

State of the State in Kyrgyzstan

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Introduction

During the spring of 2002 the DEMSTAR research program conducted a survey consisting of structured interviews with centrally placed, high ranking officials and/or experts in core government institutions in Kyrgyzstan. The research was conducted in association with the Centre for Social Research at the National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic. In total we interviewed 53 individuals, of which 23 are high ranking officials in the President's and the Prime Minister's office, 15 high ranking officials in core line ministries, 17 heads of standing committees in parliament (Zhogorku Kensha) and 15 independent experts, most of whom have previous working experience in the state administration. The survey applied standardized questionnaires (Russian versions), that are also used in other (post-communist) countries as part of a larger comparative research project. The overall objective of the project is to provide a picture of the roles, the strengths and the weaknesses of core state administrations in the aspiration of post-communist countries simultaneously to construct viable democracies and market economies.

This research report presents the results of the Kyrgyz survey. Its purpose is to situate the responses from our respondents in the context of present day Kyrgyzstan, the legacies it carries from the past, the present economic, political and social situation – and in particular in the context of the present so-called second stage administrative reforms. These reforms were initiated on January 24, 2002 at an extended government meeting where President Akaev launched them with his speech on 'The value orientation of the civil service'. Hence the present research has been conducted concurrently with an ongoing reform project. Also, the issues we address in the questionnaire and in the broader project handle the same set of issues that form the core of the present reform initiatives.

The report consists of five sections. In section one we summarize the general framework of the research project: the questions we ask, why we ask them and the broader theoretical perspectives. Section two presents an overview of the relevant part of the present context: the political, social, economic and cultural elements that impact the present reform initiatives and combine the theoretical perspectives with the contextual factors to develop a number of hypotheses about how we may interpret answers from our respondents. Section three describes the data from the survey and the insights it provides into the structure and working of core state institutions. Section four summarizes the findings, establishes the Index of State Capacities for Kyrgyzstan and discusses in a comparative perspective causal

models behind what we will term the effective capacity of the Kyrgyz state administration.

1. Theoretical and conceptual perspectives

This section summarizes the theoretical and conceptual perspectives that have informed the empirical research of the core executive in Kyrgyzstan. They will, together with the specific features of Kyrgyzstan, form the expectations (hypotheses) and interpretations (causal models) that we apply when interpreting the answers from the survey.

The starting point for our theoretical model and framework and ensuing framework for interpretation is illustrated in the analytical model (Figure 1).

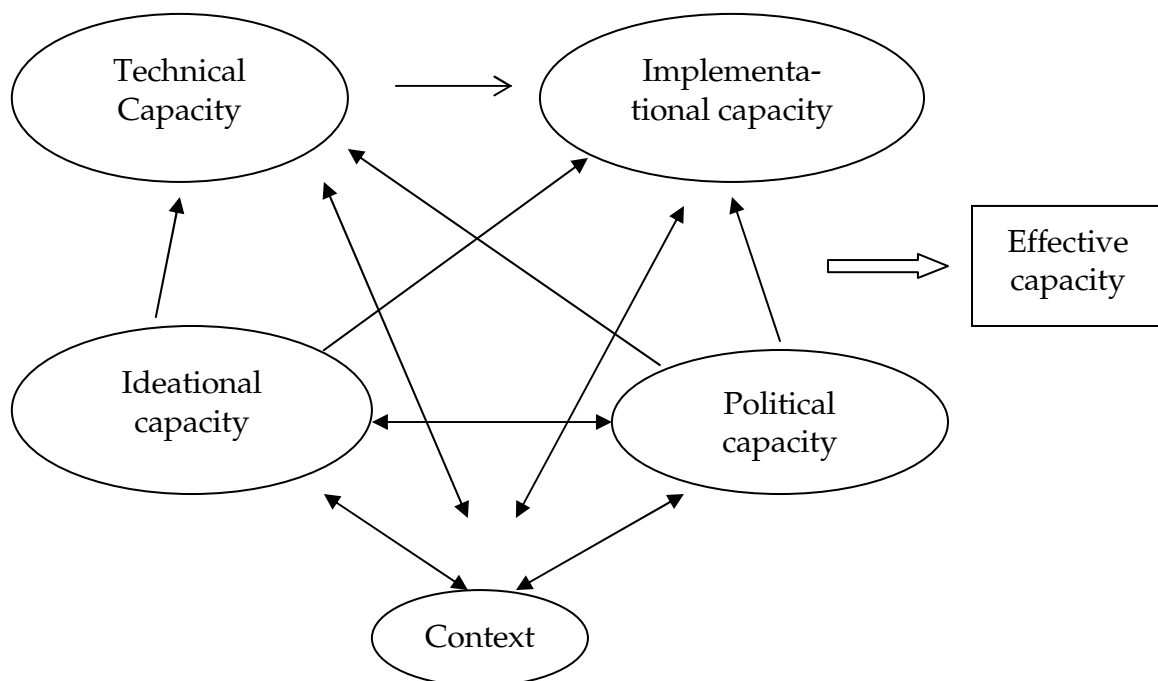


Figure 1. The Prism theory: Type of state capacities and their interactions.

The state is an important vehicle for socio-economic change in post-communist reconstructions, but its role can only be assessed in the context of the specific country in which it operates and the objectives of the activities it sets for itself. Starting here we answer questions about states' capacities to promote development (in less modernized countries), remedy distortions (in post-communist countries) or do both in less developed, post-communist countries, like our subject of analyses. In answering these questions we apply what we term 'the prism theory of state capacity', which denotes an interaction of 4 institutional variables within the context of a particular country (the five variables constituting the prism). The outcome of this

interaction is what we are really aiming for: the effective capacity of a state to promote development. Below we in brief present the core concepts and their interactions.

Effective capacity (EC) is the dependent variable in our analyses: the eventual outcome of state actions as consequence of the appropriateness of the identified (ideational) state type in the concrete country context and its operational resources. An *effective* government (it has a high *capacity*) is one that 'address(es) [societal needs] timely and with a minimum use of available resources' (UNDP, 2001: 1) and is able to 'deliver development' (Morgan, 1996). In this understanding an effective government will include economic as well as social and political objectives in its policies. This implies that it will be able to design policies that are coherent and viable but also politically feasible and sustainable. Effective capacity can thus be measured in standard terms of economic development, political stability and democratization.

Country Context (CC) (political, social, economic and cultural elements) is a constituting condition because other capacities can only be assessed in a concrete country, as it for example is emphasized in one of the first genuinely comparative studies of national bureaucracies (Page & Wright 1999: 268). Each country has a unique set of experiences of state and nation building and of the role that bureaucracies played within these processes. Consequently bureaucratic forms and structures tend ... 'to reflect unique national experiences – experiences of dictatorship, revolution, and empire have all left their imprint...'. These diverse experiences and preconditions imply that we do not accept that any universal organisational model (be it neo-liberal inspired systems or other) or generalized psychological models of individual level motivations (rational choice or other) holds superior explanatory (or normative) power. The applicability of any model (at the organizational or individual level) can only be decided in a concrete country context. Analytically we may, in the countries we are dealing with, distinguish between the sort of legacies that follow from the incumbent mode of communist government and those impacts on a state's capacity that are contingent upon the more country specific features, be they surviving traditional institutions or actors or outcomes of the transformation itself – domestic and international.

Ideational capacity (IDC). We perceive organizational and institutional arrangements as normative systems 'that are supposed to structure the occasion for evoking one identity or another' (Egerbjerg, 1999: 459). These arrangements may then be categorized according to the categories along which we choose to structure our analysis. Such categorization may be phrased in descriptive, normative or causal terms, the last two reflecting

either logic of appropriateness or logic of consequentiality (March & Olsen, 1995) of the organization. In the present analysis we see the scope and character of the relationship between state and society as the constituent and structuring relationship. We thus categorize states according to the extent to which the state is (or should be) a dominant (autonomous) or an instrumental (for political groups) actor of societal change or an active mediator between state goals and societal demands (interdependent). Civil servants will, accordingly, categorize themselves as either cogwheels in a top-down 'implementation machine' (UNDP, 2001: 2), as a loyal servant in a bottom-up popular democracy or an active (developmental) official in the interdependent state. Following their self-description we may hypothesize that they behave within the 'logic of appropriateness' they see attached to the organization, coined either as a simple 'role description' or in terms of deeper ingrained 'identities'.¹

The features of the incumbent communist systems may guide us to what we may expect from the public officials we survey. The *totalitarian* state characterized the region before the changes. In this system decision-making was centralized, political loyalty had a high priority and strict ideological control was exercised over personnel and decisions (Scootla & Roots, 1999: 28). The official role perception of bureaucrats was equated with commitment to and implementation of the official ideology (Randma, 2001: 42f). Public administration remained what has been termed 'a policy implementation machine'. In this system there was no place for interaction with organizations in civil society, who were rather seen as additional cogwheels in the implementation machine. We may therefore hypothesize that the mental legacies of this traditional system, the inherited logic of appropriateness, makes executives lock on to their traditional habits of one-way communication, commands and controls in the relationship to organizations in society (Gozman & Etkind, 1992). In reality, however, the totalitarian states may have been more embedded in society than propagated by the official ideology and many officials came out of communism as captives of particular interests, rather than ideal type totalitarian bureaucrats (Stark & Bruzst, 1998: 191). In these cases the official would either have been corrupted or pinched between official ideologies, his own beliefs – and how everyday life forced him to behave. In these cases he would be particularly exposed to particularism and illicit practices.

Ideational capacity (IDC) thus rests in the spheres of preferences, role perceptions and identities. At the most basic level ideational capacity thus refers to the presence, strength and contents of ideas that form the bedrock of reform policy (on the lines of the question, what makes some states produce

more reform ideas than others and what ensures that these ideas enjoy political support and become embedded in state institutions?), but also with a material impact on real world processes through at least 4 mechanisms.

1. The more the ideas of officials conform to the context and are appropriate for solving societal tasks in terms of objectives, policies and coherence, thus facilitating and not hindering development, the stronger the ideational capacity. Of course, appropriate policies may not automatically conform to the context, and here a political consensus will need to be reached. By context we mean not only material but also ideological – the more reform ideas fit well with existing ideologies (the shorter reformers have to travel in ideological terms), the more likely that a policy consensus will be reached.
2. The greater the political support for the ideas (in society and in the institutions of the state) the stronger the ideational capacity. Here both context and political capacity affect ideational capacity
3. The degree of correspondence between officials' individual role perception/identity and the overall logic of appropriateness (organizational values) will impinge on ideational capacity. If the executive's preferences conflicts with his perception about what the state is (state identity) the state loses elite legitimation. Ideational capacity thus inflicts on political capacity (see below).
4. If the officials' role perceptions or identities conflict with his perceptions of how things really work in his everyday dealings with society the executive will lack motivation to carry through official policies, and ideational capacity will have a negative impact on administrative capacity (technical and implementational) (see below). If the executive's preferences are in conflict with both official state identities and his experience of everyday work, ideational capacity will weaken both political capacity (elite legitimation) and administrative capacity (individual motivations).

Perceptions may of course cover a wider range of issues. In this survey we look into the extent to which the state is (or should be) a dominant (autonomous) or instrumental (for political groups) actor of societal change. (See section below on categorization.)

Political capacity (PC) is what makes it possible (for the public executive) to design and implement policies that meet the genuine concerns of society (good governance in a given context) independently from the influence of particular interests domestically and internationally. It has two dimensions.

The vertical dimension deals with the autonomy or interdependence vis-à-vis organized interests in civil society and the international community. The horizontal dimensions picture the internal structures within government ranging from segmentation and conflict to coherence and coordination between agencies and policies. It is, as already stated, also a relational concept, where the value of the (descriptive) categories only can be determined in a context of a given country (and international system). A dominant (and in some cases even a predatory) state may, in the hindsight of history, have proven to be the most effective agency to manage reactionary forces, mobilize the population around common goals and generate investment resources needed for modernization.² Or if a state's political capabilities (the links to society) are few (for one reason or another) and if technical and administrative capacities are in short supply, a limited liberal state will obviously work better than an interactive, corporatist or popular state that stretches its tasks beyond capabilities. The same argument may apply to societies dominated by strong particularistic interests groups (for example ethnic) or with legacies that expose parts of the state administration to sectoral capture, as was the case in a number of post-communist countries. In these cases a liberal autonomous state that matches tasks to capabilities and escapes capture will obviously fare better. In contrast, if the problem is that groups within the state exploit society for their benefit, a popular democracy may be the only way to limit the power and privileges of the groups aligned with the predator state. Alternatively, we might argue that different state types refer to different stages of development.

Technical capacity (TC) (efficiency) denotes the ability of the state administration by means of its own resources or through institutionalized relations to extra-governmental bodies (think tanks, universities, NGOs etc.) to design coherent, viable and politically feasible policies. TC is contingent in the sense that the strength of resources embedded in the internal operating system can only be assessed or be detectable in relation to the problems in a concrete politico-administrative setting. TC will be influenced by IDC during the range of ideas and solutions that are considered legitimate (agenda setting), and by PC by the sort of solutions that can gain political support. TC will itself strongly influence implementation capacity (AC) because the technical suitability of a certain policy will have obvious implications for the scope and intensity of the barriers it will face when implemented.

Implementation capacity (IMC) finally, measures the ability to implement the policies that have been chosen. An administratively effective (and efficient) state will establish institutions with the resources and competences to implement a policy and the ability to remain an autonomous actor vis-à-vis

pressures from specific groups and interest groups in a specific context and to escape corruption during implementation. Also IMC is contingent in the sense that the strength of resources embedded in the internal operating system can only be assessed in relation to the implementation barriers that exist in a concrete country context. In this perspective we cannot ex ante conclude that administrative corruption is negative for development. In some cases petty corruption may actually 'grease the wheels' in a rigid, traditional and hierarchical system. In other cases it may have the opposite effect when it decreases efficiency and – to reverse the picture – becomes 'sand in the wheels'. IMC is influenced by IDC to the extent that the executive's perception of a policy will influence his loyalty during the implementation stage. IMC is also influenced by PC because the political support (or obstruction) may be decisive in overcoming barriers when implementing new policies that challenge organized interests. The issue is which type of linkages between the political and administrative system matters under which conditions.

Categorizing states. Comparisons presume categorization, and the criteria we select as guiding principles for the establishment of categories pre-determine the causal patterns we anticipate between the constituting criteria and other aspects of the objects we compare. In the present context we categorize states according to the character of interaction between state and society reflected either in observed patterns of behaviour, or in normative statements.

We here distinguish between descriptive (classificatory) and analytical (interpretive) categories. We may observe if the state or society (and we may here add the international community as a separate structure and/or actor) is dominant (or preferred to be dominant) in the interaction (statist, societal and interdependent) but we cannot, on the basis of observation alone, decide the underlying political nature of this relationship. The substantial (interpretative) categories are what we arrive at during our own contextualized understanding of these linkages, distinguishing between democratic states (neo-liberal, popular and corporatist) and non-democratic states (totalitarian, predator and captured), either in pure forms or (as is always the case) in relative forms under the broad category of interdependent states. (Hence, the concepts in parentheses.)

These concepts and their interrelations are described in Figure 2.

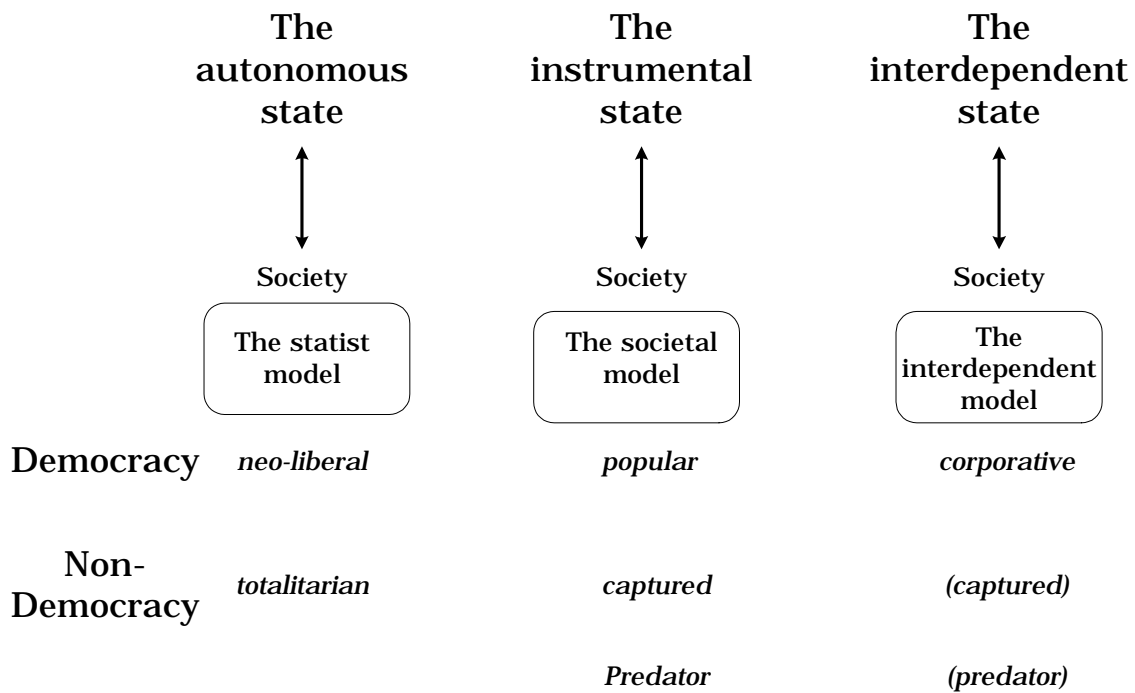


Figure 2. Categories of states (ideal types).

It is at this second, interpretative level, we may decide the underlying political nature of this relationship. For that purpose we need substantive analyses taking into consideration also the broader character of the societal context. There is also (not so clear-cut) distinction between categories that we would describe as democratic and non-democratic. In particular we decouple the concepts of participation and democracy. Participation is, in the present understanding, simply the efforts of ordinary people or organized interests in any type of political system to influence the action of rulers. Democracy adds to participation and institutionalized respect for civil and political liberties making it possible for all individuals and organized interests to articulate political demands and participate in decision-making. Following these observations, we in the following distinguish between 3 categories of descriptive and 6 categories of substantial state-society relationships.

The descriptive categories (statist, societal and interdependent) are what we learn from observing the scope and direction of interaction between the state and organizations. The substantial (interpretative) categories are what we arrive at during our own contextualized understanding of the character of these linkages, whether democratic (neo-liberal, popular or corporate) or non-democratic (totalitarian, captured or predator state). The neo-liberal model epitomizes the economist's ideal state, where decisions may be taken by democratic procedures, but once decided on, they will be implemented through a top down process. The popular state is the ideal type democracy, where openness, resources and participation go hand in hand at all levels

and all stages of government. The interdependent model only says that the state and society in some form and at a given level interact in decision making and/or in implementation of policies. Once we have decided about what mode of interaction with society we should contextualize and interpret the character of these interrelations. In the good interdependent version, the state keeps its autonomy in decision making while listening and adapting to the needs and demands of society, producing what in the literature is often referred to as the 'developmental state'. In a captured (societal) state the state apparatus (or rather part of it) is captured by particularistic interests who dominate all aspects of the political process from agenda setting to implementation. The reverse situation exists in situations where statist elites usurp institutions (and assets) in civil society for their own benefit creating a 'predator state'

2. The context of the core executive in Kyrgyzstan

This section briefly summarizes the general and more country specific components of the context that may form our expectations of how to interpret the data obtained from the survey and eventually what explains the relative ISC and the effective capacity.

2.1. The institutional legacies of the communist mode of government.

If we take the stereo type communist bureaucrat as our starting point and assume that present day civil servants (to the extent that they are still in office) are cognitively locked by the attitudes, beliefs and habituated actions formed during their service in the incumbent system, the hypothesis becomes rather clear-cut. In this picture, the executive would be unprepared to deal with neither organized interests nor ordinary citizens. He would be the loyal (but mechanical) implementer of policies decided elsewhere, previously in party organizations now in political institutions. If the successor regime holds totalitarian ambitions (religious or nationalistic) he could fit in relatively smoothly, because his way of dealing with the public would not need to change (cognitive consistency), only the overriding political rationale (state legitimacy) would have changed. If he has to operate in a democratic order, his old ways of dealing with the public would easily antagonize a democratizing society and force him to adapt to the new context or to experience a growing dissonance between his own beliefs and the state's official ideology on the one hand, and the changing society on the other. This discrepancy between his previous modes of operation and the new system would also make it difficult to provide useful technical advice because he would not know how to deal with the problems that come up in

a democratizing and economically liberalizing system. Still, many communist systems had evolved towards a system where: 'the more bureaucrats attempted to take into account an ever-expanding set of particular interests, the less the state was capable of policy concertation. In the absence of mediating institutions providing mechanisms of accountability, such taking into account meant that the state was taken captive by policy particularism (Stark & Bruzst, 1998: 191). The ultimate questions about political (and effective) capacity would then had to be answered in the context of the initial conditions and what sort of state-society interactions would be appropriate. Hence, if we infer our expectation to responses from state executives from our generalized knowledge of the legacies of the incumbent communist system we may face two scenarios. A first scenario is one in which the executives have in fact been mentally locked by the traditional communist administrative spirit (attitudes, beliefs and habituated actions) of the state's dominant role and one-way communications and dealings with organized interests and with ordinary citizens. This scenario would represent a hypothesis based on historical institutionalism, framing an understanding of cultural and rational institutional path dependencies. In this case we would see these attitudes directly reflected in the responses as a preference for limited public access to executive institutions. A second scenario implies that state executives already during the previous regime had been captured by particular interests. This picture would invite a perception of the executives as rational rent seekers who would prefer to cultivate close collaboration with sectorial interests to serve their own personal interests and thus advocate collaboration. In this case we would be unable from the responses alone to determine if we are dealing with genuine democratizing executives, or rather with captured or predator types executives. This would demand a substantive and contextualized interpretation.

In addition to the expectation of low ideational and political capacity we may expect from the conflict between the core features of the incumbent and the new democratizing systems, we should also expect that technical as well as administrative skills of the executives will be inadequate under the new systemic conditions, economically and politically, thus further weakening the states capacities to solve developmental and adaptive problems.

2.2. The structural and political context.

The present context of present reform initiatives of the Kyrgyz executive is most easily understood as the outcome of four sets of factors, two structural and two political.³ First, Kyrgyz society is still deeply marked by pre-modern types of governance. Klan, tribal, regional and personal allegiances and

identities still play a very large role in Kyrgyz politics. These loyalties predated the Soviet era, which in some respects actually strengthened these bonds under the artificial and never broadly embedded political structures of the Soviet regime. The existence of these loyalties and identities also owes to the fact that the national identity now being sought to bind the state together is built on a myth of a pre-Soviet Kyrgyz nation that never existed. As emphasized by Dukenbaev & Hansen (forthcoming) the very mode of governance, 'dependent as it is on personal, regional and clan loyalties, militates against the creation of such genuine national identity, and, in fact, serves to strengthen and reinforce the various local identities and personality loyalties the state class ostensibly desires to dissolve'.

Second, the explanation that these pre-modern bonds have been strengthened after independence owes to the early political and economic liberalization, themselves a consequence of a strong foreign (Western) influence, advanced by a charismatic, modern president. Having been brought to power through the turbulence of coups and attempted anti-coups, President Askar Akayev – himself representing a third political factor – soon consolidated his personal power by pursuing a policy of rapid economic and political decentralization that soon made the country a regional reform champion. This status was generated by strong influence by Western countries and international organizations, who in president Akayev found a keen local actor inclined to support the extant ideas of liberal democracy and market economy. Foreign influence was, however, also made possible by Kyrgyzstan's weak economy that until independence had been heavily dependent on Soviet subsidies, as the country has no major natural resources and soon came to rely on alternative sources of external financing. However, the internal price of these early reforms became a spiraling corruption of the state administration and escalation of regional and clan based conflicts.

The institutional factor represents the fourth factor that should be taken into account when assessing both the state's capacity and present reform initiatives. The combined effect of early economic and political liberalization and decentralization, continuing pre-modern form of governance and the spiraling economic decay in the mid 1990s compelled Akayev to turn to the authoritarian solution, gradually strengthening the presidency at the expense of parliament, curbing press freedom which had been the most liberal in the region and in some cases cracking down and imprisoning political opponents. The authoritarian solution, however, came at a price when corruption became more difficult to track, the state administration reverted to old habits and local politicians reproduced the authoritarian mode of governance, creating serious regional conflicts. Also international donors intensified their

criticism, thus jeopardizing the flow of foreign finance. Foreign influence and aid, on the other hand – gained a new dimension and new prospects when the post 11 September development made Kyrgyzstan a crucial partner in the American led alliance against terrorism, producing a flow of people and money unrelated to any reform initiatives. This is the local context in which President Akayev in early 2002 launched his second round of reforms of the state administration.

2.3. The present reform initiative

The reform initiative was launched in January 2002 when President Akayev in a long speech to an extended government meeting drew up all the evils and problems he saw in the present mode of government operation. In particular he addressed what he termed ‘value orientations’ of civil servants, presently not serving the needs and interests of the citizens. For that to change he called for new styles and methods of government work. He also criticised the extensive misuse of position (and outright corruption), segmentation and bad communication between agencies in government and the continued practise of appointing friends and kinfolk to office (on what he termed an ‘us – them’ principle) (*Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, January 29, 2002). On subsequent occasions the president confirmed his aspiration to increase public participation and public transparency and he confirmed his willingness to increase the constitutional powers of parliament.

In late August 2002, President Akayev set up the Constitutional Council for Constitutional Reforms to amend the constitutional structure. In a televised address to the public on 26 August 2002, he emphasised the importance of the council and made clear his motives for launching constitutional reforms: First, he stressed the necessity in a wider extent to ensure “genuine human rights” through constitutional reforms, and second, he added that clashes between police and demonstrators (in one town resulting in the shooting of six demonstrators) showed that there are serious communication failures within the executive branch and in its interaction with other branches of power (*Central Asia Report*, 5 Sept., vol. 2, no. 34). The Constitutional Council consists of 38 members, including the Prime Minister, Foreign minister, Justice Minister, the speakers of the upper and lower chambers of Parliament, the Chairwomen of the Constitutional and Supreme Courts, and leaders of several opposition parties as well as NGO representatives.

The President and members of the Council have made several comments that point to major amendments. The proposed reforms will in general establish a better balance between the country’s executive, judicial, and legislative branches. Under the current constitution there are severe imbal-

ances in power between the Office of the President on the one hand, and virtually all other institutions in the constitutional structure. The power of the president is so great that all other institutions depend on him for their continued operations and there is no effective system of checks and balances, as also indicated by the present survey.

In addition, executive power is shared by the President on the one hand and the Prime Minister and his staff on the other. The President has the power to appoint and dismiss all members of the government. Only the appointment of the Prime Minister requires the consent of one chamber of Parliament. The president also has power to suspend or annul any acts adopted by the government. Under the current constitutional structure the government therefore has final responsibility while lacking authority to take decisions.

Reportedly, the majority of participants on the Constitutional Council have reached agreement to limit presidential powers in favour of strengthening both the executive and parliament. Regarding the strengthening of executive power, it is proposed that the Prime Minister be authorised to solve issues of appointment and dismissal of local state administration heads, and that the government control exercise taxes and customs tariffs (*The Times of Central Asia*, Sept. 18, 2002, 14: 23). Regarding parliament, the proposed reform suggests that Parliament be given more power regarding appointment of the government. It further recommends that Parliament become a unicameral legislative body with 90 members. This is seen to increase the power of the legislature to oversee government operations, especially if it includes a parallel internal committee system.

Concerning the judiciary, there are plans to reduce the number of courts. The aim is to reduce costs, increase efficiency and create better transparency in a system that by the general public is perceived as unreliable, because the judiciary does not have self-governance. The Kyrgyz President has the power to appoint the judges of the country, except for the judges of the three highest courts, but he has the power nominate candidates to one or both chambers of Parliament. Besides, he appoints and dismisses all the prosecutors (he has legislative assent for the Prosecutor General's *appointment*, however). The lack of trust in the courts of justice has only been strengthened by episodes involving the imprisonment of several political opponents of President Akayev. At present it is not clear whether the reform package includes reforms of the judiciary other than regulating the number of courts. Before judges are provided with adequate protection, however, many people will undoubtedly question the true independence of public prosecutors and judges.

The proposed reform package also includes proposals to empower local government. Under the current constitutional structure, the regional governors are appointed by the President instead of being elected by the people.

Political stability requires careful balancing between the institutions charged with executing the law, and those making the law and applying it in juridical proceedings. To what extent the parameters of government power and relations between the various branches of government will be redefined through this reform package has yet to be seen. To predict future prospects for political stability and democratic consolidation in Kyrgyzstan, however, it is necessary to include the criticism levelled at President Akayev and his leadership, including the way he formed the Constitutional Council. The criticism of Akayev's leadership is illustrated by the foundation of *The Movement for Resignation of President Askar Akayev and Reforms for the People* by representatives of 22 opposition political parties, public organizations and NGOs. As its name proclaims, the movement's primary objective is resignation of the president, while its broader objective is to press for reforms in the power structure. Concerning formation of the Constitutional Council, the criticism is that Akayev insisted on approving the composition of the council and that he appointed himself chairman.

Amendments to limit presidential powers are very important steps towards political development, but merely changing the constitution will not ensure successful implementation. As regards the future prospects for political stability and further development of democracy in Kyrgyzstan, the main questions to be asked seem to be: is President Akayev really ready to share power? Or is the proposed reforms of the fundamental law of the country just a political manoeuvre as claimed by the opposition? And if the president is indeed committed to true political reforms, it remains an open question whether the parties are strong and accountable enough to live up to their responsibility.

3. Setting the research agenda

The ambition is through interviews of a subset of centrally placed high ranking civil servants and chairs of parliamentary committees in core policy areas to map the four state capacities identified above.

1. *Role of internal⁴ and international⁵ actors in policy-making and the decision-making structure⁶ (political capacity).* Is there a role for external (domestic and foreign) actors in policy-making or is this exclusively a game played within the government? If within government: is decision-making concentrated within a unitary actor (the presidency)? Or is

reality a pluralistic and conflictual structure where individual departments and branches of government (parliament, the presidency) compete with each other in an institutional system of checks and balances, where information flows are segmented and there is no clear hierarchy in decision-making and where 'real' fora of decision-making often differ from those formally defined.

◆ *Initial expectations from previous research* would be that pre-modern structures have penetrated the state and that foreign actors are a major presence in decision-making. The role of 'foreign' business actors remains important and is likely to be a key factor explaining state structure, capacity and change. We would also expect Kyrgyzstan's state and its elite to be far more fragmented than is often perceived. Even if decision-making remains concentrated at the top echelon of power, namely in the hands of the president and his entourage, it is subject to considerable negotiation and bargaining and individual agencies may pursue conflicting policies, representing alternative elite interests. As such the state can better be conceived of as an arena for bargaining between elite groups rather than a monolithic entity.

2. *Elite legitimacy and cognitive congruence of the executive (ideational capacity).*⁷ What is the elite's attitude to top leadership? Are they, as the icon(s) of the state, considered acceptable in terms of the overall values that embody the state's legitimacy? What are the perceptions of the state's central actors about how the state's relation to civil society *should be*? (normative opinion). And is there congruence between preferences and reality as perceived by the executives?

◆ *Initial expectations from previous research.* We would expect the top leadership to be fairly legitimate because of its ability to attract foreign funding and the fact that the president has been reelected on several occasions. We would, however, also expect that the executive has been unable to remain insulated from particular interests and that the state administration is infiltrated by particular interests (regional, clan), and exposed to corruption and capture.

3. *The technical capacity of civil servants and central governmental executive institutions as seen through the lenses of high ranking officials and parliamentarians (technical capacities).*⁸ Do they trust the competence of civil servants to provide valid and reliable advice in technical and

political matters (technical capacity)? Are the civil servants themselves open to external advice on matters beyond their own competence (technical capacity)? How have competencies developed since independence in the context of the more or less simultaneous change of staff and tasks (from totalitarian to developmental state)? Whatever type of state we can identify these individual competences are indispensable preconditions for a state's capacity to foster development.

- ◆ *Initial expectations from previous research.* The launching of the 'second stage of administrative reforms would indicate that major problems remain in the quality of the state administration, in particular regarding division of work between individual agencies and regarding individual corruption.
4. *Implementation capacity:*⁹ is the state able to implement decisions? What are the major obstacles to efficient implementation? The impact of corruption on implementation?
- ◆ Initial expectations would be that institutional reform has led to a de-legitimisation of state institutions in the eyes of the population. Citizens lack confidence in institutional longevity. Moreover, four main factors prevent complete control being imposed from the top down: jurisdictional confusion between the centre and the regions; financial shortfalls mean that regions are often left to scramble for their own inadequate funds to implement policy; foreign investment in some regions has allowed these regional governors increased autonomy from the centre, and with the centre making concessions to the regions; and practical constraints of socio-economic transition, size and demography. Corruption figures at all levels of the state, partly because of the state's fragmented and decentralised nature.

These are the questions we deal with in this research report. The ambition is primarily descriptive – to map the political, administrative and technical capacities of the present state in Kyrgyzstan to pursue its developmental objectives as seen through the lenses of high standing officials. Only in the conclusion will we make an attempt to speculate about causal patterns linking contextual factors and policy objectives to the state's capacities as described in this report.

4. Empirical findings

The present section reports the responses obtained in our survey of central state institutions in Kyrgyzstan. Of the 38 high ranking state executives we interviewed, 17 were previously members of the Communist party, 28 had a higher education and only seven had received further education outside Kyrgyzstan after independence (USA, Western Europe and Turkey). 25 were males and 31 of Kyrgyz nationality. 31 were born in Kyrgyzstan and about 1/3 spoke Kyrgyz as their everyday language, 1/3 Russian and 1/3 used both languages. Only 2 used Kyrgyz as a working language, 6 used Russian and Kyrgyz and the rest only Russian. In the following section we report the responses to the 4 sets of questions defined in the previous section.

4.1. Political capacity

Political capacity as defined in the methodological section consists of three components: (positive) interdependence with organizations in society, (positive) integration in the international system and coherence in the internal decision-making structures. Below we summarize responses to these three sets of questions. (Tables are reproduced in the appendix.)

4.1.1. Interdependence with civil society

Our survey clearly demonstrated that the large majority of the executives we interviewed had a permanent and mostly institutionalized contact with organized interests and non-governmental institutions in their sphere of activity (see Tables 1, 4 and 5). They in no way resembled the ideal type totalitarian bureaucrat insulated from real life and mentally locked into patterns of behavior cultivated through the Soviet system. Rather they responded like we would expect any civil servant in a modern democracy would do. That close contact with relevant institutions and organization is seen as normal, dictated by technical demands: *"For example, when preparing agrarian policy: All enterprises, regardless of the kind of ownership, know of the problems within agriculture. The ministerial officials do not always know of these problems, and therefore it is very important to take into account the opinion of the enterprises, when working out strategies"* (Ministry of agriculture); by social concerns: *"Yes, it is a necessary prerequisite in our field of work; it is important to take into account the interests of employers and unprotected classes of the population. The interests of these people are represented by NGOs, international organisations (e.g. the German Technical Centre - GTZ), but also by structural subdivisions of the ministry, which have practical experience"* (Ministry of labour and social protection); by political necessity: *"Every question is examined from all perspectives,*

and only then the Government initiate the implementation. Therefore, we always consult the concerned interests” (Prime minister's Office).

This picture is, however, further supplemented by the survey of parliamentary committees, in which the respondents were asked to rank channels of political influence by citizens. The data in Table 6 support the picture of direct contact to ministries and departments as an important means of influence, but also draws attention to the important role of informal, personal connections concordant with the important role ascribed to pre-modern political structures.

We still need to determine the character of these linkages between state and society, however. Do they represent a positive interdependence – or are there signs that they rather epitomize pre-modern (or corrupt) networks? This issue is highlighted in Tables 7-13. The responses are somehow contradictory (respondents evidently do not want to admit that they themselves have been exposed to illicit behaviour), while denunciation of others comes much easier. Still, an astonishing 70 percent of the respondents either strongly agree or agree that misuse of position is common in Kyrgyzstan. Misuse is reported to be most severe at the intermediate level (departmental directors) while it is reported to be declining the closer we get to the very peak of the political-administrative system.

On the issue of the nature of links between state and society, 60-70 percent agreed that misuse of position is a common phenomenon in the state administration. These data were indirectly supported when we asked about at which level of government our respondent believed corruption to be most widespread. The level of affirmative answers to the existence of corruption at all levels (except the intermediate level, the level of our respondents) was notably higher than in Kazakhstan: 60-80 percent against 30-50 percent. Significantly, the intermediate level is considered particularly corrupt in Kyrgyzstan. Regarding ability to escape regulation around 70 percent thought that this was possible for business interests while there was a distinctly strong belief in Kyrgyzstan that also individuals and non-business organizations could operate outside government control. Several blamed local institutions and the lack of a legal basis.

With regard to perceived reasons of corruption, officials point in particular to low salaries and to a lesser extent morale and Soviet time legacies as the major causes. They do not, therefore, seem to display a particularly negative view of the Soviet period. Few interviewed attribute organised crime as a cause of corruption, while the position of regional and clan interests is seen as a major problem. Many see their state as undergoing a process of *de facto* decentralisation, and this is generally portrayed as anathema to central state

interests. Simultaneously, few place much faith in the legal base of fight against corruption. Only a very small minority suggest the need for social measures to combat crime. As a summary final observation we asked which countries Kyrgyzstan contemporarily most resembles. Corresponding to the other questions a majority see their country as a replica of other post Soviet states, but, as seen earlier in the question on future trajectory, several place their country in the developing world.

4.1.2. Relations to the international community

The executives have, as expected, experienced a very intensive relationship to international organizations. The IMF and the World Bank are here the major players (Tables 14-18). The influence of the international organizations is also predominantly seen in positive terms, with more than 70 percent of the respondents agreeing that foreign influence had a positive effect. They are providing badly needed finance: *"The republic itself cannot solve the financial problems; therefore we approach international organizations for help"* (Ministry of transport and communication); and expertise: *"They provide help in the form of consultations, technical help, exchange of information, experience and study trips"* (Import Tax authorities) Only a few observe problems with coordination between different agencies: *"International organizations do not always coordinate their activities. For example, IMF demands a macro-economic stabilization of the inflation. The World Bank, however, demands an increase of tariffs on energy sources. These demands contradict one another"* (Economic Department, Prime Minister's Office). Others criticise that the solutions proposed do not fit local conditions: *"The conditions made by these organisations do not take into account the specific conditions of the Republic, e.g. the pension reform"* (President's Office).

4.1.3. Decision making structure

Decision making structure relates to the states capacity by the ability to decide on coherent policies across conflicting perspectives and interests of different agencies and institutions within government. What does the present survey from this perspective tell us about Kyrgyzstan (Tables 19-34)? First, the data demonstrate clearly that the president and his administration (in particular the organizational department) are at the core of the power structure and only the ministry of finance is, as in any system, an independent source of power. As is shown in Tables 19-20 the general perception is even, that the power structure in Kyrgyzstan is more monolithic today than under communist rule. Second, the data reveal severe cleavages and conflicts between different branches and institutions in government that may hinder coordination and coherence. A large majority of the respondents perceive

other institutions with deep mistrust, and a third even interpret the actions of other departments as initiated by extra-governmental forces. This may be wrong, but is still a clear sign of interdepartmental mistrust. This is also indicated by the data reported in Table 29. When asked to name the three most important factors that complicate decision-making, three stand out: lack of resources, lack of qualified staff and disagreement in the decision making process and lack of coordination. Hence, intergovernmental cleavages are perceived as major factors behind incoherent policies.

Also when we turn to the chairmen of parliamentary committees as informants about the structures in government, they put lack of coordination, information, agreement and unclear political guidelines very high on the agenda (Table 32): *"There is no agreement among the political institutions (the executive power, the presidential administration and other agencies – every agency, especially the presidential administration, demonstrates its own force"* (Parliamentary Committee). In particular the presidential administration is accused of being unqualified(!) and insulated: *"Take as an example the presidential administration: it often happens, when we discuss our objections to a Bill, introduced by the President, that no one from the presidential administration is present. Lately, we even had to address the President through the newspaper – this example strongly indicates, that we have problems with the presidential administration under the current management of Karypkulov. Today we practically do not work together with the presidential administration"* (Parliamentary Committee).

This criticism of course reflects the frustration of an impotent parliament. It also, however, mirrors a broader frustration with lack of unity and cooperation, as for example reflected in responses to a question about how to improve the links between different parts of government: *"We need to understand, that we are not three different branches of power, but instead we are one whole unity – the civil servants. As civil servants we are obliged to work for the benefit of the state, and for the benefit of the people. In the same way, in the political sphere, the branches of power ought to cooperate, search for consensus in the decision-making process, and work a united approach for solving problems (with the involvement of representatives of the civil society)"* (Parliamentary committees).

Hence, the survey reflects an administration characterized by a very strong core (the president's office) that, however, remains unable to coordinate and unite a government fraught with lack of internal coordination and cohesion. This picture is further supported by responses to questions about what factors complicate decision making. In addition to lack of resources and the absence of qualified staff, respondents in particular point to the high level of immanent disagreement between departments and agencies.

4.1.4. Summarizing political capacity

The data presented in this section picture a political system where there is a broad interaction between state executives and society and international organisations. The political quality of these interactions is, however, severely impaired by a broad misuse of office, producing a picture of a core administration penetrated and maybe even captured by particular interest groups. Whether close interaction with international society is a positive sign of learning and development rather than a capture of the domestic agenda by international actors remains an open question. The data also show a government where a unitary centre of power coexists with a fragmented bureaucratic and administrative system, producing incoherent policies.

4.2. Ideational capacity

In section one we defined ideational capacity along two dimensions: A vertical dimension, where we assess elite legitimacy of the state through executives' perception of the top leadership and a horizontal dimension where we relate the preferences of the executives to how they perceive the everyday reality they are working in. A low capacity on the vertical dimension will imply loss of legitimacy with ensuing political consequences. A low capacity on the horizontal dimension, i.e. incongruence between preferences and reality, will produce a low administrative capacity when executives refuse to go along with the present order.

We have already in section 3.1. summarized the questions that we apply to estimate level of vertical legitimization: scope and administrative level of perceived misuse of position. On the horizontal level we focus on the attitude to political participation as related to the perceived 'real participation' described in the previous section. The level of societal participation in decision-making in implementation is thus perceived as a core feature of the political system influencing the formation of attitudes to other topics. The responses here showed that top level executives in Kyrgyzstan are far away from the stereotype picture of the surviving totalitarian bureaucrat. There is a very strong positive attitude to involvements of organized interests in society (Tables 38-44) in policy making and in implementation. In the policy making process the inclusion of alternative interests is viewed as the normal (and only) procedure to prepare viable and feasible policies: *"The concerned interests know very well of the problems within agriculture in practice. By accepting the opinions of these groups, the policy formulation is improved, taking into account the interests of all parts"* (Ministry of agriculture); *"When preparing a Bill, the ministry itself cannot comprise all opinions, therefore it is necessary to take into account the opinion of all parts in order to find a compromise for the benefit of the*

society" (Ministry of transport and communication); *"It is impossible to be a dogmatist, it is necessary to take into account the interests of all concerned parties in order to make the right decision"* (Directorate of Energy).

Also the attitude to societal participation in implementation is mostly positive: *"Policy is only implemented, if many groups participate. For example, the Complex Basis of Development cannot be implemented without participation from all"* (Prime minister's office); *"E.g. the problems of homeless children: NGO's have a close cooperation with the ministry. The ministry itself is not able to deal with the problem on the spot. And, private companies give donations"* (Ministry of education, science and culture). There is, however, also a certain scepticism regarding the possibilities of intervention of particular interests – and a certain difficulty for the respondents to distinguish between decision making and implementation processes: *"The laws are prepared by the Government and adopted by the Parliament. Participation in this process may lead to lobby"* (Ministry of Justice).

The attitude to societal participation becomes much more negative when we use the term lobbying (Tables 35-37). While there is a positive attitude to lobbying as a channel of information, there remains a certain concern that lobbying may compromise the impartiality of the administration – a concern that also reflects the different experiences and perspectives of different agencies: *"It is a positive phenomenon, but at the same time you also have to take into account its subjectivity"* (President's office); *"The Parliament very often lobbies the interests of prominent businessmen. They pursue their own interests, not the interests of the state. A. Akaev lobbied the interests of the people, and a proposal on placing military bases on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic was submitted to the Parliament. That was in the interest of the state"* (Ministry of Work and Social Protection); *"In our ministry you cannot speak of lobby. The ministry is an executive agency. Lobby allows to take into account the interests of the Government, and to consider the pros and cons. Otherwise, there will be a conflict of interests. We make "brainstorming" through the media. We explain the negative consequences of approving a decision, and show the true purpose. If lobbying goes through the ministry, then the employee, if he is not a specialist in the respective field, may yield to trick. It is enough to convince one in order to make others accept the idea of the lobbyist"* (Ministry of Justice).

The answers revealed very varied understandings of the concept of 'lobbying'. A large number of Kyrgyz ministerial officials made a distinction between 'state lobbying' and 'business lobbying': the first was good and 'might succeed in promoting Kyrgyzstan's interests in the international arena', the latter was bad, usually the result of individuals who were concerned with private gain and 'whose interests might be at loggerheads with those of the

state'. Officials in Kyrgyzstan's presidential structures adopt a more positive view of lobbyism partly because they are more removed from the process than their ministerial counterparts.

In general we may interpret these conflicting attitudes to alternative modes of participation, as a political conflict between old patterns of institutionalized interaction with organized interests, enterprises and regional institutions (see Table 5) and new emerging (private) interests, trying to make their way into the decision-making process by lobbying. The positive attitude to participation of organized interests could therefore be interpreted as a continuance of bonds formed under the old system, while the negative attitude to lobbying is analogous to scepticism towards new interest groups and private enterprises, whose attempts to influence decision making and implementation may threaten traditional partnerships. Challenges that may even involve foreign actors: *"Lobby is a system in the practise of decision-making. The foreigners interfere in this"* (Prime Minister's office).

When asked which country they saw themselves as most resembling in ten years' time, a large minority of Kyrgyz officials still placed their state in the developing world, and many in the CIS. The remainder see Kyrgyzstan closer to Eastern Europe. The state identity is seen as firmly European rather than Asian. Within this future trajectory, Kyrgyzstani state officials advocate a strong and healthy role for both private companies and society in development, with the state's role being not necessarily predominant.

The responses also illustrate that it is common practice for ministries to have close interaction with organizations and institutions and that they seem fairly intense and institutionalized. Seen from citizens' perspective (as gleaned from responses by Kyrgyzstani parliamentary deputies interviewed) channels of influence are divided between direct contact to ministries, personal contacts, contacts to the president's administration and contact to relevant parliamentary committees. Citizens often use personal contacts instead of turning to ministries or deputies.

4.2.1 Summarizing ideational capacity

In general the results reported do not lend support to the theses about the enduring totalitarian bureaucrat. Rather, a majority of the interviewed officials disclose beliefs and attitudes consistent with a developmental perspective. In general they believe that popular participation and engagement is a good, that it increases the quality of decisions and that also implementation is improved by participation of those concerned by the legislative acts. The majority of Kyrgyzstan's ministerial officials supported inclusion of external interests in decision-making and implementation because it achieved a

balanced policy based on 'social consensus'; a smaller number also welcomed the 'practical additional knowledge' and 'objective advice'. The respondents gave examples of actual programmes of a successful partnership between state and society, the favourite in Kyrgyzstan being 'Kompleksnye Osnovy Razvitiya'.

4.3. Technical capacity

Technical capacity is about the ability of the state administration by means of its own resources (or through institutionalized relations to intra- or extra-governmental bodies (policy units, think tanks, universities, NGOs, etc.) to design coherent, viable and politically feasible policies.

As a starting point a majority of our respondent believed that executives can rely on their officials to provide reliable and intelligent information. This also applies to political advice although it noticeably is an unusual function for bureaucrats trained in the Soviet system, where ministries were technical agencies and political deliberations isolated in Party institutions. It therefore came as no surprise that this line of thought was more familiar to the prime minister's office, where internal advice more often was considered in political context: *"Sometimes 'yes', since it is necessary, apart from the concrete activity, to consider the interested person's relations to commands, clans etc."* (Prime Minister's Office).

In response to questions about development of the quality of the civil service there was an (unsurprising) divergence between line ministries and the prime minister's and president's offices. (Table 56) In the line ministries a majority saw an improvement in quality since independence, in particular produced by the entry exams introduced by the public service reform and by transfer of international competence (Table 57): *"There are entry-exams in order to get a job. For example, I went through a keen entry-exam, when I was hired to this post. The demands made on the people for getting a job have increased, and tribalism is wiped out. The fact, that employees regularly undergo attestation, improves the functionality of their tasks"* (Ministry of education, science and culture); *"Acquisition of international competence"* (Ministry of energy).

In the prime minister's and the president's offices, in contrast, a large majority see a decline in the quality of the civil service, in particular produced by frequent reorganization and political appointments and patronage in recruitment: *"When changing the Government, the administrative staff also changes, but it should not be like this. This is the main reason for the decline in quality"* (Prime Minister's Office). Also the low educational level of those employed and an exodus of the best qualified to the private sector are described as major reasons. *"The best employees leave for the private sector, trade or business;*

the educational level is low (especially at the institutions of higher education)" (President's office). This criticism of the administration was more outspoken in the responses from the head of parliamentary committees (Tables 60-62), where a large majority agree that the civil service is unstable and lacks expertise, and for improvement suggest that *"it is necessary to make the ministerial staff permanent and professional. The ministers change regularly, but the professional apparatus (that is the civil servants) has to remain the same. Currently, every minister tries to "push" his own people into the civil service. This reduces the professionalism of the ministerial staff and has a negative effect on the quality of work."* Some of the respondents also observe a continued concern over centralization, perceived as a legacy from the Soviet system, for example that the ministry of finance is replicating the role of the previous GOSPLAN, and the need for decentralization to regional or local administrative levels. *"Many of the ministries carry out functions that could be carried out on a lower level (county or region). Still, it is necessary to leave the questions of coordination and formulation of a united policy within the responsibility of the ministry."* Also lack of motivation among the staff, lack of coordination between different branches of government and systematic lack of monitoring and information is seen to impair the effectiveness of government (Table 62). A final observation is that also the legal culture may be part of the problem. A majority of respondents (although not among – the few – respondents in the line ministries) would solve problems by administrative means – even if it contradicts current legislation.

The administrations also to a large extent make use of external advisors, in particular academic specialists, independent political advisors and NGOs. Also advice from international organizations seems to play an important role, for example in the ministry of agriculture: *"Mostly, we contact international organisations with big experience in the field of agriculture: For example, the Asian Development Bank programme for strengthening agriculture; the World Bank project 'Support of agricultural services'; all consultations on the development of Kyrgyz agriculture"* (Ministry of agriculture).

4.3.1. Summarizing technical capacity

Hence, our initial expectations, that there remain significant problems in the technical capacity of the state administration have largely been confirmed. The problems encompass, as indicated by the responses to our survey, both structural problems (over centralization), and human resource problems, where the continuation of patronage and political appointments to administrative posts contribute to the weaknesses. These weaknesses cannot be resolved by inclusion of external experts, although in particular foreign advice

seem to play a relatively large role compared to what has been found in other countries in similar circumstances.

4.4. Implementation capacity

Below we summarize the responses to the questions concerning the state's capability to implement political decisions in order to measure the value of the implementation capacity in Kyrgyzstan.

As mentioned, administrative capacity denotes the ability of the state to efficiently implement the chosen policies through established institutions. For the most part our expectations have been met.

Our survey clearly indicates problems with the implementation of political decisions. This is partly shown by the fact that a large proportion of actors had no confidence in the loyalty of their staff. For instance, only 26 out of 51 respondents were confident that decisions made in their ministry or department would be implemented as intended (Table 63). At the same time, most of the respondents (78.8 percent) often found it necessary to control their ministerial staff (Table 64).

Our survey strongly indicates that non-state actors like individuals, interest organizations, business actors etc. are able to escape regulatory measures (Tables 75-77) by either not paying or evading taxes, or by privileged access to licenses and permissions: *"1. There are many decrees (ukazy) and laws on licence to secure transparency, and still, local agencies of individual enterprises break the law, and they strengthen their own power and source of income. 2. Private enterprises are synonymous with the presence of contraband"* (Prime Minister's Office).

Some refused to reply directly: *"I have no comments. Take a look in the newspapers – there are a lot of examples"* (Prime Minister's Office).

This result strongly indicates that the state lacks the resources and competences necessary to resist pressures from influential groups and individuals and to escape corruption.

Concerning major obstacles to efficient implementation, the great majority of the respondents (78.4 percent) point to inadequate resources. The factors "lack of monitoring and evaluation", "lack of understanding and agreement by officials" together with "insufficient staff motivation" are also mentioned by many executives, respectively by 51.0, 45.1 and 45.1 percent of the respondents (Table 65). In addition the respondents in the open questions added a number of other issues hindering implementation: lobbyism: *"A certain internal lobbyism among inner structures"* (President's Office); conflicts, incompetence, lack of experience: *"Long procedures in order to reach agreement, incompetence of the employees, lack of experience"* (Import tax authorities); social

problems of state employees: *"Social and material problems of civil servants. The salary for civil servants has increased by 80 percent, and the social conditions have improved"* (Agency of foreign investments); lack of coordination by the leadership: *"If the chain breaks, because of delays in one link, the whole procedure will break down. It happens drastically. From the beginning to the end. The work is coordinated by the management. If there are insufficient resources, it is not possible to solve the problems; therefore the resources are discussed from the beginning"* (Ministry of Justice) and disagreement between the major branches of government: *"Very often the demands of the presidential administration and demands of the Government are conflicting"* (President's Office).

In addition, a little more than half the respondents agree with the statement that regional interests are the greatest obstacle to an efficient and effective implementation of policies (Table 68): *"The regional powers look through the prism of their own interests without taking into account the interests of the state. Especially, when it comes to distribution of material resources"* (Ministry of Agriculture); they have a regional dimension: *"I think there is a big obstacle in the artificial division of the country into 'south' and 'north'"* (President's Office), and can be used as a platform for populist politicians: *"If the regional interests are formulated by certain individuals, it is bad. If they are formulated on a reasonable basis, it is useful in order to consider all aspects of conducting politics"* (Ministry of labour and social protection).

This result strongly indicates that the state lacks the resources and competences necessary to resist pressures from influential groups and individuals and to escape corruption (see section 3.1). That a majority of the executives found the implementation of decisions more efficient under the Communist system (Table 80) is a clear indication of the present problems, irrespective of the different contexts observed in the open answers: *"In that state system, the rules of the game were different from today. It was another democracy, a better way of implementing concrete decisions. Now, the different opinions are taken into account"* (Ministry of education, science and culture); but also: *"Keen control, punishment, high level of professionalism"* (Ministry of foreign trade).

Still: *"During communism everything was in order, there was no voluntarism, and violation was punished. The whole system developed. The system of social security developed"* (Prime Minister's Office), while *"more decisions are made now, but less of them are realized"* (Prime Minister's Office).

At the same time, a great majority of the respondents value the assistance provided by organisations, private business or other concerned interests in the formulation of implementation designs, as it helps ensure compliance in

the process of implementation (Table 71), indicating a belief that societal involvement can improve implementation.

4.4.3. Summarizing implementation capacity

These results are largely consistent with our initial expectations that several factors prevent complete control being imposed from the top down and that implementation rather than bad policies may be the most acute problem in present day Kyrgyzstan.

5. Concluding observations

The responses showed what we set out as our expectations in section 2. On the one hand it may seem a disappointing outcome of a substantial effort to confirm what we already alleged to know from other sources: from qualitative research, from anecdotal evidence and from just reading the news bulletins. This applies in particular to the more sensitive information as for example high level corruption and conflicts between branches of government. On the other hand, the indication that our respondents give honest answers to the most sensitive questions indicates that they are also sticking to the facts in less sensitive and more technical matters. We thus believe that the present report provides a fairly accurate picture of the state of the state in present day Kyrgyzstan.

The reason that our initial pessimistic expectations about state capacity in Kyrgyzstan were largely confirmed is probably the awkward mixture of tradition and modernity, of authoritarianism and democracy and of control and chaos we meet in present day Kyrgyzstan. The modern aspects of the Kyrgyz state are first of all reflected in the values and identities of the executives. Their positive and pragmatic attitude to interaction with society places the state very solidly in what we in section two termed an 'interdependent state'. Still tradition penetrates these interdependent structures, when informal institutions like clans play an important role in appointments and policy making and when for example the aksekal's (chiefs) play an important role in local politics. We may thus say that in some sectors social forces have captured the state, especially regional forces. Regional forces are exacerbated by economic chaos, considered the biggest obstacle faced by Kyrgyzstan in policy implementation. We may also speculate if the almost unconditional welcome of foreign actors, both in terms of expertise and financial assistance, indicate an additional capture by international organizations.

Also the schism of authoritarianism and democracy is reflected in our responses, when – on the one hand – respondents complain about the

insulation (and incompetence!!) of the president's office – and the very fact that they are prepared to share these opinions with foreign researchers. In this perspective we may see the Kyrgyz mode of government as weak authoritarian presidentialism attempting to counterbalance the regionally based interests that may have captured part of the state. Finally, we also face a strange mixture of top-down control and enduring conflicts between branches of government and different government agencies. On the one hand, we here see a picture where the presidency is perceived by everyone as the ultimate personal source of power, even more concentrated than during the communist epoch. On the other hand, we have a picture of institutions in perpetual conflict with each other, conflicts that severely frustrate any attempt to produce coherent and viable policies.

These awkward mixtures also may serve as a starting point for understanding the causal mechanism that has created the present state of the state in Kyrgyzstan – an administration that may be considered less efficient than that of its neighbour Kazakhstan – on the four dimension on which we measure state capacity (see below). These reasons have first of all to do with policy choices and less with differences in context. In particular less centralisation of decision making (in the sense that officials need to keep a close watch on decision implementation), lower respect for rule of law (many are thought to be ignorant of fundamental legislation) and less institutionalisation of structures may serve as important explanations. These factors were partly engendered by early decisions to carry through fast economic and political reforms, reforms that in turn produced a loss of control that at an early stage opened the gate for a resurgence of traditional modes of interests and structures. When president Akaev later in the process tried to curb these interests by reverting to still more authoritarian modes of government, it may actually have been too late. Once these interests had found their way into government, a reduction of democracy and transparency may actually be to their advantage. It is in this perspective we should see the present attempt to re-decentralize and re-democratize central institutions. This strategy may, however, in turn produce its own contradiction.

Notes

1. Following March and Olson (1995), Egerbjerg (1999: 458) distinguishes 'role and 'identity': 'By 'role' we usually mean a set of expectations (norms or rules) that more or less specify the desired behaviour of the role incumbent. An identity is a conception of self organized into rules for matching action to situations. To make decisions within a logic of appropriateness, decision-makers need to be able to determine what their identities are, what the situation is, and what action is appropriate for them in the situation in which they find themselves.
2. See also Sorensen (1990), Przeworki & Limongo (1993), and Nørgaard (2000) applying different methodologies in the discussion about linkages between regime form and development.
3. Re. Askat Dukenbaev & William Hansen: Understanding Politics in Kyrgyzstan. Demstar Research Report, forthcoming.
4. The following questions in the ministry questionnaire relate to this topic: 7, 7a, 8, 24, 25, 25a, 26, 28a, 46, 46a, 47, 47a, 47b, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 52a, 53, 53a; in the parliamentary committees questionnaire questions 22, 23, 23a, 24, 26, 27, 30, 31.
5. The following questions in the ministry questionnaire relate to this topic: 22, 22a, 22b, 23, 23a; in the parliamentary committees questionnaire questions 32, 32a.
6. The following questions in the parliamentary committees questionnaire relate to questions 1, 2, 12, 14, 14a, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 29, 30, 31, 34, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43.
7. The following questions in the ministry questionnaire relate to this topic: 27, 28, 41, 44, 44a, 45, 54; in the parliamentary committees questionnaire question 25.
8. The following questions in the ministry questionnaire relate to this topic: 3, 3a, 4, 4a, 4b, 5, 5a, 6, 6a, 12, 13, 37, 40; in the parliamentary committees questionnaire questions 18, 20.
9. Questions 37-43 in the ministry questionnaire are related to this topic.

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