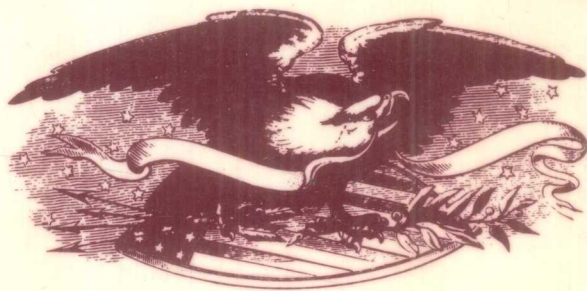


★ SECOND EDITION ★

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP



POLITICS

★ AND ★

POLICY
MAKING

GEORGE C. EDWARDS III
★ STEPHEN J. WAYNE ★

Presidential Leadership

Politics and Policy Making

Second Edition

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Texas A & M University

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Preface

The 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 deimperialize 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 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.

Obviously, presidential leadership cuts two ways. It is desirable yet potentially harmful. It is necessary but difficult, perhaps more difficult today than in the past. Even though the president has limited influence over the environment in which he must operate, he is expected to solve most of the major problems that affect a significant portion of the Ameri-

can population. While expectations of the presidency remain as great as ever, the costs of meeting these expectations have increased. To make matters worse, presidents regularly receive more blame and credit for external conditions than they deserve. All of this has complicated the president's leadership task and, at the same time, made that task more critical.

This book, the text's second edition, is about presidential leadership, about the obstacles to that leadership, and about the skills necessary to overcome those obstacles. It focuses on the nature of executive leadership in the American political system.

We posit in this edition two models of leadership: the president as director of change and the president as facilitator. In the director of change model, the president leads the nation by dominating other political actors; in the facilitator model, he works, bargaining and pleading, at coalition building to further the attainment of his and his constituency's goals. These models provide the framework within which we assess leadership in the modern presidency.

In this second edition, we focus more heavily on the human elements of presidential leadership. Chapter 8, "The Personalized Presidency," is new. It evaluates the importance of social, physical, and psychological factors in determining the chief executive's performance. It seeks to explain how cognitive skills, interactive behavior, and psychological dimensions affect, directly or indirectly, the perceptions, judgments, and actions of presidents. To make room for this new chapter, we have shortened and made an appendix out of the first edition's chapter on studying the presidency.

We offer in this book no simple formula for presidential success, but we do assess the costs and consequences of presidential leadership in a pluralistic system where 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.

One of the difficulties we faced in writing this book was choosing a pronoun to represent the president. Traditionally, the male pronoun has been used, since only men have held this office. Reluctantly, we have adopted this convention because always pluralizing the word is inappropriate and always using the "he or she" combination is awkward. We apologize if we have offended anyone by the use of this convention. We trust that in the near future women (as well as members of minority groups) will be elected president and vice president (and thereby complicate our task as authors even more).

We wish to thank our friends at St. Martin's Press for the help they have provided us in the development, editing, and marketing of the second edition of this work. Developmental editor, Michael Weber, in particular, contributed significantly to the improvement of the manu-

script. We also wish to thank Professors Eric Davis of Middlebury College, Richard K. Sher of the University of Florida, and Earl Shaw of the University of Minnesota for their insightful critiques. Finally, and 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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Presidential Leadership: An Introduction

No office within American government, or for that matter most other systems, has commanded the attention, stirred the imagination, and generated the emotions that the presidency has. Considered the first among equals, it has become the dominant institution in a system designed for balanced government, the prime initiator and coordinator among separate and independent institutions, the foremost mobilizer among disparate and, often, competing interests, and the principal communications link from and to a multitude of groups and individuals. It is a many-faceted, dynamic office—with a plethora of responsibilities, a variety of roles, and a large range of powers.

Within it, the president is clearly the chief. Executive officials look to him for direction, coordination, and general guidance in the implementation of policy; members of Congress look to him for establishing priorities, exerting influence, and providing services; the heads of foreign governments look to him for articulating positions, conducting diplomacy, and flexing muscle; the general public looks to him for enhancing security, solving problems, and exercising symbolic and moral leadership—a big order to be sure.

Unfortunately for the president, these expectations often exceed his abilities to meet them. It is not simply a question of his skill or personality, although both contribute to his capacity to do the job and to do it well. The problem is the system, particularly its constitutional, institutional, and political structures. The Constitution divides authority; institutions share power; and parties lack cohesion and often a sustained ideological thrust.

Despite the president's position and status, he has difficulty overcoming these constraints. Nor can he easily ignore or reduce what is expected of him. As a consequence, disappointment is frequent regardless of who occupies the Oval Office.

To some extent, this has always been the case. But in recent times, the gap between expectations and performance seems to have widened. Disenchantment has increased; confidence has declined; the popularity

of many presidents has plummeted during the course of their administrations. Effective presidential leadership has thus become more difficult but no less vital if the American system is to work.

This book addresses these problems and the ability of presidents to surmount them. First and foremost, this is a book about presidential leadership, about the capacity of chief executives to fulfill their tasks, to exercise their powers, and to utilize their organizational structures. It is a book about political leadership, about public opinion, group pressures, media coverage, and presidential salesmanship before, during, and after elections. It is also a book about policy leadership, about institutions and processes, about priority setting, coalition building, and governmental implementation. Finally, it is a book about personal leadership, about incumbents in office, about their goals, national needs, and the formal and informal ways of accomplishing their objectives.

In order to understand the problems of contemporary presidential leadership, it is necessary to gain perspective on the institution and its development. The first two parts of this chapter provide that perspective. In them we present an overview of the creation of the office and its evolution. We place particular emphasis on the growth of its policy-making roles, its advisory and administrative structures, and its political and public dimensions. In the third part of the chapter we examine recent changes in the political and policy environment and the impact of those changes on the president's job performance. We assess the sources of the institution's problems and present the dilemmas for contemporary leadership. In the final section we discuss how we will go about exploring these dilemmas.

THE ORIGINAL PRESIDENCY

The Creation of the Institution

The contemporary presidency bears little resemblance to the one the framers of the Constitution artfully designed in 1787 in Philadelphia. Their executive had more limited authority, less functional responsibility, and no explicit institutional structure or operating procedures. The times, of course, were different.

Although the Constitution's framers saw the need for an independent executive empowered with its own authority, they did not begin with a consensus on the form this executive should take nor the powers it should possess. At the outset of their deliberations, two basic questions had to be answered: Should the office be entrusted to one person or to several individuals? and What combination of functions, responsibilities, and powers would yield an energetic yet safe executive?

The first of these questions was resolved early in the convention

after a short but pointed discussion. James Wilson, delegate from Pennsylvania, had proposed that only a single individual could combine the characteristics of "energy, dispatch, and responsibility." Critics immediately responded that such an executive would be dangerous—"the foetus of monarchy," in the words of Edmund Randolph.

In denying the allegation that what they really wanted was a king, Wilson and James Madison sought to contrast their more limited executive with the powers of a king. As the debate intensified, Madison proposed that the institution's authority be established before the number of executives was decided. This constituted one of the most astute parliamentary moves of the Constitutional Convention. Wilson had previously declared that the prerogatives of the British monarch were not a proper guide for determining the executive's domain. They were too extensive. The American executive, he argued, should possess only executive authority, the power to execute laws and make those appointments that had not otherwise been provided for. The Convention accepted Wilson's delineation, a delineation that made it safe to entrust the office to a single individual. This was promptly done. Only later were those powers expanded through enumeration.

Wilson was primarily responsible for this enumeration as well. As a member of the committee charged with taking propositions approved by the Convention and shaping them into a constitution, he detailed the executive's powers with phraseology taken from the New York and Massachusetts constitutions. Surprisingly, his enumeration engendered little debate. The powers were not particularly controversial. Couching them in the language of two state constitutions made them more palatable to the delegates. Most were quickly and quietly adopted.

Agreement on the checks to secure and restrain the executive was a little more difficult. Abuses of past executives—particularly British monarchs and colonial governors—combined with the excesses of contemporary legislatures made the maintenance of an institutional balance essential. The problem was how to preserve the balance without jeopardizing the independence of the separate branches or impeding the lawful exercise of their authority. In the end the framers resolved this problem by checking those powers that they believed to be most dangerous, the ones which historically had been subject to greatest abuse (appointments, treaty making, and declarations of war), while protecting the general spheres of authority from encroachment (in the executive's case by a qualified veto).

Presidential responsibility was also encouraged by the provisions for reeligibility and a short term of office. Reappointment was the great motive to good behavior. For those executives who flagrantly abused their authority, impeachment was the ultimate recourse.

The traditional weapon to defend executive authority was the veto. Theoretically, it could function to protect those executive prerogatives

that were threatened by the legislature. In practice, it had frequently been employed to preclude the enactment of laws that the executive opposed. Herein lay its danger. The compromise was to give the president the veto but allow two-thirds of both houses to override it.

In summary, the relative ease with which the presidency was empowered indicates that a consensus developed on the bounds and substance of executive authority. Not only had certain traditional prerogatives been rejected but others had been readily accepted. In deciding which of these powers should be given to the new institution, the framers turned to the tenets of balanced government as articulated by the French theorist Charles de Montesquieu in his well-quoted treatise, *The Spirit of the Laws*, and practiced to some extent in the states of Massachusetts and New York.¹ Those powers which conformed to the basic division of authority were accepted; those which actually or potentially threatened the institutional balance were rejected.

Fears of potential abuse led to differing opinions on how best to constrain the branches without violating the principle of separate spheres of authority. The majority of the delegates opted for sharing powers, particularly in foreign affairs, and principally with the Senate. Their decision, reached toward the end of the convention when the pressures to compromise were greatest, exacerbated the fears of those who believed that the Senate would come to dominate the president and control the government.

Many of the opponents of the Constitution saw the sharing of powers as far more dangerous than the general grant of executive authority that was specified in Article 2. While each of the president's powers engendered some objection during the ratification debate, the most sustained criticism was directed at the relationship with the upper chamber. In the end, the proponents of the Constitution prevailed, but the debate over the efficacy of shared powers between executive and legislative branches has continued through the years.

The Scope of Article 2

In one sense what the framers did is obvious. It is written in Article 2. In another sense, however, their deliberations and decisions have been subject to constant interpretation. Unlike Article 1, where the Constitution detailed the legislative powers that were given to Congress, Article 2 stated executive authority in a more general way: "The executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America." For years scholars have debated whether this designation provides the president with an undefined grant of authority or simply confers on him the title of the office.

Although the answer to this question remains in doubt, the executive portion of the president's responsibilities is relatively clear. The