

years when the European Community's exercise of its own powers is at issue. The Maastricht Treaty, as is well known, explicitly enshrines the principle of subsidiarity for the first time ever in an instrument of 'constitutional' import. It is a considerable surprise, therefore, to find Chantal Millon-Delsol in the final pages of her book dealing precisely with the emergence of the principle in the European debate, referring to Jacques Delors as a socialist rather than a social Christian. The intellectual origins of the President of the European Commission, in fact, far more than his recent adherence to the Socialist Party, predisposed him to be receptive to the principle which has illuminated the discussion of German federalism since the early post-war years; by his own account, indeed, it was the prime ministers of the German Länder who first drew the Commission President's attention to the existence and utility of the subsidiarity principle.

The seductiveness of the principle, with all its clarity and ambiguities, is clear to see for the many politicians still searching for 'another way' between socialism and liberalism. While this book clearly shows how the principle, even embodied in a constitutional charter or treaty, will not suffice to resolve all problems of jurisdiction, it also displays the richness of the concept in that, in contrast to socialist and liberal ideas, subsidiarity does not lend itself to overstatement and — provided it is properly understood — forces debate on the essentials of economic and social problems instead of their cut-and-dried determination by reference to essentially ideological precepts.

Note

1. Used here in its sense of completing and further supplementing a lack. *Translator*.

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Conflict and Rhetoric in French Policymaking, Frank R. Baumgartner, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1989.

Although Baumgartner's work represents a recent historical study in a rapidly changing political world, his perceptions are and will be in the future valuable when considering decision-making within the administrative and governmental system in France.

It seems that the author, despite his precise and keen study of cases and his profound knowledge of the French governmental and political system, is somehow not 'satisfied' with the fact that conflict and rhetoric in policy-making are more

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important than the content of a political issue. The book does not explore the historical, cultural or even philosophical background of the problem. Neither is there an evaluation of the quality of final decisions. The very pragmatic approach avoids the strategy in politicians' behaviour. The study is objective and based on well prepared scientific research which is carefully documented. In addition to the study a description of the thirty-case sample, as well as the interview schedule and mail questionnaire given to administrators and politicians are included.

The policy-making and institutional study is based on thirty cases concerned with political debate and the decision-making process behind educational policy in France. The first part of the work is theoretical and general. It is followed by more practically oriented chapters in which the complex core of the problem is analysed. The first main and interesting question put forward is: '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?'. According to the author, with regard to political questions which raise conflict, the losers in the conflict try to expand participation, while the winners prefer the strategy of contraction, or solving the problem in a small group of specialists. Of course conflict is not the only factor that determines the issue, there are more objective factors: scope and complexity of the issue as the most inter-related factors, interest group environment and institutional procedures.

Chapter by chapter and step by step, the author introduces and analyses in detail what he learned from the processes involved in the thirty cases and decisions made within the administrative and governmental system in France. The influence and importance of all factors are thus analysed thoroughly to provide a conclusion which sets out the characteristics of policy-making. Not surprisingly such a conclusion when compared with policy-making in other European democratic societies underlines the similarities.

The characteristics of policy-making in France are not peculiar to France or to education. Doubtless, it may be agreed:

1. that there is a great variety in how policies are made even within the jurisdiction of a single governmental ministry;
2. that the content of the policy has only a moderate impact on how decisions are made;
3. that conflict is closely related to the nature of the policy process;
4. that the interest group and institutional environment in which policies are made influence the intensity of conflict surrounding a policy, independently of its content;
5. that the policy-makers are sophisticated strategic actors, who attempt to influence the policy process by portraying issues in different ways depending on their interests in either contracting or expanding participation;
6. that many factors affect the success or failure of strategies of expansion, including the entrepreneurial skills of the policy-makers involved and their ability to gain the support of allies, particularly in the national legislature.

These conclusions are certainly not a surprise to those who are involved in or familiar with policy-making, especially within the more centralized administrative systems. The observations and analysis described in detail which seek the causes of certain phenomena are really remarkable and valuable. The study not only includes interesting cases but provides conclusions which obviously apply to policy-making in every democratic society.

Nonetheless one might still wonder if the cases studied, for example within the public health policy in the Netherlands, could be different in their conclusions. Is it possible to stress the quality of decisions and place less importance on the behaviour of the strategic politicians?

This might be a challenge but is probably not the right question. Conflict and rhetoric in policy-making is an excellent study. It is also a challenge to participate in the complicated process of studying and analysing politics. The study mainly provides assistance for those who are engaged in policy-making in their non-governmental and/or administrative system, or who are specialists in educational policy. The book is not only informative, as it encourages the reader to ask more questions. It thus leads to a deeper understanding of the problems, especially when similar problems to the ones described arise.