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Book Review: Running Alone: Presidential Leadership from JFK to Bush II: Why It Has Failed and How We Can Fix It, by James MacGregor Burns

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Basic Books

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Burns, James MacGregor. **Running alone: presidential leadership from JFK to Bush II: why it has failed and how we can fix it.** BasicBooks, 2006. 278p ISBN 0465008321, \$26.00; ISBN 9780465008322, \$26.00.

James MacGregor Burns has been writing insightful books about presidential leadership since the early 1960s. In this volume, he attempts to discover the source of the leadership failures of the presidency of the past 40 years. Burns looks to the 1960 Kennedy presidential campaign as the beginning of the end of robust presidential leadership. In 1960, Kennedy "invented a new brand of political campaigning" and created a "new route to the presidency. After him, most candidates would no longer see party leadership as essential to their ambitions." From that point forward, candidates adopted personal, not party leadership as their model, and to Burns this has had "grave consequences." Detached from the lubricating as well as the controlling element of party leadership, presidents were free to run alone but then were forced to govern alone. And it is in governing that presidents needed the party mechanism to join what the framers separated: the presidency and the Congress. Burns reviews the modern presidents and finds them wanting, suggesting in the end a stronger link of president to party.

—M. A. Genovese, *Loyola Marymount University*

Summing Up: Highly recommended. General readers, lower- and upper-division undergraduates.