

## Research Article

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# The policy process model and the systems model in monarchy: The case of the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract:** By taking two monarchy countries as examples, this paper discusses the differences and similarities of the policy process model and the systems model. The difference has first been discussed. Policies in the United Kingdom can be applied to the policy process model, due to the fact that step-by-step policymaking procedures can be observed during the policymaking process in the United Kingdom. The case shows that policies made by countries with democracy can also be analyzed by using the policy process model. On the contrary, policies in Saudi Arabia can be studied by using the systems model, due to the fact that unclear policymaking procedures can be witnessed in Saudi Arabia. This paper also discusses two similarities between the two models. They both emphasize on “policy cycle”, as well as influenced by different kinds of environment. While social policy is always influenced by political ideology and system, and can be studied by different models, this paper concludes that the policymaking process is, all in all, a cycle and can be influenced by different environmental factors, no matter what political system a country has.

**Keywords:** policy process model; systems model; United Kingdom; Saudi Arabia; social policy.

## 1 Introduction

Comparisons between the policy process model and the systems model will be conducted as an attempt to unveil the similarities as well as differences among the two models in this paper. It is known that different kinds of policymaking models can be used to analyze policies within a country (Kraft, 2013), but when it comes to analyzing the tendency of using a particular policymaking model to understand policies in a country, a country’s political ideology could be observed and could be compared with that of others, especially for the comparisons between the “black box” of systems model and the emphasis of policy legitimation of the policy process model.

Through the applications of policies of the two countries with monarchy into the models, the paper will first unveil the differences between the two models. It is believed that policies made by countries with democracy are usually analyzed by using the policy process model, as the process of policymaking proceeds in a step-by-step manner and could be shown to the public. On the contrary, policies made by countries with less democracy, or even absolute dictatorship, are usually analyzed by using the systems model, as the policy process is vague to the public. This classification of models shows the major difference between the policy process model and the systems model.

The paper will then focus on the similarities between the policy process model and the systems model as both models emphasize the phrase “policy cycle”, which means that their processes of policymaking are cyclical and continuous, instead of a one-time set of actions (Kraft, 2013). Moreover, their processes of policymaking are both affected by the environment. The paper will eventually conclude that similarities, as well as differences, could both be discovered through the applications and comparisons.

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## 2 The application of the two models in different political systems

Different political systems would generate different policies with varying processes of policymaking and different models would be used to analyze. Thus, the major difference between the policy process model and the stages model is showed by applying policies from other countries into the models.

### 2.1 Policy process model and democracy in the United Kingdom

By the application of the policies of the United Kingdom into the policy process model, this paper aims to show that the policy process model has a tendency to be used to analyze the policies in a democratic country.

Democracy is a Greek word, which means “rule by people” (Harrison, 1993). In a democratic world, everyone is able to, directly and indirectly, participate in the society equally (Harrison, 1993) and therefore, legitimacy is highly valued during the policymaking process. Electing representatives and writing a proposal are examples of direct and indirect kinds of democracy respectively. According to the World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators (2014) on voice and accountability, the United Kingdom scored 92.4 in 2013, which belongs to the group of countries scoring high marks. People in these countries obtain a high level of voice and accountability. Voice and accountability measure the extent of citizens’ participation in selecting their government, freedom of expression, freedom of association and a free media in a country (Worldwide Governance Indicators, 2014). It is shown that the United Kingdom is one of the examples of democratic countries and therefore, in this paper, policies in the United Kingdom will be analyzed by using the policy process model, in which the stage of policy legitimation is highly emphasized.

According to the policy process model, six stages are included in the model, which are agenda setting, policy formulation, policy legitimation, policy implementation, policy and program evaluation and policy change (Jones, 1984). In the United Kingdom, policies must go through a few steps. The National Minimum Wage Act in 1998 could be applied into the policy process model, as an example of making a policy in the United Kingdom. First, the Labour Party, who returned to the Government in 1997, produced a Draft Bill of the national minimum wage, in which the agenda of this policy processing was arranged and the Draft Bill was formulated (British Parliament, 2014). After that, the Government issued the Draft Bill of national minimum wage towards different interested groups, such as the general public and other professions, for consultations and this was the first legitimation given by the public towards the Draft Bill before tabling it to the Parliament, which was the second legitimation given by the Parliament for discussion. In the Parliament, the Conservative Party objected to the Draft Bill of national minimum wage and there were many heated discussions between the House of Commons and the House of Lords on this issue. Eventually, it was passed by both Houses and has become an Act and was implemented across the United Kingdom in 1999 (British Parliament, 2014). At first, the minimum wage rate was 3.6 pounds (British Government, 2014a). Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has been responsible for law enforcement, such as dealing with complaints of not paying the minimum wage (Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs, 2014). The Low Pay Commission, an independent statutory non-departmental public body, was established in 1998 to give advice to the Government for evaluation and further policy change. For example, the minimum wage rate has been increased yearly since the enactment of the National Minimum Wage Act with advice from the Commission.

From the above example, it is observed that the policymaking process in the United Kingdom has to go through a great number of steps that are suggested in the policy process model, and policy legitimation is a crucial stage to show that the British Government values the involvement and voices of people, instead of making decisions by the Government only. Although people may doubt the legitimation of the agenda setting, as it is usually set by the Government, which seems like the Government has control over what to be discussed in the Parliament, the crux is that the formation of the Government is voted by the people, which is already an important stage of democracy in a direct way. Thus, even though the agenda of policy processing is set by the Government, the whole process is supported by the votes of the people. Hence, the policymaking process in the United Kingdom is coherent with the definition of democracy. A similar policymaking process with a high level of legitimation given by the people could be observed in countries with democracy, such as the United States, who scores 83.9 in voice and accountability of the Worldwide Governance Indicators in 2013 (Worldwide Governance Indicators, 2014). Therefore, the policy process model is applicable to analyzing policies in democratic countries.

## 2.2 Systems model and dictatorship in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

On the contrary, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the political situation is significantly different from that in the United Kingdom. According to the same Worldwide Governance Indicators on voice and accountability in 2013, Saudi Arabia has obtained 2.8 marks, which belongs to the group of obtaining low extent of citizens' participation in selecting their government, freedom of expression, freedom of association and a free media in a country (Worldwide Governance Indicators, 2014). In Saudi Arabia, broadcasting is the responsibility of the state-run Broadcasting Service of the country, there is no existence of any political party, and the King has overarching authority (MarketLine, 2008). According to the definition of dictatorship, it is a form of government which exercises extreme control over people's lives and actions (Smith & Boryczka, 2008). As there is limited participation of citizens to select their government, the legitimacy of the government in Saudi Arabia is low. Policies in Saudi Arabia are only made by the King and the policy making process is not openly accessed by the general public and thus in this paper, Saudi Arabia's policies will be used to prove that policies in countries with less democracy or dictatorship have a tendency to be analyzed by using the systems model.

According to Birkland (2005), there are three stages in the systems model, which are inputs, political systems and outputs. Inputs usually mean election results, public opinion, communications to elected officials, media coverage of issues or personal experiences of decision makers. The political system is responsible for transforming inputs into outputs. As the process of how to convert inputs to outputs is not shown, people often regard this political system as the "black box" (Birkland, 2005). Outputs are usually laws, regulations and decisions. As the King controls the process of policymaking in Saudi Arabia, it matches the definition of a country with dictatorship. It is therefore believed that policies in Saudi Arabia could be analyzed by using the systems model.

In Saudi Arabia, although some policies are discussed within the Consultative Council, significant decisions are handed down without public debate (MarketLine, 2008), which is similar to the three stages of the systems model. Thus, procedures of policymaking are formidable to observe by the general public. For instance, during the early 1950s, protests, as an input, demanding for education for females occurred in Saudi Arabia (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). However, the Saudi Arabian Government did not immediately take any actions towards girls' education. Until 1960, the Government established the General Presidency for Girls' Education to supervise girls' education, as an output. 15 primary schools and one institute for teacher training for females were established in the same year (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013).

Throughout the process of improving girls' education in Saudi Arabia, although the general public participated in the protests demanding for girls' education in Saudi Arabia, they were not able to witness the policymaking process. They could only witness the establishment of schools for females ten years after their protests. Thus, except for the inputs and outputs, people can only analyze the policy process in the middle as a political system, which is also being regarded as a black box. As a similar policymaking process with a low level of legitimation given by the people could be observed in countries with dictatorship, such as the Swaziland, who scores 15.2 on voice and accountability in 2013 (Worldwide Governance Indicators, 2014), the systems model is hence believed can be used to analyze policies in countries with less democracy or even dictatorship.

## 2.3 Analyzing policies in different political systems

From the above examples, the procedures of policymaking can clearly be seen by using the policy process model. Nevertheless, the procedures of policymaking are difficult to show by using the systems model. It is believed that a country's political system is the crux to affect the use of policymaking model to analyze policies of a particular state.

In the United Kingdom, step-by-step procedures can be reviewed by the general public, which is regarded as a democratic way of policymaking. Under the parliamentary system, all bills have to be discussed and passed in the Parliament. Before tabling the bills, bills have to be legitimized by the general public through consultations. Therefore, democracy could be seen throughout the policymaking process. On the contrary, the King of Saudi Arabia is responsible for making every decision in the country without any consensus from citizens, but Islamic law (Shoult & Anwar, 2008).

Based on the difference of political systems between the two countries, the values behind the two countries can be observed. As the formation of the British Government relies on the votes given by the general public in an election, the Government has to be accountable and unveil the policymaking process, so as to ensure confidence from the people.

The policy process model is, therefore, suitable to analyze policies in democratic countries. However, there is no elected legislature in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Arabian Government does not have to bear the responsibility to explain any policymaking process to its citizens to fight for the confidence of citizens and therefore, dictatorship could be seen. The systems model is therefore suitable to analyze policies in less democratic countries.

From the above comparisons, it can be concluded that the political system behind a country is the crux to affect how policy is made and which model to be used for analysis. The systems model is more suitable to analyze policies within countries with dictatorship, like Saudi Arabia. In contrast, the policy process model is more suitable to be used to analyze policies within countries with democracy, like the United Kingdom.

### 3 Similarities of policy process model and systems model

While the policy process model and systems model have different paths, both models have some similarity. One of the common features is the emphasis on “policy cycle”, which means that their processes of policymaking are cyclical and continuous, instead of a one-time set of actions (Kraft, 2013).

In the policy process model, after processing the six stages of the policy process model (agenda setting, policy formulation, policy legitimation, policy implementation, policy and program evaluation and policy change), those stages will link as a cycle, although they may not progress in a logical sequence. This is just like what Kraft (2013) said, there is no end for any policy. Referring to the example in the United Kingdom, after the implementation of the National Minimum Wage Act in 1999, Low Pay Commission, an independent statutory non-departmental public body, was established in 1998 to give advice to the Government for evaluation and further policy change. For example, the minimum wage rate was increased from £3.6 in 1999 to £3.7 in 2000 (British Government, 2014b). This decision had been made after going through the stages of agenda setting and policy formulation, in which the Low Pay Commission produced a Draft Bill, policy legitimation, in which the Draft Bill was passed to the general public for discussions, policy implementation, in which the minimum wage rate was elevated to £3.7, policy and program evaluation, in which the Low Pay Commission reviewed the current rate, and policy changed again afterwards. The policy process model shows that policy processing could never end and could be analyzed as a cycle.

While in the systems model, after processing the three stages of the systems model, which are inputs, political system and outputs, those stages link as a cycle as well, though again, they may not progress in a logical sequence. Referring to the example in Saudi Arabia, after the establishment of schools for girls, there were voices of the general public demanding for more schools for girls (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013), which were another new input of the policy. As the policymaking process was not disclosed to the general public, it could be concluded as a black box. In 1963, intermediate schools were built, as well as a single secondary school (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013), which were the outputs made by the government in Saudi Arabia. Voices demanding for more schools for girls arose again. Thus, the systems model shows that the policy process could never end and could be analyzed as a cycle. Therefore, both the policy process model and systems model examine policies as a cycle.

Another similarity is that the environment influences policymaking in both the policy process model and systems model. According to Birkland (2005), the policy environment consists of different kinds of environmental factors, such as structural environment, social environment, economic environment as well as the political environment. No matter which model is used to analyze policy, this particular policy is influenced by the environment (Birkland, 2005).

Different policies, in which the policy process model is used to analyze, could be influenced by different kinds of environment. From the example above, the National Minimum Wage Act in 1999 in the United Kingdom has been affected by the economic environment. As the inflation rate in the United Kingdom has been increased from 1.6% in 1998 to 2.5 % in 2013 (Rate Inflation, 2014), voices demanding for adjustment of the minimum wage rate have been heard, and thus, the Low Pay Commission has been responsible for adjusting the minimum wage rate every year since the implementation of the Act. For instance, the minimum wage rate in the United Kingdom has been adjusted from £3.6 in 1999 to £6.5 in 2014. The example shows that the environment influences the policymaking process. In this case, the economic environment influenced the policymaking process of the National Minimum Wage.

It is also the same for policies analyzed by the systems model. From the example above, the expansion of schools for girls is not just because of the insufficiency of schools for girls in Saudi Arabia, but population growth, which is

regarded as the social environment. Population growth in the 1960s led to the increase of the population of youngsters, almost 40 % of the population were under 20 years of age (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013); there was an urgent need to provide education to children regardless gender in Saudi Arabia. From the example here, it is observed that population growth, one of the aspects of the social environment, has influenced the policy change of the establishment of schools for girls in Saudi Arabia.

As a result, policies analyzed by both policy process model and systems model are influenced by the environment, including structural environment, social environment, economic environment as well as the political environment.

## 4 Conclusion

By taking two monarchy countries as examples, this paper showcases the differences and similarities of the policy process model and the systems model. Differences and similarities among the policy process model and systems model have been discussed in this paper. The difference has first been discussed. Although it is known that different policies in a country can be analyzed by using different models, when it comes to understanding which model is fit to analyze one country's policies, we can consider its political system. Policies in the United Kingdom can be applied into the policy process model, due to the fact that step-by-step policymaking procedures can be observed during the policymaking process in the United Kingdom, which intends to unveil that policies made by countries with democracy can also be analyzed by using the policy process model.

On the contrary, policies in Saudi Arabia can be studied by using systems model, due to the fact that unclear policymaking procedures can be witnessed in Saudi Arabia, which intends to show that policies made by countries with less democratic can also be analyzed by using the systems model. This paper also discussed two similarities between the two models. They both emphasize on "policy cycle", as well as influence by different kinds of environment.

While social policy is always influenced by political ideology and system, and can be studied by different models, this paper concludes that policymaking process is, all in all, a cycle and can be influenced by different environmental factors, no matter what political system a country has.

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