

## The nature of the rationality of public decision in Algeria

### طبيعة عقلانية القرارات العمومية في الجزائر

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#### Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to analyse the theoretical foundations of the rationality of public. We questioned the explanatory foundations of public decision-making in the case of Algeria, after positioning the problem in the Algerian context, where we have cited some cases of public decisions that have been the subject of serious criticism by many observers; we have sought to find an interpretation to these different decisions, and others. To do this, we have referred to the works of public economics, which provides us with a wealth of explanations and interpretations of decision-making and the adoption of public policies. We have then very synthetically approached the problem of the rationalization of public decisions in Algeria, based on the theoretical analysis.

**Keywords:** Public decision, rationality, institutions, bureaucracy, Algeria

#### المخلص:

يهدف هذا المقال إلى التحليل النظري لأسس عقلانية القرارات العامة. في حالة الجزائر، تساءلنا عن الأسس التوضيحية لعملية صنع القرار العام، بعد وضع المشكلة في السياق الجزائري حيث ذكرنا بعض حالات القرارات العامة التي كانت موضع انتقادات حادة من قبل العديد من المراقبين، سعينا إلى إيجاد تفسير لهذه القرارات، وغيرها.

وللقيام بذلك، استندنا إلى نظريات الاقتصاد العام، والذي يوفر العديد من التفسيرات وتأويلات لعملية صنع القرار واعتماد السياسات العامة، وبعد ذلك تناولنا مشكلة ترشيد القرارات العامة في الجزائر على ضوء التحليل النظري.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** القرار العام، العقلانية، المؤسسات، البيروقراطية، الجزائر.

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### **Introduction:**

The country (Algeria) going through a serious budget crisis (large deficits that led to the depletion of the Revenue Regulatory Fund (RIF) and the continued decline in the country's foreign reserves), it was expected that firm commitments would be made to a roadmap. consensus on courageous measures guiding a process of gradual reform, leading to a structural transformation of the way the national economy operates.

None of that. Sand walls are erected with speeches that have no more grip on reality. No diagnosis has been made of past actions and commitments, which would have made it possible to identify constraints and forms of blockage and present the causes of failures to diversify sources of wealth and growth. The economy remains more dependent than ever on revenues from the sale of hydrocarbons (non-reproducible natural capital, should we emphasize )

The discrepancy between intentions and achievements are very important (economic growth on average decennial hardly exceeds 3%, the overall productivity of the factor is still far below what it should be, the productive investment insignificant (hardly more than 2%, according to some estimates) and this despite the commitments of public authorities, employers and trade unions (rather than the only UGTA) to achieve objectives under the previously adopted growth pact

The action of the Algerian government or rather the successor governments (that of Abdelmalek Sellal, the ephemeral Abdelmajid Tabboune, that of Ahmed Ouyahia and the current Noredine Bedoui) is marked more than in the past by an a notorious irrationality. Many decisions are made in all sectors (industry, agriculture, foreign trade,... (It is unclear on what basis) that are reworked before being executed or completely questioned. These public decisions taken by state clerks not only at the central (ministerial) level but also at the local level (Wilayas, Communes) are often the subject of severe criticism by almost all observers. Recent news is full of illustrative examples

To find an interpretation to these and other decisions, we have reviewed many articles, theses and memoirs as well as the writings of the national press. It appears that few authors have addressed the foundations of public decision-making processes

#### **Problematic (questioning-hypothesis-methodology)**

If objectively we cannot consider the thesis of incompetence (all ministers and Walis (prefets ) are academics, who have for the most part held high positions in the workings of public administration), nor consider other arguments that are controversial as to the ideological bias of the decisions taken, which would explain the obvious irrationality of the decisions taken by the various ministers as well as the successive Walis (Prefects) during the last two decades, especially, ?

How can these different decisions, and others, be interpreted?

Are the decisions taken guided by the immediate interest of the decision-maker (staff, partisan, political ...), or dictated by his / her medium and long-term interest (coherence with his / her vision of the future) or by a concern for compliance with a certain way of being and doing? Are decision-makers rational, are they actors with limited rationality or agents influenced first by their environment?

Our hypothesis can be stated as follows: the rationalization of public decisions depends on the efficient functioning of the institutions

In order to rationalize public decisions in Algeria and to limit the elimination of the different autocratic propensities to express oneself, it would be necessary to institute the good rules of governance. Institutional reforms are therefore necessary

## The nature of the rationality of public decision in Algeria

To answer the questions posed and verify the hypothesis stated, we opted for methodological approach that led us to address successively:

1. a brief reminder of some of the many decisions that have been the subject of serious criticism by many observers
2. Some models and explanatory theories of public decision-making in this case models and theories of the inevitable Herbert Simon, Graham T. Allison and Elinor Ostrom
3. The rationalization of public decision in Algeria in the light of theoretical lessons

After a review of models of decision-making processes, we will be able to ask which of these models best fits the decision in the Algerian state.

1. Some public decisions taken during the last decade

Recall that we generally mean by public decision the choice made by public decision-makers between several possible options in political action. This choice "is part of a framework and a process that guide or even constrain the public decision that is often the result of collective work, the political leader does not always have the time or skills to take it alone ."<sup>1</sup>

And by rationality, according to H. Simon, "a situation of choice in which the rational actor in front of several branches of alternatives will choose the one he believes will lead to the best overall result"

It should also be noted that a decision is evaluated in relation to the objectives it is supposed to achieve (effectiveness) and in relation to the context and structure data from which it derives (issues and feasibility).

This being, in Algeria, many strongly criticized decisions have been taken by many ministers who have taken turns in the different governments that have succeeded one another during this last decade. As an example, we will recall a few of these decisions on which we have commented in the national press, notably in the economic supplement of the Algerian daily El Watan

- The increase in budget spending when resources are down

How to respond to this apparent contradiction? In theory, economics teaches us that public expenditure should be correlated with the state of available resources in terms of the future, in other words public expenditure is a function of the state of available resources' (financing capacity) optimal preservation of macroeconomic balances. Outside this paradigm, we have the Keynesian approach that advocates economic recovery through public spending even in a state of imbalance (optimal momentary fiscal imbalance ... the growth of economic activity that will be generated will increase the resources of the nation and consequently to recover in the long term the state of equilibrium of the national accounts.

This is to say that in theory there is nothing to forbid opting for an increase in public spending, everything else being equal, if the objective is a real economic recovery ... that's where the whole problem lies. The Algerian economy remains "insensitive" in terms of the development of endogenous production capacities in response to the increase in demand generated by public spending, which remains considerable. An old problem related to the permissive conditions of the multipliers game in this case the investment multiplier

And we continue to inject money into the economic circuit without questioning the impacts in terms of development of endogenous development capacities

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<sup>1</sup> « La décision publique », Le Poliste, [le-politiste.com/la-decision-publique](http://le-politiste.com/la-decision-publique), consulté le 12/03/2019

The budget allocated for 2015 with a deficit of 22% in full budget crisis. For example, to be meditated by our governments, in the countries of the European Union the maximum allowed amount of deficits is 3%

- Financing infrastructure projects with state funds

The choice of the mode of financing, on own funds of the State in this case, is contestable. The government has been offered the cooperation of international organizations such as the World Bank (WB) for the realization of these infrastructures in partnership. Algeria could have benefited from the expertise and know-how, in addition to the financing of the monetary institution at very low rates. Only, the leaders thought, that it was enough to have money to make succeed the building sites. As a result, most of them have suffered major delays due to lack of serious studies, like the East-West highway. Above all, the use of partnerships could also have avoided the massive injection of funds into the circuits of corruption. Today the report is terrible: hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent on projects that have failed or were poorly implemented.

- The rule of 51/49% applied to all sectors

The institution of Rule 49/51, which requires foreign investors to associate with national companies on the basis of a division of capital (51% for nationals and 49% for foreigners), a decision so much criticized which seems to have had a discouraging effect on the attractiveness of FDI

This rule was supposed to limit currency outflows through dividend repatriations and to control foreign investment. Except that the 51/49% has acted as a scarecrow for international investors. Very few partnerships were formed while Algeria had a substantial oil windfall. Moreover, in terms of currency outflows, the measure is far from effective. On the contrary, it encourages reprehensible tax optimization practices: what foreign partners lose in dividends, they tend to recover elsewhere, for example through a transfer pricing system, to the detriment of the Fisc, exchange reserves and foreign exchange reserves. of the Algerian economy.<sup>1</sup>

The rule of 49/51% which is not applied mechanically even in China banking on the blocking minority (30%) and the technological and managerial transfer, applied indiscriminately to all strategic and non-strategic sectors since 2009 whereas the invoice import has doubled since then

- The repurchase of mobile operator Djazzy

A symptomatic case of the irrationality of government decisions. A real fiasco. Algeria has disbursed nearly \$ 4 billion to take over the 51% stake in Djazzy at a time when the mobile phone sector is changing and the operator is in decline. On the basis of an annual profit of \$ 200 million, the State's share is therefore \$ 102 million. In this case, assuming that the profits remain stable and that the company does not invest a single penny, it would take almost ... 45 years for the State to return its investment. However, the operator is a company in decline, in a changing sector. (Tsa-Algerie.com).

- Introduction of import licenses

The economic theory teaches us that in times of crisis the public authorities can implement a whole series of instruments of protection (in this case concerning Algeria, it is about reducing the invoice of imports by limiting the volume ), in accordance with the agreements concluded in the field of liberalization of foreign trade (Free Trade Area, WTO even if accession is not yet concluded).

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<sup>1</sup> Les 12 décisions économiques irrationnelles qui vont coûter cher à l'Algérie <https://www.tsa-algerie.com/>

In this case, governments can set up quota systems through licenses. (What has been decided at home). These are authorizations for the right of the holder to import a certain quantity of a given good. The State may sell these licenses or auction them to interested importers; he may also issue them free of charge according to administrative criteria.

Such a cyclical measure by definition in a market economy should be considered as part of a global strategy whose effects would be assessed and corrected (eligible products not eligible for prior import authorizations are never definitive) periodically.

Therefore, it is not enough to enact administrative measures to solve an equation of economic essence, especially as in the institutional context that is ours marked by endemic corruption it may amplify rather the phenomenon and to alter the impact of such a measure

A trade policy can only be envisaged in coordination with an industrial policy with short, medium and long-term objectives clearly defined and periodically evaluated

And it is in December 2017 that the government acknowledged, the failure of this decision on the imposition of import licenses, introduced in 2016, which will be abolished in 2018, except for car imports

- Assembly (assembly) of vehicles

how can one decide overnight to install vehicle assembly on national soil, to start a process of substitution for the import of the finished product without any scientifically established strategy based on the data concerning all the variables determining of such a strategy whose ultimate objective would be the contribution to the industrialization of the country by the development of many industries (mechanics, metallurgy, pneumatics, glassware ...) that the automobile construction arouses?

Barely implemented this policy is already counterproductive to the extent that it only substitutes the import of the vehicle by importing parts and component of the vehicle (SKD, CKD), for a higher cost

One can quote the former Minister of Industry, Mahdjoub Bedda who inherited the sector, who considered that it was purely and simply "disguised imports" from manufacturers! Noting that the sector has no impact on foreign exchange reserves or job creation, but rather is a significant cost to the state in terms of tax aids and benefits. <sup>1</sup>

And many other important decisions that have left the media scene indifferent

How can we explain this irrationality of the many decisions made is that we will try to clarify by referring to some important work on the issue of the rationality of public decisions?

The decision of non-conventional financing (FNC)

Is it a good decision? Are there no alternatives to internal indebtedness? Can the public authorities fulfill the commitment to reserve this type of financing only for the stated objectives (deficit, public debt and National Investment Fund)? Will the reactivity of the productive apparatus be at the rendezvous for the creation of activities able to compensate the counterpart of the created money supply? The answer to all these questions must lead us to question the reality of a capacity of anticipation of the public authorities and consequently on the relevance of such a decision

This type of financing in the context of ours is bound to lead to major inflationary pressures if it is not well and rigorously supervised. These tensions are due both to the amount of additional money created and injected without guaranteed productive counterpart given the

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<sup>1</sup> « Automobile : voitures « Made in Algérie », la désillusion du gouvernement » Par La Tribune Afrique | 08/08/2017 [afrique.latribune.fr/entreprises/industrie](http://afrique.latribune.fr/entreprises/industrie)

level, the way of structuring and the low reactivity of the national economy with regard to the creation of corresponding activities and income.

The use of this kind of financing to "solve problems", do not join any economic logic according to many observers. Because "this requires in return for the use of non-conventional financing, the existence of industrial fabric consequent, and an economic dynamic that would allow temporarily to resort to this solution, without risking to be found a few years later in an economic situation inextricable, which would be only the result, of a flight forward, of an internal credit that Algeria would struggle to repay".<sup>1</sup>

And many other important decisions that have left the media scene indifferent

How can we explain this irrationality of the many decisions made? It is that we will try to clarify by referring to some important theoretical work on the issue of the rationality of public decisions

## **2. The theories and models explaining public decision-making**

The public economy gives us a whole body of explanations and interpretations about decision-making and the adoption of public policies. Many models and theories are proposed by which we will limit ourselves to exposing in a very synthetic way the theory of the unavoidable Herbert Simon, the model of Graham T. Allison and the theory institutionalist and the public decision making with the model of Elionor Ostrom

### **2.1. The theory of Herbert Simon (Theories of Bounded Rationality)**

Herbet Simon (Nobel Prize in Economics in 1978) inaugurated with "Administrative Behavior" (1945) an explanatory current, managerial and political at the time, which reflects the processes of reflection of individuals and their contribution to the decision.

Other authors have also contributed significantly in this current analysis, we can mention among others Bryan D. Jones with Politics and Architecture of Choice.<sup>2</sup>

But Herbert Simon remains the essential reference. His contribution to the analysis of business management, economics and politics is considerable. His most cited contribution is the development of the concept of 'limited rationality' and his explanation of managers' behaviors.

His theory in his famous book "Administrative Behavior" is an analysis of the implications-psychological, economic and organizational-in the decision-making process

In this book, Administrative Behavior (1945), he questioned the concept of total rationality that prevailed at that time.

As we have commented in our book, "Theory of Decision,"<sup>3</sup> he had noted the limits of the concept of rationality and the economic criterion in decision-making. He showed that the leader (decision maker) cannot reach the optimal solution to a given problem because it can be at one time but cannot be at another time. Moreover, the alternatives available to the manager can be numerous and the choice of one of them depends on the capacities and possibilities of their simultaneous evaluations with the determination of their results, which requires a lot of time and effort. . The manager is thus confronted with many factors that he cannot all master given the necessary knowledge and forecasting capabilities. This author proposed for this reason to add a qualitative criterion to the concept of rationality to lighten it

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<sup>1</sup> Lyes B (2018) : « L'Edito : Financement non conventionnel, l'Algérie ferait-elle du « surplace » ? » – Algérie Eco du 25 juin [www.algerie-eco.com/2018/06/25/financement-non...](http://www.algerie-eco.com/2018/06/25/financement-non...)

<sup>2</sup> Jones, Bryan D.( 2001), Politics and the Architecture of Choice : Bounded Rationality and Governance. Chicago : Chicago University Press, 248 p

<sup>3</sup> Boutaleb K (2007) : « Théorie de la décision » OPU, Alger, 2007, p.

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(of its complexity) and make it simpler and more realistic. He accordingly divided the concept of rationality into the behavior of individuals as follows:

- Objective rationality: it reflects the actual behavior that aims to maximize utility under given conditions. This rationality is based on the existence of sufficient data on alternative choices and their results.

- The subjective rationality: It expresses the behavior that aims to maximize the ability to achieve utility in a given situation on the basis of existing data taking into account the limitations and constraints in the choices to be made.

This contribution of H. Simon to the theory of decision particularly the presentation of the concept of limited rationality and the satisfactory alternative (less than the maximum of realization) had a great influence, which earned him the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1978.<sup>1</sup>

Concerning public decision, Herbert Simon excludes him from the model of objective rationality, even if he considers that humans act by pursuing a goal, they are therefore rational.

The rationality of the decision, that is, their appropriateness to the goals, becomes important; Simon points out that she is not at all complete in reality. It has practical limits that depend on humans and the characters of the environment. The limits to human rationality are:

- The reflexes and the gifts of each one (his capacities);
- personal values and goals (motivations);
- Personal knowledge of the situation and the information available

On this basis, there would be two contexts to study in order to interpret the public decision:<sup>2</sup>

- the elements external to the decision-maker (constraints and opportunities) and
- internal elements such as values, expectations and beliefs.

Limited rationality has two aspects:

### **1. The first aspect:**

Man is rational because he can give reasons for the decisions he has made and most of the time "In a broad definition of rationality, virtually all human behavior is rational. People have reasons to do what they do, and if asked, can give their opinion on what these reasons are "<sup>3</sup>

The second aspect:

For Simon the rationality is limited because the individual can make errors of judgment and still does not reach the fixed objectives:

"Of course, as Freud (and many laboratory experiments) told us, people can be wrong about themselves. The real reasons may be different from what they are supposed to be. (...) To say that there are reasons for people's actions means that there is a connection between the actions and the goals (values, utility function) that people have. Actions increase the possibility that some of these goals will be achieved. However, even in what we may call

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<sup>1</sup> Simon H (1985) : « Human Nature in Politics: the Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science ». The American Political Science Review, volume 79, numéro 2, p. 293-304.

<sup>2</sup> Simon H (1972): « Theories of bounded rationality ». In Decision and Organizations. C. B. McGuire et Roy Radner (éditeurs) p. 161-176. Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing company

<sup>3</sup> Simon H (1991) : "Rationality in Political Behavior", February 1991, Carnegie Mellon University, p. 1

rational behavior, there may be real differences between the action and the achievement of the goal. "

It is based on the purpose and the environmental analysis of the decision that decisions are made.

"A decision in real life includes a few goals or values, some facts about the environment, and some inferences from values and facts. Goals and values can be simple or complex, consistent or contradictory; the facts can be real or supposed, based on observations or reports made by others; the inferences can be valid or false"<sup>1</sup>.

Simon also considers that there may be an inconsistency between the action and the achievement of the goals.

"Firstly, the actors may have (and most of the time will have) incomplete or erroneous information about the situation and potential changes in the situation over time (...) Secondly, even if the information is complete, an actor may be incapable (and generally will be unable) to calculate all the consequences of the action (...) Third, the actors usually do not have only one goal, and there may be incompatibilities between the goals, the realization of the one of them interfering with the realization of the others (...) Fourth, an actor may fail to achieve a goal because of his ignorance of the means of action. » (Simon, 1991)

The rational behavior of the individual is expressed most simply by decision-making in order to maximize his or her profit (Simon,1972).

However, it is now accepted that human behavior is subject to a set of influences that exclude the existence of a single rule of behavior. As a result, any attempt to subject human behavior to these scientific and technical criteria will have unintended consequences because of ignorance of the irrational aspects that often characterize human behavior.

On the other hand, the achievement of economic efficiency goals in terms of rationality is often accompanied or competed by personal goals and informal practices to protect a power to ensure acquired benefits...

Public decisions, taken from the news in Algeria, taken as an example, raise the question of the weight of decision-makers in the decision-making structure of power. In the case of privatization, the public service seems to have adjusted to the political requirements, responding to a personal or partisan interest, of a member of the government (decision of privatization of public hotels by the Prime Minister (in September 2018) before being canceled by the President of the Republic). This raises questions about the capacity for institutional resistance, the strength of ethical rules and the modes of influence within the political administration.

This level of analysis leads us to a series of additional questions such as the room for maneuver of senior government officials, the remedies available to protect the institutional integrity and the level of professional ethics of the public service. This raises the question of the role of control of legislators, and consequently institutions and public decision-making

## **2.2. The Graham T. Allison model (Bureaucratic Politics Model '(BPM).**

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<sup>1</sup> Simon H (1959) : "Theories of Decision-Making in economics and Behavioral Science", American Economic Review, 49, n° 1, p. 273



The model of Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin i with "Bureaucratic Politics ..."<sup>1</sup> and the application of his theory on the political bureaucracy is in the current of the theories making the description and the analysis of the actors internal to the organization.

This author (Graham T. Allison) lays the groundwork for the explanatory model of the public decision called the Bureaucratic Politics Model (BPM). In his essay "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis" (1969), he presents three models: (Le Politiste.com)

1. The model of the rational actor: the state is assimilated to a rational agent, it is therefore necessary to question its objectives and to show how its choices are rational with regard to the ends pursued. However, Allison reproaches this model for being able to justify any situation and so not to be refutable;

2. The organizational model: the government appears as a conglomerate of organizations each pursuing their own logic and perpetuating, in a bureaucratic logic, a certain routine;

3. The model of government policy: the power games between politics and the need for the supreme leader to build consensus around him make the leadership charisma and internal divisions of the conglomerate of state organizations decisive importance on the decision

In Model I, the rational political model, the state is monolithic and makes autonomous decisions based on a well-established preference scale

In Model II, the state is a conglomerate of organizations that each make decisions on the basis of routines and the whole produces a state decision.

Model III focuses on the behavior of individuals in senior state management. Administrative and political leaders, at the top of several public organizations, interact in order to obtain a state decision (a decision on lucrative choice of concessions, public / private contract ...). All these actors act as if they were in a game of exchange and compromise. The decisions are the result of this game. Each actor pursues his own strategy according to the interests of his organization, his values and the gains he can obtain for himself. The result is not a rational choice, but the fruit of confrontation.<sup>2</sup>

(It is undoubtedly the model which predominates in the Algerian context)

From this confrontation of three models of analysis applied to the same decision-making process, Allison concludes that it is impossible for the researcher to discover a posteriori what really happened.

Therefore, an approach to public decision can only be made in a multidimensional way and should not be limited to the prism of the rationality of the actors.

Public decisions are, for Allison, the result of an internal political struggle. The elements of analysis are the active players, the organizational priorities, the perceptions and the stakes of these organizations, the personal interests (including the interest for the power), the mode of problematization, and finally, the channels of transmission of the decision to action. The advertised position of an actor depends on his interest and that of his organization.

This model has also been enriched by the work of many researchers, including Morton Halperin, in "Why Bureaucrats Play Games"<sup>3</sup>. The decision becomes the point of convergence of different tendencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Allison G. T. et Halperin M. H. (1972), «Bureaucratic Politics : A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications». World Politics, volume 24,

<sup>2</sup> Fillon F (2011) : « La prise de décision politique en matière budgétaire et fiscale au Québec : étude d'une décision du Ministre des finances », Projet de thèse (non publié), Université du Québec, Montréal

<sup>3</sup> Allison, G. (1971). Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1ed. Little Brown. p. 176.

Some members of the decision team are busy with one type of situation, others tend to oppose a type of solution, and finally, some solutions rejected for a previous problem can be recycled for the problem immediately after, without to be adapted ... in this case, decision-making would rarely be rational.

If Allison rejects the rational approach, it is because it actually conceals the constantly neglected side of the bureaucracy: the author of a government policy is not a single decision-maker assessing each of his moves, but rather a group of large organizations and political actors who have fairly different views of the paths that the government should follow and who are in constant competition to influence both decisions and government actions.<sup>1</sup>

In this tight negotiation game, the positions defended by the various decision-makers are dictated by the place each one occupies in the decision-making apparatus and are influenced by the operational framework and the shared values.

Allison summarizes this situation in one sentence and in a very graphic way: "where you stand depends on where you sit", which can be translated as "the position you defend is explained by the position you occupy".

As Charles-Philippe David points out, "the place you occupy determines your perception of the problem, your preferences for the issues, your interests to defend and, consequently, your point of view."<sup>2</sup>

Allison's model ultimately reveals, according to Nelson Michaud, "the staging of political actors in concentric circles according to their proximity to the policy to be developed and to an operational arrangement specific to each decision. Which arrangement is defined as "channels of action"<sup>3</sup>

While Allison argues in decision-making in the military (international defense strategy), but generalizing this concept of "channels of action", "we can see that these channels of action can cover more than one government entity, more than one ministry or, from another perspective, focus within a particular organization" (Michaud,1996).

Allison focuses on the behaviors of actors and the power relationships that bind them. Diversity and conflict are the crucial features of the "policy process", including in the framework of sovereignty politics, when national security is at stake.

"Public policy, whether it is the moment of decision or of implementation, becomes the contingent product of the struggles and bargaining by political and bureaucratic actors, entangled in their routines, defending their interests. organizational ... The decision is the result of a mixture of design errors, communication, information, haggling and tugging. Decision and implementation are interdependent and non-hierarchical phases. Here, more coherence, formal hierarchy, and rationality of the bureaucratic apparatus. The deconstruction is total. »<sup>4</sup>

### **2.3. The model of Elionor Ostrom (the theory of collective choices ...**

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<sup>1</sup> Allison G T. et Halperin M H. (1972), «Bureaucratie Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications », in dans Raymond TANTER et Richard H. ULLMAN (dir.), *Theory and Policy in International Relations*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, p. 42

<sup>2</sup> David, C P. (1994), *AU sein de la Maison-Blanche: la formulation de la politique étrangère des États-Unis de Truman à Clinton*, Sainte-Foy, Les Presses de l'Université Laval et Les Presses universitaires de Nancy, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Michaud, N. (1996). *Graham Allison et le paradigme bureaucratique : vingt-cinq ans plus tard est-il encore utile ?* *Études internationales*, 27 (4), 769–794. <https://doi.org/10.7202/703663ar>

<sup>4</sup> Bezes P et Pierru F (2012), « État, administration et politiques publiques : les dé-liaisons dangereuses La France au miroir des sciences sociales nord-américaines », Dans *Gouvernement et action publique* 2012/2 (n° 2),

institutional analysis)

Elinor Ostrom is mainly known for her work on the collective management of the commons, and for that she has been interested in the decision-making problems of the public authorities.

### **2.3.1. The epistemological foundations of the model: The neo-institutionalism of rational choices**

The explanatory model of Elinor Ostrom lies in the neoinstitutionalist paradigm

Recall that it was at the beginning of the twentieth century, that the proponents of institutionalism, tried to explain the decisions by the legal form of the state and the regulatory framework related to the field of expertise concerned.<sup>1</sup>

The legal rules (Constitutions, Laws, Decrees and Ministerial Directives) dictated the decision-making process and the development of societies. The neo-institutionalists argue that politics is less dependent on the social context than interdependencies between social and political institutions themselves. The neo-institutionalists insist on an explanatory role of the institutions.

Institutions would condition the interpretation that decision makers would make of problems and situations that come their way ("Lecours, 2002)

The neo-institutionalist current tries to reconcile the role of the actor and that of the institutions.

The neo-institutionalism of rational choices "considers the institutions according to the constraints and the opportunities that they offer to the actors. The phenomena or situations are thus explained less as products deriving from institutional structures than the result of individual and collective decisions taken by considering these same structures "<sup>2</sup>

The authors most often identified with the neo-institutionalism of rational choices are Ostrom (Governing the Commons), North ("Transaction Cost Theory of Politics") and Shepsle (Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions),

D. North, who, it must be emphasized, is considered the main promoter of this approach, conceptualized the institutions as a set of rules of the game, whether formalized (codified) such as legislation, property rights, contracts, or informal, such as norms and customs. In fact, it defines institutions as the rules of the game in society or, more formally, the constraints conceived by the men who supervise and influence their interactions.

D. North distinguishes the allocative efficiency considered in the neoclassical tradition with the conditions of the Pareto optimum, and the adaptive efficiency. For this author institutions are perceived as "rules of the game of a society or, more formally, the constraints defined by men to shape their interactions."<sup>3</sup>

The rules will be the written expression of accepted norms and, in some cases, they will be in contradiction with these norms with the avowed purpose of supplanting them. Maximizing individual preferences is still the main driver of human behavior for these authors. However, when it comes to choosing one of the many options, the actors consider the rules,

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<sup>1</sup> James M et Olsen J P. (1984), « The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life ». *American Political Science Review*, volume 78, numéro 3, p. 734-749., , p. 738

<sup>2</sup> Lecours A. (2002), « L'approche néo-institutionnaliste en science politique : unité ou diversité ? ». *Politique et Sociétés*, volume 21, numéro 3, p. 3-19., p.10

<sup>3</sup> North D. (1990), "Intitutions, Institutional change and Economic Performance", Cambridge Univ. Press, NY.

their costs and benefits and their impact on the behavior of other actors. . Institutions would increase the level of predictability of the behavior of others<sup>1</sup>

For other authors<sup>2</sup>, the central question of the theory of rationality is how to evaluate the available options. The preferences of individuals in relation to the possible products of their action will, in part, make their rational choice.

All admit that the institution influences or determines the behavior of the actors. Specifically, on the issue that concerns us, the public decision taken by the political actor.

If, on the other hand, we believe that the actors have the capacity, within the frameworks of the institutions, to make a sufficient inventory of the options, that they are able to free themselves from the received ideas and to estimate the consequences of their gestures, then we are in a neo-institutionalist grid of rational choices as expressed by the model of Elinor Ostrom

### **2.3.2. The content of Elinor Ostrom's model**

The author's two major contributions to governance are undoubtedly: the Shared Resources Study (CPR) and the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) conceptual framework.

By making the history of the debates on the renewal of the paradigm of the Public Administration in their work "Public Choice: A different approach to the study of Public Administration"<sup>3</sup>

Vincent and Elinor Ostrom recognize that it was in 1963, under the impetus of James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, that the active search by political economists for new explanatory models for public action began. And it was at the instigation of these authors that the Public Choice Society was created in 1967 and the publication of Public Choice magazine began.

Vincent and Elinor Ostrom also highlight the work of Herbert Simon, particularly "Administrative Behavior" (1945), as the most important source of challenges to the traditional model of Public Administration.

According to Elinor Ostrom four a priori framed the analysis of the behavior of individuals subject to choices:

- Individuals seek their interest, they try to make decisions in accordance with their own preference system;
- Individuals are presumed rational in the sense that they are able to identify and classify behavioral strategies according to their profitability;
- Individuals maximize their interest and try to choose the strategy that allows them to get closer to their preferences;
- Individuals have different levels of information depending on the situation.

Individuals acting on behalf of public institutions are human people who make decisions in many socio-economic and political domains. These are the different ministers responsible for the management and development of their respective sectors, who use the resources they

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<sup>1</sup> Peters G. (1999), «Rational Choice Theory and Institutional Theory». In Institutional Theory in Political Science: The 'New Institutionalism'. New York : Continuum, 175 p. p. 45

<sup>2</sup> Moser P K. (éd.) 1990. «Rationality in Action: General Introduction». In Rationality in Action: Contemporary Approaches. Boston: Cambridge University Press, 497 p.

<sup>3</sup> Ostrom, E. et Ostrom V. 1971. « Public Choice : a Different Approach to the Study of Public Administration". Public Administration Review, volume 31, numéro 2, p. 203-216.

have, to implement strategies that enable them to achieve their objectives, maintain their friendship network or to be realized.

In "Agenda for a Study of Institutions"<sup>1</sup>, Elinor Ostrom identifies several authors associated with the Public Choice movement integrating institutions into their explanatory models, including William H Riker, who in "Implication from the Disequilibrium of Majority Rule". the Study of Institutions ", stated that: " Social scientists have probably always been, and still are, divided about the degree to which institutions and personal values, opinions and tastes influence the content of collective decisions ... "<sup>2</sup>

Elinor Ostrom replaces the term 'institution' (which she considers to be difficult to grasp under a single definition), by the term 'rule' which she defines as being:

"... prescriptions known and used by a group of participants to order repetitive and interdependent relationships. The prescriptions refer to necessary, prohibited or permitted actions. Rules are the results of implicit or explicit efforts made by a group of people to order and predict situations by: (1) creating positions, (2) determining how participants can enter or withdraw from a position (3) by establishing the actions that participants must take, permitted or prohibited in those positions and (4) by determining the products that the participants are required to, the permission or the prohibition to deliver "<sup>3</sup>

For Elinor Ostrom, institutions include both "the organizations and rules used to structure patterns of interaction within organizations"<sup>4</sup>.

For the economist of the organizations Claude Ménard the institutions are "a set of socio-economic rules, set up under historical conditions, on which individuals or groups of individuals have little or no control, for the most part, in the short and medium term "<sup>5</sup>

These rules are intended to ensure the functioning of the organization or the economic system. This is also the view expressed by James March and J. Olsen<sup>6</sup> by writing that the institutions define the frameworks in which individual behaviors, collective action or public policies are unfolded.

For Olsen, there are three levels of rules. Operational rules that relate to the daily level of decision-making; the level of collective choice (this is where operational rules are adopted and decisions about activity and results are made); the constitutional level where is defined who will be able to take part in the collective choices.<sup>7</sup>

These rules are "understandings shared by actors relating to actual requirements, defining which actions or outcomes are required, prohibited or permitted"<sup>8</sup>

For Elinor Ostrom, therefore, institutions are rules and there are seven types:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ostrom, E (1986) : « An agenda for the study of institutions ». Public Choice, volume 48, numéro 1 p. 3-25.

<sup>2</sup> Riker, W H. (1980), « Implications from the Disequilibrium of Majority Rule for the Study of Institutions ». The American Political Science Review, volume 74, numéro. 2, p. 432-446., p. 432

<sup>3</sup> Ostrom, E. (1986) An Agenda for the Study of Institutions.

Public Choice, 48, 3-25, p. 5 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00239556>

<sup>4</sup> Ostrom E et Hess C. (2007) , *Understanding knowledge as a commons: from theory to practice*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press,

<sup>5</sup> Ménard C (1990) « Economie des organisations », Paris ; repères, la découverte ;.

<sup>6</sup> March J., Olsen J. (1989) , *Rediscovering Institutions : The organisational basis of Politics*, Mac Milan, New York,

<sup>7</sup> Ostrom E et Basurto X (2011) , « *Crafting analytical tools to study institutional change* », Journal of Institutional Analysis, vol. 7., p. 319

<sup>8</sup> Weinstein O (2013) , « *Comment comprendre les « communs » : Elinor Ostrom, la propriété et la nouvelle économie institutionnelle* », Revue de la régulation, vol. 14, n° 2, , p. 6

1. Rules for assigning positions. These rules establish the number of positions in the structure and how many people take place in these positions;
2. Input-output rules. These rules establish how participants are chosen to occupy the positions and how they can be dropped or withdrawn;
3. Large rules. These rules establish the expected results as well as the rewards or costs associated with those results;
4. Rules of authority. These rules establish the actions assigned to a particular position;
5. Aggregation rules. These rules establish the decisions to be taken at certain times for an intermediate product or a final product;
6. Information rules. These rules establish the channels of communication between participants as well as the content and form of these communications;
7. Bonus rules. These rules establish the benefits or costs attributed to participants in a given position.

These rules become variables (7 variables) and, combined with an assumption about individual decision making, create a framework for social interaction.

If we apply this typology of rules to Algeria; we can see:

that, to be appointed to one of these positions, no criterion seems to emerge. Appointments to ministerial posts are the responsibility of the Prince, under the jurisdiction of the President of the Republic; an occult appointment system

Appointments to positions at some level of hierarchy give incumbents duties, obligations and privileges (variable 3: scope).

To show that decision-makers are generally engaged in complex processes leading to collective choices and interacting with other decision-makers in different positions with varying expectations, Ostrom has used the concept of 'polycentricity' to describe this situation. The rules, the calculations of each decision maker and the interaction will produce a decision.<sup>2</sup>

Decision-makers interact within a situation structured by rules confronting choices of actions and strategies leading to consequences for themselves and for others "

According to the design of the author, Eleoner Ostrom, the rules, are understood as prescriptions that guide the behavior of the actors of the system. Participants make choices based on the variables derived from these rules and incorporate them as constraints of choice for other actors. There are seven types of prescriptions according to Elinor Ostrom and we have identified them above.

In the end, in order to make the decisions rational and to limit or eliminate the different autocratic propensities to express oneself, it would be necessary to institute the good rules of governance.

The cases of public decisions in Algeria, mentioned above, probably find an explanation in this third model.

### **3. Institutional change and rationalization of public decisions in Algeria**

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<sup>1</sup>Ostrom E(2005) : « Understanding the Diversity of Structured Human Interactions ». Chap in Understanding Institutional Diversity, p. 1-30. Princeton (New Jersey) : Princeton University Press. p.3

<sup>2</sup> La gouvernance polycentrique : biens communs, décisions par l'action sur les règles – E. Ostrom  
[www.sietmanagement.fr/decision-collective-rationalite-de](http://www.sietmanagement.fr/decision-collective-rationalite-de).

## The nature of the rationality of public decision in Algeria

The economic policies implemented everywhere, from the 1980s, have come up against phenomena such as corruption, lobbying of private interests or lack of information, all problems that had hardly been studied in the past. framework of conventional macroeconomic analysis.

Thus was born from the 90s, in other words under the influence of largely established failures, the so-called institutional approaches to development.

This new approach to development has, however, been made possible, as G. Grellet<sup>1</sup> points out, by the significant advances in microeconomics of the last thirty years, particularly in four areas:

- the theory of transaction costs (R. Coase, D. North, O. Williamson) which allowed to understand the economic rationality of non-market institutions;

- information theory (Akerlof, Stiglitz), in particular problems related to the asymmetry of information which made it possible to understand the rationality underlying certain types of contracts or social organization;

- game theory, especially repetitive games, which has made it possible to understand how the utility functions of agents are modified by social experience; finally

- the theory of collective choices (Mr Olson) which has shown the importance of certain groups defending particular interests in global decision-making, thus dispelling the illusion that development policies are pursued in the general interest.<sup>2</sup>

It must be emphasized that all these approaches start from problems and use different instruments. This is what makes it possible to affirm the absence today of a unified analysis of the role of institutions in development, which undoubtedly complex implementation of the practical implementation of institutional reforms.

That said, everyone agrees that the establishment of rules of law is a prerequisite for development because economic actors need to know the rules of the game to develop economic strategies.

The problem would then be the choice of the legal system most favorable to development. For liberal economists, laws must be based on social norms for three reasons.

- First of all, since the social norms that express themselves in custom are spontaneously respected, it will not be difficult to enforce the law based on custom, whereas a law created by the legislator may well be rejected by the users.

- Secondly, it may be supposed that the long-standing rules of law are the most effective because otherwise they would not be adopted.

If the first argument is hardly debatable. The second argument has been the subject of much criticism. (Grellet, 2019)

This being the case, it should be noted, as many researchers have pointed out (44), that it is not because a legal system is needed that it is thereby the most effective. criteria to say that a judicial system is more "effective" than another, it depends on the criteria of appreciation.

What can be seen, however, is that organizations in developing countries are often very different from those in industrialized countries. "Personal relationships are very

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<sup>1</sup> Grellet G, « Microéconomie du développement » [www.pantheonsorbonne.fr/IMG/pdf/GRELLET-MICRODEV.pdf](http://www.pantheonsorbonne.fr/IMG/pdf/GRELLET-MICRODEV.pdf), Consulté le 04/03/2019

<sup>2</sup> Cahuc P. (1993), "La nouvelle micro-économie" La Découverte.

important; bargaining is frequent there; neighborhood solidarity is more real For a long time these issues have not been addressed in terms of economic analysis and organizations ... "1

Only, as P. Finon<sup>2</sup> points out, following the work of R. Coase, D. North and Williamson, have attempts to explain in terms of economic analysis of the formation of institutions and organizations have been advanced.

That said, this approach, which is fairly close to neoclassical postulates, tends to reduce institutions to a certain number of formal rules. The latter, moreover, essentially refer to rules of law. According to this approach, economic agents are supposed to modify their behavior to adapt to the new rules of the game.

Thus, a large number of studies carried out in recent years suggest that institutions are vital for the achievement of economic, political and social reforms.

In the end, this institutional approach poses the problem of choosing the methods of managing public affairs and the instruments for regulating economic activities.

The case of Algeria perfectly illustrates this approach. Many observers have commented on the character of the decision-making process and institutions in Algeria.

"Everybody knows that important decisions are made in hidden circles and in the exclusive interest of the holders of power since the independence of the country in 1962"

"In Algeria decisions are taken outside the institutions", denounces Ali Benflis<sup>3</sup>

To streamline public decision making institutional reforms are therefore necessary. The aim is not to know what types of reforms to engage in and how to operate. It is more a question of attempting to explore the problem of blocking institutional reforms, assuming that this blockage is due to the behavior of the ruling elites that seem to be well established in the systems that have been built around privileges and that no reform can call into question if their very essence is not affected. How can we conceive that the "elites" who are irremovable in power remain attached to the old methods of governance that have become totally obsolete in a world that has totally changed. This can only be understood by questioning the nature and functioning of the socio-economic and political system that is a source of privilege and wealth for ruling elites as we have done in previous work.<sup>4</sup>

It thus proceeds from a vast politico-economic bargaining with the social actors, offering rent-seeking opportunities in return for political support, and opens up large margins for negotiations in a centralized system provoking rent seeking behaviors. multiple impacts at all levels of development ".<sup>5</sup>

- By this bargaining, public servants are in a position to "sell" administrative decisions of an economic nature.

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<sup>1</sup> Borner S.; Bodmer F.; Kobler M. (2004), « L'efficience institutionnelle et ses déterminants : le rôle des facteurs politiques dans la croissance économique » Paris, OCDE,. 116 p.

<sup>2</sup> Finon P (2003) « l'apport de l'économie des institutions a la définition des nouveaux cadres régulatoires », expose introductif au colloque « énergie, reformes institutionnelles et développement »UNAM , Mexico 5-6 7 nov.

<sup>3</sup> Charef A (2012) : *On vote en Algérie. On vote en France. Parle-t-on, pour autant, de la même chose ?* abedcharef.wordpress.com/2012/04/18/au-bonheur..

<sup>4</sup> Benflis A "les décisions se prennent en dehors des institutions", le Matin, Samedi 24 mars 2018 ,

<sup>5</sup> Boutaleb K (2017) : « Changement institutionnel et développement en Afrique : une quête contrariée par les élites au pouvoir », Chapitre 5 de l'ouvrage collectif : « La Renaissance Africaine : de la Théorie à la Matérialisation à l'Horizon 2060 », Mélanges Internationaux Offerts au Pr Samuel EFOUA MBOZO'O, sous la Coordination Scientifique de Bouba MAMOUDOU et Alii, By Editions Cheikh Anta Diop, Douala, juillet. ISBN: 978-9956-657-13-1



- In addition, by offering a large proportion of actors the opportunity to capture a rent, this bargaining could gain the support of these and reduce the pressure for institutional reforms from a now part of the population taking part in this politico-economic negotiation game.

- Moreover, this bargaining doubly affects the development of the private sector. This bargaining tends to encourage entrepreneurs to make more profitability gains by cultivating rents through connections within the bureaucracy rather than undertaking more expensive productive activities.

As a result, changes likely to open up access to resources are very unlikely to emerge in this institutional configuration. The potential pressure of potential beneficiaries of these reforms is much lower than that of the losers, although the latter constitute a minority (generally, the clientele of the regime).

This would also explain why the institutional reforms adopted did not seriously undermine the interests of the vast majority of the ruling elites. They have been implemented in such a way that the elites keep or rebuild their rents in renewed forms.<sup>1</sup>

The laborious implementation of reform programs over the last twenty years is a good illustration of the resistance of ruling elites to the establishment of market institutions.

This explains why the reforms initiated over more than two decades have done little to build a market economy that would be efficient in terms of output and employment. They did not generate the desired systemic breaks.

The ruling elites, as many authors have explained and theorized, are clearly more concerned about their situations than the fate of their peoples, because they are unable to conceive beyond their own interests.

The nature of the exercise of power determines predatory behavior, each one observes only his sector, sees directly what interests him, thinks and acts only according to the present circumstances ... in these conditions, only

Considered and discussed the second causes of particular phenomena and no overview appears that allows to identify a fundamental strategy.

### **Conclusion:**

At the end of this contribution on a complex subject, that of the rationality of the public decision and its corollary the institutional change and the socio-economic development on which the attention of the researchers in social sciences (economic, sociological and political in particular) assert that the rationality sought in the decision-making process imposes an institutional change leaving no room for predators

This is, as we continue to point out, a refoundation of strong states, whose power is exercised through truly representative institutions. In other words, legitimate states of law.

The enormous economic powers that can be generated by the economies regulated by the informal institutions (including in some cases the ways and customs: the case of Iran and its system of economic foundations), generally lead to collusive governance where the

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Abdelkader F (2009) : « Du droit de l'État à l'État de droit dans les pays arabes de la Méditerranée :Analyse économique des institutions de gouvernance et de leur évolution » these de Doctorat en Sciences Economiques, soutenue le 02 Juin auprès de l'Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne,

proximity of the political and business quickly turns into ruinous intimacy for the economy and the rule of law.

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