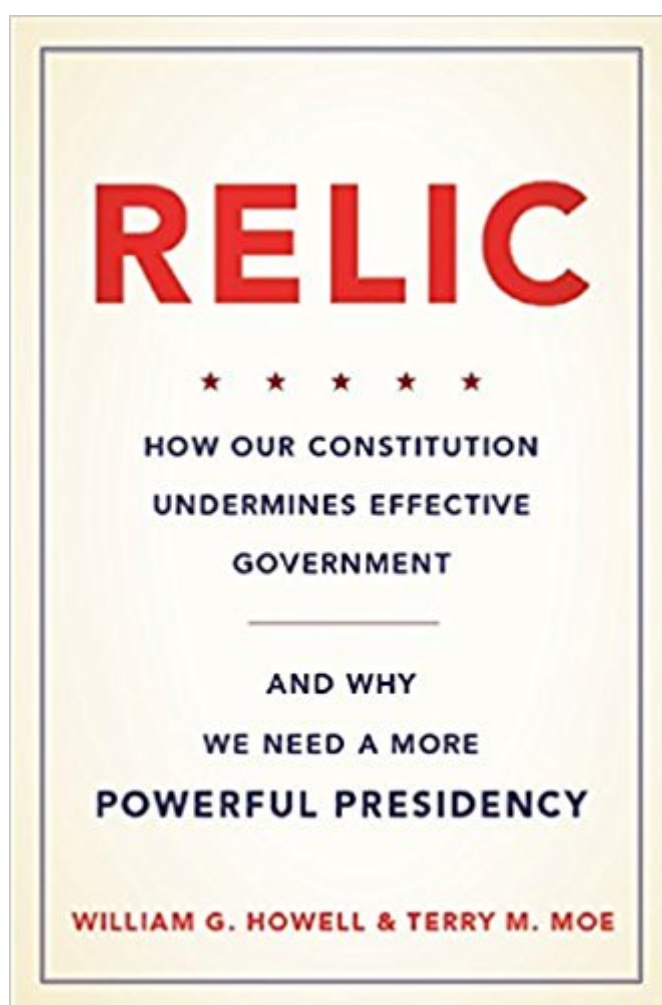


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# Relic: How Our Constitution Undermines Effective Government--and Why We Need A More Powerful Presidency



## Synopsis

Our government is failing us. From health care to immigration, from the tax code to climate change, our political institutions cannot deal effectively with the challenges of modern society. Why the dysfunction? Contemporary reformers single out the usual suspects, including polarization and the rise in campaign spending. But what if the roots go much deeper, to the nation's founding? In *Relic*, William G. Howell and Terry M. Moe point to the Constitution as the main culprit. The framers designed the Constitution some 225 years ago for a simple, agrarian society. But the government they created, with a parochial Congress at its center, is ill-equipped to address the serious social problems that arise in a complex, postindustrial nation. We are prisoners of the past, burdened with an antiquated government that cannot make effective policy, and often cannot do anything at all. The solution is to update the Constitution for modern times. This can be accomplished, Howell and Moe argue, through reforms that push Congress and all its pathologies to the periphery of the lawmaking process, and bring presidents' whose concern for their legacy drives them to seek coherent policy solutions to the center of decision making. As Howell and Moe reveal, the key to effective government for modern America is a more powerful presidency. *Relic* is a provocative and essential book for our era of political dysfunction and popular despair. It sheds new light on what is wrong with our government and what can be done about it, challenging us to reconsider the very foundation of the American experiment.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“The case for constitutional reform in Relic is the best; certainly the most realistic; in many years.... Just getting people to think seriously about constitutional reform would be progress. The cogent analysis in Relic helps to achieve that goal.”  
Wall Street Journal  
“Focused, committed, convincing, and composed in moderate language that will appeal to those all along the political continuum.”  
Kirkus Reviews  
Howell and Moe make the bold and trenchant argument that the dysfunctions of American government lie squarely in the powers that the Founding Fathers gave Congress, and that the solution is to dramatically shift the balance of power to the executive. This book is sure to trigger an important debate, precisely because its fundamental analysis is so correct.”  
Francis Fukuyama, Stanford University, and author of Political Order and Political Decay

William G. Howell is the Sydney Stein Professor in American Politics at the University of Chicago. His *The Wartime President* won the William Riker award for the best book in political economy. Terry M. Moe is the William Bennett Munro Professor of Political Science at Stanford University and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution. Moe is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Well worth reading and thinking about. Chapters 1 through 3 provide a history of the US Constitution and how it got us to where we are today. It is by no means a diatribe nor a book advocating a route to fascism. The writing is quite well reasoned. Whether people might agree or disagree with the authors' recommendation is another issue altogether. All it does is advocate allowing the President to submit legislative bills to Congress the same way he already advances international treaties: vote yes or no with no amendments allowed. It doesn't give a political advantage either to conservatives or liberals, Democrats or Republicans, or any other political party. The authors' proposed idea wouldn't prevent Congress from acting as it always has.

There were a few sections earlier in this book that seemed repetitive. But other than that, it did a very nice job setting up the current state of our country, how we got here, and the underlying issues that we have been unable to escape. The solutions proposed are both creative and very achievable. This book is a must read for anyone that is disenchanted with today's political environment and the failure of our government to adequately deal with any of the issues presently facing the United States.

Interesting book, though it was very, VERY repetitive. You only need to read the first chapter to understand the point that the authors are trying to convey.

This book is an amazing read with a simple solution to an incredibly difficult problem. Highly recommend for any level of interest and background knowledge. It starts a crucial discussion on the matter of the President and our constitution.

This book has motivated me to pursue changing peoples' opinions about the relationship between the legislative and executive branches and eviscerates the notion that the Founders and the Constitution are above criticism.

I like the book and generally agree -until you get someone unstable in the White House. Prior to the last election, I would have agreed that reaching the presidency could only be done by reasonably stable and intelligent people. Trump has put this in serious doubt.

A brilliant book and a great idea. I'm persuaded. Now, if only the thesis becomes well-known.

While I entirely agree that the constitution is in need of improvement, in light of recent events the authors' proposal of making the president more powerful doesn't seem entirely thought through.

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