

Days 5 and 6: History and Structure

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PUBPL 304

Road map

- Examine how policymaking has changed throughout US history
- Identify how changes in the environment shape the policymaking system
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the structure of our policymaking system

Importance of History

Understanding the historical development of our Constitutional order also helps us understand modern policymaking and the theories that we use to explain it

Our Task Today

Apply systems theory to the four (five?) eras of U.S. policy history:

- 1 Divided Power (1776 – 1876)
- 2 State Activism (1876 – 1933)
- 3 National Activism (1933 – 1961)
- 4 National Standards (1961 – Present?)
- 5 The End of Big Government (1994? – ???)

Making Sense of Policymaking: Systems Theory

Inputs

Resources

Throughputs

Black Box (transforms inputs)

Outputs

Products or services (policy)

Feedback Loop

Adjust inputs for better outputs

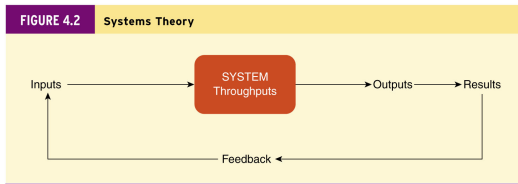


Figure: Kettl 2015

The Question

How does the environment during each era shape the inputs, throughputs, and outputs of the policymaking system?

Divided Power Era (1776-1870s)

- Methods to encourage consensus (and slow policymaking):
 - Separation of Powers
 - Federalism
 - Bicameral legislature
- Articles of Confederation vs. Constitution

Divided Power Era (1776-1870s)

Environment

- Popular uprisings (protection of property and moneyed class)
- Coming off of rebellion against strong central state
- Distant federal government
- Pre-industrial revolution
- Hence, strong state power

Divided Power Era (1776-1870s)

Effect on Inputs

Low federal revenues; **debt and bank debates**; lower federal demands; political power held by white property owners; expanding footprint

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Important role for Supreme Court to work out federal vs. state power; “which level?” is key debate; federal focus on interstate commerce and national issues

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Effect on Outputs

Important Supreme Court cases; standing army; free trade

Back to Hamilton



<https://youtu.be/WySzEXKUSZw>

Your Turn

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The End of Big Government?

Are we in a new policymaking era? Why or why not?

Big Picture

- Constitutional order relies on certain cultural commitments (liberty, property, civil rights)
- Importance of both laws and norms
- “... whether the government uses its power legitimately or abuses it is a political question.”
- Deliberation and stability (tendency towards stasis) are features, not bugs (Roman Republic)

Flexibility and Structure

We can see important changes in our policymaking system, but they are actually in a fairly narrow range due to the system's structure

Types of Stability

- Ideological Stability
- Political Stability
- Policy Stability
- Stability in power

Ideological and Political Stability

- Common core beliefs: rule of law, free-markets, free enterprise, private property
- Debates on definitions, not terms: e.g., liberty and equality
- Relatively narrow ideological spectrum
- Reinforced by two-party system

Policy Stability

- Institutions meant to be slow and deliberative
- Policies are “sticky”
- Power of the status quo
- Fragmentation

Stability of Power

- Peaceful transition of power
- Slow changes, even with single-party control
- Power inequalities
- Norms of behavior (e.g., filibuster)

Discussion

Are the benefits of policy restraint and stability greater than the costs (think in both short and long-term)?

How This Applies to “Analysis”

- Understanding the policymaking environment
- Understanding resources and how they affect the system
- You are a resource, but are competing with others