

Legitimacy of the Office of the Presidency

Jeremiah J. Hall
University of Wyoming

Initial Thought

- Anecdotal observations in my life:
 - Used to call have respect for the office
 - Referred to President as Mr. President
 - Now we use last name (Obama)
- Inflammatory remarks about President Obama sparked my interest

Why don't we like the President

- Current president
 - Called names:
 - Muslim
 - Socialist
 - Not born in America
- Former President (GW Bush)
 - Questioned his intelligence

Methods

- Multi-Disciplinary research on presidential powers
- Incorporation of knowledge from courses
- Observations in daily life
 - Media
 - Home
 - Social settings

More than just a problem with President Obama

- Political
- Psychological
- Social

Political

- Legitimacy comes from people

President	Highest Approval Rating	Lowest Approval Rating
Obama	76%	39%
Bush (G.W.)	92	19
Clinton	73	36
Bush (G.H.W.)	89	29
Reagan	68	35
Carter	75	28
Ford	74	37
Nixon	67	23
Johnson	80	35
Kennedy	80	56
Eisenhower	79	48
Truman	87	22
Roosevelt	84	48
(Roper, 2013)		

Usurpation of Powers

- From legislative to executive branch
 - Numerous examples

Joint Resolution

- Take away from congressional war making power
 - No 2/3 majority for war or treaties
 - Allows president greater power
 - Diminishing congressional power

CIA

- George Washington
 - Used covert intelligence during revolutionary war
- FDR created initial agency
- President Truman
 - CIA enacted in 1947 (CIA, 2013)

CIA cont.

- Less oversight than military
- President has the power
 - Create war
 - Covert military action
 - One man determines the good of the country

From Lincoln to Obama

- Lincoln 1862
 - Suspended Habeas Corpus
- FDR 1941
 - End Congressional War Making Powers
 - Lend Lease

Precedence

- Truman 1950
 - Korean War
- Kennedy 1961
 - Pay of Pigs
- Johnson 1964
 - Gulf of Tonkin

Precedence

- Nixon 1970
 - Cambodia
 - Laos
- Reagan 1985
 - CIA
 - Iran-Contra
- Bush HW-1991 and GW-2003
 - Iraq

Precedence

Allows power to continue to expand

Why do Americans allow it?

Times presidents need power

- Times of crisis
 - World changes faster than the laws
 - Unknown threats emerge
 - Need executive authority
 - Flexibility

Roosevelt to Nixon

- Precedence do not go backward
 - Agree with some extension
 - Build upon the next
 - Worry about problems later

Nixon

- Secretive nature
 - Made problems worse

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(Roper, 2013)	

After Nixon

- Lack peoples support
- Appears to be above the law
 - Do not understand nuances
 - Basic understanding of what is legal
 - Covert wars and operations seem illegal

Psychological

- John Locke
 - Overuse of power degrades authority (Locke, 1980)
 - Checks and balances established to insulate US from tyrannical rule

Citizens Feel Disconnect

- Perception of absolute authority
 - Can't change it
- Power is a resultant force
(Schopler, 1965)
 - Allow power by not resisting
 - Feel disconnected and powerless

Seemingly Absolute Power

- Takes away from legitimacy in democracy
 - Leaders need citizen's compliance
 - Not really complying with
 - More indifference

Society and the Office

- Many different attitudes keep the status quo
 - Not my job attitude
 - Complacency to power
 - Fear of power

Not my job

- Not empowered to make changes
 - In a study done in California (Lee & Oxelson, 2006)
 - Teachers not empowered to maintain students heritage languages
 - Out of their area

Complacency to Power

- National Voter Turnout in Federal Elections: 1960–2012

Source: <http://elections.gmu.edu>

- Infoplease (2013). National Voter Turnout in Federal Elections: 1960-2012. Retrieved from: <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0781453.html>

Year	Voting-age population	Voter registration	Voter turnout	Turnout of voting-age population (percent)
2012	240,926,957	NA	130,234,600	53.6%
2010	235,809,266	NA	90,682,968	37.8%
2008	231,229,580	NA	132,618,580*	56.8*
2006	220,600,000	135,889,600	80,588,000	37.1
2004	221,256,931	174,800,000	122,294,978	55.3
2002	215,473,000	150,990,598	79,830,119	37.0
2000	205,815,000	156,421,311	105,586,274	51.3
1998	200,929,000	141,850,558	73,117,022	36.4
1996	196,511,000	146,211,960	96,456,345	49.1*
1994	193,650,000	130,292,822	75,105,860	38.8
1992	189,529,000	133,821,178	104,405,155	55.1
1990	185,812,000	121,105,630	67,859,189	36.5
1988	182,778,000	126,379,628	91,594,693	50.1*
1986	178,566,000	118,399,984	64,991,128	36.4
1984	174,466,000	124,150,614	92,652,680	53.1
1982	169,938,000	110,671,225	67,615,576	39.8
1980	164,597,000	113,043,734	86,515,221	52.6
1978	158,373,000	103,291,265	58,917,938	37.2
1976	152,309,190	105,037,986	81,555,789	53.6
1974	146,336,000	96,199,020 ¹	55,943,834	38.2
1972	140,776,000	97,328,541	77,718,554	55.2
1970	124,498,000	82,496,747 ²	58,014,338	46.6
1968	120,328,186	81,658,180	73,211,875	60.8
1966	116,132,000	76,288,283 ³	56,188,046	48.4
1964	114,090,000	73,715,818	70,644,592	61.9
1962	112,423,000	65,393,751 ⁴	53,141,227	47.3
1960	109,159,000	64,833,096 ⁵	68,838,204	63.1*

Fear of Power

- Patriot Act 2001
 - Allows government broad powers
- Americans live comfortable lives (Giddens, Duneier, Appelbaum & Carr, 2011)
 - May not want to rock the boat
 - Could endanger easy life.

Results

- Exploratory Research
 - Some correlations
 - expansion of powers
 - popularity in government

Further Study is needed

- To Prove or disprove hypothesis
 - Look for historic trends in words used to describe government
 - Is it getting worse

Empirical data collection

- Determine if there is a link between
 - Presidential powers
 - Popularity of
 - President
 - Government in general

Conclusion

- How we talk about president is
 - “Not my president”
 - Takes away from the office
- Need to be involved and empowered
 - Make elected officials work for us

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