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Book review
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The Presidency in the Era of 24-Hour News

Jeffrey E. Cohen, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, 256 pages, \$24.95, ISBN 978-0-691-13717-9.

In this book, Cohen investigates the results of the structural changes in the media on the president and the mass public in the USA. He assumes that the media has gone a fundamental change during the last decades by the introduction of new technologies such as 24/7 cable news networks and the internet. This change resulted in the increasing access to news, and consequently decline in the impact of news media on public opinion about the president. The basic aim of this book is to provide an explanation to this situation.

The basic concept he employs throughout the book is the *Presidential News System*, which is the interrelations between the president, the news media, and the public. He analyses the structure of this system and changes in it to show the consequences for the whole political system.

The book consists of ten Chapters. In Chapter 1, Cohen makes a comparison between three Presidential scandals (Clinton-Lewinski, Iran-Contra, Watergate) to show the decreasing effects of negative news on public. Then, by using a more systematic data, he proves the existence of two periods in the presidential news; from late 1940s to mid 1970s (Golden Age of television), and from mid 1970s to the present (The age of new media). The differences between two periods are the structure of the news industry; the content of the news about the president; the audience for news; and public regard toward the news media.

In Chapter 2, he elaborates the Golden Age of Presidential Television, and summarizes the basic characteristics as the dominance of television as a provider of news to the public; the highly stratified hierarchy among news organizations; the relative insulation of news organizations from economic competition and pressures; the concentration of the industry; and the tone of presidential news-news reporting during this era tended to be “objective” or “balanced” and relatively positive toward the president (pp. 24-34).

In the next six chapters, he analyses the New Media Age and formulizes his theory as the declining news impact on public thinking about the president resulted because,

the news media provided less news about the president than it once did, the audience for news is smaller, the public is less trusting of the news media than it once was, and the regularity of negative news makes it hard for the public to tell if the bad news reflect truly bad conditions that it should pay attention to or if it merely reflects the agenda of journalists (p. 15).

In Chapter 9, he discusses the implications of the New Media on the Presidential News System and Presidential Leadership. He suggests that presidential leadership has changed as a result of the transformation from the broadcasting to the new media age and that there have been three implications of the new media age on the presidential news system; the impact of news on mass public's evaluations of the president, the ability of the president to lead public opinion, and the affect of the new media age on presidential leadership style (pp. 175-200).

In the New Media Age, Presidents find it more difficult to lead the broad mass public. Thus, it could be argued that they have modified their leadership styles. They have increased the amount of effort used to mobilize special interests, drawing on narrower publics, and/or their own partisan base, while decreasing their engagement with the broad mass public. In Chapter 10, Cohen concludes by underlying this factor and claims this change in presidential leadership style has important implications for the democracy in the US.

Theoretically, the book provides an important contribution to the literature by underlying the effects of structural changes in the media and its implications on the Presidential News System. Methodologically, it contains so many different data sets from various sources dealing with both media and audiences. The coverage of different data sets enables the reader to gain a broad overview of basic literature and research collated in a single book, including assessment of the weaknesses, strengths, and limitations of the sources discussed. However, a heavy reliance on previous studies decreases the originality of the book which is at times repetitive and may distract the attention of the reader. The book is a good resource for specialist about American politics or media.