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president, *n.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /'prezɪd(ə)nt/, U.S. /'prez(ə)dnt/,

/'prezə,dent/

Forms:

α. ME **presedente**, ME **presidens** (plural), ME–15 **presidente**, ME–15 **presydent**, ME–16 **presedent**, ME–**president**, 16 **praesident**; U.S. regional 19– **preseyedent** (*south-east.*), 19– **prezzydent** (*south-east.*), 19– **prisidint** (*New Hampshire*); Sc. pre-17 **praesident**, pre-17 **presedent**, pre-17 **presidence** (plural), pre-17 **presydent**, pre-17 17– **president**.

β. lME **precident**, lME **precidente**, lME **precydent**, lME–15 **precedent**; Sc. pre-17 **precedent**, pre-17 **precident**, pre-17 **precidente**, pre-17 **precydent**, pre-17 **procedant**.

Frequency (in current use):

Origin: Of multiple origins. Partly a borrowing from French. Partly a borrowing from Latin. **Etymons:** French *president*; Latin *praesident-*, *praesidēns*.

Etymology: < Anglo-Norman and Middle French *president* (French *président*) appointed or elected head of any gathering (c1296 in Old French) and its etymon classical Latin *praesident-*, *praesidēns* governor, in post-classical Latin also head of a Christian community (early 3rd cent. in Tertullian), head of an academic institution (a1350, 16th cent. (frequently) in British sources), use as noun of present participle of *praesidēre* PRESIDE *v.* Compare Old Occitan *president* (c1350), Catalan *president* (14th cent.), Spanish *presidente* (1385 as *presidentes* , plural; compare PRESIDENTE *n.*), Portuguese *presidente* (15th cent.), Italian *presidente* (a1342). Compare PRESIDENT *adj.* Other senses of the English word are not paralleled in French until later, e.g. sense 1a (1553) and sense 4 (1792).

In *President of the Immortals* at sense 1b after ancient Greek *μακάρων πρότασις* (Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 169).

1.

a. The appointed governor or lieutenant of a province, or other division of a country, as a colony, city, etc. Also: *spec.* the governor of a factory or province in India under the East India Company (cf. PRESIDENCY *n.* 3a). Now *hist.*

- ▶a1382 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) (Bodl. 959) 3 Esdras v. 63 Þer camen of preestis & of leuytis & of presidentis [L. *praesidentibus*] after þe townes to þe elderes þat hadden seen þe raþer hous.
- ▶c1384 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) (Douce 369(2)) (1850) Deeds xxiii. 24 Make 3e redy iumentis, or hors, that thei puttinge Poul vpon, schulden lede him saf to Felix, president [L. *praesidem*].
- c1435 LYDGATE *St. George* (Bodl.) in *Englische Studien* (1910–11) 43 18 (MED) Agayn Cristene þer was a tyrant sent..Of peynym lawe he was a president.
- c1480 (▶a1400) *St. Lucy* 192 in W. M. Metcalfe *Legends Saints Sc. Dial.* (1896) II. 392 Befor kingis quhen 3e sal stand or befor precydentis of þe land.
- 1520 *Chron. Eng.* iv. f. 31^v/1 Vitellus that was Presydent of Fraunce chalenged the Empyre.

- 1554 D. LINDSAY *Dialog Experience & Courteour* III. sig. M.viii Ponce Pylat, the precedent, Said to thame, I am Innocent of the Iust Blude, of Christ Iesus.
- 1604 E. GRIMESTON tr. J. de Acosta *Nat. & Morall Hist. Indies* VI. xx. 475 They said Pizarre was afterwards vanquished, taken, and executed by the President Guasca.
- 1607 J. COWELL *Interpreter* sig. Eee^v/2 President..is vused in the Common law for the kings Lieutenant in any Prouince or function: as President of Wales, of Yorke, of Barwick. President of the Kings Councell.
- 1625 S. PURCHAS *Pilgrimes* II. ix. IV. 1793 At a consultation in Swally Road, the fourteenth of Nouember, 1621, commission was giuen by Master Thomas Rastell President, and the Counsell of the Merchants of Surat, [etc.].
- 1683 *Britanniæ Speculum* 148 They wrote to Ætius, then President of Gallia, this short but lamentable Epistle.
- 1729 J. DISNEY *View Anc. Laws* ix. §2 315 He gave liberty also to the Bishops, in concert with the President of the Province, to conuene those that had so compelled them, or hindred their quitting.
- 1777 R. WATSON *Hist. Reign Philip II* I. x. 285 When the States found that the governor was equally deaf to the remonstrances of the president, as he had been to theirs, they began to dread the effects of his displeasure.
- 1823 *Times* 21 June 3/2 The case recently brought by Mr. Sergeant Rough, late President of the colony, before the Privy Council.
- 1863 M. HOWITT tr. F. Bremer *Greece & Greeks* I. vi. 190 The presidents are changed, and the advocates of order are often compelled to fly before the power of the lawless.
- 1891 E. ABBOTT *Pericles & Golden Age Athens* xii. 175 The government was a close oligarchy, the supreme council being formed by the heads of the tribes, of whom one was chosen annually to be the President of the city.
- 1914 W. H. DAWSON *Munic. Life & Govt. Germany* ii. 51 Supervision is exercised in the case of Prussian towns through the Chief Presidents of Provinces, the Government or District Presidents, and the District Committees.
- 1938 *Eng. Hist. Rev.* **53** 172 The notable administration of Gerald Aungier as President of Surat and Governor of Bombay in the reign of Charles II.
- 1999 J. G. PEARD *Race, Place, & Med.* i. 28 Already in 1853 João Maurício Wanderley, then president of the province, had pointed to a litany of woes plaguing the Santa Casa hospital.

b. A presiding god, guardian, or patron. In later use only in *President of the Immortals*.

- a1522 G. DOUGLAS tr. Virgil *Æneid* X. v. 97 O blyssyt moder of the goddis..be thou in batall now my president [L. *princeps*].
- 1567 A. GOLDING tr. Ovid *Metamorphosis* (new ed.) VI. f. 74^v At this match..Was neyther Iuno, President of marriage [L. *pronuba Iuno*] wont to bee.
- 1615 H. CROOKE *Μικροκοσμογραφια* 238 The Nymphes are sayed to bee presedents or dieties of the fountaines.
- c1650 *Don Bellianis* 216 I do most humbly beseech you (sole president of Divine Excellency..) to let me kiss the wonder of your hands.

- 1699 J. POTTER *Archæologiæ Græcæ* II. III. xx. 165 The Tutelar Deities of the Place, and Presidents of the Sea.
- 1708 in J. Hughes *Lett. Eminent Persons Deceased* (1772) 269 Great president of light and eye of day, As through this glass you cast your visual ray, Confess, that, in your progress round the sphere, You've found the happiest youths and brightest beauties here.
- 1891 T. HARDY *Tess* III. lix. 277 'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Æschylean phrase), had ended his sport with Tess.
- 1898 A. LANG *Making Relig.* xvii. 317 In polytheism that conception is necessarily obscured, showing itself dimly either in the *Prytanis*, or President of the Immortals, such as Zeus; or in Fate.
- 1942 C. MORLEY *Thorofare* v. 378 You don't know how lucky you were: the President of the Immortals had the lines all laid for you to run respectful in the groove and end up just a provincial clerk or a shopman like me. How did you slip your mooring?
- 1986 R. BARNARD *Bodies* iv. 30 Mrs. Cordle's outburst was at once an expression of complete mystification and a personal protest to the President of the Immortals.

2. An appointed or elected head of any gathering, who presides over meetings and proceedings.

a. *gen.*

- c1390 *Pistel of Swete Susan* (Vernon) 304 Þou hast Ibe presedent, þe peple to steere, Þou dotest nou on þin olde tos in þe dismale.
- 1417 in T. Rymer *Fœdera* (1709) IX. 435 (*MED*) And ther my Lord of Chester, the Presedent [L. *Præses*] of þour Nation, hadd his Wordis to hym in swych a wyse.
- †a1475 J. FORTESCUE *Governance of Eng.* (Laud) (1885) 148 (*MED*) Þe chaunceler..mey be presydent and haue þe suppreme rule off all þe counsell.
- a1538 T. STARKEY *Dial. Pole & Lupset* (1989) 122 Of the wych [council] the kyng schold be hede & presydent.
- 1560 J. DAUS tr. J. Sleidane *Commentaries* f. clxxvii^v He would assigne some to be as presidentes of the disputation.
- 1641 in J. Rushworth *Hist. Coll.: Third Pt.* (1692) I. 294 Because all meetings of many must be disorderly,..unless there be one to guide and to direct the rest, I shall desire, that in every Shire, over every Presbytery, we may establish one President.
- 1663 J. TAYLOR *Serm. Funeral Abp. Armagh* 44 He receiv'd publick thanks from the Convocation, of which he was President.
- 1742 J. GLAS *Treat. Lords Supper* v. vi. 241 The Elder, who is distinguished..by the Name President, is he who presided ordinarily in the Assemblies of the Church and had the chief Direction in their Order and Discipline.
- 1781 GIBBON *Decline & Fall* II. xvii. 35 After the office of Roman consuls had been changed into a vain pageant,..the præfects..were soon acknowledged as the ordinary presidents of that venerable assembly.
- a1827 W. HICKEY *Mem.* (1918) II. xxi. 288 'Let these twenty people dine together twice a week,..each person ordering a dinner at which he is to preside..' The rules were simple..the President for the day to discharge the bill,..the proprietor of the [tavern] to send in his bill..to the residence of the President.

- 1877 *Times* 21 Dec. 3/3 M. Lepère..President of the group of decided Republicans, has been appointed Under-Secretary for the Interior.
- 1977 *Times* 6 Dec. (Europa Suppl.) p. iii./5 President: title enjoyed for six months by each member state in turn. The country holding the presidency chairs meetings of the *Council*.
- 1990 *Methodist Recorder* 7 June 10/4 In Methodism we are never without a President. Like the monarchy 'the President is dead, long live the President'.

b. The head of a religious house or college of priests; (also) a person who presides over the chapter of a cathedral or collegiate church. Now *rare*.

In quot. 1690-1700: the person in charge of a hospital.

- c1410 tr. R. Higden *Polychron.* (St. John's Cambr.) (1879) VII. 165 Elfworde, bisshop of Londoun and somtyme abbot of Evesham..wolde have bene president [L. *præsidere*] at Evesham.
- c1451 J. CAPGRAVE *Life St. Gilbert* 89 (MED) Þou spak to me, þi seruaunt, þat I schuld take up-on me to be president ouyr þis puple [sc. the Gilbertines].
- ?a1475 (þ?a1425) tr. R. Higden *Polychron.* (Harl. 2261) (1876) VI. 385 (MED) Alurede..made ij monasterys, oon of men..an oþer of women..where he made Ethelgof, his doþhter, presidente [a1387 J. Trevisa tr. abbess].
- a1513 H. BRADSHAW *Lufe St. Werburge* (1521) I.xxiii. sig. h.iiii [She] Consyderynge her selfe, a lady and presydent Ordered her monasteryes.
- 1519 in J. T. Fowler *Memorials Church SS. Peter & Wilfrid, Ripon* (1882) I. 315 Master Newman, Precedent of the Chapitor of Ripon.
- 1579 in J. Robertson *Illustr. Topogr. & Antiq. Aberdeen & Banff* (1857) III. 399 With consent of the precedent and chaptur of Abirdene.
- 1603 in E. Gibson *Codex* (1713) I. 379 Canon 1603..li... The Deans, Presidents, and Residentiaries of any Cathedrel or Collegiate Church, shall suffer no stranger to Preach unto the People in his Churches.
- ?1625 F. GODWIN *Succession of Bishops of Eng.* 363 A Deane to be the President of the Chapter, and a Subdeane to supply his place in absence.
- 1690–1700 *Order of Hospitalis* sig. Civ^v These xiiij persons or vij of them at the leaste, the President being one of the Number.
- 1703 W. WAKE *State of Church & Clergy of Eng.* ii. 73 The President of the Chapter, by, and with, the Consent of his Brethren, and fellow Canons, decreed that they would proceed with the Convocation.
- 1742 J. GLAS *Treat. Lords Supper* v. vi. 241 The Elder, who is distinguished..by the Name President, is he who presided ordinarily in the Assemblies of the Church and had the chief Direction in their Order and Discipline.
- 1779 S. RUDDER *New Hist. Gloucestershire* 133 In 1222, he..was appointed a president of the chapter of the benedictines at Bermondsey.
- 1840 *Times* 21 Nov. 6/3 Archdeacon Torrens, the President of the Chapter, will, I am informed, if possible, hold himself neutral.
- 1950 *Times* 11 July 4/7 To-day the King on the right hand and the Queen on the left walked together, followed by Princess Margaret, in procession behind the sixty-seventh Bishop of Exeter..and the

.....
 President of the Chapter, the Bishop Suffragan of Crediton.

c. A title applied to the heads of certain colleges of British universities;
 (U.S.) the most usual title for the head of a college or university.

Also applied to the heads of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons in London, Edinburgh, and Ireland, and of a number of colleges for professional education.

- 1448 in *Communic. Cambr. Antiquarian Soc.* (1851) 9 38 (MED) This indenture made..between master Andrew Dokett, president of the Quene college of seynt Margret and seynt Barnard..and John Veyse.
- 1464 *Rolls of Parl.* V. 518/1 Felawes and Scolers, President and Felawes of any College, Halle, Hospitall, Hous incorporate, or any other place.
- 1530 T. CROMWELL in R. B. Merriman *Life & Lett. T. Cromwell* (1902) I. 329 He..was ons elect presydent of Maudlen Colledge.
- 1577 W. HARRISON *Hist. Descr. Islande Brit.* II. vi. f. 79^v/2, in R. Holinshed *Chron.* I There is..in euery house a Maister, who hath vnder him a president, and certeine Censors or Deanes, appointed to looke to the behaiour, & maner of the Studentes there.
- ?1625 F. GODWIN *Succession of Bishops of Eng.* 682 Owen Oglethorp, Doctor of Diuinity, Deane of Windsor, and President of Magdalen Colledge in Oxord.
- 1642 in *Rec. Mass. Bay* (1853) II. 30 Together with the teaching elders of the sixe next adioyning townes..and the president of the colledge [sc. Harvard] for the time being.
- 1695 C. MATHER *Johannes in Eremo* 78 The next [sc. child] is at this Time, Living, the Comfort of One Well known in both Englands, namely Increase Mather, the President of Harvard Colledge, and the Teacher of a Church in Boston.
- 1725 G. BERKELEY *Proposal supplying Churches* (rev. ed.) 21 Which college is to contain a president and nine fellows.
- 1780 in *New Hampsh. Hist. Soc. Coll.* IX. III Respecting the College what accounts you have received officially from the President I am unable to say.
- 1807 *Laws Union Coll.* (Hall) 37–38 No class meetings shall be held without special license from the President.
- 1844 *Times* 20 Jan. 3/5 The Venerable Dr. Routh, President of Magdalen College, has sent a letter to the committee.
- 1888 J. BRYCE *Amer. Commonw.* III. cii. 435 A visitor from Europe is struck by the prominence of the president in an American university or college, and the almost monarchical position which he sometimes occupies.
- 1916 A. LEFFINGWELL *Ethical Probl.* xv. 233 Sir Douglas Powell, President of the Royal College of Physicians..was asked whether the laws at present governing vivisection ‘have been in any way noxious to Science?’
- 1956 E. F. SEKLER *Wren & his Place in European Archit.* 44 In 1664 Ralph Bathurst, a member of the Royal Society, became President of Trinity College, Oxford.
- 1999 *Belfast News Let.* (Nexis) 14 Jan. 12 The cemetery is the last resting place of several notable Ulstermen, including..the Rev J Leslie Porter, President of Queen's College, Belfast.
- 2006 *Arizona Republic* (Nexis) 1 Jan. 4 E The novel opens with a letter 15-year-old Ellen sends to the president of Harvard University, asking to be admitted early.

d. The person elected to preside over the meetings and proceedings of a literary, scientific, etc., academy or society.

- 1664 B. GERBIER *Counsel to Builders* sig. d1 To the Right Honourable Lord Brunckhord, Viscount Iyons in Ireland, President of the Royal Society of Phylosophers Meeting at Gresham Colledg.
- 1667 T. SPRAT *Hist. Royal-Soc.* 93 Their Chief Officer, is the President; to whom it belongs to call, and dissolve their meetings;..to regulate the Proceedings [etc.].
- 1756 T. BIRCH *Hist. Royal Soc.* I. 6 That the standing officers of the society be three, a president or director, a treasurer, and a register.
- 1780 *Pennsylv. Acts* (1782) 15 Mar. They [sc. the American Philosophical Society] shall have the following officers..one president, three vice-presidents, four secretaries [etc.].
- 1842 *Rules Philol. Soc.* iii The Council..shall consist of the President, the Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, 1 or 2 Honorary Secretaries, and twenty ordinary members.
- 1872 *Times* 12 Mar. 11/6 He [sc. Dr. Goldstücker] was president of the Philological Society, and well known in many of the literary societies of London.
- 1902 *Charter of Brit. Acad.* 8 Aug. §5 There shall be a President and a Council of the Academy. The President and the Council shall be elected by the Fellows from amongst their own number.
- 1939 W. A. ROBSON *Govt. & Misgovt. of London* III. iv. 348 Such politically irresponsible persons as the president of the Law Society, the president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, and the chairman of the Committee of London Clearing Bankers.
- 1996 *Blueprint* July–Aug. 14/5 The man behind this triumph of deconstructivism, in fact, is none other than the President of the Royal Academy, Philip Dowson.

e. *N. Amer.* The head officer of a company, who handles the day-to-day management of the company.

The president may sometimes report to a board of directors, headed by a chairman, which has ultimate control over the company.

- 1762 *New Syst. Geogr.* 74 The several opulent Companies, which have been, from time to time, established at Copenhagen, every one of which has its own president, directors, and other officers.
- 1781 *Jrnls. Continental Congr. (U.S.)* 31 Dec. [To] be a corporation..by the name and stile of ‘The President, Directors and Company of the Bank of North America’.
- 1798 *Mass. Statutes* 1 Mar. The Massachusetts Mutual Fire Insurance Company..shall have power to choose a President..and fifteen Directors.
- 1808 *S. Carolina Statistics* VIII. 245 President of the South Carolina Homespun Company.
- 1830 *Mass. Statistics* 12 Mar. The said directors [of the Massachusetts Rail-road Corporation] shall elect one of their number to be president of the board, who shall also be president of the corporation.
- 1883 E. A. FREEMAN *Some Impressions U.S.* xii. 192 In England..we never, I think, give it [sc. the title] to the head of a purely commercial body. But in America we find the President of a railroad and the President of a bank—that is, what we should call by the simpler name of Chairman.
- 1902 *Rev. Laws of Mass.* 964 The directors [of manufacturing corporations] shall choose one of their

number as president.

- 1949 *Los Angeles Times* 12 July 13/7 H. D. Ivey, president of the Citizens National Trust & Savings Bank., yesterday completed his twentieth year as president of Citizens National.
- 1992 *Globe & Mail* (Toronto) 11 May A9/5 Poverty reduction is the institution's overarching objective, bank president Lewis Preston..wrote in an introduction.

f. The priest or minister who presides at the Eucharist; the celebrant.

- [1867 M. DODS et al. tr. *Writings of Justin Martyr & Athenagoras* 63 There is brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water. (Note) This expression may quite legitimately be translated 'to that one of the brethren who was presiding'.]
- 1945 G. DIX *Shape of Liturgy* v. 111 Justin says:..“Then the bread is “offered” to the president and a cup of water mingled with wine.’
- 1971 *Order for Holy Communion* (Alternative Services Series 3) 30 The Breaking of the Bread. The president breaks the consecrated bread, saying [etc.].
- 1977 *Oxf. Diocesan Mag.* Aug. 17/2 The building now consecrated, the Eucharist began, with the Bishop of Oxford as president, and the Bishop of Reading, the Archdeacon of Berkshire, the Vicar and the Curate..as concelebrants.

g. The referee or official in charge of certain sporting events.

- 1961 F. C. AVIS *Sportsman's Gloss.* 285/2 President, the senior judge in a group, as required at international show jumping competitions.
- 1976 *Sunday Tel.* 13 Mar. 36/6 Too few countries trouble to train presidents—officials who take charge of bouts.
- 1994 *Herald* (Glasgow) (Nexis) 10 Jan. 2 The thrust of Julia Bracewell's remark was not lost on Paul Hoenigmann, the referee or 'president' as they say in the normally refined world of fencing.

3.

a. Each of the heads of certain advisory councils, administrative boards, or government departments (as the President of the Board of Agriculture, Education, Trade, etc.) or of certain courts of justice, as the Court of Session in Scotland, the Court of Probate in England, etc.

Lord President of the Council: the cabinet minister with the responsibility of presiding at meetings of the Privy Council. **President of the Board of Control:** see CONTROL *n.* 2a.

- 1491 *Acts Parl. Scotl.* (1814) II. 225/1 That for the eschewing of slaughter..be complant maid to oure souerane lord his chancellare or justice that the chancellare or presedent beand for the tyme with the avise of the consale or justice with avise of his assissouris sall [etc.].
- 1560 J. DAUS tr. J. Sleidane *Commentaries* f. lxxxvj Fridericke Palatyne, presydent of the counsell imperiall.
- 1596 J. DALRYMPLE tr. J. Leslie *Hist. Scotl.* (1888) I. 126 Ouer the Senat is set a praesident of the Ecclesiastical number, quha obtaines the first place to giue out his sentence & to speik his

- opinione.
- 1645 MILTON *Sonnet x*, in *Poems* 51 Daughter to that good Earl, once President Of Englands Counsel, and her Treasury.
- 1669 J. DAVIES tr. A. Olearius *Voy. & Trav. J. Albert de Mandelslo* 19 in *Voy. & Trav. Ambassadors* (ed. 2) I..found company..at the Dutch Presidents, who had his Family there.
- 1776 J. ADAMS in J. Adams & A. Adams *Familiar Lett.* (1876) 189 The Congress..have established a board of war and ordnance and made me President of it.
- 1846 H. H. WILSON *Hist. Brit. India 1805–35* II. v. 203 The President of the Board of Control, Mr. Canning.
- 1863 H. COX *Inst. Eng. Govt.* 653 In that year [sc. 1839]..the Crown appointed the new Board of Education, consisting of the Lord President and certain other privy councillors.
- 1905 *Whitaker's Almanack* 343 Court of Session—Lord President of the whole Court, Right Hon. Lord Kinross.
- 1963 P. G. RICHARDS *Patronage in Brit. Govt.* 101 A committee consisting of the Speaker of the Commons (chairman), the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Lord Chief Justice and the President of the Court of Session.
- 1997 *Business Age* Sept. 37/1 She doesn't appear to be at all comfortable with her title of President of the Board of Trade.

b. The chief magistrate of certain British colonies in North America, and of their successor states. Now *hist.*

Always associated with, and usually elected by, a Council, and sometimes referred to as **President of the Council**. By 1800 the title had been replaced in all States by *Governor*.

- 1608 J. SMITH *True Relation Occurr. Virginia* sig. A4^v The President and Captaine Gosnold, with the rest of the Counsell, being for the moste part discontented with one another.
- 1654 in *United Col. Recds.* (1859) II. 442 [Documt. signed] Roger Williams of Prouidence Colony Presid^t.
- 1681 in *Publ. Colon. Soc. Mass.* (1902) V. 168 By Advice of y^e Honered President of this Provence [sc. Maine].
- 1732 KING GEORGE II *Charter of Georgia* in *Poore State Constit.* (1877) I. 371 And our will and pleasure is, that the first president of the said corporation is and shall be our trusty and well-beloved, the said Lord John Viscount Percival.
- 1776 *Constit. Common-wealth Pennsylvania* 10 The supreme executive power shall be vested in a president and council. ['Governor' adopted 1790.]
- 1787 B. FRANKLIN 15 Apr. in *Writings* (1906) IX. 559 Having served one year as President of Council.
- c1796 T. TWINING *Trav. Amer.* (1894) 34 Mr. Bingham, the President of the Pennsylvanian State.
- a1817 T. DWIGHT *Trav. New-Eng. & N.-Y.* (1821) II. 154 His Excellency Josiah Bartlett, some years since President of this State [sc. New-Hampshire].
- 1894 *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.* **32** 48 During a long life he [sc. Benjamin Franklin] never forgot the fact that he was a printer first, and Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States of America to the Court of France afterward; and still later President of the State of Pennsylvania.
- 1953 *Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc.* **97** 575/2 The person for whom he showed such esteem was Thomas Mifflin, who had been..president of the State of Pennsylvania (1788-1790).

- 1975 *Jrnl. Hist. Ideas* **36** 560 Having been elected president of the State of Pennsylvania, he [sc. Benjamin Franklin] was able to accelerate the adoption by the Assembly of several measures.
- 2001 *Mag. Antiques* Sept. 315/1 He was also president of the council for the Massachusetts Bay Colony and a colonel in the militia.

4. The (usually elected) head of a republican state, typically functioning as both head of state and head of government; (also) the (usually elected) head of state of a parliamentary government, typically having chiefly ceremonial political powers. Frequently prefixed to the surname of the holder of office.

First used in the U.S., where the title was apparently carried over from its application to the officer presiding at the revolutionary congresses of the separate states held from 1774 onwards (cf. quot. 1782). In quot. 1840, the sense of 'president' is similarly that of a presiding officer at a meeting of a loose confederation of member states.

- [1782 *Pennsylvania Gaz.* 6 Nov. 3/1 On Monday last the Hon. Elias Boudinot, Esq; was elected President of the United States in Congress assembled.]
- 1784 *Acts & Laws State Connecticut* 3 Every order, resolution, or vote to which the concurrence of the Senate and House of Representatives may be necessary..shall be presented to the President of the United States; and before the same shall take effect, shall be approved by him.
- 1789 *Constit. of U.S.* II. §1 The executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his office during the term of four years.
- 1789 J. MAY *Let.* 29 Apr. (1873) (modernized text) 121 His Excellency the President [sc. George Washington] is to be sworn into office.
- 1839 *Penny Cycl.* XV. 165/1 (Mexico) The executive power is vested in a president and vice-president, both elected by the state legislatures for a term of four years.
- [1840 *Encycl. Brit.* XXI. 47/2 The [Swiss] diet meets for two successive years by turns, at the capital..of Lucerne, Zürich, and Berne, the burgomaster or avoyer of which acts as president for the turn, with the title of Landmann.]
- 1863 N. HAWTHORNE *Our Old Home* II. 265 In consequence of our proud prerogative of caring no more about our President than for a man of straw.
- 1888 J. BRYCE *Amer. Commonw.* I. xxv. 395 Only four years after the power of the executive had reached its highest point in the hands of President Lincoln, it was reduced to its lowest point in those of President Johnson.
- 1903 *Times* 25 Nov. 9/6 These officers have come on an official mission to the King, in order to salute his Majesty in the name of his Excellency the President of the Republic of Brazil.
- 1937 *Life* 13 Sept. 87/2 (*caption*) On the President's front porch for the parade were, from left: Secretary of State Simpson, President Barclay and U.S. Minister Lester H. Walton, able mulatto newspaperman from Manhattan.
- 1976 *Daily Tel.* 30 June 1/4 President Amin was reported by Uganda Radio to have said that there are more than 100 Israeli hostages.
- 2004 *N.Y. Times* (National ed.) 26 Jan. A18/4 By the time the political roadshow winds its way to Florida in March, avid C-Span viewers will have heard Mr. Kerry challenge President Bush to 'bring it on', hundreds of times.

5.

a. Proprietary name for a heavy mixed fabric, of cotton warp and an inferior weft (esp. one of shoddy or mungo; see SHODDY *n.* 1a, MUNGO *n.*⁴) with a face resembling that of doeskin. Now *rare*.

1860 S. JUBB *Hist. Shoddy-Trade* 51 Some of the heavier makes in this cloth have passed current under the names of 'Moscows' and 'Presidents'.

1886 *Daily News* 18 Oct. 2/4 Large orders are still being placed for cheap tweeds, meltons, and low worsteds and presidents at the advanced rates lately obtained.

1894 *Times* 7 May 13/2 For other kinds of woollens suitable for the fall trade such as pilots, presidents, and reversibles, there is a scarcity of orders.

1909 J. M. MATTHEWS *Lab. Man. Dyeing & Textile Chem.* 307 Ladies' Cloths, Presidents, Whitneys, Moscows, Beavers, Worsted Coatings, etc. The only important requirement is sufficient fastness to light, water, rubbing, and hot pressing.

†**b.** *U.S.* A damask used for upholstery. *Obs. rare*.

1890 *Cent. Dict.* *President*, a kind of damask of silk, or silk and wool, used for upholstery.

COMPOUNDS

C1. General *attrib.*, appositive, and objective, as **president-founder**, **president-king**, **president-maker**, etc.

1773 W. COLE *Let.* 24 Apr. in H. Walpole *Corr.* (1937) I. 308 The President-Dean, though unknown to me, did me the honour to come and introduce himself to me.

1822 *Sat. Evening Post* 21 Dec. 2/1 Moses Levy, Esq. has been appointed by the Governor to be the President Judge of the District Court of Philadelphia, in place of Jared Ingersoll, Esq. deceased.

1895 *Westm. Gaz.* 4 July 7/1 The annual convention of the European section of the Theosophical Society.., under the presidency of Colonel H. S. Olcott, the President-Founder.

1905 *Daily Chron.* 4 Oct. 4/6 Prince George of Denmark was elected to the throne of Greece..and on the whole he has been a popular Monarch of a democratic community—a President-King'.

1948 *Time* 5 July 21/1 John L. Lewis..used to fancy himself as a President-maker and still does as a President-breaker.

1980 *Jrnl. Mod. Afr. Stud.* 18 474 The major themes in the Region were..maintenance of roads and bridges, neatness of the villages, maintaining a militant spirit, and, above all, support and attachment to the President-Founder.

C2.

president-elect *n.* a person elected to be president who has not yet

taken up office.

- 1719 *Compleat Coll. State-tryals* III. 709/2 Mr. Hough, President Elect, was presented to the Visitor by Mr. Maynard.
- 1837 *Jamestown (N.Y.) Jrnl.* 22 Mar. 3/2 There is a story going the rounds in relation to the president-elect.
- 1991 *Lancet* 2 Mar. 542/1 Dr Leon Lederman, a Nobel laureate in physics and president-elect of the 135,000-member American Association of the Advancement of Science (AAAS), was speaking at the National Academy of Sciences.

president-for-life *n.* (also with capital initial(s)) a person with lifetime tenure as the head of a government or organization; (now) *spec.* a dictator, *esp.* one who was originally democratically elected.

- 1659 R. BAXTER *Five Disputations of Church-government* Table of Contents Disputation 3..Chap. 4. It is lawful for the Presbyters of a particular Church to have a fixed President for life.
- 1797 tr. F. Pagès *Secret Hist. French Revolution* I. Introd. p. xxii These are for an upper house of legislation and the English constitution, those for an executive power with a president for life.
- 1852 S. S. COX *Buckeye Abroad* viii. 83 Louis Napoleon may be made Emperor, or (so called) President for life.
- 1948 J. B. TREND *Bolívar & Independence of Spanish Amer.* 259 To the mind of the Liberator there was considerable difference between a president-for-life and a king or an emperor; but less subtle minds were unable to see this.
- 2000 D. ADEBAYO *My Once upon Time* (2001) iv. 83 He would stride out in his dictator's outfit..and declare in his cod old country growl: 'After free and fair elections, I have decided to become President-For-Life!'

President General *n.* (also with lower-case initials) a president with authority over all the subordinate presidents of a system.

- 1574 J. STUDLEY tr. J. Bale *Pageant of Popes* i. f. 112^v Cyrillus a Grecian the thirde president general of ye^e white fryers dyed by report.
- a1661 T. FULLER *Worthies* (1662) 217 Robert Ivory was, saith Leland, none of the meanest Natives of this City, a Carmelite and President General of his Order, D. D. in Cambridge.
- 1722 J. STEVENS *Hist. Antient Abbeys* I. 183/2 The Congregation..is govern'd by a President General, and by three Diffinitors, who are chosen every three Years.
- 1809 J. ADAMS *Wks.* (1854) IX. 620 At the meeting of the Cincinnati at New York, when they choose Hamilton their President-General.
- 1989 *Daughters of Amer. Rev.* Apr. 373/1 Mrs. Raymond Franklin Fleck, President General presented First Lady Barbara Bush with a special DAR certificate.

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