

**Convergence of State Policy Analyses in the Context of Globalization:
An Application of the ‘Herbert Kitschelt’ Model**

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Abstract

The effects or indeed impacts of ongoing globalization have been quite fundamental in all facets of human endeavours. The world has become closely more interconnected, interdependent within the context of a global village. Consequently, sovereign national borders have been increasingly breached with impunity and in alarming frequencies by events occurring in very remote locations across the world. There are now obvious constraints on the manner states have to make and formulate their policy decisions, knowing fully well that they could almost invariably affect trends in far flung locations worldwide. Viewed then against this backdrop, it is obvious that the borderline that traditionally separates domestic from foreign policies now also appear blurred increasingly by such intervening influences of globalization. If we then take this position as given, there appears to be an urgent need to rethink the basic theoretical props utilized over time in analyzing government policies generally. The intention here is to devise a common analytical model that could be readily applicable to both domestic and foreign policies. This paper examines critically the so-called ‘Kitschelt Model’ and submits that, as an analytical frame, and under the intervening influences of

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ongoing globalization, there is a veritable basis now to analyze almost any government policy whether they are oriented towards the domestic or foreign context from a central point of convergence.

Key words: globalization, foreign policy, domestic policy, policy making, Kitschelt Model

Introduction

It is a fact that one of the principal means by which modern regimes are known to carry out their daily chores of national governance is by use of the instruments of national policies. These cumulatively constitute the perceptions, programs and master-plans of a regime pertaining to how it intends to conduct itself and the affairs of state both on the domestic and foreign plane. Thus, on the domestic scene, such programs of actions are generally called domestic public policies. Whereas, when they relate to the international scene, they are called a nation's foreign policy.

However, viewed tentatively, every policy is said to be the product of an exchange between political actors, institutions and competing strategic interests in and outside the realm of a national governmental structure. And even in most cases in the recent time, this has also been between national regime actors and other interested actors active in the external settings. This pertains to whether they are in the private sector or in the public sector. And with reference to a nation's policy, the political actors usually involved in its making and implementations, actually span from a nation's executive, its bureaucracy, and in collaboration with the domestic population consisting principally of the politically mobilized public and private sector actors generally. In any case, the array of actors permitted to play roles in that process, could also depend on the type of operating systems of government that is in operation in that given location and at any particular moment in time. However, the intervening influences of globalization have also tended to create ample room for the interests of external audiences and other interested corporate actors to also be accommodated within any given policy framework of a nation.

Consequently, the argument often canvassed in the studies of policy analyses is the notion that a policy framework is the product of interactions between political actors, institutions and competing strategies, and which is also tied to “the assumptions that actors are rational, [and that] they pursue their interests in a calculated manner within a given system of [domestic] institutional constraints [and for foreign policy, we could also perceive of a set of constraints stemming from the international system in general].”¹

Ideally speaking therefore, the preoccupation on a rational-actor cum systemic structural analysis in the process of analyzing a state’s policy formulation generally, also presupposes four basic theoretical standpoints as Kitschelt posits here in his analysis. These he informs, include the “sociological theories of policy making, political coalition theory, domestic regime structure theory and the international systems theory.”² It is however argued here that a good mix of these theoretical frames could readily embellish an emerging holistic theoretical frame required for a more exhaustive government policy analysis that portends to span far beyond the traditional strictures preset by the traditional distinctions between domestic and foreign policy analyses.

To better comprehend this position, there is an overriding need here to embark at the onset on an onerous task that requires a critically review of the theoretical approaches advanced in the Kitschelt model. The aim here is to help us harness an empirical basis to support the central argument of this paper premised on the notion that under current trends, it does not matter anymore if government policies are public oriented or externally oriented in character. Rather, all government policies in a globalizing new world order will tend to be invariably aimed at achieving the same goals even if they are focused primarily on different contexts. And it is obvious that they may

only differ in the light of their specific focus and in the manners they are adopted specifically as instruments or means for projecting the capabilities of a state as well as in achieving a state's end-goals and objectives within any relational context. The intervening influences of ongoing globalization that blurs the borders between domestic and the external environment and with its dire implications for government policy implementations and analyses, does also readily provides us a compelling reason for such a radical rethinking that ought now to be premised on a need to conflate domestic and foreign policy analyses from a theoretical point of view.

Consequently therefore upon such an analogy, it is argued here that, the theoretical framework set out in the Kitschelt analysis, could be applied blandly in the analysis of both domestic and foreign policy making processes of states within the emergent globalizing context. However, in prosecuting such a chore here and from such a general point of convergence, one can also identify four aspects of a nation's generic policy making process which also provides a good basis for such the movement towards a general convergence between the two traditional analytical approaches. This position is premised here on the notion that, every policy making process will usually consists of the followings variables:³

- 1) A set of *social groups and actors* that mobilize around a [given] policy – where the focus is primarily beamed on a conscious attempt made to identify the structural positions of each actor in a policy arena as well as who are the important actors attached to a policy issue – which invariably reflects their personal and group interests,
- 2) the *specific institutions* involved in the decision making process – where the organizational rules of selectivity provide the basis and

benchmark to admit or exclude any given actor in that specific policy arena and policy decision making moment

3) the *process of decision making* – where there is an interaction between resource availability, specific policy instruments needed to be deployed to implement a given policy proposal, and finally,

4) the projected *policy outcome* – in terms of what impact it may likely have on its targeted audience. This is a feedback process in every policy making process in turn drives a new decision making continuum that would require a review of the other three processes aforementioned here usually leading to new decisions.

Nonetheless, the Kitschelt frame of analysis presents four theoretical frameworks that largely could facilitate the general patterns for analyzing the range of policy making processes that could occur within a state. The first of these frames of analysis is known as the '*sociological policy theory*' which – as have been argued elsewhere, is premised on the notion that the character of policy issues "in a societal context determines the nature of political actors, decision making structures and processes, and policy outcomes. [And viewed in comparative terms] in similar societies, we expect to find similar policies toward the same issues across political systems, varied policies across issues within the same system."⁴

But as it were, the notion of social interests, while not necessarily referring to any social class interests, also determines such policy making processes and policy outcomes. Here, the interactions between rational costs and benefits of any given policy option, is largely responsible for a policy outcome. The role of actors and their interests are largely relegated to the background as secondary determinants in every generic national policy making process and including also their outcomes. And this is even made

more crucial by the fact that actors do not always define their interest in terms of class positions but on costs and benefit analyses. Such an assertion bears heavily on an overt Neo-Marxist determinism as it were. And this is where - as James Q. Wilson asserts, “political groups..... organize and mobilize more or less rigorously depending on the perceived costs or benefits of a policy”⁵ However, the task of analyzing the costs and benefits of a policy is usually a volatile one that generates extensive deliberations between the decision making actors in any given context. And viewed generally, it portends also to split actors into different groups or competing camps and with dire consequences for the outcome of any policy making process.

As Wilson also adds, “governments can easily adopt policies with concentrated benefits and dispersed costs, but it is almost impossible for them to act on policy issues with the reverse configuration. Policy with both distributed costs and benefits can easily be institutionalized, whereas policies with highly concentrated costs and benefits [tend to] lead to protracted and intense conflicts with the affected actors.”⁶ And as rightly argued, the premise of this theory on societal determinism of an actor’s choice is ambiguous since it fails to fully ascertain how an actor’s choice preference in the cost-benefit continuum gets enmeshed in societal determinism leading to decision making in the policy formulation process. This leaves us with the second framework of analysis here which is known as the ‘domestic theory’. This is premised on the notion that, “policy patterns within countries across policy arenas are more similar than those across countries outside policy arenas.”⁷

Here, the dynamisms of the domestic environment are said to shape the attraction of actors, their participation in a policy arena as well as the

relevant organizational structures and processes generally involved in the policy making process. As it were, it makes sense to also inform here that “the specific national ‘policy styles’ that emerge [in a state] are based on complex institutional patterns that govern [the] entire political system.”⁸ And this is where such patterns are largely determined by “the principles, norms, rules, and decision making procedures that have been firmly institutionalize over time and that survive fluctuation of power and coalitions among political actors in a country.”⁹ It also adds to up to the fact that “these domestic regimes arerelatively impervious to sudden changes on the domestic balance of power.”¹⁰

Therefore, the character of a state’s domestic political structure can also be perceived from two principal perspectives. One spectrum relates to the mutual interaction between state and society especially in corporatist systems where there are possibilities for negotiating political interest aggregation and articulation. In this light, there is an acknowledgement of the existence of competing pluralist interests. These are largely spontaneous in origin. They provide us with a scenario where actors vie for attention of policy makers through already established channels of communications where they gain unofficial access to participate in the policy making process of a state. Likewise, in a pluralist system, new comer actors are directly mobilized to participate in the decision making process without any need to pass through such corporatist institutional screening.

The other spectrum of the domestic scene relates to a scenario where a domestic regime operates by imposition. Kitschelt defines this as a situation where there is “the territorial and functional centralization of the executive branch, the domination of the executive over the legislative control of material and informational resources by the state, and the ability

of policy instruments to induce change in civil society.”¹¹ At the end of the day, ‘domestic structure’ theorists conclude that, “similar policy problems will generate different groups of actors and levels of mobilization, structures of policy arenas, decision making processes, and policy outcomes contingent upon the predominant type of politics in a country [whether they are] (pluralist, corporatists, segmented, or statist) which expresses [a broad range of] institutional patterns of interests intermediation and state strength.”¹²

A third framework Kitschelt utilizes in explaining the policy making process is the ‘Coalition theory’. This approach has evolved from the critiques of both the Sociological as well as the Domestic Structure theories. The grouse against them is premised on the notion that, they are too deterministic of structural variables in the domestic scene and for the fact that they also grossly seek to explain policy processes and outcomes without any tangible references to the dynamics of actors’ preferences, volitions and capabilities.

Coalition theory therefore is premised on the assumption that actors make conscious choices individually and in consort as group members with common interests and with clearly visible goals and set objectives which they canvass and seek to project into the state policy making process. And in this light, the general assumption is that every policy outcome is the result of a decision taken by a winning coalition among the actors acting individually and possibly in groups as politically mobilized segments of the national population. Kitschelt explains this as a scenario where, “we expect coalitions that unite actors with similar resources and interests to develop similar policies. Conversely, differences in policy results from differences

in coalitions. Groups will enter into coalitions according to their interests, whether defined or by sectoral, regional, and cultural criteria.”¹³

Ideally speaking therefore, coalition theories tend to explore wide ambits for manifold opportunities for groups acting in coalitions and with a view to influencing a state's policy in general. And here, what principally obtains is a scenario where “the image of policy making espoused in coalition theory underlies those corporatist [state] policy analysis that have found [themselves or as have been expressed through] political party strength and control of government ...[as the] key determinants of [a state's] policy.”¹⁴

On a general note here, if one surmises the position of the coalition theory, it becomes obvious that three factors are usually interactively at play in the policy making process of a state. These consist of identifiable politically mobilized groups – whether they are weak or strong on the political turf; and the notion of collective interests of these groups; including also their capabilities to consummate winning coalitions favourable for them to have premiere positions in the policy making continuum and its final outcomes.

This takes us to the last framework of analysis tackled in the Kitschelt model. It is known as the ‘International System’ theory. This model focuses on the character of the international system as the focal point for evolving factors that determine a policy making process of a state in general. And the central position canvassed here is anchored on the argument that the external setting invariably impinges on and largely shapes and determines how a state's domestic setting operates generally. Under ongoing globalizing trends, this trend cannot be more explicitly demonstrated as exemplified by current trends. Here, a state's unique

location in the international system is said to be the major benchmark for determination of the kinds of policies it may seek to pursue generally on the foreign plane as well as domestically.

Ideally speaking therefore, the Kitschelt model also asserts that, there is an overriding need to treat “countries or states as the elements of the international system [which] can be treated as actors, that is, as entities to whom volitions can be attributed [and hence] states are self-interested and seek military and economic power in absolute as well as relative terms within the system, [and] states follow optional (or at least satisfying) strategies in pursuit of their objectives and order their objectives consistently to allow for rational action. ...[and the reason being] that international systems tend toward a fairly stable balance of power. [Consequently] actors with similar positions..... [in any given power balance system where there is inter-dependence or dependence, are obliged to] select similar strategies while actors with different positions pursue different strategies.”¹⁵ By implication therefore, the domestic and foreign policies of most nations could likely achieve convergence if such states occupy relatively similar positions in any given power balance system, or possibly in terms of whether they belong to the say military or economic alliance or even the same civilization-wide international organizations.

However, viewed against this backdrop, it also becomes evident that in every international power balance system, there are no two actors that could ever be relatively equal in all respects of their national capabilities. It therefore makes it difficult to always achieve policy convergence between states. But this is not to say it is impossible to achieve. Consequently, since the much larger states are likely to possess more resource capabilities than the smaller ones, the security exigencies of maintaining a stable

international power balance for instance, would require that the larger states should continue to constantly mobilize domestic and external resources to stabilize the international system obviously in their favour.

On the other hand, when the smaller states or even the larger as well as the medium ones are under any potential external threat from other malefactor states or organized non-state actors, there is every likelihood that such emergent threats could become means for ample reduction of domestic conflicts between the political actors within such states. These actors could then be compelled to close ranks and collectively tackle their common external threats from a bi-partisan point of view. It is in such a manner that the external setting generally generates internal cohesion and generally shapes internal trends most of the time.

And it is a historical fact that nations have been known to mobilize their domestic populations and national resources more rapidly in times of national emergencies as occasioned by such potential external threats than in peace time. And if this position is taken as given, from a realist point of view which avows that the international system is perpetually anarchical, it becomes also obvious from this theoretical point of view how much impact the external settings can actually exert in shaping policy making trends in domestic settings generally across the world.

In the light of the foregoing, and having addressed the issue of what a generic policy making process entails and what also constitutes the theoretical determinants of such a process, it could also make sense for one to also focus attention at this instance on the dynamisms of the decision making spectrum of the policy making process. This is with a view to ascertaining how the various competing decision making units, whether

acting individually, in coalitions or acting as corporate actors, actually could go about shaping policy outcomes generally.

Speaking from a logical point of view therefore, such an analytical chore would require one to clearly ascertain at the onset, who are the specific political actors involved in this process, including also what are the specific processes involved, as well as how all these factors could invariably impact on the character of a specific policy outcome generally on the long haul. The observable trends in these areas exhibit a very close similarity between domestic and foreign policy focus. And the intention of such an analysis here is to further buttress the claimant that the traditional lines of distinction between domestic and foreign policies now appear invariably irrelevant within an increasingly globalizing context.

Margaret G. Hermann however echoes a similar position as espoused in succinct terms in her analyses.¹⁶ However, her approach takes off from the standpoint that, the entire process of policy making is largely determined by the competing interests of policy making actors within a government, the intervening influences of institutional structures and processes as well as some feedback inputs from projected or anticipating impact of a proposed policy on a targeted audience.

For instance, she informs that it is true to argue that, “among those making policy [whether domestic or foreign] are Prime Ministers, Presidents, Party Secretaries [especially under Communist systems], Standing Committees, Military juntas, Cabinets, Bureaucracies, Interagency groups, Legislatures, and loosely structured revolutionary coalitions. [In any case, a]systemic comparison of governmental decision making bodies across and within countries,[would produce a]number of possibilities.....[that are] formidable.”¹⁷

As presented in this framework of analysis, there are three broad categories into which all these policy decision making actors could be fitted into. And this consists of “the powerful leader, the single group and the coalition of autonomous actors [who are largely corporate actors outside the seat of governance].”¹⁸ And the way it seems, such a classificatory model presents a veritable standpoint that enables one to clearly ascertain what structures and processes that are also involved at any given moment in a state’s policy decision making process and moments. A common strand also runs through both domestic and foreign policy making processes generally.

If we then take this position as given, it also becomes evident that abstract from the intervening influences of other remote domestic and external factors, these processes and structures act as the most veritable channels through which manifold interests could also be channelled into the decision making and implementation process. Logically speaking therefore, the decision makers and the decision making processes and structures are cumulatively those apparatus of government that exercise the legal and sovereign authority to make irreversible decisions mutually binding on a state and for example, also on its foreign partners alike.

A policy analysis therefore from a theoretical point of view and as this paper argues, could entail an analysis of a decision making process involving authoritative decision making actors, and how their personal volitions and group interests invariably shape and are shaped in turn by other intervening extra-governmental, social-domestic and external factors that generally result in a coherent policy framework on the long haul.

Viewed cumulatively, this analytical model is called the ‘*Decision Units Approach*’ to policy analysis. And as Hermann rightly posits, it focuses “on bureaucratic politics, group dynamics, presidential advisory

systems, [inter-agency] governmental politics, leadership, coalition politics, and the strategies for dealing with domestic opposition.”¹⁹ Again, the decision unit approach is premised on three hypothetical assumptions consisting of the followings: first, is the notion that inter-agency decision units usually compete among themselves to project alternative options of policy choices. Second, is the assumption that each specialist unit is structurally constrained in the scope of policy options it could canvass.

This position is valid if viewed against the backdrop of the fact that since these units are composed of experts in specific issue areas, they can only speak authoritatively on such specialized areas only when such areas become the subjects of policy decision making. And third, Hermann also informs that there is also a preference for a comparative approach as the most veritable means to establish cross-cultural similarities on policy making processes generally even if states differ sharply in their unique characters, especially across the international system.²⁰

In essence, what one should be looking for here is how to assess under what prevailing conditions one unit could prevail over others. In any case, all two previous positions highlighted previously are held valid under propositions of the comparative approach. However, in applying the central focus of its hypothesis to the analysis here, it also becomes evident that a general benchmark for achieving any cross-cultural correlation could then be tied dialectically to the notion that decision making processes are generally determined by the unique nature, structure and characteristics of a nation’s political system. This adds up to a state’s unique position and standings in the international system. Such an assertion bears largely on the earlier domestic regime theory espoused in the preceding sections of this paper.

From a logical point of view therefore, one could then make distinctions between pluralistic processes especially in Western democracies. There are also hierarchical and grossly unitary processes especially in the so-called Third World states – which invariably shape a leader's predispositions to act either impulsively as in non-democratic settings. In other instances, they could also act with restraints in settings where the ideals of Western liberal democracy have already taken firm roots. Thus, since nations also vary in terms of their specific operating systems of governance, the specific characters and dynamics of their operating systems of decision making would also logically vary sharply too across a wide spectrum.

Therefore, from a comparative standpoint there usually are manifold varieties of potential policy outcomes that may ensue at the end of the decision making process. This is most obvious at the final implementation stages. And as Hermann also adds, “our point here is that a comparative explanation of [...] policy needs to recognize that decision making dynamics do not have a direct, singular impact ... Rather, they can produce various results from consensus to deadlock, from compromise to domination by one individual or faction. Our explanations need to account for both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ of these decision making dynamics – for whom they are likely to moderate or diminish the nature of a proposed response as well as when they will exacerbate the situation and produce a stronger action than might otherwise have been chosen[there is therefore an elaborate]linkage between decision units and decision outcomes [and these ideally also pertain to both domestic and foreign policies generally].”²¹

Consequently therefore, what the comparative model seeks to achieve here, is a cross-cultural scenario where there is “the likelihood that a decision unit: a) adequately recognizes stimuli from its [specialized] environment, and, b) [it also] achieves timely collaboration among its members so that they can reach agreement and engage in meaningful action.”²²

The general aim being proposed here in the analysis, is tied to the dire need to avoid such “presumptions that certain defects (or virtues) are inherent in particular political structures or philosophies – for example [in the notion] that democratic decision making is always more reactive and incoherent than decision making in authoritative regimes, or that the actions of [for example of the so-called] rogue states are [all necessarily] reckless and out of touch with any kind of reality [or a sense of basic minimum internationally acceptable civilized conducts].”²³

Viewed structurally therefore, the comparative model presents the decision making framework as one consisting of three segments consisting of: first, the decision making inputs segment; second, the decision making actors segment; and third, the policy output segment which ideally should tee-off with a feedback mechanism that propels another round of policy reviews and possibly new decision making moments for policy making actors generally.

However, the notion of a *policy input segment* is intended here by the comparativists to embrace the notion of an emergent and identifiable foreign policy problem which acts as the primary trigger needed to jump-start the entire policy making process. This also consist of the notion of an auspicious occasion for making a decision based on a process of making rational choices between available policy options and the internal dynamics

of the authoritative decision unit required to work out a decision outcome generally.

On the other hand, the notion of *decision making actors segment* refers to the legally empowered decision making actors who invariably sanction such policy outcomes. These groups of actors - as Hermann expatiates further, consists of the notion of a 'Predominant leader'; 'the Single group'; and 'the Winning coalition'. Examples that readily come to mind here about types of these 'single group' decision making actors for instance, include trends for instance in Castro's Cuba and much of the erstwhile Soviet bloc where there have been prevalence of dominant leaders; the British system - which operates on the basis of single (political party) groups and where the Cabinet Office as well as the Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party all consists of the 'single group' models of decision makers. And for the 'winning coalition model', one could also make references to Khatami's Iran, Israeli Knesset (most times), and the Indonesian system where leadership is shared at the top between the ruling and the opposition parties. The last segment refers to *the output stage* - where there is an emergent final policy outcome that invariably leads to concrete policy action or implementation.²⁴

In conclusion here, one can say in earnest that, it has been made abundantly evident here in the foregoing analyses that, the glaring realities presented by an increasingly globalizing new world order does presents mankind and indeed statesmen across the world with a litany of new challenges. In most times, these have been quite overwhelming and with far-reaching implications that have often breached the erstwhile sacrosanct walls of national sovereignty. And it is only logical that if local trends could now readily impact radically on trends in far flung locations across the

world and if such trends could also act vice versa and with equally dire consequences for local trends, then there is therefore an urgent need to also radically blur the lines that traditionally separate what constitutes domestic and foreign policies of states. In the same vein, it also makes common sense to at this instance find veritable ways and means to harmonize the existing analytical approaches in the study of both domestic and foreign policy. This is premised on the logic that the same actors and processes most times are involved and the outcomes of these policies are now tending towards a convergence under the intervening trends of globalization. The Kitschelt model as critically highlighted here in the foregoing analyses, does presents us with a veritable benchmark for such a much desired analytical frame that is urgently needed to achieve some form of empirical convergence in policy analyses generally.

NOTES

¹ Herbert Kitschelt, "Four Theories of Public Policy Making And Fast Breeder Development," *International Organization*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Winter 1986): 65.

² Kitschelt, p. 65.

³ Kitschelt, p. 66.

⁴ Kitschelt, p. 69.

⁵ See James Q. Wilson, *Political Organization*, (New York: Basic, 1979); Theodore Lowi, *The State In Politics: An In Inquiry Into The Relation Between Policy And Administration*, (Cornell University, 1982); and Lowi, "Four Systems of Policy, Politics And Choice," *Public Administration Review* 32, (July - August 1972): 298-310.

⁶ Kitschelt, p. 69.

⁷ See Dunglas E. Ashfold, "The Structural Analysis of Policy or Institutions Really Do Matter," in: Ashfold, *Comparing Public Policies* cited in Kitschelt, op cit, p. 72. See also Jeremy Richardson, ed., *Policy Styles In Western Europe*, (London: Allen and Uwin, 1982).

⁸ Kitschelt, p. 69.

⁹ Kitschelt, p. 69.

¹⁰ Kitschelt, p. 72.

¹¹ Kitschelt, p. 72-73.

¹² Kitschelt, p. 72-73.

¹³ Kitschelt, p. 73.

¹⁴ Kitschelt, p. 73.

¹⁵ Kitschelt, p. 73.

¹⁶ Kitschelt, p. 74. See also Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1979); Robert O. Keohane, "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism And Beyond," in: Ada Finifter, ed., *Political Science: The State of The Discipline*, (Washington, D.C., APSA, 1983); and Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

¹⁷ See Margaret G. Hermann, "How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy: A Theoretical Framework," *International Studies Review*, Vol.3, No. 2, Leaders, Groups, And Coalitions: Understanding The Peoples and Processes in Foreign Policy Making, (Summer, 2001): 47-81.

¹⁸ Hermann, p 47.

¹⁹ Hermann, p 47.

²⁰ Hermann, p 48.

²¹ Hermann, p 49.

²² Hermann, p. 50-51.

²³ Hermann, p. 51.

²⁴ Hermann, p. 52.