Advocacy coalition framework

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier, 1993) is a tool that is used in policymaking and is particularly helpful in dealing with intense public policy systems. It facilitates the understanding of the policies and priorities that are involved in dispute management that arises from the interaction of different levels of Government and multiple actors while implementing the public policies formulated. To analyse the Immigration in the UK to the movement towards the UK Border Control, the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) can be applied.

The UK Border Agency is the merging of the Border and Immigration Agency, UK visas and the port functionalities as managed by the HM revenue and Customs. Thus, the policies that are under study in this assignment are those that surround the integration of the various functions into one body (Sabatier, 1993.)

Sabatier states that the various defining terms in the ACF include policy subsystems that involve the group of actors that interact with an element of constancy in a functional policy domain, which in this case is the immigration system transferring into the UK Border Control. Thus, all the players and positions in the whole transitional issue make up a policy subsystem (Sabatier, 1993.) There are two types of subsystems; the first being the Nascent subsystem that is in the process of forming such as the one in discussion (Sabatier 1993.) The other type is the mature subsystem that has existed for a period of ten years or more. Policy subsystems arise from the fact that there are new issues emerging or the conceptualisations of new issues and this is the case with the need for a more effective Border Control authority or immigration system in the UK. The other term is advocacy

coalition that is basically a group of people sharing the same belief system. The goal of these advocacy coalitions is usually to change the actions of the government and redirect them to accomplish certain policy reforms (Sabatier 1993.)

One of the reasons why the Advocacy Coalition Framework is preferred in this context is the ability to deal with the changing elite and public opinion regarding the priorities that arise in Border Control. Before the issue is addressed, it is important that the basic premises that constitute the ACF be mentioned. First, there is need for the issue of technical information to be addressed in addition to understanding that the issues that concern policy change need time. The policy subsystem is used in the analysis of the policy change that will require at least a decade to monitor. Sabatier (1993) states that the public policies can be conceptualised as belief systems. Advocacy conditions are usually associated with the players of the system being combined into a number of groups, or advocacy coalitions, which have the same normative and causal beliefs. The advocacy groups also have the ability to engage in a substantial coordinated activity over a long period. The beliefs systems that are shared by the advocacy coalitions are grouped into a hierarchy depending on the degree of resistance to change. There are those that are deep core and others are policy core beliefs. Due to the existence of the belief systems, various strategies are used to push for their beliefs. For example, there is the changing of the statutes and manipulation of the budget.

Sabatier states that there are exogenous variables that are considered in the framework. There are the stable variables that will not change despite that

coalition changes this in the current case will include the basic constitutional structures that are to be followed. On the other hand, there is the issue of dynamic exogenous variables that are likely to change over time. In this case, the governing coalitions that result from the merger are going to change. The impact that the other subsystems have on the new system will be included here (Sabatier 1993.)

In the context of the UK immigration system being turned into the UK Border Controls there are the issues that are monitored constantly. For example, there is the advocacy coalition that constitutes the employees who will object to the policies that are meant to lay them off or reduce their benefits as well as the effectiveness that comes from the integration of various departments. Thus, there is going to be the issue of policy learning that can be described as members of various coalitions seeking to know more regarding the system so that they can be able to further their agenda.

In terms of the deep core convictions that can be obtained from this case study, there is the belief system that is held by the citizens. The deep core belief is that there needs to be free movement in and out the UK and especially around Europe. The citizens want it to be standard whereas the policies that are implemented by the Border Control want the age to be higher. However, under the belief system this falls within the category of the secondary beliefs that is shared by that advocacy group. Thus, there is a resistance to the new policies resulting from the merge of the various immigration bodies into one (Mcdonald, 2009.) Another advocacy coalition that is involved is the funding from the Government that requires the reduction in budget resulting from the different bodies coming to form one

administrative head. Thus in the end there are various actors that are involved in the policy implementation.

The major controversies that arise in this context are concerned with the policy subsystem, when the policy core beliefs of different advocacy groups are in dispute. Consequently, each advocacy group is very unlikely to change when it comes to policy belief change. For example, the suggestion that the travellers will be checked against a watch list and in case of any inconsistencies separated for questioning, is bound to raise the issue who will make it to the watch list and its compilation given that there are regular complaints that the foreign offices are understaffed. In the case of such a dispute, there are the secondary aspects that the advocacy group will give up so that they can proceed to change the deep core belief.

Despite the disputes there are various points that the actors show consensus for example, all the actors agree on secure borders and accountability in the immigration that the country's Government allows. It is important to note that the policy that is core in the subsystem cannot change significantly unless there is a change in the Government in power for example from Labour to Conservatives and vice versa. Hence, the idea to transform the immigration system into the UK Border Control cannot change much unless the Government changes (Fischer, Miller & Sidney 2007).

There is learning that is occurring across the advocacy coalitions that exist. On the dispute level it is easier for the policy-oriented learning to occur in across belief systems when the subject of contention is quantifiable, than when it is qualitative in nature (Sabatier, 1993.) For example, there was a

concern that was raised by the legislative function concerning the staffing and adherence of Britain manages foreign UK Border Control offices. In response, the Director of the UK Border Control was able to provide statistics regarding the employees but on the issue of regulation adherence, the dispute still holds. There is difficulty that is associated with the clarification of subjective issues that are under contention.

Consistent with this is the fact that natural systems are more conductive to policy-oriented learning than subsystems that are social or political. However, in this case there are both dimensions involved in that the boundaries are natural but the control that is enforced at this point is more of a political nature (Fischer et al, 2007.) Due to this integration of the political and the natural dimensions there are aspects that can be quantified and other are purely subjective. This can be represented by the demographics that are instituted in determination of the age for foreign marriage partners to curb immigration and the various checks that are required to acquire full citizen identification.

An issue worth mentioning in ACF is there is a wide spectrum from which the advocacy coalitions can arise. The advocacy coalitions can include journalists, researchers and agency officials and other non-government organisations (NGOs) if there is the interaction occurring as they all pursue their common objectives. In every policy subsystem, there are usually more advocacy groups than are depicted. For example, there is the union of British shoppers that is opinionated in regards to the policies that are arising from the integration of the immigration system into the UK Border Control (Sabatier, 2007.) That is the reason for the importance of an all round

consideration in analysing the policy subsystem to include information from professionals such as the actors, for the emergence of all the relevant advocacy groups. The advantage that stems from this is the ability to obtain all the accurate picture of the composition and stability (Sabatier, 1993.)

There are other aspects of the ACF that can be used to analyse the immigration overhaul in the United Kingdom. First, in examining the individual belief system and structure there is the assumption that the actors make judgments and analyse the information that is contained in the policies in respect to time and computational constraints. An example that can be given was issue of incorrect numbers that were provided by the UK Border Control regarding the number of refusal cases that were brought forward for reconsideration. Only the independent monitors who were in a position to review the statistics from the previous year were able to realise that the numbers were from a previous year (Mcdonald, 2009.) Thus, the belief structure that emerges after analysis is dependent on the ability to understand and the time that was available to learn.