

INTERDEPENDENCY, BELIEFS, AND COALITION BEHAVIOR: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK

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Abstract: This essay is all about critically reviewing the article written by Menno Fenger and Pieter Jan Klok entitled with "interdependency, beliefs and coalition behavior: A contribution to the advocacy coalition framework" in 2001.

Key words: Nterdependency, beliefs, and coalition behavior.

Introduction

This essay is all about critically reviewing the article written by Menno Fenger and Pieter Jan Klok entitled with "interdependency, beliefs and coalition behavior: A contribution to the advocacy coalition framework" in 2001. The article has synchronized the role and effects of beliefs and interdependencies in shaping the behavior of actors to formulate and coordinate coalition and in such away bestows Advocacy Coalition Framework which was initially instigated by Paul Sabatier.

Generally, nevertheless the details of the review is substantiated in the main body of the essay, the present articlereview, as portraying issues to be covered therein, hasintended to critically examine the central argument of the article , depicts theobjectives of the article, critically investigate major ideas or issues

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discussed in the article, analyzes theories and approaches of policy making scrutinized in the article and explore methodologies used by the author to ascertain its findings, and finally portraying the major weakness and strengths and issues that can be learned from the article.

Main Body

The article critically examines the role of belief system and interdependency or functional overlap in shaping the behavior of actors in forming and coordinating coalitions. In doing so, it tries to depict its contribution to advocacy coalition framework. It instigates its argument with a presumption that the ACF has no account for how actors with a certain policy beliefs develop and maintain advocacy coalition. It argued that the development and maintenance of advocacy coalition is affected by the interdependencies and policy belief systems of the actors involved in.

The article tries to elucidate coalition behaviors in ACF and portrayed gaps among theories uphold by scholars. For example, it argued that the ACF developed by Paul Sabatier has overstated advocacy coalitions, what it is, and the importance of advocacy coalition but overlooked how actors, who have belief congruent on particular policy issue in advocacy coalition, overcome the limitation of collective actions. And the article fills the gap or the omission by bringing down the work of Schlager which is very impressive in imparting ways that actors in constellation of advocacy coalition can avoid collective action problems. The article strongly argued that ACF should step up from the concept of coalition formation to the coordination of behavior within coalition and maintenance of coalition. Such kind of assumptions or prepositions are very sensational and impressive in the sustainability of advocacy coalitions.

The article after depicting different hypothesis on coalition behavior and how it's conditioned by belief congruency and functional interdependencies, upholds a position to step further functional overlap or interdependency. Functional overlap or interdependency has been treated as a variable that ranges from "high" to "low" or absent. However, it was overlooked in a way that functional overlap does mean that interfering or contribution to the achievement of other actors' goal. But the article, drawing theories from network theory, has identified different kind of interactions in which actors are involved in. Therefore, if a sort of interaction is competitive it underlines that actors are interfering. If a sort of interaction is symbiotic it recognizes that actors are contributing to other actors' goal achievement. The article further ahead ascertained that belief system is a glue of interdependency if it is congruent but detacher if it is divergent. The article disovered beliefs in to three sub variables like congruent, divergent and indifferent, and again divides interdependencies in to three sub variables like symbiotic, competitive and independence. At the end tries to depict the level of interaction among actors in line with above models.

One of the basic objective of the article is explaining the development and maintenance of advocacy coalition by looking at interdependencies and policy belief systems of the actors. The article aspires to specify the relation between interdependency, beliefs and coalition formation by distinguishing two basic

and different forms of interdependency; symbiotic and competitive interdependency. And at the end it finds ways that it contribute to advocacy coalition formation.

In synergizing the article with the ideas or issues of policy making, the article has extensively discussed issues related with actors of policy making process. Particularly, it addresses how pressure groups, lobbyists, or interest groups, by making advocacy coalition, can influence the policy making process. Pertinently, the article devotes in explaining how pressure groups or interest groups develop, coordinate and maintaining coalitions to have significant influences in policy making. The basic issue the article raised in its entire body is how the beliefs and functional overlap affects the coalition behaviors and in turn affect advocacy coalition formation and development. Advocacy coalition makes pressure and interest groups powerful in influencing policy making process.

The article also addressed some theories or approaches of policy making. From the very beginning, the article refers group theory or models of public policy. Group theory considers public policy as an outcome of group struggle. So, major actors in policy making are groups and the whole tent of the article is Advocacy coalition framework and therein coalition behavior, belief system, functional overlap are variables addressed as factors that could affect the influences of groups in policy making.

The author, in order to investigate its findings and reach conclusions, has employed case study, e.g. US Oil and Gas lease debate. Using such methodology, the author in his article tried to investigate how actors were indifferent, independent initially but with the introduction of such policy issues the actors (environmental groups and coastal resident on the one side and Oil and Gas companies on the other side) forms a coalition by shifting their previous position. For example environmental groups and coastal residents, who previously were indifferent, havenow formed a coalition based on symbiotic interdependencies and Oil and Gas Companies, who previously engaged in competitive interdependency on scarce resource, have now forms a coalition based on symbiotic interdependency as they uphold congruent policy beliefs. Therefore, using such a case study the author come up with a conclusion that the level and nature of interdependency affect the belief congruency of actors which in turn affect coalition behavior of the actors.

We tried to insight the strength and weakness of the article as follows. However, the strengths of the article by far outweighed its weakness. From the onset article starts its premises by finding gaps in the advocacy coalition framework. And it tries to fill the gaps by drawing theories and approaches from different literatures. It starts from Paul Sabatier premises and finds limitations in his work and go to Schalger to cover up the previous limitations and again finds limitations in schalgers proposition and go to Zafonte and Sabatier's theory and finally the author comes up to his modified hypothesis just to fill the gaps or avoid limitations. The second strength is, the article has achieved its objectives because from the very beginning up to the last paragraph the article has well stated and examined how belief and interdependency are related to shape the coalition behavior of

actors in coalition formation and maintenance. The organization, flow of idea, language quality (easily understandable) are another strong sides of the article. The last strength that can be depicted in the article is, it has reviewed extensive literatures as almost 22 literature works are investigated in the article.

The article, in our view, might have weakness in the methodology that it uses to address the issue. The issue is very complex that mightn't be easily addressed by using case studies. It would be very sound if the variables which are hypothesized in the article are investigated using primary data and statistical tools because case studies have limitations in making generalizations out of events rather it would be true for the specific events and actors involved in that event. So making generalization in such a case mightn't be reliable. The other weakness, in our view, is the issue has partly psychological dimensions because belief has some psychological elements but article entirely focus on unanimity of interest to have shared beliefs while ignoring some psychological factors.

Conclusion

The article, as a matter of learning in the public policy, has introduced how actors can influence public policy making. When making the influences, they can make constellations based on shared beliefs on particular policy issues. However, there are a number of factors that affect their level of influences among them the functional overlap or interdependency and belief systems are the main ones. Therefore, the article taught us an actor who have congruent beliefs, symbiotic interdependencies would have similar coalition behavior and thereafter could have more power to influence public policy. However, an actor who have divergent and indifferent beliefs and competitive and independent functional overlap will have no or less power to influence public policy making process. The article also taught us clearly how scientific articles are written. As it shows us how gaps are identified, how to solicit it with extensive literatures, theories, and approaches and it imparts the way in which gaps are filled using specific methodologies.

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