

The American Government As The Public Policy Engine

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Public Policy:

The comprehensive mechanism by which public representatives institute a proposal of various elements, including multiple laws, different regulations, guidelines, and related actions to identify, address and solve a particular real-world issue in the general public's best interest, is usually termed as public policy. Society's welfare is mainly dependent upon public policy as it requires identifying and defining a problem, setting objectives to resolve it, and executing the policy instruments to resolve the issue within the prescribed time limit (Tummers, L. (2019). To achieve such a massive purpose, the respective government in any country and various government branches are authorized and instructed to implement and oversee the policies.

Three Branches of Government:

Like several federal governments around the globe, the United States federal government has three branches, which are usually termed the three pillars of the government. These are the legislature, executive and judiciary. All these branches work closely with each other for the well-being and welfare of the general public. A particular set of functions and purposes is associated with each of these branches. For example, the 'legislature' branch of government is called Congress, which consists of two houses, i.e., the upper house and the lower house. The upper house is called the Senate, while the lower house is called the House of Representatives (Edsall, 2020). The primary purpose of this branch is to make amendments to existing laws and enact and formulate new laws. In this way, the primary purpose of this branch is law-making. Still, besides this role, it also has the responsibility to oversee government operations, regulate commerce on national and international levels, approve various budgets and financial bills, and declare war against any entity.

However, as far as the structural basis of Congress is concerned, the House of Speakers heads it. In the current administration, this prestigious post belongs to Nancy Pelosi in the United States of America. Meanwhile, another branch of government is the executive, whose primary purpose revolves around implementing the policies and enforcing the enacted laws. This branch is headed by the honourable president of the country. The branch is further accompanied by the vice president, the country's attorney general, and respective cabinet secretaries, who are representatives of executive departments. There are fifteen executive departments in the United States of America. Contrary to the legislature, the executive branch can only implement enacted laws and formulated policies. It has

no power to enact any law itself. The implementation of respective policies and enforcement of the directed laws at any cost in the country is the central purpose of the executive branch (Edsall, 2020).

Similarly, the third branch of the government, i.e., the judiciary, has the primary purpose of interpreting the law. The meaning, translation, definitions, applicability, and constitutionality of any grey areas concerning any formulated law are vested with the judicial branch of the government. This branch has nothing to do with enacting laws, formulating policies and respective implementation in the country. For this purpose, the judiciary is headed by the country's honourable chief justice. In addition, the topmost judicial body is considered the country's Supreme Court in alliance with the other subordinate courts.

Influence on Public Policy:

Policymaking is a complex task in the United States of America, and all three branches of government are very close to each other and have immense influence. The country's attorney general mainly originates the process as he is the legal advisor of the respective government concerning every issue. For example, social media is considered a monster in the present times for highlighting rumours, spreading false news and harassing any citizen. For such policies regarding social media regulations, other than the attorney general, lawmakers can also initiate private bills. Such as taking it up before Congress becomes law after passing it by Congress and acquiring the consent of the president. However, it is pertinent to mention that law-making is not a smooth process practically as it is considered theoretically. Most of the time, both public and legislative bodies have to undergo a long lobbying process to formulate any specific policy (Edsall, 2020).

Moreover, government personnel try to formulate policies that reflect the fulfilment of promises they have made during election campaigns. In this way, sometimes the party that formulates government has to bear colossal criticism by the opposition. However, it is also a fact that almost sixty per cent of bills presented before Congress concerning specific issues originate from government representatives. However, it becomes harder for the government party to pass these bills if they don't acquire the required majority in the parliament. Mostly, the opposition party impedes the process due to their numbers, even when it comes to striking good policy operations. A similar case got worldwide attention in the recent past regarding the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill passing process. Though, it was a significant pillar of the Build Back Better plan given by President Biden (Viebeck, 2021). So, the legislature has influence in policy making through lobbying to vote for or against any particular policy or law.

However, as an influencer, the executive branch is the most powerful entity in this regard. The executive pillar of government can eliminate any hurdle to chasing policies through an intense lobbying process. Lawmakers sometimes have to step back or modify their stances due to various pressures or bribery ills, especially if vests with opposition party personnel. However, the government party, when they wish to implement policy in such cases, can execute it by signing executive orders.

In such cases, Congress is bypassed, and such cases were observed in the previous American government. So, contrary to the legislature, the executive has immense influence, as bypassing the executive concerning any policy matter is impossible. As the head of the executive pillar, the president has magnificent powers that have expanded with the passage of time, which has made the American government president-centric. In this way, the law enactment and process of policy implementation have become more complicated over time (Adida et al., 2020).

Similarly, the third pillar of government, i.e., the judiciary, has also influence over policies as it has the power to initiate a constitutional review. Such a review may overturn any actions taken by the government to secure the individual rights of citizens, irrespective of the fact that these actions belong to the local, state or even federal level. The laws formulated by Congress have to undergo an interpretation process by the judicial arm to determine whether or not they are according to the Constitution. It is the reality that the judiciary has no such strong influence over policy implementation as the executive branch has. Still, it can overturn any bill, law or regulation which is against the constitutional spirit. The judiciary used a similar power regarding President Trump's executive orders, especially concerning nationality issues (Winer, 2018). In this way, the judicial branch has the review power to undo any law if found against the constitution and leave the executive branch to obey the court order at any cost.

Hence, when it comes to forming the government, every party has some agenda to address public problems through public policies. In this context, all three branches of the government join hand in hand to formulate and implement policies for the general public's well-being. All branches have influence up to some extent, whereas the executive branch has the maximum impact.

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