Presidential Rankings and Skowronek's (1993) Regimes

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** Work In Progress **

Introduction

The motivation for this blog post arose from preparing course materials for POL 322 (U.S. Presidency) at Stony Brook. The lecture topic was about presidents as individuals and presidential personality. One of the readings, from a book titled *Debating the Presidency* (2020), presented the following idea: Presidential success and failure are better explained by political time aand the strength of governing coalitions than by a president's character and leedership qualities.

Stephen Skowronek (1993) questions how presidents, as leaders of the executive branch, shape politics around them. He presents an argument for their being four (4)

For more details on the C-SPAN survey see https://www.c-span.org/presidentsurvey2021/?page=overall.

```
# Read in data
dat <- readODS::read_ods(path = '/Volumes/SDCARD/President_Project.ods')


# Format dates
dat$Term_Start2 <- as.Date(dat$Term_Start, format = '%m/%d/%Y')

dat$Term_End2 <- as.Date(dat$Term_End, format = '%m/%d/%Y')

dat$Term_Days <- dat$Term_End2 - dat$Term_Start2


# Add in presidents who were first VPs and took over after POTUS passed
dat$Year_Elected2 <- car::recode(dat$Year_Elected, "NA=0")


dat$Year_Term_Start <-ifelse(dat$Year_Elected2 != 0, dat$Year_Elected2,
```

```r
                    ifelse(dat$President == 'John Tyler', 1841,
                    ifelse(dat$President == 'Millard Fillmore', 1850,
                    ifelse(dat$President == 'Andrew Johnson', 1865,
                    ifelse(dat$President == 'Chester Arthur', 1881,
                    ifelse(dat$President == 'Calvin Coolidge', 1923,
                    ifelse(dat$President == 'Harry S. Truman', 1945,
                    ifelse(dat$President == 'Lyndon B. Johnson', 1963,
                    ifelse(dat$President == 'Gerald Ford', 1974, NA)))))))))


# First line plot to show relationship
plot(dat$Year_Term_Start, dat$`C-SPAN_Rank2021`, type = 'b', ylim = c(0,50),
     xlab = 'Year POTUS Term Starts', ylab = 'C-SPAN 2021 POTUS Ranking',
     main = 'C-SPAN POTUS Ranking across Time
(Vertical Bars Denote Skowronek\'s Regimes)')
abline(v = 1800, lty = 3)
abline(v = 1828, lty = 3)
abline(v = 1860, lty = 3)
abline(v = 1932, lty = 3)
abline(v = 1980, lty = 3)
```
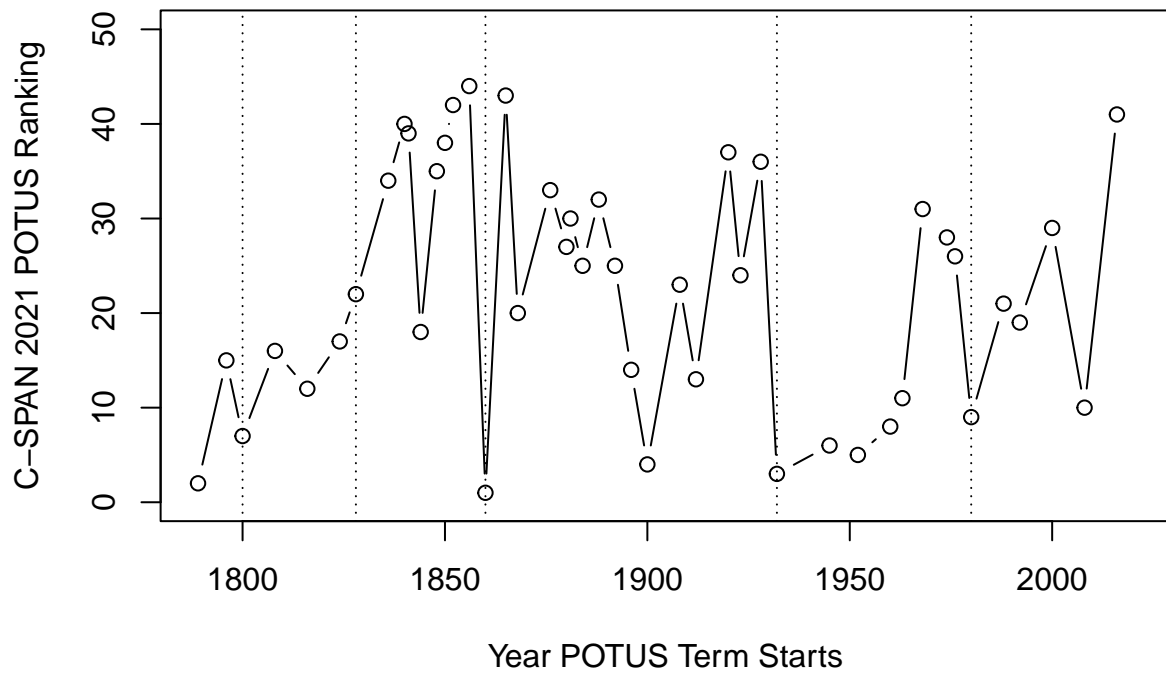
C−SPAN POTUS Ranking across Time
(Vertical Bars Denote Skowronek's Regimes)

Trends Over Time

The argument, based on the plot above, appears plausible.

```r
# Switching to ggplot as breaks are easier
library(ggplot2)


ggp <- ggplot(dat, aes(Year_Term_Start, `C-SPAN_Rank2021`)) +
  geom_line() + geom_point() +
  theme_classic() + ylim(0,50)


# Store points within each regime time
ggp_info <- ggplot_build(ggp)$dat[[2]][ ,1:2]


ggp_info_range1 <- ggp_info[ggp_info [ , 1] >= 1789 &
                                ggp_info[ , 1] < 1800, ]
ggp_info_range2 <- ggp_info[ggp_info [ , 1] >= 1800 &
                                ggp_info[ , 1] < 1828, ]
```

```r
ggp_info_range3 <- ggp_info[ggp_info [ , 1] >= 1828 &
                              ggp_info[ , 1] < 1860, ]
ggp_info_range4 <- ggp_info[ggp_info [ , 1] >= 1860 &
                              ggp_info[ , 1] < 1932, ]
ggp_info_range5 <- ggp_info[ggp_info [ , 1] >= 1932 &
                              ggp_info[ , 1] < 1980, ]
ggp_info_range6 <- ggp_info[ggp_info [ , 1] >= 1980 &
                              ggp_info[ , 1] < 2020, ]


# Plot again but add OLS line to each regime
ggp2 <- ggplot(dat, aes(Year_Term_Start, `C-SPAN_Rank2021`))+
  geom_line() + theme_classic() +
  geom_point() +
  geom_smooth(data = ggp_info_range1, aes(x, y),
              col = 'red', method = 'lm', se = F) +
  geom_smooth(data = ggp_info_range2, aes(x, y),
              col = 'red', method = 'lm', se = F) +
  geom_smooth(data = ggp_info_range3, aes(x, y),
              col = 'red', method = 'lm', se = F) +
  geom_smooth(data = ggp_info_range4, aes(x, y),
              col = 'red', method = 'lm', se = F) +
  geom_smooth(data = ggp_info_range5, aes(x, y),
              col = 'red', method = 'lm', se = F) +
  geom_smooth(data = ggp_info_range6, aes(x, y),
              col = 'red', method = 'lm', se = F)


# Final plot -- adding titles and vertical lines
ggp2 + labs(title = 'C-SPAN POTUS Rankings Across Time
(Vertical Lines Denote Skowronek\'s Political Regimes)',
            x = 'Year', y = 'C-SPAN 2021 POTUS Ranking') +
  theme(plot.title = element_text(hjust = 0.5)) +
  geom_vline(xintercept = 1800, linetype = "dashed",
```
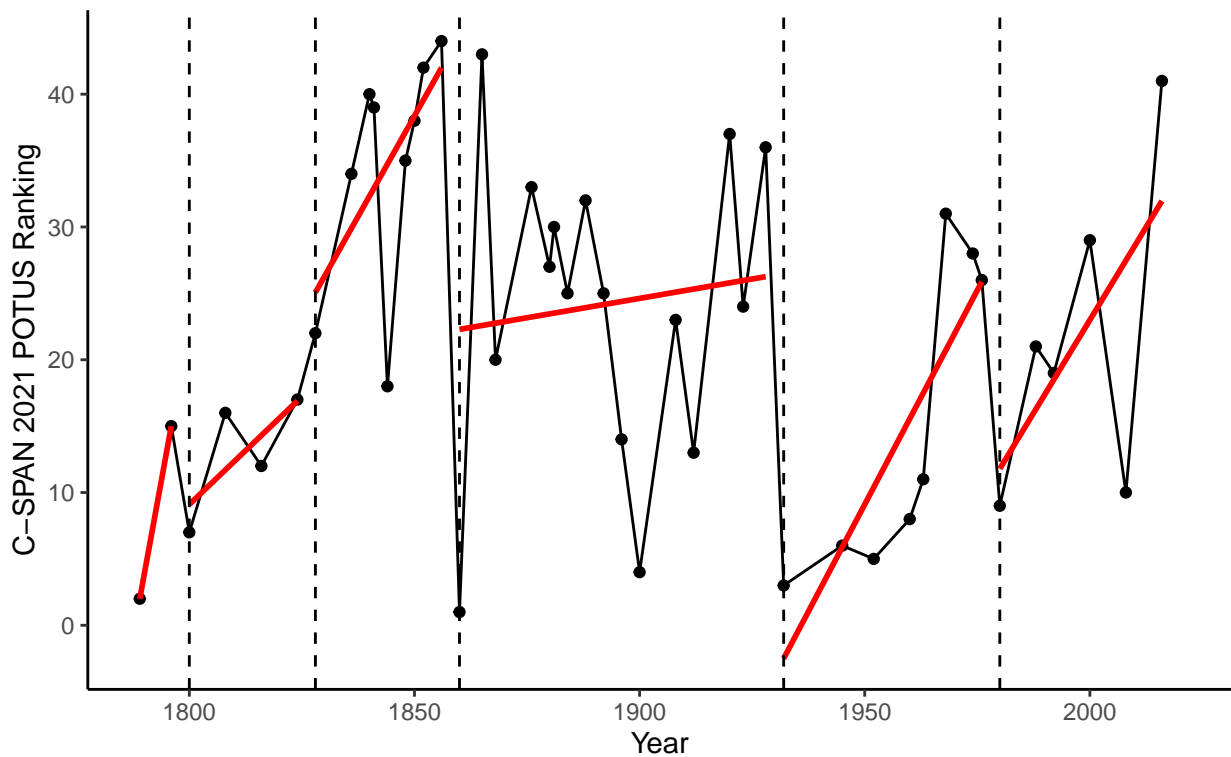
```
                color = "black", linewidth = .5) +
geom_vline(xintercept = 1828, linetype = "dashed",
                color = "black", linewidth = .5) +
geom_vline(xintercept = 1860, linetype = "dashed",
                color = "black", linewidth = .5) +
geom_vline(xintercept = 1932, linetype = "dashed",
                color = "black", linewidth = .5) +
geom_vline(xintercept = 1980, linetype = "dashed",
                color = "black", linewidth = .5)
```

C−SPAN POTUS Rankings Across Time
(Vertical Lines Denote Skowronek's Political Regimes)

References

Ellis, Richard J., and Michael Nelson. 2020. *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive (5th Edition)*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Skowronek, Stephen. 1993. *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.