

Political Economy of Pork Spending: A Case from US Defense Appropriation Bill

Hamid E. Ali, PhD
Assistant Professor of Public Policy
Department of Public Policy and Administration
The American University in Cairo
P.O. Box 74, New Cairo, Egypt
Tel: (202) 2615-3351
Website: <http://www1.aucegypt.edu/faculty/hamid/>

President Obama recently has assailed the lobbyists and lawmakers by saying “it is inexcusable and it is affront to the American people and the troops to push for weapons that the military saying it does not want it, it is not acceptable to protect jobs back home to build things we don’t needed with a cost that we cannot afford.”

INTRODUCTION:

In alarming rate, for period from 1995 to 2006, congress appropriated more than 15,000 defense pork projects that cost the taxpayer \$120.8 billion dollars. This paper examines the political economy of U.S. defense spending as earmark directly distributed to congressional district through the budget process. Here we are focusing on pork barrel spending as instrument use to entice member of congress to support the bill to build political coalition through bargaining and compromising. We don’t differentiate conceptually between “pork” that is passed as part of omnibus bills that provide distributive benefits for a majority of legislators’ districts (e.g. defense appropriation bill) and earmarks that are tacked onto general interest legislation (Wheeler, 2006: 6-7).

Our empirical study analysis two main questions first, the factors that determines the defense pork earmarks to states for the period 1996-2008; it suggests that the issues of maximizing reelection, vote trading and political institutions variables are positively influence the state share of defense pork barreling. The Second question, are those states who loose out on defense contracts those who get other pork compensation through the defense budget (or cross bill compensation) or do they just loose out entirely? This part of the study we explored descriptive study and compared winner and losers in Defense appropriation and whether pork is used to compensate the losers or winner is taking it all.