

Can Kazakhstan Follow Singapore?
Assessment of Its Civil Service Reform Capacity

Naomi AOKI (Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy)

Saltanat JANENOVA (Graduate School of Public Policy, Nazarbayev University)

DRAFT PAPER: NOT FOR QUOTATION OR USE OF ANY PART

June 2017

ABSTRACT

Studies have found that the success of civil service reforms initiated by the political executive depends in part on the reform capacity of the government. In this article, we assess the reform capacity of Kazakhstan – a country that seeks to modernize and professionalize civil service as a part of its “100 Concrete Steps” for institutional reform, embarked on by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2015. We chose Singapore as a comparative benchmark because the city-state is known to have achieved civil service excellence and because the President has been citing Singapore as a model for Kazakhstan to follow. For a systematic comparison, we adopt Christopher Knill’s (1999) propositions, which state that reform capacity differs between two ideal types of public administration: instrumental and autonomous. These two types differ with respect to three dimensions, namely, (1) executive leadership, (2) bureaucratic power, and (3) administrative entrenchment (which is positively associated with the structural complexity and size of the government, and the power of the judiciary). An ideal instrumental administration features strong executive leadership, weak bureaucratic power, and low administrative entrenchment, whereas an ideal autonomous administration features the opposite in all three dimensions. Knill posited that the conditions of the former are more favorable to the introduction of civil service reforms by the political executive, and hence, an instrumental administration has a higher reform capacity than an autonomous one. Applying Knill’s theory, Painter (2004) argued that Singapore in its early decades had a relatively instrumental administration, and hence a high reform capacity. As a result, the city-state was able to introduce a series of civil service reforms. Can Kazakhstan follow Singapore? Does the country have the same reform capacity? We argue that since Kazakhstan’s independence, its administration has been less instrumental than that of Singapore. Our study draws implications from this finding for the reform challenges and opportunities ahead.

I. INTRODUCTION

Countries learn from abroad when it comes to administrative reforms designed to improve the functioning of state bureaucracies. Pollitt (2000) argued that such learning is driven by the view that some countries are reform leaders, while others lag behind. Cross-country learning is also facilitated by what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) called *mimetic isomorphic pressure*, which drives lagging countries to follow what leading countries are doing for the sake of legitimacy. In making this argument, Pollitt (2000) considered the arguably global spread of so-called New Public Management (NPM) reform in the 1980s and 1990s. However, countries were and are learning from one another apart from NPM, too; nations adopted the ancient competitive civil service exam system in China in the past. The country of our focus in this study – Kazakhstan – is learning from Singapore today.

Since Kazakhstan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, it has aspired to modernize its civil service in the manner of Singapore, whose one of the world's least corrupt and competent bureaucracy has become an integral part of its developmental success. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev expressed this aspiration, saying that “we have supported close relationships with Singapore and have always considered this country as a model” and that “[w]e examine the experience of Singapore with great attention during design and implementation of different programs and strategies” (*Kazinform*, 28 September 2016). Kazakhstan has already made some attempts to follow Singapore by introducing Corpus A and General Secretaries, adopting meritocracy principles and performance orientation in civil service, and promoting ethics to improve the image of the government.¹

In this study, we ask: Can Kazakhstan follow Singapore and succeed in modernizing its civil service? This is an important consideration because civil service reforms remain one

¹ Besides civil service reforms, Kazakhstan followed Singapore for other areas of reforms: Examples include: (i) Presidential Bolashak scholarship which send talented students for undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate study to the leading world universities; (ii) “Samruk Kazyna” sovereign wealth fund which is similar to the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation; (iii) program for vocational and poly-technical education; (iv) easy administrative procedures for international investors.

of the top priorities for Kazakhstan today. The President recently announced in 2016 “The Plan of the Nation – The Path to the Kazakhstan Dream” which outlines further steps to boost the country’s economy to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development standard. These steps include modernizing civil service, and center around three key targets, namely: (i) effective human resource management, (ii) better quality of public service delivery, and (iii) better accountability and transparency of the government bodies. In particular, in “The Plan of the Nation,” the President emphasizes the importance of anti-corruption measures for the civil service.

The aforementioned question is worth asking because theories suggest that an attempt to learn from other countries is one thing, but actual reform outcomes (i.e. what is actually implemented) are another. This is because a number of domestic factors hamper the adoption of reforms, and a reform can also end up being transferred incompletely because it does not fit with a local context (e.g. Dolowitz and Marsh 2002). Christensen and Læg Reid (2007, 2011) argued that administrative reform outcomes can be explained by the dynamic interplay between (i) the formal structures and the cultural norms internal to public organizations and (ii) external environmental factors, such as globalization, economic crises, and the rise of a new ideology regarding how public organizations ought to be managed. Other scholars would add to this list the “politico-administrative regime” (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011) and the national culture (Meyer and Hammerschmid 2010; Verhoest 2013).

Among many factors that can influence actual reform outcomes, our study compares and contrasts administrative reform capacity of Kazakhstan and Singapore in its founding years. We adopt Christopher Knill’s (1999) definition of *administrative reform capacity* as “the structural potential for administrative reforms” that explains “patterns of administrative development; i.e., the varying scope and scale of administrative change across countries in the light of external pressures for adaptation” (p. 114). Knill argued that administrative

reform capacity is determined by three dimensions of polity, namely, (i) executive dominance, (ii) bureaucratic influence, and (iii) administrative entrenchments. These dimensions combined determine the number and extent of institutional veto points against administrative reform proposals submitted by political executives, such as prime ministers and presidents.

The rest of this paper proceeds as follows. The next section carefully defines administrative reform capacity and its dimensions. In the third section, we argue that Singapore had a high reform capacity during the founding years after its independence. The fourth section compares and contrasts the dimensions of the administrative reform capacity of today's Kazakhstan with those of Singapore in its founding period. The fifth section discusses the opportunities and challenges faced by Kazakhstan, based on our assessment of its administrative reform capacity.

II. DEFINITION OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM CAPACITY

Christopher Knill (1999) conceived of two ideal types of administration: (i) autonomous administration, with a low reform capacity, and (ii) instrumental administration, with a high reform capacity. These two administrations differ with respect to three dimensions. One is the “strength of executive leadership,” defined as the extent to which political power is concentrated in the hands of the executive. The second is the “entrenchment of administrative arrangements,” defined as “the extent to which administrative activity is based on legal and formal requirements as well as the comprehensiveness and fragmentation of administrative structures” (p. 115); in essence, administrative entrenchment is a function of (i) the power of the judiciary to check on unconstitutional decisions made by politicians and bureaucrats, (ii) the structural complexity of governments, determined in part by whether the country is a federal or a unitary state, and (iii) the number of local governments with some independent autonomy. The third, and last, dimension is the “political influence of the bureaucracy,” which is “the extent to which administrative actors are able to shape the outcome of policy

formulation and implementation in line with their interests” (pp. 115-116). An autonomous administration is characterized by low executive leadership, high administrative entrenchment, and high bureaucratic influence, while an instrumental administration is characterized by their opposites. Knill argued that Germany was an ideal autonomous administration, while Britain under the Thatcher government was an ideal instrumental administration. In cases where reform proposals are submitted by political executives, the former has a lower reform capacity than the latter, due to the presence of more veto points that work to block or subvert proposed reforms.

Although it is not explicitly stated in Knill (1999), the aforementioned theory applies to situations where bureaucratic politics are the norm. Allison (1969) was the first to analyze the impact of politics among senior bureaucrats on the U.S. government’s foreign policy decisions during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Bowornwathana and Poocharoen (2010) built on Allison’s bureaucratic politics model to include politicians and bureaucrats at all levels and introduced another bureaucratic politics model that explains how administrative reforms are born out of political relationships among bureaucrats, among politicians, and between bureaucrats and politicians, who are all interested in expanding their power and sphere of influence in the polity. Both Allison (1969) and Bowornwathana and Poocharoen (2010) further view that government decisions are the products of zero-sum games among actors whose goals conflict, in the sense that the decisions create losers and winners – unlike, say, neo-classical economics, which assumes arms-length transactions between actors. Knill (1999) argued that the number of veto points is “crucially affected by the specific macro-institutional provisions, namely the state tradition as well as the legal and political-administrative system” (p. 115). In addition to formal constitutional arrangements of checks and balances, veto points can exist informally, and politics plays a role in both. In the formal arena, politicians from opposition parties fight for votes and resist the reform plan of the

executive during parliamentary sessions. Bureaucrats may act as informal veto points, too, and they resist or subvert reform plans behind the backs of their political masters. Knill's argument is that the extent to which the executive can circumvent these veto activities depends on whether the administration is autonomous or instrumental, and he observed that Germany was close to an ideal type of autonomous administration, while Thatcher's Britain was close to an ideal type of instrumental administration.

Numerous institutional aspects can make an administration more autonomous or instrumental. As noted above, a federal structure of government implies more structural complexity than is found in a unitary state, and hence, higher administrative entrenchment. In Germany, the Bundesrat (Federal Council) represents state governments at the federal level, and the federal government needs approval from the Bundesrat for all legislative proposals related to state matters. Due to Germany's legalism based on the Basic Law, the judiciary in the country exercises stronger control over state affairs than the judiciary does in the UK, where there is no written constitution. Coalition governments imply more fragmented executive leadership than systems dominated by a single party. In Japan, political appointees in ministries are limited to a few, whereas in the U.S. thousands of political appointees in federal agencies strengthen the country's executive leadership and control over bureaucracies. Countries are also different with respect to how decisions are made inside Cabinets. Germany practices the "principle of joint Cabinet decision-making," whereby the Chancellor and the Ministers make joint decisions concerning matters of political importance, based on majority rule. Combined with the "principle of ministerial autonomy," which ensures a non-hierarchical relationship between the Chancellor and the ministers, this principle imposes a limit on executive leadership inside the Cabinet. In Japan, the Prime Minister in the Meiji period was a mere facilitator of the Cabinet, and by tradition, Cabinet decisions were made unanimously. During the era of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)

dominance, networking groups of bureaucrats and LDP politicians prepared policy proposals before submitting them to the Cabinet, while the bureaucrats played a role in educating the politicians, which meant strong political influence on the part of the bureaucrats (Mulgan 2003).

III. SINGAPORE – IDEALLY INSTRUMENTAL WITH HIGH REFORM CAPACITY

Although it is nearly impossible to compare all of the institutional aspects of countries, there are reasons to think that Singapore's administration is more instrumental than those of many other nations, even Thatcher's Britain, which Knill (1999) conceived as an ideal type. The first reason has to do with Singapore's small size, encompassing a land area ranging from 581.6 km² in 1960 to 719.7 km² in 2016 (Government of Singapore, 2017), and this small land is run by a single-tier government, unlike other large world cities like Tokyo and New York, which have elective districts within their city borders. These two features keep the country's administrative entrenchment to a minimum. Reforming such a city state is much easier than reforming a country like Britain, with numerous local governments nested in its larger territory. In fact, Singapore's small size has frequently been cited as factor contributing to its success (Lim 1997; Quah 2013).

A second reason for thinking of Singapore's administration as strongly instrumental is that it has a unicameral legislature, while Britain and other liberal democracies, including Germany, Japan, and the U.S., have bicameral legislatures. Singapore's unicameral legislature, combined with a solid People's Action Party (PAP) majority in its Parliament, limits the fragmentation of its executive leadership. Blöndal (2006) reports that in Singapore, by the time the annual budget proposal prepared by the ministries is presented to the Cabinet and to Parliament, there are "typically no changes during this stage" (p. 59), which is different from what happens in a bicameral parliamentary system, where revisions to the

budget proposal are quite frequent, and this is the case for other reform proposals as well. In particular, a unicameral parliament can help the executive avoid difficult situations that follow from a divided parliament, where two houses or diets are controlled by different political parties.

The third reason is unified politics and a unified administration that result from the recruitment of party members from among bureaucrats. It is not uncommon elsewhere for former bureaucrats to run for election, but the PAP seems to have distinctively strict quality control. Ho (2008) explains that electoral candidates are picked up “from the civil service, government scholarship and Administrative Service lists, and leading members of professions,” and they “go through a rigorous process of tea sessions, discussions and interviews with senior party members before the final endorsement of the party's Central Executive Committee” (p. 94). The fact that many party members are recruited from among public servants suggests a close linkage between bureaucracies, where party members used to lead or manage, and politics. This, in turn, means relatively few bureaucrats who exert influence to subvert the executive's proposals. In fact, scholars observe that Singapore's competent bureaucracy is relatively subservient to the state's political leaders (Vallance, 1999; Painter, 2004).

Lastly, “strength of executive leadership” was a signature feature of Singapore's governance during its founding period. What scholars have written about the Cabinet implies that the decision making there is different from that of Germany and Japan, discussed earlier. Mutalib (2003) argued that Singapore's Cabinet was the “nerve centre of the entire political system” (p. 21). Ho (2008) even wrote, “Indeed, power within the system concentrates on the prime minister, though he may share part of it with one or two senior colleagues and with his cabinet. With his cabinet behind him, and a solid parliamentary majority, the prime minister can implement almost any kind of policy he likes” (p. 98). Similarly, Painter (2004) argued

that “[t]he political executive in Singapore is completely dominant, facing few if any checks from the judiciary, parliament, or public opinion” (p. 370). Aoki (2015) argued that in contrast to Japan, where modern bureaucracy evolved through bureaucratic centrality, Singapore’s governance from the outset evolved around executive centrality.

Painter (2004) concurs that Singapore’s governance has been relatively instrumental. Building on Knill (1999), Painter (2004) proposed a model using a 2 x 2 matrix that cross-references two types of administration (autonomous and instrumental) and two degrees of reform demand (high and low), and argued that the combination of these two dimensions determines reform patterns. When an administration is autonomous, its bureaucracies maintain the status quo or experience only incremental adaption under low reform demand; when the reform demand is high, however, reforms have to be negotiated. When an administration is instrumental, high reform demand yields mandated reforms, but when the demand is low, the bureaucracies maintain the status quo or reform through continual self-improvement. Painter argued that Singapore has always remained an instrumental administration, but the degree of reform demand shifted from high to low over time, as Singapore, too, learned from abroad “liberally” (Painter, 2004, p. 372), while its political elites managed the demand for reform.

IV. HOW ABOUT KAZAKHSTAN COMPARED TO SINGAPORE?

Similar to Singapore, Kazakhstan possesses strong executive leadership; however, we argue that its administration is less instrumental than Singapore due mainly to its higher administrative entrenchment and stronger bureaucracy.

Kazakhstan is a unitary state, whose administrative entrenchment is weaker than a federal state. The country is run by a multi-tier system with the central, regional (oblast) and rural levels. The Presidential Administration, Prime-Minister’s Office and 17 central government bodies constitute the central government. At the regional level, there are 16

regional municipalities (*akimats*), branches of each ministry in 14 regions (*oblasts*), and two cities of national significance (Astana – a current capital and Almaty – a former capital). At the rural level, there are over 1,000 rural *akimats*. Regional and rural governors are not locally elected; they are appointed by the Presidential Administration, and so are officials working inside the state bureaucracies.² This contributes to the strong executive leadership, and relatively low administrative entrenchment.

Nevertheless, the vast geographical size of Kazakhstan does not keep the country's administrative entrenchment to a minimum. Kazakhstan holds the 9th place in the world by the size of a territory behind Russia, China, USA, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, India and Australia, with a land area of 2 million 795 thousand km².³ The total number of civil servants in Kazakhstan exceeds 100,000 officials including 10,000 at the central level (Civil Service and Anti-Corruption Agency of Kazakhstan, 2016).⁴ Kazakhstan is characterized by structural complexity of the government and government-related organizations which blur the borders of responsibility and accountability of the government. Reforming such a large and complex state is arguably more challenging than reforming Singapore.

Similar to Singapore, several scholars characterize Kazakhstan's regime as a soft authoritarian regime, relying more substantially on forms of subtle manipulation and persuasion than on outright repression (Schatz, 2009; Means, 1996). Strong executive leadership under the leadership of the President Nursultan Nazarbayev successfully governed the country through critical post-independence phase and dramatic socio-economic reforms of the 1990s without serious inter-ethnic and societal conflicts to become a "Central Asian Tiger." Kazakhstan recently celebrated a culmination event of its economic success and

² Over the last 10 years Kazakhstan has been trying to move to the local self-government with limited progress, and the Plan of the Nation stipulates new measures to introduce local elections of *akims*.

³ http://www.akorda.kz/ru/republic_of_kazakhstan/kazakhstan

⁴ The civil servants include only bureaucrats in the government offices and exclude public sector employees (unlike in some other countries where public sector employees are also considered to be civil servants).

international recognition gathering over 200 countries and reputable international organizations in international exhibition EXPO-2017 in Astana. Del Sordi (2016) opined that sources of legitimization of the executive leadership in Kazakhstan are: (i) personal charisma of the leader, (ii) international recognition, (iii) economic performance, and (iv) the role of political party “Nur-Otan.”

Weak power of the Parliament further contributes to maintaining strong executive leadership. Although Kazakhstan has a bicameral legislature (Senate is an upper Chamber of the Parliament and Majilis – a lower Chamber), when the draft legislation and annual budget proposals prepared by the government bodies are presented to the Parliament, the situation is very similar to Singapore with limited discussion at this stage. Both houses of the Parliament are controlled by a pro-regime Nur-Otan Party (“Nur” from the name of the President “Nursultan” and “Otan” - Fatherland from Kazakh) which hold the majority in the Parliament and plays an important legitimating role for the rule of the executive leadership. Like in Singapore, party members in Kazakhstan are recruited from civil service, public sector organizations, and Presidential scholarship “Bolashak” (*Future* from Kazakh). This leads to the close connections between civil service and Nur-Otan party, as well as movement of party members to the key decision-making posts in the government and recruitment of the leaders of the party from former senior bureaucrats. Nur-Otan performs the important role of mobilizing the population for elections generating high turnout rates and overwhelming vote shares for candidates preferred by the existing leadership (Del Sordi, 2012). There has not been a single case of divided Parliament in the history of Kazakhstan when they reviewed complex situations and had different opinions. Even when the Parliament was presented contradictory legislative drafts, these laws were approved with no serious discussion.

In Kazakhstan, the “influence of the bureaucracy” is rather strong. In a study on the public service reform in Kazakhstan with a focus on introduction of One Stop Shops,

Janenova and Kim (2016) argue that the government of Kazakhstan was able to implement public service modernization agenda only to a limited extent due to the prevailing culture of the government officials which did not fully support movement to more transparent and more accountable public service providers. OECD (2014; 2016; 2017) raised concerns about weak government capacity in Kazakhstan to implement ambitious, comprehensive civil service reforms due in part to poor motivation of civil servants. The policy on creating Corpus A as a pool of talented candidates for political appointments has collapsed. It was criticized by the public and government officials for being an ineffective imitation of the Singapore's policy. In the Kazakhstani context appointments for political posts are made on the basis of personal connections and relationships rather than on the basis of merit and talent.

In fact, this culture of nepotism and business protection are deeply entrenched in Kazakhstan (Nezhina 2014; Oka, 2013; Satpayev 2014), and it serves as a strong institutional veto against any attempt to tackle it. Scholars have identified a range of reasons for persistent nepotism, including the lack of democratic culture (Nichols, 2001; Hug, 2010), a weak judicial system (Simonov, 2011; Kaliyeva, 2013), the limited power of civil society (Jandosova et al., 2007), the "resource curse" (Bayulgen, 2009), "political inertia" (Knox, 2008), contextual corruption (DeGraaf, 2007; Perlman and Gleason, 2007), psychological effects of rapid ideological and economic transition and high level of tolerance of corruption by the local population (Nezhina, 2014), and the limited access to information on public services (Janenova and Kim, 2016).

In sum, Singapore and Kazakhstan are similarly run by the strong executive leadership with a lack of elected local governors and combined by a strong power of the pro-regime party (PDP in the case of Singapore, and Nur-Otan Party in the case of Kazakhstan). In both countries there is close interlinkage between party members and civil service. Although the Parliamentary systems are different in the two countries (unicameral in

Singapore and bicameral in Kazakhstan), the processes of legislative review and annual budget proposals with relatively limited discussion in both Parliaments are very similar. However, the two countries have contrasting land area: Singapore is a small size land with a lack of natural resources and access to sea, and run by a single-tier government, whereas Kazakhstan is a large territory, which necessitates a larger size of civil service and structural complexity. This makes its administrative entrenchment higher than that of Singapore. More important, Kazakhstan differs from Singapore in its founding years with strong bureaucrats who resist giving up nepotism and “Kazakh mentality” that had been deeply entrenched in the society even before the country launched a series of civil service reforms.

V. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Kazakhstan is a young nation which became independent with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The country has experienced a high rate of economic growth for nearly two decades, and has set forth rather ambitious economic and developmental objectives, one of which is to become one of the 30 developed countries in the world by 2050 (Nazarbayev, 2012). The Kazakhstan-2050 Strategy made clear that this ambitious goal should be achieved by improving the level of education and of the public health, by diversifying the economy, by promoting good governance through proper institutional and administrative reforms, by attracting foreign direct investments and by curbing corruption (Aitzhanova et al., 2014: 3). An important requirement to fulfill this goal has been to modernize civil service system and meet the international standards of good governance.

Kazakhstan has been considering Singapore as a model, but our analysis suggests that administrative reform capacity of Kazakhstan is lower than that of Singapore, due to its large territory and strong bureaucratic influence associated with nepotism. In following Singapore’s path, Kazakhstan has the so-called “tick box” mentality of every new and many initiatives which come along. Within a year since the launch of the Plan of the Nation, the

Civil Service and Anti-Corruption Agency reported that they successfully introduced all of the steps of the civil service reform, but implementation remains poorly executed due in part to strong bureaucratic power which is highly selective about what it chooses to implement. In this important sense Kazakhstan therefore differs from the Singapore's instrumental model and it is sufficiently important to skew its capacity for administrative reforms negatively, despite having strong executive leadership and low administrative entrenchment.

Anti-corruption policy is one of the many examples to demonstrate the ability of Kazakhstani bureaucrats to maneuver around policies and even block their successful implementation in order to satisfy their personal needs and interests. The government of Kazakhstan has repeatedly indicated that fighting corruption is a priority (Strategies of Kazakhstan until 2020, 2030, 2050). The Kazakhstan-2050 Strategy defines "corruption" as a direct threat to national security, and appeals to the state and society to fight together against this scourge. Indeed, Kazakhstan has been pro-active in developing and implementing multiple policies and regulations with an intention to reduce corruption in the civil service. It was the first among countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States to adopt the Law on Fighting Corruption in 1998 and the Civil Service Law in 1999. The explicit mandate to eliminate corruption was assigned to the Civil Service Agency, which has transformed after several reorganizations into the Agency for Civil Service and Fighting Corruption (Agency). The earlier anti-corruption programs from 2001 through 2015 did not bring any visible change in making the government more transparent.

Following the President's instruction, two parallel anti-corruption programs were adopted: the Anti-Corruption Program for 2015-2025 designed by the Nur Otan Party and approved in November 2014, and a month later - the Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2015-2025 developed by the Agency. A closer look at the two programs shows that the major directions and activities of both programs overlap to a large extent. Another document, the Concept of

Legal Policy of Kazakhstan for 2010-2020 stipulated severe punishment for corrupt activities; the Criminal Code introduced a lifetime ban to return to the civil service for persons who have committed corruption crimes. The Plan of the Nation includes “ensuring the rule of law” and “transparency and accountability of the state” among key priority areas and laid a framework for introduction of the new Ethics Code replacing the previous Code of Honor for civil servants as well as the new ethical commissioners to support promotion of ethics and integrity. In recent years there have been many cases of convicting top officials for corruption cases, including top officials (in particular, the cases of ex-Prime-Minister; ex-chairmen of the Statistics and Antimonopoly Agencies; ex-vice-ministers of Agriculture, Defense, Education, Environmental Protection). The most recent case with embezzlement of over \$22 million dollars by the former chairman of “Astana EXPO-2017” put at risk the image of the country among the international community (Sorbello, 2015).

However, Kazakhstan in 2016 scored only 29 of the 100 points on the Corruption Perception Index and held 131 position among 176 countries. In 2015 Kazakhstan was assigned a score of -0.76 in terms of Control of Corruption by the Worldwide Governance Indicators. If the cutoff point - that is what separates corrupt polities from non-corrupt ones - is 50 for CPI and 0 for WGI, two indicators place Kazakhstan in the camp of the corrupt countries. We can legitimately conclude that corruption is a pervasive problem in Kazakhstan. Corrupt culture and “Kazakh mentality” dominate in the minds of Kazakhstani bureaucrats, and they are able to block and maneuver around anti-corruption policies, thus, undermining public management reforms as a whole. What had an initial intention to be a well-designed anti-corruption strategy may turn out to be little more than imitation of reforms due to the strong bureaucratic power.

The so-called “team movement” of officials who are loyal to the political head of the ministry or municipality is a peculiar characteristic of the civil service in the country. The

political officials together with their team members continue to shape the policy agenda around their own personal interests rather than citizens' interests, and avoid any risks of being held accountable for their actions or lack of actions. A new law on Public Councils which were introduced since January 2016 is one of the examples. The intention was to promote citizen participation in the policy-making process through public councils. In practice, they have become the boards of former government officials and carefully pre-selected representatives from the civil society to express opinions under scrupulous observation of the government bodies.

Combined with strong bureaucratic influence, the fact that Kazakhstan has a higher administrative entrenchment, due to its large territory and its complex government structure, suggests that successful implementation of civil service reforms require more than what Singapore did to modernize its civil service. The government needs to keep an eye on all corners of its large territory and its state apparatus to watch out corrupt behaviors. Currently, such efforts remain inadequate. As the Deputy Chairman of the Agency for Civil Service and Anti-Corruption Affairs noted in his public speech that “[h]eads of the state bodies are endowed with great powers, but do not bear personal responsibility for systemic corruption offenses committed by the subordinates they appoint,” while citing Lee Kuan Yew to say “that if people at the top do not know about the existence of corruption schemes, it means that they just cover them up” (*Tengrinews*, 13 June 2017). Our analysis shows that Kazakhstan faces more challenges to monitor corruption measures all across the country, and this challenge needs be overcome if the country aspires to follow Singapore's path.

REFERENCES

- Aitzhanova, A., Katsu, S., Linn, J. F., & Yezhov, V. (2014). Kazakhstan 2050: Toward a modern society for all. *Oxford University Press*.
- Allison, A. (1969). Conceptual models and the Cuban Missile Crisis. *The American Political Science Review*, 63(3), 689-718.
- Aoki, N. (2015). Let's get public administration right, but in what sequence? Lessons from Japan and Singapore. *Public Administration and Development*, 35(3), 206-218.
- Bayulgen, O. (2009). Caspian Energy Wealth: Social Impacts and Implications for Regional Stability, in Amanda Wooden and Christoph Stefes (eds.). *The Politics of Transition in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Enduring Legacies and Emerging Challenges*, NY: Routledge.
- Blöndal, J. R. (2006). Budgeting in Singapore. *OECD Journal on Budgetin*, 6(1), 45-85.
- Bowornwathana, B., & Poocharoen, O-o. (2010). Bureaucratic politics and administrative reform: Why politics matters. *Public Organization Review: A Global Journal*, 10, 303–321.
- Christensen, T., & Lægreid, P. (2007). Introduction – theoretical approach and research questions. In T. Christensen & P Lægreid (Eds.), *Transcending New Public Management* (pp. 1-16). Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- Christensen, T., & Lægreid, P. (2011). Democracy and administrative policy: Contrasting elements of New Public Management (NPM) and post-NPM. *European Political Science Review*, 3, 125-146.
- Civil Service and Anti-Corruption Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2016). Retrieved from <http://kyzmet.gov.kz/ru/news/v-ramkah-novoy-modeli-gossluzhby-poryadka-6-tsyach-sluzhashchih-prodvinulis-po-karernoy>

- De Graaf, G. (2007). Causes of corruption: Towards a contextual theory of corruption. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 31(1-2), 39-86.
- Del Sordi, A. (2016). Legitimation and the Party of Power in Kazakhstan in J.Ahrns, M.Brusis and M.Schulze Wessel (eds) *Politics and Legitimacy in Post-Soviet Eurasia*.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147-160
- Dolowitz, D. P., & Marsh, D. (2000). Learning from abroad: The role of policy transfer in contemporary policy-making. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*, 13, 5–24.
- Government of Singapore. (2017). Retrieved from <https://data.gov.sg/dataset/total-land-area-of-singapore>
- Ho, K. L. (2000). Prime ministerial leadership and policy-making style in Singapore: Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong compared. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 8 (1): 91-123.
- Hug, A. (2010). Kazakhstan at a crossroads: Governance, corruption & international investment, *The Foreign Policy Center, Articles and Briefings*
- Janenova, S., & Kim, P. S. (2016). Innovating public service delivery in transitional countries: The case of one stop shops in Kazakhstan. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 39(4), 323-333
- Jandosova, J., Baitugelova, N., Jandosova, F., & Kunitsa, S. (2002). Perceptions of Corruption in Kazakhstan: by Parliamentarians, Public Officials, Private Business and Civil Society, *Sange Research Centre and United Nations Development Programme*, accessed on 21 June 2017
<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/undp/unpan011504.pdf>

- Kaliyeva, G. (2013). Corruption Onset in the Nineteenth Century in Kazakhstan, *Central Bohemia University, International Conference on Integration and Innovation in Science and Education, Prague, Czech Republic, April 7-14*. Accessed on 20 June 2017 at: <http://ojs.journals.cz/index.php/CBUIC/article/view/24>
- Kazinform “Nazarbayev: Kazakhstan considers Singapore as a model”, 28 September 2016. Retrieved from http://www.inform.kz/ru/kazakhstan-rassmatrivaet-singapur-v-kachestve-svoeobraznogo-orientira-nazarbaev_a2953822
- Knill C. (1999). Explaining cross-national variance in administrative reform: Autonomous versus instrumental bureaucracies. *Journal of Public Policy*, 19(2), 113–139.
- Knox, C. (2008), “Kazakhstan: modernizing government in the context of political inertia”, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 74 (3): 477-496.
- Lim, S. G. (1997). Sustaining excellence in government: The Singapore experience. *Public Administration and Development*, 17(1), 167-174.
- Means, G.P. (1996) Soft Authoritarianism in Malaysia and Singapore, *Journal of Democracy*, 7(4), 103-117.
- Meyer, R. E., & Hammerschmid, G. (2010). The degree of decentralization and individual decision making in central government human resource management: A European comparative perspective. *Public Administration*, 88, 455-478.
- Mulgan, A. G. (2003). Japan’s “un-Westminister” system: Impediments to reform in a crisis economy. *Government and Opposition*, 38 (1), 73–91.
- Mutalib, H. (2003). *Parties and politics: A study of opposition parties and PAP in Singapore*. Singapore: Eastern Universities Press.
- Nazarbayev, N. (2015). *Kazakhstan: 100 steps toward a new nation*. Accessed on 20 June 2017 at: <http://www.government.kz/en/>

- Nezhina, T. (2014). Examining the causes of systemic corruption: The case of Kazakhstan, *Working paper: National Research University Higher School of Economics*. Accessed on 21 June 2017 at:
<http://www.hse.ru/data/2014/12/18/1103293053/23PA2014%20new.pdf>
- Nichols, P. (2001). The fit between changes of the international corruption regime and indigenous perception of corruption in Kazakhstan. *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Economic Law*, 22(4), 867-966.
- Oka, N. (2013). Everyday corruption in Kazakhstan: An ethnographic analysis of informal practices. Interim Report for Exploring Informal Networks in Kazakhstan: A Multidimensional Approach. *Area studies center*.
http://www.ide.go.jp/Japanese/Publish/Download/Report/2012/pdf/C24_ch1.pdf
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] (2014). Kazakhstan: Review of the central administration. *OECD Public Governance Reviews*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] (2015). *Multi-Dimensional Review of Kazakhstan: Volume 1 – Initial Assessment*. OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] (2017). Towards a More Effective, Strategic and Accountable State in Kazakhstan. OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Painter, M. (2004). The politics of administrative reform in east and Southeast Asia: From gridlock to continuous self-improvement? *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 17(3), 361–386.
- Perlman, B., & Gleason, G. (2007). Cultural determinism versus administrative logic: Asian values and administrative reform in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 30(12-14), 1327-1342.

- Pollitt, C. (2000). Is the emperor in his underwear? An analysis of the impacts of public management reform. *Public Management*, 2, 181-199.
- Pollitt, C., & Bouckaert, G. (2011). Public management reform: A comparative analysis - New Public Management, governance, and the neo-Weberian state. *Oxford: Oxford University Press*.
- Satpayev, D. 2014. Corruption in Kazakhstan and the Quality of Governance, IDE Discussion paper #475. Interim report for exploring informal networks in Kazakhstan: a multidimensional approach, IDE: JETRO, Japan. Accessed on June 21, 2017 at: <http://www.ide.go.jp/English/Publish/Download/Dp/475.html>
- Schatz, E. (2004). Modern clan politics: The power of “blood” in Kazakhstan and beyond. *Seattle London: University of Washington Press*.
- Simonov, S. V. (2011). Retrospektivnyj analiz rassmotreniya terminov “korrupsiya” i “korrupsionnaya deyatel’nost” v Kazakhstane”[“Retrospective Analysis of the Consideration of the Terms “Corruption” and “Corrupt Activity” in Kazakhstan”]. *Pravovaya reforma v Kazakhstane [Legal Reform in Kazakhstan]*, n.2(54), pp. 59-64.
- Sorbello, Paolo. (2015). “EXPO in Kazakhstan: Nepotism and Corruption Revealed”, in *The Diplomat*, by Paolo Sorbello, 22 July 2015, retrieved from <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/expo-in-kazakhstan-nepotism-and-corruption-unveiled/>
- Tengrinews. (2017). “Shpekbayev cited Lee Kuan Yew that if people at the top do not know about the existence of corruption schemes, it means that they just cover them up”, 13 June 2017, retrieved from https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/shpekbaev-protsitiroval-kuan-yu-lyudi-naverhu-znayut-320154/

- Quah, J. S. T. (2013). Ensuring good governance in Singapore: Is this experience transferable to other Asian countries? *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 26(5), 401-420.
- Vallance, S. (1999). Performance appraisal in Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines: A cultural perspective. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 58(4), 78–95.
- Verhoest, K. (2013). The relevance of culture for NPM. In T. Christensen & P Lægreid (Eds.), *The Ashgate fesearch companion to New Public Management* (pp. 47-63). Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd