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GOVERNMENT

Chapter Fourteen

The Presidency

Presidential and Parliamentary Systems

- Presidents may be outsiders; prime ministers are always insiders, chosen by the members of the majority party in parliament
- Presidents have no guaranteed majority in the legislature; prime ministers always have a majority
- **Divided government:** one party controls the White House and another controls one or both houses of Congress

Evolution of the Presidency

- Defining the chief executive was one of the most difficult tasks for the founding fathers
 - Concerned about state authority being compromised
 - Concerned that president would use corrupt political practices to remain in power
- Biggest concerns related to how the president was elected, and his relationship with Congress

Electoral College

- Almost all states use a winner-take-all system
- If no candidate won a majority, the House would decide the election
- The Electoral College ultimately worked differently than expected, because the Founders did not anticipate the role of political parties

The First Presidents

- The office was legitimated by men active in independence and Founding politics
- Minimal activism of early government contributed to lessening the fear of the presidency
- Relations with Congress were reserved: few vetoes; no advice from Congress to the president

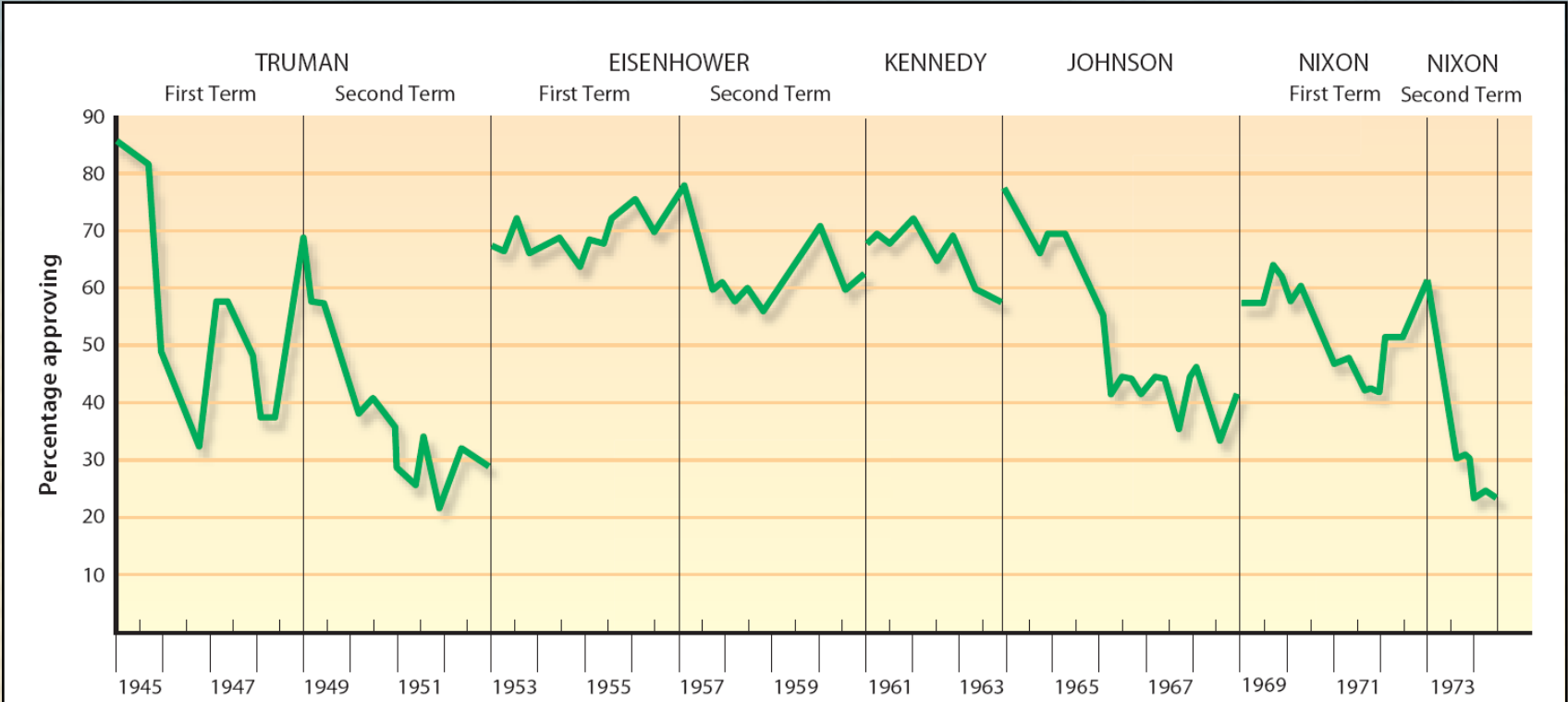
Powers of the President

- Potential for power found in ambiguous clauses of the Constitution—e.g., power as commander in chief, duty to “take care that laws be faithfully executed” (executive power)
- Greatest source of power lies in politics and public opinion

The Power to Persuade

- Presidents try to transform popularity into congressional support for their programs
- Presidential coattails have had a declining effect for years
- Popularity is affected by factors beyond anyone's control – consider Bush's approval ratings following the September 11th attacks

Figure 14.1 Presidential Popularity



Note: Popularity was measured by asking every few months, "Do you approve of the way _____ is handling his job as president?"
 Source: Thomas E. Cronin, *The State of the Presidency* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975), 110–111. Copyright © 1975 by Little, Brown and Company, Inc. Reprinted by permission. Updated with Gallup poll data, 1976–2004. Reprinted by permission of the Gallup Poll News Service.

White House Office

- **Rule of propinquity:** power is wielded by people who are in the room when a decision is made
- **Pyramid structure:** most assistants report through hierarchy to chief of staff, who then reports to president
 - Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan, Bush, Clinton (late in his administration)

White House Office

- **Circular structure:** cabinet secretaries and assistants report directly to the president
 - Carter (early in his administration)
- ***Ad hoc* structure:** task forces, committees, and informal groups deal directly with president
 - Clinton (early in his administration)

The Cabinet

- Not explicitly mentioned in Constitution
- Presidents have many more appointments to make than do prime ministers, due to competition created by the separation of power
- Presidential control over departments remains uncertain—secretaries become advocates for their departments

Table 14.1: The Cabinet Departments

Department	Created	Approximate Employment (2005)
State	1789	33,808
Treasury	1789	114,194
Defense ^a	1947	670,790
Justice	1789	105,102
Interior	1849	73,599
Agriculture ^b	1889	104,989
Commerce	1913	38,927
Labor	1913	15,599
Health and Human Services ^c	1953	60,944
Housing and Urban Development	1965	10,086
Transportation	1966	55,975
Energy	1977	15,050
Education	1979	4,429
Veterans Affairs	1989	236,363
Homeland Security	2002	149,977

^aFormerly the War Department, created in 1789. Figures are for civilians only.

^bAgriculture Department created in 1862; made part of cabinet in 1889.

^cOriginally Health, Education and Welfare; reorganized in 1979.

Source: *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2007*, table 483.

Presidential Character

- Kennedy: bold, articulate, amusing leader; improviser who bypassed traditional lines of authority
- Nixon: expertise in foreign policy; disliked personal confrontation; tried to centralize power in the White House

Presidential Character

- Reagan: set policy priorities and then gave staff wide latitude; leader of public opinion
- Clinton: good communicator; pursued liberal/centrist policies
- George W. Bush: tightly run White House; agenda became dominated by foreign affairs following the September 11th attacks

The Veto Power

- Veto message sent within ten days of the bill's passage
- Pocket veto (only before Congress adjourns at the end of its second session)
- Congress rarely overrides vetoes
- President does not hold line-item veto power

The President's Program

- Resources in developing a program include interest groups, aides and campaign advisers, federal departments and agencies, and various specialists
- Constraints include public and congressional reactions, limited time and attention, and unexpected crises

Presidential Transition

- Only fourteen of forty-one presidents have served two full terms (George W. Bush will be the 15th if he finishes his full 2nd term)
- Eight vice presidents have taken office upon the president's death

The Vice President

- Prior to 2000, only five vice presidents won the presidency in an election without having first entered the office as a result of their president's death
- The vice president presides over Senate and votes in case of tie

The 25th Amendment (1967)

- Allows vice president to serve as acting president if president is disabled
- Illness is decided by president, by vice president and cabinet, or by two-thirds vote of Congress
- The new vice president must be confirmed by a majority vote of both houses

Impeachment

- Indictment by the House, conviction by the Senate
- Presidential examples: Andrew Johnson, Richard Nixon (pre-empted by resignation), Bill Clinton
- Neither Johnson nor Clinton was convicted by the Senate

Constraints on the President

- Both the president and the Congress are more constrained today due to:
 - Complexity of issues
 - Scrutiny of the media
 - Greater number and power of interest groups