



Northeastern
Political Science Association
— Est. 1968 —



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS JOURNALS

Eisenhower & the Swelling of the Presidency

Author(s): John Hart

Source: *Polity*, Summer, 1992, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Summer, 1992), pp. 673-691

Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Northeastern Political Science Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3235055>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/3235055?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Northeastern Political Science Association and The University of Chicago Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Polity*

Research Note

Eisenhower & the Swelling of the Presidency

John Hart, *Australian National University*

Over the past decade, the political science of American politics has been exposed to a sustained wave of Eisenhower revisionism. Conventional wisdom on almost all facets of the Eisenhower presidency has been turned on its head as the former President has undergone a major re-evaluation which aims to correct the distortions and misconceptions of the past and rewrite his place in history. The once bumbling, inept, incompetent, weak, and politically inexperienced occupant of the White House has been transformed into an accomplished politician, a skillful leader, and a well-informed and activist President who completely dominated events and ran the show.¹ Eisenhower, we are told, “was a phenomenon in American politics, and there has never been anything quite like him.”² Moreover, according to Anthony Joes, “Eisenhower revisionism has passed the stage of re-evaluation and today amounts to what might be termed a small-scale intellectual revolution.”³ Eisenhower’s place in the development of the American presidency is also being reassessed and re-evaluated. His contribution is now regarded as something far more significant than conventional wisdom said it was. Fred Greenstein, one of the leading Eisenhower revisionists, claims that the formative period of the modern presidency began with Franklin Roosevelt and ended with Eisenhower and he speaks of “the post-Eisenhower presidency.” What came after Eisenhower, he says, were “rather drastic zigs and zags in patterns that had been established during the formative

1. See, especially, Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), and Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: The President* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), p. 10.

2. Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *The Eisenhower Diaries* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), p. xiii.

3. Anthony James Joes, “Eisenhower Revisionism: The Tide Comes In,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 15 (1985): 561.

first three modern presidencies.”⁴ Eisenhower’s successor, Greenstein claims, ushered in a “period of ephemeral presidencies” in which the chief executive has “become a bird of passage.”⁵ Another revisionist, Phillip Henderson, argues that “Eisenhower’s contributions to the development of the presidency were profound and remain critically important to our understanding of executive branch leadership.”⁶ And the most dedicated of all the revisionists, R. Gordon Hoxie, has annointed Eisenhower as “the principal architect of the modern institutional presidency.”⁷

This study seeks to relate the Eisenhower revisionism to one of the most significant developments of the modern institutional presidency—the expansion of the presidential staff system, or what Thomas Cronin calls “the swelling of the presidency.”⁸ Concern about the size and growth of the presidential staff was a Watergate-related phenomenon and it was in Cronin’s widely read text, *The State of the Presidency*, that most students of the presidency first encountered the bare statistics, in graphic form, detailing the expansion of the presidential staff from Franklin Roosevelt to Gerald Ford.

Cronin illustrates dramatically the growth of the presidential establishment by identifying the number of staff employed in the White House Office in the last full year of each administration over the thirty-year period since the establishment of the Executive Office of the President in 1939. These “official figures” as Cronin describes them, drawn from the *Budget of the U.S. Government*, show that after Franklin Roosevelt left office with a staff of 48, President Truman increased the size of the staff five-fold to a level of 252 (in 1952). That number remained fairly constant throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Eisenhower 275, Kennedy 263, Johnson 202) until it doubled under Nixon (510) and Ford (540).⁹ These figures were consistent with those produced by the first post-Brownlow congressional study of the expansion of the Executive Office of the President initiated by the House of Representatives Post Office and Civil Ser-

4. Fred I. Greenstein, “Change and Continuity in the Modern Presidency,” in *The New American Political System*, ed. Anthony King (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1978), p. 62.

5. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency*, p. 3.

6. Phillip G. Henderson, *Managing the Presidency: The Eisenhower Legacy—From Kennedy to Reagan* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), p. 10.

7. R. Gordon Hoxie, “Eisenhower and Presidential Leadership,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 13 (1983): 589.

8. Thomas E. Cronin, *The State of the Presidency* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975), pp. 117-52.

9. Cronin, *The State of the Presidency*, p. 119.

vice Committee in 1972.¹⁰ These figures were widely accepted in the immediate post-Watergate period and quickly found their way into the critical literature.

The size of the presidential staff was the key variable in much of the post-Watergate analysis of the presidency, and there was a broad consensus that the presidential staff, particularly the White House Office staff, was too large and that its numbers ought to be reduced.¹¹ Many critics took their cue from Cronin. Size was seen to offer an attractive and plausible explanation for the institutional defects of the presidency, especially during the Nixon years. There was a widely shared feeling that the presidential staff system was out of control—too large, too powerful, too unaccountable, too inexperienced, too isolated, and counterproductive to the functioning of government.

Watergate had exposed the expansion of the presidential staff which had been hidden from public view for at least two decades. Once exposed, however, the growth of the staff was seen as a problem of the institutional presidency and not just a feature of Richard Nixon's administration—even though the worst effects of a bloated presidential staff appeared in the Nixon years.¹² But, if the dysfunctions of the staff system were endemic in the development of the institutional presidency and, if Eisenhower is to be credited as the principal architect of the institutional presidency, then, presumably, the connection between Eisenhower and “the swelling of the presidency” ought to be a significant one and worthy of some examination.

So far, that examination has not been a conspicuous feature of the revisionist literature; given the nature of the revisionist claims about Eisenhower's impact on the institutional presidency, it is rather surprising to find that the literature has had so little to say about one of the most important developments of the post-Eisenhower institutional presidency. It does not ignore the issue of staffing, but the revisionists' focus has been almost exclusively on Eisenhower's organizational style and on the vexed question of the extent to which the origins of Eisenhower's staff system was rooted in the President's military background with its

10. U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, 92nd Congress, 2nd Session, Committee Print 19, *A Report on the Growth of the Executive Office of the President 1955-1973* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), pp. 2-3.

11. For a summary of the literature see John Hart, *The Presidential Branch* (New York: Pergamon, 1987), pp. 178-85.

12. See Stephen Hess, *Organizing the Presidency* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1976), pp. 8-11, and Walter F. Mondale, *The Accountability of Power: Toward a Responsible Presidency* (New York: David McKay, 1975), pp. 87-88.

emphasis on hierarchy, order, and delegation.¹³ The revisionists have been primarily concerned to show that one of the most heavily criticized aspects of the Eisenhower presidency—his management style—turned out to be an exemplary approach to presidential staffing and decision making.

Yet, when one comes to examine White House staffing during the Eisenhower years, not in terms of organizational style, but in the context of “the swelling of the presidency,” a rather different picture of Eisenhower’s staffing practices emerges. The most visible index of “the swelling of the presidency” was, and is, staff size, and the size of the presidential staff during the Eisenhower years has been considerably understated in both the revisionist literature and in many of the standard accounts of the modern institutional presidency. This is partly because there are major problems of measuring the size of the presidential staff, which were not recognized in the earlier post-Watergate commentary on presidential staffing, and also because the most inaccurate set of data, derived from the *Budget of the U.S. Government*, is the one that is most often used in the analysis of the expansion of the presidential staff system. Hence, it is necessary to consider the difficulties of calculating the size of the presidential staff and to assess the various measures of staff size that are available before anything can be said about Eisenhower’s impact on the “swelling of the presidency.”

I. The Size of the Presidential Staff?

A major problem with the staffing statistics derived from the U.S. Budget is that they do not take account of the number of staff “borrowed” by the White House from the departments and agencies while remaining on the payroll of the department or agency. Although this long-standing practice of “detailing” executive branch staff has been regulated since 1978 as a result of the passage of the White House Personnel Authorization-Employment Act, it was completely unregulated in Eisenhower’s time and went unreported. Because of this, Cronin quite properly added a qualification to his data on White House staff size saying that it generally underrepresented the true figure by about 20 percent.¹⁴

What Cronin did not pick up at the time was that the inadequacy of

13. See Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency*, pp. 138-50; John W. Sloan, “The Management and Decision Making Style of President Eisenhower,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 20 (1990); Henderson, *Managing the Presidency*, pp. 17-21.

14. Cronin, *The State of the Presidency*, p. 119.

the Budget data was not just a matter of omitting the number of detailees. The Budget also disregarded members of the presidential staff whose salaries were paid not from the White House Office appropriation, but from various other general appropriations to the President, such as the President's Emergency Fund, the Special Projects Fund and the Management Improvement Fund. These were little-known and little-understood appropriations that supported a variety of presidential activities. The latter two, both established at Eisenhower's behest, turned out to be an important source of funding for additional presidential staff—a point that will be taken up further on.

A second source of official data on presidential staff size is found in the *Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics*, published monthly by the then U.S. Civil Service Commission and now by the Office of Personnel Management. These figures provide a much more realistic guide to the size of the presidential staff because they include personnel whose salaries came from the special appropriations to the President which were not specifically earmarked for staffing and thus were not revealed in the Budget data. The *Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics* were the basis of the calculations of presidential staff size made in a second House Post Office and Civil Service Committee report on presidential staffing issued in 1978.¹⁵ The report was prepared by Dr. Louis Fisher and Dr. Harold Relyea of the Congressional Research Service and the “actual manpower” figures they gave revealed a quite significant difference between the staffing data provided in the Budget and those reported in the Civil Service Commission's workforce statistics, especially during the second term of the Eisenhower Administration (see Table I). But these figures also understate the true size of the presidential staff because they do not include the number of detailees either. Moreover, the authors of the 1978 Post Office and Civil Service Committee report claimed that it was impossible to discover from the public records just how many detailees were working on the presidential staff between 1950 and 1969.¹⁶ Furthermore, there is another problem with the way Fisher and Relyea have used the *Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics*. The annual figure they provide takes the size of the presidential staff to be that given for December 31 each year, but, in fact, there is often considerable monthly variation in the size of the staff over any one year. In 1975, for example, the size of

15. U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, 95th Congress, 2nd Session, Committee Print No. 95-17, *Presidential Staffing—A Brief Overview* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978).

16. House of Representatives, *Presidential Staffing*, p. 58.

Table I. The Growth of the White House Office, 1944-1975

YEAR	A (BUDGET)	B (FISHER-RELYEA)	C (WAYNE)	D (KING-RAGSDALE)
1944	47.5	58	192	50
1945	48.6	66	215	61
1946	51.5	216	213	61
1947	210	219	217	293
1948	245	209	268	210
1949	241	243	246	223
1950	238	313	248	295
1951	258	246	297	259
1952	272	248	283	245
1953	287	247	290	248
1954	250	262	273	266
1955	272	366	300	290
1956	273	372	392	374
1957	271	399	423	387
1958	277	395	403	394
1959	282	406	385	405
1960	274	416	388	446
1961	276	439	476	411
1962	282	338	432	467
1963	279	376	429	388
1964	278	328	431	349
1965	262	292	448	333
1966	266	270	475	295
1967	261	271	497	272
1968	260	261	456	344
1969	252	337	546	344
1970	252	491	632	311
1971	538	583	572	660
1972	544	583	572	660
1973	515	524	520	542
1974	525	560	552	583
1975	548	525	523	625

the White House Office varied from 625 in June to 525 in December—a 20 percent variation.¹⁷

A third set of statistics on the size of the White House staff was released in the same year as the Fisher-Relyea report in an appendix to Stephen Wayne's book, *The Legislative Presidency*. Wayne provides a "grand total" of White House staff for each year which includes detail-

17. Hart, *The Presidential Branch*, p. 102.

ees and those paid from the Special Projects Fund. The source of Wayne's data was James Connor, a member of President Ford's White House staff, but no details are provided on how the figures were derived and there is not a particularly close correlation between Wayne's data and those reported by Fisher and Relyea for the Eisenhower years (see Table I).

A further complication in calculating the size of the presidential staff has been added by the more recent publication of Gary King and Lyn Ragsdale's statistical handbook on the presidency. They provide yet another set of figures on the size and growth of the Executive Office of the President (EOP), with separate statistics on the principal component parts of the EOP,¹⁸ but, needless to say, their figures do not match up with the other published sources mentioned above. Like Wayne, King and Ragsdale provided little information on how their staff totals were calculated. They say their figures were derived from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, which uses the *Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics* figures, and the *Budget of the U.S. Government*, but they give no indication on how or why they blended the two sets of data, nor do they indicate whether all staff who work in the EOP, including detailees, temporary and part-time staff, have been accounted for.

There is a fifth source of data on presidential staff size (and probably the most accurate) contained in the annual reports mandated under the terms of the White House Personnel Authorization-Employment Act of 1978, but the series reports staff size only from 1979 onward and thus is not of much use in terms of "the swelling of the presidency" problem.¹⁹

What students of the institutional presidency now have are five different sets of data purporting to measure the size of the presidential staff, particularly the staff of the White House Office. Table I reproduces four of the six sets of data on the White House Office staff from 1944 to 1975 so that differences and similarities can be seen at a glance.²⁰ In the data sets included in Table I there are some rough approximations for some years (e.g., 1949, 1954, 1973) but, for most years, there are significant differences between the reported figures that make it impossible to talk about the size of the White House staff for any one year without specify-

18. Gary King and Lyn Ragsdale, *The Elusive Executive: Discovering Statistical Patterns in the Presidency* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1988), pp. 206-09.

19. See Hart, *The Presidential Branch*, pp. 103-06.

20. The data reported under the White House Personnel Authorization-Employment Act are excluded because the series does not begin until 1979.

ing which data set is being used.²¹ The same must be said about the pattern of growth of the presidential staff over time. Different patterns emerge according to which set of figures one uses. The Budget statistics, for example, show a major increase in the size of the staff under Truman, almost insignificant variations from Eisenhower through Johnson, and then another huge increase halfway through Nixon's first term. On the other hand, Wayne's figures show a significant increase in the size of the staff during the Kennedy-Johnson years, whereas the King-Ragsdale data show an equally significant decrease over the same time period. If one takes Wayne's figures, then "the swelling of the presidency" that was supposed to have taken place under Nixon, was nowhere near as dramatic as the Budget figures make it appear. If, however, we opt for the King-Ragsdale figures, then the expansion of staff under Nixon was even more dramatic than the Budget figures show.

II. Eisenhower and Hidden-Hand Staffing

Three of the four sets of data reported in Table I (Fisher-Relyea, Wayne, and King-Ragsdale) reveal a much larger White House staff under Eisenhower than is shown in the Budget figures. As many of the standard texts on the presidency, and much of "the-swelling-of-the-presidency" literature, looked no further than the Budget figures, the extent of White House staff growth under Eisenhower has, for a long time, been understated and Eisenhower's contribution to "the swelling of the presidency" has been overlooked. Stephen Hess, for example, author of one of the best-known and most widely-cited post-Watergate critiques, had very little to say about staff numbers when he reached Eisenhower in his study of the presidential staff system from FDR to Nixon. As far as he was concerned, "the prodigious growth of the presidency" was a Nixon-related phenomenon.²² Hess admits there was staff growth under Eisenhower and he reports it thus: "There were thirty-two presidentially appointed professionals in the White House at the beginning of his first term; forty-seven at the beginning of his second term; and fifty when he

21. The discrepancies between the four sets of figures can be explained in part by whether or not they include all staff employed in the White House Office (the Budget figures certainly do not) and, if based on the *Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics*, which month of the year was taken as the base month. The differences might also be a consequence of whether or not reported figures include some estimate of the number of detailees on the President's staff and how they have been calculated, but, beyond that, one can only guess at the reasons for the sometimes enormous variations between the data sets.

22. Hess, *Organizing the Presidency*, p. 9.

left office.”²³ To Hess’s credit, there is a lot of sense in talking about White House staff growth in terms of the professional staff only,²⁴ but he has done this in the context of a critique of the overall size of the presidential staff and nowhere in his Eisenhower chapter does he indicate the extent to which the total size of the Eisenhower staff grew, nor does he say anything about the additional funding Eisenhower sought, like the Special Projects Fund, to cover the cost of additional staff during his presidency.

Fred Greenstein also had little to say about the growth of Eisenhower’s staff. He mentions a staff total of 57, but this is done in the context of a debate about the degree to which Eisenhower had over-organized the White House, and not one about whether he over-expanded it as well.²⁵ Phillip Henderson also mentions staff size very briefly, but only in terms of the professional staff, and he discovers considerably fewer of those than Hess or Greenstein did. “Eisenhower had only 33 principal aides on his White House staff in November 1960,” he writes.²⁶ So far, the only revisionist to have recognized the true extent of the growth of the Eisenhower staff is John Sloan,²⁷ but there is no attempt in his account of Eisenhower’s management style to link this with any broader concerns about the “swelling of the presidency.”

With such discrepancies between the data sets reported in Table I, those statistics are useful only as a rough guide to the growth of the White House staff, although, for the reasons mentioned above, the Budget figures given in Column A are positively misleading and are therefore not useful at all. But the approximations provided by Fisher and Relyea, Wayne, and King and Ragsdale do permit some generalizations to be made about trends in presidential staff growth. And they all show that President Eisenhower was just as adept at “swelling the presidency” as was President Nixon.

When staffing figures vary so much, as they do in the only data sets available, measuring the expansion of the presidential staff is problematic. I have thus utilized three different measures as possible indicators of each President’s contribution to “the swelling of the presidency” from Truman to Nixon. These have been calculated from the

23. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

24. See Hart, *The Presidential Branch*, pp. 106-07.

25. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency*, pp. 145-46.

26. Henderson, *Managing the Presidency*, p. 63.

27. Sloan, “The Management and Decision Making Style of President Eisenhower,” p. 300.

data sets in Columns B, C, and D in Table I and are reported in Tables II-IV.

The first indicator, shown in Table II, gives the percentage growth or reduction in the size of the White House Office staff during each presidency by taking the difference in staff numbers between the first and the

Table II. Percentage Change in White House Staff Size Between President's First Full Year and Last Year in Office

	FISHER-RELYEA	WAYNE	KING-RAGSDALE
Truman	+ 13.24	+ 30.41	- 16.38
Eisenhower	+ 68.42	+ 33.79	+ 79.83
Kennedy	- 14.35	- 9.87	- 5.59
Johnson	- 20.42	+ 5.80	- 21.77
Nixon	+ 66.17	+ 1.09	+ 69.47

Table III. Percentage Change in White House Staff Size Between the Last Year of Presidency and the Last Year of Predecessor's Presidency

	FISHER-RELYEA	WAYNE	KING-RAGSDALE
Truman	+ 275.00	+ 31.00	+ 301.00
Eisenhower	+ 67.74	+ 37.10	+ 82.04
Kennedy	- 9.62	+ 10.57	- 13.00
Johnson	- 30.59	+ 6.29	- 29.64
Nixon	+ 114.56	+ 21.05	+ 113.55

Table IV. Percentage Difference Between Highest Staff Total for President and Highest Staff Total of Predecessor

	FISHER-RELYEA	WAYNE	KING-RAGSDALE
Truman	+ 374.24	+ 31.62	+ 383.60
Eisenhower	+ 67.74	+ 35.69	+ 51.18
Kennedy	+ 5.53	+ 12.53	+ 4.70
Johnson	- 25.28	- 4.41	- 25.27
Nixon	+ 77.74	+ 27.16	+ 89.11

last years of the presidency.²⁸ By this measure, all three data sets show that the President who expanded the size of the White House staff the most during his presidency was Eisenhower, even more so than Nixon. The Fisher-Relyea data show a 68.42 percent increase under Eisenhower compared with 66.17 percent for Nixon and the King-Ragsdale data shows 79.83 percent for Eisenhower compared with 69.47 percent for Nixon.

As an alternative measure, Table III looks at the number of White House staff during a President's last year in office compared with the number of staff in the last year of his predecessor's term of office. The relationship between the three sets of data on this measure is somewhat more erratic, but again a pattern can be seen. In two of the data sets, Fisher-Relyea and King-Ragsdale, Nixon emerges as the President who expanded the White House staff more than any other, although, on the basis of Wayne's figures, there was a greater increase in staff under Eisenhower than Nixon. Furthermore, the Fisher-Relyea and King-Ragsdale figures show a very high growth rate for Eisenhower even though Nixon outdid him—67.74 percent and 82.04 percent respectively for Eisenhower. The percentage growth in White House staff given by Fisher-Relyea for Truman's last year in office compared to Franklin Roosevelt's last year (275 percent) is a meaningless statistic and can be discounted.²⁹

The final measure, shown in Table IV, takes the highest staffing level in each presidency and compares it to the highest staffing level recorded for the President's predecessor as an indicator of the extent of "the swelling of the presidency." By this standard, Nixon emerges as the main culprit in two of the three data sets, but Eisenhower outscores Nixon in

28. In Truman's case, 1947 was taken as the first year because, in that year, Truman transferred to the White House Office payroll the greater proportion of employees that had previously been detailed to the White House from other agencies. For 1945, Wayne appears to incorporate the detailees in his total, but the Fisher-Relyea and King-Ragsdale totals do not. For 1946 both the Wayne and Fisher-Relyea totals include the detailees, but the King-Ragsdale total is still based on the hopelessly unrealistic Budget figure. 1947 is the first year in which all three sets of data are comparable. For fiscal year 1971, President Nixon similarly consolidated White House Office staff, Special Projects staff, and full-time detailees in one White House Office budget request, which is why the Budget figures in Column A of Table I show that Nixon's staff more than doubled in size in 1971. Like the Truman increase of 1947, it was not a real increase in staff but merely the result of a change in accounting methods.

29. The high Truman figure is merely a consequence of the unrealistically low figure given by Fisher and Relyea for Roosevelt's last year which clearly does not include White House staffers who were not formally on the White House Office payroll.

the Wayne data. Again the percentage increases given by Fisher-Relyea and King-Ragsdale for Truman can be discounted as an indication of nothing more than the problems of measuring the size of the staff under Franklin Roosevelt.

All three measures show high levels of staff growth during the Eisenhower and Nixon presidencies and considerably lower levels of growth, if the Roosevelt measure is discounted, under Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson. Indeed, a number of the measures indicate a reduction in the size of the White House staff during the Kennedy and Johnson years.

Admittedly, these statistics leave much to be desired but, in the absence of more accurate or more consistent data, they are the best available measure of the growth of the White House staff in the thirty years following the end of the Second World War and a considerable improvement over the crude figures of staff growth that were used in the post-Watergate critique of presidential staffing practices at the beginning of the 1970s. What they do show, despite the discrepancies, is that Richard Nixon may not have been the only President of the United States to make substantial additions to the White House staff during his term of office and that, given his previous eight years as Eisenhower's Vice President, he may well have learned some lessons about expanding the presidential staff from Eisenhower himself.

The major differences between Eisenhower and Nixon, of course, can be found in the way each used his expanded White House staff and the fact that Eisenhower seemed to be able to hide the extent of that expansion from public view whereas Nixon could not. In fact, the Nixon Administration's attempt at "an honest budget" for fiscal year 1971, in which most White House staffers were consolidated on one payroll, made the Nixon expansion look worse than it really was. One of the reasons why Eisenhower was able to hide White House staff and keep them out of the total staff numbers recorded in the Budget statistics was because their salaries were drawn from a number of discretionary funds voted for the President that did not require the President to report the numbers of staff paid from those funds.³⁰

Two of these discretionary funds, The Management Improvement Fund and The Special Projects Fund, were established in 1954 and 1955 respectively at Eisenhower's behest and were used to fund a large number of additional and "hidden" White House staffers. The first appropria-

30. See Louis Fisher, "Confidential Spending and Government Accountability," *The George Washington Law Review*, 47 (January 1979), and Dean L. Yarwood, "Oversight of Presidential Funds by the Appropriations Committees: Learning from the Watergate Crisis," *Administration and Society*, 13 (1981).

tion made under the Special Projects Fund in 1956 amounted to \$1,250,000, a sum that was equivalent to two-thirds of the regular White House Office staff appropriation at the time. When Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Maurice Stans, gave testimony to a House Appropriations subcommittee in 1959, he revealed that 101 White House staff were then being carried on the Special Projects Fund in addition to the 272 who were paid from the regular White House Office appropriation.³¹ Furthermore, when Stans testified to the same subcommittee the following year, he also revealed that the Special Projects Fund was being used to pay some of Eisenhower's most senior staff and mentioned the names of General John Bragdon, Dr. George Kistiakowsky, Mr. Eugene Lyons, and Mr. Clarence Randall as examples.³²

When the Special Projects Fund was first proposed to Congress in 1955, by way of a supplemental appropriation request, some "instrumental use of language"³³ was carefully crafted to disguise its true purposes. The then Director of the Bureau of the Budget, Rowland Hughes, told a Senate subcommittee:

The President has occasion, as you know, to do special jobs in connection with the coordination and planning of the Executive work which does not apply to any one particular department. In that connection, he has appointed some special assistants, and instead of carrying those special assistants in the regular budget of the White House, it seemed advisable to set up a separate item which would be better from two viewpoints.

The cost of these activities is difficult to forecast, although they are not of an emergency nature. At the same time, they are not susceptible to assignment to the regular agencies of the Government because they cut across the functions of the established departments.

Secondly, I believe that a separate new appropriation is the best method of financing such activities. It gives an opportunity to consolidate these special projects in one place so that better budgetary control can be maintained and the Congress will have an oppor-

31. See Hart, *The Presidential Branch*, pp. 100, 150-51.

32. U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 86th Congress, 2nd Session, *General Government Matters Appropriations for 1961* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), p. 84.

33. The term was coined by Greenstein. See *The Hidden-Hand Presidency*, p. 66.

tunity to gain an easier understanding of the purposes for which the funds are used.³⁴

As things turned out, the Special Projects Fund proved to be no different in purpose from the normal White House staff appropriation and became a facade behind which significant numbers of additional presidential staff were hidden from public view. Moreover, far from making it easier for Congress to understand the purposes for which the funds were used, the Special Projects appropriation only confused the Appropriations subcommittees even more than usual, though perhaps this was not surprising given the general lack of interest in Congress at the time about the growth and size of the White House staff.³⁵

The Special Projects Fund initiated by Eisenhower was an important source of “the swelling of the presidency.” In 1973, when the relevant appropriations subcommittees in Congress finally began to question the size of the White House staff with some serious intent, the full impact of this discretionary fund on the expansion of the White House staff became apparent. The Senate Appropriations subcommittee had managed to extract a list of all Nixon’s White House staff on the Special Projects payroll for fiscal year 1973. There were 148 names on the list, including 20 staffers on a salary of \$30,000 per year or more, some of whom like Donald Rumsfeld, Kenneth Cole, Ken Dam, Edwin Harper, and Virginia Knauer were senior members of the Nixon staff.³⁶

III. Staffing Under Eisenhower: Status, Power and Politicization

Staff size alone does not tell us everything about what went wrong with the institutional presidency in the post-war period and, indeed, purely quantitative measures probably exaggerate the problems arising from White House staff growth. “The-swelling-of-the-presidency” literature did, however, place a heavy emphasis on aggregate staff numbers, and much of the post-Watergate reform agenda was directed toward reducing those numbers. My argument is that, given the importance of staff size to the post-Watergate critique of the presidency, Eisenhower must carry

34. U.S. Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 84th Congress, 1st Session, *General Government Matters Appropriations, 1956* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 4.

35. See Hart, *The Presidential Branch*, pp. 149-56.

36. U.S. Senate, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, *Supplemental Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1974, Part 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1973), pp. 340-45.

some responsibility for “the swelling of the presidency,” yet so much of the post-Watergate literature excludes the developments during his presidency from its critique, as does the Eisenhower revisionist literature. But, Eisenhower also contributed in other respects—in a qualitative as well as a quantitative way—and those contributions have also been understated in the Eisenhower revisionist literature.

The addition of senior staff and the expanding responsibilities of the White House Office during Eisenhower’s presidency were also accompanied by a quite intentional enhanced status for the staff. As Greenstein notes, it was Eisenhower’s purpose to strengthen the White House,

by adding aides who were to have the ability and stature of department secretaries. . . . Eisenhower observed that if a president’s staff aides are not given substantial status and stature they “cannot bring problems to the attention of Cabinet officers and get something done on them.” Therefore his own aides were to be sufficiently elevated so that “people can walk into offices of any one of [them] and say, ‘Bill, this thing is wrong. We have got to do something.’”³⁷

Yet Greenstein connects none of this to the post-Watergate “swelling-of-the-presidency” arguments about the status and power of the White House staff, the decline of the Cabinet, and the interposition of the staff between President and Cabinet members. Maybe this is because Eisenhower’s staff were able to contain their ambition, restrain their behavior, control any arrogance, and maintain the Brownlow canons in the way that the Nixon staff seemed incapable of doing. Nevertheless, Eisenhower’s approach to staffing and the elevated status he accorded his staff might be seen as the beginning of a slippery slope toward the kind of dysfunctional aspects of staff behavior that eventually brought down the Nixon Administration.

Another deviation from the Brownlow design for the White House staff that became a focal point for the post-Watergate critique was the so-called politicization of what was intended to be an institutional staff for the presidency. There was a widely shared view in the literature that the practice of placing loyal presidential appointees in the key EOP posts intended to be occupied by career professionals ran counter to the best interests of the presidency. It certainly ran counter to Brownlow’s ideas, which emphasized the function of the Executive Office of the President

37. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency*, p. 106.

as an institutional staff arm of the presidency. Brownlow's cherished hopes were well and truly lost by Nixon's time, but the beginnings of presidential resistance to the notion of a career staff in the Executive Office of the President can be traced back to Eisenhower.

It was Eisenhower who led the way in appointing non-career personnel to head up what Brownlow intended to be career staff units in the Executive Office of the President, and he seems to have done so with an acute awareness of the differences between neutral competence and responsive competence—with a strong preference for the latter. The appointment of Robert Cutler as the very first assistant for national security in the White House was the first step toward the politicization of the NSC staff. The decision to put him in charge of the National Security Council staff— notwithstanding the prior existence of a career executive secretary of the NSC, who became in effect a staff assistant to the President's assistant— was a decisive initiative on the part of Eisenhower with long-term implications for the national security policy-making machinery. The best explanation for this development is given in a footnote in Greenstein. He notes the connection between Eisenhower's initiative and the highly visible national security advisers in succeeding administrations, but says that Eisenhower made a clear distinction between the responsibilities of staff aides and line officials and obviously saw the role of the national security adviser in terms of recommending, deciding, and publicly discussing decisions.³⁸ Every President after Eisenhower followed the Eisenhower precedent of appointing a non-career national security adviser and putting that person in charge of the NSC staff. This is not to imply that Robert Cutler behaved in the same way that Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski did when occupying the same position under Nixon and Carter respectively,³⁹ but it was Eisenhower who established the framework within which Kissinger and Brzezinski operated.

Similarly, it was Eisenhower who replaced a careerist Director of the Bureau of the Budget by a non-career appointee “with substantial political savvy.”⁴⁰ As the President emphasized in his memoirs, Joseph Dodge had “the status of a direct personal adviser, counselor, and assistant to the President,”⁴¹ which was not dissimilar to the role and status

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-07.

39. The evidence suggests the contrary. See, for example, Anna Kasten Nelson, “National Security I: Inventing a Process—1945-1960,” in *The Illusion of Presidential Government*, ed. Hugh Heclo and Lester M. Salamon (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981), p. 250.

40. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency*, p. 107.

41. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change 1953-1956* (New York: Doubleday, 1963), p. 119.

of OMB Director Roy Ash in the Nixon Administration. In respect to both the NSC and OMB, Eisenhower pointed the way to what eventually became a major assault by President Nixon and his successors on the doctrine of neutral competence.

Another institutional innovation in the Eisenhower White House was the establishment of the post of special assistant for economic affairs, to which the President appointed a close associate, Gabriel Hauge. It was not immediately obvious in 1953 why Eisenhower wanted a personal economic adviser, given the existence of an institutional economic-policy advisory arm in the form of the Council of Economic Advisers,⁴² but the initiative was consistent with those in the national security and budgeting arenas. Such an appointment had the potential to generate conflict between the special assistant and the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers and downgrade the power and status of the Council, although this did not materialize during the Eisenhower years because of the good working relationship that Hauge established with CEA Chairman Dr. Arthur Burns.⁴³ Although this particular Eisenhower innovation was not maintained by his immediate successors, Kennedy and Johnson, Presidents from Nixon onward have experimented with a variety of additional economic-policy advisory mechanisms in the White House and a Gabriel Hauge equivalent has been present on the White House staffs of Nixon, Ford, and Bush. It is perhaps not surprising that the Council of Economic Advisers no longer has the prominence that it possessed during the Kennedy-Johnson years and that the staff of the present Assistant to the President for Economic and Domestic Policy is larger than ever before.⁴⁴

IV. Activist Presidents and the Swelling of the Presidency

I have tried to suggest that President Eisenhower carries rather more responsibility for the expansion of the presidential staff system than has generally been recognized by the post-Watergate critics of the swelling of the presidency and by the Eisenhower revisionists whose focus on leader-

42. According to Sherman Adams, the need for a personal economics adviser was not obvious even to Eisenhower. Adams claims that he persuaded Eisenhower to add Hauge to the White House staff and Eisenhower was sold on the idea because he thought Hauge would be useful as a speechwriter and general adviser. See Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report: The Story of the Eisenhower Administration* (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 55.

43. Edward S. Flash, *Economic Advice and Presidential Leadership* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 169.

44. See Peter T. Kilborn, "Tight White House Control Marks Bush Economic Policy," *The New York Times*, March 26, 1989, p. 22.

ship style and skill has, perhaps, obscured the longer-term institutional relevance of staffing developments during the Eisenhower period. I would also suggest that Eisenhower revisionists need not resist making these connections for fear that they might sully the former President's new reputation and image. If Eisenhower is to be recast as an activist President and the principal architect of the modern presidency, then it would be quite logical to expect swelling-of-the-presidency type of behavior during his administration, as it is an essential ingredient of activism in the modern presidency. The responsibilities of the office of President in the post-war period, together with the changing and more complex nature of the constituencies with which the President must deal, compel an activist President to expand the presidential staff to enable him to do those things that are demanded of him but which he cannot conceivably do by himself. Such action is not even necessarily inconsistent with Brownlow's blueprint for an enlarged White House, even though Brownlow's emphasis on smallness was frequently recalled by post-Watergate critics of a bloated presidential staff during the Nixon years. Of course Brownlow recommended "a small number of executive assistants . . . probably not exceeding six"⁴⁵ to be added to the existing White House staff in 1937, but there is nothing in the Brownlow report to suggest that the size of the staff should remain at this level forever more. Indeed, the central recommendation of the Brownlow report was that the President ought to be given staff support to match the changing nature of government and the increased responsibilities thrust upon the presidency, and it follows, therefore, that, if the responsibilities of the presidency expanded even more, Brownlow would not have been averse to some additional increase in the White House staff.

It would also be logical to expect activist Presidents to enhance the power and status of their staffs and to show a preference for responsive competence over neutral competence. Since the first salvo of post-Watergate criticism of the power of the presidential staff, the literature on the presidency has become rather more circumspect about "the swelling-of-the-presidency" and its consequences. There is now some recognition that responsive competence may be just as legitimate a value as neutral competence and, as Terry Moe has argued persuasively, the classic textbook assumptions about the virtues of neutral competence are "entirely inconsistent with the way presidents have viewed their own

45. President's Committee on Administrative Management, *Administrative Management in the Government of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1937), p. 5.

incentives, resources and constraints.”⁴⁶ Post-modern presidents politicize the institutional machinery of the presidency as a method of ensuring responsive competence and they do so because they believe it serves their purposes better than the organizational canons usually put forward by the political science and public administration professions. The origins of politicization are not found in the textbooks, but rather in the initiatives and innovations undertaken by President Eisenhower.

In terms of the “swelling of the presidency” debate, Eisenhower’s treatment by political scientists has been too benign and has tended to create an impression that his stewardship of the White House stands as an exception to the rule. This is not to say that what went wrong with the White House staff in the Nixon years was the fault of Eisenhower—clearly it was not—but the evidence does suggest that the picture is distorted if we continue to leave Eisenhower out of discussions about the growth of the presidential staff and its consequences for the institutional development of the modern presidency. In many respects, it was Eisenhower who pointed the way.

46. Terry Moe, “The Politicized Presidency,” in *The New Direction in American Politics*, ed. John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1985), p. 266.