

# Understanding American Government

The Role of Government in America

John DeGraca

POS 2041

# Outline

- Why do we have Government
- The Founders Conceptions
- Reasons for Government Expansion
- Americans' Ambivalence about Government
- Opinions about Gov't in the Obama Years
- Trust and confidence in Government

# Why have Government

1. In Democracies
  - a. To have a measure of control over the people
  - b. To have a monopoly on the use of military power
  - c. To protect personal freedom
  - d. To regulate society
2. In Dictatorships and Totalitarian nations
  - a. Regulate every aspect of life
3. Stateless state

# How did the US developed the size of government we have?

## 1. The Founders conceptions

- Early Settlers
  - Religious reasons
  - Economic reasons
- The Constitution
  - Tenth Amendment (delegation of Power)
  - Flexibility to allow Constitution to expand
- The Role of the People
  - To vote for members in the House of Rep

# Reasons for Government Expansion

- Why does Government Grow?
- Civil War
- Industrial Revolution
- Great Depression (1929-1933)
  - New Deal; 16<sup>th</sup> Amendment (income, Tax)
- World War II and the Cold War
- Civil Rights Era
  - Great Society (9)
- Backlash to Government Growth

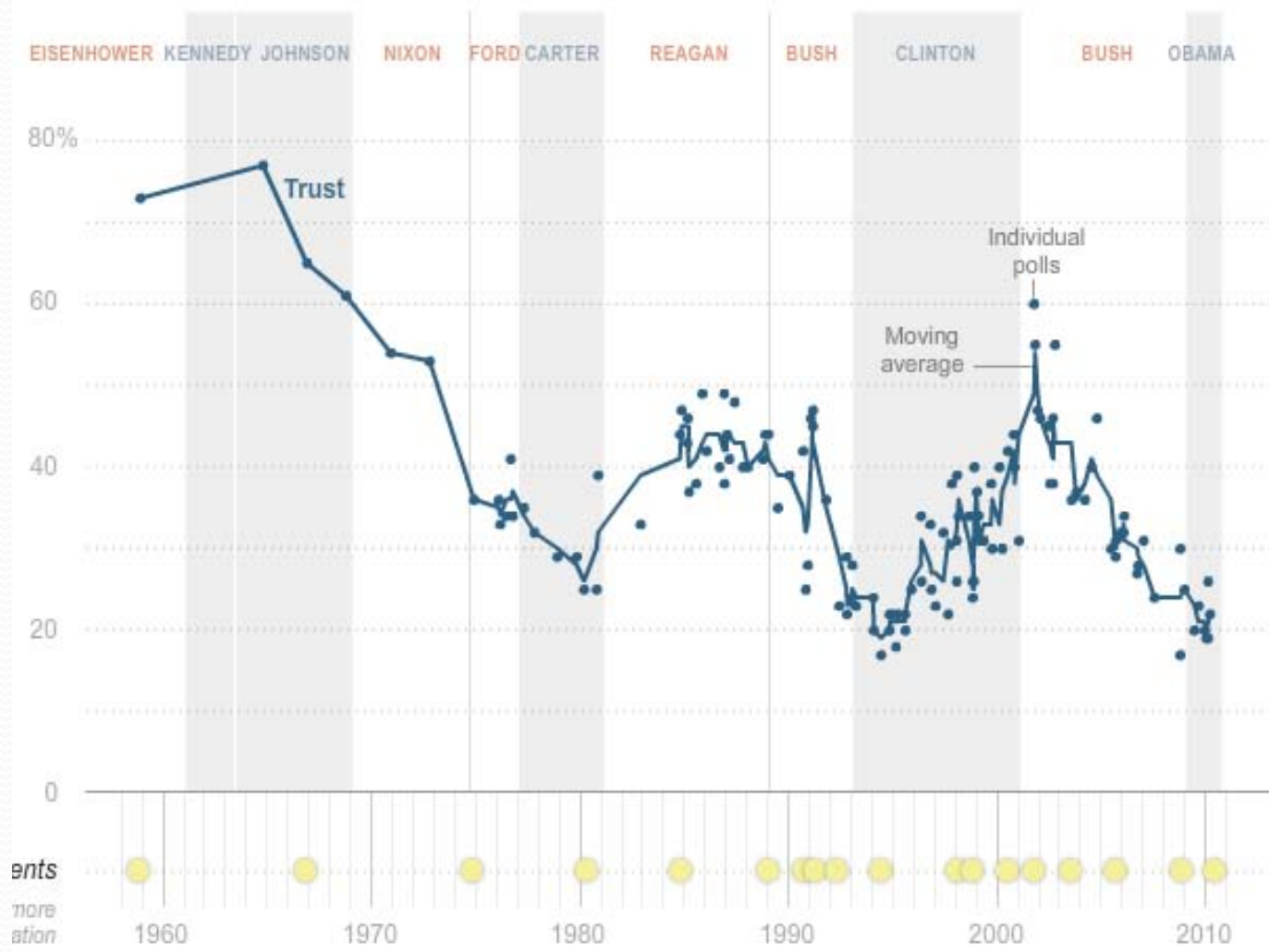
# Americans' Ambivalence about Government

- Public Opinion about Government Spending
  - Americans are of two minds about government size and activity
    - Cut spending
    - Increase number of programs
- The Diversity of Antigovernment Groups
  - Supporters of smaller government shows their displeasure
  - They challenge power to tax
  - They challenge power to regulate
  - States rights

# Opinions about Government in the Obama Years

- Impact of Recession
  - 2008-2009 level of unemployment
  - Loss of jobs
  - High mortgage rates
  - Bailouts
- Reaction to President Obama
  - Many people did not trust him in matters of national economy; issues of birthplace; citizenship; religion
- Reaction to Democratic Policies
  - Health care reform; climate change measures; education reform; and stabilize the economy

# Trust and Confidence in Government





# Conclusion

- Founders distrusted government and today people have similar sentiments
- The role of government should be minimal
- Market forces should regulate the economy