



REAGAN'S CHOICE: foundation for Enis Analytical Framework[©]

Ronald Reagan (A Time for Choosing, 1964): "I'd like to suggest there is no such thing as a left or right. There's only an up or down—up to man's age old dream, the ultimate in individual freedom consistent with law and order, or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism." I, Ben Enis, suggest that Mr. Reagan's choice can become a useful framework for analyzing public policy.

The Enis Analytical Framework visualizes the up to freedom/down to totalitarianism concept as the beginning point for analyzing any politician's speech and career, any law or regulation, any government agency action. EAF is thus an outline, a protocol, used as accountants use Pacioli's double entry balance sheet, to begin analysis of public policy.

Using the EAF: Public policy that moves America up to individual freedom maximizes ECONOMIC freedom—to trade, to voluntarily engage in exchange to expected mutual advantage—consumption, jobs, investments, profits—MARKETING. As Americans strive upwards toward earned success (and have the freedom to fail and face the consequences of that individual action), consistent with law and order, we expand the economic pie—win/win for all Americans. The opposite direction—down toward totalitarianism, is the realm of POLITICS--ever increasing power to redistribute slices of the assumed fixed pie—win/lose: power for the elite few, loss of freedom for all other Americans.

The EAF thus divides Americans into two groups: those who tell people what to do (to avoid any current terminological connotation, let's call them TOTALISTS) and those who resist being told what to do (call them FREEDOMITES). Now visualize American FREEDOMITES desiring to move up experiencing public policy: closest to totalitarianism but on the freedom side: corporations, next small business people, then entrepreneurs, then (above the Law&Order boundary) criminals who offer to exchange illegal services (smugglers, prostitutes, drug dealers) to at the very top anarchists who desires no government of at all. Now, no sane analyst advocates no government—life in the raw is "solitary, nasty, poor, brutish and short". But now visualize Americans moving down toward totalitarianism: they are governed closest to freedom but on the totalitarian side by teachers and cops, then politicians and lobbyists and community organizers, then down (below the Law&Order boundary) criminals who practice violence (murderers, extortionists, rapists, pedophiles, as well as those who prey upon buyers and sellers of illegal services) to, at the very bottom, dictators. Again, no sane analyst rejects some

government—teachers, cops, politicians, etc. are essential. But we do not want them to have too much power.

The EAF therefore demonstrates that TOTALISTS follow Plato: they see the world as it ought to be (“out of the cave into the light”), governed ideologically by the elite few for the “greater good” of all—POLITICS. FREEDOMITES in contrast follow Aristotle: they see the world as it is, governed by natural law as experienced by objective evidence—ECONOMICS. Success in politics is measured subjectively, by power. Success in economics is measured objectively, by money (revenue – cost = the bottom line). These measures are, for the sake of brevity, stated as generalizations (Einstein: not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted). But the basic point of the generalizations—that, by and large, FREEDOMITES live by objectively verifiable measures of achievement while TOTALISTS rely on subjectively determined criteria—is valid.

The study of economics validates this choice: micro economics (price theory) studies how individuals behave in responding to supply—they demand less as price of the product is increased (*ceteris paribus*, i.e., other things equal, in the most basic analysis). Price theory flows from Adam Smith to Alfred Marshall to Milton Friedman to Gary Becker and Steven Levitt and Julian Simon; they explain FREEDOMITE behavior. Macroeconomics (theory of monetary and fiscal policy) studies how government controls individual behavior. Macro theory flows from Thomas Malthus to Karl Marx to German Chancellor Bismarck to John Maynard Keynes to Thomas Piketty and Paul Krugman; they explain TOTALIST actions. Micro economists follow Aristotelian thinking; macro economists are disciples of Plato. Ironically, Aristotle’s treatise is titled *Politics*, while Plato’s seminal work is *The Republic*.

Totalitarian labels vary: the elite rule--via aristocracy, feudalism, theocracy, fascism, socialism, 20th century “liberalism”, progressivism, communitarianism, communism--all other people –slaves, serfs, peasants and workers, “useful idiots”, American taxpayers and consumers. I am not equating Americans with slaves, but do think the difference is one of degree not kind. The result by any label is as Mr. Reagan forecast in 1964: “A government can’t control the economy without controlling people. And they know when a government sets out to do that, it must use force and coercion to achieve its purpose . . . So we come to a time for choosing”—up to freedom or down to totalitarianism.

I challenge you to study public policy from Reagan’s perspective. I’ll bet a small amount (shall we say \$10,000?) that, using EAF, you can find in any current newspaper or broadcast one or more public policy issues to examine. Examples: coal companies v. EPA, orphan drug patients v. FDA, Little Sisters of the Poor v. Obamacare. Here are three steps you might use in your analysis:

First, should we enact this policy? Many policies are worthwhile and necessary: “promote the general welfare” via education, infrastructure, means of communication, etc.; “provide for the common defense” via police, military, public health requirements, etc. But all too many policies today are ill-conceived or wasteful—see Senator Coburn’s annual list. And some are just wrong—NSA spying, nation building, etc. Does every government agency really need a SWAT team?

Next, if we are to enact this policy, do benefits exceed costs? Specifically, given the policy goal, can ECONOMICS accomplish it more effectively than POLITICS? America's most outstanding accomplishments result from government setting the goal, then engaging the private sector to accomplish it: FDR's WWII victory with the arsenal of democracy, led by Knudsen and Kaiser and many others in the private sector; DDR's interstate highway system, built by many private contractors; JFK's moon landing and RWR's defeat of the USSR—both likewise accomplished by many private contractors. Contractors face profit incentives, competition, deadline penalties, etc.; they pay taxes. Assigning the goal to government bureaucrats, in contrast, produces the Veterans Administration, IRS abuses, Fast and Furious, as well as ongoing boondoggles like the Post Office and most state DMVs and public schools, to name but a few. Because bureaucrats strive to increase power, not produce results, they consume taxes. And some government functions are indeed necessary: legislatures to enact laws, executives to carry out the legislation, courts to protect private property and resolve disputes (see the U. S. Constitution). But the founding fathers, led by James Madison, designed American government to be held in check by competition: legislative, executive and judicial branches at federal, state and local levels.

Finally, what consequences might result? The risk of some consequences can be assessed via probabilities, of two types: "alpha" risk is enacting a bad policy; "beta" risk is not enacting a good policy. Alpha error is often visible (e.g., thalidomide); beta risk is less so—how many lives might be saved by a drug FDA prohibits? And the FDA 20th century regulatory approach is but one example of public policy regulations inhibiting 21st century innovation. Moreover, some consequences are unintended—we just did not see that one coming: e.g., the attack on Pearl Harbor or the effect of the "pill" on sexual practices, or the 2007 real estate collapse. The best we can do here is to think logically and comprehensively about possible occurrences.

I dare hope these brief thoughts (every short statement is misleading, including this one) have piqued your interest in public policy assessment. And that you find the Enis Analytical Framework based on Mr. Reagan's choice useful in that regard. Do remember that EAF is but a framework, a starting point for your intensive study of any policy. And thinking Americans must do such study today (Charles Krauthammer: "Politics, the crooked timber of our communal lives, dominates everything . . ."). I personally fear he is correct. The current divide between Aristotelians and Platonists, exemplified by pejorative "isms"—racism, sexism, homophobia and associated name-calling--may just possibly degenerate into another American Civil War.