

Political Science 17.20

Introduction to American Politics

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The Presidency
Lecture 8 (March 5, 2013)

Outline

- 1 The Evolving Presidency
- 2 Strategies of Modern Presidents
- 3 Unilateral Action and Pivotal Politics

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The Constitutional Presidency

Enumerated Powers

- **Veto** → negative power to check Congress
 - **Appointment** → friendly personnel, patronage
 - **Commander-in-Chief** → act decisively in time of war
 - **“Take Care” Clause** → execute laws (ambiguous)
- **Independent** selection and powers (not Congress’s agent)

The 19th-Century Presidency

- Congressional government
- President as **clerk** of small bureaucracy
- Small peacetime military establishment
- President's relationship with people mediated by party
- President as agent of his **party** (patronage)

The Rise of the Modern Presidency

The president as leader of the nation:

- Communicate directly with people (newspapers, radio, TV)
- Elected representative of the whole nation (mandate)
- Embodiment of whole government (held responsible)

Increasing presidential resources and responsibilities:

- Growth of national government and bureaucracy
- Congressional delegation to president
- Cold War → permanent military establishment

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The Power to Persuade

Neustadt (1960):

- President has little power of direct command, even over the bureaucracy
- Demands exceed actual capacity
- Presidential power is the “power to persuade”
 - Get others to want what he wants through skillful deployment of resources in bargaining with power holders

Going Public

Kernell (1986):

- Mass media allow the president to communicate directly with the people.
- Set **agenda** and put electoral **pressure** on Congress
- Public threats rather than private bargaining

Baum & Kernell (1999/2010):

- Rise of cable and end of network oligopoly lessened presidents of ability to command the public's attention, esp. the least politically interested (most persuadable)

The Power of Command

Moe & Howell (1999):

- President's power of command underrated
- Executive orders, international agreements, military deployments. . .
- President able to make law unilaterally, without the consent of Congress

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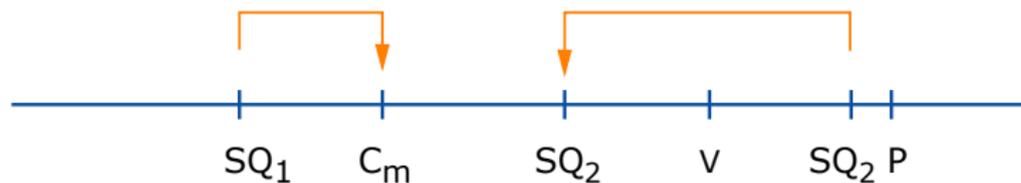
Power and Ambiguity

- **Framers' Assumption:** All politicians seek more power, so “ambition must be made to counter ambition.”
- Presidents seek **power**, but Congress seeks **reelection**
 - Why might reelection-focused MCs give up power?

Presidential Advantages

- Ambiguity of Constitution (incomplete contract)
- Congressional delegation, but little control over agent
- Informational asymmetry
- Congressional power is a collective good
- Presidential appointment of Supreme Court
- First-mover advantage (veto points, fait accomplis)

Pivotal Politics



(A) Legislative politics



(B) Unilateral politics

The legislative advantages of unilateral action.

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