

Approaches to the Differentiation of Political and Public Decisions

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The article deals with the analysis of the approaches to the distinction between political and public decisions in order to clearly distinguish between these two types of decisions, which should make it possible to identify the specifics of their development and implementation and create conditions for successful information and communication support of public administration. In particular, it is noted that the particular point of intersection of these two types of decisions is the process of formulating collective goals and constructing socially significant priorities. The complex of administrative actions aimed at the distribution of power, the formation, and implementation of the ideological guidelines of social development approved by the population forms the political face of public decisions. The article identifies four approaches to distinguishing between political and public decisions, namely: 1) the identity of public and political decisions; 2) "political decision" is considered in a broad sense, covering not only the "public decision" but also the decisions of political parties, public associations, corporations, the media; 3) political decisions are included in the content of public and act as a kind of the latter; 4) full separation of political and public decisions. Peculiarities of the interaction of political decisions and systems of public administration are considered. The article also highlights the characteristics and specific features that distinguish the actual political decisions from non-political ones.

Keywords: politics, state, decision, management decision, political decision, public decision

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Introduction

Behavioral aspects and decision-making algorithms can already be observed in the animal world. Everyone makes many decisions every day. Some we adapt very quickly without much thought, and others — after long and thorough reflection. We make certain decisions impulsively, and we spend unjustifiably much effort on others. In organizations, decision-making processes are more systematic than in private life, although they are often far from rational. Decisions made in organizations are decisions of another kind because they affect not only the lives of employees of a particular organization but also others' interests. Decision-making is a universal mechanism and form of purposeful activity of any public actors. This is especially true of political and state decisions. These decisions are important for the life of society. Still, each of them has its own specific features, which are not always taken into account both by researchers and directly by the political process subjects. Therefore, this study's purpose is a clear distinction between political and public decisions, which should identify the specifics of the development and implementation of these two types of decisions and create the conditions for successful information and communication support of public administration.

The political and public decision as a form of social and administrative decisions

A decision is the result of a person's mental activity, which leads to a certain mental conclusion or the necessary actions (complete inaction, certain action, choice of action from the list of alternatives) and their implementation. The peculiarity of the concept of "decision" is the presence of a situation of choice. The solution is: 1) finding a certain course of action; 2) the process of activity; 3) its end result.

Management decision is a creative, volitional action (act) of the subject of management (manager), which is based on knowledge of the objective laws of the management system and analysis of information about its functioning, is to choose the purpose, goals and objectives, a particular program and methods problem-solving.

Management decision is both a process and a phenomenon. As a process, management decisions are the search, processing, and analysis of information, development of alternatives, selection of the best of them, approval and implementation. A phenomenon is an action plan, order, program, resolution, oral, or written order.

It is important to distinguish the management decision from the decision in general. The main features of the managerial decision are: 1) focus directly on the organization of collective labor (voluntary act); 2) approval only by the subject of management — the head or collective body; 3) coverage of the entire management system of the organization, the inclusion of its entire mechanism; 4) contains a draft of social changes; 5) is an act of implementation of managerial action, a means of expression and a way of regulating management relations in specific historical conditions and a certain social environment.

The management decision in the concentrated form transfers "charge" of a directing action and expresses the main thing in mutual relations of hierarchically subordinated subjects and objects.

Points of intersection of political and public decisions

A political decision is central to both the theory and practice of political governance because political decisions are actually a political process. Substantially absorbing the phenomenon of polyvariance, alternatives to the further development of the political sphere, the political decision appears as a possible turning point, changes in the direction and dynamics of socio-political transformations. A political decision is an important element of political activity and the realization of a political goal. Through specific political decisions, political power embodies its will in the management process in accordance with the interests of governing groups. Political decisions largely determine the political system's institutional design and have the necessary potential to establish new rules of the game in the political process. Problems that are designed to solve political decisions usually affect the interests of large groups of people.

In turn, public decisions are one of the most important tools for the effective functioning and transformation of the system of public administration, its impact on all spheres of society: economic, social, political, cultural. Peculiarities of public decisions are manifested in the targets, in the peculiarities of power management structures' functioning, in the scale and spheres of influence.

A peculiar point of intersection of these two types of decisions is the process of formulating collective goals and constructing socially significant priorities. The complex of administrative actions aimed at the distribution of power, the formation, and implementation of the ideological guidelines of social development approved by the population forms the political face of state decisions.

Four approaches to distinguishing between “state” and “politics”

There are several approaches to distinguishing between “state” and “politics.”

The first approach is based on the identity of these two concepts. Thus, Aristotle, in his “Politics” identified the political system with public administration (Aristotle, 1997: 376). That is, according to this approach, the terms “public decision” and “political decision” are used interchangeably.

The second approach, which includes J. Boden, I. Kant, G. Hegel, K. Popper, and others, defines the state as one of the institutions of the political system, which organizes, directs, coordinates and controls the joint activities of the society. In this approach, the state, as one of the political system subjects, makes decisions by competing with its opponents. In this context, a “political decision” is considered in a broad sense, covering not only the “public decision” but also the decisions of political parties, public associations, corporations, the media, and so on. It is in this context, for example, considers the “political decision” researcher T. Klementevich (Klementevich, 1991: 388).

On the other hand, the third approach views the state as a broader concept that includes the political system as one of the subsystems. This position has been substantiated differently by different researchers. Thus, T. Parsons and D. Easton noted that the subject of the system of public administration includes political, social, economic, cultural, and other subsystems (Anthology, 1997: 480, 631). Thus, in accordance with its functions, the state acts simultaneously in all spheres of public life, and therefore political decisions are part of public decisions.

Other researchers, in the context of the third approach, identified differences between different subjects of public administration, in particular, Max Weber distinguished between politicians and officials (Weber, 1990: 205), K. Mannheim — bureaucrats-managers and

aristocrats politicians (Anthology, 1997: 367), Woodrow Wilson — politicians-leaders and administrators-bureaucrats (Wilson, 1987: 201). Suppose we reduce all these distinctions of public administration to a common denominator. In that case, the politician develops software settings, determines the main directions of their implementation, bears the overall responsibility, and responsibly makes decisions of a political nature. And the official, in turn, unquestioningly and professionally implements the decisions made by the politician. The official is not responsible for the content and direction of political decisions. For their implementation, he makes administrative (technical, auxiliary) decisions. By this logic, public decisions are divided into political and administrative. Thus, political decisions are primary, and administrative — secondary, auxiliary.

Within the third approach to distinguishing between “state” and “politics,” some researchers note that depending on the object of government, the system of public administration includes two subsystems: a) subsystem of public administration in general, which reflects the diversity of interests of social groups influencing political power to pursue their interests through appropriate policy decisions; b) the subsystem of state administrative management of state affairs, which relates to the mechanism of functioning of state bodies (Glazunova, 2002: 35).

It is also worth mentioning Graham Allison, who identifies three basic components in public administration: 1) political leadership, which with the help of institutional centers forms public decisions, laying in their content a certain “formula of interests” and “combination of problems”; 2) administrative regulation, which orients the political leadership and provides it with the necessary regulation; 3) organizational work, which is essentially a routine activity related to hardware logistics, record keeping and document management, ensuring the combination and coordination of different procedures and operations, daily communication, etc. (Allison, 2000: 256). All these components are closely intertwined. Given this approach, public decisions can be classified into political, administrative, and organizational. Moreover, the leading role will belong to political decisions, because they consolidate the strategy and tactics of action for society and the state.

Finally, the fourth approach is based on the positions of different functionalities of politics and the state, emphasizing that they play different roles in public life, do not intersect, and do not include each other. In this approach, the state is seen as a social institution that serves society, i.e., as a managerial unit that provides control within the structure. And politics is seen as an area that combines public, partially public and non-public mechanisms of political entities, which are in the “shadow” of the state’s legal mechanism (for example, the activities of oligarchs). That is, in this approach, the concepts of “political decision” and “public decision” are completely differentiated, with government decisions receiving a positive connotation and political — negative.

All these approaches to the relationship between the state and politics allow us to single out the features of political and public decisions. The first approach provides an opportunity to see the close relationship between public and political decisions, their similar managerial nature, and similar implementation mechanisms. The second approach shows that the state often has to compete with other political actors in the decision-making process and play by the political process’s rules. The third approach demonstrates that the state may have a monopoly on political decision-making and dictate rules to other political actors. Finally, the fourth approach completely distinguishes between public and political decisions, stating that they have different functional features.

Political decisions in the system of public administration

In the modern practice of state regulation, the government (bureaucracy) system can act as a political actor, i.e., an entity that formally or informally makes political decisions. According to Elena Morozova, there are currently several areas in which the bureaucracy functions as a political actor, i.e., an entity that makes political decisions, in particular: 1) independent interpretation of legislation and political decisions; 2) articulation of corporate bureaucratic interests; 3) articulation of the interests of organized clients and related lobbying, favoritism, corruption; 4) articulating the interests of illegal structures and merging bureaucracy with mafia groups; 5) conversion of administrative power into political, “privatization” of the state by officials, the establishment of “administration”; 6) personal and group union of administrative, political and industrial-financial elites, oligarchization of the political system (Morozova, 1999: 52).

The expansion of the subjective composition of making political decisions has become the main determinant for the approval in the system of political and administrative knowledge a broad interpretation of the phenomenon of a political decision as an element of public administration. Supporters of this approach Herbert Simon and T. Mescon between the concepts of “political decision-making” and “public administration” confidently put a sign of identity (Simon, 1960: 1), in fact reducing the political process to the level of the managerial process. A priori, the management process does not involve the desire to build long-term trends. They focus on a specific material “management product” that requires thorough priority elaboration of short-term prospects. Therefore, from the point of view of a broad approach within the theory of political decision-making, the main attention is paid to procedural issues, which place a dominant emphasis on the procedures of development and decision-making. This explains the great interest of supporters of a broad approach to the study of the mechanisms of the grassroots bureaucracy, which just applies the rules of current legislation in practice, i.e., uses these rules as a legal basis for narrowly specialized decisions. According to Michael Lipsky, the decisions of lower-level bureaucrats become a real state policy (Lipsky, 2003: 526).

Meanwhile, according to proponents of the alternative “narrow” approach, “public policy develops faster even in the implementation phase of decisions than at the stage of their development and adoption in the political management process” (Hill, 1997: 7). In the proposed context, political decisions are seen as “a form of maintaining the essential social order by force of compulsory power” and thus objectively differentiated from the decisions taken by the executive state structures (Klementevich, 1991).

Any transfer of competence related to political decision-making has its legal and political boundaries, which does not allow legislative institutions of any level to lose their functional purpose. This is due to the formation of organizational and institutional barriers to expanding the sphere of influence of bureaucratic structures. As shown by international practice, this approach allows for an effective demarcation of administrative and political power in government and to identify political decisions as decisions of government (primarily legislative) structures related to the functioning of pluralistic socio-political communities and which have collective essence. In the tradition of neo-institutionalism, political decision-making acts as a process “in which the dominant (authoritative) positions of one of the actors through certain procedures and technologies are transformed into mechanisms for reconciling interests and actions with the needs of subordinates” (Soloviev, 2006: 8).

Thus, if the criterion basis of public administration decision is a verified material result, which is based on the desire to realize the individual interest of a particular social agent or state manager-principal, the essential core of the political decision should be the focus on collective interest. "Fundamental to the characterization of political decisions is a combination of public, semi shadow and shadow processes, reflecting the various formats of relations between rulers and subordinates" (Soloviev, 2006: 8). Political decisions in practice act as a mechanism that allows instilling a selfish individual interest in the collective context, thus turning it into an effective mechanism for producing a better political and legal reality.

A distinctive feature of political decisions is their twofold nature, which is expressed in the fact that one vector of power is directed towards society, which accumulates at the entrance to the political system a set of requirements and expectations, and the other — towards the elite political realization of social needs. Given the differences between the individual interests of agents (social groups) and principals (power structures), a state of dysfunction of the political system may arise. This state of affairs can be overcome with the help of formal and informal institutions that would encourage the authorities to make decisions in favor of a more representative community, i.e., to choose a better and better strategy.

Comparing the concepts of "political decision" and "state decision," we can conclude that the difference between the first and the second is in the heterogeneity of participants. In the case of government decisions, which are traditionally associated with the functional actions of civil servants and officials, with a certain degree of conventionality, we can recognize that these actions are individual in nature. The "agent-principal" relationship, in this case, is quite personal. On the one hand, there is the "customer" of a particular management service (solution of a highly specialized problem). On the other is the executor interested in solving the problem in favor of the agent (external vector of action) or in favor of himself (internal vector). A hypothetical conflict of interest that arises in this situation can be resolved by the principal in his favor through the presence of executive and administrative powers. However, the disturbed balance can be restored, as the agent, as a customer of the service, has the legal right to challenge the actions of a particular principle in the manner prescribed by law. The dysfunction of the system, in this case, is overcome by either preventive or post-factum deterrent institutions (constitutional right of citizens to appeal the officials' decisions in higher and judicial instances), as well as due to the individual nature of the decision-maker and his individual responsibility for his actions.

The political level of decision-making is a specific subsystem that forms broad social development goals and forms of management of the entire system of public administration. In fact, political decisions have supra-individual nature and are directly included in the subject area of politics. Through the development, adoption, and implementation of political decisions, macro-political level issues are regulated, covering a wide range of powers related to the structure of political power, strategic organization of public administration, the formation of electoral and party systems, and more. Due to the high level of universality and "strategicness," the development and adoption of political decisions is a multifaceted and multi-vector process, where the rational is combined with the spontaneous, public with the shadow, unidirectional with bidirectional. At the same time, the composition of the subjects that make political decisions is practically not subject to quantification, even if a formal legal approach is used for this purpose. From the standpoint of this approach, the number of subjects who make political decisions is determined by the number of officials legally endowed with government functions. However, in practice, in addition to formal subjects, there is a significant general set of subjects of the informal plan, which directly or indirectly participate in the development of government decisions.

Conclusions

Thus, we can state the multidimensionality of the functioning of political and public decisions in the social system. On the one hand, the state is the central institution in the political system because the political decision is legitimized, legalized, and becomes binding only after its approval by the relevant state bodies. However, the state does not exist in a vacuum and does not make decisions in a vacuum. Depending on the type of political and state regime, it interacts to some extent with other political actors. In view of this, the most appropriate when distinguishing between political and public decisions is to rely on two criteria:

1. The subject of management decisions.
2. The subject area of management.

In these criteria, a public decision can be defined as an administrative act adopted by the state (public authorities) in order to regulate various spheres of public life and be implemented with the help of public authorities. And a political decision will accordingly mean an administrative act, which is adopted by political entities to lead and manage society and is implemented with the help of public authorities. The plane of the intersection of state and politics gives rise to another kind of decisions — public and political decisions.

Based on the above, we can distinguish the characteristics and specific features that distinguish the actual political decisions from non-political:

1. They articulate the interests of major social groups and political actors.
2. They are related to the regulation, distribution and redistribution of key resources of society.
3. Publicity, i.e., openness to society, the search for a compromise between private and public interests.
4. Power, that is, for the object to which the decision is directed, it is binding.
5. The scale of the consequences and the cost of error, as political decisions often affect millions of people and require significant investment.
6. Resource scarcity and uncertainty (riskiness): any policy decision is made in conditions of limited information, financial, time, human and other resources, which in turn is exacerbated by instability and variability of the environment, lack of technical or institutional capacity to influence on many significant factors that influence the results of the decision.
7. Focus on the problem: a political decision requires the search for and selection of alternative ways to realize the current socially significant value, need, or opportunity, which can not be achieved other than through collective (political) action.
8. The versatility and number of problems (societal problems) that can be solved through political decisions.
9. The conflict between major political actors who have opposing, sometimes antagonistic, interests and needs.
10. The problem-situational nature, the need for decision-making, appears when the subject of political management assesses the situation that arose as problematic.
11. The political decision-making process is based on an appropriate legal framework, but at the same time, this type of decision has the necessary potential to change the institutional “design” of the political system and establish new “rules of the game,” which will then be reflected in laws.

12. The “mismatch” of actors involved in the process at different stages of the decision: some groups of people prepare it, gather information, others make direct choices in favor of an alternative, others are engaged in implementation, fourth control, and so on.
13. Conjuncture (influence of interests), i.e., any political decision, is usually decisively influenced by the alignment of political forces and their interaction at the time of its adoption.
14. A political decision is a consolidated product of political goals (these goals are usually formed at the intersection of three types of institutions: public authorities, interest groups and the public (media), but the central role in this process is always played by higher state bodies authorities).

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