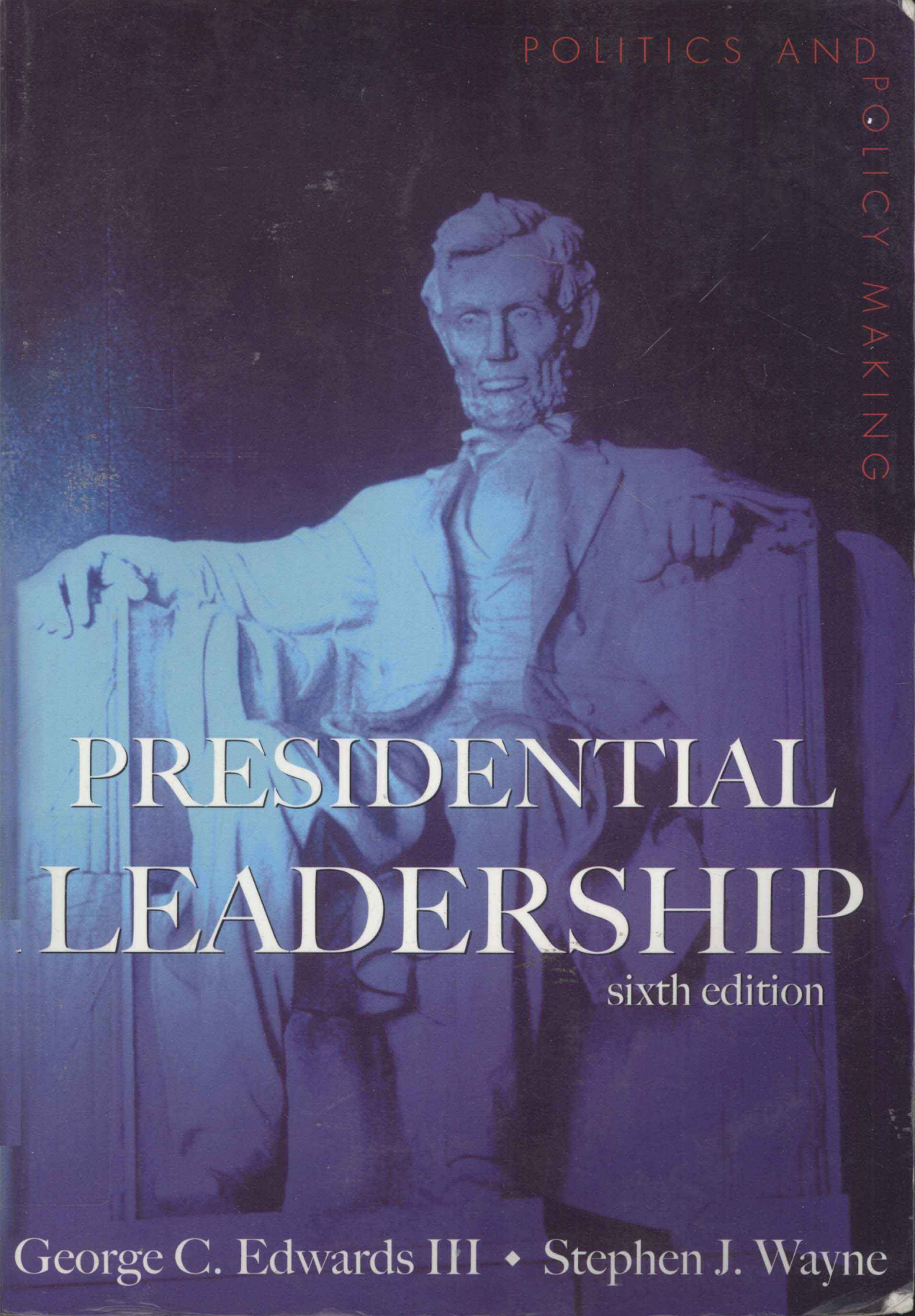


POLITICS AND  
POLICY MAKING



# PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

sixth edition

George C. Edwards III ♦ Stephen J. Wayne

# Presidential Leadership

## Politics and Policy Making

Sixth Edition

**GEORGE C. EDWARDS III**

Texas A&M University

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*To Carmella and Cheryl*



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# Preface

**T**he presidency is a much praised, much damned institution. During the early 1960s, it was seen as the major innovative force within the government. People looked to the president to satisfy an increasing number of their demands. Presidential power was thought to be the key to political change.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, this power was seen as a serious problem. Scholars blamed presidents and their excesses for involvement in the war in Southeast Asia and for Watergate and other scandals. Restrain the “imperial” presidency became the cry.

Presidents Ford and Carter responded to this plea by attempting to de-imperialize the office. Ford opened the White House to opposing views; Carter initially reduced the size, status, and perquisites of presidential aides. Both were careful not to exceed their constitutional and statutory powers.

Growing institutional conflict between Congress and the presidency and within the executive branch raised questions about the possibility of effective governance. Worsening economic conditions, increasingly scarce resources, and a series of foreign policy crises produced a desire for more assertive, more directive leadership. The presidency was seen as imperiled; weakness, not strength, its problem. Disappointment in presidential performance replaced fear of presidential abuses.

The Reagan presidency led scholars once again to reevaluate the workings of the system and the role of the president within it. Reagan’s ability to achieve

some of his major policy goals at the beginning of his administration indicated that stalemate need not paralyze the government. But it also gave rise to fears, particularly after the Iran-Contra affair, of the dangers that improperly exercised power can produce.

During the Bush and Clinton presidencies, the need for change, accompanied by the difficulty of achieving it within a divided government, reemerged. Both presidents were frustrated in their attempts to govern, particularly within the domestic arena, and the public expressed its own disillusionment—first in defeating Bush and then in putting the Republicans in power in both houses of Congress for the first time in 40 years. Yet, in the midst of defeat, Clinton rejuvenated himself, his presidency, and his party, winning the 1996 presidential election but lacking a clear policy mandate and a governing majority.

And then, amidst a scandal involving Democratic fund-raising during the Clinton-Gore reelection campaign, the president and Congress reached agreement on a balanced budget, proving once again that divided government works quite well during periods of economic prosperity, social tranquility, and world peace—when the government does not face increased demands, and especially when hundreds of billions of dollars of unexpected revenues are predicted for the treasury's coffers.

As he began his second term, the president was popular but not necessarily powerful. Clinton's popularity seemed to be a product of several factors: prosperous economic conditions, successful White House public relations, and good role playing by a president who had finally learned how to take advantage of the prestige and status of his office. But the president's popularity was soon to be tested again, this time by charges of sexual improprieties. Although Clinton's popularity survived this test, his presidency was weakened by it and the president's own credibility was undermined.

George W. Bush campaigned on bringing change to Washington. The narrowness of his election, and the unusual nature of its resolution, denied him any claim to a mandate, but he moved quickly to pass the largest tax cut in a generation. Whether this early success is an indicator of future cooperation with Congress remains an open question, especially in light of the new budget deficits. What is not open to question is that the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, transformed the administration, placing a premium on decisive action and focusing attention on the president's roles as crisis leader and commander in chief.

There has always been some tension between the personal and the institutional presidency. Presidents are elected in part on their personal leadership experience and potential, on who they are, what they have done, what they promise to do, and whether their promises are believable and seem to address the nation's problems. But once they get into office, the institutional dimension plays a larger role in influencing whether they are able to achieve their policy and political goals. Environmental conditions—economic, social, and political—as well as events and decisions over which they have little or no control also affect their leadership.

This is a book about that leadership, the obstacles to it, and the skills necessary to overcome those obstacles. We posit two models of leadership: the president as director of change and the president as facilitator. In the director of change model, presidents lead the nation by dominating other political players; in the facilitator model, they work, bargaining and pleading, at coalition building, to further the attainment of their goals and the goals of their constituencies. These models provide the framework within which we assess leadership in the modern presidency and evaluate the performance of individual presidents.

We offer no simple formula for success, but we do assess the costs and consequences of presidential leadership in a pluralistic system in which separate institutions are forced to share powers. We believe that effective, responsible presidential leadership can play a vital role in providing the coherence, direction, and support necessary to articulate and achieve national policy and political goals.

We thank our friends at Wadsworth for the help they have provided us in the development, editing, and marketing of the sixth edition of this book. Most importantly, we want to acknowledge and thank our respective wives, Carmella Edwards and Cheryl Beil, for their patience, encouragement, and help. It is to them that we dedicate this book.

George C. Edwards III  
Stephen J. Wayne





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