

INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF JAPAN  
Public Management and Policy Analysis Program  
Graduate School of International Relations

ADC5006 (2 Credits)  
**Introduction to Policy Analysis**  
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Public Policy

*“Policy is a process as well as a product. It is used to refer to a process of decision-making and also to the product of that process. Policy is spoken of as what is and as what ought to be: policy is perverting our priorities, and policy should serve the public interest”*  
(Wildavsky 2018: 421).

**1. Public Policy and Policy Problem**

“A policy proposes and intervention to alter some existing circumstance or mode of conduct. If well formulated, it will contain a description of the desired state condition and the set of means which promise to realize that condition” (Landau 1977: 425). A *policy instrument* is designed to resolve a corresponding *policy problem*, which is defined as the gap between current state and desired state.

“[Public] policy is made of language. ... argument is central in all stages of the policy process” (Majone 1987: 1).

“The task of analysis is to create problems, preferences tempered by possibilities, which are worth solving. A difficulty is not necessarily a problem. ... Only by suggesting solutions, such as programs linking governmental resources with social objectives, can we understand what might be done. Policy analysis involves creating problems that are solvable by specific organizations in a particular arena of action. A problem in policy analysis, then, cannot exist apart from a proposed solution, and its solution is part of an organization, a structure of incentives without which there can be no will to act” (7).

“Public policy remains a world we never made, consciously or entirely. Policies, acting as their own causes, drive as well as being driven. Like ideas or theories, policies, once promulgated, exist independently of their origins. Long after their causes fade away, their consequences carry on unless intervention alters them” (441).

**2. Public Policy and Publicness**

A public policy is to deal with public problems as opposed to private problems. What is the public? The publicness occurs when people recognize the “indirect consequences of an action” (Dewey 1927). This external effect (externality) is a source of market failure, calling for government intervention. Direct consequences of an action will be resolved through the market mechanism (give-and-take).

**3. Public Policy As a Hypothesis**

A policy has the “if-then” form; if a government does A, then it will get B. A Shinkansen project says, for instance, “If government builds a new Shinkansen line, then Japanese economy will be revitalized.” But we don’t know exactly in advance if the policy instrument (a new Shinkansen line) can really achieve the designated goal (revitalized Japanese economy).

Due to uncertainty and insufficient human knowledge, a policy cannot be accepted as correct a priori and its status remains “hypothetical”; “Policies are hypotheses” (Landau 1977: 425).

#### **4. Comprehensive versus Incremental Model**

A comprehensive decision-making model is contrasted with incremental or synoptic models with respect to decision-makers ability (rationality and knowledge) and uncertainty (Lindblom 1979).

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