

Determinants of Politicization of the Czech Ministerial Bureaucracy: Types of Governments, Departments, and Governing Parties

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Abstract

After the introduction of the Civil Service Act in 2015, the Czech Republic seems to resemble the public administrations where most senior officials are promoted internally from positions within the state bureaucracy. However, a sizeable portion of top civil servants continues to be selected and appointed by government ministers who have several formal and informal tools to influence the selection process and to ensure “their” preferred candidates are selected. The present paper looks at the top layer of ministerial bureaucracy (consisting of *náměstek* positions, or deputy ministers) to investigate differences in the patterns of bureaucratic appointments, considering variation across governments, departments, and political parties in control of the ministerial portfolios. It examines career profiles of ministerial deputies appointed between 2015 and 2022, relying on their official biographies as well as open-source information like websites of the ministries, newspaper articles, personal webpages, and party statements, and other official documents available online.

I first look at how types of governments (minority, majority & caretaker cabinets) differ from each other in formally politicizing appointments of top civil servants. It is hypothesized that majority cabinets prefer top civil servants with ties to governing parties, while minority governments also feature CS appointees linked to parties that are formally not represented in government but may provide parliamentary support to the executive.

Next, I consider inter-departmental differences in the extent to which career bureaucrats, rather than political appointees with little prior experience with civil service, are selected for the top jobs. It is expected that career bureaucrats are more frequent at the ministries with highly technical profiles (e.g., finance and foreign affairs) than at more generalist departments (e.g., interior, culture).

Finally, I investigate how patterns of politicization vary across political parties that control government ministries. My earlier research suggests that older and more established parties (Social Democrats, Christian Democrats and Civic Democrats) rely on CS appointees who have had formal links to the parties, while newer parties (Andrej Babiš’s ANO) let their ministers choose appointees from their own personal (non-party) networks. The paper will build on that previous research to include other new governing political parties (Mayors and Independents, and the Pirates since 2021) to explore these patterns.