Presidential Leadership, Power, and Responsiveness

Guest Lecturer: Kevin Evans
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Professor Huckfeldt’s office hours moved from Tuesday to Monday at 1:30 to 2:30 or by appointment.

Next week only.
Great Expectations

- The dilemma of presidential leadership: extremely high expectations, little formal power.

- Expectations driven by:
  - Media
  - Campaigning

The Modern Job Description

- The job:
  - Setter of the national agenda
  - Crisis manager
  - Coalition builder
  - Program implementer
  - And, the list goes on!
Conflicting Paradoxes of the American Presidency

- Paradox #1 – Americans demand powerful, popular presidential leadership that solves the nation’s problems. Yet we are inherently suspicious of strong centralized leadership and the abuse of power. Thus we place significant limits on the president’s powers.

- Paradox #2 – We yearn for the democratic “common person” and simultaneously a leader who is uncommon, charismatic, heroic, and visionary.

- Paradox #6 – We expect president to lead and to follow.

Cronin and Genovese (1998); for more paradoxes see: http://bit.ly/aXc3dR
Increasing Dissatisfaction Over Time: Job Approval, Truman

- Establishes the Truman Doctrine for aid to other nations
- After whistle-stop campaign, beats Thomas Dewey in election to begin his second term
- Republicans gain control of Congress
- Congress passes Marshall Plan
- Start of Korean War
- Signs executive order to seize steel mills to prevent strike
Increasing Dissatisfaction Over Time: Job Approval, Johnson
Increasing Dissatisfaction Over Time: Job Approval, G. W. Bush

- After Sept. 11, invades Afghanistan
- War in Iraq begins
- Wins second term in tight race over John Kerry
- Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
- Democrats win control of Congress in midterm elections
- Signs $700 billion economic bailout plan

Year:
- 2001
- 2002
- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
Good Models for Job Approval, Eisenhower

- 1953: Suffers heart attack
- 1956: Re-elected over Adlai Stevenson
- 1959: Steel workers' strike ends with a settlement
- 1960: Chief of Staff Sherman Adams is accused of accepting improper gifts from businessmen and resigns in September
Good Models for Job Approval, Reagan

For more on job approval see: http://bit.ly/qM5L
Our Framework for Understanding Presidential Leadership

- Leadership
  - Presidential power
    - Institutional resources
    - Personal resources
    - Material
    - Symbolic
  - Responsiveness
    - Explicit powers
    - Implied powers
Dimension #1: Presidential Power

- Leadership
- Responsiveness

- Presidential power
  - Institutional resources
  - Personal resources
  - Material
  - Symbolic

- Explicit powers
- Implied powers
Hamilton in Federalist #70
- “Energy” and vigor.
- To get this you need a unitary executive – one person with the reigns of power.

But what about Madison?
- This had to put some worry in Madison.
- Power not dispersed within the presidency – no formal internal checks.
- He thought external checks would be enough.
- The president can do little without Congress (according to the Constitution).
Dimension #1: Presidential Power

Leadership

Presidential power

Institutional resources
- Personal resources
- Material
- Symbolic

Explicit powers

Implied powers

Responsiveness
Explicit Powers of the Presidency

- Commander in Chief, appointments, treaties, veto, etc.
  - These powers are explicitly laid out in Article II.
  - Yet, the president’s powers are ambiguously defined.
The Power of the Veto: Cleveland, Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower

[Graph showing the number of vetoes by each president from George Washington to George W. Bush]
Dimension #1: Presidential Power

- Leadership
  - Presidential power
    - Institutional resources
      - Personal resources
      - Material
      - Symbolic
    - Explicit powers
    - Implied powers
  - Responsiveness
Implied Powers of the Presidency

- Much of the growth in presidential power has been in this area.

- Growth due to ambiguity, precedents set in times of crisis, and delegation of authority by Congress and SC.
  - Ex. - The president now makes the first draft of the budget.

- Some of these powers are unilateral.
Example #1 — Executive Orders

- “A presidential directive to an executive agency establishing new policies or indicating how an existing policy is to be carried out” (KJK, 785)
  - President’s justify by citing the “take care” clause.
  - Has the force of law until retracted, nullified by Congress, or struck down by the courts.

- Quick way to get things done without Congress.
  - Can preempt to set agenda or act when Congress cannot.

- Many in first 100 days and last 100 days.
The Healthcare Executive Order and Bart Stupak

See: http://bit.ly/9upXox
Example #2 – Presidential Signing Statements

- “A statement issued by the president that is intended to modify implementation or ignore altogether provisions of a new law” (KJK, 792).
  - Justified by presidents using “take care” and “oath” clauses.
- Multiple uses:
  - Shaping implementation in the bureaucracy.
  - Influencing court decisions.
  - Rhetorical / credit claiming.
- What types of sections does the president challenge?
  - Foreign policy/defense and reporting requirements.
- Problem: knowingly allows “unconstitutional” laws onto the books rather than vetoing.
The Average Number of Challenges per Constitutional Signing Statement has Drastically Increased

Data from Kelley and Marshall (2008) PSQ
Example #3 – Executive Privilege

- “The president’s right to withhold information from Congress and the courts” (KJK, 786).
- Assertion: necessary to maintain separation of powers among the branches of government.
- Secrecy is also often linked to concerns about national security.
Nixon on Secrecy

Dimension #1: Presidential Power

Leadership

Presidential power

Responsiveness

Institutional resources

Personal resources

Material

Symbolic

Explicit powers

Implied powers
Presidential Power is the Power to Persuade (Neustadt)

- Personal qualities:
  - Skill
  - Tenacity
  - Ambition
- Power is lodged in the person of the president, not the institution.
- The Constitution gives the president little more than a clerkship.
LBJ: A Master of Persuasion

See: http://bit.ly/5lzSEI
Persuading Through the Electoral Connection

- Going public
  - LBJ – War on Poverty
  - G.W. Bush – social security reform
  - Obama – Healthcare

- Sometimes legislators are unreceptive, need to put extra pressure on them by winning the hearts and minds of their constituents.
Dimension #2: Responsiveness

Leadership

Presidential power

Responsiveness

- Institutional resources
- Personal resources
- Material
- Symbolic

Explicit powers

Implied powers
Material Responsiveness

- The “who gets what” of politics.
  - President’s policies that influence the distribution of resources.
    - LBJ’s Great Society.
- Presidents are rewarded for responding to the needs and wants of a majority of voters.
  - Powerful incentive to provide leadership.
Dimension #2: Responsiveness

Leadership

Presidential power

Responsiveness

Institutional resources

Personal resources

Material

Symbolic

Explicit powers

Implied powers
Symbolic Responsiveness

- Expresses some broadly shared value but need not affect the distribution of material resources.
- The ambiguity of politics creates anxiety in citizens.
  - We need reassurance.
  - Presidents need to give impression that they know what needs to be done.
    - FDR during the height of the Great Depression, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”
    - President Bush during Hurricane Katrina?
Heavy Criticism Awaits When Symbolic and Material Responsiveness are in Conflict

See: http://bit.ly/q7efm