

Partisan Politics and Institutional Choice in Public Bureaucracies

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Abstract

Political leaders can indirectly control policy implementation by strategically manipulating administrative institutions. In this dissertation, Mikael Holmgren argues that, precisely because administrative institutions are instruments of political control, partisan conflict over public policies often generates partisan conflict over institutional arrangements. To buttress this conjecture, the dissertation fields a unique dataset with detailed information on all administrative agencies in the Swedish executive bureaucracy between 1960 and 2014. The results show that Swedish agencies are considerably more likely to lose their heads, powers, and resources following partisan shifts in government. Consistent with positive political theories of bureaucratic delegation, the conclusion is that partisan politics can fundamentally shape not only the substantive contents of public policies, but also the organization of the administrative state.

Keywords: Bureaucracy, Delegation, Institutional Design, Policy Conflict.