

# Public Policies and political sciences: methods & concepts borrowed from other disciplines

---

Lorena Șerban \*

## Abstract

*„A policy is a network of interrelated decisions on the choice of objectives, the means and the resources allocated to achieve them in specific situations “. The concept of public policy experience a series of definitions from the most simplistic to the instrumentalist: a course of action for a specific purpose, followed by an actor or group of actors in addressing a problem.*

**Key Words:** *politics, public policy, concept, social.*

---

\* University of Craiova, Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, BA Political Sciences.

Political science regarded as a discipline became more mature and more professionalized. Science conclusions regarding how reality is and how scientific theory relates to reality. Political science includes theories and concepts. Used in various contexts, the word "theory" refers generally thought processes and outcomes as distinct from those of action or practice.

The term "public policy" broke into specialized studies in the current language of Romania rather late (late 90s) and there are still many ambiguities in the common sense of the scope of this notion. Romania preferred to use the term in French literature, namely public policy (*politiques publiques*). *"A policy is a network of interrelated decisions regarding the choice of objectives, means and resources allocated to achieve them in specific situations".'*

The concept of *public policy* experiences a series of definitions from the most simplistic – that governments choose to do or not to do - to the instrumentalist: a course of action for a specific purpose, followed by an actor or a group of actors in addressing a problem.

### **What is politics?**

In common sense, the term "*political*" is usually taken to apply to something "greater" than individual decisions, but "something less" than the general social movements. Therefore, the policy in terms of level of analysis is a concept placed in the middle.

A second element is one key is that for most authors the term refers to a goal of some sort. Defining the object of a science, generally and of social sciences, in particular, is a complex problem that requires specification of several factors, including:

- a) Distinct field they are studying, and from what angle of view;
- b) Categories, specific social processes and laws;
- c) That the system of science instead of social sciences in general and science in the field of system activity.

In this context, several definitions of political science confirm:

1. Gabriel Almond: *"Essential object of political science, which she shares with all other sciences, is to create knowledge through inferences and generalizations drawn from experience, the politics"*.
2. Adrian Paul Iliescu: *"Subject (by) study of political science is political sphere"*.
3. Prof. Calin Valsan: *"The object of study of political science is political, as a subsystem of the global social system"*.
4. Sergiu Tamaş: *Political science is that "discipline dedicated to the study of political phenomena, the description and analysis of political systems and political behavior studying the genesis, essence and political events both in the context of a society at a given time, as well as historical perspective"*.

As a discipline, political science is defined by its substantive concerns by setting her on "political" in its many forms. Regarding policy could best be characterized as a constrained use of social power. Hence, by studying to be scientists or the politicians practitioners-can be defined as the study of nature and the sources of those constraints and techniques for using social power within those constraints.

Hybridization process consists, above all, in making and giving borrowed concepts, theories and methods. In any case, political science has always taken much more than it gave.

Political science borrowed these important concepts:

- In *sociology*: accommodation, aggregate, assimilation, circulation of elites, the working class, social class, clique, cohesion, collective behavior, social control, Protestant ethics, hierarchy, individuality, social integration, legitimacy, militarism.
- *Psychology*: emotion, alienation, ambivalence, aspiration, attitude, behavior, consciousness, addiction, social movement, personality.
- The *economy*: asset allocation, underdeveloped areas, cartel, corporatism, deficit, diminishing profits, industrialization, liberalism, gross national product.

- From *philosophy and the ancient Greeks*: anarchism, aristocracy, consensus, Democracy, freedom, monarchy, pluralism, tyranny.
- From *anthropology*: acculturation, affinity, caste, nepotism, patriarchy, plural society.
- *Theology*: anomie (indifference to divine law), charisma.
- From *journalists and politicians*: imperialism, internationalism, neutralism, patronage, syndicalism, left and right.

Since no license is required to adopt a method of research techniques, import was sometimes indiscriminate. Necessary is, first of all, common sense in applying the method to a new field. Too many political analysts still confuse scientific reasoning strategy research and methodological tools. Today, the main source of disputes among political scientists is not, as many might think, the ideology, but the methodology, most of them exogenous to the political science. Debate between ideologues is possible, even if often sterile, but between methodological schools they are inconclusive.

Borrowing methods and statistical techniques is not always beneficial. Many political scientists are using quantitative *methods* policy. However, others are motivated primarily by interest in the technique, and not substance. They build models of unverifiable routine, quantify over and over shapes. They often choose to discuss minor issues, spending much talent and energy to improve a correlation coefficient, cut hairs with factor analysis. They are productive researchers in computer-any input will result automatically in an output. Few of their work sees the light of day in major magazines because most of their studies are characterized by a painful contrast between analysts highly sophisticated techniques and poor imagination in organizing research, or have given too weak to support the powerful techniques used (Dogan, 1994).

**References:**

Alexandru, I., (2002). *Administrația publică (ediția a-III-a revăzută și adăugită)*, București: Lumina Lex.

Goodin, R. E. (2005). *Manual de știință politică. Știința politică: disciplină*, Iași: Polirom.

Profiroiu, M. (2009). *Manual de politici publice*, București: Editura economică.

**Acknowledgement**

This work was supported and financed by the Center of Post-Communist Political Studies - CEPOS STUDENT GRANT 2014 awarded within the Fourth International Conference After Communism. East and West under Scrutiny, 4-5 April 2014, Craiova, Romania.