

Drivers of Change: Refining the Analytical Framework

Part 2: A Framework for Political Analysis

The purpose of this paper is to outline a framework for the analysis of politics which will help DFID to deepen and extend its Drivers (and Blockers) of Change work. The framework will facilitate more systematic and comparative thinking about politics and should enhance analysis of how political processes influence economic policies and practices, positively or negatively. It is thus intended as a tool to enable practitioners to trace where and how formal and informal, internal and external political actors and interests interact through given (and often very different and unconsolidated) institutional arrangements to influence decisions about how resources are used, produced and distributed, and hence how developmental or non-developmental outcomes are shaped. The framework should also provide some effective pointers as to where and how DFID may begin to operationalise the lessons learned from such analyses.

Adrian Leftwich
Department of Politics
University of York
York
YO10 5DD

01904-433551
AL23@york.ac.uk

Second draft: June 2006.

Summary

This is the second paper of three papers, commissioned by the Effective States Team within DFID, to extend and refine the analytical basis for a further set of Drivers of Change studies. The paper has two main objectives. First, it seeks to build on the first paper (Leftwich, 2006) by outlining a way of thinking systematically and comparatively about politics and political processes as central to developmental outcomes. Second, it offers a flexible conceptual framework for exploring how political processes operate in diverse institutional arrangements to promote or hinder developmental policy and practice.

The central message of the paper, as in the previous one, is that politics is a necessary and pervasive feature of all human collectivities. And just as all human societies require an 'economic system' to generate and sustain livelihoods, so too they require a set of processes and institutions, whether formal or informal, which shape how decisions are made about the use, production and distribution of resources. These institutions and processes constitute the political system. Some political systems promote and enhance growth and development (and can do so in a variety of ways); some do not; some function to create stability; some do not.

However, a political system is not an isolated or autonomous sphere of social action, for all political systems are embedded in wider environments of economic, social and cultural structures, both internal and external to the society, in which agents and agencies are formed which seek to promote policies and programmes in pursuit of their own or wider collective goals and interests. The relations of power which define the interactions between such agents and agencies (drivers and blockers of change) flow through the institutions of the political system and result in particular policy or programmatic outputs.

To understand and analyse how these processes of politics work in any society, it is necessary to conceptualise the structure of the political system in terms of a series of components, and the dynamics between them. The model outlined here provides a conceptual framework for analysing the relations between a political system and its structural environment, for identifying agents of change and

resistance within and beyond the political system and for explaining developmental or non-developmental trajectories. The model is both regime-neutral and favours no particular theory of politics. Rather it offers a flexible comparative framework for deploying a range of interpretative approaches, where appropriate, and provides the basis for a classification not only of political systems but also of the paths of development (or non-development) adopted, or most likely in each instance. And by addressing and trying to organise conceptually the relations of power, this focus on the political system as a set of linked processes whereby decisions are taken about how resources are used, produced and distributed will also help to explain those situations where stagnation, crisis or collapse have occurred.

1 Background

1.1 This is the second of three papers, commissioned by The Effective States team within DFID, to evaluate, deepen and refine the conceptual framework for the analysis of the *politics*¹ of growth and development and, in particular, to sharpen the conceptual framework for future Drivers of Change studies.²

1.2 The first paper (Leftwich, 2006) explored the provenance and conceptual approach of the original Drivers of Change (DoC) studies. It introduced some ideas from mainstream political analysis and went on to argue that thinking politically about development, and the politics of development, is a necessary condition for donors to assist in promoting the conditions for growth, poverty reduction, institutional enhancement and improved patterns of governance. That paper argued that the DoC work is best understood as an emerging discourse and broad methodology for analysing and understanding the essentially contested and unavoidably *political* nature of development, but that for the future we need to work towards a clearer theoretical and conceptual framework for analysing and engaging with the political dynamics which shape development and change. And it suggested that it is important in this work to recognise that the modern politics of development and change is a special and complex form of politics in general, given that the underlying political problems in many ‘typical developing countries’ are that:

- (a) a single set of agreed institutional rules of the political game are seldom present;
- (b) promoting economic change and growth under such circumstances is extremely difficult; and
- (c) that even where such institutions are present, the challenge of promoting change while maintaining stability is daunting.

The paper argued that it is useful, as a starting point, to conceive of ‘politics’ as consisting of *all the activities of cooperation, conflict and negotiation*

¹ In emphasising the ‘political’ here I am wishing to suggest that it is not a political economy approach: more on that later.

² In writing this paper I have benefited greatly from discussions with Piers Harrison of DFID and Peter Larmour of the Australian National University. Comments from the peer review team - Adrian Guelke, Andrew Rosser, Christopher Clapham, Tim Kelsall and Stuart Corbridge - have also helped to improve it. The diagrams were written with invaluable help from Mike Dunn. However, the usual disclaimer applies: the responsibility for this paper is mine.

involved in decisions about the use, production and distribution of resources. In practice, this conception helps to show how political processes interact with ‘economic’ ones so as to promote or hinder growth and development. Moreover, the paper suggested that two propositions lie at the heart of understanding the politics of development. The first is that *when people change the way they use, produce and distribute resources, they also change their (social and political) relations – relations of power - with each other.* The second and related proposition is that *when people change their political and social (power) relations with each other, they usually change the way they use, produce and distribute resources.*

And both these suggest clearly why development is both difficult and often (highly) contentious. Because change is central to development, the politics of development is best understood as a special case of politics, for at least three reasons. First, stable polities presuppose widespread consensus and legitimacy about the fundamental rules of the game. Under these circumstances, things tend to change slowly and incrementally, especially in modern democratic polities. But, second, development is, almost by definition, a transformative (and often urgently so) process – unless very slow and incremental – and inevitably challenges prevailing relations of power. Hence, third, while it may be desirable, it is especially difficult for developmental changes of that magnitude to be undertaken under stable rules.

- 1.3 The paper concluded by arguing that although the first *tranche* of DoC studies had been couched in terms which explored the relations between structures, institutions and agents, there had not really been a consistent framework of analysis or methodology for analysing political processes. And although those studies had generated rich detail on each of the countries covered, it would be necessary in future studies to develop a more robust *analytical framework* which could focus directly and single-mindedly on the complexity of the political processes through which economic and other policies are formulated and implemented. Such a framework would need to be able to accommodate the following considerations, *inter alia*:

- Countries, polities, political practices and developmental trajectories vary greatly and any framework would need to be applicable to each and all
- As a diagnostic tool, a framework needs also need to be ‘regime neutral’; that is, it does not presuppose or implicitly enjoin one particular kind of polity
- It would need, also, to be able to explain successful, ailing and failed polities
- It would need to show where and how both internal and external agents impact on political processes and decision-making
- It would need to be able to demonstrate how formal and informal *institutions* interact in the political process
- It would need to be able to identify where and how *informal* sources and forms of *power* impact on formal political processes
- It would be useful if such a framework were applicable to sub-national, regional or local-level politics as well as (ideally) to the politics of sectoral domains
- In providing a framework for tracing how and where social and particularly economic interests operate on, in and through the political system, and how political processes in turn impact on economic and social activities, it will be possible to show more systematically how the ‘political system’, the ‘economic system’ and the ‘social system’ (to use three broad categories) interact with each other than by simply alluding to the somewhat ambiguous notion of ‘political economy’ considerations.

1.4 But, throughout, the fundamental objective is to provide a conceptual framework to enable practitioners to think about politics in a more systematic and comparative fashion, by providing an analytical lens for identifying, integrating and interpreting what are not always immediately obvious political processes and practices. Thus it is intended that the framework will (a) enable analysis to go deeper and wider than personalities, organizations and agencies; (b) offer the possibility for a more dynamic and explanatory account of political processes; and hence (c) extend and deepen the approach adopted in the initial *tranche* of DoC studies.

1.5 Devising such a framework presents a fascinating challenge for comparative political science, given the variety of political, socio-economic, cultural and ideological characteristics of the countries in which DFID works, with respect to their level and form of economic development, the salient characteristics of their social and political structures and the prevailing cultural patterns and ideas. In some areas (much of Latin America, for instance) class differentiation and identification has gone much further than in others (such as sub-Saharan Africa) and broad issue-or-class-based parties, NGOs and other

professional and social movements are both more common and better established. In other areas, issues to do with ethnicity, regionalism and religion have defined the social structure and shaped the character of political parties and other associations (such as trades unions), and patrimonial and patronage politics often predominate. Some economies (and government budgets) depend largely on single-source revenues derived from a major resource (such as oil, diamonds or copper). Others still depend primarily on agricultural exports. Some have a state tradition - state longevity – which goes back a long way; others are of a more recent (literal) creation.³ In short, the diversity is considerable.

- 1.6 Yet it is precisely this diversity which a single analytical framework can help to make sense of. It does so by illustrating how – in the context of these considerable differences – certain identifiable and comparable political processes operate and interact to enhance or hinder growth and development. The fundamental assumption underlying the construction of such a framework is that although politics is deeply entwined within diverse social, economic and ideological environments, and although it takes radically different forms in each, it is a process found in all societies and, indeed, in all continuous associations of human beings. Understood here as *all the activities of cooperation, conflict and negotiation involved in decisions about the use, production and distribution of resources*, politics is thus an essential, necessary and unavoidable process, or set of processes, in all collective human activity. Its forms and particulars differ, of course, as between societies where, for example, public political processes are formally differentiated from other ‘non-political’ processes and where the ‘public’ is more sharply marked off from the ‘private’. It differs too in societies with and without states (though in the modern era we will not have much cause to look at the latter), and whether the polities are federal or unitary, presidential or parliamentary, imperial or colonised, agrarian or industrial, capitalist or socialist, plural or homogeneous, meritocratic (‘legal-rational’ in Weberian terms) or patrimonial, or a mixture of some or all of these. Some political processes (and not by any means of the

³ Fascinating work on issues to do with state longevity may be found in Bockstette, et al (2002) and in Chanda and Putterman (2005).

same kind) have promoted growth and development; others have prevented it; some political processes are pathological and have led to failure, disintegration or collapse; others have facilitated integration and stability.

Nonetheless, all have – and must have – politics. Given this diversity, what kind of framework can be devised which will help us to think politically in a systematic and comparative fashion, enable us to capture the distinctive features of each political system, diagnose its strengths and weaknesses, trace how political activities and interactions operate in practice and map how they both reflect and influence processes and practices beyond the political sphere?

- 1.7 The central strategy of this paper is to deploy, unpack and elaborate the concept of the ‘political system’ as a very useful device for thinking systematically and comparatively about politics and for analysing drivers (agents) of change or resistance. While the phrase is widely (and sometimes loosely) used in political science, it is seldom spelled out in detail.⁴ For example, in his excellent discussion of ‘Types of Political Systems: A Practical Framework for DFID Staff’, Mick Moore uses the notion in the context of trying to ‘identify the major variables shaping the functioning of national political systems’ (Moore, 2002: 2). The notion is used, too, by Mushtaq Khan (2005: 1) in his ‘Review of DFID’s Governance Target Strategy Paper’ where he argues that ‘developing countries must be able to operate *political systems* (my emphasis, AL) responsive to all sections of the population’. And many of the DoC studies (for example, the excellent Ghanaian and Malawi studies) refer to the political system (Booth and Crook, et al., 2004: 13; and Booth and Cammack, et al., 2006: vii and 16). But in none of these is the underlying conceptual structure or the basic elements of the political system addressed or defined.

So what are we to mean when we refer to the ‘political system’? How do we conceptualise and differentiate it by contrast with the ‘social’ or ‘economic’ or

⁴ Even David Robertson’s (1993) introductory *Dictionary of Politics* only gives a few lines to a brief discussion of systems theory or to the notion of the political system. The same is true of the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics* (McLean and McMillan, 2003: 530).

‘cultural’ systems? DIFD uses the notion, too, in many of its publications without ever specifying what set or sets of process and interactions are being referred to (DFID, n.d). It is that gap which I hope this paper will help to fill.

For present purposes I have drawn on some of the original ideas about the political system as advanced by David Easton,⁵ as I think that the basic framework provides a very useful *starting point* for thinking systematically about politics and for meeting DFID’s immediate concerns for deepening and extending the conceptual framework – and especially the political analysis framework - in the next generation of DoC work. I have, however, adapted and considerably modified the Easton model and, in particular, have abandoned its allegedly functionalist and behavioural aspects.⁶

It may seem somewhat quaint, if not positively eccentric, to revert to a concept and framework that appears to have been eclipsed in political analysis and comparative politics in recent decades by the growing dominance of rational choice, historical institutionalist, political economy and Marxist approaches plus a variety of quantitative methods. But although aspects of such approaches do help to explain political (and other behaviour) and how modes of production, historical legacies and institutional structures shape current behaviour and restrain change, they do not provide us with a sufficiently dynamic framework for analysing how these political processes work in and through the institutional arrangements of very different societies.

For instance, rational choice institutionalism in political science is essentially concerned with explaining the patterns of micro-political behaviour as shaped by the prevailing institutional arrangements and incentive structures which influence it. It is an approach which seeks to uncover the ‘micro-foundations of macro-processes and events’ (Levi, 1997: 23). But it offers no guidance or set of hypotheses about how different institutional spheres (say political parties, NGOs, and bureaucracies) relate to each other, or how institutions in

⁵ This is based on the work of David Easton (1953, 1957, 1965a and 1965b, 1992).

⁶ The functionalist aspect of systems theory is more pronounced in Almond’s work (Almond, et al, 2004).

the political domain interact with institutions in the economic or social domains. Nor does it help to show how, together, they interact to constitute a wider framework of constraint and opportunity. Where are the links? How and where do economic agents act to advance their political interests? How and where do political agents act to advance theirs? Where are the dynamics which produce the outcomes? How do we frame the structure of power which is the context for action? In short, with its micro-focus, rational choice institutionalism is largely bereft of any understanding that, for good or for bad, human societies are necessarily constituted by more or less coherent, more or less consistent and more or less functioning systems or institutional processes, changing over time.

Historical institutionalism, on the other hand, rightly asserts the importance of historical legacies, of the distribution of power, of path dependency, of the role of ideas as well as interests, and of ‘critical junctures’.⁷ Or, in Tilly’s memorable phrase, historical institutionalists are interested in ‘Big structures, large processes, huge comparisons’ (1984). In short, ‘Tackling big, real-world questions; tracing processes through time; and analyzing institutional configurations and contexts – these are the features that define historical institutionalism as a major strategy of research in contemporary political science’ (Pierson and Skocpol, 2002: 713).

Vital and valid as these reminders are, in part as an antidote to the micro-focus of rational choice institutionalism, they still offer little by way of a conceptual grid to analyse and trace in practice how and where these quintessentially political processes function and interact. How does ‘path dependency’ operate? Where are ideas most influential and effective?⁸ And why do some ideas rather than others prevail? History matters, of course, but how does history

⁷ Pierson and Skocpol (2002: 693) summarise the approach thus: ‘Historical institutionalists analyze organizational and institutional configurations where others look at particular settings in isolation; and they pay attention to critical junctures and long-term processes where others look only at slices of time or short-term manoeuvres’. Moreover, they argue, historical institutionalists address ‘big substantive issues’ (revolution and regime change, democratization, the emergence of the state) and ‘take time seriously’ (ibid, 695-6).

⁸ Two interesting – and very different – examples of the impact of ideas on policy change may be found in Kohli’s account of the shift to a more pro-market approach in Indian economy policy-making in the 1980s (Kohli, 2004: 277ff) and in Peter Hall’s analysis of the abandonment of the Keynesian consensus in the 1970s in the United Kingdom (Hall, 1992).

work? Through what institutional relationships and political practices are patterns from the past sustained and transmitted in the face of demands for change? And when ‘critical junctures’ occur, what shapes the direction taken, and how and where and when?

Conceptualising political processes over time in terms of a *system* of interactions does offer a way forward. The concept of the political system remains a central part of the vocabulary of political analysis and is seldom absent from texts on comparative politics (Hague and Harrop, 2001; Calvert, 2002; Almond, et al., 2004). Though much mainstream comparative political analysis⁹ today tends to focus on political systems where the rules of the game are more or less secure and where democracies have been consolidated, the problem in many developing countries is that this is not, or not yet, the case. As the first set of DoC studies showed, politics in many developing societies is characterised by pervasive forms of patrimonialism, patron-client relations, crony-ism and *caciquismo*, understood collectively as the prevalence of personalized politics and personalized relations of power, commonly overlapping with the formal structures of Weberian-type governance (Clapham, 1982). Standard taxonomies of political systems – with their focus on well-established, differentiated and largely formal political institutions, processes and practices – do not easily capture the complexity of these overlapping processes. But a modified form of the systems framework, especially given its neutrality with respect to formal and informal processes, offers a better prospect for getting a handle on complex processes. Deploying the framework of analysis entailed in the idea of the political system thus helps to ‘lend coherence to a complex reality without violating (the) empirical individuality’ of different polities (Susser, 1992: 182).

The next section begins to explain this more fully.

⁹ A good example of this is in Newton and Van Deth (2005)

2 The idea of the ‘political system’ (see Diagram 1, below)

I start by describing in broad terms the main elements and operation of the political system and then go on to look at each of the main components in more detail. The discussion thus moves from the broad picture through clarification of some key aspects of the conceptual framework to a focus in greater detail on various parts of the process.

2.1 *The political system in broad terms*

In looking at the big picture it is important to bear in mind some fundamental preliminary points.

- First, the idea of the political system represents a stylized abstraction of the political process and is in no way meant to convey the idea that it is an independent, isolated realm. We have little difficulty in referring to the ‘economic system’ and exploring the relationships between its parts. The idea of the ‘economic system’ is, in part, an abstraction, as is the idea of the ‘social system’. So too is the idea of the ‘political system’. But these are necessary abstractions which serve useful analytical and explanatory purposes. Each acts as the broad conceptual organization for identifying and comparing certain fundamental processes found in all human societies. In functional terms, the point is that human society is inconceivable without a set of more or less consistent institutional arrangements (understood as rules) to regularise and make predictable human interaction. One such set of institutions, formal or informal, consists of the procedures or processes for making rules,¹⁰ and hence for deciding how resources are used,

¹⁰ Just as it is inconceivable without rules (institutions), or procedures for adjudicating the rules. The more general point of course is that for any human society to exist, and continue to exist, it requires more or less complex and overlapping net-works of regular social interactions and social practices. Whether economic, political or cultural, such repeated interactions entail agreed and predictable rules about ways of doing things. Such rules constitute institutions. Rules change, usually slowly, but

produced and distributed. And it is the ‘political system’ – however undifferentiated and latent within a society – that serves that function, as the set of processes and institutional arrangements through which power is distributed and politics happens.

In a complex industrial society with an established and functioning polity, with relative transparency, officials, paperwork and accountability, it *may* be relatively straightforward to identify the political system and observe its dynamics: little abstraction may be necessary. But in a small-scale stateless society – take the extreme of a hunter-gatherer community in the Kalahari, Amazon or Ituri forest – where there is little specialisation (and almost no political specialization) or institutional differentiation - it may be harder. But when, for example, a band is sitting round the campfire and conversation turns to where and how they will hunt the next day, the political system becomes operational as they decide collectively what their plans will be. It may be that the decisions on these matters are taken by the men, or elders; and other decisions (where to gather) are taken by women. But when doing so, the ‘political system’ is to be understood as being ‘activated’.

- Second, every political system, therefore, needs to be understood as operating within its own *environment* which is constituted by the economic, social, cultural and ideological systems in its national, regional and international context. In the same way, the environment of the economic system is constituted by the political, social and cultural systems which influence it. And although the boxes in the diagrams which follow suggest autonomy and separation, there is considerable overlap, blurring and constant interaction in practice between agents and actors in the political system and agents within the wider

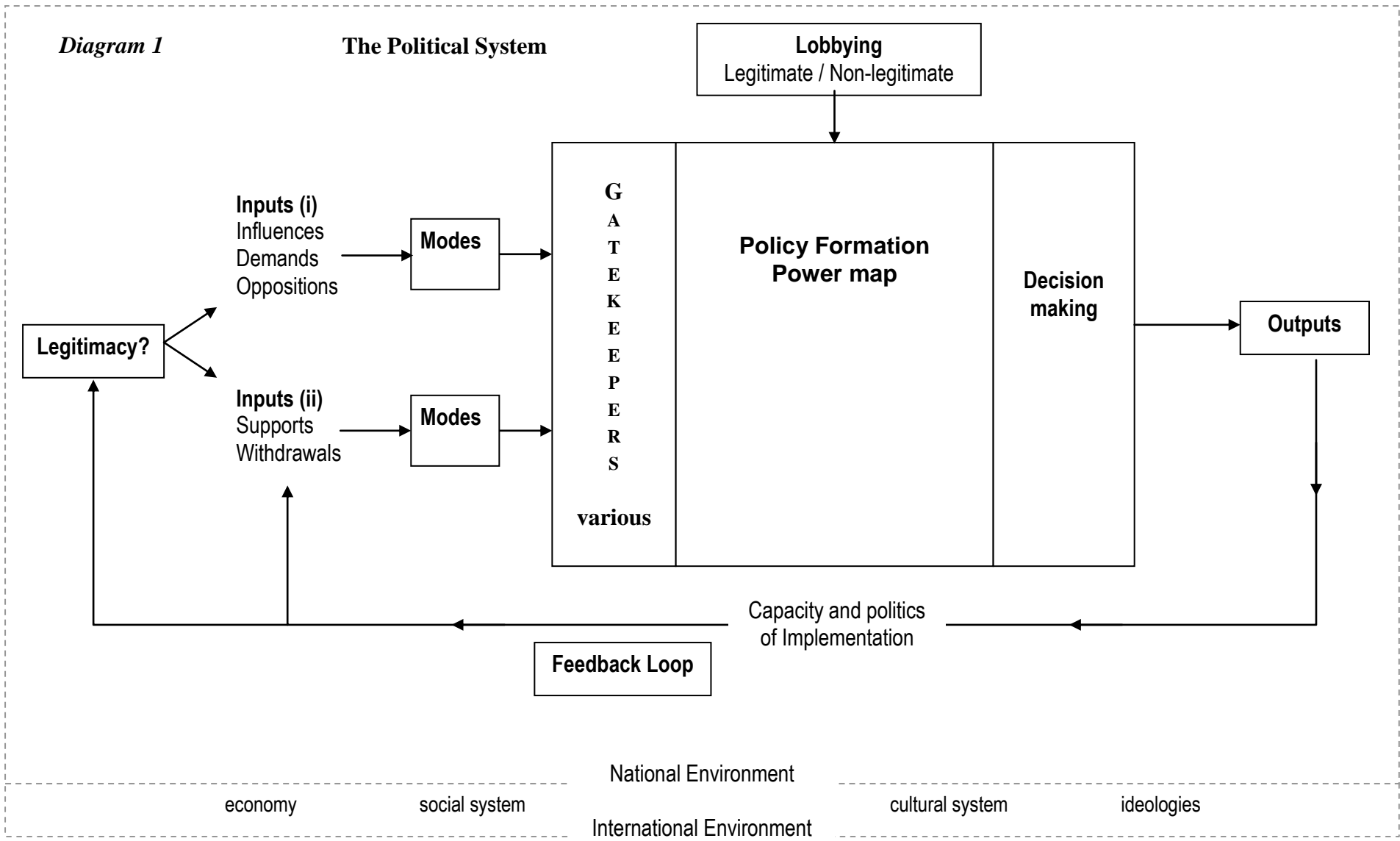
sometimes radically. Revolutionary change, for instance, brings about entirely new sets of rules. Often, competing sets of rules conflict with each other and can generate instability and uncertainty. However, when no rules can be agreed upon, societal collapse or disintegration must follow.

environment. Indeed the interaction of these agents in the processes of the political system is central to the model, as will become clear later.

- Third, though the emphasis may appear to be on *process*, the model is heavily populated by agents and agencies who drive the dynamic of the political process in, through and behind the institutional arrangements.

Diagram 1

The Political System



Lobbying
Legitimate / Non-legitimate

Inputs (i)
Influences
Demands
Oppositions

Modes

G
A
T
E
K
E
E
P
E
R
S

various

Policy Formation
Power map

Decision
making

Outputs

Legitimacy?

Inputs (ii)
Supports
Withdrawals

Modes

Capacity and politics
of Implementation

Feedback Loop

National Environment

economy

social system

International Environment

cultural system

ideologies

2.2 *Elaboration and clarification*

Some further points are now worth clarifying.

(i) First, decisions made in and through the processes of the political system are in part motivated by inputs, that is *demands and influences* coming into the political system from agents and agencies in the national or international environment. Demands or proposals may of course not only originate from actors in the environment, but also from amongst decision-making elites themselves and, of course, all such demands may also be balanced or countered by *oppositions*. The environment, therefore, is constituted by the economic and social structure – including culture and the political culture – in which interests, ideas and agents develop: and the latter will seek to influence, maintain or change rules, arrangements and distribution of resources through the political system. And though the focus of this paper is on the political system – the linked set of processes by which such decisions are made and implemented – it should in no way be taken to assume that it is in practice isolated.

(ii) Second, most stable political systems are seldom (if at all) sustained solely by a monopoly of force (legitimate or not) in the hands of the state or dominant elite, but also by *legitimacy*, that is by acceptance of the rules of the game, or general support for the process whereby decisions are made and implemented and, often and more widely, for the broad parameters of the socio-economic system. This constitutes another crucial input. In many societies, however, that is not the case; and seriously disaffected groups, communities or regions may *withhold* or *withdraw* legitimacy by refusing to accept the rules of the game and hence the very state itself with far-reaching implications for continuity, stability and development. Secessionist, irredentist, revolutionary and other movements are examples of this. But *support* needs to be differentiated from legitimacy in that it refers to support for the government or regime. Legitimacy may remain stable but support may drop: they may vary independently of each other.

(iii) However, not all ‘demands’ get through: *gatekeepers* are critical figures at a number of points and in a number of institutions who may encourage, discourage, allow or deny access of people, ideas, demands and influences. And in analysing any political system one should always be alert to interests and ideas which may not get heard, aired or through, because of the structures of power (and ideological power) and the role of gatekeepers in the process.

(iv) Moreover – and certainly in modern political systems – those engaged in the making of policy and decisions (for example politicians and civil servants) may themselves have interests, ideas, proposals and preferences which they want to advance or implement. These are best thought of as *within-puts*, as Easton describes them, for not all policy decisions, or even contestations, arise in the local or wider environment.

(v) Policy-formation is not only a response to demands and oppositions, but is also often strongly influenced by *lobbying* – some legitimate and open, some not.

(vi) The decisions which emanate from the political system thus constitute the *outputs*. They feed back into the wider social, economic and political environment. If popular, successful or beneficial, and effectively implemented, they will in turn help to boost *support*, not only for the system but for the decision-makers (for instance the patrons, party or coalition in power). But, equally, if not popular, successful or beneficial, or if they work only for the benefit or disadvantage of some, they may generate further *demands* and lower support. This may, also, affect levels of legitimacy and hence acceptance of the rules of the game. Outputs can, and usually do, precipitate both increased support *and* opposition.

(vii) It is important to note that the idea of the ‘political system’ does not refer simply to a place or set of *formal, specialized or differentiated* political institutions or organizations (though it of course may include them in some contexts). Rather, the ‘political system’ needs to be understood as a set of

processes; better still, as the set of *both* formal and informal institutions, interactions, processes, pressures and practices in a given unit of analysis by which collective and (theoretically) binding decisions are made for that unit.¹¹

(viii) Power is seldom a single source phenomenon, a quantum of capacity to get one's way. Rather it is the expression of a relationship between parties, each disposing of a certain (and usually different) power resource. So another way of thinking about the political system it is to see it as the structure, structures or relations of power through which decisions are made and implemented.

(ix) Conventionally, the unit (or focus) of analysis in the examination of political systems has been the national level of the nation-state (Almond, et al, 2004), but it could just as easily be a sub-national state in a federation, or local government, or even a sector within an economy – such as agriculture or transport or education. It could also be an organization, such as the civil service, a church, a company or a university. Each, crudely put, is a political system in its own right and, as an institution, each will have its own set of rules, procedures and practices in which relations of power and the 'mobilization of bias'¹² are expressed, and through which decisions are made. And each will have an environment on which it impacts and which, in turn, impacts upon it. In this respect it is therefore important to note also that the processes of implementation can be highly political, too. Political forces can, for instance, distort how even agreed budgets are used or decisions applied.

(x) As mentioned above, discussing the political system in this way may seem to imply that it is autonomous; that it is distinct or isolated from other systems within the society – such as the economic system or the social system. For analytical purposes it is, but in reality it is not. Influences, pressures, demands, links, connections emanating from its environment (both internal and external) establish complex and unavoidable relations between polity (for

¹¹ Easton refers to this as the 'authoritative allocation of values'.

¹² This refers to E.E. Schattschneider's observation that all institutions entail the 'mobilization of bias' with respect to their purposes, processes and power relations (1960:71).

short) and these other systems.¹³ The challenge is to find a systematic way of exploring their interactions. Business organizations, for instance, wanting lower taxes or higher protective tariffs, for example, may make demands on the political system, as may unions pushing for better conditions or minimum wage legislation. Likewise, *caciques*, patrons or ‘big men’ may seek advantages or special favours for themselves or their followers (perhaps in return for votes or loyalty). The kind of power and influence which they can bring to bear, the points of access which they utilise and the manner in which they do so, formally or informally, is part of the political process and hence part of the political system. A business, whose main job is making ping-pong balls, *becomes* part of the political process and is acting politically when it makes demands for better protection, on its own or through its business association. And (especially in the age of globalization) external influences also – political, economic, ideological – impact on the political system, as they do on other systems.

(xi) Crucially, therefore, it is in these *relations* between ‘polity’ and ‘economy’, internal and external, in any society, that ‘political economy’ resides. In short, to make sense of ‘political economy’, so-called, we need *first* to understand how politics (or the polity or political system) works and how the economy (or economic system) works, and *then* to explore how and where they interact with each other and with what effects for developmental outcomes. ‘Political economy’ is not, as it were, a third or new way, or the ectoplasm of some entirely new interdisciplinary discipline: it is the *relations* of the two which, in each case, need to be identified and mapped.¹⁴

¹³ Likewise, it is possible to analyse the economic system or the social system, as abstractions, and trace the influences of other systems (such as the political system) on their practices. After all, laws and regulations governing economic activity are precisely an example of how requirements, emanating from the political system, impact on and affect behaviour in the economic system. And norms, flowing from the socio-cultural or religious/ideological system, likewise, impact on how people act economically.

¹⁴ The notion of ‘political economy’ is sometimes presented as if it were an independent domain. Referring to the DoC work, Merilee Grindle has argued that it ‘...addresses gaps in knowledge about country-specific history and political economy that often surround decision making about policy and programmatic interventions in particular country contexts’ (Grindle, 2005: 8). But it may also be useful to think of ‘political economy’ (when not understood as a method of enquiry) as being constituted by the relations between political processes (as expressed in and through the political system) and economic practices (as expressed in the ‘economic system’).

(xii) In short, if politics is understood as *all the activities of cooperation, conflict and negotiation involved in decisions about the use, production and distribution of resources*, the political system (at least for a given unit of analysis) is that set of dynamic, formal and informal institutionally-shaped interactions, practices and processes through which these activities occur.

(xiii) It is important to stress a point made above that (despite earlier criticism of Easton to the contrary) the basic framework of analysis is regime neutral and carries no evaluative implications. Deploying the central concepts in the approach can contribute to showing where, why and how some political systems appear to work (that is they do not fail or collapse), others stumble along, while yet others disintegrate, fail or collapse. Moreover, it enables practitioners to get a sharper focus on where problems, limitations and blockers are and hence where programmes may be more effectively aimed and tailored. Likewise, it facilitates the identification and location in or around the political system of ‘drivers’, or potential agents, of change.

(xiv) Finally, the system approach is thus different to a typically ‘constitutionalist’ (or ‘old’ institutionalist) approach to politics in that it provides space for the impact and interaction of *both* formal and informal sources and forms of power and influence, and it also provides a framework for identifying where and how they are deployed. It is also different to a ‘political economy’ approach in that it starts from the premise that political systems and processes need, *first*, to be conceptualised *independently* of economic ones, but only so that the way in which they interact with each other can be much more directly traced and illustrated.

3 Conceptual blocks of ‘the political system’

Any system or structure, practical or theoretical, is by definition a set of relations of the parts that constitute it, and the ‘political system’ (or process) is no exception. In developing this model of the political system, I shall elaborate the framework in sequential stages of increasing complexity, focussing in turn on the main components and exploring their dynamic interaction. At the risk of repetition, it is important to stress again that the central purpose is to offer a usable framework for thinking systematically (no pun intended) about politics and political processes, in order to analyse where and how they impact on economic policy and practice. Theoretically the framework is applicable to all societies, irrespective of their political or socio-economic structures, and also to sub-national units as well as sectoral domains within them.

3.1 *Elements of the framework* (See **Diagram 1**)

As **Diagram 1** (above) showed, there is a number of main categories which define the basic elements of the ‘political system’.

- Environment
- Legitimacy (geographical, constitutional, political)
- Inputs
 - (i) Demands, influences and oppositions, and
 - (ii) Supports and withdrawal
- Modes (of demand and action by agents)
- Gatekeepers
- Policy formation power map
- Lobbying
- Decision-making
- Outputs
- Feedback ‘loop’
- Capacity and politics of implementation

Their interaction shapes the character of the political system and the implications for developmental trajectories and outcomes and might also form the basis for a classification of types and developmental paths, if needed. For the present, it is now useful to look at each of these in greater detail.

3.2 *Environment*

As outlined above, the environment refers to the overall structural context of the political system and includes both national and international features. While our primary interest here is in the socio-economic, cultural, ideological and political cultural environment, a more complete framework would include natural environmental features, including climate and location, though we need not go into that here. The point and purpose of exploring the structural characteristics of economy and society in a DoC study is, however, not simply to provide a descriptive or statistical account (in the manner of the CIA Factbook, for instance). It is rather to help identify the groups, agents and organizations (where they exist) which are associated with the particular economic and social structures of the society, whether these be of class, caste, patronage, ethnicity or religion - or the complexities associated with a combination of them. So the structural features of the economic, social and cultural environment are not important simply as backdrop, but need to be understood in order that we may trace the provenance, and potential provenance, of groups, social movements and political agencies whose salience, relative power and political interaction shape the political process and political system. Moreover, no society today, or its polity, economy and social order, operates in isolation of the wider regional and, especially, global environment. A vast range of economic, political social, cultural and ideational influences feed into even the remotest parts of the world.¹⁵

3.3 *Legitimacy*

While hard to measure (especially in non-democratic polities), legitimacy refers to the general level of acceptance of the rules of the political game.¹⁶ Legitimacy is not the exclusive monopoly of democratic polities, but is a property found in many political systems, past and present, ranging from

¹⁵ Working some time ago up the Lemanak River in the Iban area of Sarawak, I came across a longhouse, with basic electricity, powered by a portable generator, which fed the TV and on which was playing, as we arrived, 'The Incredible Hulk'.

¹⁶ There is a good account of the formal properties of legitimacy in McLean and McMillan (2004: 303-4).

African chiefdoms, to absolutist European polities based on the divine right of kings, to the Mandate of Heaven which was the basis of royal legitimacy in China for close to 2000 years. Legitimacy is the glue which sustains the rules of political game and their operation through the political system. There are a number of dimensions of legitimacy which need not be spelled out in detail here, but some are worth mentioning briefly. *Geographical* legitimacy refers to acceptance by people of the boundaries within which they live (that is they do not wish to secede or be part of another state); *constitutional* legitimacy refers to acceptance of the rules of the political game, formal or informal; and *political* legitimacy refers to acceptance that the rules are fairly and properly applied. Secessionist or irredentist movements indicate low or zero legitimacy for the basic rules of the game amongst some communities (for example in former Yugoslavia, Northern Spain, Chechnya, Northern Sri Lanka) and maintaining control may sap the political authority and resources of a regime.

- 3.4 And the *inputs* cover the two main groups of political factors which are crucial in the dynamic of a political system: (a) demands, oppositions and influences; and (b) supports and withdrawals.

(i) *Demands, oppositions and influences* (See **Diagram 2**)

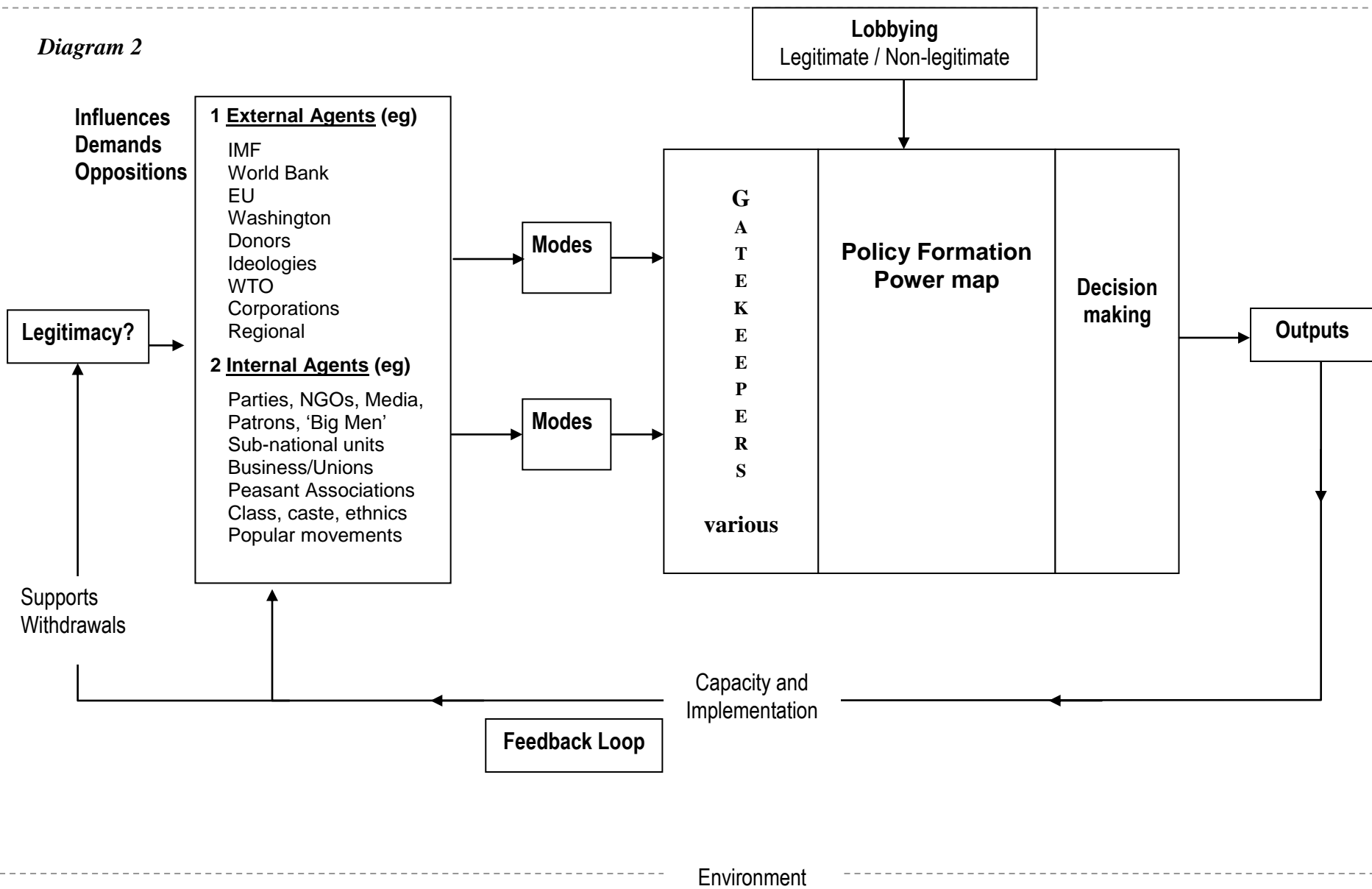
These include all those demands (e.g. for lower taxes, land reform, accessible clean water, fewer regulations, nationalization of major natural resource industries, better roads or improved schooling, more liberal trade regimes, democratization, special favours for kin or clan or region), and the oppositions to such demands, which are the fundamental contestations of politics. But they also include a range of what I've termed 'influences' which may not be expressed directly as demands or oppositions but which may arise in the national or international environment (in the form of examples, ideas, movements, expectations). In democratic polities where freedom of expression may be more deeply entrenched, these are likely to be more open and explicit. In non-democratic or partially democratic polities such expression may be

more cautious and careful, and the ‘demands’ and ‘oppositions’ may be as likely to be diverted to quiet ‘lobbying’ activity (see below), as in the practices of court politics, or through patronage chains. There is something of an overlap between this category and that of ‘lobbying’ (see below and **diagram 6**), and agents in the demand/oppositions domain are commonly also to be found lobbying, thus illustrating the point that the boxes in the diagrams should not be taken as having fixed or impermeable boundaries.

The variety of agents or agencies expressing such demand will vary considerably, as the diagram illustrates: parties, NGOs, unions, businesses, patrons, unions, religious groups and more. In identifying both demand and the articulation of demand, it is important to discover also how demand is typically expressed and the nature of the organizations and individuals doing it. If parties, what is their inner structure and distribution of power? Do demands flow up patron-client chains and whose demands get expression, and how? Are such chains independent of political parties or embedded in them? Are there tensions between them? Where and how do the media fit into the picture as both sources and conduits of demand? Are they independent, do they represent a range of views? And are trades unions, where they exist, independent of political parties and free to organize, especially dominant parties, or have they been effectively co-opted and neutralised? What is the nature of business associations - whose interests do they express, and how? And what is their relationship with offices of the state? In short, the way in which influences, demands and oppositions are expressed and channelled is an important element in the anatomy of power and politics in any society and hence absolutely central to understanding the drivers and blockers of change.

As the diagram shows, demands, oppositions and influences may be internal or external. It is not hard to see how external agents in the contemporary context can have a powerful impact on the decision-making processes of political systems, as illustrated recently (2005) and dramatically by the World Bank’s Governance and Economic Management Programme (GEMAP) for Liberia. The variety of methods, or modes, for the expression of demand, as will emerge shortly, are also well worth analysing and mapping.

Diagram 2



(ii) *Supports and withdrawals* (See **Diagram 3**)

As **Diagram 3** shows, we are dealing here with both measurable and often immeasurable (and often rapidly changing) levels of support for the regime or government of the day. There are internal and external aspects of support and withdrawals. If legitimacy refers to the acceptance or rejection of the fundamental rules of the game, *support* refers to the much more short-term fluctuation of approval and backing for a government or regime and both affects, and is affected by, the games within the rules. As will emerge later (see **Diagram 7**), this dynamic is often a function over time of the kinds of decision taken and the character of their implementation. So, lowering tariffs, for instance, may be welcomed by one class, sector, community or region and be greeted with bitterness by others. Levels of support are seldom stable, and in all polities they fluctuate across time and across different groups within the society. Support for, or disapproval of, a government can be expressed most obviously through opinion polls, votes and the media in open democratic polities. It is less easy to measure this in societies where there is less freedom of this kind. While formal democratic processes may be used to express support, groups which command different power resources can also make life hard for governments, whether they be unions, business associations, professionals or civil servants.

Regimes also require the support of the forces of coercion – the army and the police services in particular – and the history of the modern state and its capacity to promote development can even be written in terms of the manner in which it gained a monopoly of the legitimate use of force and eliminated, seduced or co-opted other armed forces (Tilly, 1992; Bates, 2001). Support of the military (at least its loyalty) is thus essential for a political system, and a monopoly of such force is often (following Weber) thought to be one of the defining features of a modern state.¹⁷ But reliance on coercion, which may be necessary for a regime to maintain itself in power, may also reduce *both* its

¹⁷ In his classic study of revolution, Crane Brinton (1965: 89) observed that “No government has ever fallen before attackers until it has lost control over its armed forces or lost the ability to use them effectively”.

legitimacy and support amongst some (even most) sections of the society. But, equally, a regime that is both authoritarian and yet delivers rising standards of living, may maintain both its legitimacy and support over long periods (as in South Korea after 1960).

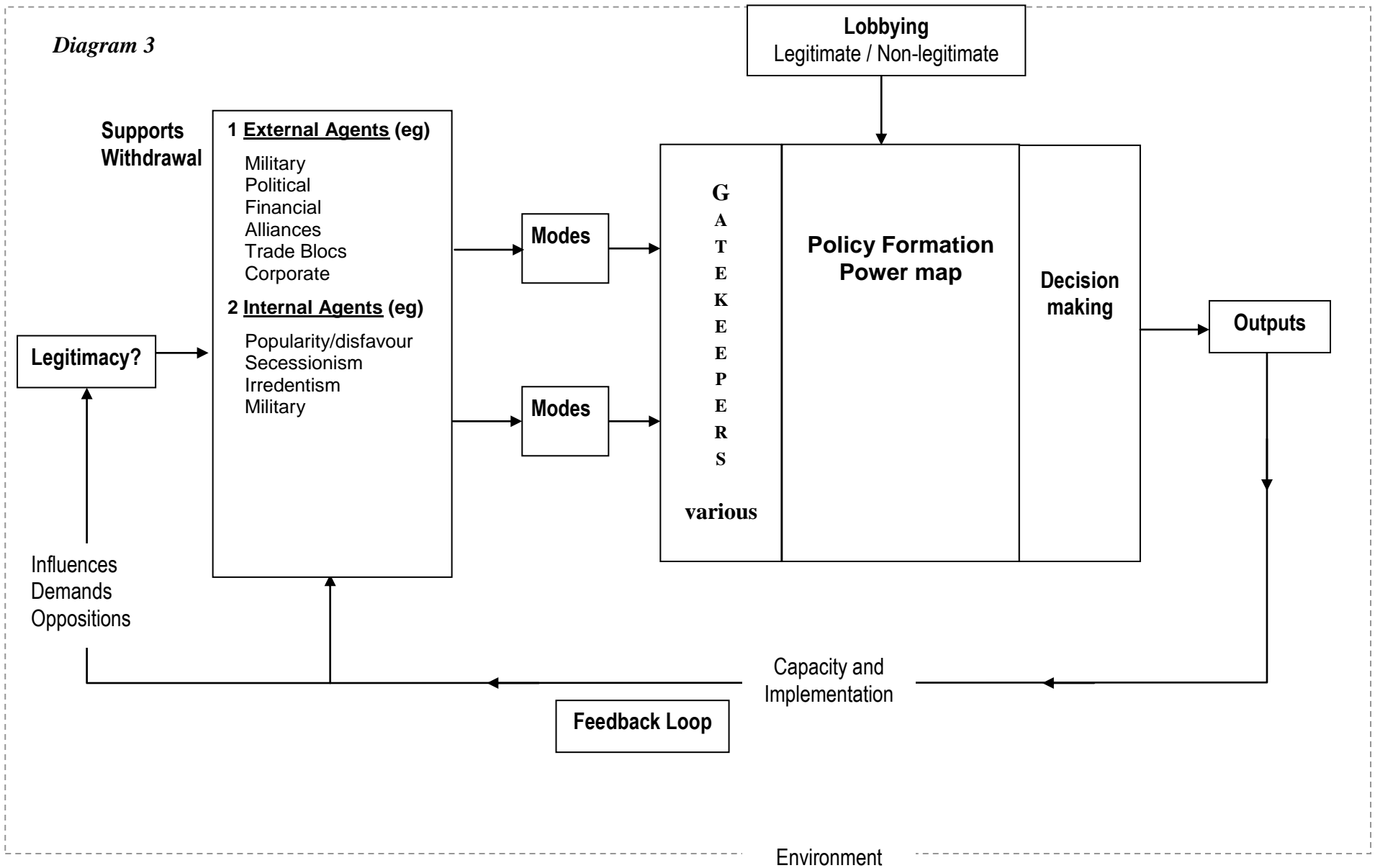
External support may also be expressed through recognition, finance or military assistance and may help to prop up a regime for long periods and maintain stability. But the moment it is withdrawn (as in Eastern Europe after 1989) the regime may simply collapse, producing a period of complex transition during which there may be considerable contestation over getting agreement about new rules of the game (both political and economic) and ensuring compliance with them. The with-holding of financial support from Kenya by the Paris Club in 1991 was decisive in pushing the government of Kenya to commence a process of democratization.

When participants in the electoral process suspect that the rules are being thwarted or breached (or will be) by incumbent governments, and hence withdraw from elections, not only is support for the government undermined but the very legitimacy of the electoral system (at least) is reduced (not uncommonly the case in new or born-again democracies) and not restored until fairness is both done and seen to be done.

There is a great variety of factors which shape the ebb and flow of support. Legitimacy of the institutional rules and processes may remain strong while support for a particular government may wane and support for an opposition may rise. But over time, the way in which these relations of contestation – essentially between society and state, but mediated through parties, pressure groups and governments – work themselves out through the political system is crucial in the process of establishing the fundamental rules of the game which underpin the formation and consolidation of effective states and hence has profound implications for development possibilities. Hence this focus in greater detail on the nature of these internal and external supports, legitimacies and withdrawals in the process of the establishment, maintenance and transformation of polities may be of particular relevance in those societies

where democratization is under way. And it may be of equal importance – but with different policy implications – in societies where democracy is stalled or suppressed (as in Burma) but where it might be of significance to identify the sources and forces of change whose actions may be instrumental in unblocking the process.

Diagram 3



3.5 *Modes* (see diagram 4)

By *modes* I mean the means and methods by which and through which demands, oppositions and influences may be expressed. *External* sources may use conditionality, threats, terms of admission to organizations (eg the EU and its position in relation to Turkey on the question of civil rights) and much more to communicate their demands. *Internal* agents and agencies have an even wider range of modes at their disposal, depending on the degree of freedom and autonomy and the political culture. These range from voting and campaigns, public airing of issues and ideas, the use of the media through to strikes, sit-ins, go-slows, riot and rebellion (for example, the pattern of urban ‘bread riots’ which has commonly accompanied price-increases, perhaps brought about by the demands of external actors to reduce subsidies).

3.6 *Gatekeepers* (see diagram 4)

How do demands, oppositions and influences ‘get through’? Not all do and the gatekeepers are those who are positioned or have the power to let them through or keep them out. Gatekeepers are found in all political systems, whether national or local, sometimes in formal roles and positions, sometimes in informal ones. Gate-keeping may be overt or it may be covert; it may be explicit, or it may be so implicated in the structure of power and the ideology associated with the structure that some ideas and interests are never expressed or always kept out.

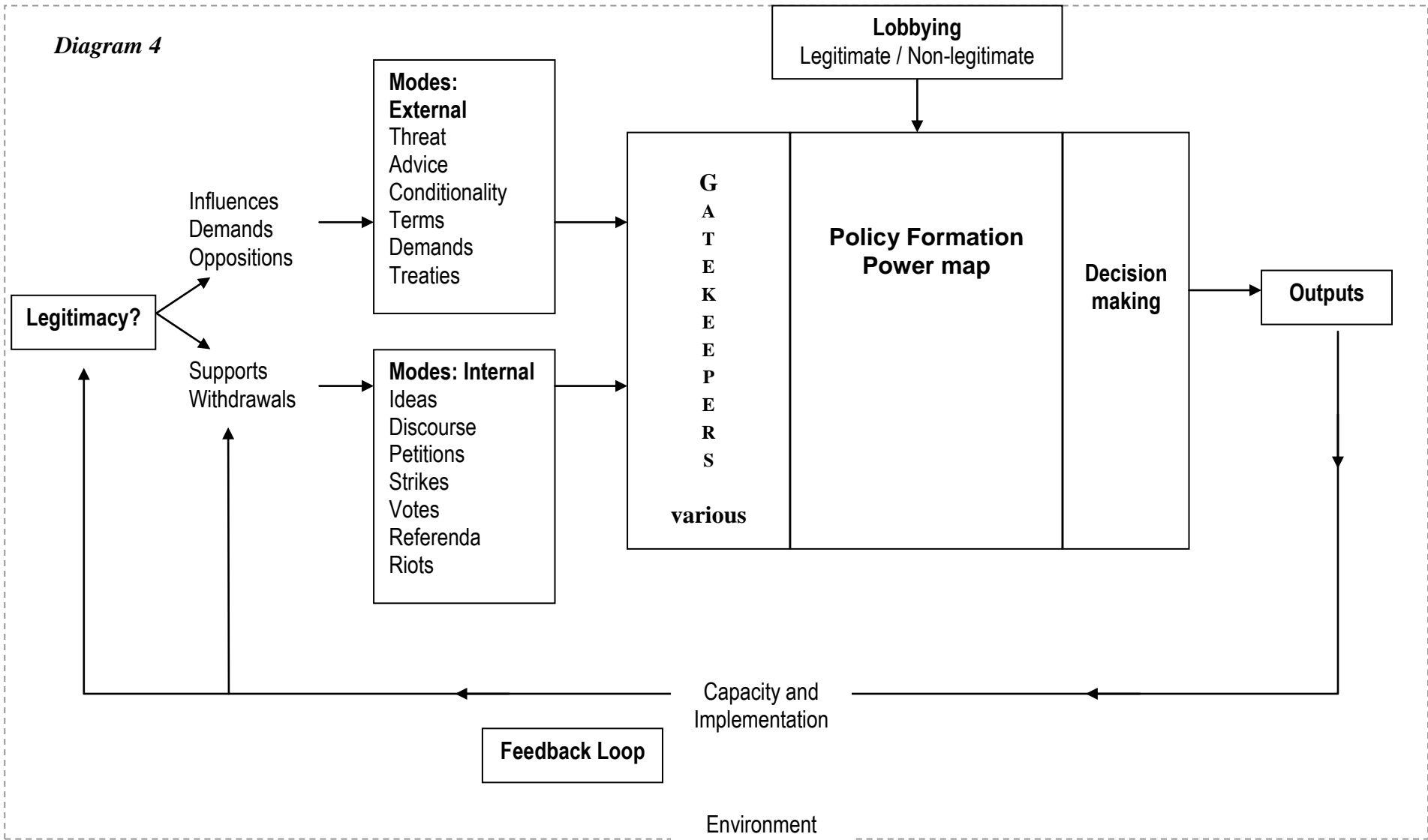
Gate-keepers may be thought to be primarily concerned with controlling the access of groups and interests and their demands. And the key keepers may perhaps be patrons, ‘big men’ or political bosses. Leaders in political parties may perform this function. Officials, too, may act as gatekeepers in terms of direct access to decision-makers with authority and power. But controlling the access of *ideas* is also something which gatekeepers do. In his discussion of power, Steven Lukes (1974) refers to a ‘third dimension’ of power, whereby certain ideas simply never get aired or discussed because the prevailing discourse is so all-pervasive and powerful that such ideas never even surface. In this respect the role of the media, think-tanks, intellectuals and religious

officials or organizations can sustain a particular orthodoxy so as to exclude alternative ideas from emerging into public debate.

The diagram suggests a clear distinction between demands, modes and gate-keeping, but in fact there is often overlap and blurring. Some demands may never get through, some may never be heard. But, equally, there may be well-organized and synergistic relations between some agents with particular demands, modes of action, supports and gate-keepers, with deep and penetrative links to key players in the policy formation power map, links (through patronage or influence) which sustain a particular distribution of power or paradigm of policies.

And it is to the power formation policy map that I now turn.

Diagram 4



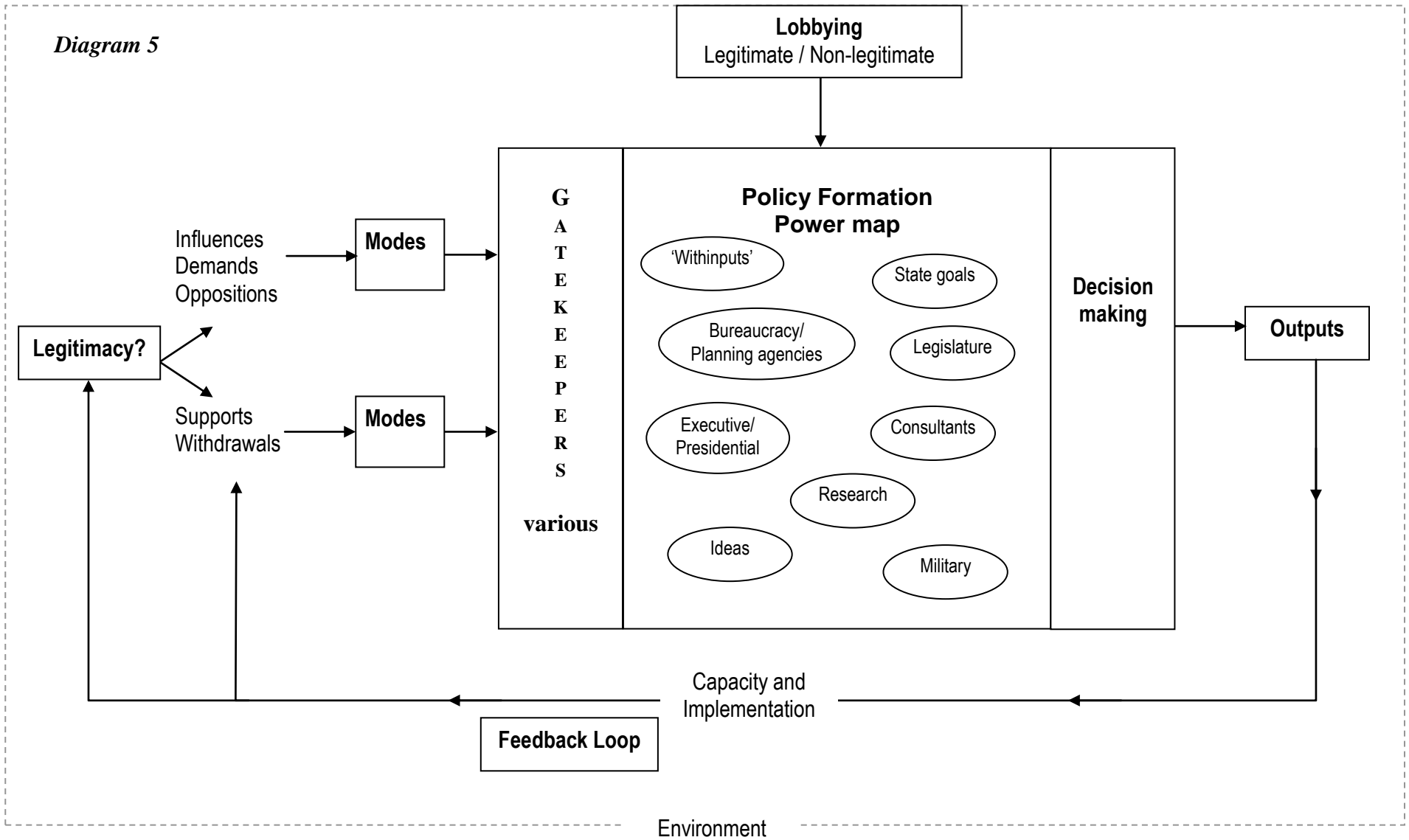
3.7 *Policy formation power map* (see **Diagram 5**)

This refers to that critical process – somewhat stylized in this presentation – through which all the different interests, influences, demands, oppositions and ideas (plus, sometimes, calculations of impact on support) interact in the contestation over policy decisions. It also is intended to indicate the variety of agents and their sources of power which interact in shaping those decisions. If an implication thus far that has been that all sources of demand, opposition and influence are only ‘outside’ the box, then that must be refuted. Easton refers to ‘withinputs’, that is ideas, interest, goals, policies, objectives of the decision-makers themselves – formal holders of power and authority - which can be very important and which get fed into the process. And it is often the case that policy decisions are the result of these ‘withinputs’ and not the consequence of popular or other demands arising in the broader environment which may be carried through as policy proposals to be decided on.

Many factors feed into the politics of this process and unpacking it may never be easy. Much will depend in each case on the distribution of power in the policy making arena, as expressed particularly in the relations between executives, legislatures, bureaucracies and militaries, for instance; and much will also depend on the relations between these elites and wider socio-economic and political interests and agents. State or governmental goals may generate ‘withinputs’; research and bureaucratic influences may impact on the form and detail of policy, or undermine it; the character of the formal institutions – whether presidential or parliamentary, federal or unitary – will shape the context within which policy is made and particularly the part played by legislatures (are they strong or weak, independent or rubber-stamps in relation to powerful executives?); inter as well as intra departmental relations may influence outcomes; the extent to which research findings and consultant advice is respected will, also, be factors; and prevailing or challenging ideas (from within or without) may affect substance or detail.

Moreover, the whole field of policy transfer fits into this dimension of the political system since most policy transfer, when it happens, occurs beyond the reach of civil society and directly within the ambit of state institutions.

Diagram 5



3.8 *'Lobbying'* (see **Diagram 6**)

The politics of the policy formation process is also strongly affected by what may be called lobbying, for short-hand purposes. It can be both internal and external, legitimate and illegitimate. Lobbying activities in some respects overlap with demands, oppositions and influences (see above) and the same actors may well be active in both spheres. Some lobbyists may also be gatekeepers. In so far as there is a distinction to be made between these elements in the political process, it is that the activities of demand and opposition are probably (but not universally so) characterized by greater transparency and formalism than those of gate-keeping and lobbying.

External lobbying – from the IFIs, bilateral donors, multinational corporations, investors, creditors and others – may take a variety of forms and may target a variety of actors operating in the politics of policy formation. The President of the World Bank is more likely than a potential investor (unless of very considerable significance) to have private discussions with the President or Prime Minister of a country, for example. But the investors may seek assurances from senior Ministers or officials concerning the security of their proposed investment.

Internally, local or regional 'big men', business people, churches, NGOs, unions, clients of various patrons within the machinery of government and others may all seek to steer policy decisions in particular directions, sometimes their own, so to speak. In established and stable polities this is commonplace and considered entirely legitimate, often expressed through well-worn and known channels (whether commissions of enquiry, think-tanks, policy networks, conferences, publications or regular consultation practices).

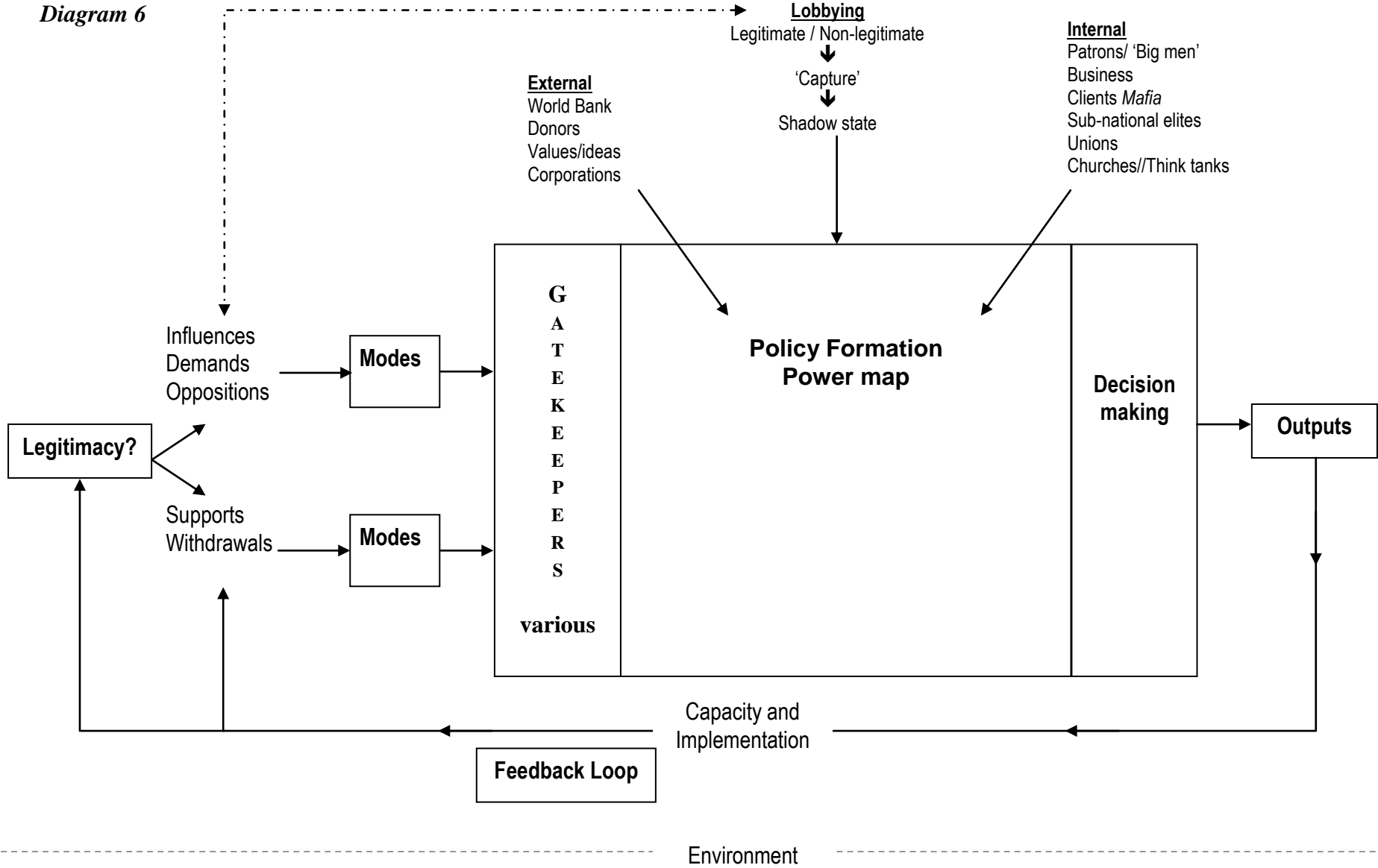
However, the line between legitimacy and illegitimacy is never easy to hold in this area and lobbying can easily tip over into illegitimacy, in the form of personal influence, 'backstairsism' or naked corruption. Illegitimate lobbying may range from one-off acts of policy piracy, that is 'capture' on a single policy issue, through to a more sustained pattern of state capture or – for what

it really is in practice – the capture of policy formation. Either internal or external sources may be involved, sometimes both, and - at the furthest extreme – may give rise to the emergence of what have come to be called ‘shadow states’ or ‘ shadow polities’ (Reno, 1995; Duffy, nd and 200; Funke and Solomon, 2000).

3.9 *Decision-making*

This is meant to refer to the point where decisions are finally made and authorised with implications for action in the form of outputs. Intent or design becomes policy, usually symbolised formally by some process or signature.

Diagram 6



3.9 *Outputs*

The form of the outputs will vary – they may take the form of laws, in the conventional sense, regulations framed in terms of such laws, ‘deals’, decisions on specific matters (contracts, siting of a dam, new schools) or – more broadly – new institutional arrangements governing economic or social relations.

But it is in and through the implementation of such outputs that the feedback loop, so to speak, of the system re-links with the social, economic and political environment and impacts positively or negatively on the inputs and, in particular, the demands, oppositions and influences on the one hand, and the supports and withdrawals (and possibly the legitimacy) on the other.

3.10 *Implementation and capacity (See Diagram 7)*

Laws passed, decisions made, ‘deals’ struck, institutions crafted: it is one thing to reach this point in the political process but quite another to achieve the implementation. This aspect of a political system involves the critical question of how and to what extent that which has been decided can be or will be implemented as intended. There are a number of potential aspects of this which have a direct bearing on the operation of the political system.

First, there are standard questions of public administration and in particular the ‘principal-agent’ problem which concerns how decisions made by ‘principals’, at the policy-making end of an organization (or relationship) are implemented, as intended, by the ‘agents’, and how principals can ensure that they are. How do legislatures or policy-makers ensure that bureaucracies do what is intended? What enables or allows agents to blow policy off course?

Second, and especially in typical developing countries (but not only), there are questions to do with the characteristics of the bureaucracy with respect to its autonomy from political pressure, training and commitment. Issues of capacity

are central here as is the organization of the bureaucracy and the capacity for joined up administration. Can and do line ministries work effectively together? How far do turf wars or the patronage politics (when present) associated with office holders impede implementation within and between the ministries? What kind of continuity is there in terms of bureaucratic service (in many Latin American countries large swathes of the senior civil servants are moved out when a new President takes office and new staff moved in).¹⁸ Moreover, corruption manifests itself not only at the point of policy formation and decision-making, but also in the course of implementation, where issues to do with achieving compliance with institutional arrangements and programmes can be very significant.

3.11 *Feedback impact*

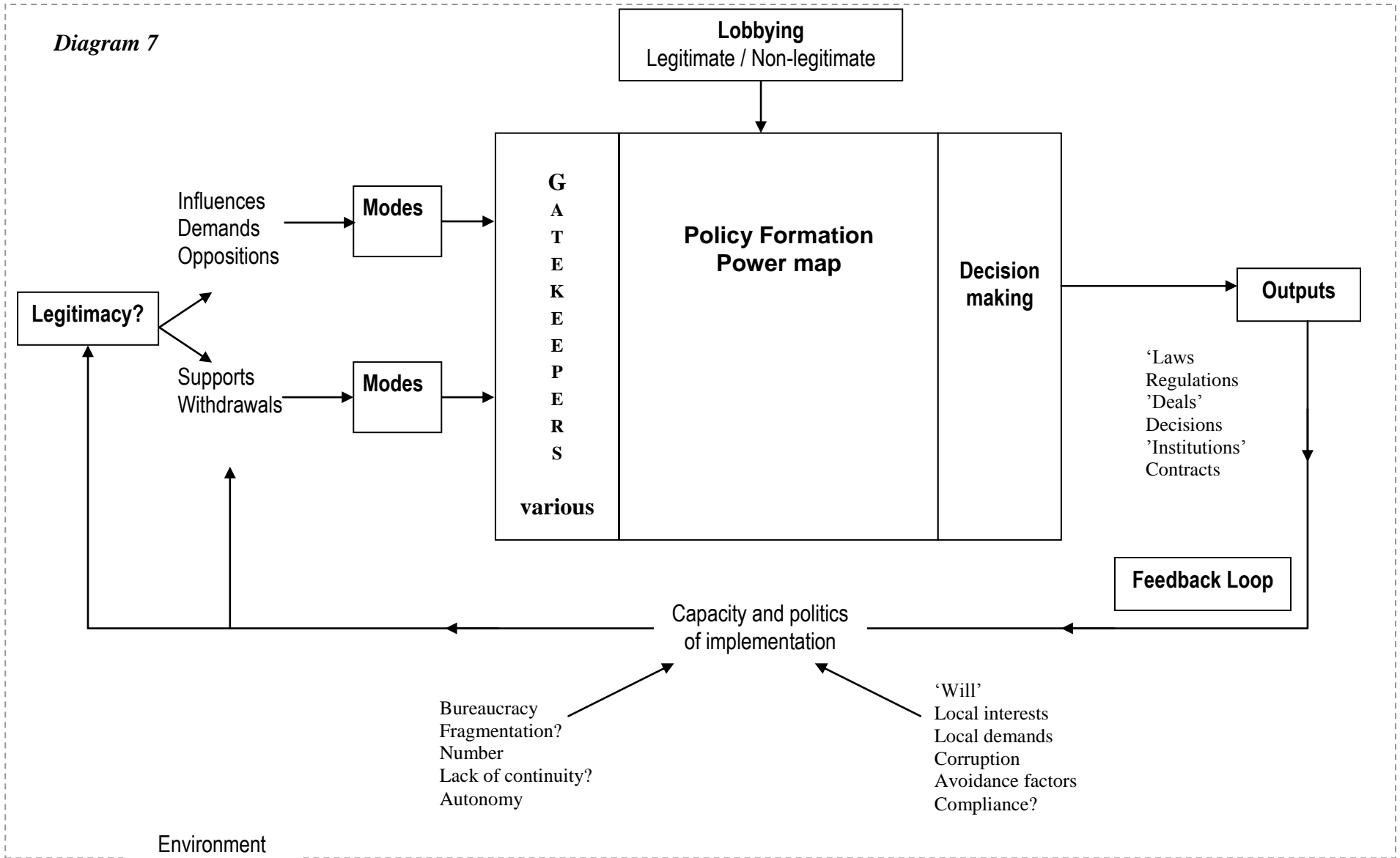
The net effect of implementation, at least in its stylized form as presented here, will affect both the supports and the demands. Stated crudely, the support of those satisfied, enhanced or empowered by the output - new schools, clean water, better policing, less pollution, nationalization of major resources - is likely to increase. Those who lose, or who miss out on these things (patrimonial or patronage politics may have steered resources to one region rather than another) are unlikely to react in the same way. If disaffected, their disaffection may deepen; alternatively it may stimulate more demands from them - through whatever channels are available - for their share of benefits or for a change in policy. Oppositions may intensify, coalitions may be built, internal and external agents may join forces. Class alignments may sharpen - or weaken. Attempts at institutional change - land or tenancy reform for example - may trigger conflict. In each case the manner of the impact needs to be analysed, and the ability of groups or organizations to respond needs to be assessed.

¹⁸ Ben Ross Schneider reports that in the 'appointive bureaucracies' of Brazil and Mexico, something in the order of 50,000 positions are filled by political appointment when a new administration comes into office, including 'all positions with real power' (Schneider, 1999: 291-292).

Where the rules of the game are well accepted, legitimacy for the system may be unaffected though support for party or government in power may shift. In each case it is crucial to be clear about the distinction between these two facets of the political process. But where the rules of the game are not well-established or widely accepted as being legitimate, adverse outcomes (for certain groups, regions or communities) may only make more difficult the task of achieving consensus about rules, for the 'losers' may simply seek power or influence in order to reverse the output or in order to access the benefits for themselves.

Whatever may be the particular pattern in a given case, the framework outlined here should assist in analysing the dynamics of the political process through the political system as sketched above.

Diagram 7



4 Conclusions and implications

My purpose in this paper and the previous one has been to suggest a way of thinking about politics and to outline a framework for analysis which focuses sharply and explicitly on *political* processes. Though a number of approaches and (more or less explicit) frameworks populate the discipline of political science,¹⁹ few have much traction when engaging with the great variety of polities found in the developing world, as many have their provenance and anchorage in the analysis of mainly established and stable democratic capitalist polities of the west. Pluralism, for instance, with its roots in standard institutional politics, presupposes quite strongly that there is a wide degree of consensus about the rules of the game and that the game is effectively played by established groups and organizations within it. Such conditions do not apply in many developing polities. Marxist approaches have as their primary focus the emergence, structure and relations of classes and class forces in the economy and their impact upon politics, power and the state. But in many developing countries, as Richard Sklar (1979) pointed out many years ago, the salience of class (and certainly class consciousness) is low and class formation is commonly a consequence of the control of state power and not economic power. Rational choice and historical institutionalism, as indicated above and in the earlier paper, have a number of limitations when it comes to the analysis of institutional interactions.

Although all offer important insights, none offers the kind of usable and relatively neutral framework afforded by the political system approach outlined here. In conclusion, therefore, I shall try to draw together some of the implications and important points arising from this discussion.

- The idea of the political system, as a conceptual approach, appears to emphasise – indeed exaggerate – the autonomy of political processes. That has been my intention, but only for analytical purposes, for few political scientists would ignore the interactions of political processes with other processes in the social environment, whether economic or cultural, internal or external.
- But in order to explore such interactions and relations it is necessary, I think, to extract political processes from this wider context in order, subsequently, to

¹⁹ Some of these were discussed in the first paper of this series (Leftwich, 2006: pp 23-43). For a much fuller and more detailed account see Hay, Lister and Marsh (2006)

reintegrate the analysis in a broader understanding of historical and developmental trajectories, just as economists tend to extract economic processes and interactions – markets, transaction costs, property rights, entry problems, credit availability and the like – from the wider social, cultural and political environment.

- For that reason I have wanted to ‘rescue’ both the idea of ‘politics’ and the idea of the ‘political system’ from approaches which dissolve them in often obscure and difficult-to-decipher ‘political economy’ considerations. This is not to suggest that the ‘political system’ is an empirically isolable entity in all societies, only that it is worth thinking about it in this way in order to explore its relations with other social and economic ‘systems’.
- The approach adopted here has two other related advantages. The first is that it is ‘regime neutral’ and can be used as a framework for making sense of the political processes of almost any society, and can be extended to the analysis of sectors and major institutions within it.
- The second is that it is politically or ideologically neutral in that it does not favour any particular theory of politics or approach to political analysis. For instance, where structural features in economy and society have given rise to class forces, their salience can be explored and the factors (perhaps the persistence of patron-client cultures and networks) which fragment or restrain the emergence of common interest organizations can be identified and analysed; where widespread legitimacy prevails, elements of pluralist analysis may be appropriate and helpful; and where the principles of individualism have spread through economy, culture and society – expressed, for instance in law and in property rights – rational choice assumptions may help to make sense of social, economic and political behaviour in distinctive institutional settings.
- Moreover, the approach adopted here enables one to identify and track the actions and interactions of both formal and informal institutions, as well as formal and informal aspects of power,²⁰ as they interact in the political processes which define the political system.
- It also helps to identify and locate potential agents or agencies of change and it might suggest where and how coalitions of broader interest may be formed. This, in turn, might help to identify where efforts may be concentrated to facilitate reform. And the framework provides scope for identifying where change (of whatever kind) is blocked, and how it is blocked.
- The same is true of governance problems. Do governance deficiencies lie in the input area – accountability and voice? Are these held back by gatekeepers in or beyond political parties? Is the problem located in the policy formation power map area and, if so, where and in which group? Does it lie in executive-legislative log-jams (which can occur in presidential systems)? Or is it because lobbying (whether by corporations or powerful big-men/patrons) distorts

²⁰ This is what Acemoglu et al (2006) refer to as ‘*de jure*’ and ‘*de facto*’ forms of power.

policy and policy processes? Or is the governance problem located in the implementation and capacity sphere?

- Any Drivers of Change study, it seems to me, would need to start with analysis which frames the political system by describing the wider historical background and economic and social structure, as most of the existing ones have often done with such skill and detail. But sooner or later such studies will need to zoom in on the political processes – whatever the formal institutional structure of the polity – which currently shape policy outcomes. And the idea and conceptualisation of the political system may help to do that.
- The approach, if applied consistently, offers a useful platform for comparative work and may even provide the explanatory basis for a classification not only of political systems but also of the paths of development (or non-development, as the case may be) adopted or most likely in each instance. Moreover, deploying the framework sensitively will help to explain where, why and how certain paths have been, or might be, adopted, whether these be sharply neo-liberal market-driven strategies, social democracy in the tropics or state-directed approaches. By addressing and trying to organise conceptually the relations of power, this focus on the political system as a set of linked processes whereby decisions about how resources are used, produced and distributed will also help to explain those situations where stagnation, crisis or collapse have occurred.
- Finally, there is the question of *political will*, or political commitment, so often referred to in the DoC and other studies as, almost, the missing link in cases of slow, poor or failed development. This is a subject and paper in its own right and cannot be dealt with in any detail here. But, as suggested in the first paper, it may no longer be helpful to think of ‘political will’ as some kind of virtue which certain individuals have or do not have, like probity or compassion. Though the attributes of individuals do count (consider Mandela or Fidel or Churchill), it may be more useful to start thinking of political will as essentially an institutional question (perhaps even the gold standard manifestation of the principal-agent relationship). Political will might thus be thought of not as an individual or group asset, but as a function of the way in which the political system works; that is of how the political processes that constitute the political system are orchestrated in a particular direction, with particular goals and outcomes in mind, by a sufficiently inclusive coalition of interests which together command the power and capacity to do so.

Of course, it will not always be easy to get at some of the detail, and of course many aspects of the model may be ambiguous and need refinement. For instance, unpacking the ‘lobbying’ process (especially its illegitimate forms) is tricky, to say the least. Further work will be needed to explore not only this aspect of the process, but also the structure of political parties, the variety of patrimonial forms, how patrons (within a government for example) relate to each other and their respective

followers – and much more. But hopefully the framework suggested here will provide a more systematic way of thinking substantively and comparatively about politics and political processes as a useful starting point for future DoC studies and other related work.

References

- Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S., and Robinson, J.A. (2006), 'Institutions as the Fundamental Cause of Long-Run Growth', in Philippe Aghion and Steve Durlauf (eds), *Handbook of Economic Growth*, (North-Holland, forthcoming).
- Almond, G.A., Powell, G. B., Strøm, K. and Dalton, R.J. (2004) *Comparative Politics Today*, 8th edition (New York, Pearson Longman).
- Bates, R.H. (2001) *Prosperity and Violence. The Political Economy of Development* (W.W. Norton and Company).
- Bockstette, V., Chanda, A. and Putterman, L (2002) 'States and Markets: The Advantage of an Early Start', *Journal of Economic Growth* 7(4), pp. 347-369.
- Booth, D., Crook, R., Gyimah-Boadi, E., Killick, T., Luckham, R. and Boateng, N. (May 2004) 'Drivers of Change in Ghana. Overview Report'. Report to DFID (London, ODI).
- Booth, D., and Cammack, D., et al (2006) 'Drivers of Change and Development in Malawi', ODI Working Paper 261 (London, ODI).
- Brinton, Crane (1965) *The Anatomy of Revolution* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ., Prentice Hall).
- Calvert, Peter (2002) *Comparative Politics* (Harlow, Longman).
- Chanda, A and Putterman, L. (2005) 'State Effectiveness, Economic Growth, and the Age of States' in Lange, M. and Rueschemeyer, D. (eds) (2005) *States and Development. Historical Antecedents of Stagnation and Advance* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan) pp 69-91.
- Clapham, C. (ed) (1982) *Private Patronage and Public Power. Political Clientelism in the Modern State* (London, Pinter).
- DFID (n.d.) 'Drivers of Change. Background Information about DOC' (London, DFID).
- Duffy, Rosaleen (nd) 'Global Governance, shadow states and the environment' (ms)
- Duffy, Rosaleen (2000) 'Ecotourism, corruption and state politics in Belize', *Third World Quarterly*, 21(3) pp 549-565.
- Easton, David (1953) *The Political System. An Enquiry Into the State of Political Science* (New York, Alfred Knopf).
- Easton, David (1957) 'An approach to an analysis of political systems' *World Politics*, 9(3), pp. 383-400
- Easton, David (1965 a) *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York, Wiley).
- Easton, David (1965 b) *A Framework for Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ., Prentice Hall).
- Easton, David (1992) 'Categories for the Systems Analysis of Politics', in Bernard Susser (ed) *Approaches to the Study of Politics* (New York, Macmillan) pp. 189-201.
- Funke, Nikki and Solomon, Hussein (2002) 'The Shadow State in Africa: A discussion', Development Policy Management Forum *Occasional Paper* No. 5, United National Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Addis Ababa, at: <http://www.dpmf.org/Occasionalpapers/occasionalpaper5.pdf>
- Grindle, Merilee (February 2005) 'Good Enough Governance Revisited.' A Report to DFID (London, DFID) mimeo.
- Hague, R. and Harrop, M. (2002) *Comparative Government and Politics. An Introduction* (Basingstoke, Palgrave).

- Hall, Peter A. (1992) 'The movement from Keynesianism to monetarism: Institutional analysis and British economic policy in the 1970s' in Steinmo, S., Thelen, K. and Longstreth, F. (1992) *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), pp 114-154.
- Hay, C., Lister, M., and Marsh, D. (eds) (2006) *The State. Theories and Issues* (Basingstoke, Palgrave).
- Kohli, A. (2004) *State Directed Development. Political Power and Industrialization in the Global Periphery* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- Lange, M. and Rueschemeyer, D. (eds) (2005) *States and Development. Historical Antecedents of Stagnation and Advance* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan).
- Leftwich, Adrian (2006) 'Drivers of Change: Refining the Analytical Framework. Part 1: Conceptual and theoretical issues', mimeo.
- Levi, M. (1997) 'A model, a method and a map: rational choice in comparative and historical analysis' in M.I Limbach and A.S. Zuckerman (eds) *Comparative Politics. Rationality, culture and structure* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press) pp. 9-41.
- Lukes, Steven (1974) *Power. A radical view* (London, Macmillan).
- McLean, I. and McMillan, A. (2003) *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*, 2nd edition (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
- Moore, Mick (2002) 'Types of Political Systems: A Practical Framework for DFID Staff' (London, DFID) mimeo.
- Newton, Ken and van Deth, J.W (2005) *Foundations of Comparative Politics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- Pierson, P. and Skocpol, T. (2002) 'Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science', in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner (eds) *The State of the Discipline* (New York, Norton), pp. 693-721.
- Reno, William (1995) *Corruption and state politics in Sierra Leone*. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- Robertson, David (1993) *The Penguin Dictionary of Politics* (Harmondsworth, Penguin).
- Schattschneider, E.E. (1960) *The Semisovereign People* (New York, Holt, Rhinehart and Winston).
- Schneider, B.R. (1999) 'The *Desarrollista* state in Brazil and Mexico' in M. Woo-Cumings (ed) *The Developmental State* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press), pp 276-305.
- Sklar, R. (1979) 'The Nature of Class Domination in Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 17(4) pp 531-552.
- Susser, B. (ed) (1992) 'Systems Analysis' in his *Approaches to the Study of Politics* (New York, Macmillan) pp. 180-188.
- Tilly, Charles (1984) *Big structures, large processes, huge comparisons* (New York, Russell Sage Foundation).
- Tilly, Charles (1992) *Coercion, capital and European States, AD 990-1992* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell).