

# : *How are organizational decisions made?*

by Dan Power

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One of the most debated and studied organizational decision processes is the decision making by President John F. Kennedy and his advisors during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The various decisions were made at a time when technology was extending the reach of the President and Commander in Chief of the United States to the front lines of the crisis. Communications technologies had vastly improved command and control capabilities compared with prior political/military crisis incidents. Kennedy speaking of the crisis noted "The essence of ultimate decision remains impenetrable to the observer - often, indeed, to the decider himself." This statement served to motivate the title of Graham Allison's widely read analysis titled "Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis."

Allison developed three models to help explain and describe the decision-making process:

- 1) The rational actor model: Decision makers act in a rational manner: They gather all the evidence, weigh their options, and make an informed choice.
- 2) The organizational process model: The structure of organizations shapes how decisions are made.
- 3) The bureaucratic politics model: Leaders of different organizations are in competition with one another, and that affects how decisions are made.

Allison, Graham (1971). *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 1ed. Little Brown. ISBN 0-673-39412-3.

Allison, Graham and Zelikow, Phillip (1999). *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2ed. Longman. ISBN 0-321-01349-2.

Essence of Decision, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, URL  
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