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Traveling Agents: Political Change and Bureaucratic Turnover in India

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Abstract

We develop a framework to empirically examine how politicians with electoral pressures control bureaucrats with career concerns as well as the consequences for bureaucrats' career investments. Unique micro-level data on Indian bureaucrats support our key predictions. Politicians use frequent reassignments (transfers) across posts of varying importance to control bureaucrats. High-skilled bureaucrats face less frequent political transfers and lower variability in the importance of their posts. We find evidence of two alternative paths to career success: officers of higher initial ability are more likely to invest in skill, but caste affinity to the politician's party base also helps secure important positions.

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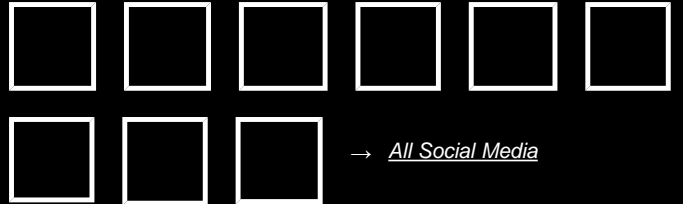
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