



Ambiguity and Choice in Public Policy: Political Decision Making in Modern Democracies (American Government and Public Policy)

Nikolaos Zahariadis

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Zahariadis offers a theory that explains policymaking when "ambiguity" is present—a state in which there are many ways, often irreconcilable, of thinking about an issue. Expanding and extending John Kingdon's influential "multiple streams" model that explains agenda setting, Zahariadis argues that manipulation, the bending of ideas, process, and beliefs to get what you want out of the policy process, is the key to understanding the dynamics of policymaking in conditions of ambiguity. He takes one of the major theories of public policy to the next step in three different ways: he extends it to a different form of government (parliamentary democracies, where Kingdon looked only at what he called the United States's presidential "organized anarchy" form of government); he examines the entire policy formation process, not just agenda setting; and he applies it to foreign as well as domestic policy.

This book combines theory with cases to illuminate policymaking in a variety of modern democracies. The cases cover economic policymaking in Britain, France, and Germany, foreign policymaking in Greece, all compared to the U.S. (where the model was first developed), and an innovative computer simulation of the policy process.

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