

The Federal Bureaucracy

I. The Bureaucrats

A. Some Bureaucratic Myths and Realities

- 1) Americans dislike bureaucrats
- 2) Bureaucracies are growing bigger each year
- 3) Most federal bureaucrats work in Washington, D.C.
- 4) Bureaucracies are ineffective, inefficient, and always mired in red tape. A plurality of all federal civilian employees works for just a few federal agencies.

B. Who They Are and How They Got There

There are nearly three million civilian bureaucrats. The permanent bureaucracy is more broadly representative of the American people than are legislators, judges, or presidential appointees in the executive branch. There is a diversity of bureaucratic jobs.

II. What They Do: Some Theories of Bureaucracy

A. Max Weber a hierarchical authority structure that uses task specialization, operates on merit principle and behaves with impersonality.

1. Hierarchical authority structure
2. Task specialization
3. Merit principle
4. Impersonality

III. How Bureaucracies Are Organized

A. The Cabinet Departments

B. The Regulatory Agencies

C. The Government Corporations

D. The Independent Executive Agencies

IV. Bureaucracies as Implementors

A. What Implementation Means

Bureaucracies are essentially implementors of policy. They develop procedures and rules for implementing policy goals and manage the routines of government. Public policies are rarely self-executing.

Policy implementation is the stage of policymaking between the establishment of a policy and the consequences of the policy for the people whom it affects.

Implementation includes three elements:

- 1) creation of a new agency or assignment of responsibility to an old agency
- 2) translation of policy goals into operational rules of thumb
- 3) coordination of resources and personnel to achieve the goals.

B. Why the Best-Laid Plans Sometimes Flunk the Implementation Test

1. First, it is impossible to implement a policy with faulty program design that is defective in its basic theoretical conception.
2. policies often lack clarity since Congress is fond of stating a broad policy goal and leaving implementation up to the bureaucracies. Not only are goals unclear, they may also be contradictory.
3. bureaucracies often lack resources, such as staff, supplies, and equipment, to carry out the tasks they have been assigned to do. Agencies may also lack the authority to meet their responsibilities.
4. administrative routine may get in the way of effective implementation. Bureaucrats follow standard operating procedures that save time and bring uniformity to complex organizations. Routines sometimes become frustrating to citizens when they do not appear to appropriately address a situation. Sometimes an agency simply fails to establish routines that are necessary to complete its task.

5. Administrators' dispositions may also be a barrier to implementation. Administrative discretion is the authority of administrative actors to select among various responses to a given problem. Street-level bureaucrats (those who are in constant contact with the public) have considerable discretion.

6. fragmentation and the diffusion of responsibility make the coordination of policies time-consuming and difficult. Sometimes those who are supposed to comply with a law receive contradictory signals from different agencies. It is not easy to reorganize the bureaucracies to correct this phenomenon.

C. A Case Study: The Voting Rights Act of 1965

The 1965 Voting Rights Act represents a successful case of implementation because its goal was clear (to register large numbers of African-American voters); its implementation was straightforward (sending out people to register them); and the authority of the implementors was clear (they had the support of the attorney general and even U.S. marshals) and concentrated in the Justice Department, which was disposed to implementing the law vigorously.

V. Bureaucracies as Regulators

A. Regulation in the Economy and in Everyday Life

Government regulation is the use of governmental authority to control or change some practice in the private sector. Everyday life is the subject of bureaucratic regulation. Almost all bureaucratic agencies are in the regulatory business.

B. Regulation: How it Grew, How it Works

In 1877, the Supreme Court upheld the right of government to regulate the business operations of a firm. In 1887 Congress created the first regulatory agency. All regulation contains three elements, first, a grant of power and set of directions from Congress; second a set of rules and guidelines by the regulated agency often developed in consultation with the people or industries being regulated; and third some means of enforcing compliance with congressional goals and agency regulations. Regulation of the American economy and society has grown in recent decades.

C. Toward Deregulation

The idea behind deregulation is that the number and complexity of regulatory policies have made regulation too complex and burdensome. Opponents of the regulatory system argue that it raises prices, hurts America's competitive position abroad, and does not always work well. Both conservatives and liberals have pushed for deregulation. Others argue that many regulations have proved beneficial to Americans.

VI. Understanding Bureaucracies

A. Bureaucracies and Democracies

Bureaucracies constitute one of America's two unelected policymaking institutions. This does not mean that bureaucracies cannot respond to and represent the public's interests. Presidents try to impose their policy preferences on agencies by

- 1) appointing the right people to head the agency
- 2) issuing executive orders
- 3) tinkering with an agency's budget
- 4) reorganizing an agency.

Congress can take measures to oversee the bureaucracy, such as,

- 1) influencing the appointment of agency heads
- 2) tinkering with an agency's budget
- 3) holding hearings
- 4) rewriting the legislation or making it more detailed.

Presidents and Congress find it difficult to control bureaucracies because agencies have strong ties to interest groups and congressional committees and subcommittees. These close ties are often called iron triangles or subgovernments. Iron triangles can influence policies, often resulting in contradictory policies.

B. Bureaucracy and the Scope of Government

1. The federal bureaucracy has actually shrunk in size relative to the population it serves.
2. A good case can be made that the bureaucracy is actually too small for many of the tasks currently assigned to it.
3. Others argue it is already too large.