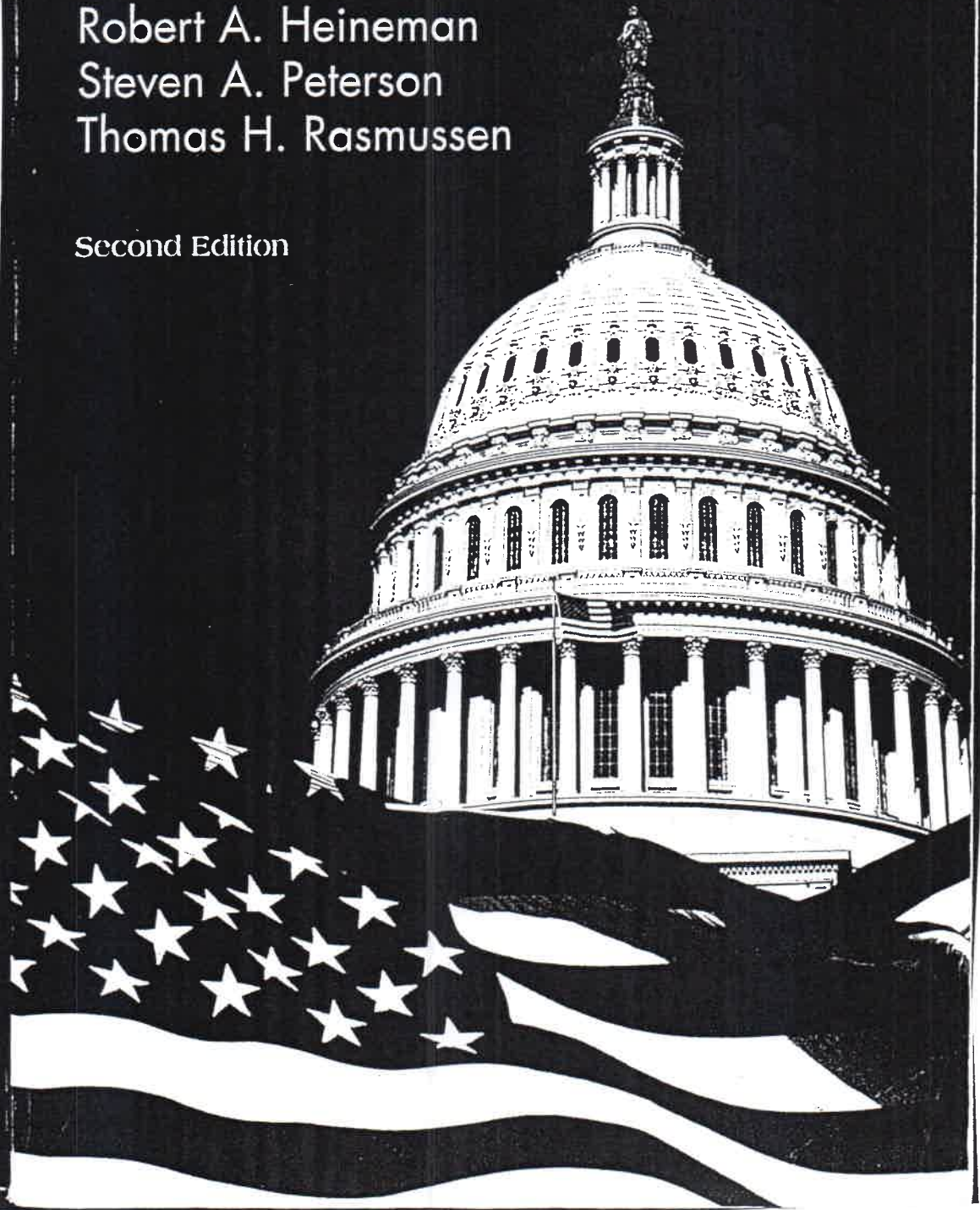


American Government

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CHAPTER 12

The Public Policy Process

Making public policy is, very simply, the business of government. The policy process, however, is not a simple one, although it involves a series of easily identifiable stages. The first stage is problem recognition, just being aware that there is a problem. If there is agreement that a problem exists, the next step is agenda setting, deciding whether anything should be done about it. To be placed on the agenda signifies that the problem is deemed important enough for government to consider taking action. In short, public leaders decide what to decide about, which is the focus of the next stage, decision making. In a complex process, decision makers enact a policy to meet the problem originally defined in agenda setting.

After a decision is made, it must, of course, be implemented. The law that is printed on paper must now be made real, with services actually getting delivered. There is a last stage, program evaluation, which takes place after service delivery has begun. Here, government examines the program to see how well it is meeting its goals. If the program is functioning smoothly, nothing at all may be done; if it is not, it can be terminated or refined to make it work better.

These, then, are the basic stages in the policy process. The pages to follow consider for each stage the actors who are involved and the nature of the policy process at that stage. This discussion serves to pull together points made in previous chapters and to provide a context for the next three chap-

ters on specific policy areas. Earlier chapters have focused on key policy-making institutions—Congress, the president, the courts, and bureaucracy—and on the basic processes or forces that influence government—political parties, public opinion, the media, and interest groups. The latter serve to provide input to governmental institutions. Each is a source of pressure on government, as discussed in individual chapters. In making and carrying out decisions, the institutions of government in one way or another take into account such input as well as each other's views. Politics is about policy—who gets what, when, and how. Each of the elements explored in preceding chapters has some role to play.

What Is Public Policy?

In the most common definition, public policy is what government does. When government takes actions or makes decisions, it creates policy. The policy process has been described as “public problems and how they are acted on in government.”¹ Others point out that policy should be taken to include what government intentionally decides not to do. For instance, when the Gary, Indiana, city government refused to press U.S. Steel to work toward reducing air pollution for fear of seeing the giant corporation pull out of Gary, the city's government might be considered to have carried out a policy of inaction in order to keep U.S. Steel happy.² Public policies, however the term is defined, run the gamut from “big” issues (national health care policy or deficit reduction) to “little” ones (a flood-control project on Ellicott Creek in Buffalo, New York).

Tradeoffs

Most policy involves what are called tradeoffs. Tradeoffs can be thought of by recalling the phrase “There ain't no such thing as a free lunch” (referred to as “TANSTAAFL” in Robert Heinlein's science fiction novel *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*). More technically, a government decision carries with it costs of one kind or another, just as it confers some benefit.

To get anything from government costs something. This is tradeoff: what one gets versus what one gives up. For instance, to increase U.S. energy supplies, government might encourage exploration for oil in Alaskan wilderness parks. This creates potential benefits—a likely increase in oil supplies and, hence, less dependence on other countries' oil. Nonetheless, there is a cost (re-member, TANSTAAFL); the environment may well suffer some significant damage. Thus, one trades off more environmental damage to obtain more oil. Another example would be the goal of deregulating industry to make pro-

duction more efficient and enhance profits; the tradeoff here is likely to be more pollution and more injuries in the workplace as regulations on health and the environment are deemphasized.

Unintended Consequences

When government makes policy, the results may not be as expected. These unintended consequences are important to consider. For instance, in the 1960s and 1970s, federal courts ordered busing of schoolchildren to achieve racial integration in a number of school districts. Ironically, an unintended consequence of this policy choice was *increased* racial segregation in some districts. Why? Many white parents pulled their children out of public school systems in which there was busing. The end result was fewer white children going to the public schools and a continuation of dominantly black schools.³

Types of Policy

Perhaps different types of policy lead to very distinct political dynamics and outcomes. That is, the particular species of policy shapes the politics surrounding it. One view posits three substantive types of policy—developmental, redistributive, and allocational.⁴ Each of these carries with it a unique set of political implications.

Developmental Policy

Developmental policy aims to enhance a government's economic position. Such policies are designed to strengthen the economy and enlarge the tax base. Central in defining a policy as developmental is a cost-benefit calculation: does the cost-benefit ratio lean in the direction of the average and above-average taxpayer? Governments like to devise policies that benefit taxpayers, thereby providing those who provide revenues to government with an incentive to be supportive. At the state and local level, such policies induce the average and above-average taxpayer to stay in that locale rather than move elsewhere to receive a more attractive set of services for relatively lower taxes. Examples of developmental policies are industrial parks and wildlife preserves.

Redistributive Policy

Here, money is taken from the better off and shifted to the hands of the less well-off. Welfare programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), for instance, redistribute money from those who can pay

taxes to those who pay little or no taxes. Politicians are often leery of this type of policy since it may arouse the ire of those who can afford to pay taxes; taxpayers often see those on welfare as undeserving, and they believe they are being penalized for the “shiftlessness” of others. State and local governments especially dislike such policy, since average to above-average taxpayers may decide that the cost-benefit ratio of staying and paying is not worth it and move to another area where taxes going to welfare recipients are lower.

Allocational Policy

Allocational policies, which involve basic services, tend to affect all taxpayers—but many citizens benefit as well. In a sense, taxpayers break even. Everyone gains alike. Many basic services can be deemed allocational, such as police and fire protection and garbage pickup at the local level; national defense would be a similar example at the national level.

Political Implications of Policy Type

Political implications differ for each of these. Allocational policies tend to be least controversial, since these involve many basic services that are deemed to serve all citizens well. Because city and state governments do not want to see their tax base evaporate, they have a major incentive to minimize redistributive policies and maximize developmental policies. One implication is that, everything equal, the federal government would have to pick up the tab for redistributive policies. And there is often resistance from the voters for this type of action. Thus, political unpopularity of redistributive policies leads to a contentious and controversial political dynamic.

On the other hand, citizens tend to support developmental activities, at the state, local, and national levels. People define such policies as investments. Indeed, it was no coincidence that President Clinton referred to the economic stimulus proposal and his deficit reduction package as an investment in America's future. The President tried to tap into the positive connotations of developmental policy (with mixed success).

The “Messiness” of the Policy Process

One characteristic of the policy-making process is its “messiness.” Many actors at all levels of government, of varying ideological and party persuasions compete to affect outcomes, as Table 12.1 illustrates.⁵

Table 12.1 Messiness in the Policy-making Process:

A Tale of Three Institutions
Separation of Powers

| Levels of Government | Executive | Legislative | Judicial |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------|----------|
| National | R D | R D | R D |
| State | R D | R D | R D |
| Local | R D | R D | |

R = Republican control

D = Democratic control

Separation of powers divides power among three coequal branches of government. Add to this the possibility of divided party control between the branches, and the process can become tangled in the combination. Consider also the situation after the election of Democrat Bill Clinton in which the Supreme Court is dominated by Republican justices appointed by Republican presidents; even with unity between a Democratic president and a Democratic Congress, conflict can still develop between the branches. And, given the Republicans taking control of Congress in 1994, the degree of messiness increases further.

In addition, the intergovernmental relations system divides power across the three levels of government: national, state, and local. If the federal government is moving in one direction, such as limiting the effects of environmental regulation as it did under President Reagan, and the states increase their vigilance with respect to environmental degradation, the policy thrust of the national government is blunted. And, of course, divided government control can occur at the state and local level as well as at the national level.

Put in such terms, it seems amazing that anything gets accomplished. However, the system has worked historically and messiness has not prevented government from taking action. The Founding Fathers wanted such a system, as pointed out in Chapter 2. They produced something that is perhaps even more complex than they had desired.

Stages in the Policy Process

Problem Recognition

Before government acts, it must perceive that there is some problem. Jones defines problems as “Human needs . . . for which relief is sought.”⁶ If many Americans are hungry but no one recognizes that hunger is so widespread, then hunger is not a problem politically. Only if significant political

actors (from the general public to the president to interest groups) recognize that nutritional needs are not being met will hunger become defined—politically—as a problem.

How Problems are Identified

Social Indicators. Social indicators are measures of society’s functioning, such as the number of people living in poverty, the gross domestic product, the annual crime rate. These indicators can signal the existence of problems. For example, if the number of individuals who are unemployed goes up sharply, a problem is developing. This may produce pressure for government officials to place more emphasis on dealing with lack of jobs.

Events. Sometimes events focus attention on a problem. For instance, if builders have been using shoddy materials for public housing projects and structures thus built collapse in an earthquake, this disaster may lead to recognition of a problem.

Feedback. A third route to problem recognition is feedback, the process by which public officials hear about how well or how poorly existing programs are working. John Kingdon notes one example: “Transportation officials monitor the performance of Amtrak and of urban mass transit systems by regularly following such indicators as ridership, load factors, on-time performance, inflation in construction costs, and operating deficits.”⁷ Simply, officials check out how programs are performing.

The Issue-Attention Cycle

The desire to solve problems can fade away, too. Some claim that even though problems may continue to be as acute as ever, if people lose interest or get bored with the issue, then there will be no impetus for action and the problem will increasingly be ignored. Anthony Downs has spoken of an issue-attention cycle, in which some problem soars into public consciousness and political leaders become energized to “do something.”⁸ After the initial burst, interest begins to decline as people come to recognize the costs involved and the difficulties with properly addressing the problem. As these difficulties are accepted, people turn their attention elsewhere. For instance, when Ethiopia’s famine first became widely known to the public through vivid photos and news videos, there was an outpouring of contributions by concerned American citizens. After the original burst of enthusiasm, interest declined, as if by having contributed to the cause by purchasing the record single “We Are the World” or by pledging money to Live Aid, people had done all that was required.

Actors in Problem Recognition

A number of actors play a role in problem recognition.

Bureaucrats. By monitoring social indicators, experts in the bureaucracy can detect problems as they develop. By publishing reports of increased homelessness, for instance, bureaucrats can spur recognition.

The Public. When the general public becomes convinced that a problem exists, public officials take notice. As the public came to see crime as a serious problem in the early 1990s, government responded with anticrime legislation that in part went against the interests of the powerful National Rifle Association, usually very difficult to defeat on matters in which it takes an active part.

Interest Groups. Interest groups are surely important actors, too. For example, the NAACP worked to make the public and political leaders aware of the problems engendered by racial discrimination.

Elected Officials. Elected officials also may be involved in this stage of the policy process. Members of Congress—especially the House of Representatives—in carrying out errand-running activities for their constituents may come to see a pattern in the problems that they are dealing with, a pattern that may suggest the existence of an underlying problem. For example, if more and more constituents are complaining about not receiving social security payments on time, a problem is signaled in service delivery that must be dealt with.

Policy entrepreneurs. Sometimes, a single person can spotlight a problem and bring it to the attention of the larger political system. Individuals who devote themselves to getting a problem highlighted in this manner are called policy entrepreneurs. By writing a book on automobile safety many years ago, Ralph Nader alerted Americans to a number of safety problems; more recently, astronomer Carl Sagan and others spoke of the danger of nuclear winter, trying to get the public to recognize an as yet undiscussed problem associated with nuclear warfare.

Agenda Setting

Problem recognition is one prerequisite for an issue to be placed on the agenda. However, even if some people believe that a problem exists, the problem may not make the agenda. John Kingdon observes that at least two other conditions must be met: political circumstances must be right, and significant political actors must back agenda placement.

Political Circumstances

Political conditions must be ripe for items to be placed on the agenda. As Kingdon observes:

Political events flow along according to their own dynamics and their own rules. Participants perceive swings in national mood, elections bring new administrations to power and new partisan or ideological distributions to Congress, and interest groups of various descriptions press (or fail to press) their demands on government.⁹

A kind of consensus among key actors may emerge that certain conditions call for government consideration. This consensus is often a product of bargaining, negotiation, and compromise among the multitudes of participants.

Actors in Agenda Setting

In agenda setting, visible political actors are most important, such as the president, Congress, key high-level appointees in the administration, top administrators, the media, parties, and interest groups. However, sometimes a single person (a policy entrepreneur) can make a difference. Among entrepreneurs trying to get particular issues on the agenda have been Phyllis Schlafly as an opponent of the Equal Rights Amendment, Jack Kemp as an apostle of supply-side economics, and C. Everett Koop as a proponent of AIDS education. In each case, an individual doggedly pursued his or her position and lobbied and worked to gather support. Therefore, an individual *can* have some impact. Nonetheless, issues normally do not make the policy agenda because of the activity of policy entrepreneurs.

Hidden or less visible participants have a role. Academics, “think tank” specialists, career bureaucrats, policy analysts, and congressional staffers tend not to have great overt impact on getting an issue placed on the agenda. They may be critical, however, in developing alternative proposals that “bubble up” through various policy communities, groups of people who focus on specific problems and push specific policies, and become adopted by the visible political actors.

Biases

Another element in the agenda-setting process is the effect of biases built into the system. E. E. Schattschneider has noted that “all forms of political organization have a bias in favor of the exploitation of some kind of conflict and the suppression of others because *organization is the mobilization of bias*. Some issues are organized into politics, while others are organized out.”¹⁰ In other words, a political system’s basic values narrow the range of issues considered appropriate for agenda placement. As noted in previous chapters, the

dominant American value system is Lockean liberalism, with its emphasis on materialism, a free market, individualism, and equality. For instance, efforts to place on the agenda government ownership of private sector businesses would be conceived as illegitimate and unworthy of serious discussion; such a policy would not fit the American mobilization of bias. Built-in biases such as this radically reduce the scope of debate in the agenda-setting process and prevent certain policy alternatives from ever being examined—irrespective of their objective merits.

Decision Making

Models

In the social sciences, models, simplified perspectives on how things work, are often used. Four models of decision making are discussed below. These models provide different understandings of how decisions get made. The totality of what happens in the decision-making stage is complex, so models help to make sense of what is going on.

Rational-Comprehensive. This model assumes that rationality best describes how decisions are (or should be) made. Ideally, as Figure 12.1 shows, officials first carefully define a problem facing the nation. Then specific goals are formulated to correct that problem. The problem could be a housing shortage; the goal might be provision of enough housing units to meet the needs of those who do not have access to adequate housing. The third step in the sequence is enumeration of alternative policies—such as public housing projects, tax breaks, rent supplements, vouchers, and so on. Then, fourth, the single best alternative (or combination of alternatives) among this set is selected. Normally, the proposal with the greatest benefits for the cost of the program, that is, the most cost-effective program, is the one chosen. The fifth step is implementation.

Some time after the program has been put into effect, it is evaluated to determine how well it is working. Evaluation research may provide suggestions on how to modify the program to make it work better, may show that the program is proceeding smoothly and needs no alterations, or may indicate that the program is a failure and should be terminated. (The process of using research findings to alter a policy is often called feedback.) In the public housing example, research might indicate that the projects become “high-rise ghettos” and do not, in fact, lead to provision of adequate housing. At this point, the process would begin anew, with decision makers examining what policies might do better.

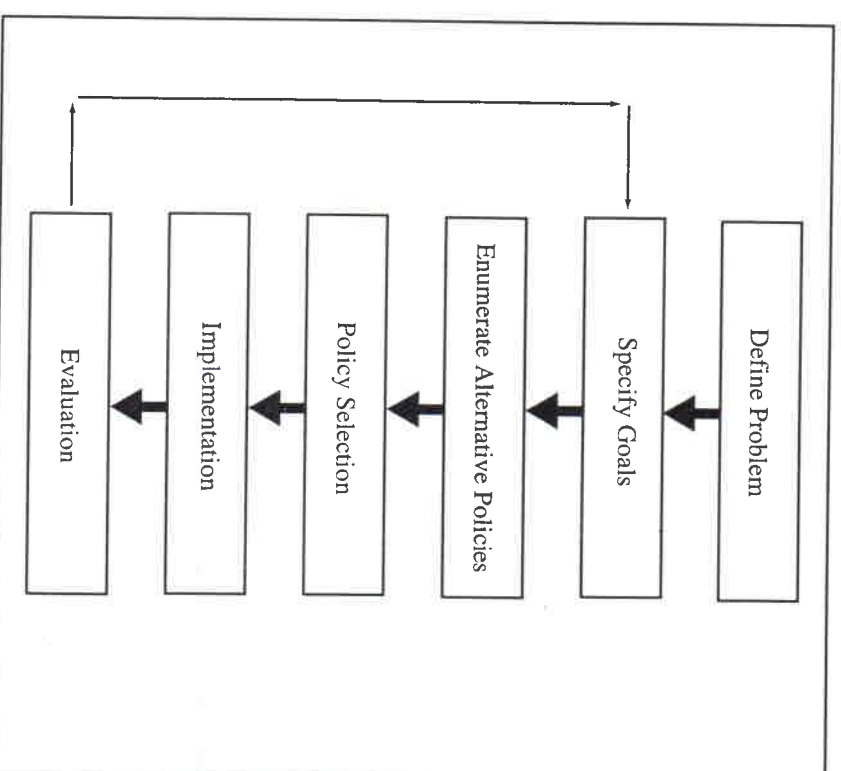


Fig 12.1 The Rational-Comprehensive Process

Incrementalism. This model assumes that a policy continues what has been done before, with some modest tinkering. In an important article, Charles Lindblom contends that decision makers cannot each year comprehensively review every decision made prior to that time to see whether or not changes are called for.¹¹ Practically, decisions are made with the expectation that previous decisions will stand, that policymakers will suggest minor modifications to improve the functioning of programs. This makes sense, too, for the following reasons.

First, decision makers have neither the time nor the information to closely examine every program and all alternatives and to select the best alternative. Rational-comprehensive decision making is not practical. Second, it is politically easier to accept continuing existing programs. Efforts to effect great

change will yield political controversy as groups who benefit from existing policies try to defend them. Politicians would not want to engage in such battles routinely. Finally, it seems unnatural for humans, including political leaders, to think along rational-comprehensive lines.¹² People tend to look for a decision that will be satisfactory (that will work)—not optimal (the single best one). People stop searching for alternatives when they find one that looks like it will work.

The rational comprehensive and incremental models focus on the process of policy-making; *how* decisions get made. The next two models concentrate on who makes decisions.

Elitism. This model is defined in detail in Chapter 1. Simply stated, elitism assumes the following:

1. Society is divided into the few with power and the many without;
2. The few who have power are not typical of the many who do not possess it;
3. The elite share basic values that work to support the system that, in turn, maintains their power; and
4. Policy does not reflect the wishes of the mass of people but, instead, is made by the elite to advance their own interests.

An elite theorist would easily explain the Reagan income tax cuts (25 percent over a three-year period) and the tax simplification scheme enacted several years later (including lowered income tax rates for the richest Americans) by saying that the rich and powerful used government to give themselves a real, concrete monetary benefit. Or, an elitist might suggest that American involvement in the Middle East during the Persian Gulf war was intended to defend the interests of “big oil” and others dependent upon oil, such as the plastics and automobile industries.

Pluralism. Pluralism, also considered in depth in Chapter 1, is one of the major models for explaining the decision-making process. This framework begins with the assumption that society is composed of many different groups and that the interaction of some of these groups in the political process shapes government decisions.

Government responds to demands made by groups. Often, however, groups will be in competition with one another. This necessitates negotiation and bargaining among groups in order to build a coalition strong enough to win in the group struggle. Thus, a number of groups working together will all benefit. For example, when the Clean Air Act was originally proposed, broad coalitions supporting *and* opposing it formed. One provision

of the act was reduction in the amount of pollutants emitted by automobiles. Environmental and health groups were in favor of tougher standards and a short time period for automobile companies to come into compliance. The automobile industry and labor unions (who feared losing jobs if the tougher standards were adopted) were arrayed on the other side. In the end, compromise took place. Stringent standards were set as goals, the amount of time granted to attain these was stretched out, and an “escape valve” was created allowing an extension to the automobile industry if it could not meet the timetable.

Actors in Decision Making

Who are the key actors in the decision-making stage of the policy process? Different models suggest different answers to this question.

In the Rational-Comprehensive Model. The demands of this model point to bureaucrats and experts as the important players. In the bureaucracy, in think tanks, and in congressional committees are experts on a subject who can fully deal with the alternatives and, using cost-benefit analysis and other techniques, select the best one.

Incrementalism. Incrementalism identifies a number of distinct actors as central. Interest groups defend programs that serve their needs, making it politically unrewarding to suggest dramatic changes in those programs. Political officials—the president and Congress—faced with myriad decisions tend to tinker with the status quo rather than engage in rational-comprehensive tactics.

Bureaucracies, interested in defending their turf, maintaining control of the programs assigned to them, and holding onto their budgets, resist major tampering. The combination of such dynamics produces incrementalism.

In Elitism. Here, the major actor is the elite, however defined. Elected officials are “tools” of the elite. Public opinion is manipulated by the elite through their control of media and other institutions. Thus, the focus must be on the elite to understand why decisions are made as they are.

In Pluralism. In this model, interest groups are obviously critical. But so too are government decision makers. Political officials must choose which course of action to take amid the clamor from competing groups. And public opinion is important. Members of the public vote elected officials into office, and these decision makers, then, must be aware of the voters’ views. Interest groups try to swing public opinion to their side as part of their strategy to get government to carry out their desires.

Policy Alternatives

What about selection of the specific alternative to be adopted by decision makers? Kingdon argues that this process involves a great deal of randomness. He claims that generating policy alternatives is analogous to biological natural selection:

In what we have called the policy primeval soup, many ideas float around, bumping into one another, encountering new ideas, and forming combinations and recombinations. . . . Through the imposition of criteria by which some ideas are selected out for survival while others are discarded, order is developed from chaos, pattern from randomness. These criteria include technical feasibility, congruence with the values of community members, and the anticipation of future constraints, including a budget constraint, public acceptability, and politicians' receptivity.¹³

The process is dependent to some extent on chance events, on political currents, and on the desires of visible political actors. Various policy communities—groups of people from government, think tanks and higher education who are interested in a particular issue—think that specific proposals would work if implemented by government. For example, the environmental policy community might advocate increasing the size of national parks, tightening the government's leasing of public lands to energy developers, and speeding the pace of cleaning up the air and water in the United States.

These ideas are publicized by the policy community. They may be ignored or taken seriously, depending on decision makers' priorities, public opinion, and events taking place at the time. At some point, however, policy proposals floating around in the "primeval soup" and pushed by policy communities may be coupled with the pressure to "do something" about a problem that has made the agenda. This increases the odds that a specific proposal will be enacted into law.

Will the policy be incremental? Or will the policy innovation be a more dramatic departure from the status quo, as suggested by the rational comprehensive model? Either is possible, depending upon the political currents and chance events. Kingdon's analysis seems to fit comfortably within the pluralist perspective, since it emphasizes the role of many actors interacting with one another.

Implementation

At this stage, decisions actually arrived at by policymakers are put into action. Paper decisions must become real. President Reagan made a decision

to introduce U.S. Marines into Beirut, Lebanon, as a peacekeeping force and to add some stability to the area. That decision did not automatically get implemented. The Marines had to be outfitted and transported to Beirut, and orders had to be cut detailing the mission and the rules under which it would be carried out. Finally, the Marines had to deploy upon their arrival. The presidential decision was just the first step. The concrete steps that had to be taken afterward were the implementation activities.

Actors in Implementation

The central figures in this often invisible stage are administrators in agencies charged with putting a policy into operation. However, officials in the executive or legislative branch can have an effect by serving as "fixers," prodding if necessary the bureaucracies in charge of implementation.¹⁴ Other actors can get involved as well. Interest groups with a stake in the specific program may, if they are part of a subgovernment or a cozy triangle, have real influence; judges, through judicial review of agency regulations, also can be key players.

Implementation Problems

What happens at this stage is affected by many other elements. Some analysts claim to be surprised that any program is successfully implemented.

Vague Wording. Laws enacted by Congress and signed by the president are often vaguely worded as a result of the bargaining and negotiation needed to get a majority to support the bill. Such a document provides unclear implementation guidelines to the bureaucracy. The same may happen in court decisions. For instance, what does the phrase "with all deliberate speed" mean in the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* implementation decision? How are lower courts to interpret this statement? Vaguely worded laws or decisions may end up moving in a different direction than anticipated by decision makers.

Poorly Reasoned Policies. When, as sometimes happens, a program enacted by decision makers is poorly reasoned or poorly thought out, proper implementation is difficult. For example, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) tried to attack unemployment in Oakland, California, in the mid-1960s. The strategy the agency adopted was to ask several employers to draw up plans indicating how they would use EDA funds in projects (such as construction of an airline hangar) to increase jobs for hard-core unemployed minorities. In fact, although the government spent tens of millions of dollars on several projects, there was no significant job creation. The logic was flawed. Those receiving federal funds were required only to promise to

hire minority unemployed; there was no provision for paying the employers only upon performance, that is, when they actually hired the jobless. And, as is clear in retrospect, the promises were not kept.¹⁵

Inadequate Resources. Resources are often inadequate for programs. Programs created by Congress may, in subsequent action, be budgeted at an insufficient level for proper implementation.

Turf Conflicts. Often, several agencies will be given a role in implementing a single program. This can lead to a problem in properly implementing the policy as the different agencies engage in turf conflict. A classic example occurred during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. To ascertain whether or not Soviet offensive missiles were being placed in Cuba, a U-2 reconnaissance flight over suspected construction sites was necessary. President Kennedy ordered the flight; however, implementation of this seemingly simple decision was delayed a matter of days. Why? The Air Force and the CIA were locked in turf conflict over whose pilot would fly the plane. The result was a delay in implementing what seems like a very simple decision.¹⁶

Hostile Agencies. It also happens that a hostile agency is charged with implementing a policy. Given the frequently vaguely worded policy mandate, this can end up producing botched implementation as the agency undermines the original intent.

New Policies. Some policies are more likely to present implementation problems than others.¹⁷ New policies can prove difficult to implement properly. When a new program begins, it is often given just enough resources to get off the ground, not necessarily enough to function properly. For instance, Congress designed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act to assist handicapped students in leading as normal a life as possible in the schools. However, Congress allocated less money for the program than was deemed appropriate by educational experts and the congressional committee which reported out the bill. The result was a much heavier burden on state and local governments to pay for making school buildings accessible to the handicapped (such as providing elevators and ramps) and more resistance to carrying out the program.¹⁸ Another problem is that new programs may not fit easily with an agency's preexisting procedures and priorities, and the agency may be resistant, as a consequence, to implementing the program as designed.

Controversial Policies. Controversial policies pose challenges to successful implementation. First, controversial decisions often lead to laws couched in vague language; implementors cannot be completely sure what

Congress really meant when it passed the law. Furthermore, controversial laws may find resistance in the bureaucracy. It is likely that if a law was controversial, there was much opposition to enacting it. And if the agency assigned to implement the law was one actor opposed to it, that agency may subvert the program in its implementation.

Program Evaluation

In rational-comprehensive decision making, evaluation is a key component. Here, one sees how well a program is working and the extent to which it is meeting its goals. Theoretically, if the program is not working and is not expected to ever perform as advertised, it will be terminated. Inherently, then, program evaluation can be threatening to the backers of any program—whether those implementing the program, its clients, or its supporters in government and in the public at large, such as interest groups.¹⁹ Evaluation, then, is not simply an objective effort at discerning program impacts, although it might well be undertaken in such a manner; it is political from the start.

Whether or not evaluation is taken seriously is, to some extent, the result of how popular a program is. When early evaluations of Head Start were disappointing, there was no hue and cry to terminate the program. People liked the program and it had considerable political support.

Democratic theorists see the people's policy desires as important influences on government decisions. Public opinion, manifest through interest groups and political parties, is viewed as shaping what government does. Democratic theorists point to the evidence that the public's priorities are associated with actual government policy (recall the discussion of the effects of public opinion and political participation on policy in Chapter 4).

Elitists contend, to the contrary, that popular control is an illusion. They argue that top government officials and leaders in the private sector clearly outweigh the people as forces influencing public policy. Further, through the elites' alleged control of the media, the masses can be duped into supporting the elites' priorities.

Pluralists emphasize the centrality of groups. In fact, as stated earlier in this chapter, pluralism is one of the basic models that many use in order to explain the policy process.

The next three chapters examine particular decision areas—economic policy, civil liberties, and foreign policy. For each of these policy areas, the reader should apply the framework laid out in this chapter. First, who are the key actors in each area? Second, what happens at the different stages in the policy

process for each? Third, what view of “who has power” seems to work best in understanding the decisions actually reached?

Recommended Reading

- James Anderson: *Public Policymaking: An Introduction*, 2d ed., Houghton Mifflin, New York, 1993.
- John W. Kingdon: *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1984.
- Janet M. Martin: *Lessons from the Hill*, St. Martin’s, New York, 1994.
- B. Guy Peters: *American Public Policy*, 3d ed., Chatham House, Chatham, N.J., 1993.
- Paul E. Peterson: *City Limits*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981.
- Randall B. Ripley and Grace A. Franklin: *Policy Implementation and Bureaucracy*, 2d ed., Dorsey, Chicago, 1986.

CHAPTER 13

Economic Policy

Time Line

- 1776 In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith argues that governments should not interfere with the natural workings of the economy
- 1890s Abuses of corporate power lead to calls for some government regulation
- 1936 In *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, John Maynard Keynes explains how governments can use fiscal and monetary policy to prevent depression or inflationary price increases
- 1973–1980 Rising petroleum prices trigger a period of high unemployment and high inflation
- 1983–1994 Large budget and trade deficits, low levels of saving and investment, intensified global competition, and emergence of a twin-tier economy of high- and low-wage jobs pose difficult economic challenges

24. Frederick Mosher, *Democracy and the Public Service*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982.
25. *New York Times*, August 19, 1987.
26. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Memorandum #87-14: Source Separation and Recycling, June 15, 1987.
27. Charles Peters, *How Washington Really Works*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass., 1993.

Chapter 11

1. An explanation of Supreme Court citations is appropriate at this point. In these citations, the first number is the volume number and the second is the page number on which the case begins. In cases since the late 1800s, these numbers for the official Court citations are separated by the initials *U.S.* designating the government's printing of the decisions. Before this, the names of the Court's reporters were used. Thus in this citation Cranch was the Court reporter, and the case can be found in volume 1 at page 137. There are also two major private publishers of Supreme Court decisions: West Publishing Company in St. Paul, Minnesota, and The Lawyers Co-operative Publishing Company in Rochester, New York. Instead of the initials *U.S.*, West uses a *S. Ct.* citation and the Lawyers Co-operative uses *L. Ed.* (for volumes since the mid-1950s, *L. Ed. 2d.*) These editions of the Supreme Court's decisions include law notes, case summaries, and other information not included in the official Supreme Court reports.
2. George R. Metcalf, *From Little Rock to Boston*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn., 1983, pp. 197-220.
3. B. Guy Peters, *American Public Policy*, 2d ed., Chatham House, Chatham, N.J., 1986, p. 86.
4. William H. Rehnquist, *The Supreme Court*, Morrow, New York, 1987, pp. 289-290.
5. Carl Brent Swisher, *Stephen J. Field*, Archon Books, Hamden, Conn., 1963, pp. 443-444.
6. William B. Lockhart, et al., *The American Constitution*, 6th ed., West, St. Paul, Minn., 1986, p. 264.
7. See Samuel J. Konefsky, *The Legacy of Holmes and Brandeis*, Collier Books, New York, 1961.

Chapter 12

1. Charles O. Jones, *An Introduction to Public Policy*, Brooks/Cole, Monterey, Calif., 1984, p. 25.

2. Matthew Crenson, *The Un-Politics of Air Pollution*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1971.
3. David R. Morgan and Robert E. England, "White Enrollment Loss," *American Politics Quarterly*, 12:241-264, 1984.
4. Paul E. Peterson, *City Limits*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981. While this formulation is directly applied to local government, Peterson also notes its applicability to state and national decisions and the interactions among the various levels of government.
5. The diagram is based on Charles O. Jones, "The Policy Process," paper presented at the Northeastern Political Science Association meeting, Newark, N.J., November, 1993.
6. Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
7. John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1984, p. 106.
8. Anthony Downs, "Up and Down with Ecology—The 'Issue Attention' Cycle," *The Public Interest*, 28:38-50, 1972.
9. Kingdon, *op. cit.*, p. 207.
10. E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People*, The Dryden Press, Hinsdale, Ill., 1975, p. 69.
11. Charles Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," *Public Administration Review*, 19:79-88, 1959.
12. Steven A. Peterson, "Why Policies Don't Work," in Elliott White and Joseph Losco, eds., *Biology and Bureaucracy*, University Press of America, Washington, D.C., 1984.
13. Kingdon, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
14. Eugene Bardach, *The Implementation Game*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1977.
15. Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, *Implementation*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973.
16. Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1971.
17. George C. Edwards III, *Implementing Public Policy*, Congressional Quarterly Press, Washington, D.C., 1980.
18. Erwin L. Levine and Elizabeth M. Wexler, *PL 94-142. An Act of Congress*, Macmillan, New York, 1981.
19. For instance, see Carol H. Weiss, "Utilization of Evaluation" and "The Politicization of Evaluation Research," in Carol H. Weiss, ed., *Evaluating Action Programs*, Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1972.