**Executive Command Simulation**

**Instructions:** In the following scenario, you and your group are the new Republican president’s top political advisors. Your task is to read through each scenario presented below and choose which option you and your other political advisors think is the best choice for the president to make. (Remember: it is about making the least bad choice.) Read through each scenario and potential choices carefully, as each choice carries with it significant consequences.

In one-two pages, explain your team’s reasoning and how you approached each of the four scenarios. For each scenario, explain the decision-making process your team went through as well as which of the seven roles of the president are evident in each scenario.

**Scenario 1: Trouble in the Middle East (Again)**

You and your staff are looking over the president’s daily briefing from the Central Intelligence Agency. There are troubling reports coming from the country of Olmir. Olmir has been a major regional player over the last 30 years and the United States has looked to Olmir’s president Afif Samad as a source of stability in a very troubled region. However, President Samad’s track record on human rights is appalling. Samad’s secret police have targeted opposition groups and imprisoned them without trial for decades. Freedom of the press is virtually non-existent and there is one-party rule. The People’s Front for the Liberation of Olmir (PFLO) has been a well-armed militia group in the countryside for decades. Recently they have begun an insurgency against the president’s government and have been growing in numbers and strength. CIA reports indicate that PFLO support is growing especially in the capital city. The CIA also indicates that the American embassy may be a potential target for the PFLO as they move closer and closer to the capital.

Option 1) Advise the president to close the American embassy. This would show that the United States will not stand idly by while autocratic regimes oppress their own populations. This would also show that the U.S. Government has no fight with the PFLO. However, this might also signal to other countries in the region that the U.S. will not stand by its allies when things get difficult. Additionally, if Samad’s government were to fall, it’s likely the conflict would turn into a full-fledged civil war and the conflict would spill across the country’s borders. This would likely spur a refugee and humanitarian crisis for Europe that could put strains on their already weak economy.

Option 2) Order the State Department to keep the embassy open and put the marine company on high alert. This will send a message that the United States intends to remain in the region. However, U.S. interests in Olmir could be jeopardized as American officials have looked the other way for years when it came to President Samad’s human rights record. It could also signal to Olmirians that the United States is opposed to a popular uprising that claims to represent the people. This action could force the United States to choose a side in a potential conflict that public opinion is very wary of. A Defense Department report indicates that at least 100,000 American troops would be required if the United States were drawn into war. Casualty estimates vary between 5,000 to 10,000 American lives.

**Scenario 2: The Fox in the Hen House**

The president came into office with only 42% of the vote (a plurality) rather than a majority. He also came in when the economy was in recession and unemployment moved from 5% to 8% during the first three weeks of his term. The Congressional mid-term elections are still a year away and the media has already begun circulating possible primary challengers from your president’s party for the 2020 election. You haven’t even decide which policy proposals to bring before Congress when the list of potential candidates are narrowed down to three. This could spell for a one-term president.

* Senator Denny Kenton from the swing state of Ohio
* Governor Olivia Valentina a popular female governor of a large southern state
* Washington Shelby, an extremely popular ideological talk show host from your political party.

Decide which ONE of the following policy platforms you plan to roll out in order to neutralize a potential political opponent in the next election.

Scenario 1) You recommend the president choose to implement a Balanced Budget Act of 2017 that would bring revenues in line with federal spending. Early whip counts show a divided Congress on this proposal. You were elected on a platform of smaller but more efficient government. However because of the recession, your political opponent in Ohio is experiencing 15% employment. Senator Kenton would like some special legislation or “pork” as well as tax incentives to draw large companies to Cincinnati, Cleveland and Akron. You can implement these provisions into the bill but this would tarnish your image as a fiscal conservative and would bring accusations of pandering to local interests rather than the national one.

Scenario 2) You recommend the president present to Congress the Tax Reduction and Reform Act of 2017. This act would lower federal taxes on individuals making less than $250,000, a very popular policy proposal. However, Governor Valentina believes the president’s administration isn’t “pro business” and “pro job creation.” The govenor believes tax cuts should accompany individuals making above $250,000 in order to stimulate the struggling economy. This proposal might alienate moderate Republicans in your party who feel the Republicans need to shed the image of “Wall Street” Republicans in favor of “Main Street Republicans.” However, should you choose not to adopt the policy you can expect the popular southern governor to possibly mount a primary challenge to you in the 2020 election bringing with her deep pockets of her Wall Street friends.

Scenario 3) Since the president came into office 11 months ago, he has been under constant assault from the more ideological elements of the party, including the populist talk radio host Washingon Shelby. Shelby was a one-time Congressman from a border state who left the Congress to spread his populist hard-liner immigration policy. Shelby believes that as Americans are struggling to find work, undocumented Americans who the previous president refused to deport are taking American jobs. Shelby wants more border security including a reinforced concrete wall between the United States and Mexico. Shelby was a harsh critic of the previous administration’s executive order that allowed undocumented immigrants to stay permanently in the United States. Shelby is a darling for “talking heads” of the conservative media and there’s no doubt if he were to launch a challenge in 2020, it would force the president to move to the right, alienating moderate members of the party’s elite. Option three would be to undo the your predecessor’s executive order, this would allow some 5,000,000 undocumented Americans to be subject to deportation. This would take the wind out of Shelby’s sails and play well to the political base of your party but would certainly alienate Latino voters the Republicans have been trying to court for the last few years.

**Scenario 3: Trade Talks**

Over the last three decades Bianjia has become the world’s second largest economy and the most powerful Asian economy. The Bian economy relies mainly on chief exports to western nations. As a result many solid manufacturing jobs in the U.S. and Europe have moved overseas. The Bians have flooded western markets with cheaper goods which is great for western consumers but led to the fall of the “Rust Belt” in America’s mid-western region. The Bianese also notoriously manipulate their currency. This means that it makes it easier for the Bianese to sell their goods abroad and more difficult for American companies to sell their good in Bianjia. The government in Bianjia is a strict authoritarian regime that tries to limit political freedoms to its over one billion people while at the same time allowing some economic freedoms. Nevertheless, the Bianese government is extremely sensitive to any mention of its human rights abuses towards its citizens who speak out.

The president will be flying to Bianjia for very high profile trade talks with the Bianese Premier Xiang Jing. The Bianese are expected to stabilize their currency and more importantly a free trade agreement might be on the table that would allow high demand American consumer goods onto the shelves of a burgeoning Bianese middle class. Premier Jing has made it clear that there will be absolutely no discussion of human rights during these week-long negotiations. Any discussion of human rights would completely jeopardize the trade deal.

Jing is particularly concerned with one of its dissident political exiles living in the United States, Hui Zan. Zan is an outspoken human rights advocate and a harsh critic of the Bianese government. Zan’s organization has planned a 100,000 march on the National Mall the week before the President’s trip to Bianjia. Zan and his human rights organization are planning to raise further awareness of human rights atrocities in Asia, especially in Bianjia. Premier Jing is furious when he finds out that Zan will be the keynote speaker and threatens to cancel the entire summit unless there is no march in Washington D.C.

Option 1) Recommend to the president to continue the trade talks and telephone Zan to ask that the march be postponed. It’s likely that Zan will listen to the president as human rights has been a major concern for the president, especially in Africa. However this could become a public relations nightmare and endanger the president’s image as a defender of human rights. It would also suggest that the president is to weak to stand up to the Bianese government, something critics have claimed for years as the Bianese navy has begun expanding its sphere of influence in Asia. This would also play well to the president’s critics who claim he is soft on defense and can be bullied and could become a major issue if someone from his party were to challenge him for the nomination in 2020. This would also hurt the president’s image at the United Nations. The president has been putting together a fragile coalition of countries who have committed troops to peacekeeping operations in West and Southern Africa. Should the president appear to cave to the Bianese government it could cast doubt on the president’s commitment to human rights.

Option 2) Recommend to the president to cancel the summit. No deal will be possible now as it took years to get the Bianese to agree to this summit. The recession-ridden Rust Belt which is home to several important battleground states could use the jobs that could come up freer trade with Bianjia. An economic recovery in Ohio and Pennsylvania could bring much needed electoral votes for the president in 2020.

**Scenario 4: Government Showdown**

The general election is a little over a year away and no primary challengers have yet to officially enter the race. Several notable Republicans have toyed with the idea but have yet to officially declare their candidacy. Many are watching to see how the president’s new spending bill goes through Congress. The president has submitted his budget to Congress and committees have voted on and added amendments in both chambers. However, Congress decided to create an omnibus bill to fund the government for the next fiscal year. Rather then many separate bills, the omnibus bill is one large bill to fund the government through the next fiscal year. This means that all government spending is in one very large bill rather than numerous individual pieces of legislation.

Democrats in both chambers, most notably in the Senate, are upset with the number of cuts the administration proposed during the economic recession. Under the new spending bill social spending has been cut by 25% and defense spending by 15% in order to combat the effects of a recession economy. Further taxes are proposed down in order to stimulate the economy. Democrats however are furious and demand a spending package that would attempt to stimulate the economy through government spending. The president is firmly opposed to any bill that raises spending without another tax cut. Obviously Democrats do not favor this. Senate Democrats have vowed to attach amendments that would make it impossible for the president to sign the bill into law.

Democrats in the Senate have attached what is called a “poison pill” to the bill. Meaning if the president were to sign the omnibus bill it would be very painful for him literately to swallow.

Democrats have attached a measure to the bill that would reauthorize the federal government to spend money on funding Planned Parenthood. If the president were to sign the omnibus bill this amendment would be it would reauthorize some 500 million towards the controversial organization.

Option 1) Recommend the president to sign the spending bill. This would avoid a government shutdown. Even though most federal workers would continue to remain on the job during the shutdown, it avoids the political mess that would result in trying to blame one side for the shutdown. Plus, one year before the general election the last thing that a president needs on his plate is a disastrous shutdown. However avoiding the shutdown would allow for Planned Parenthood to be refunded and would definitely cause the conservative base of the Republican Party to possibly search for a primary challenger to the president. The president would like to go into the election season focusing more on the Democratic opponent and less on members of his own party. Should he signed into law something that is unpopular with religious conservatives, he might find himself with a very difficult primary  Challenger, such as Washington Shelby on his hands. While this would keep the government running and lower taxes and spending, it would play into the Democrats hands showing a divided Republican Party on social issues.

Option 2) Recommend to the president to veto the spending bill. This would show the conservative members of the presidents party that he's going to stand at the Democrats attempt to risk a government shutdown to find a program he does not support.

However a presidential veto would not be able to be overridden by the Congress. The president does not have a two-thirds majority to override. The consequence would be a government shutdown. This will dominate the media cycle as the president is kicking off his campaign for a second term. It would be very risky because it is very difficult to tell which the public opinion would blame for the shutdown, the present or the Democrats in Congress. Thus the president would have to go into the holiday season with a government that is officially shut down and spend valuable time hammering out a new compromise with Democrats in the Senate, valuable time that could be spent in Iowa and New Hampshire marshaling support for the long race to a second term.