

Örgütlerde Stratejik Karar Alma Sürecinde Politik Davranışların Rolü The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations

Baybala MUSLUMOV¹, Alirza ALIZADA²

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

Özet

Bu çalışma, örgütlerde stratejik karar alma süreçlerinin yalnızca rasyonel analizlere dayalı teknik mekanizmalar olarak değil, aynı zamanda güç ilişkileri, çıkar dengeleri ve politik etkileşimler çerçevesinde şekillenen çok katmanlı süreçler olarak ele alınması gerektiği varsayımından hareket etmektedir. Araştırmada nitel yöntem benimsenmiş ve karşılaştırmalı vaka analizi yaklaşımı kullanılarak farklı sektörlerde gerçekleşmiş beş stratejik karar süreci incelenmiştir. İncelenen vakalar, örgütsel kararların oluşumunda bilgi kontrolü, etkileme stratejileri, koalisyon yapıları ve söylemsel çerçevelere gibi politik unsurların belirleyici rol oynadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Elde edilen bulgular, stratejik karar alma süreçlerinin doğrusal, öngörülebilir ve tamamen rasyonel yapılardan ziyade, aktörler arası etkileşimlerin, güç asimetrisinin ve bağlamsal faktörlerin etkisi altında gelişen dinamik yapılar olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca kararların uygulanabilirliği ve sürdürülebilirliğinin, kararın teknik içeriğinden çok sürecin kapsayıcılığı, meşruiyeti ve yönetim biçimi ile yakından ilişkili olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bununla birlikte, farklı örgütsel bağlamlarda politik davranışların yoğunluğu ve ortaya çıkış biçiminin değişkenlik gösterdiği; özellikle belirsizlik düzeyi yüksek, rekabet baskısının yoğun olduğu ortamlarda bu davranışların daha görünür ve etkili hale geldiği tespit edilmiştir. Çalışma, stratejik karar alma süreçlerinin anlaşılmasında politik boyutun ihmal edilmemesi gerektiğini vurgulamakta ve bu süreçlerin sosyal, ilişkisel ve bağlamsal dinamiklerle birlikte ele alınmasının önemine dikkat çekmektedir. Bu yönüyle araştırma, örgütsel karar alma literatürüne daha gerçekçi, eleştirel ve bütüncül bir perspektif sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Stratejik Karar Alma, Örgütsel Politika, Güç İlişkileri, Politik Davranışlar, Vaka Analizi

Abstract

This study is based on the assumption that strategic decision-making processes in organizations should not be considered solely as technical mechanisms grounded in rational analysis, but rather as multi-layered processes shaped by power relations, interest dynamics, and political interactions. A qualitative research design was adopted, and a comparative case study approach was employed to examine five strategic decision-making processes across different sectors. The cases analyzed reveal that political elements such as information control, influence strategies, coalition-building, and discursive framing play a decisive role in the formation of organizational decisions. The findings indicate that strategic decision-making processes are not linear, predictable, and purely rational structures; instead, they are dynamic processes shaped by interactions among actors, power asymmetries, and contextual factors. Furthermore, the implementability and sustainability of decisions are found to be more closely related to the inclusiveness, legitimacy, and governance of the process rather than the technical content of the decision itself. In addition, it has been observed that the intensity and manifestation of political behavior vary across different organizational contexts, becoming more visible and influential particularly in environments characterized by high uncertainty and intense competitive pressure. The study emphasizes that the political dimension should not be neglected in understanding strategic decision-making processes and highlights the importance of analyzing these processes within their social, relational, and contextual dynamics. In this respect, the research aims to contribute a more realistic, critical, and holistic perspective to the organizational decision-making literature.

Keywords: Strategic Decision-Making, Organizational Politics, Power Relations, Political Behavior, Case Study

Article Type
Research Article

Application Date
March.3 2026

Admission Date
June 12 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

Strategic decision-making processes in organizations have long been addressed within the framework of the rational model, assuming that managers choose the most appropriate option among available alternatives. In this approach, the decision-making process has been evaluated as an objective and systematic activity in which information-based analyses are at the forefront. However, today the complex structure of organizations, limited resources, and increasing competition demonstrate that decision-making processes cannot be reduced solely to rational analyses. In particular, internal power relations, conflicts of interest, and individual goals play a significant role in shaping strategic decisions.

The impact of political behavior on strategic decision-making processes becomes more evident, especially in situations where uncertainty and information asymmetry are high. Managers and organizational members develop various strategies to influence decision processes and actively use power resources in this process. Political tools such as information control, coalition building, persuasion, and symbolic behaviors play an important role in determining the direction of decisions. In this context, decisions are shaped not only in line with organizational goals but also under the influence of individual and group interests (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Théorêt, 1976: 251).

Recent studies reveal that decision-making processes in organizations are inherently political and often take the form of power struggles among different actors (Tosun, 2025: 1188–1202). Competition among top-level managers, in particular, can be decisive in the process of making strategic decisions. In this context, decision-making processes emerge not only as a result of technical analyses but also as outcomes of negotiation, bargaining, and influence processes. Indeed, some studies show that managers rely more on their experience, intuition, and internal organizational relationships rather than purely rational analyses in decision-making processes (Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992).

The influence of organizational politics and power relations on strategic decision-making processes has become even more important in today's competitive business environment. Factors such as globalization, digitalization, and rapid change require organizations to make faster and more flexible decisions, while also causing these decisions to involve greater uncertainty. Such a structure creates a ground for political behaviors to become more widespread in decision-making processes. Especially in situations where access to information is limited or information is controlled by different actors, political behaviors become an integral part of decision processes (Cyert & March, 1963: 248).

However, the impact of political behaviors on strategic decision-making processes should not be evaluated solely within a negative framework. In some cases, political behaviors can contribute to the emergence of different perspectives and enable more comprehensive evaluations. In particular, the inclusion of different interest groups in the process makes it possible to address decisions from a broader perspective. Nevertheless, it is also stated that when political behaviors become excessive, they may weaken the objectivity of decision processes and negatively affect organizational efficiency (Ürü, 2024).

In the current literature, it is emphasized that rational models alone are not sufficient to understand strategic decision-making processes in organizations, and that political and social dimensions must also be taken into account (Dursun & Köseoğlu, 2016; Ürü, 2024). Accordingly, it is accepted that decision-making processes in organizations have a multidimensional structure and are shaped through interactions among different actors. This approach allows for a more realistic analysis of strategic decisions. Although the existing literature addresses the relationship between organizational politics and decision-making at a theoretical level, studies that systematically examine the impact of this relationship on the applicability of strategic decisions through comparative case analysis are quite limited. This situation indicates that the effect of political behaviors not only on decision formation but also on the sustainability of decisions has not been sufficiently explained (Aydın, 2025). This study aims to fill this gap by examining, on the basis of comparative case analysis, how political behaviors affect

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

both the formation and the applicability of decisions, as well as their organizational outcomes. In this respect, the study provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the strategic decision-making literature.

The main objective of this study is to analyze the role of political behaviors in strategic decision-making processes in organizations and to reveal their effects on both decision-making and implementation. It is accepted that organizational decision-making processes are not solely based on rational analyses but are also significantly influenced by political behaviors shaped by individuals' power, influence, and interest relations. Accordingly, this study aims to systematically examine the forms of political behavior used by managers and organizational members and to evaluate the effects of these behaviors on the direction, quality, and organizational outcomes of strategic decisions. Within this framework, the main research question is formulated as follows: how do political behaviors emerge in strategic decision-making processes in organizations, and how do these behaviors affect the processes of decision-making and implementation? Based on this main question, the study also seeks answers to sub-questions such as which forms of political behavior are observed in the strategic decision-making process, which power and influence strategies are used by managers and organizational members to affect decisions, and how political behaviors influence the applicability of decisions and organizational outcomes. Thus, the study considers strategic decision-making processes as a multi-stage process that is not limited to the moment of decision, but also includes the legitimization, acceptance, and implementation of decisions.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS AND POWER

Although the concepts of politics and power in organizations were long evaluated in management literature as secondary or as a "deviation from the rational model," contemporary theoretical approaches reveal that these elements are structural and inevitable components of organizational life. Classical rational decision-making models assume organizations to be mechanical systems composed of actors who act in unity of purpose, have full access to information, and can systematically analyze alternatives (Ünnü, 2014). However, this approach largely ignores the complexity of the real organizational context. In particular, bounded rationality, lack of information, and conflicts of interest demonstrate that decision-making processes cannot be reduced to technical analyses alone. In this context, organizations should be considered as social systems in which power relations, negotiation processes, and political interactions are intertwined alongside structures where economic and technical decisions are produced (Cyert & March, 1963: 288). The bounded rationality perspective introduced by the behavioral approach shows that decisions in organizations are often made based on satisfactory (satisficing) solutions rather than optimal ones. These findings indicate that not only information and analysis but also interactions among actors are decisive in decision processes. These interactions are often political in nature and are shaped through power dynamics. Therefore, organizational politics should be evaluated not as a deviation from the rational model but as a fundamental component of organizational reality.

Although the concept of power is generally defined as the capacity of one actor to influence the behavior of other actors, in the organizational context this concept has a much more complex and multidimensional structure (Bayrak, 2000: 21–25). Power does not arise solely from hierarchical authority; it is nourished by various elements such as access to information, expertise, control over resources, social networks, and even organizational norms. The power typology introduced by French and Raven (1959) demonstrates that power may derive from different sources such as reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, and referent power. This diversity indicates that different actors within an organization may possess different combinations of power and that this situation may lead to asymmetric effects in decision processes.

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

At this point, an important issue is that power is both a possessed attribute and a relational process. Pfeffer (1992) emphasizes that the distribution of power in organizations is directly related to the scarcity of resources and the level of uncertainty. In environments where resources are limited, actors tend to engage in political behavior to control access to these resources, and this situation transforms organizations into a “political arena.” Within this arena, decisions are often shaped not by technical correctness but by the power and influence capacity of the actors involved (Fayganoğlu, 2019).

Organizational politics, on the other hand, is the practical reflection of these power dynamics. Individuals and groups develop various influence strategies to steer organizational processes in their favor, and these strategies often operate beyond formal structures. In this context, political behaviors emerge not only in the form of open conflicts but also in more subtle forms such as information withholding, agenda setting, framing alternatives, and coalition building. Mintzberg (1983) argues that political behaviors in organizations are inevitable and can often play a functional role in managing organizational uncertainties. This approach shows that political behaviors are not only destructive but can also produce constructive outcomes under certain conditions.

To understand more deeply the role of power and politics in organizational processes, it is necessary to consider the cognitive and perceptual dimensions of these concepts (Gül, 2024). Organizational reality is shaped both by objective conditions and by how actors interpret these conditions. The fact that different managers develop different strategies in the same decision situation is a result of these perceptual differences. Weick’s (1995) sensemaking approach suggests that the way individuals make sense of organizational events determines their actions, and therefore organizational processes are reproduced within these sensemaking cycles. In this framework, political behaviors are both tools for maximizing interests and mechanisms of meaning production used in constructing organizational reality.

To concretize this theoretical framework, an organizational context in which a strategic investment decision is made can be considered. For example, in the process of selecting a new software infrastructure in a technology company, a tension may arise between the technically most efficient alternative and the option that supports the interests of a particular department. At this point, the outcome of the decision is directly related not only to the quality of technical analyses but also to how actors present information, what coalitions they build, and how they persuade decision-makers. Framing a particular solution as an “investment in the future” while presenting alternative options as “risky” can significantly influence the direction of the decision. Such framing strategies reveal the discursive dimension of power.

Foucault’s (1980) understanding of power explains this discursive dimension more comprehensively. According to Foucault, power cannot be reduced to a central authority; rather, it is a phenomenon that is continuously reproduced and distributed within a network of relationships. This approach shows that power in organizations is produced not only through hierarchical positions but also through knowledge, discourse, and norms. For example, presenting a particular strategic decision as “inevitable” or “necessary” is actually a form of power use. Such discourses can guide decision processes by reducing the visibility of alternatives.

However, power and politics do not always result in conflict. On the contrary, in some cases these processes can contribute to organizational coordination and to establishing balance among different interest groups. Especially in complex and uncertain environments, the inclusion of different actors in the process may lead to more comprehensive and applicable decisions. Nevertheless, this finding does not mean that political behaviors should be unconditionally endorsed. In overly politicized organizations, serious problems such as information manipulation, decision delays, low levels of trust, and performance loss may arise (Ferris et al., 2005).

At this point, what is important is not the complete elimination of political behaviors but keeping

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

them at a manageable and balanced level. Because the assumption of a completely “apolitical” decision process in organizations is not realistic. Instead, managers need to have a perspective that recognizes political dynamics, can analyze these dynamics, and can guide them when necessary. This approach makes it possible to address strategic decision-making processes within a more realistic and applicable framework.

These theoretical approaches constitute the analytical framework of the study and enable power, information control, and coalition mechanisms to be addressed as key variables in the empirical analysis.

3. POLITICAL BEHAVIORS IN STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

In order to explain the political dimension of strategic decision processes, these processes must be considered not only as outcome-oriented selection mechanisms but also as processes shaped by interactions among actors. In this context, decisions are formed not through the evaluations of a single rational actor, but through the mutual interactions of actors with different interests and priorities, negotiation dynamics, and forms of power usage. Allison’s (1971) bureaucratic politics model demonstrates that decisions are shaped within this multi-actor structure and that the resulting outcome reflects a balance agreed upon among actors rather than the technically most appropriate alternative. Within this framework, strategic decision processes gain importance not in terms of evaluating alternatives, but in terms of how these alternatives are presented, supported, and legitimized. Therefore, political behaviors in strategic decision-making processes can be analyzed through mechanisms such as agenda setting, information framing, coalition building, timing, and leadership influence (Ürü, 2024).

In this context, political behaviors emerge in various forms within strategic decision processes. The first of these is the agenda-setting process. Determining which issues will be addressed as strategic priorities is, in itself, a political process. Cobb and Elder (1972) emphasize that setting the agenda in decision processes has a direct impact on outcomes. For example, presenting digital transformation as an urgent necessity in an organization may cause other alternative investments to remain in the background. In this respect, it is observed that how a decision is framed is more decisive than its content.

Another important dimension of political behaviors in strategic decision processes is information management and framing strategies. Actors may attempt to influence decision-makers by selectively presenting the information they possess or by constructing a particular narrative framework. Kahneman and Tversky’s (1979) prospect theory shows that individuals make decisions not based on objective reality, but depending on how information is presented. This finding reveals that information in strategic decision processes can be used not as a neutral tool but as a political resource. For example, presenting an investment project in terms of its “high return potential” versus its “high risk” can lead to different decision outcomes based on the same data.

Coalition building is one of the most visible forms of political behavior in strategic decision processes. Especially the formation of different interest groups among top-level managers can directly affect decision processes (Gül, 2024). March (1962) states that decisions in organizations are often the result of bargaining among coalitions. In this context, the acceptance of a manager’s proposal depends not only on the technical correctness of the proposal but also on the power of the actors supporting it and the alliances formed. In this framework, it is understood that strategic decision processes have both a collective and political nature.

Political behaviors in strategic decision-making processes are not limited to explicit negotiations and bargaining; they also emerge in more implicit and subtle forms. For example, timing strategies involve steering the process by bringing a particular decision to the agenda at an appropriate moment. Kingdon’s (1984) “policy window” approach reveals that proposals presented at certain opportunity moments are more likely to be accepted. In this context, presenting a strategic proposal during a crisis

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

may yield different results compared to presenting it during a stable period.

In addition, an important dimension of political behaviors in strategic decision processes is related to leadership and influence capacity. The ability of top-level managers to create vision, generate meaning, and mobilize organizational actors around a particular direction can directly affect the outcome of decision processes. Yukl and Falbe (1990) demonstrate that the influence tactics used by managers (such as persuasion, consultation, coalition building, etc.) are decisive in decision processes. This analysis reveals that leadership is not only a guiding function but also a political process of influence.

The political nature of strategic decision processes is also closely related to organizational structure and culture. While political behaviors tend to emerge in more implicit forms in centralized and hierarchical organizations, they may become more explicit and visible in more flexible and participatory structures. Pettigrew (1973) emphasizes that power and politics in organizations should be evaluated together with structural characteristics and historical context. This approach shows that political behaviors stem from both individual preferences and organizational context.

When evaluated through a concrete example, it can be observed that different departments have different priorities in the process of determining a new factory location in a manufacturing company. While the finance department focuses on minimizing costs, the operations department may prioritize logistical efficiency. In this case, the decision process will be shaped not only by technical analyses but also by which department's perspective is more strongly represented and how it influences top management. For example, presenting a particular location as a "strategic growth opportunity" may increase the likelihood of that option being accepted. Such discursive strategies concretize the impact of political behaviors on decision processes.

The impact of political behaviors in strategic decision-making processes is evident not only at the stage of decision-making but also during the implementation of decisions. Indeed, resistance that emerges during the implementation phase often stems not from the technical inadequacy of the decision but from the insufficient consideration of the interests of the actors involved in the process. Nutt (1999) states that one of the major reasons for the failure of strategic decisions is the inability to adequately manage political processes. This situation shows that political behaviors affect not only the formation of decisions but also their sustainability.

However, it should not be overlooked that political behaviors can also contribute to strategic decision processes. In particular, the inclusion of different perspectives in the process may allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of alternatives. Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) argue that a certain level of conflict and political interaction can contribute to higher-quality decisions. However, it is also clear that if this situation becomes excessive, processes may become blocked and decision quality may decrease.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study is designed within the framework of a qualitative research approach in order to examine the role of political behaviors in strategic decision-making processes in organizations. In the study, comparative case analysis was adopted as the method. This method enables the analysis of strategic decision processes within their real organizational context, together with interactions among actors and power relations. Within the scope of the study, strategic decision processes representing different sectors and types of decisions were considered as cases. The diversity of these cases makes it possible to examine comparatively how political behaviors emerge in different organizational contexts.

A comparative qualitative analysis strategy was followed in the study. First, each case was examined separately within its own context, and the actors involved in the decision process, the stages of the process, and the forms of political behavior that emerged were identified. The cases examined in the study were selected using purposive sampling. In the selection process, cases that created a high

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

level of strategic impact, had high media visibility, represented different sectors, and in which political dynamics in organizational decision-making processes could be clearly observed were preferred. This selection was preferred in order to enable theoretical generalization and to allow the comparison of political behaviors across different contexts. Accordingly, academic studies, news and analyses published in international media organizations, and publicly available corporate reports were used as data sources. For each case, data triangulation was ensured by utilizing multiple data sources, and the reliability of the findings was increased. A comparative analysis across cases was conducted to reveal common patterns and contextual differences. This analytical approach makes it possible to examine how political behaviors emerge in strategic decision processes within a systematic and comparable framework.

The case selection criteria were operationalized based on four main dimensions: (1) strategic significance of the decision, (2) visibility in public and academic discourse, (3) availability of reliable secondary data sources, and (4) the presence of observable political dynamics. These criteria ensured consistency and comparability across cases.

This study is based on the assumption that managers use political strategies, either consciously or implicitly, in order to influence decision processes. It is also assumed that individuals' positions within the organization, their levels of expertise, and their relational networks are decisive in shaping the direction and applicability of strategic decisions. However, the fact that the study is based on publicly available secondary data sources limits the observation of internal organizational decision processes in all their dimensions. Therefore, the findings obtained were evaluated for the purpose of analytical generalization, and no claim of statistical generalization was made.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, several strategies were employed. First, data triangulation was ensured by using multiple data sources, including academic studies, media reports, and corporate documents. Second, a transparent coding process was followed, and the consistency of coding was maintained throughout the analysis. Third, the findings were systematically compared across cases to identify recurring patterns. These measures contribute to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

In this section, how political behaviors emerge in strategic decision-making processes is analyzed comparatively through concrete cases that have occurred in different sectors, and the findings obtained are discussed within a theoretical framework. The examined cases were selected from current and high-impact examples such as the Volkswagen emissions scandal, the Boeing 737 MAX decision process, Facebook's (Meta) data policies and the Cambridge Analytica crisis, WeWork's IPO process, and the Theranos case. These cases clearly demonstrate that strategic decisions in organizations are shaped not only by technical and economic analyses but also within the framework of power relations, interest balances, and political interactions. The fact that the cases were selected from different sectors is important in showing that political behaviors are not specific to a particular type of organization, but can emerge in different forms across various institutional contexts.

The Volkswagen emissions scandal strikingly demonstrates the impact of internal organizational pressure on technical decisions. The use of software that manipulated emission values in the company's diesel vehicles was evaluated not only as a technical choice but also as a result of organizational pressures aimed at meeting performance targets (Keskin, 2024). Research reveals that engineers were confronted with technically unachievable targets and that this pressure increased the tendency toward unethical solutions (Ewing, 2017). News reports in the media also show that aggressive performance expectations of top management and the weakness of internal control mechanisms fueled

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. *ASSAM International Refereed Journal* (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

this process (Hotten, 2015). This case clearly demonstrates that organizational politics and power relations can override technical correctness and direct decision processes. This finding aligns with the power-based organizational approach, which argues that performance pressure and the concentration of hierarchical power can overshadow technical evaluations.

The decision process associated with the Boeing 737 MAX accidents shows how cost and time pressure can be used as political tools. It has been revealed that under competitive pressure from Airbus, the company pushed safety processes into the background in line with its goal of rapidly bringing a new aircraft model to market (Perell.com, 2026). Both academic studies and media reports show that despite engineers' safety concerns, management decisions were shaped in line with commercial priorities (Gelles, Kitroeff, Nicas, & Ruiz, 2019). In this process, the imbalance between technical expertise and managerial power determined the direction of the decision and led to serious crises on a global scale. This situation reveals the critical role of power asymmetries in strategic decision-making processes and shows that the imbalance between technical expertise and managerial authority can be directly decisive on decision quality.

The Facebook and Cambridge Analytica scandal demonstrates how political behaviors emerge in data management and ethical decision processes (Hinds et al., 2020). Although Facebook's policy of sharing user data with third parties was initially rationalized within the framework of growth and a data-driven business model, data security and user privacy were pushed into the background over time (Arat & Aslan, 2021: 395). Academic analyses show that growth-oriented strategies in platform economies can push ethical concerns into the background (Isaak & Hanna, 2018). Media reports also indicate that although some managers within the company were aware of the risks, this information was not sufficiently taken into account in decision processes (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018). This case shows how information control and discourse management can become political tools in strategic decision processes. Thus, access to information and the way information is presented function not only as cognitive but also as political resources in strategic decision-making processes.

WeWork's failed IPO process is an important example that reveals the relationship between charismatic leadership and organizational politics. The visionary leadership of the company's founder, Adam Neumann, created a strong influence over investors and the board of directors for a long time; however, this influence led to the neglect of the company's financial realities (BBC.com, 2019). Academic studies show that in overly centralized leadership structures, critical feedback mechanisms weaken (Conger, 1990). Media analyses also reveal that despite some managers and investors within the company expressing risks, the discursive power of the leader directed decision processes (Brown, 2019). This situation shows that discursive power and leadership influence can be used as political tools in strategic decision processes. Such cases demonstrate that the charismatic nature of leadership may, in some situations, weaken organizational balance and critical evaluation mechanisms.

The Theranos case presents one of the most extreme examples of organizational politics, information manipulation, and power relations. The ability of the company's founder, Elizabeth Holmes, to present a technologically unverified product as a success story was made possible through the production of a powerful discourse that influenced investors and the public (BBC.com, 2022). Academic analyses show that in such cases, the combination of information asymmetry and charismatic leadership can seriously distort decision processes (Carreyrou, 2018). Media reports also reveal that critical opinions within the company were suppressed and that the flow of information was controlled. In this respect, the Theranos case shows that political behaviors can shape not only the direction of decisions but also the way reality is perceived, and reveals that when information asymmetry and discursive power combine, they create an effect that can structurally distort decision processes.

The comparative analysis of these cases shows that political behaviors in strategic decision-making processes emerge through certain common dynamics. First, it is observed that power

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

asymmetries directly affect decision processes in all cases. The power held by top management or certain actors can override technical analyses and determine the direction of decisions. Second, it has been determined that information control and framing strategies play a central role in all cases. How information is presented in decision processes directly affects the outcome of the decision. Third, discursive power and the production of legitimacy have been decisive, especially in leadership-focused cases.

Table 1. Case-Based Comparative Analysis of Political Behaviors in Strategic Decision-Making Processes.

Case Study	Power Asymmetry	Information Control	Coalition Formation	Conclusion
Volkswagen Emissions Scandal	Top management is dominant, engineers are weak	Manipulation of technical information	Limited (hierarchical pressure)	Unethical decision, crisis
Boeing 737 MAX	Management > Engineering	Safety risks suppressed	Weak (engineers excluded)	Accidents, global crisis
Facebook / Cambridge Analytica	Powerful management and data teams	Data usage not transparent	Indirect (platform-ecosystem)	Loss of trust, regulatory pressure
WeWork	Charismatic leader is very powerful	Financial reality framed	Financial reality framed	IPO failure
Theranos	The leader has absolute power	Information is completely controlled	Artificial coalition (investors)	Large-scale fraud

The table clearly demonstrates that political behaviors systematically influence both the process and outcomes of strategic decisions across different contexts. In particular, the consistent presence of power asymmetry and information control across all cases indicates that these dimensions constitute the core mechanisms of political influence. Moreover, variations in coalition formation suggest that organizational structure and leadership style play a moderating role in shaping political dynamics. These findings reinforce the argument that political behavior is not incidental but structurally embedded in strategic decision-making processes.

Some differences among the cases are also noteworthy. For example, while it is observed that competitive pressure increases political behaviors in the technology and finance sectors, it has been noted that investor expectations shape these processes in publicly traded companies. In addition, it is understood that political behaviors lead to more destructive outcomes in situations where the ethical dimension is neglected. Overall, the examined cases show that political behaviors in strategic decision-making processes are clustered around five main axes: power asymmetry, information control, discursive framing, coalition support, and the production of resistance during the implementation process. These axes establish an analytical bridge between the theoretical framework of the study and its empirical findings.

6. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The empirical findings examined in this study clearly demonstrate that strategic decision-making processes cannot be explained solely on the basis of rational analyses; rather, these processes are shaped within the framework of organizational politics, power relations, and interactions among actors. In this context, the results obtained indicate that existing decision-making theories need to be reconsidered and addressed from a more holistic perspective. The original contribution of the study lies in treating political behaviors not only as an element specific to the decision formation stage, but also

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

as a process variable directly related to the applicability and sustainability of decisions. In this respect, the research makes visible the dimension of “post-decision political effects,” which is often neglected in the strategic decision-making literature.

First, the findings once again highlight the limitations of the rational decision-making model. It has been observed that strategic decisions, in many cases, are shaped not by the technically most appropriate alternative, but by power balances and influence processes within the organization. This situation shows that decision processes proceed not on the basis of “optimal choice,” but rather on the basis of “politically feasible choice” (Yücel et al., 2020). This finding is consistent with approaches that argue decision-making processes are shaped through coalitions and negotiation mechanisms (Cyert & March, 1963: 195; March, 1994).

In addition, the findings of the study clearly reveal the central role of the concept of power in organizational decision processes. It is observed that power is derived not only from hierarchical positions, but also from multidimensional sources such as information control, expertise, and the production of discourse. In particular, the finding that access to information and the way information is framed are decisive in decision processes brings the cognitive and discursive dimensions of power to the forefront. This situation is consistent with studies that show that power in organizations operates through invisible but effective mechanisms (Foucault, 1980).

One of the important theoretical contributions of the study is that it demonstrates that political behaviors should be evaluated not only as negative or deviant, but also as functional elements. The findings indicate that a certain level of political interaction can contribute to the inclusion of different perspectives in the process and to more comprehensive evaluations. This supports approaches suggesting that conflict and interaction, under certain conditions, can improve decision quality (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). However, it has also been observed that when political behaviors become uncontrolled, decision processes become open to manipulation and organizational performance is negatively affected.

In this context, in order to increase the effectiveness of strategic decision-making processes, political behaviors in organizations should not be completely eliminated but should be maintained at a manageable level. At this point, important responsibilities fall on managers. In particular, strengthening transparency mechanisms in decision processes, establishing participatory structures that allow different views to be expressed, and ensuring a balanced flow of information can reduce the negative effects of political behaviors. Such practices will contribute to decision processes progressing on a more inclusive and rational basis (Dean & Sharfman, 1996).

In addition, it is observed that the understanding of leadership in organizations plays a critical role in this process. Leaders should be positioned not only as decision-makers, but also as actors who establish balance among different interest groups and manage the process. In particular, the effective management of discursive leadership and sensemaking processes can increase the legitimacy of decisions and reduce resistance during the implementation phase. This analysis reveals that leadership should be evaluated not only as a managerial function but also as a political process (Fairhurst, 2007).

However, the cases examined in the study also reveal the determining role of organizational context on political behaviors. Factors such as the level of sectoral competition, organizational structure, corporate culture, and environmental uncertainty directly affect the intensity and form of political behaviors. Therefore, instead of developing a one-size-fits-all model for strategic decision-making processes, flexible approaches that take contextual differences into account should be adopted (Pettigrew, 1992).

As a result of this study, it is proposed that political behaviors in strategic decision-making processes are shaped around five main axes:

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

1. Power asymmetry;
2. Information control;
3. Discursive framing;
4. Coalition building;
5. Production of resistance during the implementation process.

These axes provide a holistic analytical framework that explains the political nature of strategic decision processes.

7. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that strategic decision-making processes in organizations are shaped not only by the technical and analytical dimensions visible on the surface, but also by deeper and often invisible dynamics. The findings indicate that treating decision processes as linear, controllable, and entirely rational mechanisms is insufficient to explain organizational reality. Instead, it is understood that strategic decision-making processes exhibit a multi-layered, interactive, and contextually variable structure.

Within this general framework, one of the most important findings of the study is that the acceptance and legitimization of decisions become more decisive than their technical correctness. In this context, the key point that stands out is that strategic decisions are shaped not only around the question of “which option is better,” but also around the question of “how a particular option is made acceptable.” This situation shows that decision processes should be addressed not only as content-oriented but also as process-oriented. As much as the decision itself, how the decision is presented, which actors support it, and within which context it is legitimized also become decisive.

Another important result revealed by the study is that decision processes in organizations largely proceed through invisible interactions. Behind open discussions and formal procedures, informal relationships, implicit agreements, and silent forms of resistance often exist. In this context, it is observed that organizational decisions are produced not only through formal structures but also through informal networks and relational systems. Therefore, understanding decision-making processes in organizations should not be limited to examining formal decision mechanisms; it should also take into account the patterns of relationships underlying these processes.

In addition, it is observed that there is a direct relationship between the outcomes of strategic decisions and the way these decisions are formed. It is understood that actors who are excluded or rendered ineffective during decision processes develop indirect resistance mechanisms during the implementation phase, whereas more inclusive processes lead to more sustainable outcomes. This finding reveals that decision quality is directly related not only to analytical accuracy but also to the nature of participation in the process.

Another noteworthy point revealed by the study is that as uncertainty increases in organizations, decision processes become more open to interpretation. In such environments, meaning-making comes to the forefront rather than certainty, and decisions are often shaped not by predictions about the future, but by how the current situation is interpreted. In this framework, it is understood that strategic decisions are both data-based and grounded in meaning-making processes. Therefore, decision-making processes can also be considered as areas where organizational reality is redefined.

Moreover, this study highlights the importance of the concept of balance in strategic decision processes. While an approach based entirely on technical analyses ignores organizational dynamics, a process based entirely on political interactions may weaken decision quality. Therefore, effective strategic decision-making requires establishing a delicate balance between these two dimensions. This

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

balance is closely related not only to structural arrangements but also to organizational culture and leadership understanding. However, the study has certain limitations. First, the research is limited to a comparative case analysis based on publicly available secondary data sources. This situation makes it difficult to observe all dimensions of internal and informal aspects of decision processes within organizations. In addition, since the selected cases consist of highly visible examples, it is not possible to directly generalize the findings to all organizational contexts. Future studies would benefit from examining less visible strategic decision processes in different sectors, using interview and document analysis methods based on primary data together, and testing the effects of political behaviors on decision performance through quantitative indicators. Such an expansion may enable the production of deeper and more multi-layered results regarding the political dimension of strategic decision-making processes.

This study provides three main contributions:

It systematically reveals the political nature of strategic decision processes through empirical cases;

It analyzes the effect of political behaviors on the applicability of decisions;

It proposes a holistic political analysis framework for strategic decision processes.

Finally, this study shows that strategic decision-making processes in organizations are not static but are continuously reproduced and evolving structures. Each decision process is influenced by previous experiences and forms a reference point for subsequent processes. This situation reveals that decision-making processes in organizations are intertwined with learning and evolve over time. Therefore, strategic decision-making should be evaluated not only as a momentary choice but also as a reflection of organizational accumulation and experience.

In terms of contribution to the literature, this study advances existing research in three key ways. First, it empirically demonstrates the central role of political behavior in strategic decision-making processes through comparative case analysis. Second, it extends the literature by linking political dynamics not only to decision formation but also to implementation outcomes. Third, it proposes a structured analytical framework that integrates power, information control, and coalition mechanisms as core dimensions of political behavior. These contributions provide a more comprehensive understanding of decision-making processes in contemporary organizations.

Information About Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval was not required.

Research And Publication Ethics Statement: The authors declare that the ethical rules are followed in all preparation processes of this study. In the event of a contrary situation, the ASSAM International Refereed Journal has no responsibility and all responsibility belongs to the author of the study.

Conflict Of Interest Statement: There is no conflict of interest among the authors and/or any institution.

Contribution Rate Statement: The authors contributed equally to the work.

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

REFERENCES

- Allison, G. T. (1971). *Essence of decision: Explaining the Cuban missile crisis*. Little, Brown.
- Arat, T., Aslan, M. M. (2021). Sosyal medyada veri güvenliği ve kişisel mahremiyet sorunu. *Akdeniz Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 35, 387-401.
- Aydın, B. (2025). Kamu yönetiminde yapay zekâ uygulamalarının Türkiye örneğinde analizi: Dijital dönüşüm, stratejik uygulamalar ve çok boyutlu etkiler. *Izmir Democracy University Social Sciences Journal*, 8(2), 151-181. <https://doi.org/10.61127/idusos.1754003>
- Bayrak, Y. (2000). Yönetimde bir ihmâl konusu olarak güç ve güç yönetimi -I-. *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 5(2), 21-34. <https://izlik.org/JA35ZX29FK>
- BBC.com. (2019, 24 September). WeWork: The rise and fall of co-founder Adam Neumann. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-49817037>
- BBC.com. (2022, 18 November). Theranos scandal: Who is Elizabeth Holmes and why was she on trial? <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-58336998>
- Brown, E. (2019). WeWork's IPO filing reveals deep losses. *Wall Street Journal*.
- Cadwalladr, C., & Graham-Harrison, E. (2018). Revealed: 50 million Facebook profiles harvested. *The Guardian*.
- Carreyrou, J. (2018). *Bad blood: Secrets and lies in a Silicon Valley startup*. Knopf.
- Cobb, R. W., & Elder, C. D. (1972). *Participation in American politics: The dynamics of agenda-building*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Conger, J. A. (1990). The dark side of leadership. *Organizational Dynamics*, 19(2), 44–55.
- Cyert, R. M., & March, J. G. (1963). *A behavioral theory of the firm*. Prentice-Hall.
- Dean, J. W., & Sharfman, M. P. (1996). Does decision process matter? *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(2), 368–392.
- Dursun, İ. T., & Köseoğlu, Y. (2016). Üst kademe teorisi'ni yeniden düşünmek: Üst yönetim ekiplerinin bilişsel özellikleri & teorik açıdan kapsamı ve önemi. *İşletme ve İktisat Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 4(4), 117-133. <https://izlik.org/JA75WY76UM>
- Eisenhardt, K. M., & Bourgeois, L. J. (1988). Politics of strategic decision making in high-velocity environments. *Academy of Management Journal*, 31(4), 737–770.
- Eisenhardt, K. M., & Zbaracki, M. J. (1992). Strategic decision making. *Strategic Management Journal*, 13(S2), 17–37.
- Ewing, J. (2017). *Faster, higher, farther: The Volkswagen scandal*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Fairhurst, G. T. (2007). *Discursive leadership*. Sage.
- Fayganoğlu, P. (2019). Bilgi yoğun örgütler özninde örgütsel güç ve örgüt içi koalisyon kavramları. *Gazi Journal of Economics and Business*, 5(2), 119-138. <https://doi.org/10.30855/gjeb.2019.5.2.004>
- Ferris, G. R., Treadway, D. C., Kolodinsky, R. W., Hochwarter, W. A., Kacmar, C. J., Douglas, C., & Frink, D. D. (2005). Development and validation of the political skill inventory. *Journal of Management*, 31(1), 126–152.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings*. Pantheon Books.
- French, J. R. P., & Raven, B. (1959). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in social power* (pp. 150–167). Institute for Social Research.
- Gelles, D., Kitroeff, N., Nicas, J., & Ruiz, R. R. (2019). Boeing's 737 Max crisis. *The New York Times*.
- Gül S. K. (2024). Kamu politikası oluşturma sürecinde güç ve güç ilişkileri. *Elektronik Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 23(92), 1761-1772. <https://doi.org/10.17755/esosder.1514232>

Atıf/Citation: Muslumov, B. and Alizada, A. (2026.). The Role of Political Behavior in Strategic Decision-Making Processes in Organizations. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (29), 179-192.
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1919483>

- Hinds, J., Williams, E., J & Joinson, A., N. (2020). "It wouldn't happen to me": Privacy concerns and perspectives following the Cambridge Analytica scandal. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 143, 102498. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2020.102498>
- Hotten, R. (2015). Volkswagen: The scandal explained. BBC News.
- Isaak, J., & Hanna, M. J. (2018). User data privacy: Facebook, Cambridge Analytica. *Computer*, 51(8), 56–59.
- Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. *Econometrica*, 47(2), 263–291.
- Keskin, M. (2024). Vaka incelemeleriyle finansal manipölasyonlar. Özgür Publications.
- Kingdon, J. W. (1984). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies*. Little, Brown.
- March, J. G. (1962). The business firm as a political coalition. *The Journal of Politics*, 24(4), 662–678.
- March, J. G. (1994). *A primer on decision making*. Free Press.
- Mintzberg, H. (1983). *Power in and around organizations*. Prentice-Hall.
- Mintzberg, H., Raisinghani, D., & Théorêt, A. (1976). The structure of "unstructured" decision processes. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21(2), 246–275.
- Nutt, P. C. (1999). Surprising but true: Half the decisions in organizations fail. *Academy of Management Executive*, 13(4), 75–90.
- Perell.com. (2026, 22 March). Why did the Boeing 737 Max crash? <https://perell.com/essay/boeing-737-max/>
- Pettigrew, A. M. (1973). The politics of organizational decision-making. Tavistock.
- Pettigrew, A. M. (1992). The character and significance of strategy process research. *Strategic Management Journal*, 13(S2), 5–16.
- Pfeffer, J. (1992). *Managing with power: Politics and influence in organizations*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Tosun, A. (2025). Yönetim yaklaşımlarının katılım, yönetim ve insan kaynakları yönetimi bağlamında karşılaştırmalı ve analitik bir incelemesi. *Ömer Halisdemir Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 18(4), 1182-1215. <https://doi.org/10.25287/ohuiibf.1636192>
- Ünnü, N. A. A. (2014). "Rasyonel" perspektif ışığında karar verme eylemi: Nitel bir analiz. *Yönetim ve Ekonomi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 24, 91-116.
- Ürü, F. O. (2024). Stratejik karar alma üzerinde çevresel etkiler: Bir inceleme ve araştırma gündemi. *Sosyal Mucit Academic Review*, 5(Innovative Conceptual Approaches to Social Sciences), 131-156. <https://doi.org/10.54733/smar.1553260>
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Sage.
- Yukl, G., & Falbe, C. M. (1990). Influence tactics and objectives in upward, downward, and lateral influence attempts. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75(2), 132–140.
- Yücel, Y. B., Yücel, İ., & Alar, G. (2020). Stratejik yönetimde vizyon ve misyonun yeri ve önemi: BİST100, İSO500 ve KOBİ örneği. *Avrasya Sosyal ve Ekonomi Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 6(12), 177-193. <https://izlik.org/JA43EZ45CP>