

WHO DRIVES DEFENSE POLICY: ELITES OR PUBLIC INTEREST?

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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

This thesis address issues concerning whether technical elites, such as the Defense Department bureaucracy, drive defense policy or if Congress uses defense policy as a *de facto* jobs program to keep home districts economically satisfied. It examines twenty-one years of proposed Pentagon budgets and passed congressional appropriations bills to determine what influences changes between the two budgets. Variables including economic growth, international conflict, and the role of partisanship are examined. It finds that Congress is more likely to appropriate less money than asked for by the Pentagon, but that there are several cases where Congress has maintained procurement projects when the Pentagon asked for them to be cut, suggesting that Congress does use the defense budget as a means to bring pork barrel back to districts.

The conclusions and analyses are important to research as it suggests that projects, such as the F-35 second engine, are funded to provide economic support for certain congressional districts, rather than what the military needs to execute its strategies and perform at an optimal level. The analysis also indicates that Lowi's (1972) policy typology may need to be reevaluated or updated. Both of these conclusions indicate a need for a fuller analysis of defense policy and defense budgets to ensure that the military is obtaining the correct resources it needs to implement policies and maintain relevance in the modern era of warfare.