

The image features two thick black L-shaped bars. One is positioned in the top-left corner, and the other is in the bottom-right corner. They are oriented towards each other, framing the central text.

PUBLIC POLICY & POLITICS

Khagendra kumar

Introducing Public Policy & Politics

- Public policy refers to the decisions and actions that are taken by the government when it addresses public issues or those that concern the entire community.
- Politics can occur at different levels, in families, organizations, and communities.
- **Politics** within communities **seeks to influence the decisions and actions** that are taken by government in relation to public policy.
- Politics exists because people disagree about what the best collective decision would be. Politics is a way in which such disagreements can be resolved peacefully and without the use of authority, coercion, or violence.
- following Henry Mintzberg's analysis of organizational decision making, identify four broad sources of public policy- politics, ideology, expertise, and authority.
- since governments are also organizations. Politics and the other three sources of public policy are not entirely separable since people can pursue ideologies when engaging in politics.

Authority & Politics shape

- Authority shapes public policy when governments make decisions on their own **without consulting** with nongovernment actors and then impose these decisions upon them through the use of their authority.
- Politics shapes public policy when decisions are arrived at as a **result of a process of negotiation, persuasion, and compromise**.
- A typical example is **voting undertaken by a deliberative assembly** or **negotiation** between government and interest groups.
- **Politics occurs when there is a division of opinion** within a group about what course of action to be undertaken. Such a division of opinion may arise because people's interests are differently affected by the decision.

Politics as pursuit of interests

- politics is both about the pursuit of “ideal interests” and the pursuit of material interests.
- Studies of voting in many nations over recent decades show that the link between social class and voting preferences has weakened and that many political disputes are about moral and social issues rather than economic issues.
- A division of opinion then is a necessary condition of politics as without such differences of opinion there would be consensus and hence no need for politics as a process of reconciling competing interests and viewpoints.
- In addition to a division of opinion, needs for politics arise due to decentralization of power within the society.
-

Sharing of power with civil society in liberal democracy

- Within **liberal democracies** governments share power with interest and advocacy groups and with civil society broadly
- Within **authoritarian** political systems by contrast, **power is monopolized by government** rather than shared with others, and for politics, since everyone agrees on what to do.

Characteristics of closed & open society

- Karl Popper saw in the Nazi and communist dictatorships an attempt to recreate the unity that had characterized tribal societies.
- In **closed societies**, thinking is governed by “taboos” which prohibit the questioning of certain ideas, whereas in **open societies**, ideas can be debated and challenged.
- Politics **requires the existence of an open society** or one in which people can freely express their opinions and in which ideas and authority can be challenged.

Debate about relationship between politics & rationality

- A major debate within the study of public policy has been about the relationship between politics and rationality.
- Some argue that public policy decisions should be based on rationality rather than on politics.
- This view underlies the idea that we can separate “politics” and “administration” as activities.
- Politics is assumed to be the process of selecting policy goals, whereas administration is the process of selecting the best means of attaining those goals.
- The former of these activities is the province of the politician, whereas the latter is the province of the administrator or official.

Contd.

- Critics of this view argue that rationality can never supplant politics in policy making.
- Judgments about what is “best” are inevitably based on people’s values and preferences.
- People hold different values and therefore subscribe to different notions of what is “best” ?
- Policy making inevitably remains a matter of debate, conflict, and negotiation rather than of disinterested analysis.

No clean separation between politics & administration

- Critics therefore argue that we **cannot cleanly separate politics and administration as activities.**
- **“Bureaucratic politics”** in which different agencies take different view- points regarding the desirability of certain policies is there in authoritarian political system and democratic political system as well.
- “Bureaucratic politics” known as **“departmentalism”** refers to the tendency of particular departments or agencies to habitually take particular policy positions or “lines” on policy issues.
- Different policy lines taken by finance and other department say education.

Participation of None-state actors in policy making in liberal democracy

- Within liberal democracies or polyarchies, power is not monopolized by the state and there is room for non-state actors to shape policy.
- The holding of periodic elections ensures that politicians must account to voters for their actions and thereby gives the general public some influence on public policy.
- The existence of an independent media and of advocacy groups means that non-state actors can influence the policy agenda and thereby the decisions taken by the state.

Unequal power distribution affect policy making even in liberal democracy

- Some writers question this depiction of the way that public policy is shaped within liberal democracies. They argue that the **distribution of power within liberal democracies is unequal** and in particular that certain interests have more power than other types of interests.
- **Business** occupies such a position since it controls investment in the economy.
- Governments in a sense share power with business since within a market economy it is the price mechanism rather than government fiat that determines the distribution of goods and services.
- Business also enjoys reserves of wealth that enable it to fund lobbyists to act on its behalf and to make donations to politicians who are business friendly. It is argued that governments can only govern with the “consent” of business.

Concentration of power in handful of media/media indoctrination

- In modern societies, the concentration of power in the hands of a handful of **media proprietors** and the predominantly one way nature of communication within television, radio, and newspapers means that instead of dialogue we find a situation where public **opinion is molded by media indoctrination**.
- Marxist writers allege that there exists a form of ideological hegemony in which the ruling class exercises power over the subordinate class by means of indoctrination and ideology.
- in the case of totalitarian states the mass media are controlled by the state, whereas in the case of liberal democracies, the mass media are controlled by the capitalist class.

The image features two large, thick black L-shaped brackets. One is positioned on the left side, with its vertical bar extending downwards and its horizontal bar extending to the right. The other is on the right side, with its vertical bar extending upwards and its horizontal bar extending to the left. These brackets frame the central text.

THANK YOU