

CHAPTER 22

Who Governs?

REVIEWING THE CHAPTER

CHAPTER FOCUS

This chapter provides an overview of American politics and central themes of the text, namely, “Who Governs? To What Ends?” A broad perspective of the history of American politics is utilized in order to provide a basis for understanding the politics of the past and present, and also to allow you to consider what the future may hold. After reading and reviewing the material in this chapter, you should be able to do each of the following:

1. Explain why the size of the federal government and the scope of its power did not increase in many significant ways for almost 150 years.
2. Identify and explain specific historical events and developments that triggered the transformation of the federal government into a common candidate for solving an amazing variety of social and economic problems.
3. Explain the general consequences of the enlarged scope of government activity.
4. Understand how our political culture played a critical role in the foundation of our government and continues to shape political processes and our nation’s development.

STUDY OUTLINE

- I. Introduction
 - A. Assumption the president and Congress are to address social and economic problems
 1. Limited concern of government as recently as the Eisenhower administration
 2. The Founders and the role of the federal government
 - B. Constitutional hurdles to effective federal action
 1. Separation of powers and checks and balances
 2. Federalism
 3. Bicameralism
- II. Restraints on the growth of government
 - A. For first 150 years government grew slowly
 1. Supreme Court defined government authority narrowly
 2. Popular opinion supported a limited governmental role
 3. The political system was designed to limit government
 - B. System limiting government makes it difficult to abolish programs
 1. Under Reagan spending increased for many programs
 2. Bush has also proposed programs that would increase spending
- III. Relaxing the restraints
 - A. Changes in Constitutional interpretation
 1. Bill of Rights incorporated to the states
 2. Special protection of property rights reduced, business regulation increased

3. Congress allowed to give broad discretionary powers to administrative agencies
- B. Changes in public opinion
 1. Public demand for government action during Great Depression
 2. Opinions of political elites changed even faster
 3. Some programs have been popular with the masses
- C. Changes in the distribution of political resources
 1. Number and variety of interest groups have increased
 2. Funds from organization pursuing causes have grown
 3. Greater access to the federal courts
 4. Technological advances have enhanced the power to communicate ideas
- D. The Old System v. the New System
- IV. Consequences of activist government
 - A. Need to assess costs and benefits of programs
 - B. General political consequences of the enlarged scope of activity
 1. Bureaucratization of all organizations
 2. Rise of competing policies
 3. Less control by the electorate through the decline of parties and turnout and of public confidence
 4. Greater risk of government failure
- V. The influence of structure
 - A. Parliamentary model; if adopted here, would do the following
 1. Fewer legislative restraints on the executive
 2. More bureaucratic centralization
 3. Less citizen participation to challenge or block policies
 4. Higher taxes and more secrecy
 - B. U.S. model
 1. More local authority
 2. Greater citizen participation
- VI. The influence of ideas
 - A. Preoccupation with rights
 1. Assumption that affected groups have a right to participate in policy formation
 2. Willingness to resort to courts
 - B. Effects of rights on government functions
 1. Harder to make government decisions
 2. More red tape
 - C. Elite opinion influences which rights have priority
 1. Favors freedom of expression over management of property
 2. Mass opinion less committed to freedom of expression
 - D. Freedom versus equality an enduring tension
 1. Advantages of freedom are remote
 2. Advantages of equality are obvious
 - E. Fragmentation of political system increases role of ideas
 1. Widespread enthusiasm for an idea can lead to rapid adoption of new programs
 2. Competing ideas make change difficult; change today may require the persuading of thousands of special interests
 - F. Fundamental challenge: to restore confidence in the legitimacy of government itself

PRACTICING FOR EXAMS

TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements *T*. If any part of the statement is false, mark it *F*, and write in the space provided a concise explanation of why the statement is false.

1. T F The Founders generally expected the scope of the power of the federal government to be quite limited.

2. T F Prior to the 1930s, the Supreme Court prevented the government from regulating business and levying an income tax.

3. T F Popular opinion was in direct opposition to the general trend in the Court's decision-making pre-1930.

4. T F Racial segregation was practiced only in the South.

5. T F Until well into the twentieth century, governors and mayors were more important than the president.

6. T F Until well into the twentieth century, most members of Congress served 3 to 4 terms, then quit.

7. T F The Court has incorporated key provisions of the Bill of Rights through the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

8. T F The Great Depression made people even more hesitant to give power to the federal government.

9. T F Political elites change their minds more slowly than the American public.

10. T F Political resources have become more widely distributed.

11. T F It is now easier to get access to the federal courts.

12. T F Campaign finance laws and court rulings have eliminated the influence that interest groups can wield by spending money.

13. T F Under the Old System, the presidency was small and somewhat personal.
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14. T F Under the Old System, there was a clear understanding that what the president said in a press conference was never to be quoted directly.
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15. T F Under the Old System, the government rarely took bold action, except in times of great crises.
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16. T F Under the Old System, crises had a way of leaving government a little smaller than it was before.
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17. T F The New System did not take its present form until the 1970s.
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18. T F It is said that the federal government appears to be more concerned with ruling than managing.
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19. T F Under the Old System, power was decentralized.
-
20. T F Lyndon Johnson became president with a small share of the popular vote.
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21. T F Medicare and Medicaid were part of Johnson's "Great Society" legislation.
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22. T F Members of the House began to enjoy security in the retention of their seats in the 1960s.
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23. T F Television began to play a major role in shaping the political agenda in the 1960s.
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24. T F As government gets bigger, it spends more time debating new ideas at length.
-
25. T F When the people in Washington did little, elections made less difference in policy.
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26. T F The increasing scope of governmental power has been associated with an increase in public confidence in government.
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27. T F If the United States had adopted the British (parliamentary) model, taxes would probably be lower.
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28. T F American politics remain far more sensitive to local concerns than does politics abroad.
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29. T F Party conventions came to supplant primary elections in the 1960s.
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30. T F The text suggests that, as the political system has become more fragmented and more individualized, it has come more under the sway of ideas.
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31. T F Individual members of Congress are far more important than congressional leaders.
-
32. T F Forming new issue-based interest groups is much easier than it used to be.
-
33. T F Up until the 1950s, people talked about politics in terms of bargaining among organized interested and “blocs” representing various groups.
-
34. T F We expect more from government but are less and less certain that we are going to get it.
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MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. As recently as the Eisenhower administration
 - a. domestic political issues and foreign affairs were given an equal amount of attention in Washington.
 - b. major domestic political issues dominated the attention of Washington.
 - c. the national political agenda was short on major domestic political issues.
 - d. civil rights were not thought to be a matter of federal policy.
 - e. Congress was preoccupied with solving social and economic problems nationwide.
2. For a long time, the Supreme Court prevented the government from
 - a. delegating broad discretionary power to administrative agencies.
 - b. levying an income tax.
 - c. regulating business.
 - d. all of the above.
 - e. none of the above.

3. The Supreme Court could not have maintained its view of limited government without
 - a. general agreement from the public.
 - b. allies in Congress.
 - c. the support of the American Bar Association.
 - d. the cooperation of other federal judges.
 - e. life-time appointment.
4. Which of the following was true well into the twentieth century?
 - a. Governors and mayors were more important than presidents.
 - b. Most members of Congress did not serve more than one or two terms.
 - c. Congress wasn't in session long and didn't do much.
 - d. The pay for a member of Congress was not very impressive.
 - e. All of the above.
5. In recent decades,
 - a. the Supreme Court has permitted Congress to give broad discretionary power to administrative agencies.
 - b. important provisions of the Bill of Rights have been incorporated to the states.
 - c. citizens have been able to alter state policy to a greater degree than before.
 - d. court rulings have allowed a greater degree of business regulation.
 - e. all of above.
6. Which of the following is *not* an explanation for why there was no rapid growth in the power and scope of the federal government for the better part of a century and a half?
 - a. Prevailing interpretations of the Constitution.
 - b. Constitutional amendments.
 - c. Separation of powers.
 - d. Popular opinion.
 - e. Checks and balances.
7. Under the Old System of policy-making,
 - a. the government's agenda was large.
 - b. the legitimacy of federal action was rarely questioned.
 - c. states' rights were almost irrelevant.
 - d. the president was frequently quoted directly by the press.
 - e. the people voted at a high rate.
8. Under the Old System, the dominant theme in debates about the legitimacy of governmental action was the importance of
 - a. states' rights.
 - b. the Bill of Rights.
 - c. federalism.
 - d. centralization of power.
 - e. nationalism.
9. The texts suggests that the government rarely took "bold action" under the Old System unless
 - a. the presidency and Congress were controlled by the same party.
 - b. there was a realigning election.
 - c. the Supreme Court supported the effort.
 - d. it was facing a crisis—such as war.
 - e. there was widespread political protest.

10. The “New System” of policy making began in the
 - a. 1890s.
 - b. 1920s.
 - c. 1930s.
 - d. 1950s.
 - e. 1970s.
11. The “New System” of policy making did not take its present form until the
 - a. 1890s.
 - b. 1920s.
 - c. 1930s.
 - d. 1950s.
 - e. 1970s.
12. What made it difficult to start a new program under the Old System and makes it difficult to change a new program in the New System?
 - a. Checks and balances.
 - b. Federalism.
 - c. States’ rights.
 - d. The electoral college.
 - e. None of the above.
13. Under the New System, it is much more difficult to resolve conflicts because
 - a. individual members of Congress are less influential.
 - b. the Supreme Court has limited the impact of interest groups.
 - c. the distribution of political resources is shrinking.
 - d. power is centralized.
 - e. power is decentralized.
14. The shift from the Old System to the New System was, in part, accelerated by
 - a. the election of Republican presidents in the 1950s and 1970s.
 - b. the election of Democrat majorities in the House and Senate in the 1930s and 1960s.
 - c. the selection of Republican Supreme Court justices in the 1930s.
 - d. economic instability in the 1960s.
 - e. constant turnover in the membership of Congress.
15. Who took office after promising to reduce the size of government, but could only obtain small declines in spending for some programs and actual increases in many others.
 - a. John F. Kennedy
 - b. Harry Truman
 - c. Franklin D. Roosevelt
 - d. Dwight Eisenhower
 - e. Ronald Reagan
16. The text suggests the consequences of an increasingly activist government include all of the following *except*
 - a. members of government spend more time managing.
 - b. the government appears to act in inconsistent, uncoordinated and cumbersome ways.
 - c. the government is less susceptible to control by electoral activity.
 - d. interest groups have lost their influence.
 - e. the government is held responsible for more things.

17. If the United States had adopted a parliamentary structure of government, it probably would
 - a. be more sensitive to local concerns.
 - b. have stronger parties.
 - c. be less sensitive to local concerns.
 - d. have weaker parties.
 - e. experience a decrease in voter turnout.
18. The authors suggest that, had the Founders adopted a centralized parliamentary regime similar to that of Great Britain, the least amount of historical variation would have probably concerned
 - a. social welfare.
 - b. national planning.
 - c. war.
 - d. congressional investigations.
 - e. taxes.
19. More than the citizens of perhaps any other nation, Americans define their relationships with one another and political authority in terms of
 - a. rights.
 - b. liberties.
 - c. duties.
 - d. economics.
 - e. social class.
20. According to the text, elite opinion tends to favor freedom of _____ over freedom to manage or dispose of property.
 - a. choice
 - b. travel
 - c. conscience
 - d. religion
 - e. expression
21. Tocqueville felt that Americans, as a part of a democratic community, were primarily attached to
 - a. freedom.
 - b. equality.
 - c. fraternity.
 - d. community.
 - e. reciprocity.
22. Perhaps the greatest challenge to statesmanship in the years ahead is to find a way to serve the true interests of the people and, at the same time,
 - a. reduce partisan conflicts in Washington.
 - b. restore their confidence in government.
 - c. increase voter participation.
 - d. satisfy the demands of a multiplicity of interest groups.
 - e. satisfy the demands of the military-industrial complex.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Practice writing extended answers to the following questions. These test your ability to integrate and express the ideas that you have been studying in this chapter.

1. Describe the constitutional arrangements that make it hard for the federal government to act.
2. Explain the role that the United States Supreme Court played in the expansion of federal power.

3. Explain what the text means when it says that political resources have become “more widely distributed.”
4. Identify the two major differences between the Old and New Systems of politics in the United States.
5. Explain why increases in government activism are likely to be associated with a public that is increasingly dissatisfied.
6. Why does the text suggest that an activist government is less susceptible to control by electoral activity than a passive one?
7. What are some of the ways that the American political system would differ had the Founders adopted a centralized, parliamentary system of government? In your opinion, is it better that the parliamentary form was rejected?
8. Cite 6-7 “rules of politics” as outlined by the authors.
9. Explain how the fragmentation of the political system had an impact on the influence of ideas and the possibility of change.

ANSWERS TO TRUE/FALSE QUESTIONS

1. T
2. T
3. F *Laissez faire* politics was popular with the public.
4. F It was practiced throughout the nation.
5. T
6. F Most served just 1 or 2 terms, then quit.
7. T
8. F The Great Depression raised Americans' expectation with respect to government.
9. F Elite opinion is more volatile than public opinion. It is held more strongly and changes more quickly.
10. T
11. T
12. F If anything, they have had the effect of increasing interest group activity and influence.
13. T
14. T
15. T
16. F Such crises had a way of leaving the government larger than it was beforehand. Government was not typically reduced to its previous size in the aftermath of crises.
17. T
18. F It appears to be more concerned with managing than it does with ruling.
19. F Power was much more centralized under the Old System.
20. F Johnson came to the presidency with a larger share of the popular vote than any president in modern history.
21. T
22. T
23. T
24. F As it gets bigger, it spends less time debating at length new ideas.
25. F When government did less, elections mattered more.
26. F Increase in the scope of governmental power has been associated with a decrease in public confidence in government.
27. F Taxes would probably be higher if we had adopted something like the British system.
28. T
29. F Primary elections supplanted the conventions as the critical decision-making point.
30. T

- 31. T
- 32. T
- 33. T
- 34. T

ANSWERS TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- 1. c
- 2. d
- 3. a
- 4. e
- 5. e
- 6. e
- 7. e
- 8. a
- 9. d
- 10. c
- 11. e
- 12. a
- 13. e
- 14. b
- 15. e
- 16. d
- 17. c
- 18. c
- 19. a
- 20. e
- 21. b
- 22. b