

Abstract

This article proposes a new approach to analysing governance systems - a model of dynamic concentric spheres, which allows for clearly demonstrating the limitations and corridors of opportunities determined by the influence of the political sphere on the administrative, and operations-technological systems. The author introduces the concept of 'elasticity of governance' as one of the characteristics of the political system, as well as the 'balance of powers, responsibility and resources' principle as one of the prerequisites for ensuring the effectiveness of the administrative system.

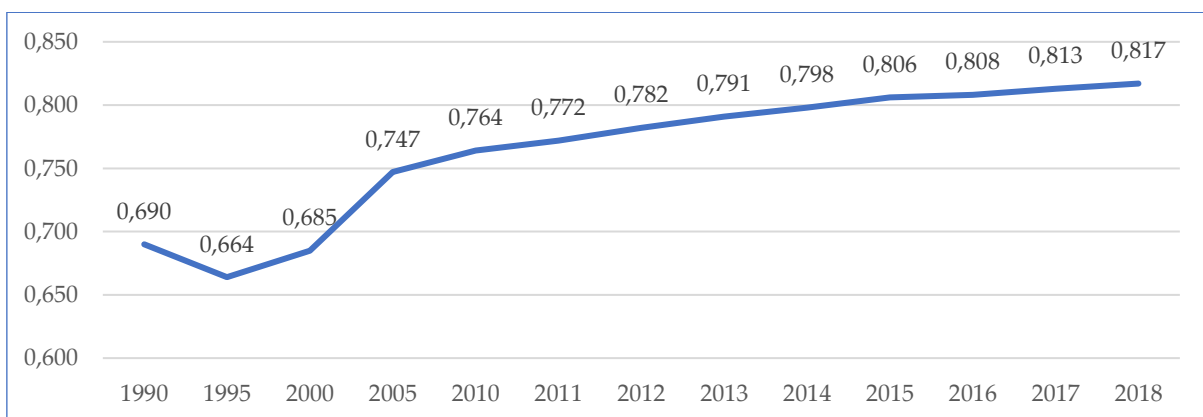
Key words: model of dynamic concentric spheres, elasticity of governance, political system, administrative system, operations-technological system, balance of powers, responsibility and resources.

Problem statement: contradictions of progress

Analysis of the development of many countries in transition, including the post-Soviet states, reveals contradicting trends in their progress (ASCH, 2017). On the one hand, most experts highly appreciate the achievements of these countries – confirmed by their rankings in leading international indices - making the transition from a planned economy and a totalitarian system to a market economy and a democratic society. On the other hand, the analysis of socio-political processes and socio-economic development exposes several problems, for the solution of which there is no significant progress. These include the presence of high levels of corruption and the gap between rich and poor, as well as issues of the quality of government regulation.

The indices values of Kazakhstan are a case in point. Kazakhstan has achieved some impressive results in the development of several sectoral areas, especially in comparison to other post-Soviet states. For instance, in 2018, the Human Development Index (HDI) score for Kazakhstan was 0.817, placing the country on the 50th out of 189 positions. A significant improvement in the country's performance since 1990.

Figure 1: Human Development Index scores for Kazakhstan (1990-2018)

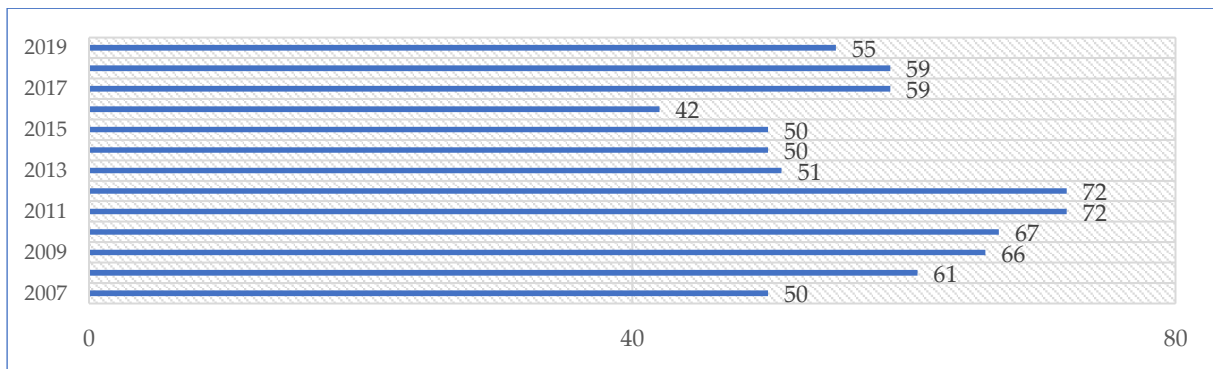


Source: HDR (2019); <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KAZ>

Similarly, Kazakhstan consistently ranks among the 60 most competitive countries in the Global Competitiveness Index, over the past seven years.

Figure 2: Global Competitiveness Index rankings for Kazakhstan (2007-2019)

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Source: Global Competitiveness Report 2019

Kazakhstan has also demonstrated even greater progress, between 2015 and 2019, in the Ease-of-Doing Business Index, ranked among the top 30 countries in the world in the past two years.

Table 1: Ease-of-Doing Business Index rankings for Kazakhstan (2015-2019)

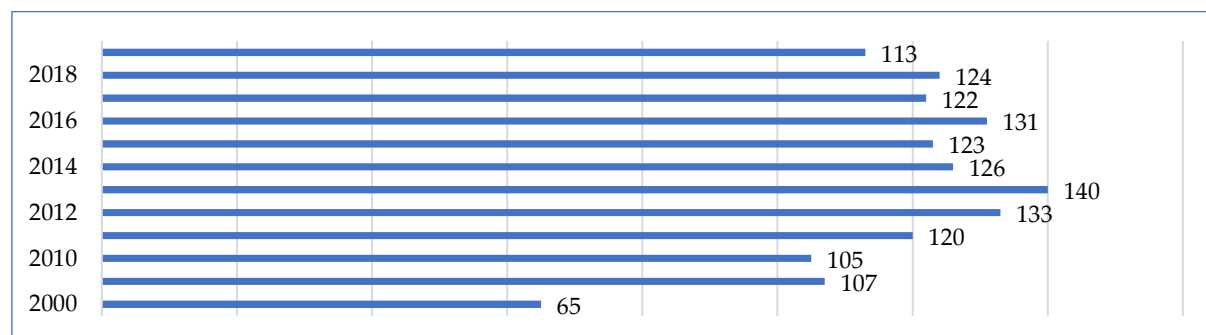
2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
51	35	36	28	25

Source: <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/data/exploreconomies/kazakhstan>

Kazakhstan has also made significant progress in public service delivery, including through the widespread application of the “one-stop-shop” principle (Knox and Janenova, 2019a). According to the E-Government Survey Report (UNDESA, 2020), the country ranks 29th in the world on e-government development. Furthermore, international experts note the progress made in utilising budget and strategic planning systems, labour market regulation and other sectoral reforms (OECD, 2017a). Moreover, international institutions and experts recognise the country’s significant success in reforming its civil service and its leadership in the region.² In addition, the report on the results of the third round of monitoring of the Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan (OECD, 2014) highlights that civil service reform in Kazakhstan was not only carried out at the legislative level, but it was also implemented in practice. In 2018, a comparative analysis of the civil service in Kazakhstan concluded that the country’s civil service system was progressive and professional (OECD, 2018).

These achievements, however, contradict Kazakhstan’s rankings in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), standing in the low hundreds (113th position in 2019 among 180 countries).

Figure 3: Corruption Perception Index ranking for Kazakhstan (2000-2019)



Source: Transparency International (2020)

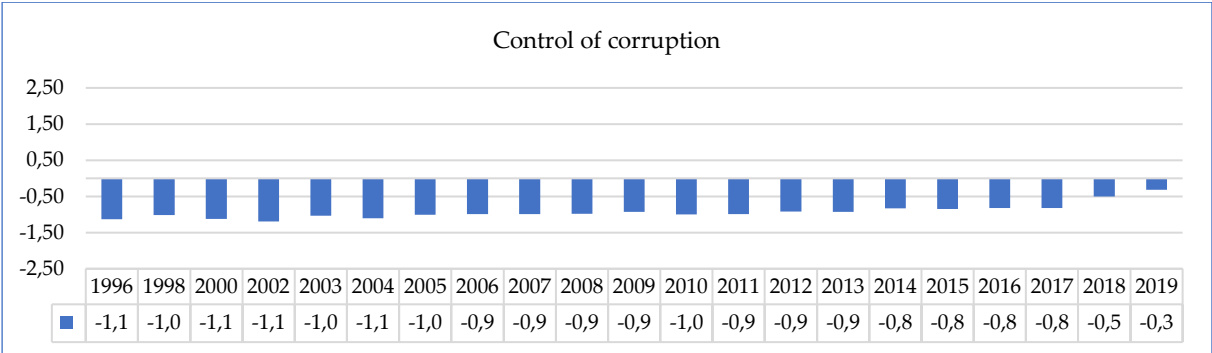
² Newland contributes to shape of civil service in Kazakhstan (2014);

https://www.inform.kz/en/newland-contributes-to-shape-of-civil-service-in-kazakhstan_a2672984;

<https://kursiv.kz/news/vlast-i-biznes/2017-04/v-kazakhstane-obsudili-problemy-kadrov-na-gossluzhbe>

The seriousness of corruption related issues is also evidenced by the country's scores on the fight against corruption, a component indicator of the World Bank's Governance Index, according to which the country scores are in the negative zone for the last ten years, ranking 107th (index value -0.3 in 2019).

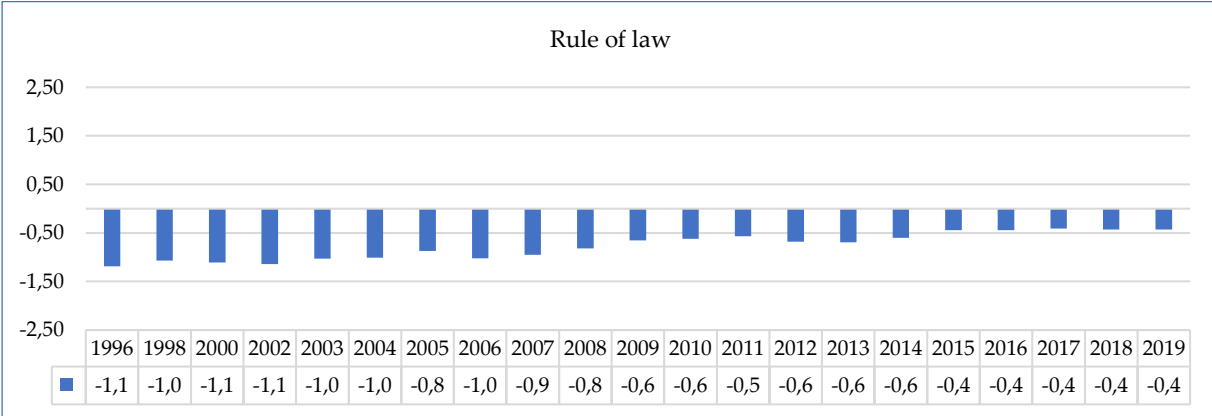
Figure 4: Control of Corruption Index values for Kazakhstan (1996-2019)



Source: <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports>

Significant problems are also observed in ensuring the rule of law, a condition critical for the shift towards a market economy and a democratic society. Kazakhstan scores are again in the negative zone for the rule of law component indicator of the Governance Index (ranking 121st in 2019).

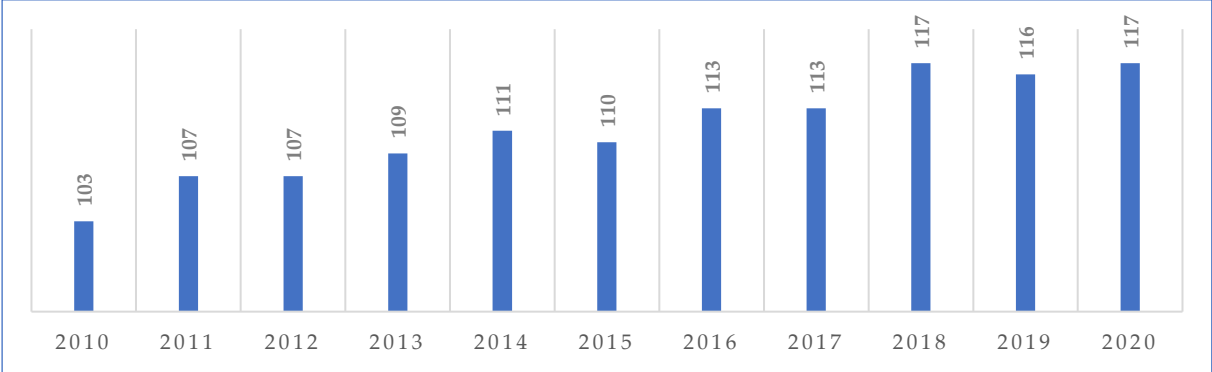
Figure 5: Rule of Law Index values for Kazakhstan (1996-2019)



Source: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#home>

In the light of the above, the country occupying the 117th position out of 178 in the Fragile States Index looks logical.

Figure 6: Fragile States Index values for Kazakhstan (2010-2020)

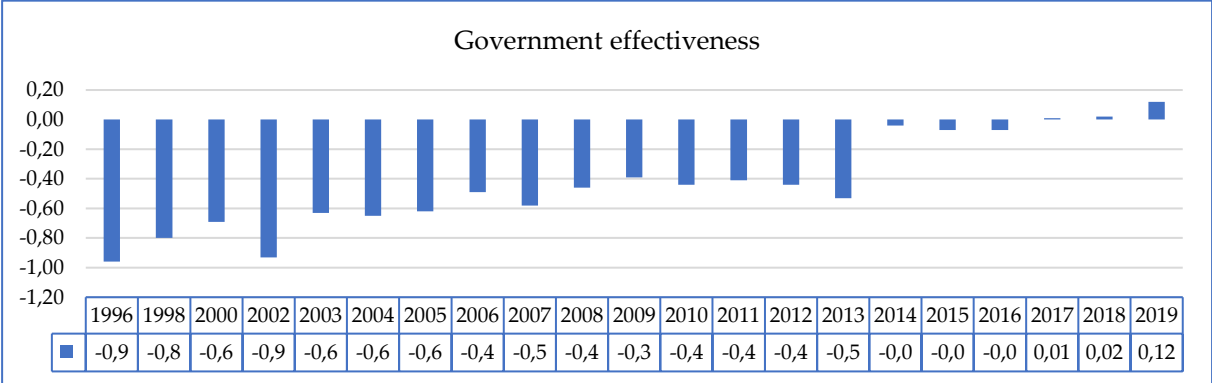


Source: <https://fragilestatesindex.org/>

It is also noteworthy that corruption is perceived as one of the most important issues in the country's development (Transparency International, 2019), and the judiciary as corrupt, while it is expected to play a key role in ensuring the rule of law.³ This is important as studies on corruption indicate the significant threat of this phenomenon to stability and sustainable development. Furthermore, high levels of corruption deepen social stratification, which result in periodic surges of social tension, jeopardising social and political stability. It is also perceived as a threat to the preservation of independence by some public figures.⁴

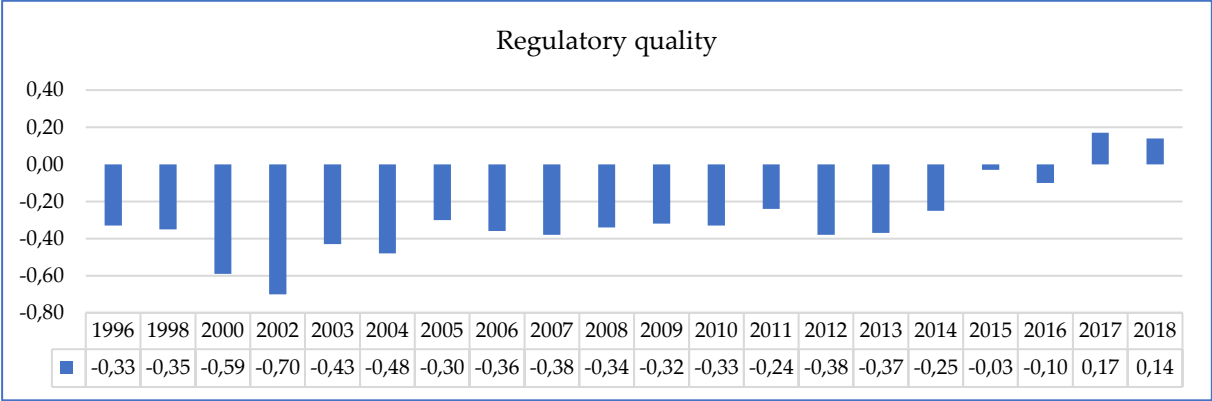
This contradiction between high rankings in some and low performance on other key indicators allows us to conclude that it is logical for Kazakhstan to be in-between on such indicators, as government effectiveness and regulatory quality.

Figure 7: Government Effectiveness Index values for Kazakhstan (1996-2019)



Source: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#home>

Figure 8: Regulatory Quality Index values for Kazakhstan (1996-2019)



Source: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#home>

Apparently, the quality of governance and regulation is influenced by both groups of factors. On the one hand, achievements in sectoral reforms improve the quality of governance; on the other hand, corruption and issues associated with ensuring the rule of law worsen it. In this sense, it is no surprise that the country achieves average values in the quality of governance and regulation indices.

³ Призывы быть честными не работают – Асанов о росте коррупции в судебной системе РК [Appeals to be honest do not work - Asanov on the growth of corruption in the judicial system of the Republic of Kazakhstan]. <https://www.kazpravda.kz/news/obshchestvo/prizivi-bit-chestnimi-ne-rabotaut-asanov-o-roste-korrupsii-v-sudebnoi-sisteme>

⁴ Сатпаев Д. Коррупция в Казахстане и качество государственного управления [Satpayev D. Corruption in Kazakhstan and the quality of public administration]. https://www.ide.go.jp/library/Japanese/Publish/Download/Report/2012/pdf/C24_ch3.pdf

Thus, we observe a paradox between significant progress made in some areas and persisting problems remaining in others. For instance, ensuring transparency and accountability of government bodies, as well as independence of the judiciary, and dispensing indiscriminate justice are elements of the greatest importance in ensuring the rule of law and combating corruption. Evidently however, reforms in this direction are primarily resisted by those forces that are interested in maintaining the status quo. It should also be noted that resistance to reforms – in the context of insufficiently influential civil society – is to a great extent observed where the interests of large elite groups are directly affected. On the other hand, it is clear that combating corruption and ensuring the rule of law meet the needs and aspirations of ordinary citizens and society as a whole, since their implementation would provide a more equitable distribution of national income, as well as help fulfil the country's potential better, taking into account the richness of natural resources, a sufficiently high level of literacy of the population and the quality of human resources, as well as such a competitive advantage of the national culture as tolerance, openness and adaptability. Evidently, moving towards greater transparency and accountability is also in the interests of the entrepreneurial class and competitive actors of the economy, as it helps to create conditions for fair competition and an environment that allows private initiative to flourish.

Clearly, the mechanisms for reconciliation and coordination of the interests of citizens, civil society institutions, business entities, as well as groups of influence fall within the political system. Meanwhile, sectoral reforms aimed at improving the regulatory framework for the development of certain sectors of the economy, or certain areas of the functioning of the machinery of government, the use of modern methods of personnel selection and promotion, as well as new technologies in public service delivery – all these can be grouped into a subsystem, that may be referred to as the operations-technological system. In the interval between these subsystems, there are institutional issues of the functioning of the administrative system, in other words, of the executive branch of power, starting from the administrative-territorial structure and ending with the delineation of powers between the levels of government.

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the relationship and mutual influence between these governance subsystems. In this context, the term 'governance' is used here in its broadest sense, that is a common system that includes all branches of government, all subsystems that relate to the ownership, disposal, and management of state resources, including state and municipal property.

The model of dynamic concentric spheres

In the vast literature on public administration, it is often said that the political system is a fundamental system, as it affects the efficiency of the administrative system and by extension of the governance system. That is why, in many countries, political reforms are implemented, to improve the efficiency of governance. In fact, the President of Kazakhstan Tokayev said, in his recent address, that the main goal of the reforms, including those in the political sphere, is to increase the efficiency of the functioning of the entire state.⁵

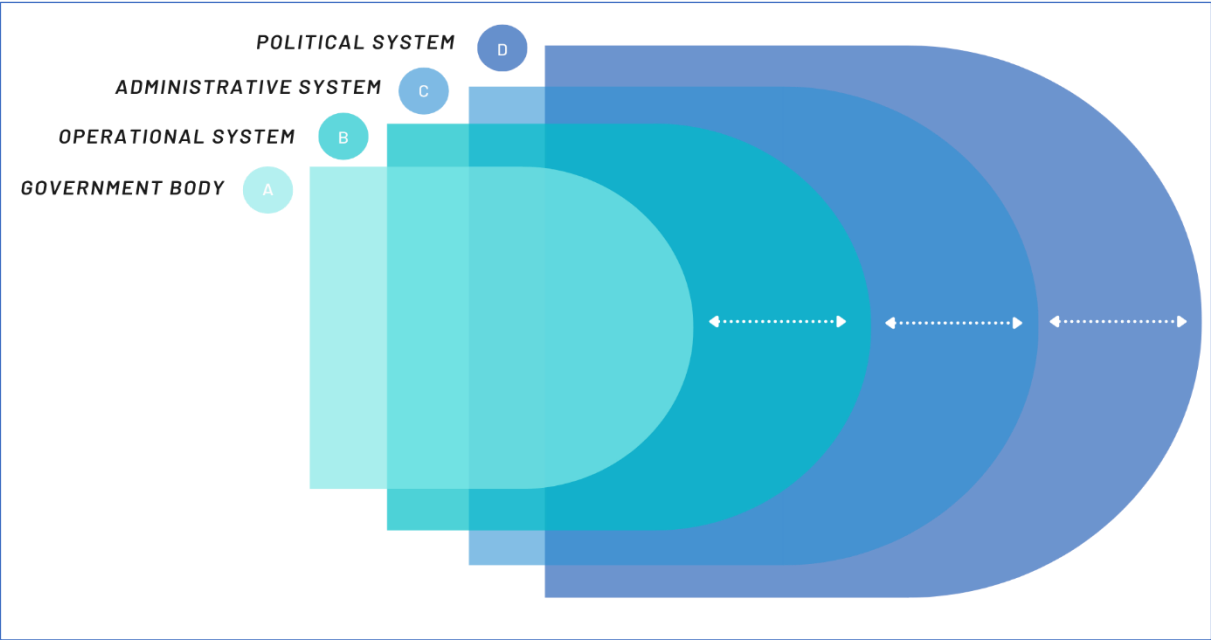
Similarly, many experts, as well as politicians, point to the need for improving the political system as a precondition for solving many socio-economic problems and thus increasing the quality of governance, as they realise that the political system provides the framework

⁵ President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's State of the Nation Address, September 1, 2020, https://www.akorda.kz/en/addresses/addresses_of_president/president-of-kazakhstan-kassym-jomart-tokayevs-state-of-the-nation-address-september-1-2020

conditions for the establishment of good governance. However, there is still no clear idea of how this interaction works and what characteristics of the governance system are attributed to each subsystem. Moreover, there are no models that clearly demonstrate the relationship between political, administrative, and operations-technological systems.⁶

Our hypothesis is that within a particular country, causal relationships exist between the governance subsystems, the understanding of which can be facilitated through the definition and visualisation of some basic principles, and mechanisms and forms of their interconnection and mutual influence. For this purpose, the author proposes the use of the model of dynamic concentric spheres; otherwise referred to as the model of ‘nesting dolls’.⁷

Figure 9. Model of Dynamic Concentric Spheres of Governance



The external sphere in this model is the political system that encompasses the institutional foundations of the whole governance system, as well as the mechanisms for interaction with civil society and the economic system. Inside the political system resides the administrative system – the institutional basis of the executive branch, designed to effectively manage resources and exercise powers. In turn, inside the administrative system resides the operations-technological system that covers the regulatory framework for the functioning of sectors and the levels of executive power. It also includes the rules, processes, and procedures for the functioning of the entire machinery of government and its interaction with recipients of public services. Finally, the core sphere of the model is a separate state body, encircled by an environment consisting of all other external spheres, thus delineating the limitations and opportunities. It is further assumed that each internal sphere can change positions (within the borders of every outer sphere) under the influence of various factors (culture, leadership,

⁶ The author also assumes that the functioning of each governance subsystem is influenced by many other factors - from culture, traditions, and history to geographical and geopolitical factors. However, the influence of such factors on the effectiveness of governance may be the subject of other separate studies.

⁷ Recently, while preparing an article on a similar topic for a Russian journal, the author compared the concept of ‘concentric spheres’ to a ‘big nesting doll’ (a matryoshka), whose subsystems are its smaller ‘nesting dolls’, to make the term simpler and clearer. This model was also mentioned in an interview in August 2020. Аликхан Байменов. Как починить машину госуправления Казахстана [Alikhan Baimenov. How to fix the government machinery in Kazakhstan]. baigenews.kz: https://baigenews.kz/news/alikhan_baymenov_gosupravlenie_kazakhstana/

geopolitics, socio-economic context, etc), the consideration of which is beyond the scope of this article.

The political system creates the basic rules, and it provides the connections between society, the branches of government and the economy. It also creates the conditions for the realisation of the potential of the country and its citizens, as well as for the consideration of the economic and social interests of citizens in the functioning of the branches and levels of government. In terms of management, the political system provides the elasticity of the entire governance system. In this context, elasticity is the ability to feel and respond to the needs of citizens. The political system thus determines institutional elasticity, accountability, and motivation. In this regard, it should be noted that one of the challenges of the functioning of modern machinery of government is the conflict between the long-term interests of the state, which are to be protected by professional civil servants, and the short-term interests that are attractive to politicians in terms of their next election campaigns. At the same time, those representatives of the political system, who are elected and occupy senior positions, play a key politically determining role in relation to the machinery of government. The machinery, by definition, must implement the political direction set by senior level politicians.

Inside this large 'nesting doll' another sphere exists, which can be called the administrative system designed to ensure the correct distribution and effective use of powers, responsibilities and resources determined by the political system - both vertically between the levels of government and horizontally between state bodies of the same level. In other words, the administrative system is designed to provide institutional flexibility, efficiency and high manageability based on the balance of powers, responsibilities, and resources. Hence, the administrative system creates institutional transparency, accountability, and responsibility of government agencies. Consequently, if there is a clearer system of powers delineated among the various government levels, then citizens are better informed about who is responsible, and hence, they can demand higher quality of service provision from the appropriate authority. Thus, one of the prerequisite principles of effectiveness of the administrative system is the clear balance of powers, responsibilities, and resources between the levels of this system.

Within the administrative system, there are, relatively speaking, operations-technological systems (functional, sectoral, or territorial), which include the civil service (a system for the selection, recruitment, and promotion of personnel), the budget system (designed to effectively plan and use financial resources), the procurement system (designed to purchase the best goods and services for the state at the lowest price), and the information systems and a number of other segments. The operations-technological system, being the instrumentation of governance, ensures the effective functioning of state institutions within the limits of their powers and resources set by legislation. This is what is called the 'machinery of government.' Finally, the fourth 'nesting doll' is a state body, for which the entire political, administrative, and operations-technological (including the civil service) systems are its external environment.

In this model, every outer sphere is the environment within which the inner one exists and operates. The rules, traditions, and values (culture) of this environment create the capacity to unleash the potential of the inner spheres. Thus, the political system creates a certain framework of opportunities and limitations of efficiency for the administrative system. Similarly, both of these systems set the scope and constraints for the operations-technological system. Consequently, no matter to what extent operations-technological systems are improved, the capabilities of this little 'nesting doll' are limited by the framework imposed by higher systems – the administrative and political.

Applying the dynamic concentric spheres model, when analysing the country's development, we see that the highest rankings in international indices are associated with the operations-technological sphere, the lowest ratings are associated with the external political sphere, and in between, the average indicator values are associated with the administrative sphere, which is affected by both spheres. Conversely - within the limits and corridors of opportunities provided by the administrative system - the operations-technological subsystem can move to the limits of its capabilities within the framework of these restrictions. In turn, the administrative system will increase its efficiency to the limits of its potential as they are delineated by the political system. And accordingly, together with that, this entails an automatic increase in the performance and efficiency of the operations-technological sphere.

As noted above, many leaders, politicians, and experts, based on an understanding of this relationship, propose political and administrative reforms, as well as reforms of the operations-technological sectors, to resolve problems associated with socio-economic development. The proposed model can be useful to them and to researchers of public administration to visually demonstrate this relationship, in order to better understand the characteristics and properties of the governance system, as they are determined by the separate subsystems. The author hopes that this hypothesis will be further studied, and the knowledge body eventually accumulated will allow for further refinement of the proposed model.

Conclusion

An overview of the complex evolutionary processes of post-totalitarian countries, including Kazakhstan, shows contradictory trends in socio-economic and socio-political development. This is confirmed by a number of international indices, where the country is among the leaders in some indicators and among the outsiders in others. The article makes an attempt to analyse such contradictions by utilising the model of dynamic concentric spheres. The application of the model illustrates the limits of capacity of internal subsystems of governance, while external conditions remaining constant. Therefore, it can be concluded that in order to achieve a greater effect from sectoral reforms, these must be supported by administrative reforms and, more importantly, by political reforms.

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