

Example of analytical essay

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Sources of Power of the President of the United States (US)

Presidential Power According to the Constitution

The Constitution of the United States (US) categorizes the powers of the President into the following: military, diplomatic, executive, legislative and judicial. The President holds the highest position in the military, the commander-in-chief. As the commander-in-chief, the President has great control over the military and is therefore entitled to command respect from, and impose his authority on all officers and officials. Therefore, the President, in his capacity as the commander-in-chief, has the power to direct the military towards protecting the state, especially against invasions and other threats to national security (Ginsberg et al. 308-310). In terms of foreign affairs, the President serves as the head of state, the top diplomatic figure of the US. The President may receive foreign representatives, serving as a gesture by the US in recognizing their nations. Any concerns of foreign representatives involving the US may form part of the treaties and executive agreements the President may issue. Treaties are official issuances coming from the President with due consultation and consent of the Senate, while executive agreements are similar to treaties but do not require the involvement of the Senate (Ginsberg et al. 310; 429-453). As the chief executive officer (CEO) of the US, the President has the constitutional mandate to ensure the due execution of laws and appoint executive officers and federal judges, subject to Senate approval. Presidential appointments are discretionary, but final approval should come from the Senate through a majority vote. Congressional initiatives must also include consultations with executive departments and agencies to ensure that forthcoming laws would

find favorable enactment and implementation (Ginsberg et al. 310-311; 333-361; 363-393). The President also practices legislative powers through agenda setting and issuing executive orders. Congress usually bases legislation on the various initiatives set by the President, whose entry into office comes with promises for reforms. The veto power of the President is an exercise of his legislative power, as his approval or rejection of particular bills coming from Congress may influence consequent legislative activities. Moreover, the President can also issue executive orders, which are management tools that formalize the implementation of laws (Ginsberg et al. 265-301; 311-313). Judicial power also forms part of the constitutionally mandated roles of the President. The issuance of reprieves, amnesties and pardons all fall within the President, many of which override decisions previously issued by the judiciary. The President may issue reprieves, amnesties and pardons to an individual or a group of people (Ginsberg et al. 310; 363-393).

Presidential Powers Coming From Institutional and Political Resources

The President of the US does not derive his power from the Constitution alone. In fact, the constitutional powers of the President seemed to be the most undermined compared to two other power sources: institutional and political. The President derives power from the institutions that enables him to govern effectively and from political forces that could either enhance or decrease his legitimacy (Ginsberg et al. 314-326).

Institutional Sources of Presidential Power

Part of the mandate the President holds is his ability to manage the resources of the institutions he holds, which involve various political

positions that serves him with great importance in his role to govern the US. Three important categories of executive institutions serve as sources of the institutional powers of the President – the White House Staff, Executive Office of the President (EOP) and the Cabinet. The White House Staff is the closest executive category to the President; a small group of advisers and analysts that were formerly an informal group. The importance of the White House Staff in directly guiding the President has since enabled it to become a formal bureaucratic institution. The EOP, called the “institutional presidency”, is a group of agencies that perform particular presidential management endeavors. The Cabinet refers to the heads of federal government departments usually distant from the President. The President appoints Cabinet members with the presumption that they would be loyal to him, with appointments subject to the approval of the Senate through a majority vote. Cabinet members do not make decisions as a group and are thus commonly associated with disputes involving the President. Being distant to the President, Cabinet members tend to act as rubber-stamp offices for presidential actions. At the same time, the President tends to demand for immediate results from the Cabinet, with the lack thereof serving as a negative impression from the latter (Ginsberg et al. 314-319).

Political Sources of Presidential Power

The President amasses political power categorized into the following: party, popular mobilization and administration. Partisan organizations help propel the image and platform of the President especially within the Congress, in which he could advance his agendas through the support of members of parties supporting him. Therefore, the President becomes more successful in

setting his goals for the US if the majority party in Congress is the one supporting him. Exploiting public support is one way the President can use his status as a charismatic figure. Public engagements in the form of speeches and utilizing vast media exposure enables the President to quell or quash his political opponents that hinder him from pushing for his agendas. In the same light, the President may claim that his victory in the elections is a sign that his political agendas have sufficient support from the citizens. Administratively, the President has the power to establish lawful administrative institutions that may depend less on Congress. Since Congress has traditionally served as the make-or-break body for the President in terms of pushing for his political agendas, administrative institutions may give him the necessary power to push for any lawful program he may have in mind, independent of any direct influence from Congress. Additionally, supportive interest groups have also become a formidable support base of the President in his goals to establish programs, away from the sluggish formalities set by reliance on Congress (Ginsberg et al. 319-326; 395-427).

Balance of Power between the President and Congress

The constitutional basis of the powers of the President are mostly fundamental in nature, given that the Constitution serves as the skeletal law of the US that provides for basic functions subject to elaboration through legislation. Traditionally, the Constitution specifies that the President may push through his political agendas by gaining support from Congress, which may construct and enact laws that may be supportive or antagonistic to any goals the President has. In light of the foregoing, the President would be

weaker should the Constitution be his only source of power. Institutional and political powers greatly enhance the abilities of the President to govern, especially because those further consolidate his status as a popularly elected ruler (Ginsberg et al. 303-331).

Utilizing both institutional and political sources of power enables the President to become more autonomous from Congress. The Constitution succinctly portrays Congress as a body that severely limits the President, given that the goals he wishes to push for legislation need to gain support from members of the House of Representatives and Senate. In terms of institutional powers, the President gains power from the advisory functions of the White House Staff and the EOP, which in turn implements his goals subject to their lawfulness without interference from Congress. The President meets his balancing point with Congress on the issue of appointing Cabinet members. The Senate finds its role on voting for the appointment of Cabinet members important for its role on legislating national-level programs.

Whereas the President chooses Cabinet members out of their perceived loyalty to him alongside their ability to carry out his political agendas, the Senate votes for or against them as a matter of double-checking their qualifications in relation to preset legislative plans of action. In other words, the Senate reserves the right to approve or reject appointed Cabinet members if it does not find any one of them to be fully qualified for the posts given to them (Ginsberg et al. 265-301; 303-331).

Political power primarily satisfies the need of the President to maintain his legitimacy, which ensures the fulfillment of his political agendas. The affiliation of the President with a political party is a strong influence that

enabled him to gain electoral victory, and thus it is important to note that demographic figures favorable to his political party benefits him in terms of the programs he wishes to implement. Therefore, the President gets to enjoy support coming from Congress if members of his political party dominate it, thus enabling him to promote his political agendas towards legislation, as noted by the Constitution. Yet, the President is not just limited to his political party. The President may expand his influence and support to other contingents not necessary associated with his political party through popular mobilization in the form of speaking engagements, media exposure and the like. In that sense, political marketing stands to have an important role. Administrative power could thus push through conveniently once the President builds his support bases formidably, thus increasing his powers from the considerably meager grant of the Constitution (Ginsberg et al. 303-331).

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