



PUBLIC POLICY AND MANAGEMENT ГОСУДАРСТВЕННАЯ ПОЛИТИКА И УПРАВЛЕНИЕ

DOI: 10.22363/2313-1438-2026-28-1-9-24
EDN: JWJRXK

Research article / Научная статья

Making Government Decisions: In Search of a Comprehensive Structure

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Abstract. The complex theoretical picture that has developed around public decision-making is replete with multiple contradictions and risk reflections, which are sometimes quite poorly responsive to the systemic practices that have developed in this area. Interdisciplinary conflicts, scientific traditions based on research in various national polities and supported by authoritative academic schools, as well as the widespread use of normative approaches that heavily rely on democratic priorities for state evolution, all contribute to the persistence and expansion of epistemic divisions in this field of research. Conceptual disagreements and discrepancies regarding even the basic parameters of this process converge only in the understanding of the need for its constant theoretical refinement. But are there any grounds for hope in developing a relatively holistic and comprehensive theoretical model of government decisions that reflects the specific nature of government? In this article, the movement in this direction is associated with further attribution of this process, which reflects the current and, at the same time, specific practices of making this type of decision. Methodologically, such attribution is proposed to be carried out on the basis of a combination of the principles of the agent-based approach (which allows us to display the real composition of the participants in this process, along with the resources, strategies, and typical patterns they use), as well as the network measurement of the mechanism of state goal-setting (which reflects the multi-component logic of the interaction between political and administrative, public, and latent communications). Overcoming the limitations of the normative approach and the principles of individual methodology, this analytical

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framework allows us to reveal the substantive parameters of state decision-making, which reflect the co-adaptation of the actual participants in this process and the resulting flexibility of their positioning in the public and latent arenas of the modern state, as well as the possibilities and limitations of using administrative and legal tools.

Keywords: public decision-making, policy, management, administration, network coalitions, flexible rationalism

Conflicts of interest. The author declares no conflicts of interest.

For citation: Solovyev, A.I. (2026). Making government decisions: In search of a comprehensive structure. *RUDN Journal of Political Science*, 28(1), 9–24. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1438-2026-28-1-9-24> EDN: JWJRXK

Принятие государственных решений: в поисках комплексной структуры

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Аннотация. Сложная теоретическая картина, сложившаяся по поводу принятия государственных решений, изобилует множественными противоречиями и риск-рефлексиями, подчас весьма слабо реагирующими на сложившиеся в этой сфере системные практики. Междисциплинарные конфликты, научные традиции, опирающиеся на исследования в различных национальных политиках и поддерживаемые авторитетными академическими школами, а также широкое распространение нормативных подходов, в значительной степени опирающихся на демократические приоритеты государственной эволюции, сохраняют и приумножают эпистемические размежевания в данной сфере научных изысканий. Концептуальные разногласия и разночтения относительно даже базовых параметров данного процесса сходятся только в понимании необходимости его постоянного теоретического доопределения. Но существуют ли основания надежды на разработку относительно целостной и одновременно комплексной теоретической модели государственных решений, отражающей специфический характер государственного целеполагания? В данном исследовании движение в этом направлении связывается с дальнейшим атрибутированием данного процесса, отражающим современные и одновременно специфические практики принятия этого типа решений. Методологически корректно осуществить такую атрибуцию предложено на основе сочетания принципов агентского подхода (позволяющего отобразить реальный состав участников этого процесса вкупе с используемыми ими

ресурсами, стратегиями и типичными паттернами), а также сетевого измерения механизма государственного целеполагания (отображающего многосоставную логику взаимодействия политических и административных, публичных и латентных коммуникаций). Преодолевая ограничения нормативного подхода и принципов индивидуальной методологии, такая аналитическая рамка позволяет раскрыть субстантивные параметры принятия государственных решений, отражающих взаимную адаптацию реальных участников данного процесса, обуславливающую подвижность их позиционирования на публичных и латентных аренах современного государства, возможности и ограничения использования административно-правового инструментария.

Ключевые слова: принятие государственных решений, политика, управление, администрирование, сетевые коалиции, гибкий рационализм

Заявление о конфликте интересов. Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Для цитирования: Соловьев А.И. Принятие государственных решений: в поисках комплексной структуры // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Политология. 2026. Т. 28. № 1. С. 9–24. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1438-2026-28-1-9-24> EDN: JWJRXK

Public Policy Making: Basic Models and Contradictions in Conceptual Approaches

The ancients made the first attempts to explain decision-making, and while they did not create a corresponding theory, they did establish a tradition of rational interpretation of this process, which in turn sparked research into state-specific goal-setting mechanisms. Additionally, the intellectually varied history of the study of state decisions has consistently shown conflicts with the “standard thinking” of common people (connecting the decision maker’s goals with his “beliefs, desires, or values”) with complex ideas about the conditions of this choice, posing numerous queries regarding the relationship between “different attitudes” and “preferences” [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy]. The beliefs of scientists in the mainstream of the Western branch of political science, which upheld the rationality and humanism of Homo politicus and were ultimately convinced of the superiority of democracy and the essential role of the civil sector in stimulating the accountability of elite governance, formed a sustainable intellectual platform for theoretical search that reveals content in public policy making (henceforth referred to as PPM).¹ Perhaps because of this, theories that emerged within the framework of methodological

¹ These essentially ideological parameters of the PPM, finding some confirmation in the functioning of Western polities, have consistently increased the share of hopes and expectations consistent with democratic intentions. Even the UN has followed this line since its founding to establish a lasting peace through the joint actions of free peoples. And although the works of elitist theorists (beginning with Charles Mills) and later supporters of the network approach warned about the egoism of ruling circles, they did not break the dominant forms of political existence that scale the political ontology of democratization.

individualism, which provided a variety of logical interpretations of both individual and collective forms of decision-makers' activity, predominate epistemologically. The two most popular techniques are not only traceable in diverse interpretations of this process but also enable a systematic comparison of many theoretical models, even though the mainstream did not let it to build any universally accepted definition of PPM in science.

Here, normative (prescriptive) and behavioral (descriptive) techniques are being discussed. The former highlights rational motivation, the capacity to intelligently seek out and analyze information, a fair evaluation of the surrounding circumstances, and an awareness of counterparties' perspectives in order to explain the goal-oriented form of human action. Many exceptional mathematicians were able to establish themselves in this field thanks to this method, which produced a variety of models of rational human attitudes toward uncertainty and the formation of alternatives (risk prevention, social choice, preference search, awareness of environmental limits). To explain this process, they used formalized models describing the relationship between logical and conventional truth and subjective and objective probability, as well as other aspects of human activity, acting in the direction of the expected utility and effectiveness of the goals being achieved. In terms of state policy, this stance emphasized the importance of public-institutional connections, reflecting the "rationally substantiated principles and integral goals" of the state as a whole (and hence "closed") totality [Degtyarev 2004: 20]. Accordingly, legal institutions' primary interpretation of public policy was the fulfillment of their functional-role loads (which not only denied the important role of culturally determined "deviations" in human activity but also tended to understand state policy as a distinct intellectual function of public administration). The concepts of "unified", "universal", and "activating" management were developed concurrently within the framework of this approach, upholding the socio-humanistic heritage in the interpretation of the process being studied.

Today, along with the popular model of bounded rationality by G. Simon, the theories of E. Downs (emphasizing economic priorities and internal state apparatus mechanisms), W. Niskanen (identifying the work of the state apparatus with the management systems of private firms aimed at generating profit), M. Farmer (affirming the status of political decisions as a result of the aggregation of individual "choices" associated with aggregate or social results), as well as stage models and theories of sociological and political institutionalism, normative ideas have the most significant influence on theories of the design of target groups (SCTG), organizational behavior, institutional analysis and development (IAD), studies of political innovation, group representation (In its parliamentary-party, functional and corporate forms), as well as other authoritative theories.

At the same time, one cannot help but see that, within this tradition, politics has become a formalized component of the state governance system.² In other words, it has assumed the form of interactive communication between the government and the population, playing a virtually decisive role in aligning state regulation with corporate and multi-level governance, circumventing the issue of civic choice and the state's need to maintain a balance of social forces.

Conversely, the behavioral campaign of supporters, which challenges the opponents' central claim that theorists are "primarily interested in rational rather than correct decisions" [Peterson 2017: 1–2], suggests that interests play a major role in participants' goal-setting. This method highlights the many aspects of PPM, emphasizing the role of sociocultural, psychological, and other cognitive factors that influence not only the incentives and attitudes of the strategies and actions being developed by decision makers, but also the nature of their communications with stakeholders, coordination and adjustment goals, development priorities, state politicians, etc.³ The behavioral approaches of C. Merriam and the incrementalist ideas of C. Lindblom, which defined the substantive profile of this field, convincingly demonstrated that a person's dynamically changing visions of their own interests play a decisive role in goal design and their practical implementation. At its logical extreme, this paradigmatic platform gravitates toward understanding PPM as a form of managerial art, whose theoretical interpretation is inextricably linked to the cognitive incentives and limitations of participants' activity.

Within the framework of this approach, scientific concepts have emerged that attest to the organizational-behavioral basis for interaction between competing actors representing the state and the civil sector, affirm the open nature of the public good, and assert a "complex-component" approach to this process [Degtyarev 2004: 22]. It was also proven that the state, as a non-monolithic actor, creates target structures based on the internal divides of goal-setting players with their own interests. This illustrated the conventionality (polysemanticity) of their conception of public goods and the variety of standards for evaluating the success of aims that have been put into practice. In essence, this served as the foundation for the comprehension of rationality's diversity, which is essential to the general good. In other words, it was a kind of reflection that showed the

² Even when assessing the transition from structural to dynamic (procedural) characteristics of decision-making, priority is given to mechanisms directed "from the top down", where "the initiative comes from institutional leaders", and social processes initiated from below "are perceived by them as a threat to their own values and interests" [Dye 2001].

³ As scientists write, decision making "is not only a theory of choice, but also a theory of beliefs, desires, and other relevant attitudes; what matters is how these various attitudes (let us call them "preference attitudes") are related to each other" (Decision Theory. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved October 15, 2025, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/decision-theory/>).

flexibility and variety of a “reasonable” interpretation of goals dependent on the actors’ expectations of the outcomes of their implementation rather than the clarity of a “balanced” approach to issue solving.

The theory of multiple flows [Kingdon 1984], support coalitions [Sabatier, Weible 2007], punctuated equilibrium [Baumgartner, Jones 1993], wastebasket [Cohen, March, Olsen 1972], rounds [Teisman 2000], and other significant concepts have all influenced the development of numerous original political and administrative models that reveal the nature of this process. On the one hand, the intensity of this theoretical direction’s development has broadened the scope of research on state decisions by emphasising different types of real-world interactions between PPM participants. This has also led to an increase in linguistic-semantic analysis tools. The identification of different “profiles”, “modes”, “contours”, “subcomplexes”, “subsystems”, or unique behaviourally defined continua with their own logic and set of actors is now a common technique for theoretical enlargement of the subject matter. In a similar spirit, a variety of classifiers that distinguish between the actions of certain participants, decision types, state-mandated tasks, decision makers’ activity styles, etc. have been and are being created. These specific parameters, along with the evolution of the government agenda and other features of the PPM, have become distinct fields of study, in contrast to the mid-19th century, when C. Barnard “imported... the term [decision making — auth.] into the world of business”, replacing such “descriptors” as “resource allocation” and “policy development” [Buchanan, O’Connell 2006: 32].

Nevertheless, the PPM’s components, which were created in a variety of professions and disciplines and even partially overlap, only weakly support logical correlation with one another, which prevents them from improving the synergy of science’s heuristic potential. Conflicts between proponents of various approaches and methodologies persist and intensify as a result of the description and systematisation of the various parameters of this process (separating the design and use of resources, coercive and encouraging styles of imperative coordination, specifying tools for developing an agenda and evaluating results, etc.). Interpretations of the state as a business and public administration institution, the rights and actual powers of the governing and the governed, the combination of hierarchical and heterarchical relationships, the relationship between power and politics, management and administration, coordination between various levels of goal-setting, the role and content of the decision-maker’s cognitive parameters, and other issues were and still are at the centre of these disputes. The idea that the PPM is the core of public administration, centralising all relationships of political dominance (hegemony and monopoly) and the

endeavours of political rivals seeking to control the distribution (redistribution) of resources, is still viewed with scepticism. However, many authors view the PPM as “the main component of the development and implementation of public policy” [Degtyarev 2004: 17] and even as a purely “public process” [Vasilieva et al. 2017: 248], which invariably blends the legalisation of decisions with their substantive parameters.

In short, we can interpret the PPM within the framework of a “family resemblance” of concepts that are close in meaning, indicating the lack of a “single essence” among the referents and excluding its singular interpretations, thanks to epistemic distinctions and the ontological equality of disciplinary (fundamental and applied) foundations, which frequently preserve the priority of unvalidated information [Wittgenstein 1969: 118]. Simultaneously, the realisation that researchers lack information reflecting “an array of controlled experience... in terms of its acquisition, re-verification, and expansion” (which, while it “distinguishes science from everything else” [Stepantsev 2017: 104], inevitably excludes invalidated information from consideration) results in an ongoing rise in logical assumptions that complicate, but rarely clarify, the theoretical picture of the PPM.

Fundamentally, the development of a thorough theory of PPM that can unite essentially different concepts and give the process a certain logical integrity and completeness is impossible due to the epistemic heterogeneity of opposing approaches and theoretical models (including the irreconcilable conflict between structural and agential priorities), each with its own distribution at different levels of analysis. To put it another way, it becomes extremely difficult and unachievable to integrate the various PPM elements into a single notion. However, the theoretical form of PPM might achieve some homogeneity with a qualitative update of the methods and outcomes of gained knowledge (e.g., employing AI or intricate study into the human cognitive field).

However, even such a cognitive situation does not preclude the possibility of further attributing the fundamental parameters of this process, allowing us to discern, within the “vague space” of goal-setting, the outlines of logically interconnected constructs that eliminate the uncertainty of “bookish” explanations of the complex combinatorics of the PPM. In other words, science has the potential to correctly and logically compare certain ideas and approaches that reveal the various facets of this complex, political-managerial (and, to a certain extent, administrative) process. This is all the more necessary since the transformation of global orders, combined with the results of long-term (and not very successful) public administration reforms, inevitably affects the transformation of the institution of the state and the mechanisms

for making public decisions, which are changing their contours in the context of increasing competition among large business players and changes in transnational communications [Cerny 2012: 185–212]. New analytical decision support systems developed in large corporations that constantly interact with the government also play a role in refining knowledge about the PPM.

To put it briefly, in order to shed light on the methodological underpinnings of theoretical reflection on the PPM, a number of contemporary goal-setting parameters must be attributed, and they must be contrasted with the inflexible logic of theoretical schemata, which have little bearing on the real communications of political structures and active actors. This will increase the theoretical content's applicability and, in certain situations, dispel the most blatant misunderstandings about this process. In this situation, the main focus should be on defining the state as an organisation functioning within a framework for making decisions, somewhat reorganising its internal structure and altering the guidelines for choosing participants.

Grounds for Complex Attribution of PPM

Clarifying the subject field is the first step that, to some extent, enables us to overcome the semantic polyvariability and multiplicity of meanings of the PPM. This limits the open set of heterogeneous practices of developing and implementing goals, including both the normatively defined actions and interactions and the anthropic logic of promoting interests. A “simplification” of the fundamental concepts of this process is required by such a combination of theoretical versions of the PPM [Sabatier 2007: 8], which is mainly focused on reflecting the actions of common actors while also abstracting from the meanings of cultural goal-setting styles, independent forms of political will manifestation, etc. The “key opposition — between the observable... that lies on the surface and the unobservable, hidden... that requires study, interpretation and explanation” [Stepantsev 2017: 106] is basic in nature. It is no accident that G. Ryle viewed practice-oriented behaviours, or “knowledge how”, as a collection of skills that are frequently unrelated to introspection and have hidden meanings ingrained in choices [Ryle 1999].

In other words, attributing the basic parameters of the PPM, coupled with practice-orientated practices of state goal-setting, not only allows us to discover the actual structure of this mechanism, emerging from the interactions of real participants, but also to “grasp” the meaning of their actions and relationships [Hutchinson 2008: 13]. This, in fact, allows us to achieve semantic unity in the

theoretical interpretation of state goal-setting. At the very least, this approach allows us to identify the modality of obligation that will be more relevant to the actual process of developing and implementing decisions.

The definition of the referent outlining the subject field of the PPM primarily reflects the nature of the tasks addressed by the state. In particular, decisions related to the day-to-day provision of public services and goods to citizens are routine administrative practices that involve institutions fulfilling their functional and role-based responsibilities within the framework of existing regulations (taking into account the influence of representative mechanisms of citizen expression) and the coordination of powers within the apparatus. This mode of exercising power transforms the political components of state goal-setting into a constant facet of proactive and interactive interaction between the ruling structures and the population, largely ignoring the problem of choosing (confirming) a political course, regulating the balance of power, and the ideological identification of the civil service.

At the same time, decisions of a fundamental nature (influencing the position of the state in the world, changing the social dispositions of various segments of the population or the configuration of the ruling class as the framework of national and regional policy, etc.) [Zahariadis 2016: 1–24] determine a different type of interaction in the development and implementation of goals. It is no coincidence that J. Pfeffer [1992], C. Hood and Margetts [2007], as well as a number of other scholars, sharply contrasted decisions related to the struggle for power and its application with all other decisions made in the state. As D. Osborne and T. Gaebler [1992] aptly put it, only one type of state decision is associated with maintaining political course (“steering”), while others are simply day-to-day “rowing”.

From an epistemic perspective, this type of decision-making involves the manipulation of knowledge related to “wicked” problems for which “objective and final answers cannot be obtained” and “which cannot be definitively described” [Horst 1973: 155]. Given the unique nature of these problems, cognitive constructs require constant updating of knowledge and correction of previously made conclusions.

However, from a political and managerial perspective, the development of corresponding decisions is linked to the formation of a special goal-setting mechanism, quite removed from the routine forms of everyday administration. Essentially, such decisions “trigger” goal-setting mechanisms that involve only those actors (structures, institutions, stakeholders) essential to the state, whose resources and capabilities allow them to participate in the development of goals, regardless of whether they have the right to speak and act on behalf of the state. In this regard, it is fundamentally important that the political parameters of this type of goal-setting

are initially linked to determining the vector of development of the state and society, the resulting nature of which is formed through intense competition between status and informal players vying for participation in the distribution of major public resources. It is precisely through the process of “co-adaptation” [Infantino 2020] between status and informal players that the PPM transforms into a dynamically changing configuration of interest coordination, agenda setting, goal adjustment, and the definition of other instruments for profiling institutional actions, determined by the “winners” personifying the “public choice”. In this context, politics not only acquires its natural form of competitive choice and determination of the balance of power necessary for the advancement of dominant goals but also turns into a form of “trusteeship power” capable of circumventing institutional norms and acting above legislative restrictions and moral invectives.

In short, the volume of distributed resources and the participation of major political investors, influencing the balance of social forces and the stability of the regime, form a special mechanism of PPM, in which even administrative forms of goal-setting are often either irrelevant or play a purely formal and subordinate role.

A crucial factor determining the systemic “limitations” of norms and the institutional coordination of interests is the pressure of informal coalitions, which form “overlapping and competing cross-border power networks, shifting loyalties and identities” within the state, generating “new sources of endemic conflict” and inter-elite contradictions [Cerny 2012: 13, 20]. Even when partially integrated into the system of public administration, these informal associations provoke “treacherous behaviour” from institutions, creating a space dominated by “friendly relations and acquaintances” [Khaoz 2011; 2008]. This *de facto* patronage in newly formed “chains” of human connections allows network communities to gain “disproportionate control over or access to resources” [Khan 2012: 362] and, under the guise of “public governance”, undertake actions that replace “government” as a form of exercising institutional power [John, Cole 2000].

In short, the informal communications of network coalitions as “*de facto* groups” (R. Dahrendorf), while partially mitigating the flaws of the apparatus hierarchy, not only weaken the influence of official norms in goal-setting but also shape the *de facto* rules of the PPM, based on a framework of intertwined institutions and power nodes. Moreover, by increasing the distance and alienation of citizens from decision-making levers, network coalitions go beyond group cohesion, corrupting public consciousness with notions of the accessibility of public resources through illegal means of obtaining them.

The main source of barriers, supplementing the traditional administrative barriers existing for citizens, are the undeclared connections between competing groups and

ruling class figures, hidden from society. Moreover, even “institutions and generally accepted values [of society — auth.] can become objects” for the implementation of hidden plans” of ruling groups [John, Cole 2000: 201], transferring state activity into a latent sphere that supports basic forms of causality in the construction of a new architecture of power [Kennedy 2011]. Moreover, in different ruling regimes, the architecture of the latent sphere, formed on the priorities of elite consumption,⁴ can take on the outlines of an additional, “second circuit of state governance” [Solovyov 2021], and even a “deep state” [Koktysh, Sergeev 2025].

Strictly speaking, the *de facto* dominance of major players in the PPM zone (under any system of political dominance and supremacy) not only exerts a decisive influence on decision-making but can also deprive the state of its mission of producing public life, its function of stabilising the political order, and in some cases even the preservation of sovereignty (which can be dissolved in a multitude of agreements and treaties with influential external players).

In this context, it is appropriate to recall that the idea of prioritising actual, rather than nominal, PPM participants was long embedded in the network approach, which opposed institutional and cyclical concepts. However, proponents of this approach primarily promoted the idea of a partnership between state and society, facilitating social integration between the government and the population and increasing the effectiveness of governance. It is only recently that proponents of network methodology have begun to argue that formality is merely a “gatekeeper to the nodal points of institutional change” and decision-making [Nederveen 2024], while “informality” acts as a “new norm” of political epistemology [Ledeneva et al. 2024: 13], forcing a revision of the understanding of PPM.

Practice itself has confirmed the systemic nature of the transformation of fragmented “chains of power” (M. Foucault) by network actors, forming nodes of political dominance embedded in the system of governance and supporting disparate connections with external players (including those outside the nation-state). The systemic dominance of “closed” networks not only categorises decision-makers based on their actual role in decision-making but also creates “cross-cutting forms of power and influence” [Kapstein 2006], which form new “strong ties” within the state and stimulate diverse forms of political patronage [Gerlach, Teodorescu, Hertwig 2019]. This situation leads to a qualitative demarcation within the ruling class, on the one hand, facilitating the emergence of an elite corps that “rules in the shadow of the

⁴ Moreover, the interests of elite groups, “necessary for improving social status and international competitiveness”, are strictly linked to attempts at “self-enrichment at the expense of their rivals and opponents”, while allowing them to ignore even the “depletion of national resources” [Goldstone 2016: 481]. It is no coincidence that a number of scientists place the main emphasis when identifying elites on their opportunities to “appropriate resources from non-elites” [Lakhman 2010: 31–32].

hierarchy” [Jessop 2019], absolving itself of responsibility to the state and society, and on the other, transforming elected politicians into a “disposable” elite, excluded from the mechanisms of the political system but forced to justify their decisions to the population. In this context, “public” state policy can be viewed as an auxiliary function of governance, defined by intra-elite competition (preserving the latent meanings and intentions of political leaders) and forms of administration as a way for institutions of power to legitimise decisions and goals developed by actual decision-makers outside the apparatus hierarchy.

As can be seen, the consistent application of the network approach not only confirms the central role of intra-elite rivalry in the development of goals, but also testifies to the existence of a latent sphere of politics that integrates the undeclared connections of the ruling class and forms special “subjective components” of management rules, “organizational norms” and functions of “political-administrative structures” [Kupriashin 2025: 279–281].⁵ Since the entire complex of non-public structures and relations is conditioned and mediated by the needs of elite groups and figures to constantly and daily reduce the costs of internal competition (which is the main condition for their positioning in power structures and the fulfillment of role loads), this allows us to consider the latent sphere as the actual core of the PPM and public administration as a whole.

This situation convincingly demonstrates that “invisible social reality... turns out to be stronger” [Titkov 2017: 9] than public forms of political games, which only partially reveal the real dependencies of the participants in this process and the hidden plans of political dominants [Solovyov 2022]. Moreover, recognizing the substantive role of the latent sphere allows us to more definitively answer the questions of “what is happening” in the development of government decisions and “what is hidden behind this” [Lukes 2002]. This confirms the idea of S. Lukes that scientists should pay more attention to manifestations of power that are less accessible to observation, but more effective from a practical point of view [Lukes 2005].

In short, the systemic network pressure on government institutions, coupled with the substantive role of latent forms of state goal-setting, testify to the fundamental dependence of the PPM on the ability of elite groups and figures to penetrate decision-making zones (overcoming administrative barriers, bottlenecks in the apparatus hierarchy, and the “political ambushes” of competitors). This not only determines the fundamentally “open” nature of the PPM, conditioned by the dynamically changing composition of decision-makers, but also testifies to the fundamental weakness of the

⁵ It is no coincidence that Domhoff argues that public policy formation begins informally within the walls of corporate boardrooms, clubs, and discussion groups, where situations are identified as problems requiring political decisions, and the end point of this process is government agencies that approve and implement these decisions [Domhoff 1998].

civil sector as a political partner of the state (whose deficit of resources, competencies, and, most importantly, mechanisms of influence relegates it to the distant periphery in the development of critical decisions). Even the “democratization of democracy” (K. Pateman) is unable to eliminate the functional veto spaces in the PPM mechanism that are insurmountable for the population.

Thus, it can be concluded that the predominance of informal latent connections in the mechanisms of political decision-making determines the leading role not of normative and rational-logical algorithms for the appropriate behaviour of decision-makers, but of various collaborations between officials and groups and political figures. The complex transversal connections of these micro-actors with institutions of power permeated by latent communications are expressed in the constant reproduction (recursivity) of a changing set of participants (assemblage) of basic state decisions. As a result, the ongoing transformations in the public administration system, operating in a mode of making fundamental decisions for the government, are replacing the administrative-organisational hierarchy of goal-setting with a fluid political-managerial structure of political decision-making. In other words, these essentially matrix forms of state regulation create diverse arenas and platforms for goal-setting [Solovyov 2015], smoothing (or even eliminating) differences between status and informal contenders for participation in the PPM, and creating real structures and relationships in goal-setting and implementation that are qualitatively different from the normatively defined constructs of institutional design. The trigger for the formation of these political-administrative entities is the energy of elite groups competing in a space closed to society to advance their interests.

Conclusion

As can be seen, the PPM is decisively formed through personally and intellectually mediated interactions between decision makers in a weakly institutionalised environment, dominated not by the established norms of their business communications but by dynamic partial (developing on an ad hoc basis) reactions arising from the “co-adaptation” of key political investors. These substantive parameters both delineate the boundaries of the PPM and allow us to specify the actual nature of this process. Central here is the understanding that the distribution of major public resources (altering the balance of power in the state’s domestic and foreign policy), coupled with the systematic and hidden influence of network coalitions on government institutions, transforms the normatively defined organisational and administrative process of goal development into a dynamically changing PPM structure, where the will of actors with actual advantages in dispositions, resources, and competencies prevails. Moreover,

this applies even to cases where actors acting on behalf of the state lack a public mandate to do so. In other words, the PPM represents a zone of state governance that significantly reconfigures apparatus connections and creates within the system of institutional governance a flexible yet coherent governance structure based on the hidden communications of major political players.

The universality of this structure, which develops in any political system, demonstrates its relative autonomy from the systemic (determined by connections with society) foundations of the organisation of state power. Not only authoritarian but also democratic political systems demonstrate the same dependence on the development of their fundamental goals on the most influential political actors, who prefer to develop goals for “social” development with their partners through latent communications. The currents of transformation emanating from network coalitions and latent connections (which do not exclude the deformation of social development standards, corruption, corporate raiding, or the unlawful secrecy of expenditures) create “new norms” of goal-setting within the state, simultaneously giving rise to a circle of elite actors who absolve themselves of responsibility to the population. In this sense, the most dangerous tendency in interpreting the PPM is the conflation of the real and nominal nature of this process, leading to an irrelevant recognition of the advantages of institutional and normative interactions between legal actors in the public sphere and ignoring the substantive role of latent structures and the goals and intentions of the ruling class, hidden from society. Reducing the content of the PPM to the hierarchical interrelations of governance institutions, forms of personnel policy and organisational work, and other manifestations of the apparatus communications of “official state agents” (even supplemented by formalism, disorganisation, and bureaucratic cunning) fails to reveal the meaning of the political and managerial interactions occurring within the state in setting and implementing goals.

Perhaps, in the future, the norms of confidential management, aimed at increasing the level of validation of data on algorithms within elite competition, may become a more relevant analytical framework for studying this process and simultaneously a factor in the creation of a more comprehensive theory of the PPM. This would allow us to bring the study of latent communications and identification concepts of decision makers to generalisations capable of clarifying the contours of a complex model of this process.

Received / Поступила в редакцию: 17.09.2025

Revised / Доработана после рецензирования: 10.10.2025

Accepted / Принята к публикации: 15.11.2025

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