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**Attention, Politics or Performance?
Competing Influences on Oversight by
Analytical Bureaucracies in the
Regulatory State**

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Samuel Workman and Michelle Wolfe
September 2011

Abstract

In this paper, we examine and evaluate competing explanations for congressional attention to the federal bureaucracy in the United States. What we label “analytical bureaucracy” is a key, but severely understudied, tool in congressional management of administrative policymaking. Congressional attention to the bureaucracy generally, as well as particular agencies, is governed by a confluence of factors. These explanations involve the partisan and ideological features of the American political system, issue-driven attention through time, and bureaucratic performance. Using a new data set of reports issued by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) over the past quarter century, we examine the influence of partisan politics and governmental performance on congressional attention to the federal bureaucracy. Using the new GAO data as the focus of the analysis, we demonstrate variation in these data pursuant to common measures of ideology in Congress and the bureaucracy and measures of bureaucratic and programmatic performance. Using these data as the focus of study, we demonstrate that the strength of these different explanations varies both across time and particular partisan configurations of American government. Our findings have implications for how we understand the dynamics of congressional intervention in administrative processes, and further how we view the role of congressional bureaucracies in administrative policymaking.

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This paper examines the competing influences on congressional attention to the federal bureaucracy in the United States. We identify three broad traditions in the study of congressional oversight and general intervention in the process of bureaucratic policymaking. Each of these traditions point to the value of intervention by the elected branches of government, but for different reasons and with vastly different implications for bureaucratic policymaking. These broad traditions embody efforts by Congress to overcome the divergent goals of bureaucracy owing to the political orientations of different agencies, interject in bureaucratic policymaking to correct poor performance by bureaucracies, and finally to aid the bureaucracy in addressing an ever-changing issue agenda confronting government. By “congressional intervention,” we simply mean congressional efforts to gather information on, and forays into, bureaucratic policymaking.¹ We identify two traditions in congressional intervention in bureaucratic policymaking: the overhead democracy tradition and the public administration tradition borne of the progressive movement.

These different impetuses for congressional intervention are important because they determine the general nature of bureaucratic policymaking. Differing reasons for congressional intervention send different signals to federal bureaucracies about the desired role of the bureaucracy in the course of governance broadly, and how bureaucracies behave in their day-to-day operations more specifically. These different impetuses set the bounds not only on what policy directions are feasible, but also on how policy goals are to be accomplished. Therefore, understanding these competing influences on congressional intervention tells us something not only about the relationship between bureaucracies and the elected branches of government, but also about how bureaucrats come to understand their role and place in the system through time. More to the point, it helps us understand the evolving role of bureaucracy in democratic systems of government.

In order to examine the influence of the two traditions in congressional intervention in bureaucratic policymaking, we focus on the important role of what we shall label “analytical bureaucracies.” The activity of the Government Accountability Office (GAO), a prominent analytical bureaucracy forms the empirical foundation for the research to follow. Analytical bureaucracies embody many features that make them ideal for examining the competing influences of the three traditions in congressional intervention in bureaucratic policymaking. Using a new data set on the reports issued by the GAO, we demonstrate the relevance of the two traditions in congressional intervention and also examine the changing relevance of each tradition through time and across different partisan and institutional configurations of American government. In doing so, we situate the federal bureaucracy, including the group of analytical bureaucracies, in the larger governing system in the United States (Redford, 1969; Dodd and Schott, 1979; Epstein and O’Halloran, 1999; Huber and Shipan, 2002).

Two Traditions of Congressional Intervention

Congress, its members and committees, choose to intervene in bureaucratic policymaking for a multitude of reasons that can be grouped generally into two categories. Congress may choose to intervene in bureaucratic policymaking because the bureaucracy is viewed as having different preferences than

¹We eschew the term “oversight” here because the class of interventions that are the empirical and theoretical focus of this study encompass what we normally think of as oversight as well as myriad other activities, including information gathering that may or may not assume a rogue bureaucracy. Further, “oversight” is normally associated with one particular tradition of the three we identify. We therefore view interventions as a class of congressional activities much broader than what the term “oversight” usually connotes.

elected officials. Alternatively, bureaucratic institutions take on a life of their own that is not always consistent with congressional prerogatives. In either of these scenarios, the goals and/or preferences of the bureaucracy diverge from those of the political overseers and this instigates intervention in order to assure democratic accountability.

Congress may also intervene in bureaucratic affairs because a particular bureaucracy or group of bureaucracies are performing poorly, or otherwise faltering in the implementation of public policy. This class of interventions also might include instances in which Congress needs to change the overall direction of public policy. This includes instances in which coordination across multiple bureaucracies is desired, and also includes instances in which issues are interdependent and therefore are not easily addressed by one bureaucracy or even many.

In what follows, we address each of these traditions in congressional intervention in bureaucratic policymaking before proceeding to a discussion of the importance of analytical bureaucracies to congressional intervention generally. Thereafter, we empirically examine the two competing and overlapping traditions of congressional intervention as they operate on the GAO's attention to the federal bureaucracy in the United States.

Overhead Democracy Tradition

The overhead democracy tradition emphasizes the need for democratic influence on bureaucratic policymaking. This arises from the democratic dilemma presented by the unelected position of bureaucracy in the political system. It is further assumed that bureaucrats have preferences of their own deriving from their political orientations as well as their positions within bureaucratic organizations that tend to take on lives of their own. This rift between allegiances to political overseers and bureaucratic institutions or professional norms forms that dual foundation for understanding congressional intervention in the overhead democracy tradition. The political orientations of bureaucrats and their interests owing to their institutional affiliations mean that their preferences over matters of policy will often diverge from those of elected officials. In this formulation of the relationship between Congress and the bureaucracy, political influence on bureaucratic policymaking is of paramount importance to ensure democratic accountability and responsiveness to politicians, avoiding the subversion of popular will by unelected public administrators (Niskanen, 1971; Alchian and Demsetz, 1972; Mitnick, 1975).

There exists a long and rich literature concerning influence on the bureaucracy by Congress, the Presidency, and the Courts (McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984; McCubbins, 1985; Moe, 1985, 1989; Melnick, 1983). On the congressional side, intervention in bureaucratic policymaking serves the purpose of ensuring favored constituencies' interests are reflected in bureaucratic policymaking. On the presidential side of bureaucratic influence, presidents intervene in order to steer the broad course of public policy (Wood, 1988; Wood and Waterman, 1994), install political allies to top positions in the bureaucracy (Lewis, 2008), and institutionalize their policies and preferences from political enemies and shifting coalitions in the future (Lewis, 2003; Moe, 1989). In this wing of overhead democracy, intervention serves the purpose of ensuring responsive competence from the bureaucracy. That is, professional bureaucracies are desirable, but will also be highly responsive and reflective of political considerations.

From the vantage point of overhead democracy, intervention in bureaucratic policymaking should occur frequently overall, but most frequently where agency policy preferences and ideologies diverge from those of Congress. That is, there will be spatial variation across agencies in the federal bureau-

cracy. The targets of intervention should also vary over time. As political fortunes change, sweeping one party in power at one point in time and another party into power in the future, the same federal bureaucracies should not be the target of interventions across time. As conservative coalitions are dominant in Congress, agencies viewed as more liberal relative to Congress should receive more attention, and vice versa.

Within the tradition of overhead democracy, it cannot be overlooked that Congress competes with the other institutions of government for influence on the federal bureaucracy (Hammond and Knott, 1996; Whitford, 2005). This implies yet another, institutional dimension, to variation in congressional intervention. Congress should show more “interest” in bureaucracies it views as aligned too closely with the policy preferences of the President (Lewis, 2003). Altogether, the various perspectives on overhead democracy imply that politics will be central to congressional intervention, and thus, central to bureaucratic policymaking. This group of approaches also further imply that the “politics of intervention” will embody partisan, ideological, and institutional dimensions of conflict within and among the branches of government.

Classic Public Administration Tradition

The tradition in classic public administration offers a perspective on congressional intervention that departs drastically from the overhead democracy tradition in both its baseline assumptions and its implications for congressional intervention in bureaucratic policymaking. Since Wilson (1887), scholars working in the public administration tradition have argued that a fire-wall between politics and administration is necessary to ensure the competent execution of public policies. Moreover, this fire-wall is required to ensure democratic accountability on the part of elected officials. If politics enters heavily in calculations concerning policy implementation, then citizens are unable to judge the quality of the policies put in place by elected officials. In this tradition, the role of politics is not ubiquitous, but intermittent. Political influence serves to set the broad direction and general scope of public policies, while policy implementation is left to the experts.

In the public administration tradition, responsive competence is replaced by neutral competence and the rule of law (Aberbach and Rockman, 1988; Durant, 1995; West, 2005; Bertelli and Lynn, 2006). That is, policy implementation should not reflect changing politics, but should reflect a concern for unbiased implementation of public policy. Policy implementation is, or should be, analytical rather than political. These scholars have noted that the responsive competence of overhead democracy is not only detrimental to the ability and success of politicians hoping to govern, but in its most pernicious form, a detriment to democracy where political overseers are corrupt (Miller, 2005).

In the public administration tradition, the role of congressional intervention is twofold. Congress intervenes to set the general goals of public policy and to resolve through democratic processes trade-offs among competing societal values. Congressional intervention also serves to correct corruption, incompetence, and poor performance within the administrative system. In contrast to the overhead democracy tradition, congressional intervention in the administrative system occurs precisely when federal agencies become political and serve entrenched interests or alternatively become mired in poor performance (Lowi, 1969; Stigler, 1971; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973).

The public administration tradition implies that congressional intervention will be likely when performance in the federal bureaucracy is noticeably poor. Intervention will also follow in the wake of scandals, disasters, and general failures of policy implementation. Just as the public administration

tradition takes an analytical view of the role of bureaucracy, the tradition also emphasizes that the reasons for intervention should be analytical. Poor performance should be a key trigger for intervention by Congress in bureaucratic policymaking.

Explaining Congressional Interventions

Combining the overhead democracy and public administration traditions in congressional intervention provides some key insights into which federal agencies are likely find themselves in Congress' cross-hairs under different partisan configurations and at different points in time. When members of Congress or political parties take a particular interest in a given agencies performance, this attention is already cached within persistent features of institutional and partisan conflict in the American political system. The federal bureaucracy is cached within a system that engenders conflict between both parties and also between institutions often even if controlled by the same party.

Keeping these sources of conflict in mind, the two traditions in congressional intervention offer some straight-forward implications what federal bureaucracies we may expect will endure congressional intervention given different partisan and institutional configurations of American politics through time. Taking each tradition separately, it is clear that both politics and bureaucratic performance will contribute to variation in congressional intervention across federal agencies. Our first set of hypotheses addresses these general expectations.

***Overhead Democracy.** Preferences or Politics.* Agencies that are ideologically extreme relative to Congress will face congressional intervention with greater frequency than agencies viewed as more moderate.

***Classic Public Administration.** Performance.* Agencies deemed to be performing poorly will face congressional intervention with greater frequency overall than agencies viewed as performing well.

Confluence of Traditions. Congressional intervention will occur most frequently for those agencies that are both ideologically extreme relative to Congress and are deemed to be performing poorly.

Combining the insights of the overhead democracy and public administration traditions, the agencies most ripe for congressional intervention are not only those who most ideologically extreme relative to Congress, but those agencies that are both ideologically extreme and exhibit poor performance. This creates the perfect trigger for any member of Congress, committee, or party caucus who might be inclined to intervene on a given federal agency.

The Administrative Presidency versus The Administrative State

The modern era in American politics has witnessed conflict among the elected branches of government over control of the bureaucracy. Administrative strategies for governance have been prominent features of modern presidents' attempts to make policy. Whether it is in response to the administrative presidency (Moe, 1985; Wood, 1988; Golden, 2000; Lewis, 2008; May and Workman, 2009), or put more strongly, an imperial presidency (Moe, 1987, 1989; Lewis, 2003; Rudavelige, 2005), or in spite of it, legislators have shown an increasing affinity for policymaking that involves bureaucratic and sub-

system processes if not involving bureaucracies directly (e.g. public contracting).² Legislators pass fewer laws and spend more time in oversight in recent times. These two empirical trends suggest that policymaking is increasingly carried out at the meso level and governed by the dual dynamics of the administrative state.

It has been some time in the study of political institutions and their interrelationships that we have been willing to discuss the *administrative state*. Yet, the demise of the system of bureaucracies, committees, and interested publics is more a product of scholarly inattention than a real, empirically verifiable fact of the modern system of government. In fact, though most theories of the policy process now discuss policy change as a result of weakening or compromised subsystems (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993), or learning and adaptation of subsystems within broader coalitional dynamics (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993), all seem to agree that policy subsystems (or any of the conceptual spins on the general notion) are the locus of the vast majority of policymaking (Worsham, 1997).

The breadth of the conflict between the U.S. Congress and the presidency over control of the administrative levers of government leads us to suspect that institutional conflict, quite apart from partisan tussles, will condition both presidential and congressional attempts to steer bureaucratic policymaking. Given Congress' affinity for making policy by way of subsystem politics and bureaucratic interventions at the meso level, Congress will be particularly sensitive to presidential incursions into this mode of governance and policymaking.

Of course, the administrative presidency involves many tools beyond involvement in bureaucratic policymaking, including personnel management and budgeting. Both personnel management and budgeting offer the president more potent tools for altering the course of public policy. However, tinkering in substantive bureaucratic policymaking will engender a sharper congressional response and come at the the cost significant political capital in presidential efforts to alter subsystem policymaking. This assertion derives from the renewed strength of the arrangements aptly described as the administrative state and the value that legislators and legislative institutions place on this mode of governance.

In sum, the two traditions in congressional intervention in bureaucratic policymaking identify politics and bureaucratic performance as key to understanding congressional attention to the various agencies of the federal bureaucracy. We now turn to a discussion of what we label "analytical" bureaucracies and their importance in the political-administrative system. For various reasons, we also suggest that these peculiar bureaucracies are well-suited to examining the competing influences of politics and performance on congressional interventions in bureaucratic policymaking.

Analytical Bureaucracy and Institutional Conflict

This paper identifies a special class of presidential and congressional bureaucracies that are ideal for investigating the operation of the three traditions in congressional intervention discussed above. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) falls into this special class of congressional bureaucracies.³

²It should be noted that the rise in contracting has placed tremendous strain on the ability of the government to govern or otherwise oversee contracts. One can easily envision the transformation of the administrative state from developing and administering policy to one whose institutions are leveraged in monitoring contracts. Many of the traditional sources of both bureaucratic and congressional problem expertise would be suited to monitoring contracts.

³Other prominent examples are the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), which routinely makes headlines evaluating the President's budget and the budgetary effects of his policy proposals, the Congressional Research Service (CRS), and formerly the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), which was eliminated in 1995. Each of these agencies reputations benefit from the analytical nature of their tasks.

We label these institutions “analytical bureaucracies” as their primary role is interjecting themselves in executive branch policymaking, gathering information, and utilizing this information to adjust bureaucratic goals, procedures, and general policymaking activities.⁴ The base of their influence in bureaucratic policymaking, however, is not only their position as agents of Congress, but also their analytical approach to politics and policy.

The reports issued by the GAO form the empirical base for our investigation of the traditions of congressional intervention in bureaucratic policymaking. We focus on all reports produced by the GAO since 1983.⁵ To our knowledge, this data set represents the first large-scale, systematic study of GAO reports. From each report, information was gleaned concerning specific features of each report including: report number and issue date, this information includes document type, a summary or purpose for the document, title and subtitle, length (in pages), and the recommendations and agencies affected by any recommendations given.

The GAO was created by the Budgeting and Accounting Act of 1921. The Comptroller General of the United States heads the GAO and is appointed to 15 year terms by the President from a slate of candidates generated by Congress. The GAO has 3,350 employees and operates on an annual budget approaching 571 million dollars. The influence of the GAO does not diminish with increasing privatization as one of its central functions is contract oversight. Further, the GAO has both a mandatory (issuing from both majority and minority members in Congress) and discretionary agenda.

Three considerations make the GAO an ideal institution on which to gauge the competing influences of politics, performance, and issue attention on congressional propensity to intervene in bureaucratic policymaking. First, there are resource economics associated with congressional reliance on its analytical bureaucracies in intervening in bureaucratic policymaking. Given limited time, and attention (Jones, 2001), delegation of intervention, especially information gathering and utilization, is economical for Congress. The capacity to gather or generate information about policy problems is much greater in the federal bureaucracy generally, and especially in the analytical bureaucracies than in Congress (see Katzmann, 1989).

The second consideration is the breadth of the GAO’s jurisdiction, which includes the entire federal bureaucracy and all policy areas from the agriculture to defense. Unlike oversight by congressional committees, the GAO may examine agencies and programs within and across diverse jurisdictions. This mitigates against the usual problems of jurisdiction encroachment, and interdependent policy areas or issues. Jurisdiction and interdependency together form major barriers to attempts to coordinate interventions and policy adjustments across bureaucracies and different policy issues. From its vantage point, the GAO is able to survey bureaucratic policymaking from a level that allows the meaningful aggregation of information on policy problems and performance across jurisdictions and issues.

Third, the analytical nature of the task of the GAO is such that it engenders the perception that its work is largely unbiased and lends an air of legitimacy to both the information it generates and the way in which its policy recommendations are viewed. This springs from the analytical nature of the GAO’s task, and is furthered by the pluralistic power arrangements in Congress. Since either party (majority or minority) may use the GAO to intervene in bureaucratic policymaking, neither party completely

⁴It should be noted that the President has analytical bureaucracies at his disposal as well. Some examples are the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Office of Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Nevertheless, these agencies’ reputations have not kept pace with their congressional counterparts for various reasons, including the pluralistic nature of congressional organization and politics (Bimber, 1996).

⁵We currently have data going back to 1960 of all documents (reports, testimonies, etc.) issued by the GAO. This study represents an initial foray into the data for what we hope is a much larger, longer project.

controls the GAO. Each of these features lends the set of analytical bureaucracies to congressional efforts to intervene in bureaucratic policymaking and also to examine the relative and changing influence of the three traditions over time and across policy issues.

Preferences, Performance, and Politics in Triggering Intervention

While GAO reporting on the programs and agencies of the federal bureaucracy allows us a conduit for connecting the three traditions in congressional intervention, we are now in need of measures useful in gauging the extent to which GAO target of federal bureaucracies is a product of the competing traditions. More specifically, we need measures of the attributes of federal bureaucracies that might “trigger” an intervention in the form of GAO reporting and recommendations. In order to gauge the extent to which politics and performance matter in congressional intervention in bureaucratic policymaking, we make use of two publicly available data sets on the political orientations of federal bureaucracies and their evaluations of their performance.

Bureaucratic Preferences. In May and June of 2006, Clinton and Lewis (2008) surveyed experts on the political orientations of various federal bureaucracies. These data serve as the basis for analyzing the influence of agency political orientations on the propensity of Congress to intervene in bureaucratic policymaking.⁶ These data yield estimates of the general political orientation of various federal agencies (conservative, liberal, or centrist) as rated by experts in the academy, think tanks, and Washington, D.C. non-partisan organizations.

The Clinton and Lewis (2008) estimate of agency preferences ranges from -2.07 to 2.4 with negative scores associated with agencies who are perceived by the raters to be liberal in orientation and positive scores associated with agencies perceived to be conservative. The estimates of agency preferences reveal a bureaucracy that is ever-so-slightly conservative overall. The median agency has a score of about .08, represented by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and close-by the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Administrative Conference of the United States, both at .07. On this scale, the Department of the Navy is the most conservatively rated bureaucracy at 2.4, while the Action is the most liberal agency at -2.07.

Bureaucratic Performance. In order to gauge the degree to which bureaucratic performance matters in shaping congressional interventions we make use of widely available data from the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) analysis and reports conducted on agencies and programs of the federal government by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The PART was initiated by the Bush administration in 2002, but was a continuation of similar efforts by the Clinton administration known as the National Performance Review. The PART scores tap into four categories of program implementation and assign a grade to each of the four categories between zero and one hundred. The four categories of evaluation are: program purpose and design (20 percent), strategic planning (10 percent), program management (20 percent), and program results (50 percent).⁷

Congressional Agenda. In assessing the extent to which salient policy issues and emergent policy

⁶These data were collected by Joshua D. Clinton and David E. Lewis. The data are available from David E. Lewis' webpage at <http://people.vanderbilt.edu/~david.lewis/data.htm>.

⁷For a full explication of PART scores, please see *Instructions for the Program Assessment Ratings Tool*. U.S. Office of Management and Budget. Washington, D.C., July 12, 2002. Also, see Lewis (2007) for the use of PART scores to gauge the relative performance of political appointees. The PART data for 2004 was collected by David Lewis and is also made public at his webpage at <http://people.vanderbilt.edu/~david.lewis/data.htm>. We collected the data for 2007 from the White House webpage at www.whitehouse.gov.

problems matter in triggering congressional interventions, we make use of the congressional hearings database housed at the Policy Agendas Project.⁸ Using the topic coding of hearings over time in this database, we calculate the number of topics receiving a hearing in each month over the period under study. This should yield a measure of the degree to which emergent issues play a role in triggering Congress to intervene in bureaucratic policymaking via the GAO.

Presidential Involvement. We make use of three data sets that assess presidential attempts to intervene in bureaucratic policymaking. The first of these are the executive orders issued by the President, which are generally geared toward management of the bureaucracy. We obtained these data from Woolley and Peters' American Presidency Project.⁹ The second measure is signing statements issued by the President, again obtained from the American Presidency Project. Signing statements have been used with increasing frequency in recent years to lay out the President's position on pieces of legislation as they are signed into law. Finally, and most importantly where presidential involvement in substantive bureaucratic policymaking is concerned, we make use of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) (an office within the Office of Management and Budget) reviews of regulations issued by the bureaucracy. In particular, we make use of the number of times OIRA issues requests for bureaucracies to make substantive changes to regulations under review.

Analyzing the Traditions in Administrative Intervention

In order to examine how agency preferences, performance, and institutional conflict influence congressional intervention in bureaucratic policymaking, it is first necessary to ascertain whether the mode of governance at the meso level is an important part of congressional activity. Figure 1 displays the total number of congressional hearings held from 1984 through 2008 in the top panel, along with the proportion of those hearings that were oversight hearings over the same period. The trend is clear. To say members of Congress spend considerable time in oversight activities would be an understatement. During the period under study, oversight hearings never comprise less than 60 percent of all hearing activity. Oversight activity reached its zenith in 2005 at almost 90 percent of all congressional hearing activity.

Government Accountability Office reports contain recommendations for changing bureaucratic management practices, program implementation, and substantive policy. Table 1 displays the number of GAO recommendations changes in bureaucratic policymaking and management practices broken down by agency performance evaluations, divided government, and agency preferences. The classification of agency performance comes from the total weighted PART scores for each agency program as described above. Using the Clinton and Lewis (2008) data for agency preferences, Table 1 also breaks down GAO recommendations by agency preferences where the agency is either holds centrist preferences (within one standard deviation of the mean) or constitutes a preference outlier (greater than one standard deviation above the mean or less the one standard deviation below the mean).¹⁰

Perhaps the most interesting and consistent finding in Table 1 concerns the interaction of agency preferences and performance. Under each configuration of divided or unified government, bureaucra-

⁸These data were originally collected by Bryan D. Jones and Frank R. Baumgartner and are publicly available at www.policyagendas.org.

⁹These data are publicly available from www.presidency.ucsb.edu/.

¹⁰Preference scores in the positive range indicate conservative agencies, while negative scores indicate the agency is liberal on balance.

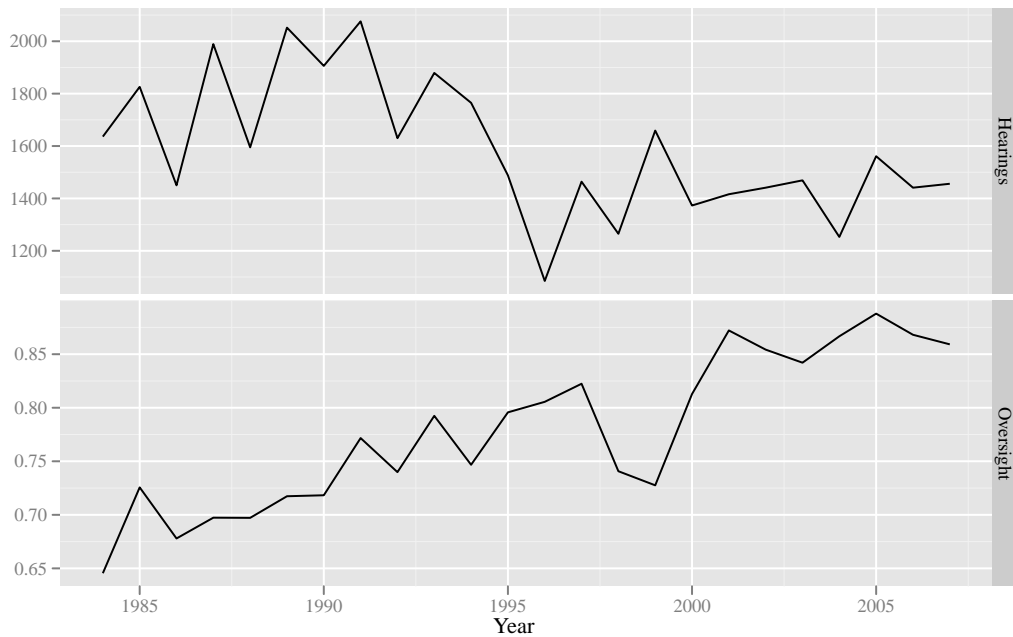


Figure 1: Rise of Governance by Oversight

Table 1: Preferences and Performance in GAO Reporting

	Performance			Totals
	Average	Poor	Well	
Divided				
Moderate	606	175	289	1070
Outlier	536	341	170	1047
Totals	1142	516	459	2117
Democrats				
Moderate	260	67	165	492
Outlier	248	137	98	483
Totals	508	204	263	975
Republicans				
Moderate	604	190	316	1110
Outlier	473	359	183	1015
Totals	1077	549	499	2125
Totals	2727	1269	1221	5217

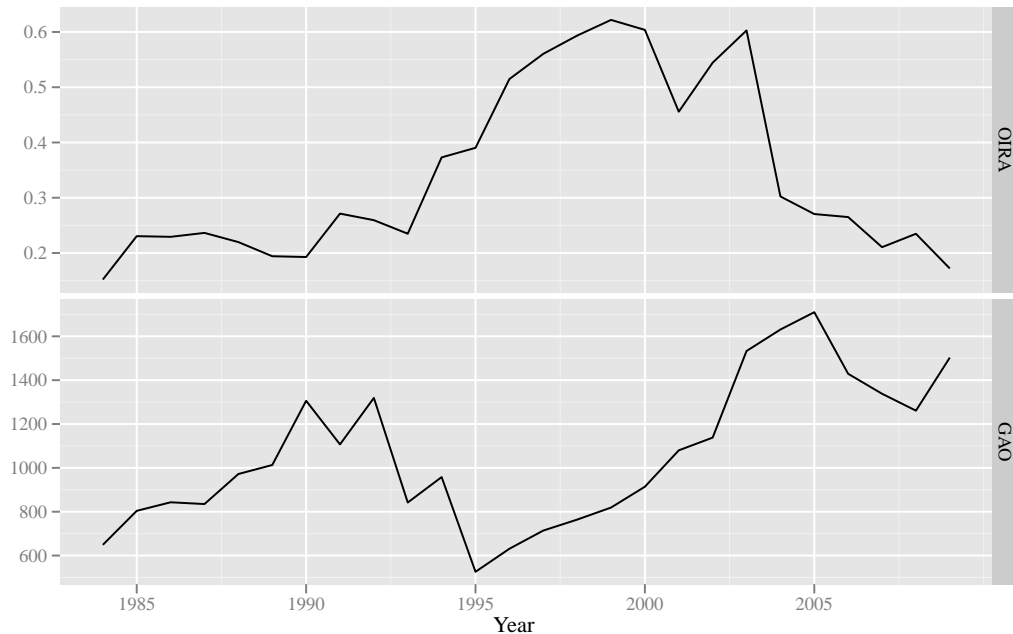


Figure 2: Analytical Bureaucracy and Policymaking

cies who are preference outliers and also perform poorly according to PART scores receive greater attention. Likewise, agencies holding somewhat moderate preferences and performing well receive great attention from the GAO. The finding that poorly performing agencies who are preference outliers conforms to our understanding of congressional intervention according to both overhead democracy, classic public administration, and the confluence of these traditions are concerned.

Instances where agencies are moderate in terms of preferences and perform well under PART evaluations are present more difficulty for standard approaches to understanding congressional intervention. Initially, it must be the case that the preferences members of Congress hold for given public policies and their attainment must be conditioned on the ability of bureaucracies to deliver those policy benefits. Obviously, poorly performing bureaucracies are ill-equipped to attain the policy goals of legislators. It also should be the case that a bureaucracy holding moderate preferences should be more amenable to the whole range of preferences for policy expressed by legislators. A second possibility is that members of Congress focus on these groups of agencies in an effort to learn from successful agencies. These considerations need to be incorporated into a more robust understanding of congressional intervention and use of analytical bureaucracy.

Analytical bureaucracies have also been key to the development of the conflict between the administrative presidency and the administrative state. Figure 2 displays the two key analytical bureaucracies for Congress and the President. The top panel displays the proportion of OIRA reviews issuing requests for changes to bureaucratic regulations by OIRA from 1984 through 2009. The number of recommendations contained in GAO reporting is displayed in the bottom panel of Figure 2.

Figure 2 is suggestive of a relationship between both Congress and the President's use of analytical bureaucracies in an effort to alter bureaucratic policymaking. Together, the series of Figure 2 also suggests that partisan and institutional conflict between the executive and legislative branches of gov-

ernment over control of the bureaucracy underlies this association. Recommendations issued by the GAO tend to increase with the longevity of a President of a different party than members of Congress. Note that a democratic Congress increasingly issues recommendations to the bureaucracy throughout the course of Republican control of the presidency through the 1980s and early 1990s, while a Republican Congress displays the same trend when facing a Democratic President Clinton in the 1990s. Nevertheless, partisan division is not the whole story as GAO recommendations continue upward and reach their peak for the series under a Unified Republican government of 2003 through 2006.

Table 2: Presidential Interference and GAO Reporting

	Reports		Recommendations		Targets	
	<i>Est</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Est</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Est</i>	<i>SE</i>
Intercept	17.88*	6.15	-5.33	12.51	-20.02	13.33
Lagged DV	0.25*	0.05	0.27*	0.05	0.20*	0.05
Signing Statements	-0.47*	0.19	-0.62	0.40	-0.66	0.42
Executive Orders	-0.61	0.50	-1.25	1.06	-1.16	1.13
OIRA Change Requests	0.26*	0.08	0.46*	0.17	0.66*	0.18
Presidential Disapproval	0.17*	0.09	0.69*	0.19	1.11*	0.21
Unified Democratic	-2.84	3.86	-7.97	8.25	-11.05	8.80
Unified Republican	-7.55*	2.62	33.05*	6.03	45.30*	6.67
Election Year	6.13*	2.06	6.66	4.40	2.60	4.71
Oversight Topics	0.31*	0.04	0.47*	0.08	0.41*	0.08
Budget Deficit	-0.00*	0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00
Adj R ²	.38		.36		.39	
F (p <)	19.26 (.001)		17.36 (.001)		19.71 (.001)	
Ljung-Box χ^2 (p <)	.04 (.83)		.08 (.77)		.18 (.66)	

Note: Alternative specifications: GLS, GLM, ECM, ARIMA, & PAR(p) (Patrick Brandt); there was variation in the estimates, but the highlighted substantive findings remain the same in each specification.

Table 2 presents the results of a regression model of presidential influence on three features of GAO reporting. The first model in Table 2 presents presidential influence on GAO reporting overall. The second model pertains to the number of recommendations for bureaucratic policymaking contain in congressional reports. The dependent variable in the third model is the number of times GAO reports explicitly target particular federal agencies.¹¹ Table 2 assesses presidential influence on congressional willingness to intervene in bureaucratic policymaking through the GAO.

The major take-away from Table 2 is that presidential attempts to alter bureaucratic policymaking through OIRA are significant and robust influences on congressional intervention using the GAO. Change requests from OIRA reviews of bureaucratic regulations are significant for GAO reporting,

¹¹Note that GAO reports need not contain recommendations for action. Further, reports containing recommendations for bureaucratic policymaking need not target particular federal agencies.

recommendations, and agency targets. In addition to OIRA change requests, presidential signing statements are influential in GAO reporting, though fail conventional statistical significance for recommendations or agency targets. Interestingly, presidential disapproval is also a strong and robust influence on congressional intervention through GAO reports, recommendations, and agency targets. Congress reacts to the administrative presidency through use of analytical bureaucracies.

In addition to the influence of the administrative presidency on congressional intervention through the GAO, unified republican government witnesses less GAO reporting overall, but increased levels of recommendations for policymaking and specific agency targets. Perhaps Republican Congresses tend to focus more intensely on fewer bureaucratic agencies. Finally, the number of distinct topics covered in congressional hearings increases GAO reporting, recommendations, and agency targets.

Consequences, The Traditions, and Bureaucratic Policymaking

This paper takes a new approach to examining the competing influences of politics, performance, and emergent policy issues on congressional intervention in bureaucratic policymaking. These influences are closely linked to the traditions in the study of congressional-bureaucratic relations that we identify. Further, we have used a unique approach to exploring these traditions in congressional intervention. This research situates analytical bureaucracies within the larger system of relations between Congress and the federal bureaucracy, and takes advantage of their ideal position in the system for understanding the competing influences on congressional intervention. This paper represents the first efforts at a large-scale, systematic study of analytical bureaucracies.

Our initial evidence indicates that there exists a relationship between partisan control of government, bureaucratic preferences, and bureaucratic performance in explaining congressional intervention in the form of GAO activity, especially recommendations. In particular, congressional intervention through analytical bureaucracies is influenced by agency preferences, performance, and responses to the administrative presidency.

Understanding the competing influences on congressional willingness to intervene in bureaucratic policymaking is important beyond notions of democratic accountability and bureaucratic effectiveness. Each of the traditions send different messages to the bureaucracy. When considerations of an agency's political orientation drive congressional attention, these agencies get the message that appearing unbiased or keeping a low profile is more acceptable than performing well. Conversely, agencies targeted because of performance, without regard to political orientation, may go too far in letting their own policy preferences color their work. Put simply, the messages federal bureaucracies receive when Congress intervenes are of great potential importance in determining their policymaking activities in the wake of the intervention.

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