

Independent and Politicized Policy Communities: Education and Nuclear Energy in France and in the United States

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INTRODUCTION

The internal characteristics of a policy community determine the nature of its interactions with the broader political system. Those policy communities which feature strong bureaucratic agencies and closely organized and consensual outside groups are better able to maintain their independence from political involvement than policy communities with either weak bureaucratic sponsors or divided and conflicting interest groups. In order to demonstrate the importance of the organization of state institutions on the one hand and diverse members of a policy community on the other, this article discusses two policy communities in two countries. The United States, in reference to which the concept of policy communities was developed, is peculiar in comparison to most other democracies in the weakness of its central bureaucratic agencies. This may lead to doubts concerning the applicability of the concept of broad, loosely bounded policy communities to other countries with much stronger bureaucratic agencies. High level civil servants in France, as in Japan, play a predominant role in many areas of policy. The role of the legislature is emasculated in comparison with that of the U.S. Congress. Still, different policy communities are organized in different ways within each of these countries, and a complete understanding of the policy process cannot be gained without investigating the relations among the diverse actors which make them up.

Education policy in France is dominated by a single central state agency, but the broader policy community surrounding it is often characterized by vituperative conflicts among its members. The state institutions surrounding education policy in the United States are extremely weak compared to those in France, but the interest group environment surrounding education policy tends to be more consensual. Despite the differences in the organization of state institutions, American educational policy makers are better able to maintain control

over their area of policy than their French counterparts. Education in France is often the subject of hostile partisan exchanges, while in the United States it is more often the subject of bipartisan consensus. The greater ability of American than French educational specialists to maintain independence from the partisan political system is remarkable, considering that the institutions of American government appear designed to preclude such coordination and cooperation.

In contrast to the area of education, where the conflict among French groups leads often to the intrusion of political generalists into the policy process, nuclear energy policy verges on the opposite extreme. French nuclear authorities are able to maintain almost complete control over all questions affecting their industry, while those in the United States are not. Both the institutions of the state and the organization of outside actors interact to produce these results. As in the case of education, the institutions surrounding nuclear energy in France are much more centralized than in the United States, affording those involved in the industry much greater capabilities to maintain control over questions affecting them. In contrast to the area of education, however, there is great consensus among those outside of the state in the case of France, but not in the United States. In the United States, opponents to nuclear energy have been able to take advantage of a complex myriad of federal, state, and local procedures in order to cause delays and to halt construction of many plants. The policy community surrounding nuclear energy in the United States often loses its independence, whereas in France it operates virtually without political involvement. The French government, controlling the process from beginning to end, insures that nuclear energy does not become a major political controversy, while the disjointed institutions of the American government provide many opportunities for the intrusion of outsiders into the process.

A myriad of policy communities surrounding different issues form the essential arenas in which policies are made in France and in the United States. These policy communities are often dominated by elite civil servants and a select group of interest group or business representatives; however, they often include a small number of elected officials with particular interest in the area, as well as a variety of academics and media commentators. Some policy communities appear to revolve around purely technical issues and are rarely discussed in the nation's media, while others seem constantly to be the subject of political controversy and elite-level discussion. This article will explain why some policy communities are more insulated from politics than others. It focuses on the degree of conflict present within the community of experts, on the strategic behaviors of the policy makers

involved in them, and on the success or failure of strategic efforts to shift the venue of a policy debate. The organization of a policy community determines its members' ability to dominate the policy process and to avoid the intrusion of non-specialists.

The peak of the policy making hierarchy in France is the national, or "general," arena in which major political actors and social institutions operate. The president, the prime minister and the government, the parliament and the political party leaders, the Conseil Constitutionnel, and leaders of the main groups in society such as labor and business deal with issues at the top of the national political agenda. Their activities are generally reported widely in the press. Below the general arena of politics is a variety of "specialized" arenas of policy-making dominated by experts. The specialized actors in the "education policy community" include ministerial officials, union and association leaders specializing in education, as well as those few members of parliament or political party staff members who focus their efforts on education policy. The specialized education policy community can be further subdivided according to more specific areas of education policy. "Ultra-specialized" policy communities revolve around a particular issue (pedagogical reform in the primary schools, teacher training questions, vocational training for adolescents, higher education policy, personnel questions, or other specific aspects of education policy) or a single discipline (French, history, mathematics, physical education, science, or other subjects). Members of these ultra-specialized communities tend to be in close contact with each other and often develop similar ways of looking at the questions which face them. Contrary to the general political arena, the activities of the specialized policy arenas surrounding particular issues are rarely the subject of press coverage, and the public remains ignorant of most of their activities.

There are no fast rules about the arena in which policies must be decided. Depending on the amount of conflict surrounding a given issue, only those most directly affected by it or a much larger group of actors may become involved. Generally speaking, however, the specialists will never abandon the issue; the only question is if they will act alone or if non-specialists will also become involved. In a study of regulatory policy making in the United States, Gormley describes a similar process:

In regulatory politics, as in baseball, there are "regular" and "irregular" participants. Visit a ballpark and you will see all of the regulars, barring injuries, of course. But you will see the irregulars – those in the bullpen and those on the bench – only on special occasions (close games, important games, extra-inning games, etc.). Visit a regulatory proceeding and you can count on seeing bureaucrats and regulated industry officials. These are the

regulars. The irregulars – politicians, citizens, journalists, judges and professionals – participate only under certain circumstances. In regulatory politics, as in baseball, the participants vary from game to game. The big difference between regulatory politics and baseball is that, in regulatory politics, the irregulars are usually more interesting to watch (1986, 602–603).

From the point of view of those whom Gormley calls the “regulars,” maintaining the independence of the policy community from the “irregulars” is an important goal. Conflict is essential in determining independence. Schattschneider (1960) wrote that the scope of a conflict is the most important determinant of its outcome, and that which strategically skilled policy makers are likely to attempt to influence.

The most important strategy of politics is concerned with the scope of conflict. Imagine what might happen if there were a hundred times as many spectators on the fringes of the conflict who sympathized with Able rather than Bart. Able would have a strong motive for trying to spread the conflict while Bart would have an overwhelming interest in keeping it private. It follows that conflicts are frequently won or lost by the success that the contestants have in getting the audience involved in the fight or in excluding it, as the case may be (Schattschneider 1960, 4).

The losers of a policy debate have an interest in expanding participation, while winners try to keep participation restricted: “It is the weak who want to socialize conflict, i.e., to involve more and more people in the conflict until the balance of forces is changed. In the school yard it is not the bully, but the defenseless smaller boys who ‘tell the teacher.’ When the teacher intervenes the balance of power in the school yard is apt to change drastically” (Schattschneider 1960, 40). Changing the roster of participants is the most fundamental political device; political conflicts grow dramatically as the losers appeal to allies in the broader policy community.

Losers expand a conflict by portraying issues in a more politically-charged manner. They hope that this will attract the attention of non-specialists. Those whose views appear to be prevailing within the policy community, by contrast, portray issues in the most arcane and technically complicated manner possible in order to insure that no one else will become interested. Of course not all efforts to generate political interest in a given problem are successful, and policy communities differ in the ease with which losers can take advantage of institutional procedures, public attention, and pre-existing political alliances in order to attract the attention of non-specialists. Where losers can appeal through an independent judiciary, through powerful spokesmen in the parliamentary parties of the opposition, through local politicians who might oppose central government plans, or

through other institutional means, it is more difficult for policy specialists to maintain control over the debate. On the other hand, the more difficult these avenues for expansion are to exploit, then the easier it is for the specialized community of experts to maintain their independence from political involvement in their affairs.

The importance of conflict and of strategies of expansion and contraction for the study of policy communities is that policy communities differ systematically in the extent to which they create the incentives for expansion and in the likelihood that any efforts at expansion will be successful. One set of factors, at the center of which is conflict, determines the incentives for strategic policy makers to push an issue outside of the sole control of the specialists and to induce political generalists and others to become involved in the decision. Another, more complex, set of factors, determines whether or not these efforts are likely to be successful. The institutional arrangements of the government, the rules of standing before the courts, the size and political alliances of the groups involved, and the roles of the national legislature and media all are important in determining whether efforts at expansion will be successful. The organization of the different policy communities in each country creates markedly different political processes, and allows some policy communities to retain independence from the broader political system while the issues facing others are constantly politicized. This article focuses on one mechanism of issue expansion, but there are other means by which an issue may rise to the general political arena. Political leaders themselves may become interested in an issue for reasons other than appeals from specialists, or specialists may appeal to the general arena in the absence of conflict, for example in order to further their collective interests.

This article is based in part on a larger project which compares thirty cases of policy making in French education, based on 111 interviews with those involved in Paris in 1983–84. Further, data from a mail survey of all organizations active in the area of education are compared to a similar survey in the United States (Baumgartner and Walker forthcoming). Finally, recent press coverage and secondary literature form the basis for comparison of the nuclear energy industry in the two countries.

THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION AND NUCLEAR ENERGY IN FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES

Education

Politics and policy-making surrounding education in France is rife with conflict. The policy process is divided among a number of competing

unions and associations of specialists, many of which compete with each other for members. Furthermore, most of these associations maintain links with different political parties. Therefore, the Ministry of Education operates within an environment where each conflict within the specialized community of experts has the potential for being translated into a much broader fight between Socialists and Communists, between Conservatives and Leftists, or between Clericals and Anti-Clericals (Ambler 1985, 1987; Prost 1968; Clark 1967).

In the United States, the expansion of the public school system occurred without the conflict associated with it in France. With the exception of civil rights and religious questions, where vociferous political battles have taken place in the area of education, few have questioned the need or the value of increased public commitment to education. American groups active in the area of education avoid the conflict found among French education groups, and they benefit from bipartisan political support in the broader political arena. Unlike American groups, French organizations in the area of education are often in competition over members, as several unions may dispute the representation rights to a single category of teachers or employees. In a mail survey of all groups involved at the national level in education policy in France conducted in 1984, almost ninety percent of French education groups reported the existence of competing organizations, while only about one quarter of American education groups contacted in a similar survey conducted in 1983 reported engaging in "continuous competition for members or resources with other associations in the field." This competition over members which the French groups experience often translates into substantive conflict, as each group seeks to differentiate itself from its rivals. Seventy-two percent of the French education groups reported other organizations "with which [they] often find [themselves] in disagreement" and the vast majority of these groups describe the disagreements as "fundamental matters of principle" rather than only "questions of detail." In the U.S., by contrast, only twenty-nine percent said that "some organized groups oppose the policy aims of this organization" (Baumgartner and Walker forthcoming).

Often, controversies stem from the jurisdictional and membership battles in which the different unions in France are engaged. These fights, which often have little to do with policy content, serve nonetheless to complicate the policy process and to push the issues higher up the administrative and political hierarchy. Issues which might otherwise be dealt with by education specialists alone take on political and ideological overtones, thereby attracting the attention of political leaders. When medical students objected to the institution of a

new examination system in 1983, they found natural allies in the political parties of the opposition in their efforts to shift the debate from the specialized community of medical education experts, where they had little influence, to the general political agenda, where they had more success. Parliamentary spokesmen for the opposition were happy to defend a vocal constituency against the Socialist government, and they used the forum of the parliamentary debate on the bill to focus national attention on an issue which previously had been the subject of only restricted interest among specialists. The issue was transformed from a purely pedagogical one into a political and ideological one because of the organization of interests surrounding it and because of the strategic appeals of the losers to their allies in the general political arena (Baumgartner 1987).

Another illustration of the impact of the group environment on conflict comes from the ministry's decision to reform the physical education section of the baccalauréat exam in 1983. Three unions represent gym teachers in France; two are affiliated with the Fédération de l'éducation nationale (National Education Federation, FEN), but are members of rival factions within the federation (one being dominated by Socialists and the other by Communists), and the third is affiliated with the Confédération française démocratique du travail (French Democratic Labor Federation, CFDT). The jurisdictional conflicts over members are therefore reinforced by partisan and ideological hostilities. One high administrator in the Ministry of Education explained how these divisions complicated the policy process:

Between the [two major unions involved], it's a fight to the death. They are in competition over members, so the one would systematically oppose everything the other said. . . . One of the biggest fights was over the possible appearance of the term "expression corporelle" (demonstration of physical coordination) in the decree. All agreed on the content of the new exam, but this term was closely associated with [one of the unions], and the [other] did everything it could to make sure that it would not appear. Only the words were the subject of controversy. On the content of the exam, there was no disagreement.

Those on the losing side of the conflict shifted the venue of the debate by appealing to other teachers not directly affected by the reform. They argued that if the ministry was allowed to change the *bac* in their field, it would use this as a justification to change it in other areas in the future. Teachers of history, mathematics, and other areas who had no interest in a decision affecting only the physical education teachers suddenly become attracted to the issue, thus shifting the balance of power towards those opposed to the change. As conflict became more

and more apparent, the issue was pushed higher up the administrative hierarchy until the specialists no longer had complete control. According to the civil servant most closely involved, decisions were eventually made by political appointees on what he described as "political grounds." He defined "the political" as "that which can intervene so that the technically correct choice is not always made; that which has to do [for example] with the relative strengths of the unions involved." While specialists would have made the "correct choice," the intrusion of political generalists and others made certain that these choices would not be made, according to this high civil servant. In areas of great organizational conflict, seemingly routine and technical administrative decisions can become major political battles, and decisions can be made on entirely different grounds than only the "technical merits" of the alternatives. Civil servants and others who generally dominate the specialized policy communities resent perhaps nothing more than the success of their adversaries in appealing over their heads to the political leadership.

The education specialists within the ministry and specialized organizations in France clearly have a predominance of influence in questions affecting their sphere. For example, in the larger study from which this article is drawn, civil servants were considered central actors in ninety percent of the cases studied and specialized interest group representatives were central in three-quarters of the cases. Political appointees within the executive branch were important actors in only half the cases, and the parliament had lengthy discussion of only ten percent of the cases studied. The centralized institutional structure of the French Education Ministry allows for much greater control by high civil servants than does the decentralized and divided set of institutions which oversee education in the United States. Clearly, the education policy community in France generally dominates policy making within its sphere. Internal conflicts, however, sometimes cause questions to erupt from within the community of experts and to emerge as broader political questions in France.

In the United States, the internal consensus among education specialists has allowed them to avoid the politicization of pedagogical issues which occurs periodically in France, despite the more complicated institutional structures within which they operate. One of the most important consequences of the greater consensus surrounding education in the United States is this nation's greater financial commitment to the area. Education is one of the few areas of the welfare state where American public expenditures per capita far exceed those of European states. While America lags far behind other countries on most areas of public expenditure for social programs, its commitment to education is

extraordinary (Heidenheimer 1973; King 1973). French education, unlike American, is not the subject of any societal consensus. Even purely pedagogical issues can lead to political conflicts in France. The left sees the educational system as the means by which elites are reproduced (Bourdieu and Passeron 1966), while the right sees the leftist teachers' unions as the cause of mediocrity and entrenched interests. Because each of the major actors within the education policy community has a distinctive political ally, issues are easily transformed from the pedagogical to the political and ideological. While conflicts within the American educational policy community rarely explode onto the national political agenda, education in France periodically surfaces on page one of *Le Monde*.

Nuclear Energy

The politics of nuclear energy presents a striking contrast to education. Those involved in the issue in France have developed a strong consensus in its favor, have nurtured this consensus in the political sphere, and have been able to retain virtually complete control over the development of the issue. In the United States, by contrast, opponents have been able to force the issue out of the control of those experts who favor its development. A number of institutions of the federal and state governments has become involved, and the issue is periodically in the news. As a result, the nuclear power industry in the United States is in a state of virtual abandonment while it is very healthy in France.

Scheinman (1965) described how even in the early years of development of the civilian and military applications of nuclear power in France, partisans of its extension were able to avoid links to the political parties and effectively to insulate themselves from partisan politics. Nuclear policy making is dominated by the large state industries which design, build, and operate the plants, mine the uranium, manufacture the enriched fuel, dispose of the waste, and market the electricity. France has the most ambitious nuclear program of any western country, and has not slowed down its commitment to nuclear power in recent years, contrary to virtually every other western country (Kitschelt 1986). France operates the world's only commercial fast-breeder reactor, the Super-Phénix at Creys-Malville, near Lyon. The percentage of electricity generated from nuclear power plants in the United States grew from only 2% in 1971 to 11% in 1977, but has stagnated since then, reaching only 12% in 1983. France, by contrast, has increased the percentage of its electricity coming from nuclear plants from 1% in 1966 to 6% in 1971, 16% in 1979, 39% in 1982, and

65% in 1985 (French and American figures calculated from European Community, annual). Official plans call for nuclear plants to be the single largest source of energy in France by the year 2000, displacing even oil (Maurus 1987). The United States, in contrast to France, has stopped planning new commercial nuclear reactors altogether in the 1980s. When the Nine Mile Point plant in New York was opened in May, 1987, its cost had risen to \$6.3 billion, and it had taken thirteen years to build, despite initial estimates of five years and about \$600 million (Boorstin 1987). Similarly, the Seabrook plant in New Hampshire was originally planned as twin plants at a cost of less than \$1 billion, but when it was completed, only a single plant was built and the cost had risen to nearly \$5 billion. Even after completion, the plant was still not granted an operating license because of refusal of local authorities to participate in a required emergency evacuation plans. In January, 1988, the Public Service Company of New Hampshire, the largest investor in the plant, became the first public utility in the United States since the Depression to file for bankruptcy protection (Wald 1987; Daniels 1988). The plant will not be put into service despite being completed: a \$5 billion fiasco.

One of the most important reasons for the contrasting developments of the French and American atomic energy industries has been the extent to which each has become the subject of public controversy. Such controversy has been weak in France compared not only to the United States, but also to other Western European countries. Nuclear power in France is largely considered to be a technical question best left to the experts, testimony to the rhetorical and strategic skills of those experts. Garraud explains that until 1970, nuclear power was:

perceived essentially as a technical and scientific fact, and not as an issue which could generate conflict. This perception is certainly linked to the technocratic process by which the electro-nuclear program was put into place. . . . [Those responsible for the nuclear program] always made sure to present this policy as a technical problem solely within the domain of a small group of experts, and not as a political problem capable of generating controversy and of being the object of a public debate (Garraud 1979, 450-451).

In the United States, the scientific community, whose members are largely in favor of nuclear power and who perceive the risks associated with it as relatively low, have lost control of the debate as a broad range of participants and pushed their way into the decision making process. Journalists, elected officials, and anti-nuclear groups have more critical beliefs about the safety of nuclear power than the experts, and have been able to shift the debate away from domination by nuclear scientists and utility personnel (Rothman and Lichter 1987).

There are, of course, opponents to nuclear power in France. The most notable fact about the French anti-nuclear movement, however, has been its complete lack of success both in achieving its programmatic goals and in making a political issue out of what its opponents portray as a technical question. Nuclear power policy in France has been largely dominated by a small number of administrative agencies, with graduates from two of the most prestigious *grandes écoles* predominating (l'Ecole Polytechnique and l'Ecole des Mines). Elected officials, the courts, and lower levels of government, have been virtually excluded from the nuclear debate. Further, regulatory and administrative procedures have allowed those in charge of the nuclear industry to act with much greater freedom than in the United States. The ability of French policy makers to limit the participation of these other types of actors explains much of the success they have had compared to their American counterparts. The lack of an institutional forum for the debate led to a variety of extraparliamentary activities by the opponents to nuclear power, but these eventually contributed to the marginalization of the anti-nuclear activists. Five factors explain the ability of the French nuclear authorities to maintain control over the nuclear issue while their American counterparts have not been able to do the same: 1) the streamlined regulatory procedures which allow greater control by the nuclear authorities in France than in the United States; 2) the relatively minor role of the civil and administrative courts in France; 3) the unwillingness of local levels of government to oppose nuclear plant construction in France; 4) the limited role of the political parties and the parliament; and 5) the politically marginal position of the anti-nuclear activists in France.

Regulatory Procedures

French and American practices differ greatly in the area of public involvement in regulatory decision making. These differences make it much easier for those in charge of the expansion of nuclear power in France to maintain tight control over the process, avoiding the expensive delays which have led to financial insolvency for investors in nuclear plants in the United States. While supporters of nuclear power in each country have an interest in restricting the range of public participation because of its relative unpredictability and possibilities for generating delays, French administrative procedures allow for only little public involvement: "EDF deposits its technical reports in the prefectorial offices and city halls of the concerned municipalities. People living within 5 km from the site have access to these documents for six to eight weeks, during which time they can voice their

objections" in writing (Nelkin and Pollak 1981, 30). The public hearing process in the United States presents much greater opportunities for delay and obstruction than the French. Both the amount of time allowed for public comment and the rules of standing are more generous in the United States. Considering the rural sites chosen for the French plants, the five kilometer rule effectively limits participation to a handful of potential opponents usually with no organization or familiarity with the process (and who are likely to benefit from enormous tax and municipal service advantages).

French nuclear authorities have simplified the regulatory process in two other important ways which have not been used in the United States. First, they have adopted a standard reactor model. There are a number of different constructors in the United States and a number of reactor designs, but in France the same authorities are involved in the construction of each reactor, and the plans do not vary from site to site. This means that once permission has been given for construction at one site, little argument can be made that the reactor design is not safe for another. By standardizing reactor designs, EDF not only saves money in construction and design costs it also avoids the need for new safety hearings on the design of each plant. Second, the French have simplified the regulatory process by building multiple plants at the same sites. Once a site has been approved for construction of one plant, gaining approval for additional ones is simpler than beginning the whole process anew at another location (Nelkin and Pollak 1981, Appendix A). Tight control over the planning process in France allows almost no intervention by non-specialists. This has paid off in France in much shorter delays than in the United States, with an average completion time of six years in France as opposed to twelve to fourteen in the U.S. (Kitschelt 1986, 79).

The most fundamental difference between the French and American policy making concerning nuclear power is the great authority of the high civil service to make decisions in virtual secret and without any public debate over the merits of its choices, which are always portrayed as simply the technical and neutral implementation of decisions made by the elected officials. "Civil servants, convinced that their plans serve the general interest, prefer closed procedures involving participants from industry and government who are accustomed to mutual accommodation. Integrating the public into this decision-making process means only increased delays." One high civil servant describes in these terms the specter of involvement of public officials in the nuclear planning process: "We are obliged to make decisions. The elected officials know nothing. They aren't capable of discussing our projects with us. We don't talk the same language" (Nelkin and Pollak

1981, 34, 36). Another responded to the question "Why is there not in France, as in the United States for example, a public debate [on nuclear power]?" by saying: "Such a discussion is not justified since there are elected municipal officers, deputies, and senators. . . Besides, that procedure does not allow, in general, the establishment of a dialogue and a serious and objective debate" (Nicolon 1979, 244). The desire for a "serious and objective debate" is common to those seeking to avoid the explosion of their issue into an arena which they do not control.

The Courts

Proponents of nuclear power in France have not faced the opposition of an independent and hostile judicial system as has been the case in the United States and elsewhere. Rules of standing make it all but impossible in France for individuals or groups to bring actions in the civil courts against the siting or construction of a nuclear power plant, and the administrative courts which generally hear these complaints rarely rule against the administration or the utility (Garraud 1979, 462). One significant limitation to the use of the courts for anti-nuclear activities in France is that standing in the civil courts is granted only to those who are directly and individually affected, and who can demonstrate some tangible material damages from the actions of their opponents. Class action suits and other forms of legal action which have been used widely in the United States are not available in France. While the civil courts are largely uninvolved in such questions, legal action can and often is brought against the plants in the administrative law courts (*tribunaux administratifs* and the *Conseil d'Etat*), but these officials have been extremely loath to hinder the development of the nuclear program. "Unless EDF violates a procedural rule, the courts will not force suspension of work" (Nelkin and Pollak 1981, 159; *Le Monde* 1987a). Comparing the role of the courts in France and West Germany, one study concludes:

The role of the courts has been the decisive factor in determining the outcome of the nuclear debate. In Germany the courts served as a useful political resource for anti-nuclear groups, and possibilities of effective legal action helped to sustain the movement. That such possibilities for influence were unavailable to French activists contributed to their decline as an effective political force (Nelkin and Pollak 1981, 166).

Compared to either West Germany or to the United States, French courts were unavailable as a possible avenue for the expansion of the debate (Hatch 1986).

Of course the courts cannot become involved in policy questions if

the laws are written to prevent their involvement. Executive branch officials in France have been powerful enough in their relationship with the Parliament to avoid the passage of laws which would grant standing to a broader range of groups in opposition to nuclear plants. The U.S. Congress passed laws in the 1970s which had the effect of opening up the courts as a means for environmental action. In France, the executive branch officials who dominate the process have limited the involvement of the legislature and of the civil courts as well.

Local Government

Anti-nuclear organizations in the United States and elsewhere have often been able to generate the support of local government in their opposition to nuclear plants, but in France this strategy has been ineffectual. First, under the centralized French administrative structure the local levels of government have much less leeway in opposing decisions made by the central authorities than do American states or localities. Perhaps more important, however, is the ability of the power authorities to enlist the enthusiastic support of the local mayors and city councilors with whom they deal. The prefects insure the cooperation of the departmental authorities, and the elected officials from the small communes in which the plants are located see the plants as sources of tax revenue windfalls for their underfinanced municipalities. The plants are of course located in rural areas, which insures that no powerful city governments, whose mayors might have an electoral or a political incentive to oppose the installation of a plant, are involved. One small town mayor reacted this way to the proposal of a plant in his commune: "This represents a fortune, and we could certainly use that! . . . In [a town with a similar plant], they are happy because they are rich. The city hall, the schools, the sports complex, everything is new; it's terrific!" (Garraud 1979, 455; Nelkin and Pollak 1981, 25-26). Neighboring towns which will not share in the tax windfall associated with the plant (but which will share the risk in case of accident) often are less enthusiastic (Rérolle 1987a), but administrative procedures do not allow their participation in the planning or construction process.

In the United States, regulatory procedures require the participation of state and local governments in the planning of new plants, and these rules have repeatedly been used to the advantage of those opposed to the plants. For example, conflict erupted in the spring of 1987 over two nearly completed reactors in New England: Seabrook in New Hampshire and Shoreham on Long Island. Opponents to the plants took advantage of rules requiring state and local authorities to

cooperate in establishing emergency evacuation plans for residents living within a ten mile radius of the plants. The governors of New York and Massachusetts, both of whom were potential candidates for the Presidency, refused to certify any evacuation plans as safe. In the wake of the Chernobyl disaster, they argued, it was misleading to state that there could be safe evacuation from such densely populated areas. The involvement of two possible candidates for President was immediately a news item, and many other politicians followed suit in showing their opposition to the plants. When the NRC staff proposed rescinding the requirement that local and state governments must cooperate with emergency planning before a plant can be opened,

Mr. Cuomo and Mr. Dukakis immediately denounced the idea. They said the safety of state residents was their responsibility, which the commission could not legally override. Mr. Cuomo, according to his staff, viewed the commission's proposal as a major national issue that he could argue against . . . (Oreskes 1987).

Governors Dukakis of Massachusetts and Cuomo of New York have little in common with the small town mayors with whom the French nuclear authorities typically deal, and they were happy to be put in the position of insuring the safety of the public from a discredited nuclear regulatory commission and utilities. Unlike the French Ministry of Industry, the American Nuclear Regulatory Commission has neither the authority nor the inducements to force local politicians to cooperate with their plans. The competition between state and federal authority in the United States also represents a powerful rhetorical argument, which is less potent in France. By casting the issue as one of "states' rights," opponents were able to get more support. This portrayal was specifically called into question by one supporter of the plants:

The debate pits two states against a Federal agency and thus is being cast as a classic confrontation between state and Federal rights. But the real issue is not rights: It is what to do when a clash of rights threatens the national interest. When compelling, the national interest must prevail. . . . Finally, politicians at all levels of government should elevate the debate from the rhetoric of states' rights to the reality of genuine national interest (Chubb 1987).

Policy makers know that rhetoric sometimes counts for at least as much as reality, and each side attempts to portray the issue in the way most favorable to it. The "genuine national interest" is no less a rhetorical device than are "states' rights."

Parliament and the Political Parties

The debate in parliament presents the best opportunity for the expansion of an issue in France, and skillful policy makers outside of parliament take advantage of this whenever they believe they will lose a battle if it remains confined to the specialized arena. They cultivate relations with party leaders in parliament so that they can appeal to them when they need to expand a debate. In the area of education, parliamentary debates have often been lively and have contributed to the politicization of a number of education issues. Since each of the major education unions and associations in France is affiliated with a political party (and considering the large number of teachers sitting in Parliament), they have a privileged avenue for the expansion of a debate through the legislature. In the case of nuclear power, members of parliament have occasionally shown interest in the issue, but never have they shown the kind of sustained attention to the question necessary to create a political issue out of it.

Scheinman (1965) described how the creation of the CEA and the early years of its operation in the 1950s and early 1960s were virtually devoid of participation by either the major political parties or the parliament as a whole. Important decisions about both military and civil nuclear policy were made with almost no parliamentary intervention. Similarly in 1974 when the government announced the planned construction of over 60 new power plants in reaction to the oil crisis, the Messmer plan also escaped the interest of the parliamentarians:

The government introduced the major decision to expand its nuclear program in the fall of 1974 as a *fait accompli*. Parliament did not vote on this issue, which was defined by the government as a technical implementation of energy policy, needing no special debate. Although most parliamentarians accepted the nuclear choice as an economic necessity, many of them expressed their resentment of this closed decision-making power. At a parliamentary debate called to discuss the government decision a socialist representative criticized the regional consultations over nuclear plant siting as hypocritical pseudoconsultation and charged that they confused information and propaganda and stifled debate. Consultation procedures, he argued, reflected a scorn for democracy (Nelkin and Pollak 1981, 37-38).

Extensive parliamentary interest in nuclear energy questions could not be generated in part because the issue did not correspond to the traditional partisan cleavages. While education questions in France are quickly translated into left-right battles, the same is not true of nuclear power issues. While the Socialist Party was internally divided about the anti-nuclear movement, the Communist Party has long been a strong supporter of the civilian nuclear program (Nelkin and Pollak

1981, 42–43; Nicolon and Carrieu 1979). When the two leftist parties entered power in 1981, they continued the rapid nuclear power expansion program begun by their predecessors (with the notable exception of one plant, at Plogoff, abandoned amid considerable controversy). In fact, a major parliamentary debate organized just after coming to power during the summer of 1981 had for object the decision of building either four or six new power plants: hardly a pro- versus anti-nuclear choice. Communists proposed the construction of seven plants in order to maintain employment levels. Obviously, nuclear energy questions are not the stuff of the traditional partisan cleavages in France. With virtually depleted coal deposits, and with almost total dependence on foreign sources for oil, French leaders see few alternatives to nuclear power, and all of the major political parties have come to this same conclusion, more or less enthusiastically. The inability of the anti-nuclear activists to generate the sustained support of even one of the major political parties was one of the most important reasons for their lack of influence.

Individual politicians can sometimes be attracted to nuclear questions in France, but the issue does not correspond as education does with the established political cleavages, and the ability of a single politician without the help of a party organization in France to generate controversy is limited. After a series of incidents in several different French nuclear power stations in the spring of 1987, including a leak at the fast-breeder reactor, elite attention appeared poised to focus on the issue. Both the ministers of Environment and of Industry made trips to nuclear sites, and the Minister of Environment made public a previously secret report concerning the possibility of contamination of the Paris water supply in the event of an accident at a plant under construction only fifty miles from the capital. The nuclear issue appeared on the verge of escaping from the complete control of the experts who normally dominate it. Twenty-four articles appeared on domestic nuclear power questions in *Le Monde* during the month of April, 1987. This burst of interest by nonspecialists proved to be short-lived, however, and the issue disappeared from the public agenda as quickly as it had appeared. Only five articles appeared in May, and seven in June; none of these on the front page. Opposition members of parliament, who played central roles in the generation of political controversies surrounding education questions, were conspicuously absent from the nuclear debate. With no translation into partisan debate, the question died away.

In the United States, nuclear power decisions are generally treated within the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and other agencies within the executive branch. However, the interest and involvement of

members of Congress and other politicians can quickly be raised whenever issues take on political overtones. In addition, individual politicians rather than only spokesmen for the main political parties can be attracted to the debate. This makes it more difficult for executive branch officials to maintain control. The debates over Seabrook and Shoreham described in the previous section were not limited to local leaders; other politicians focused their attention on the nuclear industry. In order to allow the two completed plants to receive their operating licenses despite the lack of certified evacuation procedures, the NRC proposed simply rescinding the requirement. At the required hearing over this proposal, however, participation was not limited to "regulars"; a number of "irregulars" also showed interest:

The commission, whose members rarely receive the testimony of elected officials, will hear from at least three United States Senators, the Governors of four states and half a dozen United States Representatives. Most of them are angry about the agency's latest plan to end an expensive impasse in the industry it oversees, and they have been condemning the idea since its disclosure earlier this month (Franklin 1987a; Franklin 1987b).

Opponents sought the help of allies through the regulatory process, through legislation in Congress, and through the courts (Franklin 1987c). The House Interior Committee, the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, the Subcommittee on Nuclear Regulation of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, and the U.S. Department of Justice all began investigations into the activities of the commission and alleged favoritism to a range of utilities across the country (Franklin 1987a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h).

The result of all this acrimonious debate, conducted largely through the institutions of the federal government, was that elected officials and others not normally involved in nuclear regulatory decisions became closely involved. Just as in France, specialists who predominate in a specialized policy community resent the intrusion of the newcomers (May 1987). However, the more open regulatory procedures in the United States and the independent investigatory powers of the Congress allowed opponents to nuclear power many more avenues to obstruct the plants in the U.S. than in France. The issue has not become particularly partisan in the United States, but individual elected officials and committees of Congress have focused their attention periodically on nuclear energy questions in a way which has not occurred in France. With a weaker party system, but with a greater number of individual politicians hoping to attract national attention, it is not always necessary in the United States for issues to fit into the traditional Democratic-Republican cleavage. In France, on the other

hand, an issue which cannot be made to correspond to the partisan cleavages which dominated the national agenda is very difficult to expand.

Marginalization of the Anti-nuclear Movement in France

Perhaps the single most striking thing about the anti-nuclear movement in France is its complete lack of success. During the late 1970s, anti-nuclear groups formed in France, and they attempted to generate political controversy surrounding their issue. Just as expanders should do, they constructed alliances with others who shared their interest in criticizing the government, even if for different reasons. Political party leaders, regional governments, and others were sought after, and this strategy appeared on the verge of some success as parliamentary criticism grew in the late 1970s and as several regional governments called for a broad public debate on the topic. They presented the nuclear program as the latest manifestation of the *dirigiste* tendencies of the French state, calling it the "modern revelation of the State-Society antagonism" (Garraud 1979, 453). They hoped to shift the debate from a purely technical one about energy dependence and engineering and safety procedures to a broadly political one about the domination of a small group of technocratic experts from Paris. Anti-nuclear activists behaved just as the expanders described in the education area; however, they failed.

One great problem for the anti-nuclear groups was the lack of information concerning nuclear power in France, and their first major task was to search out and publicize information which they gathered in Germany, England, and the United States. Because of their attachment to the concepts of *autogestion* (self-management), however, the diverse groups involved in the anti-nuclear campaign could not coordinate their actions in an effective way (Garraud 1979, 460). The ability of the nuclear authorities to limit the available information, even about possible problems in the plants, allowed them to keep the debate contracted. Furthermore, the environmental movement in France has traditionally been weak. While anti-nuclear activists in the United States built to some extent on the organizational base of established conservation and environmental groups, the equivalent groups in France were either non-existent or weak (Nelkin and Pollak 1981, 119-125).

Because they could not generate the strong support of either the Communist or the Socialist parties, or of any important regional leaders, the anti-nuclear activists were left with alliances with far-left groups, regional autonomists and independence movements with little

hope of success or broad public support, and they gradually were pushed to the margin of the French political system. They resorted more and more often to extra-institutional methods of generating publicity for their cause, which further exacerbated their politically marginal character. As Gamson (1975) describes with respect to groups outside the mainstream of the American political system, each failure within the system encouraged them to attempt to go further outside the system:

The use of the courts by anti-nuclear protesters in the USA has been rather effective as a means of slowing down the U.S. nuclear energy programme. In contrast, the 'Carlos Committee' in France organized a series of bomb, fire and machine gun attacks in France in November 1977 as part of its campaign against the development of nuclear energy in France. . . . (Richardson and Jordan 1979, 142).

Each success in generating publicity through the use of such tactics as "eco-sabotage," violent protest, and other extra-institutional actions, in turn, further contributed to the marginalization of the French anti-nuclear movement and made it easier for their opponents to portray them as irresponsible.

The French anti-nuclear movement remains much smaller and less organized than its counterparts in Germany, the United States, Great Britain, and elsewhere (Vial 1987; Rérolle 1987b; Cans 1987; *Le Monde* 1987b). Anti-nuclear protests in France tend to be very sparsely attended because of the poor ability of the anti-nuclear groups to generate supporters. Often, French protesters are out-numbered by foreigners even when the protests occur in France. After one protest near the German and Luxembourg border where a total of only three to four thousand demonstrated, and where the French were far outnumbered by their neighbors, one journalist quipped: "The French produce electricity and radioactivity; the Germans and the Luxembourggeois, protests" (Vial 1987). Because the anti-nuclear groups were unable to establish alliances with mainstream political parties or major regional government leaders, they were not able to enter the mainstream of the French political system. In the country of Pierre and Marie Curie, public opinion was not as predisposed to distrust the nuclear industry as in other countries. As in many other areas, the high civil service, and *les polytechniciens* in particular, have been able to convince others that their decisions are "technical" rather than "political." This has allowed them to dominate the policy process.

The ability of opponents of nuclear power in the United States to use the courts, local elected officials, the Congress, and even the regulatory system itself to cause massive delays and to force the utilities to install

expensive safety systems lies in stark contrast to the inability of the French anti-nuclear activists to force EDF even to slow down its expansion of the nuclear program. The complicated institutional structures of the United States and the autonomy of a number of governmental authorities allowed opponents many opportunities to shift the venue of the debate to an arena where they could be successful. In France, on the other hand, a determined set of governmental agencies is able to use a streamlined set of institutions and administrative procedures in order to keep consideration of nuclear power restricted to a small set of experts with a shared interest in the growth of the program.

Nuclear power experts in France are convinced, and have succeeded in convincing others, that their work is essentially "technical" rather than "political". This is one of the greatest reasons for the rapid expansion of the nuclear power industry in France. After a series of interviews with officials involved in the nuclear industry, one author describes how they use the term political to mean the "fundamental choices" made by elected officials and which are imposed on them as givens. "The nucleocrats discuss only the means of implementing these choices; the propositions which they make are of a technical order. . ." (Simonnot 1978, 165-166). The fact that the administration was able to portray the 1974 decision to build 60 new nuclear power plants as simply a "technical" decision is evidence of their rhetorical skill, but also of their sophisticated understanding of the importance of contracting the debate. By portraying things in the most technical light possible, supporters of nuclear power in France follow the strategy which allows them greatest control over the process.

INDEPENDENT AND POLITICIZED POLICY COMMUNITIES

The institutions of government in France are set up in such a way as to minimize the opportunities to obstruct debates and to generate political controversy (Kitschelt 1986). In the case of the nuclear energy program, the issue has constantly and successfully been contracted, but in the case of education, issues have periodically erupted into political controversies. In the United States, a consensus among education specialists allows them to maintain control over the policy process despite an institutional structure which provides many more opportunities for the expansion of policy debates than are present in France. American nuclear power questions, on the other hand, have often escaped from the control of the experts. Anti-nuclear activists in the United States have successfully exploited the opportunities which the complicated policy making process gives them to shift the debate into

those arenas where they can do best. The results of these different systems of policy making have been dramatically different public choices surrounding the two issues in the two countries. Nuclear power in the United States has virtually been abandoned in the face of political controversies, enormous delays, and financial insolvency. Nuclear energy in France has been expanded according the most ambitious plan of any western nation. American education expenditures remain vastly superior to the French because of the ability of American education specialists to portray their issue in a politically neutral way and to generate support on all sides of the political spectrum. French education experts, with too many sources of internal division, have not been able to avoid the intrusion of partisan politics in their policy area, and it has suffered as a result.

Why is nuclear power a "technical" question in France, but a "political" question in virtually every other country, and why is education more politically charged in France than in the United States? The answer lies in large measure in the internal characteristics of the policy communities which surround education and nuclear power in the two countries. The degree of conflict among the members of a policy community determines the incentives for those on the losing side to attempt to create a "political" issue out of what had previously been considered a "technical" question. The institutional structures of the policy community and the political ties of the organizations involved determine the success that these expanders are likely to have. In a tightly controlled issue area such as nuclear energy in France, where rules of standing and participation restrict the involvement of non-experts, and where conflict between experts is low, issues can successfully be portrayed as "simple technical measures." Where conflict erupts among those involved, or where institutional procedures allow less control over participation, as in the United States, on the other hand, "political" issues erupt where none had existed before.

Policy communities can enjoy great independence from the broader political system if those involved can convince others that their work is "purely technical." Many authors have noted that elite civil servants in France legitimate themselves by stressing their technical training and insulation from "political" concerns (Alliot-Marie 1983, 198). Each of the prestigious *grands corps* of the French administration attempts to portray itself as the sole capable judge of technical questions and to show that important questions are technical rather than political so that it may retain monopoly control over a sector of society (Thoenig 1974, 44-45). Administrators emphasize the narrow and technical aspects of their work and discourage the inputs of general actors by wording their decisions in the most limited ways possible and by avoiding allusions

to the broader political or social implications of their decisions (Grémion 1974, 61–62). The characterization of the French administration and upper civil service as wholly technical or administrative is curious in a country where upper civil servants play such an important political role and where so many civil servants have entered political life (Suleiman 1977; Dagnaud and Mehl 1982). When these policy makers emphasize the technical, it is much more likely the result of a strategic decision meant to increase their own power than the consequence of a simple intellectual bias or institutional tradition. The internal organization of the policy communities and the relations which specialized actors maintain with the nation's political leaders determine the ability of experts to convince others that their work is "purely technical" and therefore to dominate the policy process.

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