

# Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents

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*The Politics of Leadership  
from Roosevelt to Reagan*

RICHARD E. NEUSTADT



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# Preface to the 1990 Edition

In writing this book thirty years ago, I sought to characterize the power of a modern American President. I addressed not the office but rather the person as one among many in a set of institutions. Power I defined as personal influence of an effective sort on governmental action. This I distinguished sharply—a novel distinction then—from formal “powers” vested in the Presidency by constitutional or statute law and custom. In considering Dwight D. Eisenhower and Harry S Truman, with Franklin D. Roosevelt in their immediate background, I found effective personal influence to be a risky thing—hard to consolidate, easy to dissipate, rarely assured. I still find it so. Ronald Reagan did amass it on occasion, but by no means everywhere or all the time.

Presidential weakness was the underlying theme of *Presidential Power*. This remains my theme. It runs through the eight original chapters, here reprinted, and through five later ones that are meant to supplement, bring up to date, revise, and reconsider, as befits a new edition. The doing has not brought a change of theme. Weakness is still what I see: weakness in the sense of a great gap between what is expected of a man (or someday woman) and assured capacity to carry through. Expectations rise and clerky tasks increase, while prospects for sustained support from any quarter worsen as foreign alliances loosen and political parties wane.

A President, albeit republican, hence temporary, is our substitute for Britain’s monarch, not only in the twentieth-century sense of chief of state but also in the seventeenth-century sense of chief of government. Late-seventeenth-century, to be precise: Ours is a constitutional monarch, a consciously purified version of William and Mary. Our Constitution stands as an intended although unacknowledged gloss on the English Act

on far too many acts of government: Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon. Their power is symbolized by the Americanization of the Vietnam War and its continuation, and in Nixon's case as well by all the things we lump together under "Watergate." Their strength was in a sense illusory, however, for these are also symbols of their self-destruction.

In 1960 my concern with personal power turned upon the problem of enhancing or conserving it prospectively, taken in strategic terms, "looking toward tomorrow from today." Presidents, I argued, ought to think about their prospects for effectiveness as they make current choices—deriving either cautions for the future or guidance for the present. The better they think about power in prospective terms, the likelier they are to buttress future influence and also chosen policies. They need to do the thinking for themselves, since in our system they can count on no one else to do it for them in *their* terms. They ought to concentrate such thoughts on their own choices, since in our system these are the only means under their personal control by which they can affect the acts of government. That was and remains the skeleton of my argument. It will be found with flesh on the bones in chapters 6 through 8, once I have cleared the ground for it in chapters 1 through 5.

But in the face of that argument Johnson and Nixon, by all accounts assiduous in thinking about power—both, indeed, preoccupied with it to the point of obsession—set themselves on disastrous courses, leading one to premature retirement and the other to forced resignation. In the process they deeply damaged their dearest policy objectives: Johnson's Great Society at home, Nixon's balance of power in the world.

Two questions arise: Can what they did be squared with what I wrote thirty years ago? If not, how should I change my words in light of their years in the White House? Having pondered those questions, I address them here initially in Chapter 10. That chapter was written as a commentary on the whole of the original book. So it remains; it adjusts details but not essentials. Despite appearances Johnson and Nixon found their power as contingent and variable as that of others. It follows that concern about prospective influence and efforts by the President himself to make the most he can of it remain as central to the Presidency as I thought them thirty years ago.

Some critics of the earlier editions could not fathom how such strength as, for example, Nixon showed in 1973, when he impounded funds appropriated by Congress, can be viewed by me as consonant with weakness. But that is to confuse the first bite of invoked authority with longer-run effects on power prospects. Nixon complicated his relations with the Democratic Congress just before his cover-up of Watergate collapsed. He

of Settlement of 1688. The President is far more powerful than Queen Victoria, even the young Victoria, but also more dependent than the young George III upon a parliament, called Congress, that his favoritism cannot tame. Nor can he turn it out as though he were a Cromwell. Nor can it cut his head off as though he were Charles I—except in such a special case as Watergate, and then but in conjunction with the media and the courts. The President and Congress are at once so independent and so intertwined that neither can be said to govern save as both do. And even when they come together they face other claimants to a share in governing: the courts, the states, the press, the private interests, all protected by our Constitution, and the foreign governments that help to shape our policy. All these are separate institutions sharing each other's powers. To share is to limit; that is the heart of the matter, and everything this book explores stems from it.

Because our monarch's formal powers are so largely shared, his personal effectiveness (actual power) is in the same degree at risk, dependent on consent from other sharers. Because he needs them he must bargain with them, buttressing his share with his resources in their eyes of personal reputation and of public standing. Together with his powers, reputation and prestige become the sources of his power, case by case. Anticipating how the three might or might not combine to serve him in the future is the subject of this book. For when power rests not only on official authority but also on the subjective views of others, looking ahead is essential. Yet anything so doubly subjective as the prediction of those others' views is by its nature weak. With formal powers at the base of power, necessary if not often sufficient—and if sufficient, costly—weakness is constitutional as well as natural. I spell that out in chapters 2 and 3.

Stated so flatly, "weakness" may cause surprise. Since 1960 six new Presidents have come and gone. (George Bush, when he goes, will count as number seven.) Broadly speaking, the experience of three supports that view, although they served for such short spans as to reduce their usefulness in evidential terms, only nine years among them: John F. Kennedy, Gerald R. Ford, and Jimmy Carter. But Reagan, serving almost as long, was sufficiently successful both in legislation and in foreign negotiation, and also, overall, quite credible enough as chief of state, to leave behind a temporary glow of seeming mastery. He also left behind a bold and popular reaffirmation of what Richard Hofstadter entitled forty years ago (when he wrote what he thought was its obituary), "the American political tradition." And the remaining two Presidents since 1960, with nearly eleven years of office between them, successively displayed what most Americans regard, at least in retrospect, as altogether too much influence

provoked a batch of lawsuits brought by congressmen, which overturned his more adventurous impoundments. He invited a restrictive statute that eventually deprived the Presidency of its right to impound in his fashion ever: all this for a short-run show of success. Power? Not in prospective terms!

Nixon, to be sure, did not believe in hoarding power just to tell himself he had it. (No more do I.) His aims, like those of other Presidents before and after him, were all bound up with policies in action and result. His need was not to scrap his preferences lest they becloud his prospects, but rather to pursue the policies he sought and fend off those he didn't—with strategies that took the prospects into full account. A less draconian approach that winter might have got him relatively more economies in the long run than did the sweep of those impoundments. But behind them lay not presidential strategy so much as postelection hubris or tunnel vision at the Office of Management and Budget or both.

Chapter 10 is preceded by another commentary with a different purpose. Chapter 9 adapts this book's analysis of power viewed in prospect so as to provide the terms for judgment of a President's performance in retrospect. These terms, I hope, are applicable to anyone, but only retrospectively; they make it plain, for instance, how premature are early judgments about Bush's lack of "commitment" as compared with Reagan. In Chapter 9 the terms have been applied to JFK, the man history squeezed between Eisenhower and Johnson. Kennedy was also the first President to deal directly with a nuclear confrontation and the second to involve us directly in Vietnam. On those scores, among others, his incumbency projects beyond its two years and ten months. Thus Chapter 9 does double duty, not only offering terms for general use but also helping to bring readers from the fifties toward the nineties.

Chapter 11 continues with that latter task, comparing, among others, Kennedy and Carter as they went about learning by doing. This is an inescapable aspect of the office and one that Carter's difficulties cast into sharp relief; it seems to be both harder and more critical than formerly. "Transition," taken as inclusive of the learning time, was hazardous for Kennedy but still more so for Carter. Personal style aside, this reflects changes in our system. These, while cumulative since the fifties, accelerated in the seventies so that they rendered Carter's institutional surroundings different even from Johnson's. Chapter 11 suggests how and why. It also spells out, with two new case studies, what the hazards of transition are. The Bay of Pigs of 1961 and the Lance affair of 1977 are the illustrations in this chapter, and I note a further aspect taught us by David Stockman in 1981. Chapter 11 thus adds fresh illustrative material to chapters 1 through 4 and adds to Chapter 5 a dimension of television.

Granting all the changes of detail in institutions and in public moods, Carter's power problem somewhat resembled Truman's. But beyond the altered details lay substantial differences of substance. The United States was no longer the overwhelming military power in the world, no longer sure of never losing wars, no longer confident of having learned how to maintain employment and to check inflation, no longer reveling in resource independence, technological supremacy, favorable exchange rates, and the privileged life abroad. If there *was* an "American century," as Henry Luce proclaimed during World War II, it lasted only twice as long as Adolf Hitler's Thousand-Year Reich. Tantalizingly, unlike the Reich, conditions favoring this country's sense of independence and security—if not quite the old substance—could have returned with a few well-placed technological breakthroughs. But they did not occur and haven't since. Substantively Carter's problem may have been worse than Truman's; psychologically it surely was worse, especially since Carter had no Stalins to stage educational dramas overseas; instead he had gas shortages, inflation, and ayatollahs. However, this is very relative. Fearfulness, not confidence, marked public moods in many of the Truman years, and also anger at the President. Carter evoked shrugs or headshaking; Truman evoked cries of treason.

Yet Reagan, following Carter, with American supremacy still more remote—relying as we had not done for six decades on foreign creditors—evoked fond smiles in most of his eight years. This raises still another question with my original text: How could a man so inattentive seem to do so relatively well? Chapter 12 turns to Reagan—not in general terms but in the quite-specific terms of this book's focus on prospects for personal power. Reagan had good prospects (partly thanks to carefully drawn contrasts with Carter), and for several of his years the "Great Communicator" made the most of them. In one publicized affair he spectacularly did not, the sale of arms to Iran and the siphoning of profits toward the Nicaraguan Contras. That case I add because it offers fresh illustrative material and newly sharpened edges for my argument. (I write before Admiral Poindexter goes on trial. But I am reasonably confident my reconstruction will stand up to all such later probes.)

Reagan's operating style was like no other seen in modern times. Yet his successes, in their way, compare with some of Johnson's, while his failures seem remarkably avoidable compared with Carter's or even Nixon's. This gives me hope that with a minimum of adaptations even a style akin to Reagan's could be made to serve a President who sought consistently to husband power prospects while confronting present choices. That is good, for I expect more Presidents whose backgrounds have accustomed them to such a style. Bush, it appears, is not one of them; perhaps he saw too much of Reagan.

Chapter 13 suggests two rules of thumb to help a would-be Reagan and does more. It offers two examples of success in using present choices to protect prospective influence. These two become new bulwarks for the argument and offer fresh material to help address the question of what else to do besides consulting power stakes: a question posed initially with reference to Johnson and Nixon. The two examples deal respectively with Kennedy facing Khrushchev late in the missile crisis of 1962, and with Eisenhower facing French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The Eisenhower seen here is the "hidden hand" President, *par excellence*. He belongs here right along with the Eisenhower of budgeting in 1956 and Little Rock in 1957. I cannot resolve the contradictions between them, but it is well that both be represented. That, however, is a bonus, for those success stories are put here to shed light on the basic claim made in the first edition of this book and ever since—namely that a President who seeks to guard his prospects for effectiveness (someday they will be her prospects) should think about his power stakes in every act of choice. There are some other things that he can think about, besides, to help sort out such contradictions in his stakes as those that beset LBJ, thus helping him frame strategy better than LBJ could. Those other things are specified in Chapter 13. They are supplements, not substitutes, for thought about personal power.

The power problem I addressed in 1960 was defined as time bound, bearing on the Presidency in a given setting. I chose the then-contemporary setting, labeled it "midcentury," and defined it in political and institutional terms drawn from the years since World War II. Hence the stress on Truman and Eisenhower. I did not think it likely that three decades later all the changes in the setting would have taken such a shape as to leave the problem roughly what it was then, if not more so. Change was bound to come; I did not foresee this result. Sometime during the seventies I thought we might see strengthened partisan alignments, linking President and Congress through their nominating processes. "Sometime" could be any time, if not the seventies perhaps the nineties or the noughts of the next century, should the Republicans acquire their long-sought congressional majorities. (Or is the prospect but pie in the sky?) However, for the present we have seen the opposite occur, especially since ticket splitting became endemic. Policy-making harks back in some respects to Franklin Roosevelt, circa 1939, when Congress was as feisty with the President on foreign policy as on domestic programs. Of course it was a very different Congress, in a very different world of parties, staffs, departments, interests, issues, populations, economics, armaments and media. Yet the terms and conditions of employment for a President who

seeks to husband his resources and extend his grasp appear alike from then to now in significant ways. Bush now conciliates an opposition Congress in some of the same tones as Truman during 1947. Why difference leads toward sameness—and where sameness stops—are questions variously addressed by all the chapters I have added since 1960.

The new chapters lengthen the book, something I deplore. It once had brevity—something I admire. But I ruled out the alternative. Revising the original text struck me as inappropriate, a bit Orwellian. Books should stand where they first saw the light of day, expressive of their setting and confined by it. Therefore the only things that I have done to chapters 1 through 8 in this edition are to find and strike a misused “hopefully,” to correct typographical errors, and occasionally to footnote later events. Otherwise those chapters remain as they were 30 years ago, warts and all; just as they have been cited, quoted, criticized. Chapters 9 through 13 build on them, comment on them, differ with them now and then, but do not obfuscate (I hope) their analytic argument. That remains the heart of the book. My intent in the new chapters is to strengthen it.

Often since 1960 I have been importuned to do more. Students and others have urged me, for instance, to enlarge on the parallels historically and comparatively, before the modern Presidency and beyond our borders; or to treat public relations as a thing apart, an actual alternative to bargaining among the Washingtonians; or to expand on FDR’s fine line, “the Presidency is preeminently a place of moral leadership.” But I stick to my last. I won’t do it. The first is too big. The second I regard as wrong: Public appeals are part of bargaining, albeit a changing part since prestige bulks far larger than before in reputation. And the third waits for somebody else. The Presidency *also* is a clerkship that serves to keep government going. In this book I try to focus on the consequences of that aspect of his office for an incumbent President, as one human being among others in the system. I think it enough for one book to endeavor to do.

For reasons I find hard to fathom, readers with government experience follow my argument more easily than do some of those for whom it remains theoretical. The latter have great difficulty separating in their minds the tactical pursuit of immediate aims from relatively imprecise endeavors to anticipate longer-range likelihoods. Yet it is just those endeavors with which I am concerned: trying to judge influence prospectively, as it might be available for still-to-be-specified use, rather than reviewing current conditions for particular use at the moment. This is an everyday distinction to the people who do both, although rarely if ever formulated in such abstract terms. Consider two longer-range questions: Will I be better able to get more of what I may then want next week, next month, next

year? Will I be worse off later, and with whom, if I do X now, rather than Y? These are commonplaces of a politician's day, invoking just the issues I seek to stress. They are not the same as asking—though they may incorporate— What does it take to get X done today? The forecast and the plunge into immediate doing may be close or far apart or somewhere in between. They will not be identical unless by chance: Human prediction about other humans is not good enough. Why that is sometimes hard for readers inexperienced in government to see I cannot tell. I have puzzled about it as a teacher without coming to firm conclusions. In any event I hope the added illustrations for this new edition—seven in all, spread over chapters 10 through 13—make it clearer than I fear it was for some in 1960.

To write of teaching is to remind myself that I may have done some inadvertently—with poor results! In December 1972, at a Harvard conference on the presidential campaigns just concluded, a clean-cut young man introduced himself to me and said, "I'm glad to meet you. I read your book a couple of years ago, indeed I had to: Bob Haldeman made each of us read it as soon as we joined the White House staff . . ." The man's name was Jeb Magruder. The next I heard of him he was being indicted. He subsequently went to jail for his part in authorizing and then trying to cover up some of the illicit, often idiotic covert actions at the heart of Watergate. Some six years later, at the University of Utah, I ran across another former Haldeman subaltern, Gordon Strachan, the man who kept the tickler file. He said to me, recalling Watergate: "You know, you have to share the responsibility . . . your book. . ."

Initially I found it puzzling that the pages of this book—then chapters 1 through 9, whether read or merely turned—could seem to them to license illegalities, along with such ineptitudes as "plumbers" at the White House, break-ins at the Democratic National Committee, and a crackpot cover-up. In Talleyrand's phrase, a blunder is worse than a crime: These people had gone in for both. Eventually I realized that those chapters had been written on an invalid assumption about White House aides. Of course, I wrote in hopes that such as they would read the book. But I assumed that they would mostly be experienced in government, to some significant degree, as I had been when I was there in Truman's second term, or as were most of my colleagues and most of our successors under Eisenhower.

That a whole crew could arrive at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue with somebody like Haldeman, as innocent as he of government experience, actually believing that their President is "CEO" by tight analogy to private corporations—this did not occur to me when I was writing thirty

vants, part collaborators of congressional subcommittees, and a feel as well for media relations—together with a prudent sense of what it means to work inside a Presidency sharing powers with the Congress, courts, and states, where no one has the “final” word, except, sometimes, the voters. In short, I took for granted White House staffs with roughly the experience of Reagan’s first-term aides or Bush’s inner cabinet now, not Nixon’s Germans and their aides, to say nothing of Carter’s Georgians. I therefore did not bother to spell out what I assumed such readers would bring with them to a reading. If I am to judge from the likes of Magruder, that proved a mistake.

I may have made a second, similar mistake. I also took for granted that journalists and college students, two more sets of hoped-for readers, would have absorbed from studies in their colleges and schools a somewhat similar sensitivity—as I indeed thought I (and much of my cohort with me) had done in the 1930s. I failed to reckon on the steep decline of history, blurred almost beyond recognition by “social studies” in schools or escaped by means of electives in college curricula. These made prior knowledge even of *The Federalist*, let alone Edward Corwin, rare among the young, as rare perhaps as was experience among the Nixon aides who read or riffled through my book without it—and apparently were conscious of no lack until too late.

So let me pause here and now, at the outset of this new edition, to issue a warning—stuffy as that seems. The very likelihood of presidential weakness should impose on those who seek to help a President get what he wants, as well as on the President himself, a decent respect for the opinions—and indeed the civil rights—of all who share in his authority, his “powers.” That, for the most part, most of the time, means hundreds or thousands of people, as the case may be, in Washington, the country and abroad. When it comes to something as egregious as installing “plumbers” in an adjacent basement, literally millions can be said to be involved, because the White House is “their” house, a national shrine. Consider their interests, ponder their rights, give them their due—and be known to do it! That I urge on the aides of any President. In the terms of Chapter 3, “separated institutions *sharing* powers” includes him, and therefore you! And most of the time, he is supposed to be weak. And in the normal course, getting what he wants is supposed to be hard. Those actually are attributes of constitutional government in the United States. A President does well to begin by respecting them if he would make the most he can of his prospects for power. His aides are justified by nothing save as they help him do well.

aide, my immediate boss, a second-level staffer, grew a little testy with an unresponsive senator—and showed it. This occurred one morning. The senator complained to Truman in the afternoon. Truman well remembered what it was to be a senator beset by snappish White House aides. The next day I was looking for another boss; the previous one no longer worked at the White House. (Future Magruders please note: It is not so different now as you may think—or anyway it shouldn't be!)

And Presidents should know their place as well. They can forget it too. In 1985 Reagan allowed covert operations to be run from what was generally regarded as his house. In 1971 Nixon allowed “plumbers” into that same house, then tried to hide their criminal activities, in the process committing his own. In the early 1960s, JFK allegedly allowed himself light dalliance in the family quarters with the girlfriend of a gangster who was under surveillance by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, though Kennedy didn't know that; if so, he made himself vulnerable to FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. In 1937, after a triumphant reelection, FDR was disingenuous in public, straight out of the oval office, with what promptly became tagged his “scheme” for “court packing.” From one shrine he attacked another, the Constitution and its traditional interpreter, the Court—and did so in an underhanded way, too clever by half, alleging his concern about the workload of aged justices when everybody knew it was their rulings he deplored.

In all such instances of which I am aware, the Presidents did not think hard enough, carefully enough, beforehand, about foreseeable, even likely consequences to their own effectiveness in office, looking down the line and around corners. They did not think enough about prospective power, not anyway in its symbolic and constitutional dimensions. For that they suffered something—Nixon everything—and so also did we, the rest of us, whether or not actively engaged in public life.

That is my crowning point. Not the President alone but everyone who cares about our government's performance has a stake in his concern for his own influence prospectively. A President serves others in the system as a customary source of the initiatives, the mediation and, on certain issues, final judgments that are needed by those others in the doing of *their* jobs. The better he does his, the better they can do theirs. As I argued in the first edition of this book, our Madisonian government is energized by productive tension among its working parts. As a source of such tension, initiatives are vital. We all have a stake in them. A President will often have no better means for framing them than careful consultation of his own interests for influence. We thus have a stake in his doing so.

tional and international—wider and more varied than those of any other single office in the system. A President who thinks about his prospects for effectiveness, with and through all those others, is thinking about matters relevant for policy, invoking broad constituencies and institutions. Better thought about personal prospects can contribute, I believe, to better thought about the viability of policy. Roosevelt's threat to "pack" the Court sufficed to change its own direction; he later said he lost the battle for his bill but won the war. Over the next years, however, he and his successor lost far more than that: They lost control of Congress on domestic legislation. An FDR less disingenuous might not have been so obvious a target for the nascent conservative coalition. It formed in the course of the Court-packing fight. The coming of that coalition might have been delayed, or moderated, with positive effects on pending social legislation—little of which got through for nearly thirty years thereafter. In Kennedy's case we cannot know what his alleged indiscretion could have cost him in policy terms, but if the allegation stands as true, Hoover would have extracted something, I don't doubt. We do know what the "plumbers" and the cover-up cost Nixon: his Presidency and with it his ambitions for Vietnam and Soviet-American relations, to say nothing of his hopes for Republicans in 1976. We also know what Colonel North and Admiral Poindexter cost Reagan by way of policy: long delays, at least, in treasured options for Iranian relations and for Nicaragua.

So I persist in the belief expressed in earlier editions of this book—namely that pursuit of presidential power, rightly understood, constitutionally conditioned, looking ahead, serves purposes far broader than a President's satisfaction. It is good for the country as well as for him. The President who maximizes his prospective influence within the system helps to energize it in the process. He will enhance as well the prospect that the policies he chooses can be rendered viable: enactable, administrable, with staying power. Whether at a given point he shields his influence or spends it, he will, if he has calculated wisely, strengthen just those policies. Suppose they are not policies I favor? So be it. That does not seem to me too high a price to pay. Besides, he has to use whatever influence he does possess on Congress, agencies, the media, state governments, private interests, foreign allies, and public opinion abroad as well as at home. In opposition I am unlikely to feel lonely for lack of associates. That too is Madisonian. Compared to all the oppositions, even a "strong" President is weak. All this will be developed in what follows; *wea* remains the word with which to start.

# Preface to the First Edition

When we inaugurate a President of the United States we give a man the powers of our highest public office. From the moment he is sworn the man confronts a personal problem: how to make those powers work for *him*. That problem is the subject of this book. My theme is personal power and its politics: what it is, how to get it, how to keep it, how to lose it. My interest is in what a President can do to make his own will felt within his own Administration; what he can do, as one man among many, to carry his own choices through that maze of personalities and institutions called the government of the United States.

This is not a book about the Presidency as an organization or as legal powers or as precedents or as procedures. It is not about the politics of getting to the White House; nor is it a history of what has happened there. Least of all is it a list of what occurs there hour by hour. Fortunately we have many books on all these other aspects of the Presidency; historical treatments, administrative surveys, nomination and election studies, contemporary commentaries, biographies galore. The reader who seeks background is referred to these; their contributions are not duplicated here.

The purpose here is to explore the power problem of the man inside the White House. This is the classic problem of the man on top in any political system: how to be on top in fact as well as name. It is a problem common to prime ministers and premiers, and to dictators, however styled, and to those kings who rule as well as reign. It is a problem also for the heads of private "governments"—for corporation presidents, trade union leaders, churchmen. But this book is not comparative, though possibly it may facilitate comparisons. This is an effort to look closely at the problem of one officeholder in one political system: The office is the Presidency,

illustration in this book is in some sense the story of a failure; without exception every case turns on dramatic incidents. This does not mean that recent Presidents knew no successes, or that presidential business is invariably dramatic. It merely means that negative examples tend to be the most illuminating, and dramatic ones tend to be best remembered and recorded. These cases serve my purpose, but my aim is not historical. My treatment of events and men has no other objective than to clarify the nature of the search for personal power.

In several instances my illustrations have involved men and events still on the stage as I was writing. School integration at Little Rock is an example. Another example is the "new" Eisenhower of 1959. In instances like these I have not tried to bring the record up to date beyond July of 1959. My observations and conclusions rest on what occurred in that month and before. When one deals with contemporary matters one must stop somewhere; this is where I stopped. To help the reader place that point in time: The American economy had virtually recovered from the 1958 recession; a steel strike had just begun; the Little Rock high schools were soon to reopen; Congress was approaching adjournment; so was a foreign ministers' conference on Berlin; the vice president was in the Soviet Union; the President was about to visit Western Europe; the Soviet premier had accepted an invitation to visit the United States. This book takes no account of what has happened since.

While writing, I have been aware that there will soon be rich additions to the literature concerning modern Presidents at work in modern government. The Inter-University Case Program, which pioneered in-depth case studies of policy decisions, is now preparing several studies focused in large part upon decisions at the White House. The Twentieth Century Fund, through its project on civil-military relations, is about to publish a notable series of case studies in foreign and military policy-making; these cases also reach into the White House. A comparable, complementary series has been undertaken by the Columbia University Institute of War and Peace Studies. In 1960 and in 1961, publications from these sources will provide detailed accounts of governmental action at the highest levels on a rather wide variety of foreign, military, budgetary, scientific, and economic policy decisions made in Roosevelt's time, and in Truman's and Eisenhower's. I have been mindful of that prospect in preparing this book. Three of my major illustrations, most of my incidental illustrations, and the general organization of my argument were planned to provide links between the presentation here and that prospective case material. Students will, I hope, find it easy to move from the particular perspective of this

book, focused on the President himself, to the wider focus of these forthcoming case studies.

It is a matter of regret to me that I have had personal contact with only one of the Presidents involved in my illustrations. In President Truman's instance I saw aspects of the man at work while I served on his staff and have had later opportunities to exchange views with him. His readiness in those exchanges to respect my scholarly purpose, regardless of our former association, was as kind as it was useful; I note it gratefully. In President Roosevelt's case I had a partial substitute: the recollections of my father's friends and of my own acquaintances who served in his Administration, and opportunities to talk with certain members of his family. In President Eisenhower's instance, on the other hand, although his aides were helpful and informative, they felt themselves unable to extend to me the privilege of direct contact with him or with their work. This is not noted in complaint but in acknowledgment of limits on my resources for personal observation. Recognizing these limits I have sought compensation in the usual way, by interviewing men who had the contacts I did not.

This book is my responsibility, of course, but many others have contributed to its development. I began it when I first returned to teaching at the close of the Truman Administration, after a decade of staff work in the Office of Price Administration, the Navy, the Budget Bureau, and the White House. During the seven years since then I have imposed on numbers of my former colleagues for access to their memories and their personal files. I have buttonholed assorted friends and strangers in the Washington press corps and at the Capitol. And I have interviewed officials in the Eisenhower Administration with the student's usual unconcern for other people's time. Everywhere I have been met with courtesy and candor as well as information. I am profoundly grateful for all three. Many of my Washington informants were assured that there would be no attribution of their information. Since I cannot thank them all by name, I shall name none. But I can state the debt I owe them all: Without their help this study could not have been done.

My work was aided, also, by financial grants in 1955 and 1957 from the Columbia University Council for Research in the Social Sciences. Research and writing were completed while I held an appointment from Columbia as Ford Research Professor in American Government. The university's help in these respects is noted with a great deal of appreciation.

While this book was in draft form, four friends and colleagues gave me detailed comments on the entire manuscript: Roger Jones, Wallace Sayre,

criticisms and suggestions which have certainly made this a better book. I am equally obliged to several others who commented on portions of the draft: Daniel Bell, Douglass Cater, Violet Coffin, Herbert Deane, Henry Graff, Samuel Huntington, Frances Low, Warner Schilling, and Kenneth Young. My thanks are due also to Everard Meade and Rose Marie O'Reilly of the Columbia Broadcasting System, and to George Gallup and John Fenton of the American Institute of Public Opinion, for their time and good counsel as well as for the data they so generously provided.

Finally, I owe more than I can readily express to Elinor Truman, who masqueraded as a typist but performed as an editor; to Bertha Neustadt, who joined in this enterprise not only as my wife but also as my research assistant; and to Rick and Beth Neustadt, who spent a whole year heeding the injunction, "Shh—he's *writing*."

Columbia University  
New York City  
December 1959

Richard E. Neustadt

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Three of the five chapters added to this edition were initially prepared, one at a time, for the editions of 1968, 1976, and 1980. Like the original chapters, these too remain unchanged, except for striking another “hopefully,” adding a couple of clarifying phrases, deleting dated introductions and removing short conclusions from Chapters 10 and 11, since their purpose now is served by Chapter 13.

Chapter 9 is virtually identical with the Afterword prepared in 1968 for a French edition and thereafter carried in American editions. It adapts the terms of the original edition from their focus on prospective influence to a concern with retrospect—in principle of anyone as President but in this instance of Kennedy. (His sex life goes unmentioned; I conformed to the conventions of the time—which I still like—and I knew nothing but stray rumors anyway.)

Chapter 10 is, in condensed form, the text of the three William W. Cook Lectures delivered in the spring of 1976 at the University of Michigan Law School, under the title “Presidential Power Revisited: Reflections on Johnson and Nixon.” I am grateful to the law school for suggesting the subject in the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate, and also for agreeing that my text should be published where it belongs, in this book rather than in a separate volume.

Chapter 11 is, in expanded form, the Phi Beta Kappa Lecture I gave in the early months of 1979 as a visiting scholar at several universities and colleges (including the University of Utah). I am grateful to the National Phi Beta Kappa Society for those interesting visits, and to the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences for an immensely satisfying place to write and edit this chapter, among other things, while on sabbatical leave. The chapter was completed there in May 1979 and edited partly

while waiting on long lines for gasoline. "Malaise," Edward Kennedy, Afghanistan, Tehran hostages, and Reagan were still to come.

Chapters 12 and 13 are new, although some of their thoughts were aired in 1988 at a conference on the Reagan legacy sponsored by the University of California at Davis. But together they go well beyond my comments to that conference, staking out further ground. They also keep this book inside the boundaries of a single line of thought—the argument sketched in the preface to this edition and in the original text. Were I starting from scratch, I would use Truman illustrations less and Reagan illustrations more; otherwise I would stick to that argument. So I have tried to do in these two chapters.

Numbers of friends read drafts and gave advice at one stage or another on the five chapters added since 1960. For their help I am deeply grateful. Let me offer special thanks to those who read three or more: Fred Greenstein, Anthony King, Ernest May, Austin Ranney, and above all, David Truman. Truman, in the course of thirty years, has had to read the drafts of every word this book contains. I am equally grateful to my wife, Shirley Williams, for her thoughtful, sharp-eyed hunt through Chapters 12 and 13, stalking errors. I hope I have attended to all she found! I guess I am grateful to my publisher—and editor and friend and former student—Erwin Glikes, for insisting that I not leave the book without Reagan. I certainly owe thanks as well to Pennie Gouzoule, Barbara Witt, and Sally Makacynas for word processing. I am grateful for research help to Thomas Balliett and to Bruce Harley. Needless to say, their assistance was all to the good; anything bad remains mine.

Erwin Glikes deserves thanks also on another ground: He has indulged me in three idiosyncratic uses of capital letters. Defying contemporary usage, this book capitalizes *President* and *Presidency* right along with *Congress* and *the Court*. I wish thereby to assert constitutional equality, no more than that, in the American context against Whiggish tendencies of current lexicographers. Moreover, this book capitalizes *Administration* when the word refers collectively to the political appointees of a given President. That conforms to fifty years or more of usage in the Washington community.

Previous editions of *Presidential Power* and now this one have been dedicated to two people. One is my late wife Bert, who helped this book (and me) along at every stage from its inception in 1955 through the 1980 edition. The other is a one-time boss in the then-Budget Bureau, Roger W. Jones, who helped to launch me on an academic career and subsequently disciplined my interest in the Presidency, by first insisting that I

later, by thoughtfully reviewing every draft of this book's original text. Thirty years ago he did not wish to be identified. In 1980 I became unwilling to let him remain anonymous. That is still my sentiment. I owe him much.

Since 1960 we have had not only six more Presidents but also, and in greater number, new works on the Presidency, on Congress, and on relationships between the two. Some of these are distinguished contributions. Together they make plain that a full understanding of the Presidency as an institution, and also of its operating problems, calls for understanding Congress. The two are inseparable. So I have been tempted to dwell on those books as well as on the Presidents, but I have resisted the temptation lest I alter this book's character. *Presidential Power* never was and is not now a comprehensive commentary on the literature. The new material for this edition is not even comprehensive in its dealings with the critics of the first edition. The criticism I have heeded is my own, which sometimes coincides with that of others, sometimes not. The book remains now what it was originally, one man's argument, illustrated from the public record of the Presidency, drawing on my own experience and observation, an argument thus limited in its ambitions and its uses. My experience was considerably enlarged after 1960, also the opportunities for observation, as a consultant to the Kennedy and Johnson White House and occasionally to Carter's Reorganization Project. And teaching has produced, over the years, a set of friendly former students in each new Administration. What an asset for a President-watcher! I have always tried to turn participant-observership to the account of scholarship that might assist participants. I leave to others, or at least until another time, all wider tasks.

