# Process of Decision Making in Government

## Dr.Achchhan Rathore

Associate Professor, Dept. of Public Administration, MS College, Bikaner, Rajasthan, India

**ABSTRACT:** You can expect to make big decisions from your first day in the job as minister – and lots of them. But while the ministerial code gives an overview of some of the formal structures for decision making in government, there is little guidance available on how it works in practice.

Many of your decisions will be made at departmental level. Some of them you will instigate: once you have communicated your desire to pursue a policy or achieve an aim, officials will go away and work up options for you to approve. Other decisions will be required as policies and problems escalate through the department, or as external events arise.

**KEYWORDS**- decision, government, policy, department, ministerial

## I.INTRODUCTION

Your private office can help to explain any processes specific to your department, but there are some commonalities across government:

- Submissions – Civil servants provide formal advice and request sign-off for decisions in a 'submission' or written document submitted to your red box. This will typically include an explanation of why you are being asked to take a decision, several policy options, their risks and benefits, with recommendations for action. Supporting evidence is usually annexed.[1,2,3]
- Meetings within the department – You may also want to receive advice in person, negotiate with other parties, or discuss decisions with officials before signing them off in writing.

Some decisions affect the work of multiple parts of government, in which case the question is not just what you think, but what ministers in other departments can agree to. You will need to negotiate with them to decide the best course of action. There are several formal routes through which this can take place:

Cabinet – A group of senior ministers which meets once a week, chaired by the prime minister. The cabinet is supposed to be a space for private and frank discussion, but once a decision has been agreed, all ministers are expected to abide by it. In theory the cabinet is the senior decision-making body in government, but in practice this is not always the case. Prime ministers sometimes prefer to broker decisions with secretaries of state bilaterally or in small groups ahead of time.

Cabinet committees – Smaller groupings of specific ministers who discuss a related subset of issues, for example, those to do with science and technology. Decisions taken in a cabinet committee are binding on all government ministers, as if agreed by the full cabinet. The effectiveness of cabinet committees for cross-government decision making depends on the personal relationships between the ministers who sit on them, and the importance placed on them by the prime minister.

Write-rounds – Some issues that require a decision in cabinet or a cabinet committee are not discussed in a meeting. Instead, the minister requesting a decision will write to all members of the relevant committee and ask them to agree to their proposal. If ministers disagree, they can write to the committee chair to explain their position. [4,5,6] The cabinet secretariat will then help to broker an agreement or call a meeting to discuss the issue.

Being an effective minister

Making well-informed decisions and getting results

1. Tell your private office how you want to receive advice

Make sure that the advice you need is provided in a format that works for you. Your private office will respond best to clear direction about what it is you do and don't want. Some useful questions to think about are:

- What time of day do you want to go through your red box?

- When you have multiple decisions to make, how do you want them prioritised?

- Do you want to set a minimum and maximum length for written submissions?

- What kind of evidence do you want to see for and against policy options?

- Would you prefer to be briefed in person?

- Do you want to discuss the decision with a group of advisers, or just one?

"Today there's another sin that they commit, which is you get a five- or 10-page document and then on top of that, you get a two-page summary. On top of that, you get a one-page summary. And on top of that, you get your private secretary's handwritten summary, which you probably can't read. So it's about information control, departmental control, debate control."
David Davis, Secretary of state for exiting the European Union (2016–18)

2. Use all the levers available to you

Formal decision-making mechanisms like submissions and cabinet committees serve an important purpose – not least, creating a written record of what decisions were taken and why. But you don't have to work through them exclusively.

You can create your own systems within your department to feed into decision making – for instance, as secretary of state for work and pensions, Iain Duncan Smith asked for a 'red team' of outsiders to review the running of the Universal Credit programme.

There are also lots of informal levers available to you, both to garner additional advice and to broker decisions across government. You could:

- Speak to the team of civil servants working closest to the problem

- Set up conversations with external experts and stakeholders

- Consult your special advisers and work through their networks outside of the department, including their connections with other spads

- Build and maintain relationships with backbenchers, especially those who take an active interest in your policy area

- Talk to other ministers outside of official meetings and committees

3. Be decisive

It seems obvious, but you need to actually make a decision. You are always entitled to ask for more advice or more policy options, but putting off the choice altogether is rarely wise. The government machine quickly gums up without ministerial sign-off. And another box full of decisions to be made will pile up rapidly.[7,8,9]

You need to accept that it won't be possible to be across all of the detail, all of the time. Officials are there to provide expert advice – you are there to exercise judgement.
"You are not there as an expert in the department. You've got experts there – that's the civil service. They're there to advise and to tell and to help assist you. Your actual decisions are very much looking at the options and taking a political decision on them."
Sir Patrick McLoughlin, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (2016–18)

4. Follow up on your decisions

It can be easy to feel that making the decision is enough, but you need to make sure you understand how your decisions will be put into practice, and follow up on obstacles that arise in the process of implementation. Make sure you know what the next steps are.

Departments should have mechanisms in place to ensure you are kept up to speed. Discuss with your private office how you can expect to receive progress updates. For instance:

- Do you want regular check-in meetings with teams?

- Would it help to set up a spreadsheet or another tracking mechanism?

- Do you want status updates only where issues arise, or on successful projects too?

"You could take decisions but you had to insist on decisions. You then had to find out within a month whether anybody had done anything whatsoever to implement that decision."
Kenneth Clarke, Lord chancellor and secretary of state for justice (2010–12)

## II.DISCUSSION

The decision-making process at the local level implies mechanisms and institutions of the Municipality that determine the ways of developing the decision-making process.

When the decision-making process does not function properly, complaints about lack of information, inadequate consultation and arrogant behavior are becoming more frequent. When this is the case, the entire process needs to be looked at to see where the problem is and how to address it.

The decision-making process goes through several steps: the first phase, prior to making a decision that consists of setting the agenda, problem structuring, planning for the results and the second phase after making the decision is implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the decision.

Government leaders can challenge the norms of how their [10,11,12]organizations work and dramatically increase their decision-making speed and agility. **The current moment** provides a critical opportunity to reset how government organizations, leaders, and teams make decisions. The recent climate of unprecedented uncertainty requires even greater speed, agility, and decisiveness in decision making. McKinsey research shows that most companies struggle with this challenge: in a survey of executives across industries, just over half of respondents reported spending more than 30 percent of their working time on decision making—and for 60 percent of surveyed executives, most of that time was used ineffectively. Having worked with more than ten US government agencies on decision-making issues, we have observed that government leaders face a particularly steep uphill battle when it comes to making good decisions *fast*. This article offers five practical suggestions for government leaders who want to improve decision making in their organizations.

Most public-sector organizations face similar challenges in terms of how they make decisions. First, when there is an unambiguous "bottom line" to measure and rally around, the rational approach to governance tends to lean toward building consensus and limiting opposition and dissent. This not only increases the time spent on and cycles required for the decision-making process but also leads to the proliferation of multiple large all-purpose forums with unclear decision rights; for example, in one US federal agency, efforts toward consensus building led to the development of more than 70 governance bodies and a "governance tax"—or burden of time and resources devoted to meetings and decision-making churn—of more than 40,000 person-years annually.

Second, the tendency to minimize risk can also lead to the development of layers of oversight and bureaucracy in an attempt to "grade homework" and bring risk to zero. Counterintuitively, increasing oversight often doesn't lead to more control or lower risk; instead, it can easily create more risk because no layer takes ownership and all control ends up resting with the top—an impossible burden (for example, the secretary of an organization is tasked with catching mistakes and redoing simple work).

Increasing oversight often doesn't lead to lower risk; instead it can create more risk because no layer takes ownership and all control ends up resting with the top. Third, leaders' potential options are often heavily scrutinized prior to a decision and, thus, reduced in breadth and scope. As a result, organizations critically shrink their risk frontier—stifling risk taking in favor of an "ultimate compromise" solution.[13,14,15]

## III.RESULTS

The current moment provides a critical opportunity to reset how government organizations, leaders, and teams make decisions. The recent climate of unprecedented uncertainty requires even greater speed, agility, and decisiveness in decision making. McKinsey research shows that most companies struggle with this challenge: in a survey of executives across industries, just over half of respondents reported spending more than 30 percent of their working time on decision making—and for 60 percent of surveyed executives, most of that time was used ineffectively.

Having worked with more than ten US government agencies on decision-making issues, we have observed that government leaders face a particularly steep uphill battle when it comes to making good decisions fast. This article offers five practical suggestions for government leaders who want to improve decision making in their organizations.[16,17]

Most public-sector organizations face similar challenges in terms of how they make decisions. First, when there is an unambiguous "bottom line" to measure and rally around, the rational approach to governance tends to lean toward building consensus and limiting opposition and dissent. This not only increases the time spent on and cycles required for the decision-making process but also leads to the proliferation of multiple large all-purpose forums with unclear decision rights; for example, in one US federal agency, efforts toward consensus building led to the development of more than 70 governance bodies and a "governance tax"—or burden of time and resources devoted to meetings and decision-making churn—of more than 40,000 person-years annually.

Second, the tendency to minimize risk can also lead to the development of layers of oversight and bureaucracy in an attempt to "grade homework" and bring risk to zero. Counterintuitively, increasing oversight often doesn't lead to more control or lower risk; instead, it can easily create more risk because no layer takes ownership and all control ends up resting with the top—an impossible burden (for example, the secretary of an organization is tasked with catching mistakes and redoing simple work).

Increasing oversight often doesn't lead to lower risk; instead it can create more risk because no layer takes ownership and all control ends up resting with the top.

Third, leaders' potential options are often heavily scrutinized prior to a decision and, thus, reduced in breadth and scope. As a result, organizations critically shrink their risk frontier—stifling risk taking in favor of an "ultimate compromise" solution.

While the climb may be steep, government leaders must tackle the challenges of enabling more agile and effective decision making. In uncertain times, when citizens need government services more than ever, leaders can't afford to delay decisions. Our experience working with government agencies on effective decision making has highlighted the following five steps that can help government leaders make significant progress on the decision velocity in their organizations:[18,19]

Comprehensively clarify decision rights, then empower decision owners with the authority to execute. Pick a preferred decision rights framework—for example, a DARE (decision makers, advisers, recommenders, executors) framework—and quickly clarify which individuals actually get to make what decisions and who they have to consult for advice. When choosing decision makers, empower them to make enterprise-wide decisions. Communicate these decision rights to the organization, and then, fully empower and support decision makers so they can make rapid progress. If roles are violated (for instance, advisers thinks they have a veto when they don't, or team members push a decision to a higher layer when they have the right to make it themselves), make a correction and communicate about it in real time. Following a decision, communicate the plan and ensure the executor has a clear runway to delivery. Finally, help resolve conflicts and clear bottlenecks on any issues that arise; communicate the decision across the organization to ensure follow through and broad understanding and to limit or address any resistance.

Explicitly define, and hold fast to, the roles of "decision advisers." Establish norms on who decision owners consult with across the organization or agency and when and how they do so. Often some team members can act as "pocket vetoers"; in such cases, broach and resolve this issue when the decision is made. Inform advisers about the timeline for decision making and reinforce a firm deadline for actionable information. Such efforts will help ensure timely external input and maintain the speed (and sanity) of the decision-making team. Reinforcing these norms across the organization early on will help cement the delineation of adviser with decision maker and prevent instances of decision-making creep (such as advisers becoming part of the decision-making team).

Abolish the defined meeting cadence and cleansheet a new, agile meeting cadence to convene the right people at the right times. If a governance construct involves a set of stable bodies with several attendees who meet frequently and it's not clear when, how, or even whether they make decisions, then get rid of it. Replace it with a far leaner, more agile governance construct in which decision makers have ways to quickly get relevant individuals (such as key advisers and recommenders) into a room to get input and align on a direction. Creating a forum where people can get into a room together and hash it out can cut out the need for arduous and time-consuming staff work that can get bottlenecked in the system and slow down decision making. As government leaders build toward agile governance, they should note that there will be immovable requirements tied to risk and their organizations' missions.

Create a high-velocity senior leadership team to clear bottlenecks and ensure alignment on tough decisions. If government leaders don't already have a small forum for their organizations' senior leaders to get together and find resolutions for the toughest problems facing their enterprises, then they should consider standing one up. As per Jeff Bezos's famous "two pizza" rule, making sure the group is small enough to split two pizzas helps facilitate more meaningful dialog about key enterprise issues; however, at the same time, try to incorporate representation from the most important policy and operational worlds. This team should tackle only the most critical, cross-cutting issues facing the organization and only the ones that can't be resolved quickly at lower levels. As part of the discussion, ensure the senior leadership team is aligned on how decisions will be cascaded and supported by all senior leaders; doing so will provide transparency and support across the organization, increase and hasten the adoption of decisions, and help the leadership team to speak with one voice.

Identify key outcome-based metrics sharpened with a data-based edge to hasten the speed of decisions. Private-sector companies have clear metrics they use to measure performance to the bottom line. Though performance is more difficult to define in the public sector, it's still incredibly important and completely possible. Start by setting unifying target outcomes that agency members understand and support (for instance, delivering services or citizen experience). Then cascade these metrics across the organization to define performance on those targets. Review performance on these metrics regularly (for example, monthly), and use that data to drive decisions about matters such as resource and talent

allocation. When a team member proposes a new or alternate option to a decision, ask how it will help the organization improve performance on its targets.

Taking these five steps can move government leaders down the path toward faster, more agile, and, ultimately, more effective decision making. Additionally, following these steps will help government leaders reduce the governance tax facing their organizations today.

There are three major steps in making such impactful decisions: situation framing, information gathering, and coming to conclusions. Each step can lead to adopting a different approach to a same problem. The first step is what we call situation framing, which is to determine the different aspects by which a decision can be analyzed. In the coronavirus crisis, there is not one single aspect that is important, but a number of dimensions that can impact the decisions that will need to be made: the human, economic, financial, and individual freedom dimensions are for instance all key aspects of the decision-making process. Each government will need to prioritize which ones they consider the most important, and the ones they consider the least important.

This choice will be highly dependent of how each country defines the role that the government must play in a society. You can already see stark differences on this framing phase in the approaches adopted by, let's say- the US, focusing on protecting individual freedom and wishing to keep the economy going, and Denmark, focusing first and foremost on helping people who cannot work during the crisis.

Once the framing is defined, follows a phase of information gathering. In the coronavirus crisis, this is a delicate phase, as more information is learned every single day about how the virus works and spreads. When key information is missing, governments must make assumptions to enable decision-making in the face of uncertainty. Each government can select different information to base their decisions on, make different assumptions and inferences based on the information that they do have, and therefore again end-up with different decisions.[19]

## IV.CONCLUSION

And finally, once the information is gathered, governments must interpret the information they have, and come to conclusion. Yet, interpreting the information needs a solid process to lead to an accurate decision. If adopting a solid process can be far more efficient than unorganized thinking, the group of people who interprets the information plays a tremendous role in shaping the decision that are made. Different groups of experts in different countries can, based on the same data, actually process and interpret information differently, and thereby, reach different decisions.[20]

## REFERENCES

1. Dobratz, B.A. (2015). Power, Politics, and Society: An Introduction to Political Sociology. Taylor & Francis. p. 47. ISBN 978-1-317-34529-9. Archived from the original on 30 April 2019. Retrieved 30 April 2019.

2. ^ Jump up to:[a] [b] [c] Linz, Juan José (2000). Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes. Lynne Rienner Publisher. p. 143. ISBN 978-1-55587-890-0. OCLC 1172052725. Archived from the original on 22 April 2019. Retrieved 20 October 2018.

3. ^ Jump up to:[a] [b] Garcia-Alexander, Ginny; Woo, Hyeyoung; Carlson, Matthew J. (2017). Social Foundations of Behavior for the Health Sciences. Springer. pp. 137–. ISBN 978-3-319-64950-4. OCLC 1013825392.

4. ^ "14.2 Types of Political Systems". 8 April 2016. Archived from the original on 22 October 2018. Retrieved 20 October 2018.

5. ^ Columbia Encyclopedia (6th ed.). Columbia University Press. 2000.[full citation needed]

6. ^ Jump up to:[a] [b] Smelser & Baltes 2001, p. [page needed].

7. ^ Brock 2013, p. 53–62.

8. ^ "Government English Definition and Meaning". Lexico. Archived from the original on 17 July 2018. Retrieved 17 July 2018.

9. ^ Jump up to:[a] [b] Christian 2004, p. 245.

10. ^ Christian 2004, p. 294.

11. ^ Eagly, Alice H.; Wood, Wendy (June 1999). "The Origins of Sex Differences in Human Behavior: Evolved Dispositions Versus Social Roles". American Psychologist. 54 (6): 408–423. doi:10.1037/0003-066x.54.6.408. Archived from the original on 17 August 2000.

12.     ^ Fukuyama, Francis (27 March 2012). The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. p. 70. ISBN 978-0-374-53322-9.

13.     ^ Roosevelt, Anna C. (1999). "The Maritime, Highland, Forest Dynamic and the Origins of Complex Culture". In Salomon, Frank; Schwartz, Stuart B. (eds.). Cambridge history of the Native peoples of the Americas: South America, Volume 3. Cambridge University Press. pp. 266–267. ISBN 978-0-521-63075-7. Archived from the original on 24 June 2016.

14.     ^ Jump up to:[a] [b] Kuper & Kuper 2008, p. [

15.     ^ Haider-Markel 2014, p. [

16.     ^ Lewellen 2003, p. [

17.     ^ Kopstein & Lichbach 2005, p. 4.

18.     ^ Renna 2015.

19.     ^ Ribuffo 2011, pp. 2–6, quote on p. 6.

20.     ^ Frederickson 2000, p. 12.