

UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC POLICY MAKING IN KYRGYZSTAN IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

*Askat Dukenbaev*¹

INTRODUCTION

Hypotheses

It is said that governments are not unified institutions, but rather they tend to develop and pursue policies, which are initiated and supported by a particular group(s) either *within* or *outside* (or both) the government. Thus, the relationship between these interests groups plays important role in the formulation and implementation of public policies in a country.

In relation to this, the paper is based on the following assumptions:

- (1) Both institutions and groups may play important role in the initiating and implementing the policies;
- (2) The role and influence of the institutions and groups on the policy decision-making varies from one policy area and policy stage to another.
- (3) The role of the groups in the policy-making process in Kyrgyzstan are different from those played by the similar groups in the European political context.

Methodology of the research:

According to David Marsh, the comparative perspective is “essential in order to establish both the effect of networks and, more specifically, the relative effect of networks and context, on outcomes”². The scholars of the field have identified two basic approaches which can be employed either separately or in combination. The first one is to compare policy formation and outcomes within the same policy area across countries with similar political and economic context.

The second approach is to compare the policy making process in different policy areas in one country over the same period. For the purposes of the research, I have decided to use the second approach and compare two policy areas; namely *foreign policy* and *education* in Kyrgyzstan.

The rationale behind choosing these policy areas, is as follows: (1) the major reason is that they represent two different policy areas within one country: *foreign policy* is mainly oriented towards *outside* whereas *educational policy* is mainly a part of *internal* public affairs; accordingly, different policy making styles and arrangements of (and interaction between) various interest groups and institutions are expected, (2) my own interests, professional and academic background which are closely related to education and international politics, (3) ‘logistical’ reasons: based on my personal experience, it is much easier to deal with the people from these two policy areas rather than with the representatives of other fields.

The data has been collected through:

- (1) Analysis of the related written regulations, documents and publications (both official and non-official);
- (2) Semi-structured interviews with policy makers and experts in Kyrgyzstan: so far, 15 people have been interviewed from both policy areas, including two ex-ministers of foreign policy and education, members and experts of the related departments of the parliament, and the members of NGOs, engaged in the similar policy issues (note: regarding the *education*, interviews have been held only with people engaged with *higher* education).

¹ Lecturer, American University – Central Asia, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

² Marsh, David (1998). *Comparing Policy Networks*, Open University Press , p.15.

The aim of the research is to study the role of formal intuitions and groups (and also relationships between them), which influence a *particular* policy area in Kyrgyzstan, one of the post-Soviet Central Asian states³. I think that research contributes to the understanding of the politics and policy-making mechanisms not only in Kyrgyzstan but also around post-Soviet Central Asian states, which have many things in common in terms of political as well as administrative development. In broader terms I hope my research contributes to the cross-country comparisons of political change in the post-communist states, to which, according to the observation of Bruce Parrot, scholars have devoted relatively little effort⁴. Meantime, I believe that the comparative studies would help us to understand the causes and consequences of (and learn lessons for the future from) the different political outcomes in the development of the countries that once were called ‘socialist’ (or ‘communist’ according to Western political terminology).

Thus, the initial research is more specifically aimed at:

- (1) Identifying the formal institutions and groups (both *formal* and *informal*) in each of the policy areas;
- (2) Defining their role(s) in different stages of the policy-making process;
- (3) Comparing the findings of the research with the similar ones in other countries.

The paper is just an initial attempt to analyze and understand the problem with the preliminary findings. Therefore, any suggestions and comments aimed at improving the paper are more than welcomed.

Chapter 1: Major policy makers in Kyrgyzstan

This section identifies the various formal intuitions and groups (both formal and informal) and their roles in the policy-making process in Kyrgyzstan. Taking into account the highly centralised political system in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, the policy makers are set according to their influence on a policy decision-making process in the country.

1.1. The President and his Administration (administratzia):

Although the Constitution calls for a government of three branches, in the reality the President remains the most powerful political and administrative institution of the state, with great and significant influence on the decisions of the *Parliament*, *Government* and even the *Courts*. This gives the President and his Office - *Administratzia* a strategic role and the tools to formulate and implement public policies. It is fixed in the Constitution which provides the President of Kyrgyzstan with broad functions such as ‘defining the fundamental directions and external policy of the state’ (Article 42), monitoring the work of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (Article 72). The President has the ability to implement important policies or constitutional amendments through a carefully designed and manipulated national *referendum*⁵.

³ Author’s note: For basic facts about Kyrgyzstan including the brief description of politico-administrative structure, please refer to Appendix 1.

⁴ Parrott, Bruce, ‘Perspectives on postcommunist democratization’, p.1. In: Karen Davisha and Bruce Parrot (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp.92-130.

⁵ Authors note: Since independence, in total four referenda have been held in Kyrgyzstan. The last constitutional referendum in Kyrgyzstan, held in February 2003, further increased the role of President at the expense of the legislative body. For some basic facts about the referendum please refer to CNN’s *World Election Watch – Kyrgyzstan* at: <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/election.watch/asiapcf/kyrgyzstan4.html>.

Thus, the main feature of the existing system of policy making processes in Kyrgyzstan is the dominance of the President and his *Administratzia* (which according to its Regulations should have just *auxiliary* functions) and the duplication of the functions of the Ministries with the Presidential *Administratzia* and *Secretariat* of the Prime-Minister, which have almost identical policy departments.

1.2. Prime Minister and its Secretariat, ministers and other state units

Formally (that is according to the Constitution), it is the Government (*Prime Minister* and its *Secretariat, ministers* and *other state units*), which is nominally entrusted with the formulation and the implementation of the public policies in Kyrgyzstan. For example, according to the Constitution, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic is ‘the highest executive body of the state power in the Kyrgyz Republic’ (article 70).

In the reality, it is the President (along with his *Administratzia*), which became the major centre where policies are *initiated* and *formulated*. In these circumstances, the Government is given the only task – to implement the policies and take responsibility for their correct implementation, as it was designed and blessed by the Presidential administration.

1.3. Heads of the local (regional and district) levels of the government

The Heads (or *Gubernators*) of the *regional* level State Administrations are appointed by the President according to proposals of the Prime Minister and with the formal consent of the corresponding regional representative (legislative) body (*Kenesh*). Heads (*Akims*) of the *district* level State Administrations and cities are also appointed (and dismissed) by the President, nominally - with the consent of the Prime Minister, related *Gubernator* and district *Kenesh*.

In relation to the above, it is not an accident therefore, that in reality, the local State Administrations became very powerful institutions for *channelling* the decisions of the *President* rather than those of the *Prime Minister* to the local territories. Nominally, the local State Administrations are an inherent part of the *executive* branch (Cabinet of Ministers) and therefore, are supposed to be subordinated to the Prime Minister.

In these circumstances, the local State Administrations became the *supreme executive bodies* on the related territories, responsible for implementation of the Centre’s policies. Therefore, they also given some autonomy in managing the local affairs in the related territories.

1.4. International organizations (states, donors, etc.)

The influence and the roles of the international organizations vary from the case to case. The most powerful ones are those who provide substantial financial assistance to the country, like the IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and which can considerably influence the economic situation in the country. The rest, especially international human rights organizations, are less important for the key policy decision-makers of Kyrgyzstan.

As for the states, Kyrgyzstani policy makers are very concerned with the positions of Russia, the United States, China and some European countries (mainly Germany and Switzerland, due to the amount of economic aid) and neighbouring Central Asian states towards Kyrgyzstan. Over last few years, the Kyrgyzstani government became very concerned with real or imagined ‘threat’ from cross-national Islamic (allegedly – terrorist) groups like the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*, *Hizbut-Tahrir*, etc.

1.5. Courts (the judicial system)

The judicial branch includes local courts and three high courts: the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, and the Court of Higher Arbitration⁶. The President appoints the members of the high courts (subject to the approval by the parliament, which he has been getting so far) and the judges of the local level courts (up to the level of districts - *rayons*) and also of the military tribunals of the Kyrgyz Republic (and dismisses them from their positions in cases provided by the Constitution and laws).

It is no accident therefore, that the major role of the courts in the policy making process has turned into pursuing the specific interests of the ruling institutions and groups rather than the public's one. Courts in Kyrgyzstan are corrupted, distrusted by the general public and dependent on the government. For example, the courts are often used to suppress the independent mass media and opposition, ruling the cases in favour of powerful persons and institutions.

1.6. Parliament (Zhogorku Kenesh)

Nominally, that is according to the Constitution, apart from its usual legislative ('law-making') functions, the Kyrgyzstani parliament has the right to determine the directions of the of internal and foreign policies. However, it is not true in reality as this function is exercised mainly either by the Presidential *Administratzia* and/or Government. Overall, parliament plays just *marginal* role in the policy-making process. The latest Constitutional amendments, held in February this year, further limited its role in the national decision-making process, turning it, according one of the interneers, to 'the judicial unit of the Presidential Administration'.

1.7. The role of the groups in the governmental decision-making process

Scholars have long noticed the importance of the role of what called 'informal' politics in the Muslim world, mainly referring to the states in the Middle East.⁷ Although, there is still lack of the scholarly studies and scientific data on the role of 'informal' relationships in the Central Asian states, there are a lot practical evidences, which support the claims of the Western scholars about the "centrality of 'groupism'" and 'informal networks' in Central Asia.⁸ As Gregory Gleason point out, 'Central Asian politics is the outcome of a highly complex and variegated process in which groups are continually contesting for power, frequently competing for advantage, and sometimes cooperating for mutual advancement'.⁹

In relation to this, as practice, the people in the region show little respect for *formal* rules and institutions. It is not an accident therefore that people prefer to resolve their problems not through official institutions and regulations (like, for example, the courts, laws and public units), but through *informal* channels of communication (contacts). The case of Kyrgyzstan totally supports the remark of the notorious Russian 'oligarch' A.Berezovskii who a TV appearance exclaimed that 'it is time for us to live by rules (*po pravilam*) rather than by ideas (*po ponyatiam*)'¹⁰.

⁶ Authors note: According to the latest Constitutional amendments, taking effect from 2005, the Arbitration courts will be merged with the Supreme Court.

⁷ E.g., Owen, Roger. *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, Routledge, 2000, esp. pp.221-225, 229-238; Kazemi, Farhad and John Waterbury (eds.), *Peasants and Politics in the Middle East*, Miami: Florida International University Press, 1974, and so on.

⁸ Anderson, John. *The International Politics of Central Asia*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997, p.87.

⁹ Quoted in John Anderson. *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 1997, p.87.

¹⁰ Authors note: although the Russian word '*ponyatia*' has several meanings, it is a widely used connotation referring to the *informal rules practiced among criminals*.

However, it is worth mentioning that the identification and studying these *informal networks* in Kyrgyzstan, especially in the public administration, is a very problematic due to lack of good data available on the issue and existed barriers to get it.

1.7.1. Regional and tribal clans

Kinship and regional clans, which are *informal* as there are no laws or official regulations legalizing them, are the most studied network groups in Kyrgyzstan, although in a more general level¹¹. Ethnic Kyrgyz traditionally pay great attention to family and clan (tribal and regional) affiliations. In spite of more than 70 years of forceful Soviet modernization, Kyrgyz identity in public and private life is still determined primarily by membership in one of the tribal clans. Clan membership plays a significant role in competing for scarce social and economic advantage. Support for fellow clan members is the usual practice in the politico-administrative system in Kyrgyzstan.

Currently, according to the data available and the pattern of official appointments, the political (therefore, administrative and economic) power belongs to the ‘Northern’ clans represented by the President and his wife. As a result, on the national level all decisions and policies should be made taking into account the interests of the representatives of the ‘Northern’ clan. On the local level the decision are made in order to suit the interest of the powerful local clans.

1.7.2. Groups outside the government like NGOs, political parties, business groups and mass media as a rule play very insignificant role in the policy making process. Among these groups, only *NGOs* have potential to influence some policy areas, e.g., in education, but in overall, they activity is discretionary and mainly dependent on the financial assistance of the foreign donors.

As for the *political parties*, *business groups* or ‘*think-tanks*’ unlike Western countries, they are not well organized and institutionalized, therefore, they do not play a significant role in the public policy making in Kyrgyzstan.

Finally, regarding the role of the *mass media*, although, the President of Kyrgyzstan is still the only head of state in post-Soviet Central Asia who has not been labeled yet an ‘enemy of the press’ by the well-known New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists¹², over last few years the positions of independent media in Kyrgyzstan, achieved since times of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, has clearly worsened. The Government constantly represses the most popular opposition newspapers, imprisoning their editors, not getting them published, suing them and bringing them to the edge of bankruptcy or even shutting down some of the most ‘trouble-making’ newspapers.

¹¹ Authors note: The ethnographical studies of the tribal clans, which had been carried out in a very limited manner since the Soviet times, flourished since independence. At the same time, as it was mentioned above, it is still very difficult to collect *factual* data on *informal* networks in the governmental structures; although some journalists publish from time to time some information on the issue, mentioning even some names and network patterns, their info is specific and scattered. Thus, it requires some more time and efforts to collect all this data and get real evidences of the *tribal* and other *informal networks* in the official structures.

¹² Times of Central Asia, 8 March 2001

Chapter 2: Foreign Policy-Making in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan

2.1. *The Soviet legacy*

The republics of the Soviet Union had only the formal right to participate in the formulation of Soviet foreign policy. Despite the fact, that since 1944 each republic had a nominal and embryonic “Ministry of Foreign Affairs” (for example, the staff of the Ministry of the Soviet Kyrgyzstan had included 5 people in the 1948 and only 2 since 1955)¹³, whose main job was to provide consular services and host some foreign delegations, they have never made significant contributions to the foreign policy making process in the USSR, nor did they accumulated enough professional experience¹⁴ and what is called an ‘institutional memory’.

It is not accident therefore, that having obtained an unexpected independence as an aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the country has faced an enormous and very difficult task in forming and implementing a foreign policy on its own as the country had never had a professional and institutionalized foreign service like, for example, Russia. Neither did it have enough specialists and experts in international relations to fill the positions in the re-created Ministry of Foreign Affairs (henceforward – the MFA).

The situation has been complicated by political problems of the transitional period. Although independence and followed political liberalization caused some series of institutional changes (which at the end turned to be mainly nominal), the substance of the policy process in practice in Kyrgyzstan did not change. Whatever initial movement toward democratic policy processes existed in the post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan in the early days of independence seems to have been overcome by the inertia of remaining Soviet-style strong centralised policy-making, administration and political mobilization.

It is not accident therefore that in these circumstances, it was the President and his Administration that became from the beginning the major center of the policy making in the country. The situation has been exacerbated by the fact that the most experienced professionals went to work for the Presidential administration – the most prestigious public unit of Kyrgyzstan.

2.2. *The role of bureaucrats, politicians and groups (networks - ?)*

There is no professional (Weberian-type) bureaucracy in Kyrgyzstan. In spite of all attempts to reform public administration in 1990s, Kyrgyzstan has failed to establish even the appropriate legal framework for a professional civil service¹⁵. This conclusion is fully appropriate to the staff of the MFA where most of the civil servants (if not all) are ill paid, unqualified, demoralized and preoccupied with survival and careerism rather than with performing their professional tasks.

According to the experts I have interviewed, the situation is becoming even worse. Therefore, the most qualified persons has been leaving the foreign service for better opportunities in the private or NGO sector. It is seem to be reflected in the quantity of the staff of the MFA, which has been decreasing over last years, for example, from 115 persons in 1998 to 101 ones in 2000¹⁶.

¹³ ‘Istoria obrazovaniya Ministerstva inostrannykh del Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki’ (in Russian; official site of the Government of Kyrgyzstan). In: <http://www.gov.kg/cgi-bin/page.pl?id=1129>

¹⁴ Abazov, Rafis (1998), *Practise of Foreign Policy Making: Formation of Post-Soviet Politics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan* (final report), p.38. In: <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/96-98/abasov.pdf>

¹⁵ Dukenbaev, Askat and Valimjan Tanyrykov. ‘Politico-Administrative Relations in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia’. In Verheijen, Tony (ed.), (2001), *Politico-Administrative Relations: Who Rules*, Bratislava: NISPAcee, pp. 175-202.

¹⁶ Cholponkulova A.O., *Konstituzionnye osnovy vneshnepoliticheskoi deyatel'nosti Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki*, Bishkek, 2000, p.145.

Meanwhile the international politics of the region has been getting very complicated and challenging for Kyrgyzstan over the same period.

As for the role of politicians, the major one is the President, who has the Constitutional right to “define the fundamental directions of internal and external policy of the state” (Article 42), and “direct the foreign policy of the Kyrgyz Republic” (Article 46). The President exercises his power through mainly his *Administratzia*; in terms of foreign affairs – through the Department of Foreign Affairs in the *Administratzia*, which in many situations tries to take a mentoring stand and controlling functions (rather and auxiliary ones as it is prescribed in Regulations of the Department) over the MFA. According to the interviewees, this situation has become the basis for constant conflicts and rivalry between these two agencies, namely, between the Head of the Department and the Minister.

Anyway, the Presidential Department often serves as a ‘filter’ for information and a final decision-maker on initiatives coming from the part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is mainly entrusted by nominal function of the *coordination* and *implementation* of the decisions made by President and his *Administratzia* regarding the foreign policy.

In fulfilling this task, the MFA directly cooperates basically with the following ministries and state agencies, which bear the official title of ‘specialized organs of foreign relations’¹⁷: (1) Ministry of External Trade and Industry, (2) Ministry of Finances, (3) State Commission on Foreign Investments (with rights equal a Ministry), (4) Ministry of Defense and sometimes, with (5) State Committee on National Security (formerly - KGB).

These units may create a kind of *network* with the MFA at the center, but this still needs further investigation. For instance, according to the interviewees, the relations between the MFA and these ‘specialized organs of foreign relations’ are discretionary and concrete; depending on specific issues, which the MFA faces in its activity. For example, when there is a need to get expertise and proposals on foreign trade policy, the MFA contacts the Ministry of External Trade and Industry. In the case of border delimitation, the MFA usually contacts the Ministry of Defense, etc. These contacts intensify during the decision-making process on a related issue and abate when the issue is resolved.

These ‘specialized organs’ including MFA, are followed by the Parliament (*Zhogorku Kenesh*), which, unlike Western parliaments, plays an even less important role in the foreign policy formation and decision-making process. According to a local expert, ‘parliamentary participation in determination the course of policy has limited character’, the legal framework for foreign policy making is underdeveloped, therefore there are many issues which have yet to be regulated by legislative body¹⁸.

As for the influence of the organizations outside the government (businesses, clans, NGOs, experts, ‘think- tanks’, etc.) on foreign policy making in Kyrgyzstan, according to all interviewees, it is minimal and they mostly do not have any significant impact¹⁹, unlike the Western countries, for example, the USA, where they may significantly affect the decision-making process in the executive agencies as well as in the Congress. Indeed, it is argued that in the United States

¹⁷ Authors note: In Russian: “spetsializirovannye organy vneshnih snoshenii” (Cholponkulova A.O., *Konstituzionnye osnovy vneshnepoliticheskoi deyatel’nosti Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki*, Bishkek, 2000, pp.138-139).

¹⁸ Cholponkulova A.O., *Konstituzionnye osnovy vneshnepoliticheskoi deyatel’nosti Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki*, Bishkek, 2000, p.176.

¹⁹ Authors note: Although some scholars (e.g., Rafis Abasov, 1998) put mass media, academicians and public opinion right after the parliament in terms of their impact on the foreign policy in Kyrgyzstan, the people whom I interviewed deny any significance of the societal groups in the process of the foreign policy making.

‘executive agencies are nothing more than pawns of the powerful economic organizations in American society with which they deal’.²⁰

To summarize, the observation of the Western scholars about ‘loose’ networks providing unstable and unpredictable policy outcomes²¹ seems to be true in the case of Kyrgyzstan. Indeed, so far Kyrgyzstani establishment has failed to develop any coherent and consistent concept of the foreign policy.

Chapter 3: Educational policy and the role of public groups in Kyrgyzstan

3.1. The official and unofficial objectives of the educational policy²²

According to the Law “On education” (1992, amended in 1997), the objective of the education is ‘to train the citizens of the republic for the satisfaction of society’s spiritual and financial needs’.²³ This too broad and vague purpose is further specified in the official statements of the President, Prime-minister or Minister of Education.

In addition, according to the Article 3 of the Law, the main principles of organization of education in Kyrgyzstan are:

- (1) “Equality of all citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic in receiving of education;
- (2) Free of charge education in state educational institutions of all types within the norms of the state educational standard, and creation of conditions for functioning of paid education;
- (3) Humanistic character of education, priority of human values;
- (4) System and continuity;
- (5) Diversity of educational institutions by forms of education, directions of activity, forms of property;
- (6) Accessibility of education, correspondence of educational system to levels and peculiarities of development and preparation of learners;
- (7) Creation of conditions for selection of talented learners and their creative development”.²⁴

Needless to say in reality it is just a small part of these principles are put in practice, although over last few years these principles have been tried to be implemented in several national educational programs and activities, but without any tangible positive consequences.

At the same, there are *unofficial* purposes of the educational policy. It is well known fact, that education is traditionally considered to be one of the important intuitions and tools for the implementing main spoken and unspoken objectives of the ruling regime. In relation to this, the years of independence have not significantly changed the role of educational system. Moreover, in many terms, situation in this area has become even worse due to lack of sources, first of all financial, which has caused the decreasing the access to the education, especially for the poor part of the society. For example, in 1996 only 74% of the total secondary school students entered the

²⁰ Rourke, Francis E. (1972), *Bureaucracy and Foreign Policy*. Studies in International Affairs, Number 17, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, p.11.

²¹ Daugbjerg, Carsten and David Marsh, ‘Explaining Policy Outcomes: Integrating the Policy Network Approach with Macro-level and Micro-level Analysis’. In Marsh, David (1998), *Comparing Policy Networks*, Open University Press, p.78.

²² Authors note: For information about the structure of the formal educational system of Kyrgyzstan please refer to the Appendix 3.

²³ Research Institute of Higher Education Problems: *Regional Study Trends, Issues and Policy in Education* (1998), Bishkek, p.96

²⁴ The UNESCO ‘Educational for All’ country report on Kyrgyzstan (2000). Available at: <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/kyrgyz/contents.html>

10th class, 13 2000 (17%) of the secondary school aged people neither work nor study²⁵. The situation is aggravated by declining infrastructure, brain-drain and corruption in the field of education.

However, in spite of the negative tendencies, the importance of the education for the regime, as it was mentioned above, has been increasing. Therefore, one of the basic features of the educational system of Kyrgyzstan is its high level of *politicization*. All secondary schools and state higher educational institutions (and even private universities) have the official curriculum approved (and imposed) by the Ministry of Education. Their students and faculty are constantly mobilized for participation in official events, like national celebrations or officially organized conferences, public meetings or rallies. There are only few universities (like American University - Central Asia) which are always exempted from these kind of actions of mobilization, not at least thanks to their international status and a special stand in the educational system of Kyrgyzstan.

Another unspoken objective of the Kyrgyzstani education since independence has become the promotion of the cultural values of the 'titular' nation – the ethnic Kyrgyz. Thus, education became an important tool for the political socialization and state building in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan like, I believe, everywhere in the post-Communist world.

Regarding higher education, one of the important goals of government is to keep young people engaged in some kind of activity (e.g., with their studies at the universities) rather than making them unemployed and consequently, potentially dangerous for the regime.

Finally, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, higher education of Kyrgyzstan has become very commercialized (and therefore corrupted), some kind of making business, enriching mainly many groups of the educational officials and administrators. It is not accident therefore the *corruption* and decreasing the *admission* and *academic standards* became one of the major problems of the country's educational system.

3.2. The role of institutions and groups in the educational policy-making

The major difference between *foreign policy* and *education* is that, the *educational policies* are formulated and implemented with a much more greater level of involvement of groups (both governmental and non-governmental), whereas in case of the *foreign policy making*, the public involvement is minimal.

It is possible to divide the groups of the policy area into the following sub-groups (with brief description their main functions; arranged in accordance with their influence on the policy decision-making):

3.2.1. Governmental officials (politicians and bureaucrats from the related departments of the Presidential Administration, the Cabinet of Ministers and Parliament, and Ministry of Education):

Like in case of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the President and his *Administratzia* have some significant influence on the decision-making process at the Ministry of Education. At the same time, the latter has more autonomy than the former in formulating and implementing the educational policy. Besides, the level of autonomy seemingly varies from one Minister of Education to another as long as new policies and the decisions of a Minister conform to the broad political aims of the Presidential Administration.

²⁵ Research Institute of Higher Education Problems: Regional Study Trends, Issues and Policy in Education (1998), Bishkek, p.107

For example, two major breakthroughs in the educational reform in Kyrgyzstan took place in 1992-93 and in 2001-2002. In both periods the Ministry of Education was headed by reformist ministers, who had vision, leadership skills, charisma and popularity among the people to introduce significant innovations into the educational system in Kyrgyzstan. Thanks to their personal abilities, they had managed to get considerable support (at least at the initial stages of their reforms) from the high-level officials, first of all from the President himself. It is not accident therefore that during those periods, the Ministry of Education had clearly enjoyed more autonomy from the Presidential Administration, could exercise more authority in the policy area and cooperate with more societal groups than at any other times.

Regarding the relations of the Ministry of Education with other ministries and state units, they may happen when different ministries are assigned to implement a national program aiming to meet the population's basic social needs. For examples, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor are taking joint efforts under the poverty alleviation national program called "*Araker*" (Activity) designed to train unemployed youth in a variety of trades. The Health Ministry and the Ministry of Education are responsible for the implementation of the "Healthy Nation State" program targeting infant disease prevention, motherhood and childhood protection, protection of the environment and fighting pollution. There is also a program, involving the Ministry of Justice, which targets legal and civic education, aiming to familiarize people with the elementary rules of living in a democratic society²⁶.

As for the role of parliament, its influence on educational policy is limited just by legislative functions (adopting or making some amendments to the laws) and by ability to make budget allocations for the educational sector while approving the country's state budget, which is very rarely implemented in full.

3.2.2. Administrators and faculty members of the higher education institutions (university rectors, heads of departments and programs, faculty):

As it was mentioned above, higher educational institutions in Kyrgyzstan (like elsewhere around Central Asia) became very politicized and ended up, with few exceptions, being the servants and major supporters of the governmental activities. Therefore university rectors became an inherent part of the official establishment and main agents of the government in the higher education. Many of the rectors have managed to establish both formal and informal contacts with high-level decision makers in the government (for example, one of the rectors has been appointed as an official adviser to the President; another one's daughter had married into Presidents' family, and so on). It is no accident therefore, that the rectors became a very powerful and resourceful *network* that is strongly opposed to any educational reforms (like creating the Board of Trustees, which would put a rector and the financial resources of his university under their supervision and control) that threaten their personal interests and positions as was in the case of the two above-mentioned ministers-reformers.

In addition to their roles in the internal politics, the rectors of *international* universities can get involved into geopolitical games in the region. For example, the rector of the Kyrgyz-Russian University is well known for his pro-Russian political orientations and promotion of the Russian educational standards vis-à-vis the Western ones in Kyrgyzstan. The university is supported by Moscow and widely recognized to be one of the pillars of the Russian education and culture in Kyrgyzstan. The same can be said about Kyrgyz-Turkish and Kyrgyz-Uzbek universities, and, possibly, but to a lesser extent, the American University.

²⁶ The UNESCO 'Educational for All' country report on Kyrgyzstan (2000).
In: <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/kyrgyz/contents.html>

The relations *within* the Kyrgyzstani universities are very hierarchical and the university administration has nearly ultimate power over their subordinates and faculty members, which are in large extent ill-paid (therefore – corrupted), under-motivated and under-qualified, without any important role in the university governance, except teaching the students. As a result, the major part of the Kyrgyzstani universities has lost or has been loosing the true academic atmosphere in their campuses and the scientific potential left from the Soviet period.

3.2.3. Groups involved into the secondary school level activities (administrators, teachers, parents of the schoolchildren and extracurricular development institutions):²⁷

In general, the situation in *the secondary schools* resemble the above-described picture at the universities, although in a smaller, but not less alarming, scale. The same problems like lack of sources (financial, human and technical), corruption, mal-administration and politicization and so on are also present in the secondary schools.

According to the UNESCO “Educational for All” (EFA) country report (2000), **parents** have been more actively involved in tackling basic education problems in Kyrgyzstan.

Firstly, they help to choose schools, influence the selection of teaching programs and curricula, and assume more responsibility for school financing and equipment. Besides, parents even can exert indirect influence on national education policies. For example, changes in a number of provisions of the Law on Education of the Kyrgyz Republic related to the duration of school education and its standard level to be reached in 1997 were influenced by parents. Also, parents have been given more rights to co-run schools. More than 400 schools today have trustees boards composed of local public representatives, parents, sponsors, etc. The boards of trustees are empowered to decide on financing, supplies, meals, health care and extracurricular education, and are giving considerable assistance to children from poor families. More parents and public representatives can now take part in the organization of the vents in the schools.

Extracurricular development institutions include children’s creative endeavor centers, sports schools, young technicians’, tourists’ or naturalists’ centers, etc. A total of 116 such institutions are active in Kyrgyzstan attended by more than 100,000 schoolchildren, although the number of the centers dropped to 116 in 1998 from 187 in 1991, primarily due to cuts in financing. In their efforts, these institutions use their own premises as well as schools or pre-school facilities.

In addition, schools have a network of optional courses to offer schoolchildren more instruction on subjects taught at school as well as those centered on various aspects of children’s creative endeavors. A variety of competitions, festivals, Olympiads, excursions or exhibitions are arranged by extracurricular development institutions and schools.

Unfortunately, extracurricular development is traditionally seen as the state's exclusive domain. The role played by NGOs in offering extracurricular services and expanding the limits of formal education is insignificant.

²⁷ Author’s note: This section is based on the UNESCO ‘Educational for All’ country report on Kyrgyzstan (2000). Available at: <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/kyrgyzz/contents.html>

3.2.4. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):

There are more than 1,000 officially registered NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, but only half of them, if not fewer, are active. The *relatively* high level of involvement of the NGOs in the policy making process in the area of education can be explained by fact that most of them address social and education-related issues. For example, according to the Counterpart Consortium, early in May, 1999, there was a total of 200 NGOs, in one way or another, involved in the UNESCO's 'Education for All program', which is planned to benefit more than one third of the population²⁸.

There also Quasi-NGOs like the Meerim Fund (headed by president's wife - Meerim Akayeva), Children's Fund of Kyrgyzstan, and so on and non-governmental international organizations, involved in educational activities in Kyrgyzstan, including Soros Foundation in Kyrgyzstan, USAID, ACCELS, UNESCO, etc, which provide great amount of financial assistance to the educational sector of Kyrgyzstan.²⁹

SUMMING UP

The case of Kyrgyzstan (which can be expanded to broader scope of all post-Soviet Central Asia) demonstrates that due to the heavily centralized character of the political system and strict limitations for the political participation of the non-governmental groups, in general, the policy-making process is limited in the governmental structures and groups. The policies are implemented mainly through state institutions and bureaucracy. Although according to the Constitution, all three branches of government – executive, legislative and judicial – are responsible for the policy-formation in Kyrgyzstan, in the practice, policies are initiated and *formulated* mainly in the Presidential Administration and in the Government, which is also responsible for *implementing* of the policies.

Nevertheless, even in this highly centralised context, the groups matter, and preliminary findings of the research demonstrate that the role of the groups outside the government vary from one policy area to another, like it was demonstrated in case of the *foreign policy* and *education* in Kyrgyzstan. While in the former case the involvement of the non-governmental groups (clans, business groups, NGOs, etc.) has been minimal, in the latter case the role of the groups seems to be very important. Although, the question about *the degree of influence* of each of the groups remains open.

Another difference between two areas is, in general, the minister of education has more autonomy and freedom in its policy area. But the level of the freedom seems to be dependent on a personal factor, namely, skills of the minister (leadership skills, determinations, charisma, etc.).

Thus, the preliminary findings seem to support initial assumptions that (1) both institutions and groups play important role in the initiating and implementing the policies, although (2) the role and influence of the institutions and groups on the policy decision-making varies from one policy area and policy stage to another (like it was demonstrated in cases of *foreign policy* and *education* in Kyrgyzstan).

As for the third research question about differences in the roles of the groups in the policy-making process in Kyrgyzstan from those of played by the similar groups in the European political context, further elaborations and discussions on this issue I would like to leave on the participants of the Working Group...

²⁸ The UNESCO 'Educational for All' country report on Kyrgyzstan (2000).

In: <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/kyrgyz/contents.html>

²⁹ Author's note: For information about the amount of the international financial assistance in the educational system of Kyrgyzstan please refer to Appendix 4.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Abazov, Rafis (1998), *Practise of Foreign Policy making: Formation of Post-Soviet Politics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan* (final report).

In: <http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/96-98/abasov.pdf>

Anderson, John. *The International Politics of Central Asia*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997.

Cholponkulova A.O., *Konstituzionnye osnovy vneshnepoliticheskoi deyatel'nosti Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki*, Bishkek, 2000 (in Russian).

Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic (English version)

In: <http://www.kyrgyzstan.org/Law/constitution.htm>

Dukenbaev, Askat and Valimjan Tanyrykov. 'Politico-Administrative Relations in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia'. In Verheijen, Tony (ed.), (2001), *Politico-Administrative Relations: Who Rules*, Bratislava: NISPAcee, pp. 175-202.

'Istoria obrazovania Ministerstva inostrannyh del Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki' (official site of the Government of Kyrgyzstan; in Russian). In: <http://www.gov.kg/cgi-bin/page.pl?id=1129>

Marsh, David (1998). *Comparing Policy Networks*, Open University Press

Research Institute of Higher Education Problems: Regional Study Trends, Issues and Policy in Education (1998), Bishkek.

Rourke, Francis E. (1972), *Bureaucracy and Foreign Policy*. Studies in International Affairs, Number 17, the John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London.

Times of Central Asia, 8 March 2001

UNESCO 'Educational for All' country report on Kyrgyzstan (2000)

In: <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/kyrgyz/contents.html>

Appendix 1:
KYRGYZSTAN (THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC):

THE BASIC FACTS (AS OF 2003):

Area: 198,000 sq.km.

Population: 5 million.

Capital: Bishkek (formerly – Frunze); population - around 1 million

Major cities: Osh (300,000) (in the south); Tokmok (71,000) and Kara-Kol (64,000) (in the north).

Provinces: 7 - Chui, Issyk-Kul, Talas, Naryn (in the north); Batken, Jalal-Abad, Osh (in the south).

Geography: Kyrgyzstan is a small country in the centre of Asian continent, at the same altitude as of the South of Italy, Spain and Japan. The total length of the borderline is 4500 km. Mountains occupy 90 percent of the territory. It is landlocked by Kazakstan in the north, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the west and south, and China in the east.

Ethnic groups (as of 2003): Kyrgyz - 65 percent, Uzbek – 13,8 percent, Russians – 12,5 percent, Ukrainians, Tatars, Kazakhs, German and others.

Languages: Mainly Kyrgyz, Russian and Uzbek, but many young people speak English and other foreign languages.

Religions: Mainly Muslims and Christians, but other minorities also enjoy religious freedom.

* * *

POLITICO-ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF KYRGYZSTAN

(From: CIA – the World Factbook,

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kg.html>)

EXECUTIVE BRANCH:

Chief of state: President Askar AKAYEV (since 28 October 1990).

Head of government: Prime Minister Nikolay TANAYEV (since 22 May 2002); note - Prime Minister Kurmanbek BAKIYEV resigned on 22 May 2002 when five demonstrators were killed in clashes with the police.

Cabinet: Cabinet of Ministers appointed by the president on the recommendation of the prime minister.

Elections: president reelected by popular vote for a five-year term; elections last held 29 October 2000 (next to be held November or December 2005); prime minister appointed by the president.

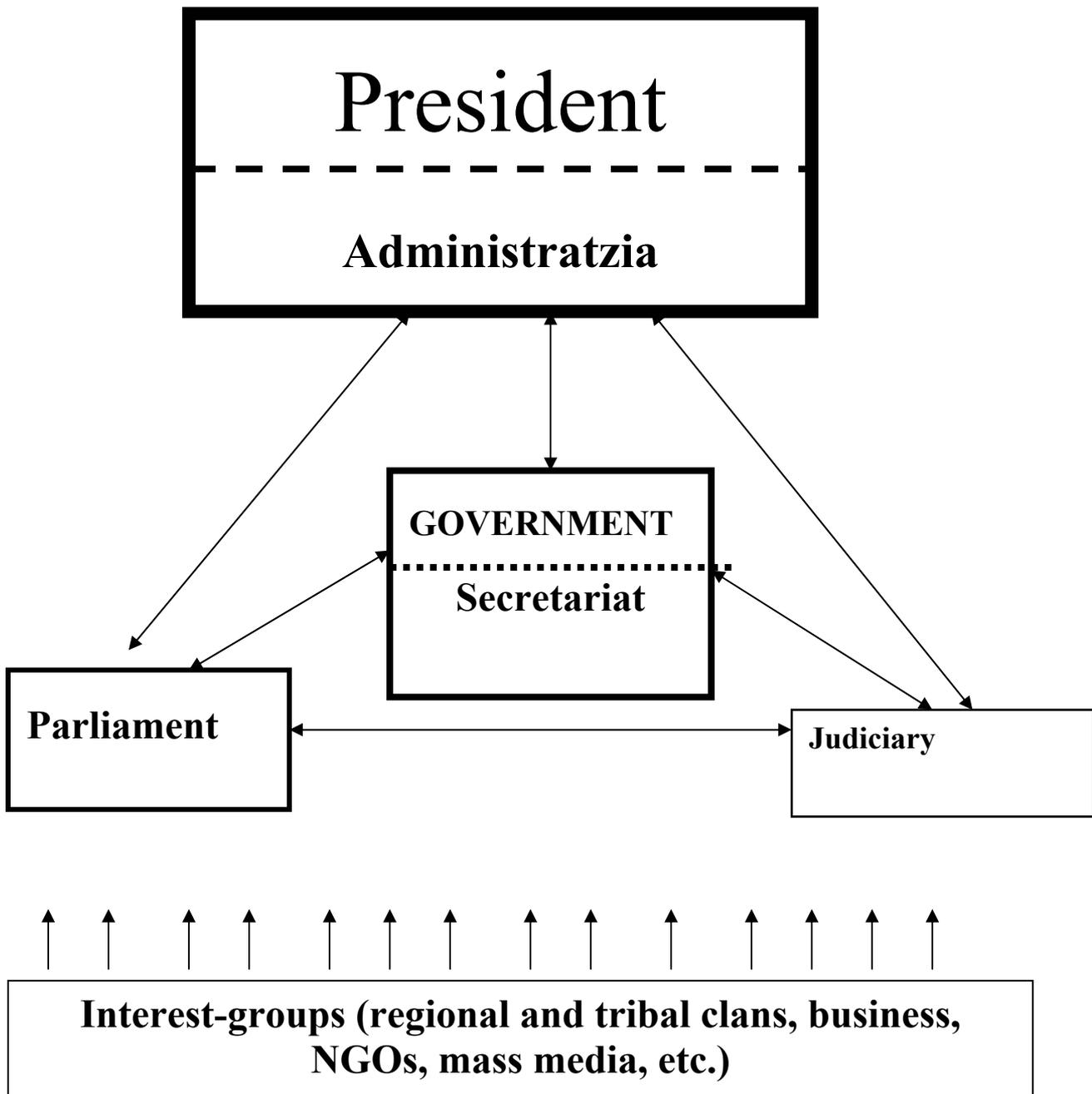
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH:

Bicameral Supreme Council (or Zhogorku Kenesh) consists of the *Assembly of People's Representatives* (70 seats; members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms) and the *Legislative Assembly* (35 seats; members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms).

JUDICIAL BRANCH:

Supreme Court (judges are appointed for 10-year terms by the Supreme Council on the recommendation of the president); Constitutional Court; Higher Court of Arbitration

Appendix 2:

THE REAL STRUCTURE OF THE POLITICO-ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND POLICY MAKING IN KYRGYZSTAN

Appendix 3:**GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE KYRGYZSTANI EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM:**

8	Postgraduate education <i>(postgraduate teaching, doctorate, refresher teaching course and conversion teaching)</i>				24	
7					23	
6	Complete Higher Education				22	
5	<i>Master degree</i>	<i>Speciality</i>	Higher education	Additional education	21	
4	Basic Higher Education		Professional Education		20	
3	<i>Bachelor degree</i>				19	
2		Incomplete Higher education			18	
1	Secondary		Professional-Technical Education		17	
11	Professional Education	3 rd stage Complete Secondary Education			16	
10					15	
9	2 nd stage				14	
8	Basic Secondary education				13	
7	()				(^{**})	12
6	School Education					11
5					10	
4	1 st stage				9	
3	Primary education				8	
2					7	
1					6	
0	Preschool education				5	
Years of study					Age of learners	

Source: UNESCO 'Educational for All' country report on Kyrgyzstan (2000),
in: <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/kyrgyz/contents.html>

Appendix 4:
INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION:

Table 1: Principal investment activity related to the period from 1991 to 1999:

Investing organization	Project	Type of investment and total amount	Years of use
World Bank	Staff Teaching Component	\$4.9 million loan	1994-1999
German government	Strengthening of Vocational Teaching Department under market transition	DM6.2 million technical assistance	1994-2003
Danish government	Publishing textbooks for vocational schools on business fundamentals; teaching manuals for teachers	\$7,400 technical assistance	1995-1997
Turkish Ministry of National Education	Women staff teaching promotion	\$100,000 technical assistance	1994-1997
Asian Development Bank	Vocational teaching system reforming	\$25 million loan	Starting 1999
European Education Fund	Enterprise development support	100 000 ECU	Starting 1999

Source: UNESCO 'Educational for All' country report on Kyrgyzstan (2000),
in: <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/kyrgyz/contents.html>

Table 2: List of loans and grants received by Kyrgyzstan from 1992-1999 to support educational sector:

<i>Name of assistance</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Donor</i>	<i>Sum (US \$)</i>
1	2	3	4
Vocational education staff teaching as part of Social Protection Network Development project	1994	World Bank	4.900.900
Support to Education sector	1994	Denmark	1.113.000
School textbooks publishing	1995	Germany	1.666.000
Support to Education sector	1994	Asian Development Bank (ADB)	2.500.000
Support to Education sector	1995	ADB	900.000
Language teaching	1995	ÅÑ	1.250.000
Support to primary vocational education	1993	Germany	1.560.000
Support to primary vocational education	1996	Germany	1.820.000
Teaching through Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JAICA)	1993	Japan	800.000
Teaching through Asian Productivity Organization	1993	Japan	200.000
Education sector planning and management teaching	1993	UNDP	14.500
Establishment of National Testing Center	1995	UNDP	295.000
Education in Kyrgyz Republic, phase 2	1995	USAID	3.716.059
CIS teaching reform	1994	USAID	2.052.887
Management staff teaching courses	1994	Turkey	30.115
Education management improvement	1998	ADB	

Source: UNESCO 'Educational for All' country report on Kyrgyzstan (2000)

In: <http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/kyrgyz/contents.html>