

## The Most Powerful Man in the World?

The President of the United States is universally regarded as the world's most influential individual. As the leader of the world's mightiest nation, the current President of the United States, George W. Bush has the most prestigious job on the planet. That being said, we would believe that the President governs his country by command and that his every order is followed.

The writer Richard Neustadt would disagree, he expresses in his book Presidential Power that overall Presidents cannot govern by command. Neustadt feels that the Presidents seat is weak and the “powers” of the President granted in the Constitution are greatly limited. “In the words of a President, spoken on the job, one finds the essence of the problem now before us: ‘powers’ are no guarantee of power; clerkship is no guarantee of leadership.”(Neustadt) President Harry Truman felt the same way when he commented about his presidential power saying, “Do this! Do that! And nothing will happen.” How is it then that a leader can rule and get results without the ability to command? A President must be able to persuade rather than command using his tools of persuasion; reputation and prestige. Neustadt, concurring with Former President Truman claims that the Presidents’ power rests in his ability to persuade. He says, “Command is but a method of persuasion, not a substitute, and not a method suitable for everyday employment.”

As we claim that the Presidents power is in his power of persuasion, and not his ability to command, we must first look at instances where commands have been given, and successfully executed. The President, though not a dictator has a very powerful

office. Article Two of the Constitution defines the powers of the president, although a President's power is greater than what is merely expressed in the Constitution. Neustadt gives examples of Presidential commands and orders that were carried out. He first talks about the President's right as Commander in Chief. During the Korean War, President Truman made the unpopular order of removing General Douglas MacArthur from his position in the far-east. Truman was within his constitutional authority as the sole voice of foreign policy in the U.S. Government to relieve General MacArthur as Commander, showing the president's power to command. We then look at Truman's seizure of the steel mills as necessary for national defense. The other instance discussed was Eisenhower's use of the National Guard in Little Rock, Arkansas to restore order. Along the same lines, President Jackson when dealing with the Cherokee Indians wrote a treaty and removed the Indians from their land. The idea that Presidents have never been able to rule by command is absurd, in every president's term you can find instances where he has given an order and it has been carried out based solely on his status and power as president. Our argument is that the President cannot govern only by command; he must also exercise other powers.

Our government is structured in such a way that the power is balanced between the branches. This separation of powers automatically answers the question of whether a President can govern by command. But it is still possible that with the right support the President would be able to lead by command. Neustadt explains a way that our president can be successful; by his power to persuade, built by his professional reputation and his public prestige.

Neustadt says the power to persuade is the power to bargain. Who does the President need to persuade, or bargain with? The answer is the men who share the power with the President. The men who the power is balanced between namely congress and the senate. The executive branches' vantage point affords much more power than the other branches. A Presidents authority and status give him advantages in dealing with the men he would persuade. (Neustadt) These men that the President would persuade either fear him or need him, giving him the advantage over them. By having the prestige of being the President he can persuade others, possibly commanding those around him

We have said that the Presidents ability to command is based on his ability to persuade those who balance the country. We now must see what it is that gives him this advantage of persuasion. Neustadt talks about Washingtonians, and their perception of the president and what effect they have on him. These people build up and tear down a Presidents reputation. Reputation is the element that helps aid the President in his ability to persuade. The President hopes to gain the favor of this "Washington community", doing so affords him persuasive friends who will help him to command. Many uncontrolled factors go into determining the face that is portrayed of the President, but the professional reputation of a President in Washington is made or altered by the man himself. (Neustadt)

Now that the President has the ability to persuade, and the reputation he needs to hold respect, he must have the public prestige. He must look at how people outside Washington feel about him. Machiavelli said, "Nothing makes a prince so much esteemed as great enterprises and setting a fine example. (The Prince) The president must be able to not only communicate with the people but teach them as well. One of the ways

the President can teach is by setting an example. Most people in America become interested in the President when something is going on that effects their lives. Therefore the President must perform in such a manner that the American people can rely in him, giving him the prestige and support that he needs. Having the reputation that is necessary to succeed, and the public prestige to match, the President can now have the power of persuasion.

Having the power of persuasion does not equal the ability to command the country, only the ability to be effective as a leader. The ability to command then rests solely in what surrounds you. President Eisenhower stated it best when he said, "I sit here all day trying to persuade people to do the things they ought to have sense enough to do without my persuading them...That's all the powers of the President amount to."

(Neustadt)

If the President of the United States were asked how he feels about the idea of Presidents not being able to govern by command, he would tell you that he agrees with that notion. President George Bush works diligently behind the scenes attempting to make his commands effective from within. He has a gentle un-commanding approach, having faith that all of his orders will be carried out. He would agree with Neustadt that he cannot govern by command and that bargaining is the way to achieve his goals. Many of George Bush's plans and agendas have failed over the years, showing that you cannot always command and expect your orders to be heeded. As have other Presidents, George W. Bush's commands have at times been carried out and supported by the public. As with other Presidents, in times of crisis, President Bush has been able to give commands and have the public behind him. Using Neustadt's approach, President Bush has gotten

results—notably a large tax cut and, an education-reform package. Although his commands have often been ignored, with the right persuasion he can still be a successful leader.

Presidents cannot govern by command. They must hope that their circumstances and the people around them make it possible for them to be successful.