

8. Presidency

Breakout Sessions

POLS 1101

12:40pm-1:30pm Park Hall 145

& 1:50pm-2:40pm Leconte Hall 135

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The Presidential Power

- The origin of Presidency power was *the result of desire for a strong, centralized leadership.*
- **Duties and powers (p. 325)**
- **Why does the presidential power always tend to expand?**
 - Conflicts between providing and limiting it (with no existing examples!)
 - Ambiguities of the Constitution -> **the inherent powers**
 - The growth of formal powers based on political and economic contexts
 - The **delegation of powers** by the Congress
 - Low coordination cost -> **unilateral action**
 - Veto legislation
 - Executive orders
 - Presidential memorandum
 - Signing statement
 - proclamation

The Presidential Power (cont'd)

- **Boundary: Trump v. the United States (2024)**
 - **Group discussion outline**
 - Did the Supreme Court in Trump v. United States **expand presidential immunity too far?**
 - Should presidential immunity distinguish between "**official acts**" and "**personal acts**"? Is this boundary clear?
 - Compared with **impeachment by Congress**, is **judicial prosecution** a more effective way to hold presidents accountable?
 - Does this ruling **shift the balance of power** among the three branches of government? What impact does this decision have on **public trust in judicial independence**?

The Executive Branch Establishment

- The Executive Office of the President (EOP)
 - The White House Office
 - National Security Council (NSC)
 - The Council of Economic Advisers & the National Economic Council
 - The Office of Management and Budget
 - Staffs organized around specialties – e.g. the legislative liaison staff
- EOP provides **flexibility** for the presidential power.
 - If you were the president, would you prefer relying on a small circle of close advisers, or listening widely to input from different departments?
 - National Security Crisis; Natural Disaster
 - Social Movements and Public Opinion Pressure
 - Domestic Reform (e.g. Health care)
 - When selecting team members, should a leader prioritize loyalty or competence?
 - How to make a trade-off between executive efficiency & the information filter problem?

Presidential Leadership (1): Personality

- James David Barber, *The Presidential Character*
 - A president's **character, worldview, and style**—shaped long before they enter the White House—provide important clues about how they will behave once in office.
 - **A two-dimensional framework**
 - **Active vs. Passive** → the amount of energy the president invests in the job (highly engaged and driven vs. more hands-off and reactive).
 - **Positive vs. Negative** → the president's underlying attitude toward politics and the office (optimistic and enthusiastic vs. resentful or anxious).

Type	Description	Strengths / Weaknesses	Examples (Barber's view)
Active-Positive	High energy, sees politics as rewarding and enjoyable.	Pragmatic, flexible, resilient; but can be overly ambitious.	FDR, JFK, Truman, Clinton
Active-Negative	High energy, but driven by hostility, compulsiveness, or inner conflict.	Strong work ethic, but rigid, aggressive, and often frustrated.	Wilson, LBJ, Nixon
Passive-Positive	Low energy, but optimistic and eager to be liked.	Friendly and compliant; but tends to avoid hard decisions, overly reliant on others.	Harding, Reagan
Passive-Negative	Low energy and little enjoyment in politics; sees duty as a burden.	Honest, dutiful, avoids conflict; but often disengaged and reactive.	Washington, Eisenhower, Coolidge

Presidential Leadership (1): Personality (cont'd)

- **Why *The Presidential Character* Matters**
 - Barber's framework was one of the first attempts to **systematically link psychology with presidential performance.**
 - It helped explain why presidents facing similar institutional constraints behaved so differently.
- **Some questions**
 - Does personality matter more than institutions, contexts, ...?
 - Are certain personality types better suited for crises, reforms, diplomacy, ...?
 - Could we use Barber's framework to anticipate the performance of modern presidents?
 - What are the risks of reducing complex leaders to psychological categories?

Presidential Leadership (2): Power to Persuade

- Presidential power is the power to persuade.
 - Divided Government -> Gridlock

Aspect	Presidential Lobbying	Congressional (Legislative) Lobbying
Main Goal	Persuade members of Congress to support or block major national policies, budgets, or legislation.	Convince fellow legislators to vote for or against specific bills, amendments, or procedural motions.
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- One-on-one meetings at the White House or Capitol Hill- Personal calls, invitations, dinners with legislators- Using the <i>bully pulpit</i> to appeal directly to the public and pressure Congress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Persuasion in committees, caucus meetings, or informal settings- Vote trading (<i>logrolling</i>): “You support my bill, I’ll support yours”- Sharing technical data, district benefits, or policy details
Sources of Influence	Institutional authority, national mandate, media visibility, and the symbolic power of the presidency	Seniority, personal relationships, party leadership positions, committee assignments
Scope	Often tied to large-scale, high-profile issues (healthcare reform, war powers, tax policy)	More routine and frequent, covering a wide range of everyday legislative issues
Style	Relies on presidential prestige and ability to mobilize public opinion	Relies on peer-to-peer bargaining, coalition building, and reciprocity

Presidential Leadership (3): “Going Public”

- The president is elected by the people in a nationwide election (so in theory they should be unifying national leaders). However, the public regards them as **partisan leaders** in practice, requiring them to appeal to their constituents.
- **Why can even energetic and well-planned efforts by presidents have little effect on public opinion?** e.g. Obama's push for healthcare reform
- Sometimes, in presidential elections, candidates often **deliberately blur or soften their policy positions** to appeal to a broader electorate.
 - **In which policy areas might ambiguity be beneficial? In which areas is it harmful?**
 - Diploma; Economic policy; Social issues such as abortion or same-sex marriage
 -
 - **Do you think voters prefer a “pragmatic but ambiguous candidate” or a “clear and idealistic candidate”? Why?**
 - **In the age of social media, is it harder for candidates to maintain ambiguity, or does fragmented communication actually make it easier?**

Next week...

- Read materials on **Bureaucracy** before class, and that will be helpful to participate in peer discussions.
- Feel free to email me if you have any questions!
- ENJOY YOUR WEEKEND!