

# STAGES AND SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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## I. Introduction

For more than 16 years, Uzbekistan has been trying to modernize its sociopolitical and economic system. This process is encompassing all spheres of public life, particularly the administrative structures. It should be noted that reform of state administration is the most important prerequisite for enabling transformation of the political system as a whole. Uzbekistan's vast and cumbersome bureaucratic machinery is hindering implementation of the reforms in the republic.

The prevalent bureaucratic arbitrariness in the economic sphere could lead to the monopolization of property, the creation of non-market mechanisms for regulating the activity of economic agents, and a reduction in the inflow of investments into the country. Stagnation of the administrative reforms in the political sphere is delaying the adoption of progressive laws, blocking the implementation of the decisions taken, promoting the formation of corporate groups among government officials, and making it impossible to efficiently regulate certain social processes. Bureaucratic arbitrariness in the social sphere can hinder the implementation of various social programs, which might later discredit the state bodies. In order to analyze the problems and prospects of administrative reforms in Uzbekistan, we should take a look at the main conceptual models of efficient administration.

The idea of forming an efficient administrative system goes way back into the distant past. It generates, we feel, from man's need, as a social being, to provide himself with efficiently organized administration. This was precisely why, according to many academics, the first political studies were of an applied nature. It is interesting to note that one of the oldest conceptions of administration was developed in China, since it was precisely that model which presumed the formation of a hierarchal system of administration, as well as clear delimitation of powers. These two main aspects of the Chinese administration model point the way to forming the rudiments of a rational bureaucracy. But in contrast to the contemporary versions, the purpose of the Chinese administration model was not to resolve social problems, but to serve the emperor. At the end of the nineteenth-beginning of the twentieth centuries, new administration models began to appear aimed at resolving social problems. These models started with Max Weber's conceptions. It was precisely his conception of "rational bureaucracy" in the 20th century that led to the appearance of new administration models. Different administration models were formed within the framework of such schools and trends as the classical school, the school of human relations, structural-functional trends, and so on.

It is not our intent in this article to reveal the essence of the conceptual models of efficient administration, since this is not part of our study, instead we will only take a brief look at the main aspects of these models in the context of their efficiency by identifying the things they have in common. This comes from the practical need to understand what the country should gain during the administrative reforms.

So we feel that an efficient administrative system should have the following characteristics:

1. Professional government officials;
2. Clear delimitation of powers;
3. Non-misappropriation of office property by civil servants;
4. Civil servants should have personal freedom and only be obliged to perform “impersonal” duties;
5. A corporate spirit;
6. Motivation models in administration and their practical implementation;
7. The administrative structure should be able to intensively adapt to the dynamically developing world;
8. Close interaction between the government officials and the world around them;
9. A horizontal system of administrative relations.

Of course, it is very difficult to ensure that all the characteristics noted are achieved, but they can be partially accomplished and forms the basis for building a democratic and law-abiding state. Consequently, if Uzbekistan has chosen to build such a state, it will inevitably encounter the need to remove the dysfunctional elements that exist in its administrative system as it moves in this direction. This article aims to analyze the problems and prospects of the administrative reforms currently being carried out in Uzbekistan.

## II. Administrative Reforms in Uzbekistan

Within the framework of the reforms being carried out in Uzbekistan, there were plans to cut back 45,000 civil servants, which constitutes more than 22% of the total size of the state and economic administrative machinery.<sup>1</sup> The first to comment on this decision by the government was Vice-Premier R. Azimov. In his opinion, these measures will save 40 billion sums (the money unit in Uzbekistan) a year. This will result in Uzbekistan having the most compact and efficient administrative system of all the countries in the post-Soviet expanse. According to the Minister of Finance, cutting back number of employees in the state and economic administration bodies will reduce their ranks to 1.6% of the total working population. According to this index, Uzbekistan will have six civil servants per one thousand people, which will be the lowest index among all the CIS countries. For comparison, this index amounts to 19 in Kazakhstan and to 22 civil servants per one thousand members of the population in the Russian Federation. During a briefing, R. Azimov noted that within the framework

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<sup>1</sup> See: I. Karimov, “Our Main Task is to Strengthen the Boundaries Reached and Comprehensive Continuation of the Reforms,” *Report at the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers* devoted to the results of socioeconomic development in 2003 and the main trends for intensifying the economic reforms in 2004, 5 February, 2004 (in Uzbek).

of the administrative reform, there are 20 high-ranking leaders among the civil servants of all different ranks due to be laid off.<sup>2</sup> We will remind you that this major stage of the administrative reforms in Uzbekistan was preceded by two presidential decrees: On Improving the System of Republic State Administration Bodies and On Improving the Economic Management System. In keeping with these documents, 27 associations, concerns, and companies are being reformed or eliminated. As a result, only 13 ministries, 11 state committees, 9 agencies, 7 centers, and 7 inspection services will remain in the state administration. Reorganization will affect such branches as machine-building, the agro-industrial complex, the manufacture of consumer goods, construction, transportation, and commerce.<sup>3</sup>

In correspondence with the administrative reforms, a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers was adopted on 5 January, 2004 On Cutting Back the Administrative System. I would like to look at its most important aspects in more detail.

1. In the interests of raising management efficiency, it is recommended that creative funds, trade unions, and public associations financed by membership fees review their payroll on the basis of the proposals by the Republican Commission for Intensifying the Administrative Reform and Improving the Economic Management Structures and establish the maximum number of management staff in their structures.
2. Beginning in 2004, the Ministry of Finance should register the payrolls and provide an estimate of the expenses of the state-financed institutions and organizations.
3. Within one month, regulations for using the funds liberated due to cutback in the number of employees of the administrative machinery to provide material encouragement of highly qualified employees should be drawn up and duly approved.
4. The Republican Commission for Intensifying the Administrative Reform and Improving the Economic Management Structures (R. Azimov) should establish control over reducing the size of the administrative machinery in all state committees, departments, and economic management bodies envisaged by this decision and report the results to the Cabinet of Ministers.<sup>4</sup>

Under the administrative reforms carried out in Uzbekistan, one deputy out of three, for example, was laid off in the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Education, and one out of four in the Ministry of Public Health and the State Statistics Committee.<sup>5</sup>

The cutbacks affected essentially all the administrative structures. For example, in 2005 the Foreign Economic Relations Agency was turned back once more into a ministry. At the same time, it is obvious that “cutback for the sake of cutback” does not promote really positive results and can only lead to the formation of a narrower bureaucratic structure, which will also want to protect its own corporate interests. So what is the point of administrative reforms in Uzbekistan if they are not taken as simply a reduction in the administrative machinery?

In our opinion, this process was engendered by the necessity to ensure decentralization and delimitation of state functions. World experience has shown that the successful development of society as a whole depends on the delimitation of powers between separate branches of power and on the nature of interrelations between the local bodies and the central administrative structure. Duplication of functions, lack of clear management organization, and insufficient public control will lead to a drop

<sup>2</sup> See: T. Zhukov: “Miagkoe kreslo ne tokarnyy stanok,” available at [www.zamoninfo.uz].

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>4</sup> See: *Decision of the Republic of Uzbekistan Cabinet of Ministers On Cutting Back the Administrative System of 5 January, 2004, No. 1.*

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

in the efficiency of the activity of the state administrative bodies and serve as fertile ground for the bureaucracy to flourish.

This direction, that is, decentralization and delimitation of functions, is the main priority, since it permits the government to concentrate on strategic issues. This, in our opinion, will help to increase the efficiency of strategic management, create conditions for optimizing the number of central bodies, prevent interference in the economic activity of economic agents, raise the responsibility of the local state power bodies for providing services in such branches as health care and education, as well as raise the role of the local power bodies by endowing them with the authority to independently determine their own priorities and distribute resources keeping in mind the local conditions and requirements. This will also help to transfer many functions of the state bodies under public control in the form of local self-government bodies and nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations.<sup>6</sup>

The main principles of decentralization and delimitation of powers in Uzbekistan are:

1. Centralization of political and strategic powers that establish and regulate state functions in the republic-level state administrative bodies.
2. Transfer of the main bulk of state administrative activity to the territorial, regional, district, and city level.
3. Functioning of independent regional state administrative structures that are not subordinate to republic-level bodies in spheres not requiring the performance of political, strategic, and regulatory functions.
4. Functioning of regional links of direct or double subordination, which includes the performance of ongoing state functions. In so doing, it is necessary to ensure close interaction between the population and the economic agents.
5. Maximum rapprochement of the state services with the population or business entities, that is, with the consumers of these services.<sup>7</sup>

Delimitation and decentralization of administrative structures in Uzbekistan is being carried out in the following areas:

1. Horizontal decentralization with simultaneous changeover from sectoral to primarily functional administration. During the years of independence, the number of ministries and government departments (particularly sectoral) that carry out the function of direct state regulation has significantly decreased. More than 50 republic-level ministries have undergone reorganization. During the current administrative reform, in compliance with government decisions, more than 20 structures carrying out state administrative and economic management functions in different spheres are being eliminated or reformed. In compliance with the administrative reforms, only five of the remaining 13 ministries are sectoral (public health, higher and secondary special education, public education, culture and sport, and agriculture and water conservation), and three of the eleven state committees are sectoral (sport, geology and mineral resources, and architecture and construction). The sectoral ministries and committees mainly regulate the activity of sectors in which market mechanisms do not function efficiently.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See: "Gosudarstvennoe upravlenie v usloviakh liberalizatsii ekonomiki: razgranichenie i detsentralizatsiia funktsiy," *Narodnoe slovo*, February 2004, available at [www.narodnoe slovo.uz].

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

2. Delimitation of functions of state administration and economic management. Beginning in 1997, state administrative reforms have been aimed at completing the delimitation of economic and state administrative functions.
3. Vertical-sectoral deconcentration. This is being carried out by transferring some of the functions of the republic-level bodies to lower-level structures, as well as to the private sector. The central government apparatus is overloaded with trying to find solutions to everyday problems in the industries and enterprises, which is not enhancing the qualitative development of strategic administrative decisions. During the decentralization of state administration, functions are being transferred to lower-level structures that involve the regulation and management of state property, surveillance, and the rendering of social services. For example, only some of the functions of the ministry of communal services eliminated at one time were transferred to the Uzkommunkhizmat Agency. Most of the functions of the eliminated government department were transferred to the local power bodies, and some of them to the private sector.
4. Elimination of the centralized distribution of resources presumes a decrease in the state's intervention in the activity of enterprises. In so doing, some distribution functions are still being retained in strategic areas.
5. Transfer of some administrative functions from republic-level state administration to the local level. At present, the regions are becoming more actively involved in the country's socio-economic and political life. Increasingly serious tasks, which used to be resolved only within the framework of the central bodies, are now being solved at the local level.

The activity of the state bodies in the provinces will increasingly concentrate on performing the following main functions:

1. Ensuring the practical implementation of social policy, including in education, public health, and social protection of the population.
2. Ensuring more reliable municipal housing conditions.
3. Creating a favorable atmosphere for developing private business.
4. Assisting the efficient functioning of self-government bodies and developing a civil society.
5. Transferring the functions of state administration to the makhallia self-government bodies, citizen gatherings, which have recently been acquiring greater significance in administering society.

### **III. The Problems and Prospects of Administrative Reform in Uzbekistan**

Of course, the goals put forward by the country's government within the framework of the administrative reforms are positive with respect to the development and democratization of society. But, unfortunately, the practice of carrying out similar transformations in the CIS countries, of which we are the witnesses, is giving reason to talk more about the declarative nature of these reforms. In order to avoid this, we need to identify and resolve the problems preventing the formation of efficient state administration in Uzbekistan.

Corruption and clannishness are the most urgent problems in Uzbekistan's administrative structure. Corruption in the administrative system is promoting criminalization of political power, since the bureaucrat appointed to his post in a corrupted way will logically try to at least compensate for what he spent to gain his post. Clannishness and favoritism, in turn, are leading to an inefficient system for forming the managerial elite.

As we know, the main elements in creating an efficient state administration are transparency and counterbalances to the existing bureaucracy. Democratic institutions are the main elements for ensuring this. Unfortunately, it should be stated that conditions have still not been created in Uzbekistan for ensuring transparency and counterbalances. We think the following factors are at the bottom of this:

1. The lack of real opposition parties in parliament;
2. The lack of a civil society capable of articulating and aggregating its requirements;
3. The lack of a mechanism for ensuring a constructive dialog between the state and civil society.
4. The lack in the republic's mass media of independent information-analytical programs that raise the population's political culture. This is responsible for insufficient awareness of the population about the activity of the state structures. (In July of this year, we polled 50 people to find out whether they knew the names of the key ministers of Uzbekistan. Only 10 of those surveyed were able to name the minister of justice, minister of the interior, and minister of defense. It was also revealed that the country's population is more informed about the personalities and activity of the Russian Federation ministers.)

It is obvious that any reforms can only be efficiently carried out if they are correctly understood. Unfortunately, we have to say that the administrative reforms being carried out in Uzbekistan are not sufficiently understood either in the government or in society as a whole. In our opinion, this is manifested in the following aspects:

1. The administrative reforms are understood simply as a cutback in staff. The experience of foreign countries clearly shows that any activity based on the "cutback for the sake of cutback" principle does not lead to the formation of an efficient managerial structure.
2. The cutback in administrative staff is merely an effort to save money. Perhaps there are some specific positive aspects in saving funds, but today civil servants are one of the country's main sources of "capital." The more is invested in them, the more dividends can be received in the future. One of the serious problems in understanding the administrative reforms in Uzbekistan, in our opinion, is that the program for carrying them out does not contain a paragraph about the need to change the managers' mentality. For example, in Canada, the current administrative reforms are aimed 70% at changing the mentality of the managerial staff.<sup>9</sup> We believe that shortcomings in understanding the administrative reforms in Uzbekistan are related to a certain extent to the lack of objective monitoring of them. This is primarily due to the fact that there are essentially no independent consulting companies and research centers in Uzbekistan capable of presenting an objective assessment of the reforms conducted.

Reform in the legislative sphere is the most important condition for the overall success of the reforms throughout the country. Unfortunately, it must be stated that to this day Uzbekistan

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<sup>9</sup> See: O.V. Ageev, S.V. Ustinkin, *Biurokratiia i politika*, Moscow, 2001.

does not have a law on civil servants. This is leading to unregulated relations among bureaucrats, as well as between the bureaucrat and his client. The republic's administrative system still has the dysfunctional elements inherited from Soviet times described by American sociologist Robert Merton. He regarded the bureaucratic system in the context of a substitution of goals. In his opinion, the bureaucrat primarily serves the interests of his organization and not the resolution of social problems.

A very important prerequisite for forming an efficient state administration system is professional staff. It must be stated that in Uzbekistan there is still not a sufficient number of specialists with diplomas in political science, sociology, and state administration.

Another problem that needs to be studied and a corresponding solution found is the unsatisfactory financial position of most civil servants. Although it has long been known that a "cheap administration" is the most expensive management in the world. At present, a middle-ranking official in Uzbekistan receives a salary of around 100 dollars, while a commercial employee earns two or three times more than this. This situation is naturally promoting corruption in the administrative structures.

## IV. Conclusion

In our opinion, the administrative reforms in Uzbekistan could develop in keeping with four main scenarios:

1. Control by one person over the entire administrative system. Society's mental characteristics, expressed particularly in the inclination toward subordination to one "authority," are promoting this scenario.
2. "Bureaucratic centralism." As a result of the clan competition in Uzbekistan's administrative system, one or two clans could take the upper hand and monopolize the entire system of administration.
3. Confrontation between an individual (political authority) and the bureaucracy, in particular over distribution of the main financial and power resources.
4. Formation of an efficient administration system. This scenario can be realized only if the ruling elite begins to reform the sociopolitical system in favor of its real democratization, a contra elite appears that constructively criticizes the activity of the state bodies, the system of political institutions functions on the basis of checks and balances, and, finally, the population becomes used to democratic values.

It should be noted that the first three scenarios are the most capable of being implemented. The fourth should be regarded most likely in the longer term, whereby, naturally, it is the most acceptable for the sociopolitical development of the Republic of Uzbekistan.