do not delineate between operations, planning, and oversight. Communities need those who know how to heal sick people and make policy decisions, but those subject matter specialists should use that expertise to unify in helping to mitigate the disaster but should not necessarily be the ones to direct the response.

So many graphs, pie charts, trajectories, formularies, spreadsheets, social media graphics, memes, overlays, spread factors, surge charts, threshold limiting, and condition postures have created a lack of situational awareness. Emergency managers do not have consistent health department charts and diagrams for gaining clarity on the current status

of the pandemic. Emergency managers have been conditioned to take an [objective approach](#) to properly display the current condition and subject threat. It is time to shed some light on this darkness.

Becoming Taciturn

Most will agree that many of the people dealing with this pandemic have, in fact, brilliant, passionate minds with thought-provoking ideas that hopefully will help guide future pandemic response and right any wrongs. An appropriate word would be “taciturn,” which is defined as being reserved or uncommunicative.

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During the pandemic response, some elected officials, public health professionals, and emergency management bureaucrats have clearly been taciturn with regards to communicating locally on the disaster. This is not the time for reserved or talking heads who are uncommunicative, say little when questions or strategies are asked of them, share tactics that are nonexistent or poor at best, are non-committal, or lack the ability to make decisions. It should have been time for doubling down on collaboration, communication, and constructive conversations with diligent planning. The time to shine for emergency



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coordination fell flat. Everyone has to do better and realize that to do good means to do something. However, to do something means being smart and sticking within areas of strength and expertise. Emergency management, elected officials, and public health officials need to understand each other and be force multipliers rather than build a fortress that ignores the threat. These leaders should combine forces to develop best practices in order to strike the threat and fight together.

COVID Reconnaissance

Reconnaissance can be defined in using the structure and breadth of the [Planning P](#). Illustrated here, it can be called the Pandemic Planning P.

- *Incident threat* – January 2020, Center for Disease Control and Prevention announced the threat from Wuhan, China.
- *Notification* – Make the healthcare universe aware of the situation and begin reconnaissance.
- *Agency briefing* – After identifying a potential threat and doing reconnaissance, all key stakeholders should be brought together for an incident threat briefing. Provide briefing to health departments, government, and those that are adept at coordinating emergencies to set the stage for a unified command,

including who the subject matter experts will be and what this will mean to those that affected.

- *Unified command* – This provides the foundation for the response, including the profound development of thought, the course forward, and setting the objectives.
- *Objectives* – In order to stop the pandemic, define objectives that are simple, manageable, achievable, realistic, and timely (SMART). Rather than directives and cinematic references to the apocalypse, health departments should develop SMART objectives.
- *Initial strategy* – Formulate operations and resources and coordinate under the collective decision making of all key stakeholders. During the current pandemic response, a lack of defined objectives, strategy development, and decision-making exacerbated supply chain shortages. Local stakeholders recognized immediately that they must act and, when faced with roadblocks, had to find innovative ways to make their own PPE or repurpose PPE as necessary.
- *Coordination* – The critical next step in the cycle of emergency management is to perpetuate coordination and lead the scope and scale of the disaster response.
- *Tactics meeting* – Borne out of information sharing and gathering, the tactics meeting is the keystone to properly manage a disaster using continuous, relentless, coordinated, and collaborative information gathering and sharing.
- *Information gathering and sharing* – This represents the vessels, the skin, the bone, the blood, the fiber of every incident. It creates life to all strategies, plans, tactics, and operations for effectively navigating through the crisis. Information gathering and sharing must reach all levels, including the local level, which has been lacking in the COVID response.

When governments, health departments, bureaucrats, and subject matter experts stand before those that they are committed to protect and simply denied to or did not understand how to manage a disaster, then the failure is compounded and recovery will be long and arduous. Emergency managers are complicit and need to stress at every opportunity that disasters will happen. It is not necessary to plan for an implicit disaster, but rather be students of all hazards and pioneers of resources. Reconnaissance is information gathering and sharing and the path for responding more effectively for the next pandemic.

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