
Alfred Dick Sander’s *Eisenhower’s Executive Office* is a continuation of the author’s research first outlined in *A Staff for the President: The Executive Office, 1921-1952* (1989). Sander’s study is part of a larger literature on the EOP that includes John Hart’s *The Presidential Branch: From Washington to Clinton* and Charles E. Walcott and Karen M. Hull’s *Governing the White House: From Hoover to LBJ*. The book would be of greatest use to specialists in the field of the presidency and graduate seminars on the presidency.

The academic debate on the Executive Office revolves around several key questions, including the balance between administrative and political functions, the size and influence of the staff, and the behavior and managerial styles of presidential aids. *Eisenhower’s Executive Office* focuses on the creation and operation of agencies within the EOP during the Eisenhower Administration. Relying on primary material gathered largely from the Dwight Eisenhower Presidential Library, Sander argues that Eisenhower’s military background and direct experience with President Truman’s staff led him to raise the reorganization of the EOP as an issue in the 1952 election campaign.

When Eisenhower became president in 1953, the EOP consisted of five organizations including the White House Office (WHO), the Bureau of the Budget (BOB), the Council of Economic Advisers (CEA), the National Security Council (NSC), and the National Security Resources Board (NSRB). The president and the Bureau of the Budget largely dominated the EOP during the Truman Administration. The CEA, NSC, and NSRB all suffered from presidential opposition or neglect, poorly defined missions, or bureaucratic infighting.

The bulk of Sander’s analysis focuses on the development and reorganization of specific organizational components within the EOP, including WHO, CEA, NSC, the Operations Coordinating Board (OCB), and BOB. Within WHO, Sander credits Eisenhower with introducing a White House Chief of Staff, the Legislative Liaison Office, the Staff Secretary, and the Cabinet Secretary. Eisenhower also added an additional layer of Special Assistants to the President on such subjects as economic affairs, national security affairs, and personnel management. Based on his research, Sander concludes that Eisenhower significantly increased the power and status of the staff within WHO over the course of his administration. The immediate hierarchy did not survive into the Kennedy Administration, but the budget for the White House Office did, providing a baseline for future presidents.

The President’s Advisory Commission on Government Organization (PACGO), staffed by Arthur Flemming, Nelson Rockefeller, and Milton Eisenhower, planned the reorganization of the remaining components of the EOP. Sander suggests that Eisenhower and PACGO were able to save the Council of Economic Advisers from Truman’s neglect and congressional opposition by centralizing the shared functions of the three-member council and appointing Arthur Burns as Chairman of the Council. The president and PACGO restructured the NSC by turning it into a clearinghouse for national security issues, a mechanism
for reconciling agency differences, and a forum for policy recommendations. The OCB grew out of a concern over the feasibility of NSC policy recommendations, and, after a shaky start, grew into “an institutionalized reality check on the feasibility of policies that [NSC] developed” (p. 147). Sander notes that these changes proved extremely difficult because of internal policy differences and turf battles. The CEA changes faced opposition from Congress. The Department of State opposed changes in NSC. The Budget Bureau argued that OCB would infringe on its oversight functions.

According to Sander, not all of Eisenhower’s changes were successful. The president tended to view BOB as a fiscal control agent rather than the policy coordinating body. As a result, Eisenhower’s budget directors tended to look at the Bureau’s activities through eyes of a CPA rather than a policy agent. Eisenhower’s plan to create Assistant Vice Presidents for Foreign Policy and Administration (later First Secretary and the Director of the Office of Executive Management) created a firestorm of opposition from the State Department, the Bureau of the Budget, and members of Congress. The plans were defeated by extended political warfare throughout Eisenhower’s second term.

Sander suggests criticism of Eisenhower’s staffing arrangements in the years following the 1960 election were partisan in nature, reflecting the change in party control. The criticism led Kennedy to dismantle many of Eisenhower’s changes, including the OCB whose deliberative functions might have prevented the Bay of Pigs fiasco. Sander concludes that Eisenhower transformed an EOP in shambles after the Truman Administration into a functioning organization.

Sander’s research clearly underscores the importance of the Eisenhower Administration in the evolution of the EOP as a policy making instrument for the president. The study serves as a useful antidote to more partisan criticism generated by scholars who served in subsequent Democratic administrations. Moreover, Sander’s meticulous research at the Eisenhower Library reveals much that was hidden about Eisenhower’s management style. Sander’s analysis is particularly rich on the origins and functioning of NSC and OCB.

Despite these positive accomplishments, the book is somewhat disappointing. Sander’s original volume, A Staff for the President, placed the development of the EOP in the context of the ongoing debate over the managerial and political functions of the presidency. More importantly, Sander placed the development of the EOP in the context of changes in the nature of the presidency, American politics, and American society. In the current book, Sander refers to these issues only obliquely. The reader is forced to draw inferences from scattered sections of the book. Sander provides no concluding section that synthesizes the detailed descriptions that he has provided of the operations of the EOP. The book is also unbalanced in its coverage. Over 40 percent of the book focuses on the NSC and OCB (which became part of the NSC late in the Administration). The Bureau of the Budget only warrants about eight percent of the book.

Overall, the book provides a moderately useful addition to the literature on the Executive Office of the President. Scholars interested in tracing the origins of several key components of the EOP will find much to admire here. For scholars
whose interests are broader, the work must be read in conjunction with Sander’s original work to provide the necessary context for the analysis.

—Steve Daniels
University of Alabama at Birmingham


The twenty-fifth anniversary of Richard Nixon’s resignation as president due to Watergate affords the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the scandal. That is the intent of Bob Woodward’s most recent book. As one of the reporters who broke the Watergate story and doggedly pursued it to the end, Woodward notes that because of Nixon’s transgressions, subsequent chief executives “not only would be subject to doubt and second guessing, they would be suspected of outright criminality” (p. 1). Rather than a history of the Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations, Woodward seeks to examine those occasions “when the honesty and truthfulness of the presidents and those closest to them were challenged” (p. 2). He employs memoirs, personal interviews, public records, and secondary sources to accomplish the aforementioned objective.

Part I on Gerald Ford concentrates on the immediate post-Watergate period and the only president who succeeded to office as an appointed vice president. While the major complaint against Ford is the manner by which he pardoned Nixon, Woodward also cites insubordination by Defense Secretary James Schlesinger—who ignores several directives—and Ford’s penchant for imbibing at lunch as byproducts of Watergate.

Part II on Jimmy Carter initially details how Carter used an anti-Nixon, anti-Washington theme to win the White House in 1976. Carter’s promise that he would never lie or mislead Americans, while a catchy gimmick on the campaign trail, caused cynicism and disappointment when the realities of governing meant that it couldn’t be kept. The 1978 Ethics in Government Act, which institutionalized the special prosecutor procedure for probing wrongdoing within the executive branch, was supported by Carter as a necessary reform emanating from Watergate. Yet, the low threshold required to trigger an inquiry meant that any and all charges would have to be investigated. Allegations of drug use by two Carter staffs, Hamilton Jordon and Tim Kraft, led to special prosecutors being named. Though no credible evidence was uncovered in either case, the fallout added to President Carter’s woes in 1980 and his eventual reelection defeat.

As opposed to the relatively insignificant assertions of wrongdoing in the Ford and Carter White Houses, two full-blown scandals transpired during the Reagan presidency; they are reviewed in Part III. The first involved claims of insufficient enforcement of the Superfund law—designed to ensure hazardous waste cleanup—by the Environmental Protection Agency. The second encompassed what came to be known as the Iran-contra episode. Whereas a 29-month