



Conflict and Rhetoric in French Policymaking

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and that one has to include an analysis of the broader polity within any study of agrarian politics. Institutions do make a crucial difference in the political economy of development, a lesson that those social scientists who are currently infatuated with the importance of prices would do well to ponder.

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Conflict and Rhetoric in French Policymaking.

By Frank R. Baumgartner. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989. 287p. \$34.95.

"Why do some issues become important societal debates, dominate the national media, and monopolize the attention of the nation's political leaders, whereas other issues are decided by small groups of experts?" (p. 3). Answering this question is the central purpose of Baumgartner's study. The empirical base for the book is a very narrow but extraordinarily intensive examination of policy making in France: thirty diverse cases of policy making handled by various divisions of the Ministry of National Education during 1983 and 1984. These cases are analyzed through 111 interviews with public and private actors, a content analysis of all coverage of education in *Le Monde* during the period in consideration, a mail survey of the major education interest groups, and selected documentary sources. This multifaceted assessment of representative cases drawn from a single issue area of a single country is designed to allow for the isolation of "those aspects of the policy and of its environment that cause variation in participation and public awareness" (p. 20).

Through an exhaustive quantitative analysis of his data and a qualitative assessment of selected cases, Baumgartner develops his central thesis. There is "only a moderate relationship between the objective scope of an issue and the level of participation that it stimulates" (p. 42). For more important than the scope of content of a policy is the degree of conflict it engenders: "Consensus leads to low levels of participation, and intense conflict usually but not always leads to high levels of participation. . . . Though intense conflict creates the incentives for policymakers to attempt to change the

roster of participants, it does not guarantee their success in doing so" (p. 86). Conflict itself is often unrelated to the content of policies; for it may be generated by an environment featuring "categorical, institutional, and jurisdictional rivalries" (p. 94). Such independent variables as conflict, scope, and environment combine to determine the probability that a policy will generate relatively high or low levels of participation.

But "the single most important link in the chain" is the "strategic behavior of policymakers. . . . More than any other factor, their individual decisions and strategies determine the nature of the policy process" (p. 129). "Contractors" present "issues in the most narrow and technically complex way possible"; while "expanders"—those who seem to be losing the contest in the current specialized arena—"portray issues in the broadest and most political way they can" so as to bring allied political generalists (and even the public) into the process and change the balance of power in their favor (p. 93). "Depending on who wins the rhetorical battle" between expanders and contractors, "the policy community will be limited to a small number of experts, or it will be expanded to include large numbers of generalists" (p. 129).

Compelling though Baumgartner's argument seems in many respects, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he often exaggerates the degree of variance in participation primarily attributable to the rhetoric of policy makers. While they may have "a lot of room for maneuver" (p. 67), it is only in the rarest of conflictual contexts that they are able to achieve the sort of dramatic expansion described. Of his 30 cases, the three that came to "dominate the national media" were, by his own account, "the most conflictual" (p. 158). At the other extreme, in 10 cases where "conflict was minimal" expansion was not even attempted (p. 157). In the 17 other cases (involving moderate conflict) the success or failure of expansion efforts only slightly affected the "roster of participants." In the 10 cases said to feature unsuccessful efforts at expansion, the mean of Baumgartner's "index of participation" was $-.5$ (the mean of all 30 cases was $.0$, with a range from -2.75 to 9.14); and 6 cases attracted the attention of political generalists. In the 7 cases of successful expansion, the mean index was $.3$ and five cases drew in

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generalists (pp. 52, 157). Baumgartner concedes that "participation levels were not enormous" in this latter group, but insists that "even small changes can sometimes be important" (p. 158).

Though he may thus be faulted for over-emphasizing the independent effect of "rhetoric," Baumgartner vividly illustrates how such variables as degree of conflict and environment combine with the strategic behavior of policy makers to determine the nature of participation and policy outcomes. His case studies provide not only the most systematic account to date of the dynamics of educational policy making in France but also a generally useful guide to the respective roles played by civil servants, interest groups, and political elites in the policy making process. Moreover, his analysis of the role of parliament as the "court of last appeal for potential expanders" in France (chap. 8) is quite enlightening, as is his explanation (chap. 9) of how political and structural differences between France and the United States have resulted in contraction of the debate over nuclear power in the former and expansion in the latter. Specialists in both French politics and comparative public policy will thus find this book to be a significant and provocative contribution to the literature.

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The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations. By James A. Bill. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. 520p. \$30.00 cloth, \$13.95 paper.

James Bill has written a most valuable and trenchant critique of U.S. foreign policy toward Iran in the Pahlavi and post-Pahlavi periods. The author has based his study on a great array of sources, including declassified U.S. government documents (plus those "declassified" by the student hostage takers at the U.S. embassy after their assault in November 1979); personal letters and memoranda; interviews with key policy makers; internal Iranian sources; and informal discussions with U.S. and Iranian public figures. Bill has accumulated a wealth of experience in his many years of travel to Iran and

from his numerous studies of Iran's internal and external politics. The result is a work that is characterized by a high degree of authenticity and integrity.

Bill's thesis is that U.S. policy toward Iran since the 1940s has been characterized by deeply disturbing inconsistencies; willful intervention; fractured communications among the numerous official U.S. agencies both inside and outside Iran; endemic rivalries among members of U.S. civilian and military missions; cultural insensitivities and misperceptions; myopia concerning the alleged communist threat to Iran; and excessive reliance on contacts with Iran's governmental elite, especially the shah. Bill believes that these deficiencies were responsible not only for the United States' failure to anticipate and act to prevent an Iranian revolution but also for its inability to come to terms with the revolution after the fact.

Among the most compelling parts of this book are the discussion of the genesis of the U.S. commitment to the shah in the 1940s; the analysis of the interrelationships among the various U.S. and British oil companies; the impact of private sector figures (such as David Lillienthal of the Tennessee Valley Authority, David Rockefeller of Chase Manhattan Bank, and the newly retired but vigorously active Henry Kissinger) on U.S. policy; and Washington's catastrophic insistence that Iran approve a humiliating Status of Forces Agreement in 1964. With the exception of Truman, postwar U.S. presidents receive poor marks: Eisenhower because of his sanctioning of the CIA coup of 1953; Kennedy because his reform proposals were really intended to preserve the status quo; Johnson because he believed in the shah's use of force and admired his apparently stable rule, as well as his support of the U.S. war in Vietnam; Nixon because of his blank check of 1972 on arms transfers to Iran; Carter because he praised Iran's stability and later followed Brzezinski's hawkish advice to try to derail the revolution-in-progress by a military coup(!); and Reagan because of his demonizing of the Iranian regime and of course his involvement in the Iran-Contra scandal.

There are many lessons to be learned, and Bill provides a checklist of some 12 points for future consideration to avert the continuation of the tragedy in U.S.-Iranian relations. These range from a skeptical and questioning attitude