

The Power of Political Leaders

Introduction

In Australia, we are often spoon-fed a daily dose of stories from the mainstream media which presents ‘more leadership’ or ‘better leadership’ as the panacea to the complex problems of the world we live in. Even if we leave the vacuous and often ideological nature of such statements to one side, it is fairly safe to say that Australian federal politics is often presented through a very narrow lens to the electorate. The two-party, leader versus leader perspective, not only under-plays the complexity of the system, but it also shapes expectations of leaders that very few will ever be able to meet. Though, it is also true that there is extensive debate internationally about the way the politics of liberal democracies has changed and the effects these changes have had on leaders. Questions about whether leaders have greater capacity for autonomy and have increased resources at their disposal than previously are central to these debates. Broadly speaking, these debates are grouped together under the banner of the ‘presidentialization thesis’.¹ This book, *All Hail the Leaders*, is about presidentialization, but even more so it is about political leadership in Australia, with a specific focus on leadership in the Australian Labor Party (ALP). It considers whether leaders of the ALP have felt the effects of these international as well as domestic forces that can alter, shape and sometimes even transform our social, political and economic environment. *All Hail the Leaders* also explores political leadership across time – the 1940s to the 2000s – and also across levels – national leadership, party leadership and electoral leadership. Most of all, this book is about Australian federal politics and the political leaders who dominate the national stage. Before we begin this examination though, it is worth reflecting on what has come before. This chapter considers some of the seminal writing on political leadership generally and on the ALP

more specifically. It also sets out the framework employed in this book and the case studies explored.

Political Leadership

As one might expect, the study of political leaders has a long and distinguished history. The literature which explores changes in the capacity of political leaders is also incredibly diverse. It traverses a variety of areas in political science with little consensus on why leaders have, if at all, become dominant. In fact the only consistent narrative within this varied literature is that leadership was for an extended period a neglected area of political science. According to Walter (2008:1), 'this is partly to do with the conventions of social science itself: its rejection of the nineteenth century emphasis on 'the great man' thesis of history'. While Bennister (2008:336–7) argues that

In contrast to the burgeoning study of leadership in other disciplines, political science has been slow to make systemic analyses of political leadership. The keenness of scholars to concentrate on institutions and structures has led to a downplaying of the role of leadership. Prime Ministers, in particular are viewed as constrained actors, dependent and contingent. Comparative angles have often been lacking in a sub field generally dominated by American work.

In the last two decades, however, some headway has been made. In particular, the work of Elgie (1995), Helms (2005), Rhodes, Wanna, and Weller (2009), as well as Strangio, 't Hart and Walter (2013) have filled this gap. Nevertheless for much of the twentieth century, the Australian academic work which did examine political leadership took its cues from the United Kingdom, viewing leaders as constrained actors. The grand old UK debate around cabinet or prime ministerial government is an example of this (Bennister, 2008:337). The start of this debate has been attributed to two main protagonists during the 1960s, Richard Crossman and John Mackintosh (Honeyman, 2007:4).² With Crossman's (1963) foreword to *The English Constitution* now viewed as the start of this debate. In his 1968 book, *The British Cabinet*, Mackintosh used examples of various prime ministers to show how different individuals could dominate a cabinet.

Therefore, while not displaying disregard for the checks and balances approach, Mackintosh was pioneering in his analysis of the validity of

'*Primus Inter Pares*'. Leaders were viewed as constrained and restrained by a variety of checks and balances established as part of systems of governance and at no time did Mackintosh or Crossman claim this was presidential government or signs of 'presidentialization'. They hedged their argument by recognising that leadership was dependent on party and colleague support and parties were still seen to be a part of the checks and balances in preventing dominance by leaders (Hart, 1991:210). It was for this reason that the traditional discussion of leaders was prefaced with the assumption that leaders were neither separate nor autonomous from the system as a whole, hence why studies would only compare leaders in systems which were similar. In other words, parliamentary systems were compared with parliamentary systems and presidential systems with presidential systems. This ensured that the debate was inherently confined by these parameters and the question for parliamentary systems centred on an examination of whether the powers of prime ministers were increasing at the expense of their colleagues.

Therefore, even the cabinet or prime ministerial government debate, while refreshing in terms of its view that leaders possessed greater autonomy, still viewed these leaders as restricted, as the thesis maintained an 'institutional approach' in its evaluation of leadership (see Bennister, 2012:12–5). The importance of this debate cannot be underestimated and it was from this point that cross regime studies began and the level of autonomy that leaders possessed was considered.³

One of these early forays which examined leader autonomy was the work of Farrell (1971) in Ireland. This has most notably been continued on in the work of Foley (1993; 2000). Foley's *The British Presidency* (2000), has received mixed responses within the political science community, with Heffernan (2005a:53–4) disputing much of the thesis arguing that Foley's book:

is a wonderfully illuminating study of political leadership in Britain ... Yet, while Prime Ministers clearly matter more than most ministers, the notion of Presidentialisation ultimately misleads. It makes little of the power dependencies found within any system of collegial government ... He or she is only one actor alongside others ... The Presidentialisation thesis particularly fails to acknowledge that institutional factors make it impossible for a Prime Minister to become a President.

All Hail the Leaders

Heffernan has also not been alone in his criticism of theses that have emphasised leadership autonomy. Rhodes and Dunleavy (1994), Bevir and Rhodes (2006) and Smith (1999) have all contended that those advocating leader autonomy, have produced weak analyses that have been anecdotal at best. In their view, these contributors should instead have focussed on a more modernised conceptualisation of the central policy co-ordinating machinery, namely, the core executive. Dunleavy and Rhodes (1994:12), in particular, argue that when analysing executive politics, merely looking at leaders or cabinet is not enough and that other actors should not be left out including departmental ministers and bureaucrats.

Presidentialization

While some of the literature which came before Poguntke and Webb (2005) offered important insights into changing modes of political leadership, their book *The Presidentialization of Politics*, presented the most systematic explanation of the presidentialization thesis. According to Poguntke and Webb (2005:1) '[P]residentialization denotes a process by which regimes are becoming more presidential in their actual practice without, in most cases, changing their regime type'. In other words, presidentialization is the idea that leaders have more resources and autonomy within the institutional parameters of their regime than their predecessors. While presidentialization has become one of the key analytical concepts used to explain changing patterns in political leadership in liberal democracies, it is still a concept that attracts more critics than supporters. According to Michael Foley (2007), debates about presidentialization often 'generate more heat than light' and this was certainly the case for much of the last two decades.⁴

While Foley's (2000) work was a systematic account of Britain, it was Poguntke and Webb's (2005) adoption of a comparative politics framework which advanced the debate to a discussion about the causal effects driving changes across democratic systems. The framework of presidentialization that Poguntke and Webb devised was based on what they perceived as the three distinct faces of presidentialization: the executive face, the party face and the electoral face (see Appendix: Chart 1). They noted each of these 'revolves around the tension between

political parties and individual leaders' (Poguntke and Webb, 2005:7). The executive face of presidentialization, while inter-related with the party face, is specifically focussed on how leaders interact with their governments. Any growth in the formal powers of leaders as well as evidence of autonomous decision making is central. In Poguntke and Webb's (2005:9) terms: 'While partified government means governing through parties presidentialized government implies governing past parties'. When examining the party face of presidentialization, Poguntke and Webb (2005:9) were looking for a 'shift in intra-party power to the benefit of the leader'. This shift may be related to the third face of presidentialization, namely the electoral face, whereby the leader appeals over the party to the electorate for their support base. Usually this would be a result of structural changes to the party giving leaders more formal powers which allows them to bypass various power bases within the party (Poguntke and Webb, 2005:9). The electoral face has three central components, campaign style, media focus and voting behaviour. Campaign style centres on the question of whether there has been a growing emphasis on leadership appeals in election campaigns. Media focus examines whether the media is focussing more on leaders than previously. Voting behaviour examines if leaders are becoming more important in the choices of voters (Poguntke and Webb, 2005:10).

By using a comparative approach and increasing the generalisability of the thesis,⁶ Poguntke and Webb (2005) achieved two things. They succeeded in broadening the debate and they also increased its clarity in definition and conceptualisation as the parameters were more explicitly defined than previously. Also, by providing a clear framework, Poguntke and Webb (2005) highlighted the difference between conditional dominance which is reversible, and has more to do with the individual in office, and structural changes which emerge as a result of a variety of causal factors that alter the dynamic of parliamentary and semi-presidential systems into a 'de-facto presidentialization' arrangement' (Webb et al, 2011:3-5). This distinction is critical to any systematic examination of presidentialization and separates it from the casual observations of media commentators who have asserted that Australian politics is becoming more 'presidential'.

Criticism of Presidentialization

In spite of this, the Poguntke and Webb (2005) thesis has also been criticised from a variety of angles. The critique from core-executive advocates has perhaps best been articulated by Rhodes, Wanna and Weller (2011). Their argument centres on the idea that there are essentially 'four contested and contestable claims' about the presidentialization thesis (2011:86). These are: due to a lack of formal rules around chief ministers that power has become more centralised; that policy making and co-ordination centralisation has increased leadership capacity; that 'pluralization of advice has empowered the chief minister'; and, that the 'personalization of party leadership' has increased attention on the leader. Rhodes, Wanna and Weller (2009: 110–1) further asserted that:

Arguments that the Westminster system has been undermined by presidentialism are not persuasive. All the chatter about presidencies is often a counter to the messiness of court politics and wider party politics. The debate is also instrumental. For example, for Blair's supporters, it was a way of promoting his standing in the party and in the country ... But it matters not that the presidential analogy is misleading because the game is not about empirical accuracy.

A different criticism of the Poguntke and Webb (2005) model has come from Karvonen (2010). This critique is primarily centred on what Karvonen views as the lack of comparability between the data sets in the Poguntke and Webb (2005) volume. In particular, Karvonen (2010: 10) argues that 'the conclusions are not based on comparable empirical efforts'.

While Keith Dowding has provided the most vitriolic critique of the presidentialization thesis to date, arguing that the thesis should 'be expunged from political science vocabulary' (2012:1). Dowding (2012:2) asserts that 'the forces identified as presidentialization are better seen as personalisation of politics'. He also contends that any centralisation of decision making within the executive takes us further away from 'presidentialism' and that any power prime ministers have accrued makes them less like the United States president, not more, because prime ministers have always been more powerful. The personalisation thesis Dowding (2012) was referring to, has been examined by a number of

contributors (see Graetz and McAllister, 1987; Bean and Mughan, 1989; Bean, 1993 as examples). In essence, the personalisation of politics refers to the idea that democratic systems are experiencing fundamental changes 'without any concomitant change in their formal institutional structures' (McAllister, 2005:2).

In *The British Presidency*, Michael Foley (2000:13) argued that '[T]he chief problem with a contentious issue of this nature is that both those who deploy the presidential analogy and those who find it objectionable suffer from a lack of perspective. The former are inclined to overlook the past, while the latter tend to ignore the underlying parallels between different systems'. More than a decade on and very little has changed.

The central contention of this book is that it is only through systematic, historical, comparative case studies that a phenomenon as complex and contested as presidentialization can be adequately theorised and understood. While it is true that we can find similarities across liberal democracies and this is at least partially a result of global changes that affect us all, the unique and idiosyncratic nature of national politics cannot be underplayed. Australia is no exception to this. A distinctive institutional architecture, compulsory voting and publicly funded elections are just part of the mix which produces a brand of politics which has historically been highly leader-centric.

Studying the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party

Another important variable which contributes to the distinctiveness of the Australian polity is the political parties. The view that political parties play a central role in Australian politics is one Jaensch (2006:24), in particular, has expressed, arguing:

When King wrote that the political party's role in Western industrial society today is more limited than would appear from its position of formal pre-eminence, he did not give sufficient attention to Australia, where the parties and the party system are, more than ever, the key to understanding the polity. In Australia, the domain of political parties is almost the same as the domain of politics – almost every aspect of the political system is linked in some way to political parties.

The Poguntke and Webb (2005) presidentialization thesis has seldom been applied to systems where parties are as strong as they are in the

Australian case. The dynamic between leaders and political parties is central to the presidentialization thesis, and it is therefore important to consider the detailed literature which has dealt with the ALP. In particular, in the Poguntke and Webb (2005:7) model, it is this face which is central to the whole thesis as it acts as the conduit between the other faces, namely the executive face and the electoral face. Or in Poguntke and Webb's (2005:7) words, presidentialization revolves 'around the tension between political parties and individual leaders'. This tension between party and leader is particularly prevalent in the FPLP, which has historically been suspicious of leaders.

The literature on the FPLP can generally be grouped into camps. The first is the work of academics which examines changes (or continuity) in the party, and these are usually related to a broader school centred on the declining relevance of political parties (for example, Johnson, 1989 and 2011; Jaensch, 1989; Beilharz, 1994). The second are the biographies and party testimonials, such as *True Believers* (Macintyre and Faulkner, 2001; McMullin, 1991), which despite celebrating defining elements of the party such as the conference or the factions, generally acknowledge that power has often been wielded by a select few, who have altered the destiny of the party.

The tension that exists in democratic leadership, especially within a political party, has been a key theme in much of the literature on the FPLP. This argument has most recently been canvassed in the work of Walter and Strangio in their volume *No, Prime Minister: Reclaiming Politics From Leaders* (2007).⁷ In it, Walter and Strangio (2007:57; see also Jaensch, 2006:26) noted that as far back as 1967, the FPLP leadership was making changes to centralise the power in the hands of the parliamentary leadership. These changes are important and can be seen as similar to changes to the British Labour Party under Neil Kinnock which have been accentuated under Tony Blair. Placed in its historical context, one can see why much of the literature views this as an important moment. The 1966 Federal election was a low point for the ALP electorally. They lost further ground to a post-Menzies coalition, with the result in the House of Representatives giving the Coalition double the amount of members of the FPLP. In Warhurst and Parkin's (2000:34)⁸ view, leader domination is one of the great ironies of the FPLP, considering their emphasis on collective decision making.

A related but different theme in the literature is the debate over where the party is headed and if this is in the right direction. Frequently, this focuses on the effects of a declining membership and the 'death' of the FPLP as a mass party. Warhurst & Parkin (2000:7–8) are key contributors to this debate. They note that 'Labor like other parties, exists in an anti-party age. The very justification for their existence is now frequently questioned'. The declining membership of the FPLP is similar to other major political parties in Western democracies and has been touched on by a number of contributors (Warhurst & Parkin, 2000; Jaensch, 2006; Ward, 2006; Swan, 2002; and Button, 2002).

An accurate figure of FPLP membership is hard to ascertain, with figures provided quite varied, however there is consensus that the membership was until recently at least in decline with former Senator Chris Schacht for example arguing at one stage 'that the ALP membership is about the same as the membership of the Adelaide Football Club. It is a woeful figure' (cited in Jaensch, 2006:28). Jaensch (2006), also views the declining membership as a sign of the party becoming less representative internally and more leader dominated. He argues (2006:30) that over time, the FPLP has shifted from its traditional mass party model towards a catch all and even perhaps cartel model. This has reduced the need for a traditional mass party model, with thousands of branch members actively campaigning. Contributing to this change has been the 'development of oligopolies of factions and unions, and for all parties by public funding' (2006:30). There is some evidence to suggest this slide has been reversed somewhat, but it remains at historically low levels.

A different school of literature, but no less important, is that which examines if power is becoming increasingly centralised in the hands of the parliamentary leadership. Walter (2010) and McAllister (2004) are central protagonists in this debate. In particular, they argue that many functions of the party have been replaced by the role of the prime minister and opposition leaders and that 'weaker voter attachment enhances the role of the leader' (2010:325). This emphasis on greater personalised leadership, according to Walter (2010:331), has increased the strength of leader convictions which in turn has driven policy decisions.

One of the most controversial decisions on FPLP party structure, as acknowledged by many including Ward (2006:72), Warhurst and Parkin

(2000: 29), Manning (1996:37–8) and Button (2002:41–2) is the shift of power away from the state branches and the national conference. While the national conference still theoretically holds the position of the chief decision making body of the party, the parliamentary leadership have all but absolved the conference of responsibility for policy decisions. ‘To some extent, the parliamentary leadership has shifted from being delegates of the working class to being the ‘trustees of party policy’ (Sawer and Zappala, 2001:47). This shift in the locus of power, has prompted Ward to argue that the pledge taken by Labor parliamentarians is merely symbolic and that while ‘the formal constitution of the Labor Party fixes its National Conference at the apex of a pyramid which rises on a base of thousands of local branches of the ALP throughout Australia, in practice not only has the National Conference surrendered power to decide party policy, but Labor’s base of thousands of local branches is also now substantially hollow’ (2006:72–3).

The reasons listed for such a change are varied, but Jaensch argues that even though the FPLP’s structure positions the caucus as ‘delegates of the platform and the membership’, the FPLP have had increasing room to move. While the parliamentary party is a permanent entity, the national conference is only held every two years, meaning the parliamentary wing need to make policy, which can at times differ from the platform (2006:33). As Ward (2006:72) explains, there is a stark contrast to the party of contemporary times and the one of four decades ago:

To grasp how Labor has altered we need only recall the occasion in March 1963 when its federal leader and deputy parliamentary leaders were photographed outside Canberra’s Kingston Hotel awaiting the decision of Labor’s National Executive which was meeting within to decide whether the Labor Opposition would oppose plans by the US to build a communications facility in Australia’s northwest.

Perhaps even more glaring is the fact that in 1966, the national executive almost expelled Gough Whitlam after he referred to them as the ‘12 witless men’. This would be entirely unthinkable in the contemporary party where leaders exert their influence across and over these intra-party institutions, primarily because they are a part of all of them! (Lloyd, 2000b:52).

According to Manning (1996:37–8) and Blewett (2000:388–9) central to the dominance of the leader has been the nature of the campaigns that the party has run. In particular, they argue that since the Hawke period, campaigns have become increasingly presidential and that greater centralisation has moved power even further away from the machine towards the senior factional leaders. The result of which has been to take much of the responsibility for campaigning out of the hands of the organisational wing of the party. The consequences of this shift are that the base, unsurprisingly, feel the party is undemocratic. Walter and Strangio (2007:57) have argued that election results lead to deference to the leader by other members. '[W]hat is undeniable about the dominant parties is that they are capital-intensive, professional, centralised and dependent on the projection of effective leadership. ... this means the leaders can transform party philosophy.

An alternative view in the literature comes from Rodney Cavalier, former NSW State minister. Cavalier concurred with the theory that the dominance is not new, however he has suggested that to understand the dominance of the leadership one has to go even further back into the past: 'Labor has become a cartel party dependent on the unacknowledged largesse of the taxpayer. ... A party does not have to be democratic to survive or prosper. The ALP for much of the time since 1916 is living proof of that. Self-perpetuating oligarchies are the norm for preferment within most parties around the world' (2006:62). Cavalier (2010) is of the belief that 1916 and the battle over conscription destroyed the fabric of the party as this was the year that the affiliated unions took control of the party and they have strangled internal democracy ever since.

Former FPLP leader, Mark Latham (2005a), who also diagnosed a centralisation of power, has gone so far as to give a lecture on 'Ten Reasons Why Young Idealistic People Should Forget about Organised Politics'. Latham advised that being politically active in a political party these days means you wouldn't be joining what people understand political parties to be about 'but a political machine – an oligarchy dominated by opportunism, careerism and acts of bastardry. This is the unhappy story of Labor's culture over the past twenty years' (2005b:5).

The 'machine men' Latham refers to are those who dominate the factions. In a party such as the FPLP, the manner in which leaders could be held to account or how decisions were traditionally made was through

a process of negotiation and compromise with State branches, and more recently with the factions. As Faulkner (2005:82) highlights, when discussing how local members of the ALP are chosen as delegates to attend the national conference, '[U]sually, two of the factions will make a deal to give each other their preferences, ensuring that people at the top of their faction ticket are elected'. However, the factions, especially more recently, have become central to leader domination of the party.⁹ At various points over the last twenty years, some thought the stranglehold of the factions had been broken. For instance, Paul Keating commenting after the election of Latham to the leadership viewed the moment as 'a victory for a new beginning and a defeat for the bankrupt factional operatives' (cited in Donovan, 2004:8). Rodney Cavalier (2006:58) on the other hand, is less optimistic and argues that real changes will only occur once a fundamental change in the relationship between the party and the unions transpires: '[U]nions are the creature of faction; factions are the instrument of unions. They are indivisible. Break union control, and the faction system breaks with it. Workers, note are not part of this equation'. This antipathy is not directed at the unions though. In Cavalier's (2006:59) sights are the careerists who have come to dominate the unions; those who have spent 'a career and working life spent wholly inside the ALP political class'.

Interconnected with the literature on the factions is the body of work which laments changes away from the mass ethos which has produced discontent within the party. Warhurst and Parkin (2000), Ward (2006) and Button (2002) are notable contributors, and they are generally in agreement. In their views, any reform process has either been delayed or ignored by powerbrokers. After each federal election (especially loses), the ritual call for greater internal democracy is heard. Often these make their way into the internal party reviews conducted since the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, the 1978 National Committee of Inquiry had as one of its key terms of reference 'the most effective functioning of the party in terms of the involvement and satisfaction of party members'. Moreover, in almost every review done since this time recommendations proposing greater internal democracy have been made (Warhurst & Parkin, 2000:29).

Once again, the election of Gough Whitlam as leader of the FPLP in 1967 is seen as a crucial point and Warhurst and Parkin (2000:31) argue that:

Increasing the power of the politicians was, after all, one of the explicit goals of the important reforms instituted during and since Gough Whitlam became National Parliamentary leader in 1967. At that time, the National Conference consisted of six members nominated by each State Conference, and did not necessarily include parliamentary leaders. Campaigns by Whitlam and later reforms, most recently in 1994, led to today's larger Conference and revamped executive, which includes the four national parliamentary leaders and each of the State parliamentary leaders and, in practice, a very large representation of elected politicians beyond the leaders.

Ward (2006) and Button (2002) in particular characterise the reform process since this time as largely superficial. In their view, despite the size of the national conference increasing, the situation has, if anything, deteriorated for members, as decisions for policy are either subsequently ratified or the platform ignored. Examples of this behaviour include the sale of uranium to France in the 1980s, refugee policy in 2001, as well as the sale of Qantas and telecommunication policies. Button argues that 'the parliamentary party should not act in defiance of the national conference without some sort of ratification' and that conference delegates are tired of the 'sterile, managed conferences where the outcomes of the debates are pre-determined by factional deals. There are few genuine debates and unity as a media offering is preferred to any public disagreement or robust debate' (2002:41-2). Nevertheless, recent events in the party and the change in the way the federal party select the parliamentary leader have demonstrated that change is possible.

Any investigation that explores political and party leadership is going to encounter a varied and complex literature. Still, some general conclusions can be made based on the literature explored. First and foremost, while many commentators agree that power is increasingly centralised, argument emerges when one tries to identify when this centralisation began, what were the driving forces behind it and what these changes actually mean. Second, while there is general agreement among

All Hail the Leaders

scholars over many of the changes, a lack of systematic studies means much of the debate is still largely anecdotal. Third, that internationally, presidentialization has never been explored using comparative, historical case studies. While in Australia, the debate has rarely been examined systematically. In Mark Bennister's (2012) book *Prime Minister's in Power*, he noted that he was steering 'clear of the definitional minefield of presidentialisation'. This book heads in the opposite direction, digging deeper into what the presidentialization thesis is really all about, in an attempt to provide a coherent, diachronic analysis of political leadership in Australia broadly, and the FPLP specifically.

Framework for Analysis

The central framework employed in this book will, therefore, be the Poguntke and Webb three-face model (see Appendix: Chart 1). However, this book will also include a behavioural aspect as well. While the Poguntke and Webb (2005) model will be very helpful in examining formal rule changes and dramatic exogenous changes, the addition of a behavioural focus will aid in the exploration of norms and endogenous, incremental changes. Moreover, as Australian federal politics has inherited the Westminster parliamentary system along with the fluid nature of conventions, this is a necessary addition so that the way power is exerted in Australian federal politics can be fully conceptualised and theorised.

Thus far, the literature on presidentialization in Australia is minimal at best. While Bennister (2007) used a combination of the presidentialization thesis and the core-executive model to analyse the prime ministership of John Howard compared to Tony Blair, no other long-run in-depth study exists of presidentialization in Australia. Hence, this study has a few aims. First, it will test the presidentialization thesis by examining the Australian case. Second, it will make a theoretical contribution to the literature by highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of one of the more systematic conceptualisations of the thesis, namely, the Poguntke and Webb (2005) model. Third, it will highlight areas of Australian exceptionalism as well as commonality with the findings internationally. Furthermore, while there is a general consensus within the literature that changes started to emerge around 1960 as a result of a variety of causal

factors, this study will examine a leadership period before the year 1960, to determine if changes are as substantial as they are often believed to be.

Examining the presidentialization phenomenon using predominately quantitative analysis would be extremely difficult if not impossible (Poguntke and Webb, 2005; Foley, 2000). As Poguntke and Webb observed, 'How might one quantify presidentialization in a meaningful way?' (2005:347). Fortunately, the Poguntke and Webb (2005) model of presidentialization is conceptually clear enough so that one can look for indicators of presidentialization using primarily qualitative methods. As their model is a work of comparative politics, a large international data-set already exists to compare any changes against. This will mean that any areas of exceptionalism or commonality will be easily identified.

Another difference between this book and the Poguntke and Webb (2005) approach is that they examined the concept comparatively across different nations and regime types. This work will overcome comparability and methodology criticisms (see Karvonen, 2010 for example) by providing a more in-depth historical analysis of the concept of presidentialization within one political system, Australia's. The Poguntke and Webb (2005) study also had country experts identify changes from 1960 onwards and the evidence underpinning presidentialization was assessed through 'the three-dimensional framework which looked at leaders' positions within their party organisations, within national executives (in respect of governing parties), and within electoral arenas' (Webb et al, 2011:3-4). This book will focus on leadership periods of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party (FPLP) over an extended period of time. This includes a case study before the 1960 point, and three after this point to further investigate this claim.

The focus on one party also differs with the Poguntke and Webb (2005) model but clear reasoning exists for this difference. First, in the conceptualisation of presidentialization Poguntke and Webb (2005) developed, political parties were critical to understanding this phenomenon. They noted that it was growing power from and within parties that accentuated leaders' authority in the executive of government, within parties themselves as well as in the way that election campaigns are run (Poguntke and Webb, 2005:336). They also argued that the party face was central to the other faces (Poguntke and Webb, 2005:9). Therefore, by focusing on one party, this volume

All Hail the Leaders

will be able to plunge deeper into the phenomenon in a country with strong parties such as Australia. Adding further weight to this is that it is reasonable to assume that it is within the FPLP rather than its primary opponent in the Australian political system, the Liberal Party, in which the least amount of evidence of presidentialization would be able to be identified. The Liberal Party, created in 1944 under the guidance of Robert Menzies, has placed strong federal parliamentary leaders as one of its key principles (Brett, 2006: 212). The FPLP has traditionally viewed leaders with suspicion and through its complicated web of internal institutions, attempted to provide checks and balances on these leaders.

Cases to Examine

In examining presidentialization in the Australian context, and within the confines of the modern Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, four separate leadership periods were chosen. As one of the three key areas to examine is the executive face, it was critical to select periods in which leaders of the FPLP became prime minister as well. As a starting point, it was decided that the focus of the study was going to be on post-World War Two leaders of the FPLP as the difficulties in comparing the modern FPLP with that of the structure closer to federation would be a difficult task in terms of the ability to access suitable sources. As a result, and with the need to select leaders who were also prime minister in mind, the leadership periods selected were Ben Chifley (1945–51), Gough Whitlam (1967–77), Bob Hawke (1983–91) and Kevin Rudd (2006–10). This left out only Paul Keating and Julia Gillard as leaders of the FPLP who were prime ministers in the post-World War Two period. As the Gillard period and the second Rudd period of office have only recently finished it is difficult to properly analyse those period in office. Moreover, the desire to examine the phenomenon across the longest time span possible also contributed to the omission of the Gillard and Keating periods in office. Hence, four separate periods spanning the latter part of the 1940s and the early 1950s for Chifley, the 1960s and 1970s for Whitlam, the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s for Hawke, and the first decade after the turn of the century for Rudd were selected. The leadership periods were *not* selected based on leadership styles or individual characteristics, but as examples from

each of the periods in which the ALP governed. The closest, in terms of one period finishing and the other beginning are the Whitlam and Hawke periods. Each of these leaders will have experienced a variety of intra-government and external pressures and this plurality of experience will ensure that evaluations over whether leader domination was conditional, or if their capacities had been structurally enhanced, is based in the broadest possible sample within these periods. This is fundamentally important as it has been noted that during the Tony Blair prime ministership, as an example, that he was far more dominant in his early years than his later years (Heffernan, 2012:4). Furthermore, as presidentialization should, in theory, be less evident in the FPLP than in the Liberal Party, charges relating to picking cases based on the dependent variable should not be applicable. There is of course the view in political science, most persuasively put forth by Robert Michels (1962) that social-democratic or 'centre-left' parties have a tendency to become oligarchic. This thesis will not be discounted and will be considered throughout. However, the principal conceptual parameters for this book will remain the Poguntke and Webb (2005) presidentialization model with the addition of the behavioural aspect previously discussed.

Measuring Presidentialization

At the core of the presidentialization thesis is the notion of power and questions such as: Who holds it? How do they exercise it? Have these power resources increased? Power is a much studied, yet amorphous concept in political science. The definition most commonly used is that of Max Weber (1978:53) who argued that '[P]ower is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests'. In Poguntke and Webb's (2005:7) view, autonomy is central to studying power as 'leaders who enjoy greater autonomy have a larger sphere of action in which they are protected from outside interference'. They also argued that their overall power is the 'combination of this protected area and their ability to use all their power resources to overcome potential resistance by others outside this protected area' (2005:7). Therefore, they view increased power as being a result of 'two processes. ... [A] growth of the zones of autonomous control' and 'growing resources to overcome

potential resistance' (2005: 7). Following Poguntke and Webb's (2005) approach, this study will view signs of leaders having the capacity to exert more power or authority over processes and/or institutions as constituting evidence of presidentialization.

Central to Poguntke and Webb's (2005) volume is an investigation into the ways that the capacity of leaders has been structurally enhanced. This proposition has, arguably, defined their understanding and explanation of power and the way it is exercised. This conceptualisation is, however, problematic when applied to a system heavily reliant on conventions such as Australia. Primarily, this has to do with Poguntke and Webb's (2005:5-6) binary approach to what is a conditional and what is a structural factor. The central drawback with this approach, as will be demonstrated throughout this study, is that how power is exercised can often have very little to do with a structural enhancement whereby something formal within these institutions has been altered. Frequently, the sources of leader power are informal and behavioural. While Poguntke and Webb (2005) do discuss the importance of conditional factors which are at times behavioural, this aspect of the framework is not explored as systematically as their exploration of structural change which normally comes in the form of a formal rule change. What this volume will show is that a more dynamic understanding of the 'processes of institutional change' that impact on political leadership could be provided by stretching the parameters of the current framework to include some aspects of constructivist methodology (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:3). Most notably, this would come by integrating norms in to the debate.

While leaders may be able to exercise political power due to structural enhancements as Poguntke and Webb (2005) have clearly shown, they may also exercise it due to the evolution of a norm. The commonly accepted definition of a norm in International Relations (IR) is a 'collective understanding about the proper behaviour of actors within a given identity' (Katzenstein, 1996:5). While the use of norms in IR has become common to help scholars understand the behaviour of actors, it has been used relatively sparsely within political science.¹⁰ However, the integration of a behavioural dimension would greatly improve understanding of the sources of leader power and the ways they exercise this power. Across the four leadership periods examined in this study, the evidence suggests that

the way leaders interact with institutions can also be due to the presence of a norm. These examples will be highlighted throughout.

There is little agreement in the literature on political leadership on how to describe the power of leaders and any increase in this power. Dominance, pre-dominance and pre-eminence are just some of the terms that have been used to describe the amount, as well as the nature of the power that leaders possess (Heffernan, 2003; Bennister, 2012). This book will attempt to overcome these obstacles and sources of confusion by clearly defining which terms will be used and what these terms mean. Dominance in this study will be defined as leaders enjoying a high degree of authority and/or prestige at a given time. However it will not be used as a sign of presidentialization. Dominance and conditionality should also *not* be taken to imply agency. If the actions of leaders as an individual agent are discussed, this study will use the term Poguntke and Webb (2005:7) used, autonomy.

Of course, examining a phenomenon such as presidentialization, in a longitudinal way such as this poses certain problems. Accounting for differences between the periods in terms of the lengths of campaigns and technological innovations, as just a few examples, can be quite difficult. Nevertheless, the Poguntke and Webb (2005) framework, provides the tools to decipher the inter-play between the political context and the structural sources of leader power. Moreover, the addition of the behavioural focus employed in this volume, produces a systematic conceptualisation of the sources of leader power. It also ensures that the contextual, structural, behavioural and institutional components of leadership are adequately analysed.

Structure and Agency

Central to understanding the idea of presidentialization is deciphering whether changes to the system are structural or conditional. Hay (1995:191) noted that 'conceptions of structure and agency are implicit in every explanation and attribution of causality to social and/or political actors'. Conditionality often plays a part when commentators write of how 'presidential' elections have become within parliamentary systems or the way leaders are running their governments. Many of these claims are made without any long-run analysis as evidence. Thus, it is important to

determine whether changes or signs of presidentialization are just a sign of the individual characteristics of individual leaders or something deeper.

But this is not the full story. Determining how (if at all) changes occurred, and if agents actually were able to change how things were done is also important. In general, this study argues that while institutions clearly have an impact on actors, these same actors can play a central role in changing institutions as well. In fact, at various points in this volume, the evidence suggests that agents have at least in some minor way, changed the nature of institutions. The ability of actors to be the drivers of change is especially true in political parties and perhaps even more so in Australia's modern political parties, who have converged around the dominant paradigm of neo-liberalism (Marsh, 2006:125). Of the many positions taken within the structure and agency debate, the approach of this volume takes some cues from Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory. Hay noted that: 'Giddens' aim has been to develop a hybrid theory capable of reconciling, on the one hand, a focus on the structures which are the very condition of social and political interaction, with, on the other hand, sensitivity to the intentionality, reflexivity, autonomy and agency of actors. This he has attempted to achieve through the development of a dialectical understanding of the relationship between structure and agency' (1995:197). In particular, Giddens' view of what agency should be understood as is incorporated throughout. Giddens (1984:9) argued that '[A]gency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing things in the first place'.¹¹ However, this work also recognises the criticisms of Giddens approach. For instance, this approach is not truly dialectical as it 'does not allow us to study the interaction between the two' (Marsh, 2010:216). Any analysis overlooking the interactions between the forces of structure and agency will be incomplete and this book will show how at various stages that changes to Australian federal politics are a product of the interaction between structures and agents who inhabit that system. It is with this in mind that key theoretical dilemmas, namely structural and conditional presidentialization and the capacity of agents to change structures are viewed. Hence, while these are the broad principles that will be employed, this work also adheres to the view that theories about structure and agency should be a guiding orientation rather than a methodology for others to follow (Stones, 2005:5).