Analysis of development aid management in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan: Understanding donor-recipient relations in comparative perspective

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Table of Contents

Preface ..... **iv**
Abstract ..... **v**
Acknowledgements ..... **vi**
Abbreviations and Acronyms ..... **vii**
List of Tables, Figures, Maps and Boxes ..... **ix**
Chapter 1 | Introduction **1**
1.1. Rationale for selection of countries 2
1.2. Research objectives 4
1.3. Research questions 6
1.4. Hypotheses 7
1.5. Methodology, epistemology and ontology 8
1.6. Thesis format and structure 10
1.7. Notes on transliteration and translation 11
Chapter 2 | Development aid: Evolution, theoretical and policy frameworks, key ideas **12**
2.1. Introduction 12
2.2. Evolution of ODA and aid policy framework 13
2.3. Major theories addressing foreign aid 18
2.4. Key discussions in foreign aid literature 21
2.5. Conceptual framework to study foreign aid relations 24
2.6. Conclusion 30
Chapter 3 | Methodological framework **31**
3.1. Introduction 31
3.2. Epistemology, positionality and reflexivity 31
3.3. Research methods 31
3.4. Data collection 34
3.5. Data analysis 38
3.6. Research conditions, challenges and limitations 40
3.7. Ethical issues 42
3.8. Conclusion 44
Chapter 4 | Political economy analysis of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan **45**
4.1. Introduction 45
4.2. Political economy of Kyrgyzstan 48
4.3. Political economy of Turkmenistan 55
4.4. Conclusion 64
Chapter 5 | Donor-recipient relations on the regional and country levels **66**
5.1. Introduction 66

5.2. Geopolitics of Central Asia 66
5.3. Foreign aid and donor-recipient relations in Central Asia 68
5.4. Donor-recipient relations in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan 70
5.5. Conclusion 91
Chapter 6 | Donor-recipient interaction in the governance sector 94
6.1. Introduction 94
6.2. Defining 'governance' 94
6.3. Donor-recipient interaction in the governance sector: Kyrgyzstan 96
6.4. Donor-recipient interaction in the governance sector: Turkmenistan 115
6.5. Conclusion 130
Chapter 7 | Donor-recipient interaction in the rural development sector 134
7.1. Introduction 134
7.2. Defining 'rural development' 134
7.3. Donor-recipient interaction in the rural development sector: Kyrgyzstan 136
7.4. Donor-recipient interaction in the rural development sector: Turkmenistan 149
7.5. Conclusion 161
Chapter 8 | Donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector 165
8.1. Introduction 165
8.2. Defining 'environment' 165
8.3. Donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector: Kyrgyzstan 166
8.4. Donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector: Turkmenistan 178
8.5. Conclusion 191
Chapter 9 | Conclusion 196
9.1. Introduction 196
9.2. Contextualizing aid interactions across countries and sectors 196
9.3. Reconstructing the agency of aid recipients 197
9.4. Summary of key findings 198
9.5. Theoretical implications 207
9.6. Research limitations 208
9.7. Areas for further research 208
9.8. Concluding remarks 210
Annex I: List of interviewees 212
Annex II: Interview guides 214
References 222

Preface

This doctoral research was conducted and finalized based on the approval obtained from the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board (File Number 01-16-34). The thesis was written solely by the author, who bears full responsibility for its content.

Abstract

Both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan were part of the former Soviet Union and were integrated into its political, economic and governance systems. As Union republics, they remained isolated from the outside world, with little direct interaction with external actors. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan established relations with a number of bilateral donors and multilateral development agencies. Despite their many similarities (e.g., social, cultural, religious, linguistic, geographic) and a shared history, the two countries' post-Soviet development trajectories diverged dramatically. While Kyrgyzstan quickly launched transition reforms, liberalizing its economy and polity with support from external donors, Turkmenistan adopted a more gradual approach to political and economic reform and managed to minimize the influence of external actors in domestic affairs. This thesis analyzes the donor-recipient interaction in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan across three sectors: governance, rural development, and environment.

The analysis focuses on the management of aid through an anthropological, political economy-directed inquiry of relations between foreign donors and aid recipients at the micro level (daily interactions in managing aid). Collective action theory, evolutionary theory and adaptive behavior approaches are utilized to analyze the interaction on micro-level. However, the analysis is also situated in a broader, macro-level context of development and security priorities of the two states, for which the realist branch of the international relations theories is applied. Methodologically, the study is based on the triangulation of findings from various sources, including the content analysis of primary and secondary sources as well as the analysis of over 60 semi-structured interviews involving government and donor officials from the two countries.

The thesis does not attempt to analyze whether development aid was effective. Instead, using similar analyses of aid interactions (Mosse, 2005; Swedlund, 2017), this thesis aims to investigate how aid interactions 'happen' (Wedel, 1998). While I agree that the sustainability of development aid is hampered by the inability of both donors and recipients to 'make credible commitments' (Swedlund, 2017), in this thesis I argue that aid interactions are also influenced by other factors, namely the political sensitivity of the sectors to which the aid is given (governance, rural development, environment), regime characteristics, availability or absence of natural resource-based revenues, and geopolitics. These factors, taken together, affect the aid bargaining process in important ways. The thesis makes a three-fold contribution to the existing knowledge on aid relations. First, it expands the knowledge on the agency of recipient governments by putting them at the core of the analysis. Second, it contributes to the very limited number of cross-sectoral and cross-country comparative studies on both aid management and on public policy making in general and in Central Asia in particular. Thirdly, it provides a detailed account of how development aid has been managed in Turkmenistan, a country on which no serious academic literature related to aid management has been produced to date.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DFID	Department for International Development of the United Kingdom
DPCC	Development Partners Coordination Council in Kyrgyzstan
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FSU	Former Soviet Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GFATM	Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria
GIZ	German International Cooperation Agency
GNI	Gross national income
GOKR	Government of the Kyrgyz Republic
GONGOs	Government-affiliated NGOs
GOTM	Government of Turkmenistan
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFIs	International financial institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISDB	Islamic Development Bank
JCSS	Joint Country Support Strategy for the Kyrgyz Republic
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
MFAKG	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic
MFATM	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan
MSF	Doctors without Borders/Médecins sans frontières
NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSCKR	National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy of Kyrgyzstan for the period 2013-2017
OCHA	UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PIP	Public Investment Program
PIU	Project Implementation Unit

PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RKDF	Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish Agency for International Development
SSCT	State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan
TACIS	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
TICA	Turkey International Cooperation and Development Administration
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime
UNPFD	United Nations Partnership Framework for Development
UNRCCA	United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WFP	World Food Programme

List of Tables, Figures, Maps and Boxes

Tables

Table 3.1: Number of planned and actual informants in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan 38
Table 4.1: Country facts and figures in brief 46
Table 4.2: International Benchmarking Indices – Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan 47
Table 4.3: Worldwide Governance Indicators – Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan 47
Table 4.4: Kyrgyzstan 5-year average calculations for key macro-economic indicators and HDI 54
Table 4.5: Turkmenistan 5-year average calculations for key macro-economic indicators and HDI 63
Table 5.1: ODA disbursements to Kyrgyzstan by selected sectors 2005-2017 (constant 2017 USD, millions) 75
Table 5.2: ODA disbursements to Turkmenistan by selected sectors 2005-2017 (constant 2017 USD, millions) 87
Table 6.1: Comparative summary of governance sector findings: Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan 133
Table 7.1: List of national strategies and plans containing rural development objectives in Kyrgyzstan 137
Table 7.2: Comparative summary of rural development sector findings: Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan 164
Table 8.1: International Environmental Treaties to which Kyrgyzstan is a party 168
Table 8.2: International Environmental Treaties to which Turkmenistan is a party 180
Table 8.3: Comparative summary of environment sector findings: Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan 195
Table 9.1: Comparative summary of country-specific findings 205

Figures

Figure 2.1: Analytical model of donor-recipient interaction 29
Figure 4.1: Selected socio-economic indicators for Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan 46
Figure 4.2: Human Development Index – Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan 46
Figure 4.3: Personal remittances received (% of GDP), Kyrgyzstan 54
Figure 5.1: Net ODA received by Kyrgyzstan (% of GNI) 70
Figure 5.2: Kyrgyzstan's external debt stocks (% of GNI) 71
Figure 5.3: ODA disbursements to Kyrgyzstan by type of donors (constant 2017 USD, millions) 74
Figure 5.4: Net ODA received by Turkmenistan (% of GNI) 83
Figure 5.5: Turkmenistan's external debt stocks (% of GNI) 83
Figure 5.6: ODA disbursements to Turkmenistan by type of donors (constant 2017 USD, millions) 86
Figure 6.1: Search results for ‘good governance’ and ‘democratic governance’ at Google Ngram Viewer 95
Figure 6.2: Approval process for projects with loan element in Kyrgyzstan 110
Figure 6.3: Project approval process for donor-funded projects in Turkmenistan 126
Figure 7.1: Search results for ‘rural development’ at Google Books Ngram Viewer 134
Figure 9.1: Donor-recipient interaction in Kyrgyzstan 199
Figure 9.2: Donor-recipient interaction in Turkmenistan 201
Figure 9.3: Donor-recipient interaction in project/program design and implementation 202

Maps

Map 4.1: Political map of Kyrgyzstan 48
Map 4.2: Political map of Turkmenistan 56

Boxes

Box 5.1: Kyrgyz government's preferences in cooperating with donors 77
Box 5.2: The impact of geopolitical developments on donor-recipient relations in Kyrgyzstan 81
Box 5.3: Turkmen government's preferences in cooperating with donors 89
Box 6.1: Definitions of Governance 96
Box 6.2: Involvement of NGOs in the governance sector projects in Kyrgyzstan 104
Box 6.3: Kyrgyz government's donor coordination efforts 105
Box 6.4: Donors' interaction with national partners in the governance sector (Kyrgyzstan) 108
Box 6.5: Sensitive areas in the governance sector (Kyrgyzstan) 114
Box 6.6: Sensitive areas in the governance sector (Turkmenistan) 117
Box 6.7: Local recipients' behavior in project design (Turkmenistan) 121
Box 6.8: Involvement of NGOs in the governance sector projects in Turkmenistan 121
Box 6.9: Turkmen government's donor coordination efforts 123
Box 6.10: Role of local staff members in the governance sector interaction (Turkmenistan) 125
Box 6.11: Access to data in Turkmenistan 129
Box 7.1: Definitions of Rural Development 135
Box 7.2: Involvement of NGOs in the rural development sector projects in Kyrgyzstan 143
Box 7.3: Donor coordination efforts in the rural development sector (Kyrgyzstan) 144
Box 7.4: Local context in Kyrgyzstan 144
Box 7.5: Donors' interaction with national partners in the rural development sector (Kyrgyzstan) 146
Box 7.6: Involvement of NGOs in the rural development sector projects in Turkmenistan 156
Box 7.7: Donor coordination efforts in the rural development sector (Turkmenistan) 157
Box 7.8: Donors' interaction with national partners in the rural development sector (Turkmenistan) 159
Box 8.1: Involvement of NGOs in the environment sector interaction in Kyrgyzstan 173
Box 8.2: Donor coordination efforts in the environment sector (Kyrgyzstan) 174
Box 8.3: Donors' interaction with national partners in the environment sector (Kyrgyzstan) 176
Box 8.4: Involvement of NGOs in the environment sector interaction in Turkmenistan 185
Box 8.5: Donor coordination efforts in the environment sector (Turkmenistan) 187
Box 8.6: Donors' interaction with national partners in the environment sector (Turkmenistan) 188
Box 8.7: Project implementation issues in the environment sector interaction (Turkmenistan) 189

Chapter 1 | Introduction

The literature on foreign aid, diverse as it may appear, has for a long time been dominated by discussion about its impact on growth and economic development in the recipient countries. Since the Report of the Commission of International Development in (Pearson et al., 1969), which provided the first thorough review of international development cooperation and its successes and failures (Riddell, 2007), aid effectiveness was put through rigorous analyses by both academics and practitioners. Through a series of high-level consultations in the 2000s and early 2010s, the international policy framework for ensuring that aid is used effectively was developed (OECD, 2011a; OECD, 2011b).

Yet, this discussion paid very little attention to the agency of the recipient governments, whose involvement in foreign aid interactions was considered in the mainstream development aid literature as that of passive agents, compliant with rules imposed on them within the donor-defined international policy framework on foreign aid (Lamothe, 2010; Whitfield & Fraser, 2009). The agency of the recipient governments, as well as their interactions with donors in selected development aid sectors, is the focus of this thesis. Analyzing aid interactions – by looking at motivations and incentives of recipient governments and donors on a micro-level, and how those incentives are shaped by macro-level geopolitical and geo-economic factors – is an important issue. Wedel (2001) emphasizes the importance of the agency in the following way:

> Rarely was careful consideration given to the donors' and recipients' agents, the relationships formed between them, and the effects of those relationships on aid outcomes. In the study of aid and development, little attention has been paid to how aid actually happens. Yet how aid happens – through whom and to whom, under what circumstances, and with which goals – determines not only the nature of what recipients actually get and how they respond to it, but its ultimate success or failure (p. 6).

Little has changed on this front since Wedel wrote those words eighteen years ago. This thesis analyzes, through a political economy and somewhat anthropological lens, the management of foreign aid in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, two former Soviet republics located in Central Asia, by looking at an interplay of behaviors and actions of donors and host governments and power dynamics embedded in this interaction. The study of the political economy of foreign aid in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan deserves attention both from policy and practice perspectives. Despite their inclination for "the continued existence of the Soviet Union in some form" (Sahadeo, 2012, p. 168), Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, as well as other Central Asian republics, became independent in 1991. The independence of these countries was unexpected (Menon, 2007) or even 'imposed' on them, with neither being prepared "economically, politically or ideologically" (Gravingholt, 2013, p. 160). Both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan experienced sharp changes in almost all spheres since 1991. Governance and public administration systems became inefficient and were not adequately matched to deal with the post-independence realities while economic systems suffered severely from the break-up of the Soviet Union.

This analysis focuses on the management of aid through an anthropological, political economy-directed inquiry of relations between foreign donors and aid recipients at the micro level (daily interactions in managing aid). However, the analysis is situated in a broader, macro-level context of development and security priorities of the two states. The nature of this interaction around the management of aid, key factors shaping this interaction and actions of all actors in managing foreign aid is the focus of this thesis.

1.1. Rationale for selection of countries

Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan are both land-locked countries located in Central Asia. They have similar cultural, historical (i.e., both countries were part of the former Soviet Union until 1991), linguistic (i.e., both Kyrgyz and Turkmen belong to Turkic group of languages, and Russian is still widely spoken in both countries), and religious backgrounds (i.e., Sunni branch of Islam is practiced in both countries) (Kellner-Heinkele & Landau, 2012; Haghayeghi, 1996). Following their independence, the two countries experienced different degrees of political and socio-economic transformations. While Kyrgyzstan experienced violent regime changes provoked by public revolts, the political environment in Turkmenistan generally remained stable with no violent political developments taking place (Kavalski, 2010). While Kyrgyzstan introduced transition reforms and liberalized its economy and polity with support from external donors, eventually becoming a member of the World Trade Organization (the first country in Central Asia) (Melnykovska & Schweickert, 2013), Turkmenistan was less open to such external influences (Sabol, 2010).

According to the World Bank, both are classified as middle-income countries; Kyrgyzstan being a low-middle-income country, and Turkmenistan being an upper-level-middle income country (World Bank, 2016a). The level of national income is significantly correlated with the availability of natural resources. While Turkmenistan has rich natural gas reserves, thanks to which it has experienced robust economic growth in the recent years, Kyrgyzstan is less fortunate in that sense and is highly dependent on remittances, which amounted to almost 37% of its GDP in 2017 (World Bank, n.d.a). The ability to extract revenues from natural resources has played an important role in the attitude and behavior of the two governments toward external influences. In Kyrgyzstan, market-oriented reforms were initiated in order to access "international financial and technical assistance", while Turkmenistan and other countries rich in hydrocarbon resources, "could resist international pressures for reform by drawing on their oil, gas and mineral reserves" (Kobonbaev, 2007, p. 317).

In addition, the development landscape in two countries also differs in terms of the number of donors (who are more numerous in Kyrgyzstan than in Turkmenistan) and the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through which development initiatives are implemented. According to the latest available data, the number of registered NGOs in Kyrgyzstan ranged between 8,000 and 12,000 in 2011 (ADB, 2011), while in Turkmenistan, the number of registered NGOs was 89 in 2007, with majority of them being affiliated with the government (ADB, 2007). NGOs are believed to have been instrumental in regime changes in certain post-Soviet environments, and suspicion about their role in these processes has grown dramatically following the social unrest and the overthrow of regimes in Georgia (in 2003), Ukraine (in 2004 and 2014) and Kyrgyzstan (in 2005). In Kyrgyzstan, it is argued that "imported and indigenous social capital aided popular mobilization during the Tulip revolution" of 2005 (Kavalski, 2010, p. 9).

Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan appear to provide two contrasting contexts in terms of analyzing donor-recipient relations in aid management. Since its independence, Turkmenistan has been a difficult environment for external players to operate, which applied not only to the development sector but also to Western multinational companies. As argued by Olcott (2005), because of the authoritarian nature of the regime, over-bureaucratized decision-making system, limited integration of the country's economy and financial sector to regional and global systems, as well as highly statist governance of the economy, "nowhere has it been more difficult for Westerners to do business" (p. 37). According to Peyrouse (2012), despite political changes following the death of President Niyazov in 2006, only 'cosmetic' reforms have been implemented. This "general reluctance to introduce economic reforms also limited the flow of

multilateral aid" (Anceschi, 2009, p. 84). Despite limited opportunities for cooperation, the interaction between donors and the government has taken place across a number of sectors and the Government of Turkmenistan (GOTM) had to respond to external donor-led initiatives in implementing its domestic and foreign policies. Yet, this external influence appears to have been limited, especially in the areas of democracy-building, civil society development, human rights, combating corruption and other governance-related areas.

On the other hand, Kyrgyzstan introduced economic, political and social reforms starting from the early years of independence (Olcott, 2005), with a vibrant civil society sector, more expanded cooperation with donors and with a generally more open political system. According to OECD (2017a), in 2013 Kyrgyzstan was the third largest ODA recipient among the former Soviet republics (and the largest in Central Asia). It has been one of the front-line Central Asian countries to support the international community's *war on terror*, hosting military bases on its territory and providing logistical support to the US-led campaign in Afghanistan (Cooley, 2012).

The differences in their interaction with donors can be attributed to several factors. The first is the availability of hydrocarbon resources. In Turkmenistan, hydrocarbon resources helped the country to extract large revenues, from which it self-financed the implementation of its own national development objectives, and thus could limit the influence of donors and their pressure for reforms. In the absence of hydrocarbon and other natural resources, Kyrgyzstan had to pursue "market-oriented reforms to seek international financial and technical assistance", which made it more dependent on foreign donors (Kobonbaev, 2007, p. 317). The second factor is related to the geopolitics of Central Asia and particularly the involvement in geopolitical initiatives led by external players (i.e., participation in the global war on terror), which resulted, in the case of Kyrgyzstan, in the generation of additional revenues stemming from the provision of basing rights and logistical support. The third factor is the difference in political systems and the nature of regimes in the two countries. Greater political freedoms and openness of political system in Kyrgyzstan, as opposed to other Central Asian countries (e.g., Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan), led to the emergence of a more dynamic donor-recipient interaction, with a greater number of development projects and larger amounts of official development assistance (ODA) provided for their implementation. It has also allowed for more active involvement of non-state actors (such as the local civil society) in the formulation and implementation of national development strategies.

The two countries, while being different in terms of their political systems, dependence on donors vs. reliance on non-donor funding, and the extent of external geopolitical pressures, provide an interesting framework for comparison of aid management practices and donor-recipient interaction. How aid is managed appears to depend on the three factors described above – namely, availability of hydrocarbon or other non-aid resources, geopolitical factors, and the characteristics of domestic political systems and regimes – which also influence the selection of strategies by both host governments and donors in maintaining their interaction with each other.

The study of the political economy of foreign aid in Central Asia appears to be under-researched. Some authors emphasize the fact that the majority of studies on development aid have traditionally focused on the countries most commonly referred to as "Third World" countries. As emphasized by Wedel, "nearly all studies in development anthropology concentrate on the "Third World"" (2001, p. 11), while research on countries of the "Second World" (i.e., former socialist bloc countries) has been limited. This discussion could

contribute to an understanding of the role of development aid in the context of Central Asia, the findings of which can be relevant to other transition economies of the former Soviet Union. Given their initial contextual similarities, the development trajectories in the two countries have diverged and resulted in the emergence of two different systems: one with more open policies and greater interaction with donors, the other one with more reserved and selective approaches, with less active interaction with donors. Cross-country and cross-sectoral comparative studies on development aid in Central Asia are limited, and almost non-existent in relation to Turkmenistan.

1.2. Research objectives

This thesis analyzes the political economy of foreign aid management in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. In particular, it focuses on how aid gets managed in each of these countries and analyzes the relations and (inter)actions between foreign donors and host governments. The analysis covers selected aid-funded development sectors and focuses on development support provided by selected donors representing the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations agencies and the international financial institutions. The two countries' interaction with the non-OECD donors (e.g., China, Russia) is examined intermittently to support the analysis. The analysis is embedded in a broader context, by exploring political, security and other factors shaping the decisions of the governments of the two countries in receiving foreign aid and provides an assessment of how these factors had an impact on the management of development aid in the countries.

The decision to concentrate on the OECD donors is based on several considerations. First, current aid governance architecture has been devised by the OECD member-states and multilateral institutions affiliated with the OECD. Since some of the research objectives aim at exploring donor-recipient relations within the context of global aid governance compacts, the decision to focus on the OECD donors appears to be justified. Second, based on the initial research, I found that non-OECD donors tend to have less transparent data management systems. While the information on project/program activities of most of the OECD donors can be found on their websites or on consolidated datasets managed by the OECD, information about development initiatives of non-OECD players is difficult to find. Third, my previous experience of working in Central Asia shows that embassy officials of non-OECD countries in charge of development activities did not regularly participate in donor coordination meetings arranged by traditional donors in the two countries. Those officials would not be able, in all likelihood, to answer some of the standard interview questions, which were formulated taking the first consideration in mind.

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the non-OECD donors' contribution to development interaction in the two countries has gradually increased over the years. For example, as discussed in the empirical chapters, Russia, China and countries of the Gulf Region have contributed large amounts (provided through different types of development funding modalities, including development grants and loans) for implementation of various projects in Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan to a certain extent. While the importance of non-OECD donors should not be understated (since they have emerged as major external development actors in the two countries), at the same time I should acknowledge that data limitations and research objectives influenced my decision to concentrate predominantly on the OECD donors.

The thesis does not attempt to analyze whether foreign aid was effective in the context of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. Instead, it looks into the political economy of foreign aid management in the two countries within the wider context of Central Asian geopolitics, analyzing the relationships between donors and

governments, their actions and the extent to which they adapted to each other's behavior in maintaining these relations. In a political economy analysis, a range of factors is considered (including political, economic, social, historic) to analyze the relations between different actors, their motivations and various institutions and strategies they use in maintaining their relations with each other. Therefore, applying a political economy framework can give a powerful insight into how donors and recipients interact and what factors motivate them in their interaction. The approach is similar to David Mosse's ethnography of aid, which is based on "not whether, but how development works" (2004, p. 641). While this thesis does not focus on aid effectiveness, it nevertheless has direct implications on aid effectiveness debate as by exploring "how aid works" it attempts to analyze how donors and recipients work together and how effective their interaction is from the perspective of aid effectiveness policy implementation.

More specifically, the thesis focuses on the analysis of donor-recipient relations and (inter)actions in three sectors: governance, rural development and environment. Donors provide aid to each of these sectors in both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The following paragraphs explain why each sector was chosen.

Governance

Both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan were part of a centrally managed government system under the Soviet Union. After their independence, the two countries have embarked on (with varying degrees of intensity and scope) a range of political, legal, economic and social reforms as a way of addressing post-Soviet development challenges they faced. The evolution of governance in these countries has resulted in establishment of what Wooden and Stefes call a 'hybrid regime' (partly-free) in Kyrgyzstan and a 'stable authoritarian regime' in Turkmenistan and further demonstrated that "good governance is a rare commodity" not only in these countries but in the entire Central Asian region (2009, p. 20). Given the number of governance concerns (related to human rights, elections, civil society development, combating corruption, gender equality and public administration) and the current, relatively poor, level of governance indicators in the two countries, donors have expressed their commitment to help improve governance in these countries. Yet, development cooperation in this area is likely to be highly contentious, given the interests of the regimes in power and sensitivities of the governance sector interaction.

Rural Development

This sector is important since both countries have large rural populations. In 2013, the percentage of the population living in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan was 65%, while in Turkmenistan it was 51%. In 2012, the agricultural sector contributed 19.2% of GDP in Kyrgyzstan and 14.5% in Turkmenistan (World Bank, n.d.a). Socio-economic conditions in rural areas tend to differ significantly from those in urban areas, especially the capital cities. At the same time, the harsher socio-economic conditions in rural areas can be the source of destabilization for the governments. The arrival of donors in rural areas expands their contacts with rural actors and exposes the donors to the real situation in rural areas. Given the nature of the rural development sector interaction, I have hoped to analyze the extent to which host governments would either limit the donors' access or facilitate their greater involvement in rural development issues, taking into account the two governments' national development and security priorities.

Environment

The Central Asian countries have a number of environmental challenges, many of which cross international boundaries. Many of these challenges have occurred because of environmentally unsustainable agricultural practices, which contributed to the drying up of the Aral Sea basin, soil degradation, desertification and a

range of other country-specific and regional environmental challenges. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, both countries acceded to a number of international conventions and treaties in the area of environment. A range of donor-funded environmental projects had been launched in the two countries, which appeared to be more technical and less politically sensitive compared to governance projects. As well, regional coordination mechanisms were established to deal with the environmental challenges (Djanibekov & Valentinov, 2015), which could potentially contribute to the emergence of tensions among countries of Central Asia (Carius, Feil, & Tänzler, 2003). Taking into account that both countries have extractive industries (gold and uranium in Kyrgyzstan, and oil and natural gas in Turkmenistan), the environment sector interaction is interesting to analyze in terms of these countries' national interests versus their commitments within the global and regional environmental agendas.

The justification for using the sector-based analysis stems from the following two considerations. First, donors (especially large donors with mandates in diverse areas, such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UNDP, EU and USAID) implement their activities across multiple sectors through their respective country strategies that involve cross-sectoral linkages. Yet, the analyses of cross-sectoral aid management and aid relations integrating various sectors appear to be limited. Sectoral analyses have predominantly evolved within single sectors, and mostly through the assessment of sector-wide approach programs (SWAPs) and other joint program delivery modalities (Riddell, 2007). Therefore, research on aid relations should increasingly focus on the cross-sectoral analysis of aid-funded initiatives to fill in this gap, especially in the context of a growing number of donor-funded joint programs such as the SWAPs. Second, the cross-sectoral analysis of aid relations can also show how different the agency of the recipient governments can be. While the agency of recipient governments can be viewed as that of a holistic actor, cross-sectoral analysis of aid relations can help to understand why the behaviour of recipient government in co-managing aid-funded projects varies from sector to sector.

1.3. Research questions

The thesis focuses on the following core research questions, as well as four sub-questions below.

Core questions:

How has foreign aid been managed in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan? Specifically, have relations and interactions between the donors and the two recipient governments been qualitatively different a) overall, and b) in each of the sectors of aid to governance, environment and rural development, and c) if so, why?

Sub-questions:

- How have foreign donors and recipient governments interacted with each other and adapted to each other's behavior in managing different aid sectors?
- To what extent did both foreign donors and recipient governments conform to the principles of aid governance, as promulgated in key foreign aid policy documents, in managing aid sectors?
- What kind of political or technical instruments were built by recipient governments in dealing with donors and what were the key considerations in building these instruments?
- How and why has the aid management differed in two countries within the selected development aid sectors, namely governance, rural development and environment?

1.4. Hypotheses

These questions are based on the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis #1

That the nature of the recipient country's regime is a significant factor in how it interacts with donors. Specifically, that a more open, democratic regime (e.g., a regime that has the attributes of liberal democracy) is more amenable to donors' initiatives. At the same time, as the realist theory suggests, the recipient countries accept foreign aid because of self-advantage; within donor-recipient interaction, recipient countries see their interests in terms of maximizing their power and increasing chances of survival. Drawing on constructivist framework, however, it is expected that different recipient countries accept aid differently, as they perceive/interpret (i.e., construct) the reality differently.

Hypothesis #2

That the country's level of dependence on foreign aid or, conversely, its access to non-aid revenue such as revenue from hydrocarbons, affect how the government and donors interact. More specifically, the more dependent the country is on foreign aid, the more amenable the recipient government is to donors' initiatives.

One should emphasize here that Hypotheses 1 and 2 are interlinked and not completely independent of each other. The availability of vast natural resources in Turkmenistan permits consolidation of an authoritarian regime based on the provision of natural resource rents to citizens. As the importance of taxing its citizens becomes marginal thanks to the availability of natural resource rents, Turkmenistan, hence, does not need to develop a social contract with its citizens. Conversely, in Kyrgyzstan, given the lack of natural resources, some form of social contract has been established between the state and the citizens, through which citizens can voice their concerns about how the state is governed. The existing research on resource-rich countries (or petro-states) suggests a direct relationship between the type of governance and dependence on natural resource exports (Schwarz, 2008; Tarzi & Schackow, 2012; Friedman, 2006). As emphasized by Ross in his longitudinal study of 113 states, when oil-rich "governments derive sufficient revenues from the sale of oil, they are likely to tax their populations less heavily or not at all, and the public in turn will be less likely to demand accountability from – and representation in – their government" (2001, p. 332).

Hypothesis #3

That the nature of the donor-recipient interactions differs from one sector to another. Specifically, that the more politically sensitive is the sector or the more the sector is likely to affect the nature or survival of the recipient country's regime, the more the recipient government tries to avoid, deflect, and/or distort donors' initiatives in that sector.

The corollary of the above is as follows: it is expected that donor-recipient relations is qualitatively different in Kyrgyzstan compared to Turkmenistan; that Kyrgyzstan is expected to be more amenable to donors' initiatives both because it is more aid-dependent than Turkmenistan and because the Kyrgyz regime is temperamentally more disposed to the views of the main Western donors and multilateral agencies than is the Turkmen regime.

A further corollary is that it is expected that both recipient governments, but especially Turkmenistan's, is less amenable to donors' initiatives in the governance sector than in the environment sector, given that governance reforms have the potential to fundamentally alter the nature – and even threaten the survival – of the recipient country's regime.

Hypothesis #4

That, while donors and the governments are expected to express rhetorical support for the international donor-recipient compacts (e.g., the Rome, Paris, Accra and Busan declarations), the implementation of aid-funded initiatives is not characterized by universal application of aid governance principles by donors and governments across all aid-funded sectors. Rather, that recipient governments and donors apply those principles selectively across different aid sectors, departing from the agreed commitments based on their immediate interests and objectives.

Hypothesis #5

That the way foreign aid is managed in and by Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan is affected by geopolitical importance attached to these recipient countries by Western donors within the framework of the wider "war on terror" and the global and regional politics of hydrocarbon resources. Specifically, the more the Western donors engage these two recipient countries in their geopolitical and geo-economic agendas, the more Western aid these recipient countries are likely to get and the less Western pressure they are likely to experience with regard to economic, political and governance reforms. A further corollary is that the emergence of non-OECD funding alternatives and the engagement of these recipient countries security, economic and political initiatives backed by non-OECD donors affect the two recipient countries' behaviour vs. traditional, Western donors.

Therefore, this thesis hypothesizes that the two governments treat different development aid sectors differently and the way they manage their relations with donors in aid sectors tends to depend on the nature of the regime and its priorities, which in turn are likely to be shaped by a combination of domestic factors and external vulnerabilities stemming from regional geopolitics. It is expected that aid in the governance sector is managed differently in the two countries. Due to the more closed nature of the regime, governance aid in Turkmenistan is expected to be subject to tighter monitoring and control from the government side than in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, it is also expected that aid in the environment and rural development sectors are managed differently in both countries than aid in governance sector.

1.5. Methodology, epistemology and ontology

Methodologically, this thesis uses a comparative political economy approach to analyze aid management in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, the two Central Asian countries with similar cultural, historical, linguistic and religious backgrounds. Despite their similarities, however, their post-Soviet paths diverged in terms of social, political and economic processes (Kavalski, 2010). This study draws on a qualitative, mixed-methods type of research using a cross-country comparative case study method. The analysis is based on the most-different systems design (MDSD) formulated by Przeworski and Teune. The MDSD allows conducting a cross-country comparison of the same dependent variable in different contexts and analyzing the key factors that cause the divergence. As emphasized by Przeworski and Teune, "in the most different systems design . . . . if nations differ, national factors will be examined" (1982, p. 36). Since this research focuses on the analysis of donor-recipient relations (i.e. dependent variable), the MDSD can be helpful in analyzing this

dependent variable and the extent to which it is influenced by other variables, such as the nature of the political regime, the resource base of the country, geopolitical and other [political economy] factors.

Conceptually, the research involves multiple levels of analysis. It studies the political economy of aid management in Central Asia on macro and micro levels. On a macro level, international relations theories – specifically the realist branch – are used to explore the macro-picture of evolving relations between the recipient governments and the external donors. Realism can help to understand motivations that guide recipient governments in maintaining their relations with donors (as well as the underlying factors of regime survival and preservation) within the framework of geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics. Geopolitical and geo-economic trends – and the angle through which the recipient governments consider them in their foreign and domestic policy-making – can have a direct impact on how aid projects and programs are managed on an everyday basis. This everyday interaction, or the micro-picture, is explored through a combination of collective action theory, evolutionary framework and complex adaptive systems. Combining these conceptual frameworks helps to understand the kind of strategies used by the recipient country agents (on individual and institutional levels) in managing aid-funded initiatives, to determine whether or not they developed trustful and cooperative behavior in their relations with donors, and to identify factors that had an impact on their incentive to cooperate, while situating these interactions in a broader regional political economy.

Epistemologically, the thesis employs a constructivist framework. This approach holds that the world is socially constructed and that we, as researchers, "can only experience it personally through our perceptions which are influenced by our preconceptions, beliefs and values" (Walliman, 2011, p. 22). At the same time, exploring this reality is based on "understanding people's perspectives in the context of the conditions and circumstances of their lives" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 21). The objective of research, according to a constructivist framework "is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Given the complexities underlying foreign aid, and taking into account that each country has a unique context in terms of actors involved and their interests, constructivism, compared to positivist framework, is likely to provide a more comprehensive framework in terms of understanding the reality behind aid discourse and grasping the political economy of aid relations.

The ontological position in conducting this research is based on the following two considerations:

a) I have lived in Turkmenistan since I was born there in 1976. As a teenager, I witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the birth of a new country in 1991. As a student of international affairs at Turkmen State University, I observed the arrival of various external players with varying degrees of involvement in domestic affairs.

b) From 1997 to 2013, I worked (as a local staff member) for various international organizations in Turkmenistan. In this capacity, I worked, on daily basis, with both expatriate staff of donor agencies and government officials on various levels (from working level to senior level) within the framework of various programs and projects. This insider perspective gave me an opportunity to observe donor-recipient relations in action.

From a research ethics point of view, the insider perspective mentioned above raises a number of questions. While previous affiliation with the international organizations can play a positive role (e.g., in terms of gaining access to data and being able to arrange interviews with key informants), it can also have some

undesirable consequences (e.g., former colleagues, invited to participate in the interviews, might feel obliged to participate out of concern to not worsen their relationships with me). These considerations are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

In addition to my personal experiences, various sources of information have been used in writing this thesis. These include academic sources, sources from donor agencies, government sources as well as the data collected through semi-structured interviews conducted from mid-May to late-August 2016 in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. Data collection methods are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.6. Thesis format and structure

The thesis is written in a monograph format, which is usually judged to be the most appropriate thesis format for this kind of ethnographic research. Monograph format logically and cohesively brings together all relevant parts of a single narrative. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the evolution of development aid policy and reviews key international policy documents. It also analyzes key theoretical frameworks and proposes a conceptual framework to study foreign aid interactions. Essential concepts and ideas, related to foreign aid, are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology to construct the comparative cross-country analysis, proposes the choice of field research methods and addresses the limitations and research constraints. It also discusses the ontological positioning and as well as ethical considerations. Chapter 4 summarizes the political economy of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, looking at issues such as history, culture, religion, politics and economics. It provides a content analysis of Kyrgyzstan's and Turkmenistan's contexts over the last century, with particular emphasis on the period since their independence in 1991. Chapter 5 looks at donor-recipient interaction on the regional and country levels and the relationships between the governments of the two countries and the external donors. It specifically analyzes the approaches of the host governments in their cooperation with new development donors and partners, who arrived in the region with limited knowledge of local realities.

Chapters 6 to 8 present the findings from the sectoral analyses of donor-recipient relations in the areas of governance, rural development and environment. These chapters examine how foreign aid has been managed in these three sectors and aim to respond to the research questions presented above. Each of these chapters also addresses the key *pain points*, which have affected donor-recipient interaction in respective aid sectors. The term pain point is adopted from the customer/user experience field, where users of a certain product or a service experience problems when interacting with the product owner or a service provider, be it online, via phone or other interaction channels. Shewan (2018) defines a pain point in the following way: "A pain point is a specific problem that prospective customers of your business are experiencing. In other words, you can think of pain points as problems, plain and simple."

Chapter 9 is a concluding chapter, which provides the summary of key findings resulting from the comparison of the two countries within the three sectors. It reviews policy and practical implications related to management of aid and proposes areas for future research.

1.7. Notes on transliteration and translation

When writing the names of government officials from Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, I have mainly used the transliteration system of the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) and the British Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (PCGN). The BGN/PSGN transliteration system was also used in the references section for the romanization of the names of sources originally written in Russian. However, exceptions have been made for some names, for which I used the officially adopted versions (e.g., Jeenbekov instead of Zheenbekov, Berdimuhamedov instead of Berdymukhamedov).

Chapters 4, 6, 7 and 8 contain quotes from speeches and statements of government officials, which I have translated from Russian into English. I have only translated those quotes that have been originally written in Russian. For these translated quotes and statements, in order to avoid repetition, I opted not to include an in-text remark indicating that the quote was translated.

Chapter 2 | Development aid: Evolution, theoretical and policy frameworks, key ideas

2.1. Introduction

The concept of foreign aid emerged after World War II. The launch of the Marshall Plan following the war was instrumental in reconstructing the post-war countries in Western Europe. The apparent success of the Marshall Plan encouraged the further expansion of aid-funded initiatives beyond the European continent, with developed countries paying increasing attention to the newly independent states, which emerged in the 1960s (Tarp, 2010).

With the proliferation of aid-funded development initiatives, a number of efforts have been made to critically analyze the challenges and major causes of aid failures. Among them are the commissioning of various studies and reports, including the Report of the Commission on International Development (Pearson et al., 1969), the Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (Brandt et al., 1980), various reports produced by the OECD, and particularly its Development Assistance Committee (OECD, 1996).

In a series of high-level consultations at the beginning of the twenty-first century, in Monterey (2002), Rome (2003), Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011), donors were urged to harmonize their procedures, untie their aid, increase national ownership, build capacities of recipient countries (United Nations, 2003a), decrease transaction costs (OECD, 2003a), and "improve the quality of aid and its impact on development" (OECD, 2011a, p. 1). The result of these mostly donor-led efforts was the production of key documents, which governed the provision of development aid, proposed standards for implementation of aid-funded country-level activities, and introduced codes of conduct for donors and recipients.

Although the language of those policy documents and aid allocation practices reflect the often implicit assumption of the passivity of aid recipients (Lamothe, 2010; Whitfield & Fraser, 2009) whose interactions with donors often result in the 'relationships of dominance' (MacLachlan, Carr, & McAuliffe, 2010), this thesis argues that aid recipients are not passive players in this process. Moving beyond the language adopted in international aid policy documents, this chapter looks at the agency of recipient governments, and their tactics and strategies in dealing with donors. As evidence from different country contexts demonstrates, recipient governments are not passive and they are able to successfully pursue their own objectives and priorities (Epstein & Gang, 2009) and effectively use their bargaining powers while negotiating with donors (Whitfield & Fraser, 2010; Swedlund, 2017).

Conceptually, the study of foreign aid has gone through several generations of scholarly work, mostly exploring the potential of foreign aid to contribute to economic growth and development in the recipient countries (White, 2007). Most of this literature focuses on the assessment of the impact of aid on growth based on positivist approaches characterized by investigative methods such as econometrics (Riddell, 2007), thus showing a strong bias towards quantification and disregarding important factors that cannot be measured. Primarily concerned with the measurement of the impact of foreign aid on growth, this literature finds that aid has a somewhat positive impact on growth, yet "the magnitude of this relationship is modest" (Clemens, Radelet, Bhavnani, & Bazzi, 2012, p. 590).

The aid-growth debate, although important in itself, is not the focus of my research. This thesis is not about aid effectiveness. Rather, it contributes to a different debate in development aid literature, one that focuses on the agency of recipient governments. This chapter argues that foreign aid is full of complexities,

encompassing an intricate set of actors, their interests and preferences, which shape those actors' behaviors, as well involving a range of issues related to aid management and aid delivery modalities (e.g., sectoral management, project aid vs. program aid, etc.). As Gibson, Andersson, Ostrom, and Shivakumar emphasize, development assistance has "multi-actor, multi-level, multi-owner characteristics" (2005, p. 226) and simply limiting this discussion to the dichotomy of aid and growth would be non-inclusive.

This chapter discusses the evolution of foreign aid, formally referred to as official development assistance (ODA), as well as the foreign aid policy framework, which provides guidance both for donors and recipients in maintaining their relationships and in pursuing their aid and development agendas. This chapter also provides the key theoretical perspectives in international development studies, through which academics and practitioners alike have debated foreign aid and the ways it has been used to promote or undermine development in the recipient countries.

Finally, this chapter outlines a conceptual framework, which appears to be useful to study foreign aid and interactions it involves. Taking the multi-actor and multidimensional nature of foreign aid as the basis, the proposed framework integrates various concepts, which are relevant for exploring the research questions proposed in this thesis.

2.2. Evolution of ODA and aid policy framework

The Official Development Assistance, or foreign aid for short, is defined by the OECD (2017a) in the following way:

> Official Development Assistance is defined as those flows to developing countries and multilateral institutions provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies, each transaction of which meets the following tests:
> a) it is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective; and
> b) it is concessional in character and conveys a grant element of at least 25% (p. 295).

Riddell argues that this definition of ODA "has largely been donor-driven" (2007, p. 18) and has not changed much since its inception in the 1960s. While developing countries have gradually become more vocal in their interactions with donors, there was little room for them to 'contest' this definition and to provide their own vision of what ODA should be (Riddell, 2007). Likewise, representatives of developing countries have stressed during various international fora that their positions and priorities in aid cooperation should be taken into account, complaining that aid governance "debate has been, for the time being, driven largely by the OECD" (UNCTAD, 2010, p. 1).

The origins of foreign aid go back to the post-World War II period when the United States launched its capital support program, commonly known as the Marshall Plan, whose objective was to provide financial and technical support to the war-torn European countries. According to Riddell, the scale of the Marshall Plan was 'unprecedented' in terms of its financial contribution, which "over the course of just a few years totaled some $13 bn. . . . This is equivalent to over $85 bn at current prices, an amount of ODA only surpassed for the first time very recently, in the year 2005" (2007, p. 24). The launch of the Marshall Plan in 1947 resonated well with prevailing post-war U.S. geopolitical priorities reflected in the 1949 inaugural speech of President Truman, also known as the Four-Point Speech. In this speech, President Truman proposed four interrelated areas through which the United States would take leadership on the global scale in order "to

build an even stronger structure of international order and justice" (Truman, 1949). These areas related to the provision of support to the newly-established United Nations and to strengthening its authority, continuation of the program of economic recovery on the global scale, strengthening freedom around the world through military and other types of cooperation, and finally, promoting growth in what Truman called 'underdeveloped areas' of the world (Truman, 1949).

The initiation of Marshall Plan led to the emergence of a foreign aid industry, with the establishment of aid agencies and their bureaucracies, both on bilateral and multilateral levels, and extension of development programs and projects on the global scale (Riddell, 2007). However, the management aspect of foreign aid, including management of donor-recipient relations, management of implementation processes, coordination of aid as well as other aspects, were not extensively addressed on the international level until important lessons learned were accumulated through subsequent decades of implementation of development programs and projects around the world. One of the first formal attempts to evaluate the management of aid was made in the late 1960s with the establishment of the World Bank Commission on International Development. The Commission addressed a number of challenges resulting in mismanagement of development aid and reflected on such issues as the importance of coordination among development partners and donors, national ownership, focus on national priorities and other aspects (Pearson et al., 1969). Attempts to introduce more nuanced approaches to evaluating the development work through the creation of evaluation units and evaluation training programs (Imas & Rist, 2009) had also been a response to the challenge of assessing the impact of development projects and programs.

The evolution of ODA can be broken down into two major periods: the Cold War period (late 1940s to late 1980s) and the post-Cold War period (1990 to the present time) (World Bank, 2008a). The 1940s and 1950s witnessed the formation of the ODA and its expansion throughout the world (Riddell, 2007). With the emergence of the newly independent countries in the 1960s, most Western countries transformed their programs supporting colonial administrations into 'development assistance programmes' (Veen, 2011, p. 7). Formal mechanisms dealing with development aid issues, such as the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, were also established in the 1960s. During the 1960s and 1970s, an increasing number of non-state actors started to get involved in aid implementation and management, such as NGOs as well as charity and faith-based organizations (Riddell, 2007). In the 1990s, when the majority of donor countries were affected by fiscal crisis, funding for development activities had been significantly reduced (Veen, 2011). During the Cold War period, foreign aid was used by both Western donors and the Soviet Union as an ideological and political tool to pursue their strategic priorities and economic interests, including through special programs such as President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress and the Soviet Union's military and economic aid programs to the Third World countries (Black, 2011; Riddell, 2007; Cassen & Associates, 1986; Arefieva, 1991). With the fall of Soviet and European communism in late 1980s and early 1990s, foreign aid has significantly increased and its coverage expanded to territories previously closed for external players, i.e., countries of the former Eastern Bloc. From the 2000s onwards, most of the development aid interaction has taken place within the framework of the globally agreed Millennium Development Goals/Sustainable Development Goals and the current aid management policy and institutional framework (Riddell, 2007).

A key milestone that contributed to development of the modern international policy and institutional framework for management of aid was the OECD publication titled "Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation" (OECD, 1996). This document proposed important dimensions

around which donor-recipient relations would evolve, setting normative responsibilities for both multilateral and bilateral donors as well as host-governments and local aid recipients. It also built the foundations for further work in this area, which was defined through high-level conferences organized in Monterey (2002), Rome (2003), Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011), whose overall objective was to develop the international policy frameworks for joint management of development aid on global, regional and country levels. Each of these high-level conferences had a major impact on development aid policies of both donors and recipient countries, as explained below:

- The 2002 conference in Monterey, Mexico, was the first global event which aimed at realigning donor-recipient relations. It addressed the growing concern for the lack of financing for development, with conference participants stressing that "achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, demands a new partnership between developed and developing countries" (United Nations, 2003a, p. 5). Participants committed to mobilization of internal and external financial resources to support national development efforts, making greater use of international trade "as an engine for development", and to addressing issues of interagency coordination, harmonization of procedures, and in general to building a more coherent system of donor-recipient relations (United Nations, 2003a).
- In 2003, donors and a selected number of aid recipient countries meet in Rome, at the First High-Level Forum. They expressed their concerns about unproductive transaction costs, limited capacity of recipient countries to manage aid-funded projects, multiple donor requirements, and the mismatch between donor practices and national development priorities and mechanisms. The results of those discussions were reflected in the Rome Declaration, the first official policy document outlining key principles of governance of aid (OECD, 2003a). Following this conference, a special Task Force on Donor Practices was established. It was tasked with development of operational procedures to strengthen national ownership and formulation of proposals to improve the system of "managing development assistance" to which both donors and recipients would abide (OECD, 2003b, p. 3).
- In 2005, donors and recipient countries met in Paris, at the Second High-Level Forum and jointly developed the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. This declaration introduced a "practical, action-oriented roadmap to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development" (OECD, 2011a, p. 1) and proposed five key principles of aid governance: ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, and mutual accountability. These principles are the cornerstone of the modern development aid policy agenda.
- Donors and recipient countries reiterated their commitments to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness at two subsequent meetings in Accra in 2008 and Busan in 2011 (OECD, 2011b). These additional high-level meetings brought in the aspect of inclusive partnership, with participants stressing the importance of involving newly emerging donors and civil society organizations in development cooperation.

These policy frameworks establish the basis of the present day 'aid architecture', which the World Bank defines as "the set of rules and institutions governing aid flows to developing countries" (World Bank, 2008a, p. 1). However, these policy frameworks have not gone uncontested. For example, there has been some criticism with regard to the way in which these policy documents were formulated. For example, G-77 countries (a group of developing countries jointly promoting their objectives through the United Nations and other international fora) have argued that their positions have not been adequately reflected in

elaborating international development policy documents, which has left "limited scope for developing countries to fully articulate and reflect their needs and priorities" (UNCTAD, 2010, p. 1).

Furthermore, there is strong criticism in the academic literature of key concepts promoted through international development aid policies. Some of these critical points refer to contradictions associated with the implementation of these principles. For example, according to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, donors are supposed to develop local capacity through strengthening national ownership of development initiatives, e.g., via better harmonization of procedures and better alignment with host-country systems and policies. Yet in practice, concerned about accountability to domestic taxpayers, donors continue to implement their own projects or tend to outsource the implementation to third parties (such as local and international non-governmental organizations or private consulting firms), thus bypassing the national authorities. These two conflicting, irreconcilable priorities from the perspective of donors challenge the implementation of development aid policies and instruments, such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (Sjöstedt, 2013). Other scholars present even more critical points, claiming that through concepts such as country ownership, governance, harmonization, alignment and partnership, foreign actors intervene in domestic affairs (Hoogvelt, 2001; Mosse, 2011).

Similarly, the language of these policy documents also appears to send mixed signals to the governments of developing countries. For example, on the one hand, the Paris Declaration stresses that "in determining the most effective modalities of aid delivery", donors "will be guided by development strategies and priorities established by partner countries" (OECD, 2006a, p. 9). This suggests that recipient countries have the freedom of choice in terms of selecting areas for development cooperation when receiving development assistance from the donor countries. On the other hand, the Accra Agenda for Action mentions that "aid is only one part of the development picture" and that "democracy, economic growth, social progress, and care for the environment are the prime engines of development in all countries" (OECD, 2008, p. 15). This tacit imposition of 'engines of development' on the recipient countries (especially those related to democracy), in turn, can put certain conditions for them in receiving aid and might potentially limit their choices in advancing their own development priorities funded through the ODA.

The debate around the imposition of conditions and underrepresentation of developing countries' concerns in co-managing development aid can be considered through what Foucault termed as the *discourse*, which he defines "as the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation" (Foucault, 1972, p. 107). Development as the discourse, being framed by Western actors, has been stressed by a number of authors. For example, Ferguson, throughout his analysis of development aid in Lesotho, argued, "that 'development' discourse does operate within a familiar broad contemporary configuration of Western knowledge" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 67). Based on these premises, some authors alluded to the interventionist nature of foreign aid imposed through different concepts, with donors claiming "they no longer make interventions at all, but rather support the conditions within which development can happen" (Mosse, 2011, p. 3). For example, Hoogvelt (2001) contends that donors impose 'governance' conditionalities on aid recipients, making the availability of donor funding subject to implementing 'governance' reforms and to creating 'enabling environment'. By imposing 'governance' conditionalities, donors "meddle in the internal affairs of state, targeting a plurality of actors, be they non-governmental organizations, micro-businesses, local communities, or grassroots organizations" which results in "redirection of 'aid' away from national governments" (Hoogvelt, 2001, p. 192). Likewise, as argued by Mosse, the use of concepts has become an essential element in donors' interaction with the recipients: "there is today unprecedented expert

consensus on how global poverty is to be eliminated and the poor governed, brought about by new processes of aid 'harmonization' or 'alignment'" (2011, p. 3). These discussions contribute to strengthening the already prevalent notion that Southern governments are passive recipients with submissive behaviors within donor-recipient interaction.

Studying foreign aid through discourse analysis can help to reveal the inconsistencies between declared objectives and actual practices of donors, whose approaches to development solutions in the recipient countries have been repeatedly criticized. Donors have been perceived as creating their own vision of development reality on the ground through narratives that "experts construct to connect a specified problem to a proposed solution" (Mosse, 2005, p. 57). Foucault's *governmentality* concept has been widely applied to study these narratives. Governmentality, according to Foucault, is a concept through which power is practiced via a combination of "institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics" (2001, p. 219) and through which "a whole complex of knowledges" is developed (2001, p. 220). Applying a governmentality concept, as argued by Ferguson (1994), allowed conducting a better analysis of the link between development policy and practice by "connecting observed discursive regularities to non-discursive practices and institutions" (p. 67).

Development anthropologists and ethnographers have extensively researched the inconsistencies between development policies and practices. In his ethnographic studies on aid policies and practices, Mosse notes that "despite the enormous energy devoted to generating the right policy models, strangely little attention is given to the relationship between these models and the practices and events that they are expected to generate or legitimize in particular contexts" (2005, p. 2). Studying donor-recipient interaction in co-managing aid, their explicit and implicit objectives, as well as specific patterns of their interaction in pursuing those objectives, appears to be important to understand the successes and failures of development interventions. Inconsistencies across various aspects of aid relationships have been documented extensively. For example, donors are criticized for inconsistencies in policies and practices in aid allocation on various grounds, which result in situations where recipients "often do not get what they want simply because they did not ask for it" (Browne, 2006, p. 140) and point out that there are clear commitment problems on the donors' side. Yet, not only donors but recipients as well can fail to deliver on their commitments while engaging in aid interaction. As argued by Swedlund, the successes or failures of development aid interaction depend on the ability of both donors and recipients "to make credible commitments" (2017, p. 89) in formulating and implementing aid-funded initiatives. While both donors and recipients 'willingly' engage in interaction, they are frequently unable to implement their commitments and, thus, they re-engage in 'aid policy bargaining' that leads to new 'aid policy compromises' (Swedlund, 2017).

Meanwhile, a number of authors contested the assumption that recipient governments are passive players in aid interaction. Killick, Gunatilaka, and Marr (1998) analyzed the adjustment programs of the international financial institutions (IFIs) and their conditionality policies in 21 countries of Latin America, Africa and South-East Asia implemented from 1980 to 1994. Using principal-agent theory, Killick et al. found strong evidence that outcomes of adjustment programs "are a result of calculations by governments and their officials about whether implementation will be in their own interests or not" (p. 163). If the recipient governments perceive adjustment programs to be "imposed from outside", with donors not securing enough government buy-in, the recipients' behavior will include "resentment, foot-dragging, sabotage and back-sliding" (Killick et al., 1998, p. 100). Their key message is that "domestic political calculations dominate decisions about economic policy changes and donor agencies are relatively powerless" in this

process (Killick et al., 1998, p. 151). Likewise, Whitfield and Fraser (2010) review aid negotiation strategies of eight African countries and produce findings that reject the passivity of aid recipients. As they emphasize, the recipient governments develop their negotiating strategies with the external donors taking into consideration "global and national economic, political, ideological, and institutional contexts", which they refer to as *structural conditions*. The harsher the structural conditions for the recipient government, the less control they exercise over policy outcomes funded through aid packages. Countries in possession of the strongest control over policy outcomes "have kept donors at arm's length while formulating their own policy positions and have largely kept them out of their domestic administrative systems" (Whitfield & Fraser, 2010, p. 364). Yet, they also observed that even countries with a weaker control were able to pursue their objectives too, by "asserting their policy position, rejecting donors' views which" they did not support and "pursuing the initiative with or without donors" (Whitfield & Fraser, 2010, p. 365).

As stressed above, aid interactions involve dealing with many collective action situations. As pointed out by Ostrom, "at the very heart of trying to achieve development assistance are collective action problems" and in order to address them, "we need the contributions of many participants" (2011, p. 26). The actions of the key participants involved in development cooperation, as opposed to their intentions and declarations, have been identified by some scholars as instrumental in understanding how recipients interact with foreign actors. Jeffrey Herbst, in his analysis of the state's interaction with foreign actors in Zimbabwe in the 1980s, stresses that one has to have a "perspective which focuses first on the actual operations of the state" in order to understand its decision-making characteristics (1990, p. 8). Other authors emphasize the importance of studying relationships between foreign donors and the host-governments. Analyzing these relationships helps to understand the agency of recipient governments better. It also helps to understand "how aid happens" (Wedel, 1998, p. 6), which eventually has an impact on the overall developmental outcome and the extent to which those collective action problems are solved.

2.3. Major theories addressing foreign aid

Theoretically, foreign aid has appeared in a number of international development theories. The following paragraphs discuss key theoretical frameworks, which have relevance for studying the agency of recipient states and their interactions with donors.

Modernization theory is one of the earliest frameworks, which addressed foreign aid and relations between the developed and newly-established independent countries. It emerged shortly after World War II and became a dominant theoretical framework in international development studies. Proponents of modernization theory assumed that foreign aid, along with other investments, resulted in accumulation of domestic savings eventually promoting growth and allowing developing countries to "take off" (Rostow, 1960; Rosenstein-Rodan, 1943). More recent forms of take-off were analyzed by Jeffrey Sachs (2005), who argued that it was possible for poor countries to resolve their development challenges and eventually escape the 'poverty trap' with financial assistance from donors. Modernization theory offers a somewhat simplistic conception of the agency of Southern recipient governments. It recognizes that recipient governments are involved in donor-recipient interaction, but they are represented as holistic entities, which supposedly act on behalf of the entire nation. The relationships with external donors during the early years of independence of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan were indeed characterized by two-actor engagement (i.e., donors and recipient governments) as there were no or very few non-state actors in those countries following the collapse of Soviet Union. Both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan were eager to 'modernize' (e.g., economically, politically, institutionally, etc.) with support from external partners from the first days of

their independence. Therefore, some analytical assumptions of modernization theory could be useful in analyzing donor-recipient interaction in the two countries.

Modernization theory gradually fell out of favor in the 1970s with the emergence of dependency theory, a framework highly critical of foreign aid. According to Hayter, "the existence of aid can be explained only in terms of an attempt to preserve the capitalist system in the Third World" (1971, p. 9). Hayter's critique of foreign aid is also based on the premise that "a common ideology of 'development'" is jointly maintained by the "elites of underdeveloped countries and the metropolitan countries" to promote their shared interests, which is to gain more profits out of this interaction (1981, p. 83). While some dependency theorists tend to diminish the agency of Southern recipient states (Hayter, 1971), others clearly recognize that Southern states, although dependent on external actors in terms of investments and know-how, have some (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979), and in certain cases significant (Evans, 1995) degree of autonomy in selection and implementation of their development strategies.

For Cardoso and Faletto (1979), dependency is undeniable, yet the context-specific relationships between various domestic and external groups may result in development taking place in Southern countries, a process, which they refer to as 'dependent development'. The Southern state's role in the process of dependent development, according to them, is 'fundamental', and "the role of bureaucracies and of technocrats is considerable" (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979, p. 204). For Evans (1995), similarly, the states are important, in that they create necessary preconditions for development to take place, by building alliances, devising policies and imposing rules of industrial growth. The dependency argument is included here as both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan established relations with multiple external actors with implicit and/or explicit agendas of economic and political domination deeply embedded into geopolitical encounters. How governments reacted to external influences and through which policies, measures and alliances, as well as how they protected their agent-hood are important questions.

Proponents of free market-led development, or neoliberalism, are equally critical of foreign aid, yet for different reasons. Bauer (1974) emphasizes that foreign aid's contribution to promotion of development and economic growth in the recipient countries is marginal, and that it often perpetuates poverty and patronizing relations between aid providers and recipients. According to Bauer (1974), developing countries would benefit more from being involved in international trade and removal of trade barriers in developed countries, rather than simply receiving aid from them. Dambisa Moyo's analysis of development challenges in the African countries critically reflects on foreign aid and its failures. Moyo (2009) explores broadly on development failures in Africa and notes that despite unprecedented amounts of foreign aid spent in the African countries, it did not have any positive impact on the lives of ordinary people. On the contrary, it worsened their lives. One of her key critical observations in relation to foreign aid is that it promotes corruption and that through increasing amounts of aid provided to recipient countries, governments in general, as well as their institutions and legal systems, become corrupt. This in turn results in countries losing their attractiveness for foreign investments, which hinders growth, reduces employment and ultimately contributes to poverty. In addition, Moyo (2009) suggests that aid promotes rent-seeking behavior by recipient governments, undermines the domestic civil society sector and contributes to the emergence of conflicts involving a range of domestic players competing for aid resources. In a related way, Deepak Lal argues that foreign aid perpetuates the economic problems of the recipient states in Africa and contributes to the establishment of highly corrupt dirigiste governments, with much of external financial aid being "stolen or wasted" (2013, p. 178).

For proponents of neoliberalism, therefore, the agency of aid recipients is limited to one that fosters corruption and constantly engages in rent-seeking activities. In the view of neoliberalism theorists, the agency of recipient states is presented as narrow groups of usually corrupt self-interested individuals, who are involved in aid interaction on behalf of the nation, but whose interests do not necessarily represent the wider public interests. Aid received by Southern governments, therefore, disproportionately benefits a small group of political elites and those affiliated with them, while "the poorest are largely untouched by aid" (Bauer, 1972, p. 21). Access to aid-generated wealth, then, contributes to strengthening of those corrupt regimes (Moyo, 2009), who continue to engage with donors on behalf of the country and its people. Both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan were encouraged to implement liberal market reforms in line with neoliberal prescriptions from the early years of independence, yet the intensity of those reforms varied: Kyrgyzstan was one of the most active reformers in the region, while Turkmenistan was considered as a reform-laggard (Nørgaard, 2000). How and why liberal economic reforms lobbied by the external actors varied is closely intertwined with those countries' strategies of working with external donors. Therefore, neoliberalism presents another important framework through lenses of which the donor-recipient interactions could be considered.

Institutional approaches in international development started gaining prominence since the early 1990s with Douglass North's seminal work (1991) on institutions and the impact they have on economic growth and development. The role of institutions has been widely reflected in policies of major development agencies. For example, the World Bank's World Development Report 2002 focused entirely on institutions, with the key argument being that 'effective institutions' are a precondition for sustained development (World Bank, 2002). Attention to institutions increased within academia too, with some scholars noting that countries with *good policy environments* tend to benefit more from the interaction with donors compared to countries with domestic *policy distortions* (Burnside & Dollar, 2000), and others arguing that aid delivered to countries with poor institutions is not likely to benefit their people, and hence the need to invest more in building "inclusive economic and political institutions" (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012, p. 454). Studying the characteristics of institutions in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan is instrumental as it helps to develop greater understanding of the agency of recipient governments and the strategies they use in dealing with external donors. States with more inclusive and effective institutions (as per the donor-framed language of aid governance) will tend to be more open for cooperation, as opposed to states with *extractive* and *non-inclusive* institutions.

Overall, theoretical reflections regarding foreign aid evolved with the changing international development context. With changing perceptions about the role of foreign aid, so did the notion of the agency of aid recipients. Foreign aid was seen as playing a positive role during the post-World War II period when modernization theory was on the rise and states occupied one of the central positions in aid relations. With dependency theory gaining prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, foreign aid was severely criticized for perpetuating poverty in developing countries, promoting interests of rich countries, and for cultivating dependent relations between them. The recipient-states were seen as weak and dependent on external actors, albeit with some degree of autonomy over which development trajectories to pursue.

During the period of neoliberal reforms and structural adjustments of the 1980s, foreign aid was widely criticized as a key contributor to corruption and rent-seeking in the recipient states, whose agency was typically represented by narrow groups of self-interested and corrupt local elites benefiting from foreign

aid. The period from 1990s-onwards witnessed the emergence of institutional economics (which was concerned with building more effective and inclusive institutions in the recipient countries) and the adoption of development goals on the global scale. The agency of recipient states was brought back in, as the implementation of newly adopted global development goals required unquestionable involvement of Southern governments, whose institutional capacity was to be enhanced through more nuanced donor-recipient engagement.

2.4. Key discussions in foreign aid literature

The foreign aid literature offers rich depictions of various concepts and phenomena. The following paragraphs attempt to provide key discussions in foreign aid literature, which are relevant for this dissertation.

Foreign aid: Technical vs. political

Although aid was used as a political instrument to advance strategic interests during the Cold War period, programmatically, development challenges in recipient countries were considered apolitical (Apthorpe, 2012) and donors treated development initiatives as technocratic endeavors for a long time (Carothers & De Gramont, 2013; Duncan & Williams, 2012). Fear of losing allies among the recipient governments, resistance on the side of recipients to let donors intervene in domestic political processes, donors' preference to treat all social and economic challenges as technical issues, and failure to critically assess and understand local development dynamics are among the reasons why the apolitical approach to development prevailed during the Cold War period. In addition, aid interaction remained predominantly state-centric during the Cold War period, with donors having become accustomed to dealing with governments, rather than non-state actors. The language of the 2005 Paris Declaration indeed reflected that state-centric approach and neglected the role of non-state actors, despite their increasing involvement in development work both as donors (i.e., providers of funding) and as implementing agents (i.e., in charge of implementing development projects) since the late 1980s and early 1990s (Riddell, 2007).

Since the 1990s, donors have gradually started introducing political economy analysis and governance assessments, in order to better understand general development processes and specific contexts in which development interaction takes place (Duncan & Williams, 2012). This made way for implementation of new wave of projects focusing on political issues such as democracy promotion, governance, inclusive and participatory development. As argued by Carothers and De Gramont (2013), until donors start treating development work as politically motivated engagement, the impact of development initiatives on the ground will be limited.

One of the examples of development interaction being treated as technical endeavors comes from the area of capacity development. Government capacity development (GCD) has been identified by Armstrong (2013) as a complex area, in which traditional linear management models might have little relevance. Armstrong analyzes the problems of externally-aided capacity development interventions implemented as best-practice approaches, and emphasizes that "the almost universally applied 'standard model' approach to GCD is based on the assumption that capacity development is a technical problem, to which experts can apply 'solutions'" (2013, p. 3). He further stresses that despite development agencies' realization that "capacity development must be context specific" (Armstrong, 2013, p. 10), many of them fail to realize the wicked nature of the context and its complexity.

Introduction of political economy analysis, along with the increasing realization that aid projects should be context specific and take into account local power dynamics, implies that foreign aid is political and that engagement in aid interaction can be politically motivated. This, in turn, leads us to assume that the recipient governments (and their representatives managing aid-funded projects), as politically motivated actors, have a strong sense of agency, and through this sense of agency they are able to promote their interests and objectives. How aid has been managed by the recipient-states and what political, administrative and technical arrangements and procedures they have devised in managing foreign aid in line with their interests and objectives, are the key issues addressed in the core research question and sub-questions. The agency of state as an active player in donor-recipient interaction is the focus of this thesis.

Foreign aid and delivery channels: Government vs. non-government

There has been much debate in both academic and professional literature stressing donors' concern to provide ODA through and to state authorities due to alleged widespread corruption and ineffective management of aid disbursements by recipient countries. In those poor policy environments, donors prefer to channel their financial assistance through NGOs. Isolating government agencies and using NGOs in the utilization of donor funding results in further weakening of the state capacity and undermines its authority (Kelly, 2010). In addition, aid-funded projects implemented directly by donors and foreign NGOs, even though through locally-hired staff, result in poor accountability towards local people and host-governments since "they have less reason to care about their own state, to engage with it politically" (Kelly, 2010, p. 12). The engagement of NGOs is portrayed as a critical factor promoted through the Western-dominated discourse of development and reflected through the concept of empowerment (Joseph, 2010) and civil society.

Looking at the involvement of non-state actors in the implementation of donor-funded projects in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, and the extent to which donors channel their funding through NGOs or other non-state actors is critical as it helps to understand the nature of the political regimes in these countries. In a more open regime, the involvement of non-state actors is expected to be more vigorous, with donors using local non-state actors as intermediaries in their country program strategies. In a more closed and restrictive regime, the involvement of non-state actors is expected to be minimal, as the government will be wary of donors' willingness to use local non-state actors in order to promote their projects and programs through them.

The preference of donors in terms of whether to channel their funds through NGOs or government authorities, according to Dietrich (2016), also depends on the extent to which the state in donor's home country is involved in delivery of public services. Countries, in which market efficiency in provision of public services is emphasized (e.g., United States, United Kingdom), tend to outsource the implementation of aid projects to third parties, such as the NGOs, private companies, the United Nations and other international organizations. On the contrary, countries in which the state plays a strong role in provision of public services (e.g., Japan, France, Germany) tend to channel their aid through state institutions. As stressed by Dietrich, "to understand different aid policies, one needs to understand the political economies of donors" (2016, p. 66). Countries emphasizing market efficiency will try to "bypass when the public sector in the recipient country poses high risks for aid delivery" (Dietrich, 2016, p. 66). Dietrich's observations can be potentially useful in analyzing the inclination of certain donors to use the local non-state actors for the implementation of their projects in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan (especially such donors as USAID, which tend to be more

vocal about supporting local civil society organizations, building their capacity and generally involving them in their projects and programs).

Foreign aid: Ownership and local capacity building

The concept of national ownership started being used relatively recently in the management of donor-funded projects, but has become one of the central themes in donor-recipient relations. However, the term is defined in an ambiguous way, which on the practical level creates conceptual challenges in its application (Buffardi, 2013). Part of the confusion comes from the perception of the concept of ownership in various cultural settings. The Anglo-Saxon perception of ownership, based on a 'rationalistic' and legally binding conception of ownership of a certain property protected by laws, might be completely different from the perceptions of ownership used in other cultures (Brian, 2000). Considered through the lens of property rights, which involves a concrete individual (or a business entity or an organization) in possession of a concrete thing, this notion of ownership could hardly be applied in other spheres of human interactions. For example, in the area of international development "many programmes intended to improve health and human development do not generate tangible products for which legal rights can be acquired by a single beneficiary" (Buffardi, 2013, p. 979).

The concept of ownership in aid governance reflects the commitment of recipient countries to "exercise leadership in developing and implementing their national development strategies through broad consultative processes"; it also reflects the commitment of donors to "respect partner country leadership and help strengthen their capacity to exercise it" (OECD, 2008, p. 3). Yet, donors' inadequate use of host-country systems, insufficient alignment with host-country policies, and their reluctance to alter non-aid policies in relation to recipient countries undermine national ownership (Booth D., 2012).

In addition, national ownership and national capacity to implement development projects are undermined by the high degree of aid fragmentation among donors (Ghani & Lockhart, 2008). Longitudinal studies demonstrate that development aid provided in a fragmented manner by a large number of donors negatively affects the capacity of the recipient countries. As stressed by Knack and Rahman, "bureaucratic quality suffers where aid is fragmented more severely across donors" and that while donors struggle to demonstrate results, they "act to maximize performance of their own projects, and shirk on provision of the public sector human and organizational infrastructure essential for the country's overall long-term development" (2004, p. 24). Donors are also constrained in their commitment to national ownership and alignment with recipient country priorities by the necessity to continuously use results-based management (RBM) techniques, the application of which tends to promote donor priorities rather than those of the recipients (Sjöstedt, 2013). This situation leads to diminishing the importance of country ownership and limiting the role of the recipients in developing their own policies and procedures (Quibria, 2014).

Exploring the concept of national ownership in this thesis helps to show both donors' and the recipients' conformity with the Paris Declaration and other internationally promulgated documents. The conformity of the recipient countries is expected to be different, depending on the depth and intensity of interaction of governments in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan with the external donors, availability of non-aid resources, and geopolitical factors. On the donors' side, a closer look at their project management modalities (e.g., whether they use national project teams and national procurement processes, or rather, they hire their own

project staff and use their own results-based management guidelines) will demonstrate the extent to which donor projects are aligned with national systems and contribute to capacity building of national partners.

2.5. Conceptual framework to study foreign aid relations

The analysis of the political economy of foreign aid in the recipient countries can potentially integrate various theories that address interrelated issues hypothesized in this thesis. Considering the general hypothesis that governments will have a different attitude toward aid given to different development sectors, and that the management of donor-recipient relations in those sectors is likely to depend on the nature of the regime and its priorities shaped by internal and external factors (such as the degree of rent-seeking in the domestic economy, regional geopolitical issues, availability of hydrocarbon resources etc.), the analytical framework can conceptually use international relations theories, the literature on evolutionary theory and adaptive behavior, as well as the new institutional economics and particularly the collective action theory.

A political economy approach offers a more inclusive framework to analyze development aid than other analytical frameworks. For example, while a *political analysis* framework offers "a more nuanced understanding of institutions, a more open and realistic debate about the nature of power in development, and a more systematic approach to development policy analysis", it does not fully reflect on "actual change in aid practices, due to an overly macro-political and academic focus" (Yanguas & Hulme, 2015, p. 210). Similarly, a *standard economic analysis* framework used by donors was referred to as "exceedingly technical" and paid little attention to "political incentives and motivations" (Tolentino, 2010, p. 4). A number of authors have argued that development issues are approached as technical issues (Copestake & Williams, 2014), separated from politics, and that this disregard of politics in development analysis of major donors resulted in a failure of donor-supported reforms and initiatives in the recipient countries (Yanguas & Hulme, 2015). As Duncan and Williams (2012) maintain, since the end of the Cold War, donors started focusing on political issues (human rights, governance, institutional reform) and political economy analysis started being applied more systematically to understand key factors around development aid in general, and the way it is implemented in particular contexts. It was also seen as useful in grasping the power dynamics on various levels (country, regional, global) and in examining the role of institutions and development actors, whose political influences had a direct impact on designing and implementing development policies.

International relations theories analyze issues a on macro-level, addressing power dynamics within the wider regional/global context, national interests vs. international commitments/obligations (e.g., in the global war on terror) as well as the factor of natural resources and their role in shaping the interaction between recipients and donors. International relations (IR) theories intersect well with other analytical frameworks, namely collective action theory and an evolutionary framework when analyzing donor-recipient relations. While IR theories address macro-level dimensions of this interaction, collective action theory and an evolutionary framework can be applied to analyze micro-level everyday actions of actors involved in collective management of aid and the extent to which they adapt to each other's actions and behavior characterized by a high degree of complexity (Ostrom, 1999; 2007; Ramalingam, 2014).

In Chapter 1, I hypothesized (Hypothesis 3) that aid recipients will try to avoid international cooperation in those areas in which the engagement of external donors is likely to change the nature of the regime, and hence affect its survival. The international players, represented by a range of bilateral and multilateral

donors, and the recipient governments' interaction with them can be viewed through the realist branch of the IR theories. Realism seeks to explain the behavior and actions of recipient governments and how they maintain their relationships with external donors. Recipient governments might perceive the very idea of international partnership and donor support through the lens of realism. As suggested in Hypothesis 1, the nature of a country's regime is a significant factor that shapes the recipient government's actions and behavior: a more open, democratic regime is expected to behave more cooperatively and show a certain degree of openness toward donors' initiatives. Yet, as Hypothesis 3 suggests, in those sectors which are existential for the survival of the country's regime, the recipient government will try to avoid, deflect, and/or distort donors' initiatives.

In maintaining this partnership, the recipient countries will most likely be guided by considerations of maximizing their own security (Elman & Elman, 2003), given the fact that the Western actors are inclined to use "international institutions, military power and economic resources to run the world in ways that will maintain Western predominance, protect Western interests and promote Western political and economic values" (Huntington, 1993, p. 40). By integrating aid recipients into cooperation maintained through international aid system, Western actors can be seen as attempting to gain access and to modify governance systems in those countries. Through this cooperation, it could be argued, donors try to ensure the recipient governments' complicity in aid policies, which, as referred to in previous sections, are developed more in line with the objectives of the external donors. Management of aid-funded initiatives induced through this cooperation might also depend on the geopolitical and geo-economic importance, which donors attach to recipient countries, as stated in Hypothesis 5. At the same time, the intensity and extent of the recipients' interaction with donors is also likely to depend on the availability of non-aid revenues generated by domestic extractive industries or other sectors (Hypothesis 2).

As argued by Morgenthau, "international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power" and that in pursuing their objectives, statesmen are guided by considerations of power (1948, p. 13). Therefore, promoting national interests through the rational exercise of power is of utmost importance for the states to ensure their survival. However, the nature of state interests, or how a given state interprets its vital interests, is likely to depend on many state-specific characteristics, as stated in Hypothesis 1, and on the degree of sensitivity that a given state attaches to certain sectors, as stated in Hypothesis 3. The interests of the two countries selected for the research and the interplay of those interests with external factors, such as foreign aid, can, therefore, be explained through the realist paradigm. The realist paradigm is also useful in comparing the actions of recipient governments and donors vis-à-vis their commitments in line with the international aid policy documents. Comparing actions and formal declarations helps to understand the extent to which each government's and donor's interests will lead them to depart from the agreed aid governance frameworks, as stated in Hypothesis 4.

At the same time, when looking beyond macro-level state interests, one can observe specific patterns of behavior and evolving formal and informal institutions through which different agencies and individuals representing key actors (i.e., external donors, recipient governments, other domestic actors) are engaged in adaptive interaction in managing foreign aid. The concepts of evolution and adaptation originate from Darwin's evolutionary theory widely applied in biology. Evolutionary theory, according to Nowak, consists of "three building blocks of evolutionary dynamics: replication, selection and mutation" (2006, p. 9).

The key principles of the evolutionary framework have recently started being applied in social sciences, with attempts to explain different processes through evolutionary perspectives. For example, Hodgson and Knudsen draw useful analogies between biology and other areas of human interactions, emphasizing that "just as organisms compete for scarce resources, businesses, states, and other organizations do likewise. They adapt and change" (2010, p. 1). In addition, as argued by Ramalingam, "drawing on work by evolutionary economists, cognitive psychologists, and behavioural theorists, the notion of adaptation and evolution has become widely used as a means to understand social and political phenomena, from conflict dynamics to political institutions, technological change, and economic growth" (2014, p. 180). Likewise, Messner, Guarin, and Haun, in their analysis of behavioral patterns within international cooperation, argue that "the concepts (and language) of evolutionary theory such as 'fitness' and 'selection' have been influential in social sciences" (2013, p. 10). Evolutionary theory perspectives can also be found in foreign policy analysis. Rosenau views "the nation as an adapting organism" and foreign policy as the behavioral reaction to changes in prevailing circumstances, with countries demonstrating 'adaptive' or 'maladaptive' behavior (1970, p. 366).

Based on evolutionary perspectives, attempts were made to provide explanations regarding the emergence of *cooperative behavior* (Messner et al., 2013). Axelrod (1984) provided various patterns of cooperative behavior by analyzing the results of a computer tournament in game theories and identified key characteristics with regard to the emergence of cooperation, such as reciprocity and putting more emphasis on future interaction, which he termed as *the shadow of the future*. According to Axelrod, "cooperation can get started by even a small cluster of individuals who are prepared to reciprocate cooperation, even in a world where no one else will cooperate" (1984, p. 173). Applying Axelrod's insights to Central Asian countries, one can argue that all of them have formally established relations with a variety of external players on bilateral and multilateral levels and have created institutional mechanisms for maintaining the interaction with them on a long-term basis. The longer the exposure to this interaction, the greater are the chances to have a more durable cooperation, and subsequently much greater is the shadow of the future likely to be. However, the cooperation can be negatively affected by frequent changes of the officials working with donors, which is a common practice in authoritarian regimes and countries with unstable political environments, as well as in donor organizations and the United Nations agencies and funds. Among the donor agencies, most expatriate senior and mid-level staff are rotated on a three- to five-year term. Subsequently, it will take some time for the new staff to learn about each other and gain trust since they do not have a history of previous interaction. The donor-recipient cooperation can also be affected by 'commitment problems'. According to Swedlund (2017), both donors and recipients find it difficult 'to make credible commitments' because they both frequently fail to deliver on their initial promises due to various issues. Yet, as Ostrom (2005) suggests, there is a reasonable potential for the emergence of cooperation as the interacting parties get to learn about each other and try to gain a reputation as a trustworthy and cooperative partner. This strategy, in the long-term perspective, tends to be more beneficial than pursuing one's own narrow interests based on rational behavior. The higher the level of accumulated trust, the greater is the chance that interacting parties will positively reciprocate and cooperate with each other. However, Ostrom notes that the emergence of trust depends on a range of "structural variables as well as the past experiences of participants" (2005, p. 50).

Referring to the multifaceted nature of development cooperation, proponents of complexity thinking have pointed to the mismatch between the approaches used by donors and the complex realities that they deal with in various contexts. According to arguments provided by complexity thinking proponents,

international development problems are treated as the simple, closed problems and donors fail to take account of the whole range of complex issues (Ramalingam, 2014). Development challenges, as argued by complexity theorists, are often highly complex, involving complex networks of players and actors, their interests and relations (Apthorpe, 2012). In the complex environment prevailing in many recipient countries, where the changes are unexpected, development initiatives that do not adequately adapt to those changes are not likely to achieve their overall objectives (Swanson & Bhadwal, 2009).

As a way of dealing with those complexities, donors have been encouraged to adopt complex adaptive systems, known for their flexibility, adaptive way of management and focus on non-linear, unpredictable change (Armstrong, 2013; Andrews, 2013; Rondinelli, 1993). The ability to adapt becomes equally important for recipients as well, since, as argued by Armstrong, development interventions can only be beneficial if both recipients and donors work together in a "co-learning, co-diagnosing, co-designing and co-acting" way (2013, p. 221). Yet, adaptive cooperation also requires that actors involved in this cooperation know each other well, or be able to predict each other's behavior based on previous interaction (Axelrod, 1984). As emphasized by Ostrom, the interaction, which involves various actors, and the way they adapt to each other's behavior can result in "designing new tools – including institutions – that can change the structure of the worlds they face for good or evil purposes. They adopt both short-term and long-term perspective dependent on the structure of opportunities they face" (2007, p. 195).

The process of adaptation of both donors and recipients leads to "the alteration of the institutional matrix" (North, 2005, p. 3) and the emergence of *adaptive agents* (Ramalingam, 2014). As put by Ramalingam, this interaction "leads to an ongoing series of actions, interactions, adaptations, and landscape movements" (2014, p. 182). One way of looking at the institutional changes would be through collective action theory. Collective action theory could be helpful in analyzing the institutional aspects of managing foreign aid as a collective action problem. Through collective action theory, one could look at local institutional arrangements (whether cooperative or not) in the recipient countries, created through the daily interaction of recipient governments and donors. Ostrom, Gibson, Shivakumar and Andersson emphasize that "individuals are capable of crafting solutions to their own diverse problems of collective action", which "requires a rich set of general and special institutional arrangements at local, regional and national levels" (2012, p. 11). Yet, institutional arrangements can be complex in various settings, and standard approaches applied to all institutional contexts can be misleading. Ostrom stresses this point in the following way: "policy analysts who would recommend a single prescription for common problems paid little attention to how diverse institutional arrangements operate in practice" (1990, pp. 21-22).

As emphasized previously, proponents of collective action theory suggest that this approach offers an inclusive framework to better understand the complexities of development aid. Gibson et al. (2005) explore various frameworks of donor-recipient interaction. They argue that development interaction is full of collective action problems and that the motivations of each player involved in this interaction, as well as information asymmetries, have an influence on their incentives to cooperate. Different scenarios of donor-recipient interaction are proposed by these authors, involving *passive recipient engagement* (where recipients agree with all initiatives without any commitment), *active recipient engagement* (in which recipients agree and commit to donor-funded initiatives), and *unengaging recipients* (in which recipients disagree with donor-funded initiatives and commit to implement own development policies). This configuration involving motivation problems and information asymmetries produces "particular patterns of incentives that affect sustainable development" (Gibson et al., 2005, p. 223). Collective action theory

presents a useful framework to analyze the internal dynamics in managing foreign aid and the extent to which recipient governments and donors adapt to each other's behavior and develop adaptation strategies as well as formal and informal institutions. In this donor-recipient interaction, a specific cooperation framework can evolve within the context shaped by opportunities and limitations. The range of those limitations and opportunities can vary in different countries. As stated in Hypothesis 2, the country's dependence on external aid or conversely its access to non-aid resources (with the former being a limitation and the latter being an opportunity), will, we hypothesize, affect how the government will interact with donors, with a more aid-dependent country being more amenable to donors' initiatives.

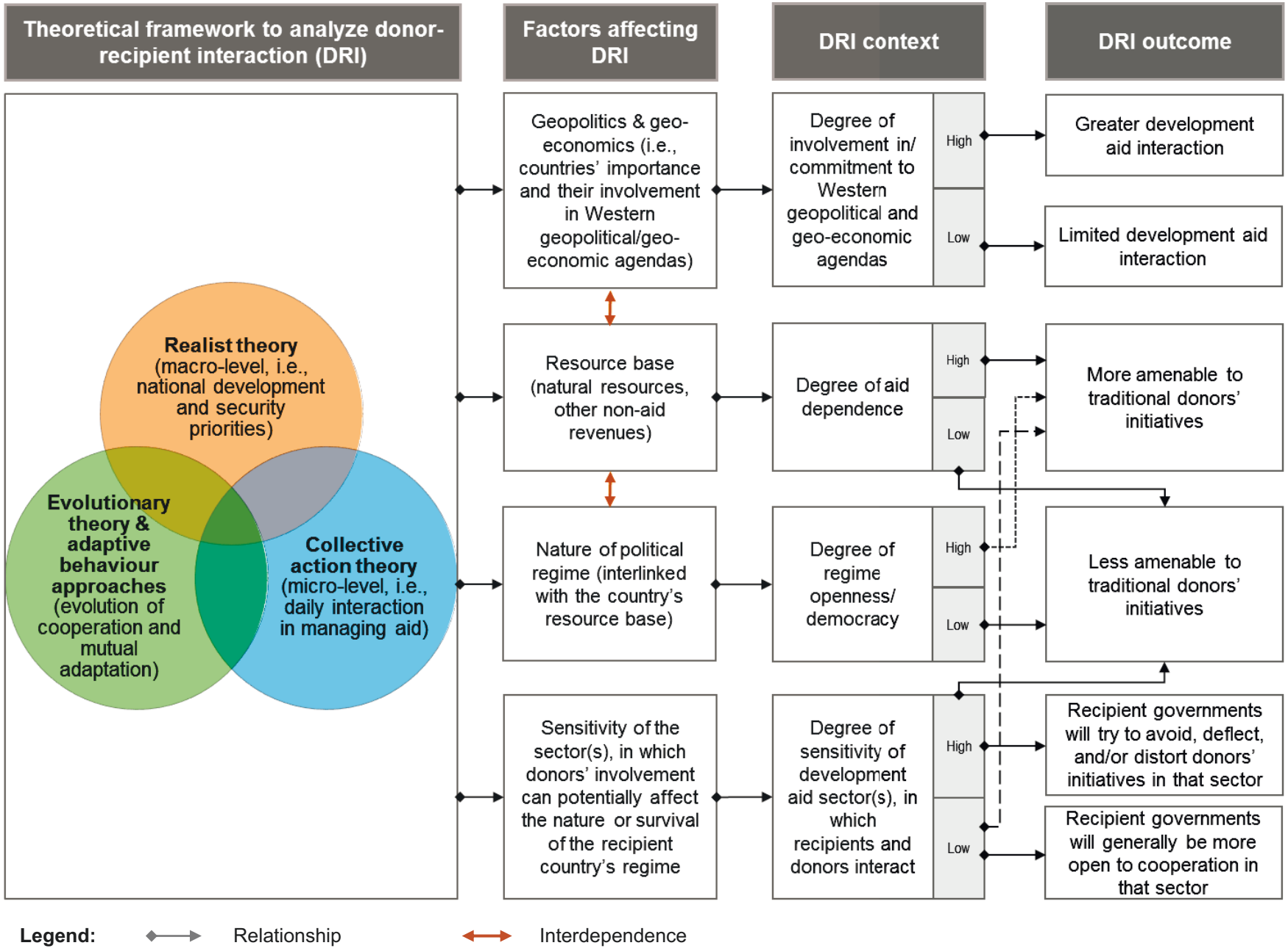
An additional and related concept that is useful for studying development cooperation in the former Soviet Union (FSU) countries is the concept of transition economies that dwells on the institutional and structural features of the countries in transition. Cooperation of these newly independent states with the external aid players started shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These newly independent states started receiving foreign aid to support their transformation from command economies to market economies. As highlighted by Mickiewicz, "new governments in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia faced an immediate task to fix the ailing economies", which in turn "implied replacing command economy with the markets; that is with the conditions of economic freedom" (2010, p. 37). Marelli and Signorelli argue that "the core of transformation was institutional change, an overall process, in which price liberalization, privatization and the emergence of new governance were key aspects" (2010, p. 12). While the pace and depth of transition have been different in various FSU countries, they all had to go through the process of change and to start building relations with the external actors from scratch, resulting in varying outcomes in different countries.

Based on the above-mentioned theoretical frameworks, the analytical inquiry on the political economy of foreign aid in the two countries could be pursued at multiple levels. On the one side, the realist paradigm is used to analyze macro-level issues, associated with state interests and how these interests are transformed into states' actions. On the other hand, collective action theory and evolutionary and adaptation frameworks allow going beyond those macro issues and focusing on everyday actions, incentives and relationships of recipient governments and donors. While this analysis targets the institutional interaction between governments and donors, it is also equally important to analyze the impact of individual interactions on aid management. This is especially important given the frequent turnover of staff in both governments and donors and the fact that the new people in charge of maintaining this interaction have to build a sufficient level of trust in order for cooperation to evolve. This intertwined analysis is helpful in revealing the impact of those macro and micro factors on the management of aid in the given sectors. As argued by Ostrom, analyses at the macro level pay attention to broader structures and issues, which, "in turn, affect the type of collective-choice decisions as they eventually impinge on the day-to-day decisions" of relevant actors being analyzed (1999, p. 38).

Schematically, an analytical model of donor-recipient interaction (DRI) is illustrated in Figure 2.1, which offers a visual representation of relationship between:

a) Donors and recipients;
b) Causes and effects in donor-recipient interaction; and
c) Theoretical frameworks/approaches and research hypotheses.

Figure 2.1: Analytical model of donor-recipient interaction



2.6. Conclusion

Measurement of the impact of aid on economic growth and poverty reduction based on quantification dominated much of the development aid literature, but that is not the focus of this research. The objective of this chapter was to show the complexities of development aid and of interactions that take place within the framework of foreign aid discourse. Since this interaction involves a network of international and domestic players, with various incentives and motivations, it is important to explore those incentives and motivations. Learning these interactions helps to understand the agency of recipient governments and their ability to consciously choose strategies, tactics and actions which allow them to exercise varying degrees of control (depending on the specificities of each country) over aid flows, policies, program areas and management modalities.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, on the macro level, the recipient governments have been usually viewed as passive players within the framework of donor-led and donor-formulated foreign aid architecture. However, interactions on the micro-level, which involve donor and recipient government officials and institutions, lead us to hypothesize that recipient governments are not as weak as they are often portrayed. Depending on the nature of domestic structural conditions, as well as global political and economic opportunities and constraints (Whitfield & Fraser, 2010), they develop their strategies and tactics in interacting with donors, and try to use that interaction for their own benefit, in order to pursue their own objectives and preferences. In addition, individual officials on both government and donor sides may at times pursue personal agendas and interests within the framework of donor-government interactions.

Overall, in this chapter I have explored a range of relevant issues that contribute to understanding the complexity of development aid interactions and how those issues related to the agency of recipient governments. Reviewing all these issues, concepts and theories is useful to set the background for aid policy framework and donor-recipient interactions.

Chapter 3 | Methodological framework

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology and methods that were used in exploring the hypotheses and research questions outlined in Chapter 1. It consists of the following sections. Section 3.2 discusses epistemology, positionality and reflexivity. Selection of research methods is discussed in detail in Section 3.3, which provides relevant argumentation as to why the proposed research methods have been selected. I then discuss data collection and data analysis in Sections 3.4 and 3.5, explaining how I collected the data as well as what tools and approaches I have used to analyze them. Section 3.6 addresses research conditions, challenges and limitations in each of the countries. Ethical issues are outlined in Section 3.7, which lists key issues and risks and discusses measures to mitigate them. Finally, the concluding section summarizes the discussion on the selected research methods and the challenges faced during the research.

3.2. Epistemology, positionality and reflexivity

Because this thesis explores the incentives and motivations of various actors involved in aid interactions on both sides, I use the constructivist approach to develop a greater understanding of these issues. Using positivism as a methodological framework, in my opinion, cannot provide insights into the incentives and motivations of key actors. To support the analysis, I occasionally use quantitative data on aid disbursements to the recipient countries.

My positionality in conducting this research is based on a combination of my personal and professional experiences. I lived and worked in Turkmenistan and I occasionally travelled to and worked with colleagues from Kyrgyzstan. The collapse of the Soviet Union, which had integrated both countries as union republics, brought numerous external actors into the region. As a Central Asian, I could observe the arrival of these new actors, which has been an indication of greater exposure of the region to expertise, knowledge and practices brought by those new actors. I also had the opportunity to be part of aid interactions through my work experience in aid-funded projects and programs. Involvement in development work provided me with an opportunity to observe how aid interactions happen and to learn the behavior of both donors and government recipients. Being a Central Asian with personal experiences of living in a collapsing country and finding myself in a newly-established country, combined with work experience in various development programs and projects, I believe, make me well-placed to conduct research on and in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

My researcher reflexivity stems from my positionality, in that I am reflecting upon my personal knowledge and experiences. However, I am also reflecting upon the experiences and knowledge of others, with whom I interacted through my fieldwork conducted in the two countries. As stated by Coffey, "qualitative fieldwork has a biographical dimension" in the sense that a researcher is "concerned with observing, (re)constructing and writing lives and experiences of Others" (2012, p. 314). It also has a researcher's personal 'biographical' dimension as researchers reflect on their personal experiences related to specific issues that are being researched by them (Coffey, 2012).

3.3. Research methods

The thesis draws on a qualitative, mixed-methods type of research using a cross-country comparative case study method. The selection of the comparative case study as a research design allows collecting comprehensive data to analyze the subject matter, within a certain timeframe and focusing on a certain

place (Bryman, Bell, & Teevan, 2012). Yin defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (2009, p. 18). The two countries are used in this cross-country comparative research as separate cases, within which three development sectors are analyzed as separate units of inquiry. The case study is based on Yin's multiple-case design with embedded sub-cases, or what Yin refers to as "the embedded units of analysis" (Yin, 2009, p. 52). The selection of the case study design for exploration of the political economy of development aid in Central Asia, as stressed by Bryman et al., offers "an adequate context for answering certain research questions or examining key social processes" (2012, p. 39).

As emphasized in Chapter 1, the basis for comparison is provided by the two countries' historical, political, social and other similarities, which stem from their common past, as well as by their contrasting approaches in post-independence reform paths, which have diverged in important ways. These differences are believed to have had an impact on management of development aid, and contributed to the production of different models of donor-recipient interaction in the two countries. The cross-country comparison, as emphasized by Hantrais, can be applied "to examine particular issues or phenomena in two or more countries with the express intention of comparing their manifestations in different socio-cultural settings (institutions, customs, traditions, value systems, life styles, language, thought patterns)" with the objective "to seek explanations for similarities and differences or to gain a greater awareness and a deeper understanding of social reality in different national contexts" (as cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 72).

The comparison is based on the constructivist approach to understand how donors and recipients perceive and interact with each other and adapt to each other's behavior. The constructivist paradigm allows conducting an accurate qualitative analysis of historical and contextual specificities (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994; Constantino, 2008) and is used in order to understand the social phenomena, which result from "interactions and negotiations" involving people, organizations and other agents of social relationships (Bryman, Bell, & Teevan, 2009, p. 128). In addition, a constructivist approach allows going beyond predefined concepts prevailing in foreign aid literature as those concepts themselves are the products of social interaction and as such "do not have built-in essences" (Bryman, 2012, p. 34).

The comparison is also based on the most-different systems design (MDSD). Although the number of scholarly works applying MDSD has increased in social science research (Gerring, 2007), several critical observations have been provided regarding this research design. For example, as Gerring (2011) notes, while cross-case comparative studies exploring either differences or similarities can be relevant in explaining whether or not a specific phenomenon occurs, they are less relevant in explaining why this phenomenon occurs or does not occur. This explanatory limitation does not permit "to conclusively eliminate rival hypotheses" (Gerring & Seawright, 2007, p. 141). At the same time, as Pennings, Keman, and Kleinnijenhuis maintain, scholars using MDSD in their research should be careful in selecting too many context-specific variables and, to the extent possible, should limit their number in order not to "end up with conclusions that everything is indeed different and all situations are peculiar by definition" (2006, p. 36). Despite these critical observations, MDSD appears to be the most appropriate research design to explore cross-country differences in aid management. Combined with the case study design, MDSD can provide answers as to why the two countries' interaction with the external donors has diverged despite their initial post-independence similarities.

The comparative method helps to reveal the differences in aid management practices (exercised by both donors and recipients) embedded in a broader analysis of regimes' security and development priorities, which tend to vary depending on the regime's revenue-generating capacity and the extent of rent-seeking within the countries. Several hypotheses touch upon this interrelationship. For example, Hypothesis #2 suggests that the country's level of dependence on foreign aid or, conversely, availability of non-aid revenues stemming, for example, from the export of hydrocarbon resources, will affect how the government and donors interact and respectively how aid gets managed. Hypothesis #3 suggests that the nature of the donor-recipient interactions will differ from one sector to another and that the more a certain aid sector is likely to affect the nature or survival of the recipient country's regime, the more the recipient government will try to avoid cooperation and distort donors' initiatives in that sector.

In addition, a cross-country comparative study of two different cases can help to project the behavior and actions of host-governments when vulnerabilities stemming from either internal or external factors increase or decrease. For example, the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 greatly influenced the way other Central Asian governments (in particular Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) dealt with donor-funded programs in the area of civil society development. The logic of comparison under a cross-country case study approach entails studying "one case in relation to other cases in order to test a series of theoretical assumptions" (Pennings et al, 2006, 249). This thesis, therefore, compares the two countries, which have important historical, religious, social, cultural and other similarities but whose aid management approaches tend to differ presumably due to different nature of their regimes, the degree of their dependence on the external funding sources, and the extent of their involvement in geopolitical processes in the Central Asian region.

The main justification for this comparative study of the political economy of foreign aid in Kyrgyzstan and in Turkmenistan is twofold. First, while there is an extensive normative literature on how aid should be managed, there is relatively little literature on the management of the aid relationship, and even less that puts the recipient government at the core of the analysis. Second, there have been few comparative studies of aid at all in Central Asia in general, and in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan in particular. On both of those counts, this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge. I am unaware of any studies conducted on the political economy of foreign aid in Turkmenistan, and almost all of the work that focused on development aid was conducted as part of project and program evaluations initiated by the donor agencies. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, several studies have been produced, focusing on post-Soviet transitional development issues. My desire to reflect on the work of foreign donors and to explore their contribution to the transition of the two countries was one of the key factors in selecting this field research.

The research has been conducted through qualitative research methods, which according to Creswell can be "used as a broad explanation for behaviour and attitudes, and it may be complete with variables, constructs and hypotheses" (2014, p. 64). Given the theoretical frameworks proposed in Chapter 2, the research employs a combination of inductive and deductive reasoning. While inductive reasoning helps to develop general suppositions based on observed reality, deductive reasoning entails verifying general observations and theories and developing a hypothesis to be tested empirically (Bryman, 2012).

As stressed by Ritchie and Lewis, "both deduction and induction are involved at different stages of the qualitative research process" (2003, p. 23). Deductive reasoning is used to analyze broad macro-level assumptions of international relations theories (which would allow testing general arguments that

countries are guided by national interests, regime survival and maximization of state security). At the same time, deductive methods also provide a useful analytical framework for the political economy approach to test some of the hypotheses at the micro level (e.g., that the way donors' initiatives get managed are affected by the nature of the regime, which is shaped by wider geopolitical interests/concerns of the countries). Inductive reasoning is applied to examine routine actions of donors and host-governments through collective action theory and evolutionary and adaptive frameworks, and to analyze their relations and the degree of their co-adaptation in maintaining these relations. Inductive method is also used for macro-analysis arranged through the investigation of how macro-level factors are influenced by routine actions, decisions and institutional processes.

The above-mentioned methodological choices are appropriate to examine donor-recipient interactions in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The core research question explores the differences in aid management approaches across countries and sectors and between donors and recipients. By asking this question, I attempt to get insights and answers on a macro level. At the same time, the sub-questions are concerned more about micro-level interactions, behavior and actions on both sides. Understanding those micro-level interactions, behavior and actions, in my opinion, allows answering the core question. Therefore, I believe that a cross-country comparative case study approach, based on qualitative research, is methodologically more suitable to explore similarities or differences that might exist between the cases and to demonstrate factors causing those similarities or differences, which is the main objective of this thesis. On the other hand, using a comparative research design in conjunction with the constructivist epistemology allows capturing individual perceptions about the realities of donor-recipient interactions and building a body of knowledge based on the interpretation of those perceptions.

3.4. Data collection

I used the following approach to collect the data that allowed me to compare the two countries. Firstly, I collected primary and secondary sources through an extensive online search using *Google search operators*. Using Google search operators allowed searching for online content with specific format (e.g., pdf, docx, etc.), specific document titles (e.g., project evaluation, country strategy, etc.) during specific time frames (e.g., searching for online content uploaded during specific periods of time) and on specific websites (e.g., gov.tm, gov.kg, worldbank.org, etc.). For searching primary and secondary sources, I also used donor agencies' online data repositories with specific content, such as the evaluation databases, UN General Assembly resolutions, etc. Following the data collection, I then did documentary analysis of those sources, including content and discourse analysis. When collecting and analyzing the primary and secondary sources, I was particularly interested in key pain points that affected donor-recipient interaction on various levels, including on project and program levels as well as on policy, technical and political levels. As stressed in Chapter 1, pain points are problems and challenges, which the service providers have to deal with in order to improve the interaction with their customers. Applying customer experience perspective to donor-recipient interaction appears to be relevant, as both donors and government recipients serve as customers and services providers at the same time. Secondly, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 67 key informants in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan in order to triangulate the findings from the primary and secondary sources with the data collected through semi-structured interviews. Such data triangulation is used to compare data collected through various means and sources. According to Yin, triangulation is "a major strength of case study data collection", which allows for "development of converging lines of inquiry" (2009, pp. 114-115). This section outlines the key field research tools and the sources of information used.

3.4.1. Collection of primary and secondary sources

The following primary and secondary sources have been used for this research:

Primary sources:

- Donor agency reports (e.g., project and program evaluations, annual reports, project reports, mission reports, factsheets, policy briefs and other reports produced by donors, their country, regional and HQ offices);
- Signed project documents and annual project work plans;
- Government and donor agencies' press releases;
- Official government documents (e.g., national development plans and strategies, sectoral plans, policy documents and other reports produced by the recipient governments);
- Speeches and statements of both government and donor officials delivered on various occasions;
- International legal documents (e.g., UN General Assembly resolutions, decisions, etc.);
- Reports produced by independent evaluation consultants regarding the implementation of donor-funded projects;
- Interview data (see Section 3.4.2 below).

Secondary sources:

- Statistical documents (both international donors and governments);
- Surveys and monitoring reports (on implementation of aid-funded projects etc.);
- Research by other scholars and practitioners, focusing on Central Asia, and specifically on Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan;
- Online sources (e.g., articles, reports, factsheets, media statements, etc.);
- Studies produced by international organizations and NGOs not represented in the two countries, but whose publications focused on either Kyrgyzstan or Turkmenistan or both.

3.4.2. Semi-structured interviews

The second component consisted of semi-structured interviews with 67 key informants who deal or who have previously dealt with the implementation of aid-funded projects in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The interviewees included the current staff of government and donor agencies, former staff of government and donor agencies, staff of NGOs, independent experts and consultants based in the two countries, experts and consultants based in other countries. The interviews were conducted in Russian, Turkmen or English, depending on the language preferences of the interviewees. The interview guides were prepared in Russian, Turkmen and English, and the most appropriate version was used depending on the language choices of the interviewees. The interview guides were developed prior to departure for the field research and were discussed with my research supervisor, and approved by the Research Ethics Board of the University of Ottawa (File Number 01-16-34).

In both countries, I utilized my previous contacts for interviews, specifically, people who are or who have been involved in implementation of international development programs and projects, especially within the three aid sectors: governance, rural development and environment. As mentioned in Chapter 1, before joining the University of Ottawa, from 1997 to 2013 I worked for local offices of different international organizations (including World Health Organization, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, UN Development Programme, Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan) represented in Turkmenistan. During this period, I developed an extensive list of contacts within the government, donor

agencies and other local and international organizations involved in development cooperation in Turkmenistan. I have also developed contacts with colleagues from Kyrgyzstan, who worked in various capacities within the United Nations system in that country, as well as international experts specializing in Central Asia but not based in this region. The following strategies were used for recruitment of participants in the two countries and participants based elsewhere:

Recruitment in Kyrgyzstan:

I had fewer contacts in Kyrgyzstan as I have never worked in this country. I have occasionally visited Kyrgyzstan to participate in regional conferences and workshops organized by UNDP or other UN agencies. However, through my former UN colleagues, whom I knew personally and whom I also interviewed (five interviewees), I could get access to local interviewees (six interviewees). In addition to my personal contacts, I was also referred to potential interviewees through my colleagues at the OSCE Academy in Bishkek (three interviewees), where I stayed as a visiting researcher from July to August 2016. Informants whom I had previously interviewed also referred me to their respective contacts (five interviewees). Several references were obtained through my colleagues who have already done their doctoral research in Kyrgyzstan (four interviewees). The referrals of these colleagues were helpful in getting an access to potential informants. I approached some of the respondents directly via email after visiting the websites of the organizations where they worked at the time (five interviewees). Finally, I have used the *advanced search* option in LinkedIn, an online professional networking portal (eleven interviewees). The advanced search option allowed me to narrow the search results to people who worked as project or program managers in either of the three aid sectors in Kyrgyzstan. LinkedIn's advanced search option produced a range of individuals with relevant professional profile, whom I contacted through LinkedIn's built-in messaging tool. In all cases, I sent the potential interviewees a brief summary about my research in advance.

Recruitment in Turkmenistan:

I developed the draft list of interviewees for Turkmenistan, which included about 30 potential informants, some of them being current or former government officials, others representing donor agencies or those who worked in Turkmenistan in the past. Taking into account that I personally knew most of the interviewees in Turkmenistan (23 interviewees from that draft list of 30 potential informants), I did not prepare any formal letters inviting them to be part of my research. They were aware that I was doing my doctoral research and knew me personally. Any formalization of the research process through the introduction of formal letters or forms, I thought, might undermine the trust between us and discourage them from agreeing to be interviewed. Therefore, in the case of those interviewees I knew personally, I phoned them to agree to have a short meeting, and once we met, I explained the reason why I contacted them, asking for an interview, and providing them with a hard copy of the short summary about my research. In those cases, when I could not get through the phone, I sent them an informal email indicating why I contacted them and explaining the purpose of the interview. When contacting interviewees through email, I provided a brief information about the research. In cases when I did not know the interviewees personally (especially those professionals who started working in development after I left Turkmenistan in 2013), I sent them a formal email asking for an interview and attaching a short summary about my research (one interviewee).

Seventeen of the interviewees in Turkmenistan included my former colleagues, with whom I worked within the United Nations System in 1997-2013, representing different agencies and agency projects. Interviewing former colleagues could involve the possibility of bias given the previous researcher-interviewee

professional relationships. However, I was transparent about this challenge from the beginning of my research and felt convinced that the bias resulting from these relationships could be minimized in different ways. Firstly, I deliberately did not share the research hypotheses with those interviewees. Secondly, I tried my best not to impose my own perceptions about the issues I was researching, thus trying to avoid the interviewees being compliant with my own opinions.

Recruitment of participants based elsewhere:

A small number of participants were based outside the two countries but had previously worked in those countries. I contacted them by email (with a brief summary about my project included as an attachment), requesting an interview. Once the date was agreed, they were interviewed via Skype (two interviewees). Other interviews with people based elsewhere were conducted in person, one in Canada (an interviewee who had previously worked in Turkmenistan) and one in Turkey on my way back from the field research to Canada (an interviewee who had previously worked in Turkmenistan and was based in Istanbul at the time when the interview was arranged).

Use of audio recording device:

During some of the interviews (eight interviews), I used an audio recording device. However, in Turkmenistan, I did not offer to record the interviews for fear of causing stress to the participants. I suspected that offering to audio-record the interviews in Turkmenistan would cause potential informants to self-censor, or even refuse to participate in the interview. For interviewees in Kyrgyzstan, and those based elsewhere, I asked if they felt comfortable with recording the interview, and if the answer was negative, I did not use the audio recorder. If the answer was positive, I used the audio recorder and reflected their permission in the relevant section in the Written or Oral Informed Consent Forms during the interview. For those interviewed through Skype, the permission to be audio-recorded was documented through the Oral Informed Consent Form. It should be noted that in certain situations I could not use the audio-recorder (even though the interviewee would not have minded) because all electronic devices were taken away by the security personnel of the organizations where the interviewees worked. This applied particularly to embassies and offices of international organizations.

Use of local research assistants:

In terms of involving local research assistants, given my language proficiency, I did not hire any local research assistants or interpreters. I was able to arrange all interviews and conversations without the involvement of the third parties. This also helped to minimize threats to confidentiality and anonymity of informants. As stressed by Ritchie and Lewis (2003), the involvement of third-party assistants could undermine the anonymity of local interviewees.

Taking into account that in each of the two countries I intended to look at three development aid sectors, I initially planned to interview a roughly equal number of participants both on the government (current or former government staff) and non-government (current or former donor) side. I was hopeful that for each sector, the number of interviewees from the government side would be 4-5, and the number of interviews from the non-government side would also be 4-5 (i.e., given that the research focuses on two countries and three sectors within each of those countries, it was initially planned that the number of participants would be 48-60). However, once I arrived in those countries, about 8-10 informants from the initial list of interviewees were either not available (i.e., not physically available in the country, or did not have time to meet) or simply did not reply to my messages or return the phone calls. Similar number of alternative

informants were identified and interviewed as a way of addressing this challenge. In addition, in terms of sectoral project implementation, the interviewees from the governance sector in Turkmenistan outnumbered interviewees from the rural development and environment sectors. In Kyrgyzstan, the interviewees from the governance and rural development sectors outnumbered interviewees from the environment sector. In both countries, a number of interviewees were involved in managerial positions with some experience and knowledge in each of these areas. The following is the breakdown of the interviewees by countries and sectors.

Table 3.1: Number of planned and actual informants in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan

Sectors	Number of informants in Kyrgyzstan		Number of informants in Turkmenistan	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Governance	8	13	8	10
Rural Development	8	10	8	7
Environment	8	5	8	7
General	0	11	0	4
Total	**24**	**39**	**24**	**28**

As shown in Table 3.1, I eventually interviewed more people than initially planned, in order to get as much useful data as possible, and in order to address the issue of underrepresentation of interviewees in certain sectors. Some of the key informants did not represent either of the aid sectors, but rather had a general knowledge of the donor-recipient relations in the countries. These mostly included heads of agencies or other senior ranking officials from donor agencies. I initially did not plan to interview people with general knowledge, but as I arrived in the countries, I realized that key informants with general knowledge would be in a better position to provide a wider perspective of donor-government relationships as they were more often involved in high-level policy discussions on development cooperation. I hoped the number of participants across sectors and countries would be sufficient to collect a variety of views, representing donors and governments from each sector and each country. Having more than one viewpoint from each country and sector can contribute to development of a more complete picture. I also hoped this number would be enough to provide both donors' and governments' perspectives in terms of aid management and would allow me to obtain more complete results.

3.5. Data analysis

As mentioned above, I conducted content and discourse analysis to analyze the primary and secondary sources listed above. In analyzing the content of these documents, I specifically looked for references to any issues (of a general nature and those having a relevance to governance, rural development and environment) that would shed light on the relationships between recipients and donors as well as their official positions on various issues falling under the three development aid sectors. Most of the content analysis was qualitative, which, according to Bryman et al., helps to "uncover deeper meanings in the materials" being studied (2009, p. 295). To a limited extent, I also used quantitative content analysis, such as counting the number of specific words in official government documents (e.g., the word "poverty" in national development plans). Concerning discourse analysis, I was more interested in capturing concepts commonly covered in foreign aid discourse and promoted by donors, such as "good governance", "Sustainable Development Goals", etc. As discussed in previous chapters, the language used in foreign aid discourse can become a basis for a development policy framework, which sets the rules of engagement

between donors and recipients. Analyzing foreign aid discourse is also helpful to examine the perceptions of donors regarding recipients, regarding their development challenges, and the types of reforms they should introduce (from the perspective of donors) to address those challenges.

Having collected the data from primary and secondary sources, I conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, as well as those based elsewhere. I then did triangulation of data from multiples sources collected, including the primary and secondary data, as well as the interview data. Triangulation of data was helpful to validate findings of analysis of primary and secondary data with results from analysis of the interview data. Most of the collected documents (both primary and secondary) had a qualitative content. However, some of these documents offered relevant quantitative data (e.g., foreign aid disbursements within the sectors and countries, government budgetary allocations, etc.), which was used to triangulate findings from the qualitative analysis. Indeed, Deacon et al. refer to triangulation "as a process of cross-checking findings deriving from both quantitative and qualitative research" (as cited in Bryman et al., 2009, p. 287).

Interview data processing and analysis was performed using a combination of the standard Microsoft Office software, namely Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel. Ose's data analysis method (Ose, 2016) was used as a reference, but was modified to suit my data analysis needs. The initial interview notes and recordings were arranged in English, Russian or Turkmen, depending on the informants' choices. They were then transcribed into Microsoft Word files. During the transcription, all notes and recordings arranged in Russian and Turkmen were translated into English. A separate file was created for each interview in English and each file consisted of interview questions and informant answers. All Microsoft Word files were then merged into a single Microsoft Excel database, which included the interview questions, the code ID of each informant, their answers and their personal details (such as institutional affiliation, work experience in a given country, etc.). Various Excel features (e.g., data filters, data validation, and combination of 'IFERROR' and 'VLOOKUP' functions) were applied to navigate the database through countries, sectors and research questions. Most of the data analysis was carried out using the Microsoft Excel database, while Microsoft Word files were simply used as the textual inputs to the Excel database.

The use of Microsoft Excel (and not more specialized software like NVivo) for data analysis is justified given that my dataset was not very large and had only 67 informants in total for two countries. Using Microsoft Excel offers a lot of flexibility. First, it is available as part of the Microsoft Office package on any computer. Secondly, it does not require spending much time on learning. Thirdly, importing data from interview notes in Microsoft Word into Microsoft Excel appears to be simpler than into NVivo.

In addition, my selection of Microsoft Excel as the data analysis tool was justified on the grounds that it has been used by many other scholars in their qualitative research. Meyer and Avery argue that despite being viewed as quantitative analysis software, Excel's "structure and data manipulation and display features can be utilized for qualitative analysis" as well (2009, p. 91). Their approach to qualitative data analysis using Excel allowed them to process a large set of interview data, break them into codes and color-code them using the conditional formatting feature of Excel. Similarly, Ose argues that Excel has relevant and useful features which allow coding the data, sorting them based on codes, ultimately allowing researchers to "structure large amounts of unstructured data" (2016, p. 147).

To summarize, the structure of analysis was based on three steps. During step one, document analysis of primary and secondary data (content and discourse analysis) was performed. The second step consisted of the analysis of semi-structured interview data, collected during four months of fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. During the third step, data and findings from document analysis were triangulated with the results from the analyzed interview data. This process was used to analyze donor-recipient relationships in general, and within the framework of the three development aid sectors. It should be noted, however, that additional document analysis was performed in parallel with and after the interview data analysis, as some important government or donor documents were made available after the completion of the fieldwork.

3.6. Research conditions, challenges and limitations

3.6.1. Research conditions

The political environment varies between the two countries. In Turkmenistan, discussion of sensitive issues is more challenging than in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan is a relatively open democratic society, which has the highest scores in terms of 'political rights and civil liberties' in Central Asia (Freedom House, 2018). Therefore, interviewees and others I met as part of this research felt free to speak and to share their personal opinions about international development cooperation in the country. Both civil servants and staff of development agencies appeared to speak freely about their work without fear of repercussion. The experience of other colleagues of mine who were recently involved in doctoral research in Kyrgyzstan also showed that the local interviewees were open and willing to share the information, which is consistent with the relatively high degree of openness of the research environment in Kyrgyzstan. In my experience, local respondents generally appeared open and sincere and in certain cases were willing to refer me to other potential respondents whose experience and knowledge could be beneficial for my research. The political environment in Turkmenistan, on the contrary, is more restrictive than in Kyrgyzstan and some informants were reluctant to provide comments or answer questions involving sensitive issues. Those participants were more careful in providing their opinions and in answering the questions, and double-checked that their names would not be publicized in the final version of the thesis.

Neither Kyrgyzstan nor Turkmenistan had a central government authority which provides research permits to foreign scholars. My initial investigation about the work of foreign researchers in Kyrgyzstan (through my former colleagues and personal acquaintances who were doing their doctoral research on Kyrgyzstan at the time of my fieldwork) confirmed that a research permit was not required for foreign scholars. Moreover, taking into account my nationality and proficiency in the Russian language (which is still widely spoken in countries of Central Asia), I did not have any cultural and communication issues and barriers while doing the research. Given my proficiency in local languages, I did not need any local language interpreters.

3.6.2. Challenges

Finding interviewees with a professional background in the relevant sectors in both countries was one of the main challenges. In Turkmenistan, the interviewees were identified in advance, although about 8-10 of them were not available for the interviews for various reasons. Firstly, some of potential interviewees were not physically available in Ashgabat. Secondly, those who were available and with whom I briefly talked about the possibility of an interview did not confirm their availability and therefore no interviews were conducted.

In Kyrgyzstan, there were different challenges than in Turkmenistan. There, I had a more limited number of people whom I knew personally and only five of them agreed to be interviewed. Therefore, I had to rely on the following five alternative strategies:

1) LinkedIn search (11 informants recruited through this option);
2) Potential informants referred to me by people I already interviewed (five informants);
3) Potential informants referred to me by either my former colleagues or colleagues from the OSCE Academy in Bishkek (nine informants);
4) Informants whose contact details I found through websites of respective organizations where they worked at the time of the interview and whom I emailed requesting an interview (five informants);
5) Potential informants referred to me by other PhD students (four informants).

With regard to the first option, I sent short messages to various individuals I found on LinkedIn. Some of them responded and we agreed on the interview date and time; others never replied. Personal references by former colleagues or OSCE Academy colleagues were more productive in that almost all referred individuals agreed to be interviewed.

Another challenge was the lack of funding to travel to Central Asia and to conduct the field research. Unfortunately, research focusing on Central Asia was not often in the list of priority areas of major Canadian organizations providing research funding for doctoral students in the area of international development. For example, research travel grants awarded to doctoral students by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) excluded Central Asia from their list of eligible countries. The highest expenses I incurred were the travel expenses, both from/to Canada and within the region. Travel expenses within the Central Asian region (i.e., from Turkmenistan to Kyrgyzstan) were high because there were no direct flights between the capitals of the two countries. Therefore, alternative option (via Istanbul, Turkey) was selected, which significantly increased the travel expenses. As a researcher self-financing both travel and living expenses, I did not have sufficient resources to stay longer in the two countries in order to collect more data and information. However, I relied on my knowledge of the country contexts, on an awareness of the key sources for data collection, and the opportunity to collect additional data via Skype (through Skype interviews with people based in the region and elsewhere) in order to address those challenges.

I incurred minor inconveniences when interviewing people in public places in Turkmenistan. In one case, when I was having an interview with a key informant in a café in an open area, we were approached by a drunken individual, sitting next to us, who wanted to be part of our "interesting conversation". My informant and I politely explained to that individual that we were having a private conversation and that his participation in our conversation was not welcome. We eventually had to ask a café manager to take care of this situation. This individual was finally requested to leave the café and not bother its clients. In another case, when I interviewed a key informant in a public park, my note-taking was too obvious and visible, and occasional passer-by stared at us, which caused some minor discomfort for my informant.

3.6.3. Limitations

Access to data was, in general, difficult in Turkmenistan, especially access to sources produced by the government. In terms of using government sources, I relied only on those documents (e.g., development strategies, reform papers, laws, decrees and orders of the government, statements of government officials), which were available on the websites of government agencies or international organizations (e.g., UN agencies, OSCE, etc.) or available at local bookstores (e.g., government publications, collection of legal

documents, etc.). Access to information in Kyrgyzstan was less problematic and in most cases data were digitized and made available by the government. Regarding the media sources, given that all local media (newspapers, radio, and TV) in Turkmenistan are associated with and funded by the government, media reports have a distinct pro-regime bias. In these cases, local media sources were used to verify the facts and figures regarding the government's interaction with donors. At the same time, alternative independent news sources, delivering messages and opinions of independent consultants and experts, were available in Kyrgyzstan and these sources were used for the purpose of this research. I tried to fill in the data gaps for Turkmenistan by using donor reports and publications, in which the government's opinions were reflected (e.g., minutes from the joint meetings, project evaluation reports, etc.).

Another limitation is related to protection of confidentiality. Methodologically, protection of confidentiality in the final version of the thesis might lead to a less detailed description of the background characteristics of individual interviewees from Turkmenistan, which eventually resulted in some generalizations in those sections. In this way, the overriding objective of protecting the confidentiality of interviewees could have negatively impinged on the research from a methodological viewpoint. Furthermore, in discussing sensitive issues, government officials from Kyrgyzstan were more open presumably due to the nature of the political system, compared to their Turkmen counterparts. This, in turn, could have had some impact on the validity of findings from Turkmenistan.

Selection of research sites and time constraints have been additional limitations. In both countries, I interviewed individuals who were based in the capital cities. However, this should not have affected the research findings, as most of the donor activities in Turkmenistan were implemented on the central level (the number of donor projects in the regions was extremely limited) and, in Kyrgyzstan, the key informants were willing to share the information about their activities implemented in the regions without any hesitation. In terms of time constraints, in total I had about four months of field research work, which appears to be not long enough for an ethnographic study. However, I had already developed an insider perspective as both a citizen of Turkmenistan and former aid worker with knowledge of the region and working experience with development agencies in the region.

Finally, the unequal number of participants by sectors and by countries represented a methodological challenge as well. However, I am convinced that I properly addressed that challenge by utilizing the information and data from project evaluation reports and other reports produced by either donors' internal evaluation units or independent evaluation experts, in which key challenges and opportunities for donor-funded projects were outlined.

3.7. Ethical issues

In conducting any research, scholars must take into account the diverse set of field research challenges that might put local interviewees at risk. As summarized by Creswell, "researchers need to protect their research participants; develop a trust with them; promote the integrity of research; guard against misconduct and impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions; and cope with new, challenging problems" (2014, p. 92). Considering that there were politically sensitive topics addressed as part of the research, ethical aspects of doing the research were based above all on the *do no harm* principle. Particular attention was paid to obeying this principle in Turkmenistan, with its more restrictive research and political context. The approval of the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board of the Social Sciences and Humanities was obtained before starting the field research (File Number 01-16-34 issued on April 6, 2016).

In Kyrgyzstan, I did not have any major risks or inconveniences for the participants. Before my arrival, I consulted with my colleagues who had previously done doctoral research in Kyrgyzstan regarding any ethical issues which might arise. Upon arrival, I also consulted with my former colleagues within the United Nations system in Kyrgyzstan, as well as colleagues in the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, on local peculiarities to avoid situations that might entail risks or inconveniences for local participants. All informants were open and cooperative, including those who were government employees at the time of the interviews or who previously worked for government agencies.

In Turkmenistan, from the beginning of our conversation, the interviewees were orally briefed on the purpose of the research and the potentially sensitive issues involved so that they would be aware of risks. I was transparent with them about my research in the country. As expected, informants working for donor organizations were more open in sharing their thoughts and opinions than current or former government officials. I made my key informants aware from the very beginning that I would protect their identities by not recording and not sharing any information about their participation in this research. I assured them that those risks would be mitigated as all information was kept confidential and the anonymity of informants was ensured through protection of their data.

It should be noted that 17 of the interviewees included my former colleagues, with whom I worked in Turkmenistan within the United Nations system agencies in 1997-2013. Three of the key informants were my former colleagues whom I had previously supervised. However, we were no longer professionally related. Therefore, there was no opportunity for potential retaliation on my side in case if they did not agree to be interviewed. When I had initially contacted these three key informants for an interview, I assured them that if they wished not to participate in the research, it would not affect our relationships in any way. As far as other informants concerned, I did not have any supervisory relations with any of them and we worked in different sectors. It should also be stressed that I interviewed two of my former supervisors. In those cases as well, there was no coercion involved with these interviewees since we no longer had any professional or supervisory relationships. Even though I knew these interviewees personally, they did not feel obliged to participate in the research.

I initially thought my affiliation with a foreign institution (i.e., University of Ottawa) might contribute to a lack of trust on the side of nationals in both countries. However, I did not have significant trust-related challenges: in Turkmenistan, because I knew most of the informants; and in Kyrgyzstan, because the environment was not restrictive and in fact local citizens had no fear of having an open conversation with a foreigner.

I took the following precautions to address the ethical issues, which emerged during this research:

- Protection of key informants' confidentiality (no actual names were recorded in notes; all interviewees were assigned special name codes to avoid attribution of their statements to their names);
- Protection of data (all written notes were saved in a password-protected Microsoft Word document and uploaded to Google Drive);
- Password protection was done using strong passwords (i.e., alphanumeric, with a combination of lower and upper-case letters, with unique passwords for each file);

- No audio recording was used when interviewees did not feel comfortable about it. I only used the audio recorder after the participants gave their consent to be audio-recorded.
- All meetings were organized in places that were comfortable for the interviewees. They were also given the freedom to select the time and place of the interview.
- While in Turkmenistan, the country of which I am a citizen, all my relatives and friends knew about my research plans. In order not to expose them to any risks, I stayed in an apartment which my family owned. While in Kyrgyzstan, I rented a small studio apartment through my friends residing in Bishkek, the capital city of Kyrgyzstan. My local contacts in Kyrgyzstan were also informed about my research plans and interests, although the safety of my Kyrgyz contacts was not an issue due to open nature of the Kyrgyz political system.
- Some informants (especially in Turkmenistan) preferred to give their consent in the oral form in order not to put their signature in any written documents. In all such cases, I used the Oral Consent Form. I did not insist on using the Written Consent Form, as my objective was to ease the anxiety of local participants regarding their contribution to my research.
- The importance of the research's benefit to local participants and institutions was a significant part of the ethical plan for this research. Research should not be a sort of "one-way traffic, in which researchers extract information from the people being studied and give little, or more usually nothing, in return" (Bryman, 2012, p. 40). Researchers must reflect on the needs and interests of local participants and ensure their access to research results and findings (Desai & Potter, 2006). To this end, during the interviews, I offered to share the key research findings with my informants (prepared in a summary format and translated into Russian). Some research participants indeed expressed their interest in getting the research findings, especially those in charge of donor coordination in the government agencies in Kyrgyzstan.

3.8. Conclusion

The selection of research methods for this study was made on the basis of opportunities and constraints I faced when conducting the field research, as well as the methodological requirements that were implicit in the research questions and hypotheses. I have specifically aimed to do documentary analysis, and to support that analysis with data received through the semi-structured interviews. I am confident that the triangulation approach helped me to produce a coherent set of evidence and findings across sectors and countries, by ensuring, at the same time, that ethical considerations were given proper attention. I tried to be as objective as possible throughout the research process, taking into consideration potential researcher biases and assumptions stemming from my personal values. However, as noted by Bryman et al., total objectivity is hardly achievable and "fewer writers today subscribe to the position that the principle of objectivity can be put into practice fully" (2009, p. 15).

In the next two chapters, I will be exploring the political economy of the selected countries, as well as their relations with the external donors since their independence in 1991. This will help in setting the background for the regional (i.e., Central Asian) and country contexts.

Chapter 4 | Political economy analysis of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a political economy analysis of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, specifically focusing on historical, cultural, social, economic and other issues that would help to understand the key characteristics of both countries and the nature of their current political regimes. Despite their initial common characteristics at the point of gaining independence in 1991, the two countries have adopted different modes of interaction with external donors. This interaction, as argued by this thesis, depends on the nature of their political regimes and the socio-economic context which emerged after 1991. The political economy analysis of the two countries has direct relevance in understanding the recipients' and donors' behavior and the interaction that has evolved over time (see Tables 4.1-4.3 and Figures 4.1 and 4.2 for a brief snapshot of each country's political economy profiles).

This chapter is organized in two parts. The first discusses the political economy of Kyrgyzstan, while the second part discusses the political economy of Turkmenistan. Each part looks at the geography (including political geography and administrative division of the countries) and demographic profile (i.e., ethnic composition, religion, language and social structure). A summary of main historical events, namely pre-independence history (with particular focus on Soviet period and its legacy) and major developments since 1991 is provided as well. This chapter also examines the countries' contemporary political systems (branches of government, general political structure, political parties and electoral systems) and economies (including general macroeconomic profiles, natural resources, key economic sectors and foreign economic relations, as well as human development indicators). Finally, each section analyzes key development challenges and national strategies designed to address them.

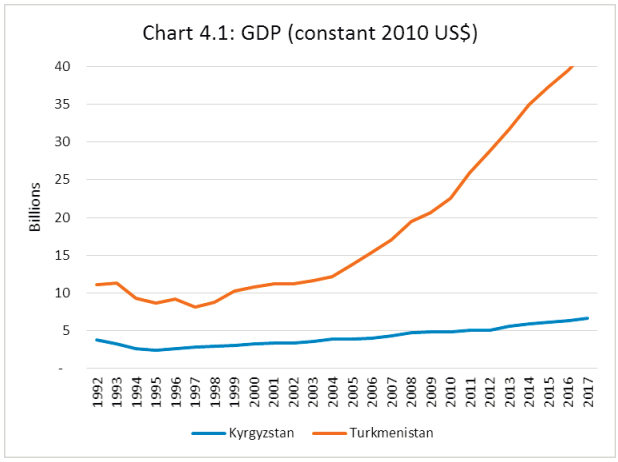
It is important to examine these variables as they could have influenced, in my opinion, the evolution of their models of engagement with external actors. While geography is useful to situate the countries' location and the powerful actors that surround them, history helps us to understand the external and internal pressures these countries faced and political transformations they went through during different time periods. At the same time, looking at these countries' economies, their natural resources and changing demographic profiles facilitates understanding the socio-economic constraints and opportunities they had. All of these factors could have affected, in one way or another, their behavioral styles when engaging with external donors since gaining independence.

Table 4.1: Country facts and figures in brief

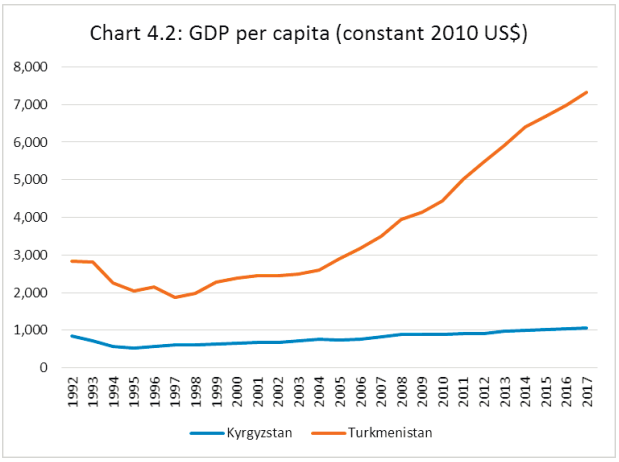
Data	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmenistan
Geographic profile [a]	Landlocked	Landlocked
Total land area (square km) [b]	199,900	491,021
Population size [c]	6.4 million (2019)	6.2 million (n.d.)
Political system [d]	Parliamentary Republic	Presidential Republic
Human Development Index [e]	0.672 (2017)	0.706 (2017)
GDP per capita (constant 2010 USD) [f]	1,070.9 (2017)	7,317.5 (2017)
GDP (constant 2010 USD) [f]	6,638 billion (2017)	42,135 billion (2017)
Net ODA received (% of gross national income) [f]	6.277 (2017)	0.079 (2017)

Sources: [a] UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (www.un.org/ohrlls); [b] Kyrgyzstan: Office of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic (www.president.kg), Turkmenistan: State Statistics Committee (www.stat.gov.tm); [c] Kyrgyzstan: National Statistics Committee (www.stat.kg), Turkmenistan: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (www.mfa.gov.tm); [d] Kyrgyzstan: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (www.mfa.gov.kg), Turkmenistan: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (www.mfa.gov.tm); [e] Human Development Data (1990-2017) (http://hdr.undp.org/en/data); [f] World Bank Open Data (https://data.worldbank.org/)

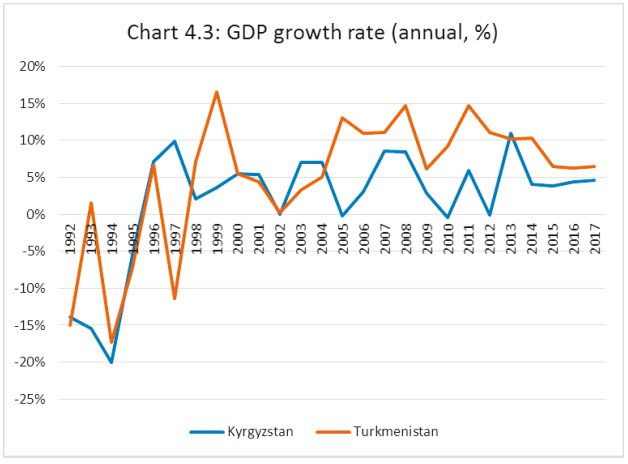
Figure 4.1: Selected socio-economic indicators for Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan



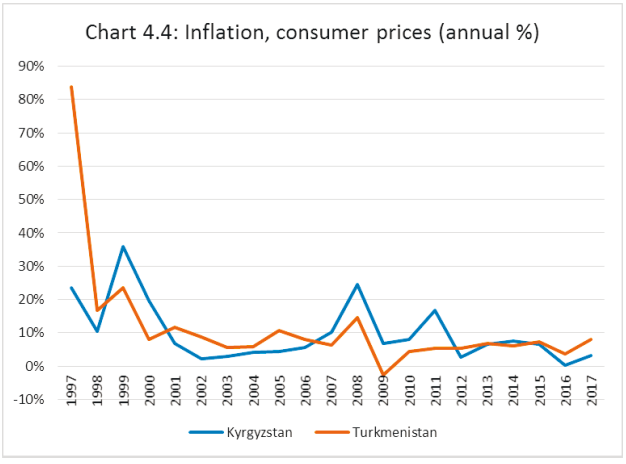
Source: World Bank Open Data (https://data.worldbank.org/)



Source: World Bank Open Data (https://data.worldbank.org/)



Source: World Bank Open Data (https://data.worldbank.org/)



Source: IMF World Economic Outlook database (http://www.imf.org/external/ns/cs.aspx?id=28)

Table 4.2: International Benchmarking Indices – Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan

International Benchmarking Indices	Kyrgyzstan					Turkmenistan				
	1999	2005	2010	2015	2018	1999	2005	2010	2015	2018
Corruption Perception Index [A] (0 – highly corrupt; 100 – clean)[1]	2.2	2.3	2.0	28	29	N/A	1.8	1.6	18	20
Global Competitiveness Index [B] (0 – worst; 7 – best)	N/A	N/A	3.36	3.72	3.89	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ease of Doing Business Score [C] (0 – lowest; 100 – best)	N/A	N/A	59.89	61.53	65.76	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Index of Economic Freedom [D] (0 – repressed; 100 – free)	54.8	56.6	61.3	61.3	62.8	36.1	47.6	42.5	41.4	47.1
EIU Democracy Index [E] (0 – authoritarian; 7 – democratic)	N/A	N/A	4.31	5.33	5.11	N/A	N/A	1.72	1.83	1.72
Freedom in the World Index [F] (1 – best; 7 – worst)	5.5	5.5	5.5	5	5	7	7	7	7	7
World Press Freedom Index [G] (0 – most free; 100 – least free)	N/A	32	63	30.69	31	N/A	93.50	95.33	80.83	84.20

Sources: [**A**] Transparency International (https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview); [**B**] The World Economic Forum (http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2017-2018/GCI_Dataset_2007-2017.xlsx); [**C**] The World Bank (https://www.doingbusiness.org/); [**D**] The Heritage Foundation (https://www.heritage.org/index/explore?view=by-region-country-year&u=637019848536493744); [**E**] Economist Intelligence Unit (https://infographics.economist.com/2019/DemocracyIndex/); [**F**] Freedom House (https://freedomhouse.org/); [**G**] Reporters Without Borders (https://rsf.org/en).

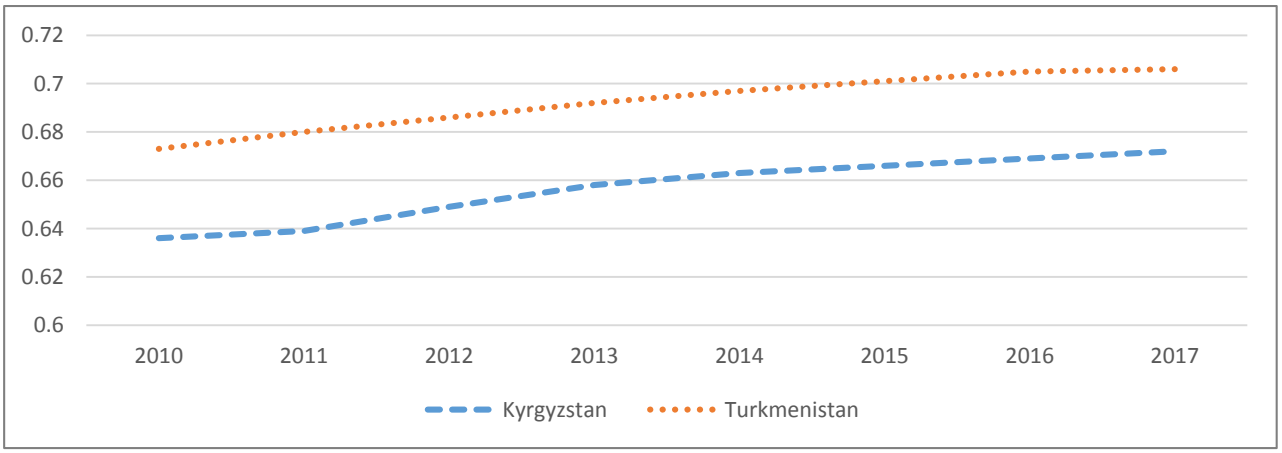
Table 4.3: Worldwide Governance Indicators – Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan

Worldwide Governance Indicators (0 – lowest; 100 – highest)	Kyrgyzstan					Turkmenistan				
	1996	2000	2005	2010	2015	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Control of Corruption	17.20	19.80	8.80	10.50	11.10	15.59	9.14	1.95	1.43	5.77
Government Effectiveness	41.50	36.40	21.60	30.60	18.30	12.02	6.15	1.47	3.35	19.23
Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism	41.49	39.68	14.56	15.17	18.57	61.17	44.44	48.06	55.54	42.86
Regulatory Quality	41.85	50.77	16.67	43.54	34.62	8.15	3.59	1.96	2.39	1.92
Rule of Law	27.64	25.25	13.88	8.53	14.42	6.03	8.42	3.35	3.79	5.29
Voice and Accountability	24.00	15.42	23.08	21.33	33.50	6.50	3.98	1.44	1.90	0.0

Source: Worldwide Governance Indicators (https://databank.worldbank.org/source/worldwide-governance-indicators).

[1] The scale for Corruption Perception Index has changed from 1-10 to 0-100 in 2012.

Figure 4.2: Human Development Index – Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan



Source: UNDP Human Development Data (1990-2017) (http://hdr.undp.org/en/data)

4.2. Political economy of Kyrgyzstan

Geography

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked developing country situated in the eastern part of Central Asia. It borders China to the east, Kazakhstan to the north, Tajikistan to the south and Uzbekistan to the west (see Map 4.1).

Map 4.1: Political map of Kyrgyzstan

Source: UN Geospatial Information Section (https://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/kyrgysta.pdf)

Administratively, Kyrgyzstan is divided into seven oblasts (provinces): Batken, Chuy, Issyk-Kul, Jalal-Abad, Naryn, Osh and Talas (see Map 4.1). In addition, the capital city of Bishkek (located in northern part of the

country) and the city of Osh (located in southern Kyrgyzstan) have special, constitutionally recognized status equivalent to provinces.

Demographic profile

According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (NSCKR), as of January 2017, Kyrgyzstan had a total population of 6.140 million people, of which 34% lived in urban areas and 66% lived in rural areas (NSCKR, 2017a). In 1991, the population of Kyrgyzstan was 4.484 million and since then has increased by almost 25% (Open Kyrgyzstan, 2014). About 40% of Kyrgyzstan's population are children and youth aged 0-19 (NSCKR, 2017b). Kyrgyzstan is a multi-ethnic country. The majority of the population are ethnic Kyrgyz, who constitute 73% of the country's population. The largest ethnic minorities are Uzbek (15%) and Russians (6%). In addition, Kyrgyzstan is home to a range of other ethnic groups, including Azerbaijanis, Dungans, Kazakhs, Koreans, Tajiks, Tatars, Turks, Uigurs, Ukranians and others (NSCKR, 2016). It should be noted that the proportion of Russians living in Kyrgyzstan has declined significantly over time, from 20.6% in 1991 (Open Kyrgyzstan, 2014) to just 6% in 2016.

Linguistically, the Kyrgyz language is related to the Turkic group of languages. The Cyrillic alphabet, introduced in 1940, forms the basis of the modern-day Kyrgyz language (Abazov, 2007). As is the case in many other former Soviet Union (FSU) republics, the Russian language is still widely spoken in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan is also among a few FSU republics where the Russian language is constitutionally recognized as the official language of the country (GOKR, 2016).

The majority of Kyrgyzstan's population are Muslims practising the Sunni branch of Islam (GOKR, 2006). Although, compared to other countries of the region, the Kyrgyz population in general is believed to be secular with a moderate level of religious practice (Abazov, 2007), the number of officially registered mosques grew from 39 in 1991 (GOKR, 2006) to 2,618 in 2015 (Aidaraliev, 2016). The increase in the number of officially registered mosques since the early 1990s could be an indication of the government's leniency toward Islamic revival in the country. Yet, as emphasized by some analysts, the government's liberal approach toward religion has been replaced by a more restrictive one following the 2010 ethnic clashes in southern Kyrgyzstan, as well as taking into account the number of Kyrgyz citizens involved on the side of the Islamic State in the Syrian conflict (Khamidov, 2017).

Historically, Kyrgyz people have had a nomadic lifestyle, with strong tribal divisions (Abazov, 2007). The residents in the southern regions developed greater degree of religiousness and had more traditional values and lifestyles due to their proximity to Uzbekistan. On the other hand, the residents of northern regions were influenced for a long time by dominant position of Slavic populations during the Soviet period, affecting "not only the language and the culture of the local Kyrgyz but also their political orientation" (Huskey, 1997, p. 244), resulting in a greater degree of receptivity toward externally-driven social and political transformations. Tribal relations and kinship affiliation, according to Morozova, did not disappear during the Soviet rule, "but mutated under the impact of the external factor of socialist state building" (2013, p. 14) leading to the emergence of national party elites. The importance of tribal division has been sustained over time, and, as argued by Glenn (1999), tribal relations along with the country's fragmentation into North and South, continued to have a strong impact on domestic politics following the country's independence in 1991.

Pre-independence history

One of the earliest references to the Kyrgyz ethnicity, according to official interpretation, was made in one of the Chinese chronicles and dates back to the year 201 BC (Gullette, 2010). Yet, in academic circles, "there are several competing theories about the origin of the Kyrgyz and about their links to the legendary Yenisei Kyrgyz of Siberia" (Abazov, 2007, p. 12), who succeeded in establishing their khanate in the southern part of Siberia, which later dissolved with the Mongol invasion of the region in the early thirteenth century (Gullette, 2010). Despite the Arab conquest of the Central Asian region in the eighth century, the conversion of the Kyrgyz tribes to Islam did not take place until the late 16th and early 17th centuries (Haghayeghi, 1996). Between the late 1800s and prior to the arrival of the Russians in the second part of the 19th century, the modern day Kyrgyz territory was part of the Kokand Khanate (Wheeler, 1975), which the Russians initially made their vassal state and later abolished altogether, integrating it into their empire (Gullette, 2010).

The Russian advance deeper into the Central Asian region resulted in annexation of all other neighboring ethnic groups and their lands, which territorially became part of the Russian Turkestan region headed by the Governor-General (Wheeler, 1975). The October 1917 socialist revolution in Russia established and consolidated the power of Soviet rule in the Turkestan region, and in 1918, Kyrgyzstan became part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Abazov, 2007). The Soviet political and administrative reforms of the 1930s resulted in the establishment of the Kirghiz Soviet Social Republic (SSR) in 1936 (Wheeler, 1975). Colonization of Central Asia under the Tsarist regime, and establishment of Soviet rule at a later stage, resulted in the migration of a large number of Russians into the region, including Kyrgyzstan. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, one fifth of Kyrgyzstan's population were Russians (Open Kyrgyzstan, 2014).

With consolidation of Soviet rule and rapid economic growth based on development of heavy industries and collectivization of agriculture, a range of social services were introduced, resulting in the improvement of living conditions in Central Asian republics and Kirghiz SSR specifically, which "were extremely poor and essentially still pre-industrial agricultural/nomadic societies" (Carlin, Schaffer, & Seabright, 2013, p. 119). Agriculture and industry were the largest sectors of the economy and in the late 1980s these two sectors each produced almost one third of the republic's GDP (World Bank, 1993). The Kirghiz SSR's economy was heavily dependent on allocation of investments from the Soviet center. However, despite these financial and technical flows, 37.1% of population lived under the national poverty line in 1988, compared to 8.4% for the rest of the USSR's population (McAuley, 1992). During the Soviet period, Kyrgyzstan was effectively isolated from the external influence and contacts, as foreign policy and relations with the external partners were the prerogative of the Soviet central authorities based in Moscow.

In the mid-1980s, efforts to reform the Soviet Union through Gorbachev's policy of political and socio-economic restructuring (aka *Perestroika*), culminated in the military coup in mid-August 1991 staged by the members of the State Committee for the State of Emergency. Headed by pro-reform President Akayev, who was publicly elected in 1990 (Gullette, 2010), the Kirghiz SSR was one of the first republics to dissolve the Communist Party and to announce its independence in late August 1991 (Abazov, 2007).

Developments since 1991

Askar Akayev was elected as the President of Kyrgyzstan in October 1991. He did not have a background in communist party politics and, before being elected as the President of the Kirghiz SSR in 1990, Akayev

headed the republican Academy of Sciences (Oraz, 2013). Compared to other presidents of the newly independent Central Asian states, he was the only president not representing the mainstream communist party bureaucracy (Lugkins, 2003). President Akayev's openness for transition reforms, willingness to cooperate with the external partners, coupled with his relatively open attitude toward political opposition, civil society and independent mass media (Cummings, 2010), made Kyrgyzstan what Wilkinson calls "a positive anomaly in the region" (2010, p. 133). However, beginning in the mid-1990s, as noted by some observers, President Akayev started to gradually grasp additional power and concentrate more authority within the executive branch (Lugkins, 2003; Huskey, 2002).

The Western partners (e.g., United States, the OSCE) became increasingly disappointed about Kyrgyzstan's failure to build a liberal democracy. Yet, after the country was fully integrated into the US-led war on terror in the aftermath of 9/11, that disappointment appeared to have faded away (McGlinchey, 2009). As noted by Wilkinson, "fears that Kyrgyzstan was backsliding on reforms were overshadowed following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, with the Republic's geostrategic value becoming its chief international asset" (2010, p. 133). On the domestic front, a range of events, such as the shooting of protesters in Aksy district in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2002, widespread corruption, and increasing authoritarianism of the Akayev regime culminated in the *Tulip Revolution* of 2005 (Tursunkulova, 2010; Kulov, 2010), resulting in the overthrow of President Akayev. The Tulip Revolution, as some observers noted, was a result of consolidation of opposition forces against "voting irregularities" which took place during the parliamentary elections of 2005 (Cummings, 2010).

The presidential elections of 2005 brought to power Kurmanbek Bakiyev, former Prime Minister under President Akayev and the head of the interim government following the 2005 revolution. President Bakiyev's election and his assurances "to reform the system of government by transferring certain powers to the parliament and, therefore, to the political parties," initially contributed to the expansion of the roles of key political parties and their leaders (Ramas, 2013, p. 137). However, the political balance and unity among key parties did not last long as President Bakiyev started concentrating power and failed to fulfil the promises of maintaining participatory politics through an empowered and independent parliament. These factors, combined with increasing corruption, nepotism and inability to deal with the economic crisis of the late 2000s, led to public protests in 2010, subsequently resulting in the overthrow of the Bakiyev regime (Buxton, 2015).

The new interim government, headed by Roza Otunbayeva until election of the new president, was formed after Bakiyev fled the country. The interim government "agreed to retake the liberal democratic path and to tackle reforming the system of government towards parliamentarism" (Ramas, 2013, p. 140). The October 2011 presidential elections were won by Almazbek Atambayev, who received 62.52% of the votes cast. According to the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE), the elections were "conducted in a peaceful manner" with the Central Commission for Elections and Referenda of the Kyrgyz Republic (CCERKR) being commended for arranging "the technical preparation for the elections in an adequate manner" (2011, p. 1). But, the OSCE also made some observations with regard to introducing technical and procedural improvements. Despite this, the elections "marked the first peaceful and voluntary handover of power from one leader to another in the history of post-Soviet Central Asia" and "took place in an environment of freedom and impartiality" (Marat, 2011). During Amabayev's term in office, Kyrgyzstan introduced constitutional reforms aimed at building a parliamentary democracy. However, according to the OSCE, these changes "met strong resistance from parts of the opposition and from civil society

organizations who claimed that the law prohibited changes to the constitutional powers of the president and parliament until 2020" (OSCE, 2017a, p. 3). Despite procedural issues and controversies involving the promotion of a pro-government candidate (Zenn, 2017), the most recent presidential elections of October 2017 were welcomed by the OSCE as contributing "to the strengthening of democratic institutions by providing for an orderly transfer of power from one elected president to another" (OSCE, 2017a, p. 1). Sooronbai Jeenbekov, former Prime Minister in President Atambayev's government won the elections with 54.22% of the votes cast (CCERKR, 2017).

Throughout its post-Soviet history, Kyrgyzstan has had a vibrant civil society sector. In the Central Asian region, Kyrgyzstan had the largest number of NGOs per 1,000 population. According to Bayalieva-Jailobaeva, in 2007-2008 "there were 11,035 NGOs involved in a range of fields" (2014, p. 360). By the end of the first decade of independence, "Kyrgyzstan had a number of confident and experienced NGOs whose leaders were ready to demand accountability from their government and international donors alike" and who played an active role in formulation of the country's development agenda and policies (Buxton, 2015, p. 240). For example, civil society organizations, along with the parliament, played a decisive role in the government's withdrawal of its application to the World Bank's Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative (IMF, 2007a), claiming that donor-funded activities contributed to indebtedness of the country (Buxton, 2015). Compared to other Central Asian countries, the NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have been politically active and relatively well organized; both government and donors have involved Kyrgyz NGOs in various development programs and projects.

Contemporary political system

Kyrgyzstan is a parliamentary republic (MFAKG, n.d.). Changes to the constitution were introduced in 2010 following the overthrow of President Bakiyev. Further reforms came in 2016 through a nationwide referendum in which almost 80% of voters (CCERKR, 2016) supported constitutional changes strengthening the role of a Prime Minister (BBC, 2016). According to the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic (Article 84, §1), the government is chaired by the Prime Minister, whose candidacy is proposed by the political party having a majority of mandates in the parliament or by a coalition of political parties.

The legislative branch is represented by a unicameral parliament (Jogorku Kenesh) consisting of 120 members elected for a five-year term based on a proportional electoral system. The parliament has nine committees within its structure and its sessions are chaired by an elected speaker (Jogorku Kenesh, 2016). The current sixth convocation of Jogorku Kenesh was formed as a result of October 2015 parliamentary elections, which the International Electoral Observation Mission[2] commended for being 'competitive' and for providing "voters with a wide range of choice" (OSCE, 2015, p. 1). The following six political parties (Jogorku Kenesh, 2016) are represented in Jogorku Kenesh:

- Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (38 members);
- "Respublika-Ata Zhurt" Political Party (28 members);
- "Kyrgyzstan" Political Party (18 members);
- "Onuguu Progress" Political Party (13 members);
- Political Party of State Unity and Patriotism "Bir Bol" (12 members);
- "Ata Meken" Socialist Party (11 members).

[2] The International Electoral Observation Mission consisted of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, as well as the parliamentary assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

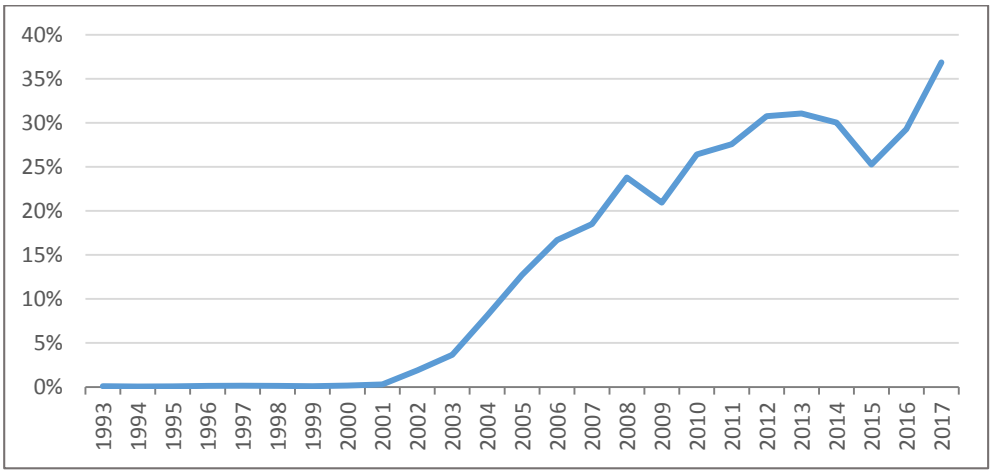
The judicial branch is represented by the Supreme Court and local courts, as well as the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic (CCSCKR). Along with the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Chamber "is the highest judicial authority which independently performs the constitutional oversight by way of constitutional legal proceedings" (CCSCKR, 2017). The Constitutional Chamber is a relatively new judicial institution, which replaced the Constitutional Court in 2010. Due to controversies related to the involvement of the Constitutional Court in attempts to extend the terms in office of previous presidents Akayev and Bakiyev, in 2010 the Constitutional Court was abolished by the decree of the interim government and was replaced by the Constitutional Chamber (Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic, n.d.). In accordance with the Constitution of Kyrgyzstan (Article 94, §7-8), the members of the Supreme Court elect its chairperson and the deputy chairpersons for a three-year term, while local judges are appointed by the country's president upon recommendation of the Council for Selection of Judges.

Economy and natural resources

During the Soviet period, Kyrgyzstan was one of the least developed Soviet republics (Nørgaard, 2000) and "its economy was characterized by heavy dependence and excessive specialization through trade with the FSU" (World Bank, 1993, p. xv). In the late 1980s, the Kirghiz SSR received the smallest level of investment (1,577 million rubbles in 1988) among Central Asian republics. This figure was especially noteworthy as it contrasted with what the more populous Kazakh SSR (13,006 million rubbles) and Uzbek SSR (7,568 million rubbles) received from the center (Burkett, 1992). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan selected a more radical approach to economic reforms, liberalizing prices in 1992, launching a privatization program and initiating market reforms (World Bank, 1993). Thanks to the implementation of these reforms, led by President Akayev and supported by the external donors, by the late 1990s Kyrgyzstan became "the most successful economic and political reformers among the five Central Asian republics" despite sharing many common characteristics with them (Nørgaard, 2000, p. 179). Kyrgyzstan also became the first Central Asian country to become the member of the World Trade Organization in 1998 (Melnykovska & Schweickert, 2013). However, the pro-reform agenda was not without its complications, which followed after the external donors imposed a range of reform conditionalities upon the government, which according to some observers, contributed to deterioration of living standards (Morozova, 2013). The country's dependence on external aid has gradually increased as well (Myant & Drahokoupil, 2013). For example, the net official development assistance (ODA) was only 0.91% of Gross National Income (GNI) in 1992 and steadily increased throughout the 1990s, reaching almost 24% of GNI in 1999 (World Bank, n.d.b). The power shifts in 2005 and 2010, and the concerns for increasing authoritarianism during the presidencies of Akayev and Bakiyev (Ramas, 2013), did not however change the liberalized nature of the country's economy, as Kyrgyzstan remained one of the most active reformers in the post-Soviet environment.

According to the World Bank, Kyrgyzstan's "economy remains characterized by significant informality and relies heavily on a few sectors and worker remittances from abroad" (World Bank, n.d.c). Worker remittances from abroad has increased significantly from the early 2000s (see Figure 4.3), which by 2017 reached almost 37% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Bank, n.d.d). Kyrgyzstan's GDP in 2016 was USD 6.55 billion (World Bank, n.d.c), with the agriculture, industry (manufacturing, construction, mining, energy) and services sectors contributing the largest shares (World Bank, 2015a). The country's GDP has been growing unevenly starting from the late 1990s demonstrating negative growth during 2002, 2005, 2010 and 2012 (World Bank, n.d.e). Table 4.4 provides key macroeconomic indicators and the human development index (HDI).

Figure 4.3: Personal remittances received (% of GDP), Kyrgyzstan



Source: World Bank Open Data (https://data.worldbank.org/)

Kyrgyzstan is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and its economy is closely linked to the Russian economy (NSCKR, 2014). However, trade relations with China have expanded significantly in recent years and in early 2016, the share of Kyrgyz-Chinese trade (28.5%) surpassed the proportion of Kyrgyz-Russian trade (27.4%) for the first time (Akchabar Financial Portal, 2016).

Kyrgyzstan is rich in various ore and non-metallic minerals, including gold, silver, mercury, tin, tungsten and others. Kyrgyzstan also possesses huge water resources (GOKR, 2013). Limited oil and gas resources are available in southern Kyrgyzstan. The country's gold deposits are reportedly significant and gold mining accounted for approximately 8% of GDP in 2014 (EITI, n.d.).

Table 4.4: Kyrgyzstan 5-year average calculations for key macro-economic indicators and HDI

Indicators	1992-96	1997-01	2002-06	2007-11	2012-16
GDP (constant 2010 US$, billion) [a]	2,936	3,085	3,738	4,738	5,798
GDP per capita (constant 2010 US$) [a]	646	638	732	879	992
GDP growth rate (annual, %) [a]	-9.55%	5.29%	3.39%	5.06%	4.51%
Unemployment (% of total labour force) [b]	N/A	7.65%	9.48%	8.38%	7.90%
Inflation, consumer prices (annual, %) [c]	N/A	19.31%	3.83%	13.21%	4.75%
Human Development Index [d]	0.576	0.587	0.611	0.631	0.657

Sources: [a] World Bank Open Data (https://data.worldbank.org/); [b] National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (http://stat.kg/ru/statistics/zanyatost/) [c] IMF World Economic Outlook database (https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2017/01/weodata/download.aspx) [d] UNDP Human Development Reports database (http://hdr.undp.org/en/data)

Development challenges

Declining production, decreasing trade and increasing prices during the first years of independence contributed greatly to an increase in the country's poverty level (World Bank, 1993). Poverty levels in urban and rural areas declined over time as Kyrgyzstan initiated transition reforms, yet the quality of social

services in rural areas (i.e., health, sanitation, education and social protection) are of serious concern, especially affecting disadvantaged layers of the population (Piga, Novovic, & Mogilevskii, 2016). External factors have also had an impact on domestic developments. As noted by Piga et al. (2016):

> The development process in the Kyrgyz Republic is vulnerable to various types of geopolitical, economic and security-related conflicts in the region, as well as to natural disasters and external economic shocks. In the regional context, the country's geopolitical situation is potentially damaging to its sustainable development taking into account its land-locked position, internal tensions, disputed borders with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and "recurring community level conflicts" with these neighbours over the use of land and water resources. (p. 10)

According the World Bank, "Kyrgyzstan was one of the first of the former Soviet republics to initiate a program of structural reform to facilitate the development of a market economy" (1993, p. xvi). It was one of the few countries in the world to have been selected as a pilot country for the implementation of the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework (World Bank, 2000a). Kyrgyzstan has also developed Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers starting from the early 2000s (IMF, 2016) proposing a range of policy measures to tackle key poverty-related challenges. Kyrgyzstan's recent National Sustainable Development Strategy for the period 2013-2017 (NSDS 2013-2017) offered the following vision for the country's development:

> Our strategic vision of Kyrgyzstan in the long term is of a strong and independent country that is part of the developed countries, a place that is comfortable for living, a place where their rights, freedoms and security are ensured, a multi-lingual and friendly domestic environment governed by the rule of law, a country with high level of education, healthy natural environment, public stability, international image of state with stable background, robust economic growth and high attractiveness for investors (GOKR, 2013, p. 7).

In 2017, with the NSDS 2013-2017 nearing completion, the government started developing its new strategy, which has a much longer lifespan and covers the period from 2018 to 2040 (Kabar News, 2017a). This is a major shift from the medium-term strategy planning which the government has used for its previous development plan and strategies.

4.3. Political economy of Turkmenistan

Geography

Turkmenistan is a land-locked country located in the southern part of Central Asia (see Map 4.2). In terms of internal administrative division, Turkmenistan consists of five velayats (provinces): Ahal, Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap and Mary (see Map 4.2). Each province has several etraps (districts) within them. Ashgabat, the capital city located in southern Turkmenistan within the territory of Ahal province, has the same status as the five provinces of Turkmenistan (MFATM, n.d.a).

Map 4.2: Political map of Turkmenistan

Source: UN Geospatial Information Section
(http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/turkmeni.pdf)

Demographic profile

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, "the population of Turkmenistan is more than 6.2 million people" (MFATM, n.d.a). The United Nations' estimates are somewhat lower, i.e., 5,439,000 people as of 2016 (UN Statistics Division, n.d.). Census data from previous years show that Turkmenistan's population has been steadily increasing over time. According to the 1989 census, the population of the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic (TSSR) was 3,534,000 people, and in 1995 it reached 4,481,000 people (Demoscope Weekly, 2001).

As of 2011, according to the State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan (SSCT), the country had almost an equal proportion of urban (50.8%) and rural (49.2%) inhabitants (SSCT, 2012). The population of Turkmenistan is relatively young. Although the age disaggregation for population data is not as detailed as Kyrgyzstan's, estimates for 2011 show that 29.4% of Turkmenistan's population were 0-15 years old, while the share of its working-age and retired populations were 64.3% and 6.3%, respectively (SSCT, 2012). Turkmenistan has "more than 100 nations and ethnic groups living in the country" (MFATM, n.d.a), though majority of the population is ethnic Turkmen. More recent official data on Turkmenistan's ethnic composition is not available. In 1989, prior to collapse of the Soviet Union, the largest ethnic group in TSSR was Turkmen (72%), followed by Russian (9%), Uzbek (9%), Kazakh (2%) and other ethnic groups (7%) (Demoscope Weekly, n.d.). For the period from 1991 to the early 2000s, the estimates for the ethnic structure of Turkmenistan differed, depending on the source providing the data. According to the U.S.

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in 2003, 85% of Turkmenistan's population were Turkmen, followed by Uzbeks (5%), Russians (4%) and other ethnic groups (6%) (CIA). However, during the 2003 People's Council Session, the late President Niyazov stated: "More than forty nationalities are represented in Turkmenistan. We live with them in peace and harmony. Three percent of the country's population are Uzbek, two percent are Russians. The titular nation – Turkmens – is 91 percent" (Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2001a).

The lack of official population statistics prevents an assessment of population dynamics in Turkmenistan. Unlike in Kyrgyzstan, the content of the State Statistics Committee's website in Turkmenistan is limited and does not provide detailed statistical data. The available official data sometimes cannot be reconciled with the estimates and figures provided by the international organizations or other externally-produced sources.

The majority of Turkmenistan's populations speaks the Turkmen language. Similar to the Kyrgyz language, Turkmen falls under the Turkic group of languages. After Turkmenistan became independent, the Cyrillic script used during the Soviet period was abandoned and the new Turkmen alphabet, designed on the basis of the Latin script, was introduced in 1995 (Abazov, 2007). Turkmenistan was one of the two countries in Central Asia (along with Uzbekistan) to abandon the Cyrillic and to introduce a new Latin-based alphabet. As stated by President Niyazov during the 2002 People's Council Session, "if you remember, during the last 10 years we adopted the national alphabet, declared the Turkmen language as a state language, and began to deeply study Turkmen literature and history. Since 2000, our people have already clearly understood that independence is forever" (as cited in Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2002). The Russian language is still widely spoken in Turkmenistan. However, the use of Russian in educational institutions, especially on a tertiary level, according to Abazov (2007), is limited compared to other countries of the region. Unlike in Kyrgyzstan, the Russian language has no official language or working language status.

The dominant religion in Turkmenistan is Islam. As in Kyrgyzstan, the majority of Turkmenistan's population belong to Sunni branch of Islam (Abazov, 2007). According to estimates, the proportion of people practicing Sunni Islam in Turkmenistan was 89% in 2007, while the second-largest religious group was Russian Orthodoxy (Library of U.S. Congress, 2007). Turkmen people have had a moderate way of practising Islam (Haghayeghi, 1996), which involved elements of Sufism and ancestral traditions and beliefs originating from the pre-Islamic period (Abazov, 2007; O'Dell, 2017). According to the U.S. State Department (2005), during the Soviet period, only four mosques existed in Turkmenistan and their number gradually increased after independence, reaching 350 by the mid-2000s. Following independence, Turkmenistan has in general encouraged Islamic revival. However, the government consistently stressed that "religion should not intervene in state affairs" (Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2000). It also exercised strict control over religious affairs through the Council for Religious Affairs operating under the President of Turkmenistan (O'Dell, 2017).

During most of their pre-Soviet history, "the Turkmens were involved in pastoral nomadism, raising horses, sheep (especially the highly valued karakul sheep), and camels" (Abazov, 2007, p. 14). The tribal division among Turkmen people has been traditionally strong (Cummings & Ochs, 2002) and tribal affiliation played an important role in everyday life (Kadyrov, 2003). The Turkmen nation consists of five major tribes. The current settlement of the tribes in various regions of Turkmenistan is the result of continuous tribal dislocations and movements during the period preceding the establishment of the Turkmen SSR in 1924 (Peyrouse, 2012). While in the case of Kyrgyzstan, the tribal division has occurred through a north-south

divide, in Turkmenistan, the tribal division has been represented through "the stand-off between clans from around the capital and the clans from all other parts of the country" (Kadyrov, 2003, p. 108). According to some observers, tribal affiliation has played and continues to play an important role in the political domain (Abazov, 2007; Peyrouse, 2012), with the argument being that representatives from Teke tribe were given "senior posts" (Bohr, 2016, p. 23) and that generally they played more "prominent roles in cultural and political life" (U.S. State Department, 2011, p. 17). Yet, "tribal differences were viewed as a threat to Turkmen national unity and were not discussed publicly" (Edgar, 2006, p. 265) with President Niyazov issuing a warning in 1992 that "anyone who tries to play on tribal feelings, nationalism, will suffer a severe punishment in accordance with the law" (as cited in TPH, 1993, pp. 29-30).

Pre-independence history

The first human civilization found in the territory of present-day Turkmenistan is believed to have emerged 400,000 years ago. With the establishment of large human settlements in the oases areas, which were integrated into ancient trading routes and networks, Turkmenistan, like other parts of Central Asia, had been constantly penetrated and invaded by the outsiders including Macedonians, Persians, Turkic tribes from eastern Siberia, Arabs, Mongols and their descendant Khanates (Peyrouse, 2012). According to various sources, the Turkmens, as a separate ethnic group, originated from the Oguz tribes (Abazov, 2007; Edgar, 2006) who migrated to Central Asia from the eastern part of Siberia in the eighth century (Peyrouse, 2012). According to the official historical discourse, the Turkmen tribes emerged some 5,000 years ago and were descendants of the legendary ancestor named Oguz-Han Turkmen (Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2001b). The Arabs conquered Central Asia in the eighth century and the conversion of the Turkmen tribes to Islam took several centuries. Compared to other pastoral nomads of Central Asia, according to Haghayeghi (1996, p. 77), "the Turkmen tribes were exposed to the Islamic faith between the twelfth and fourteen centuries, which is considerably earlier than the Kyrgyz and Kazakh tribes."

From the 16th century and until the arrival of the Russians in the second half of the 19th century, periods of uncertainty followed as various Turkmen tribes were separately involved in continuous conflicts with their more powerful and larger neighbors, including the Khanates of Bukhara and Khiva, as well as the Persians (Peyrouse, 2012). By the late 1870s, the Russian empire conquered most of Central Asia and the Russian victory in the battle at Geok Tepe fortress in southern Turkmenistan finalized the Russian conquest of Central Asia, with territories occupied by the Turkmen Teke tribes being the last areas to be included into the Russian Empire's Turkestan region (Haghayeghi, 1996).

Following the Revolution of October 1917, the Turkmen territories were integrated into the Turkestan Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic, which was administratively under the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (Peyrouse, 2012). As the result of territorial reforms in the newly established USSR, in 1924, Turkmenistan was given the status of the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic. With the consolidation of Soviet power, similar processes took place in Turkmen SSR, as in other parts of Central Asia, namely collectivization of agriculture, rapid industrialization and creation of national elites based on the communist ideology (Ochs, 1997). The introduction of basic social services contributed to significant improvement of living standards and conditions (Carlin et al., 2013). The political and economic processes that followed have gradually transformed the Turkmen nomadic lifestyle, leading to their further settling and overall greater urbanization (Ochs, 1997).

Isolated from the rest of the world during the Soviet period, Turkmenistan had little contact with external players and was highly dependent on investments from the Soviet centre. The August 1991 military coup in Moscow was met with a certain degree of perplexity in the republic, with its leadership adopting a wait-and-see approach (Sabol, 2010). The Turkmen SSR, headed by Saparmurat Niyazov, the First Secretary of the republic's communist party since 1985, was one of the last Central Asian republics (along with Kazakhstan) to announce its independence, on October 27, 1991. Yet, the Turkmen SSR was one of the first republics to adopt its constitution, in May 1992 (Peyrouse, 2012).

Developments since 1991

The declaration of independence in October 1991 opened a new chapter in the history of Turkmenistan, albeit under the same leadership. Niyazov was elected as the president of independent Turkmenistan in June 1992 with 99.95% of the votes cast (Ochs, 1997). Unlike in Kyrgyzstan, domestic politics in Turkmenistan had become highly monolithic, with a centralized decision-making system and consolidation of presidential authorities (Peyrouse, 2012). The approach to post-Soviet transition adopted by Turkmenistan was based on slow reforms in political, economic and other spheres (Nørgaard, 2000). On the international arena, Turkmenistan tried to position itself as a neutral country, abstaining from participation in any political and military blocks and associations. This approach was formalized and "became operational on December 12, 1995, when the General Assembly of the United Nations approved an ad hoc resolution [A/50/80(A)] in which it endorsed Turkmenistan's intention to acquire a neutral status" (Anceschi, 2009, p. 1). The status of permanent neutrality has become the foundation of Turkmenistan's foreign policy doctrine and its domestic development policies since then (Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2005a).

In the political sphere, during Niyazov's presidency there were no political parties other than the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, the only political party established in Turkmenistan since independence (Ochs, 1997). Niyazov's presidential term was extended as a result of the nationwide referendum of January 1994, with 99.99% of those who took part in it supporting the extension (Peyrouse, 2012). Finally, in 1999, the People's Council of Turkmenistan granted President Niyazov "an exclusive right to exercise the authorities of the head of state without any time limit" (Mejlis of Turkmenistan, 1999), making him a President for life. These political processes, along with the country's permanent neutrality status, led to gradual isolation of Turkmenistan on the regional and global levels (Sabol, 2010). Yet, despite its neutrality status, as the country sharing a long border with Afghanistan, Turkmenistan got involved in the US-led war on terror following the 9/11 events. However, its involvement was mostly limited to provision of logistical support and its airspace (Tynan, 2011). Another key factor which contributed to the country's isolation and which negatively affected its relations with external actors was the November 2002 assassination attempt on President Niyazov. The international community strongly condemned the way in which the authorities dealt with those reportedly involved in the attempt and their family members (Decaux, 2003). The tendency toward increasing isolation continued until December 2006, when President Niyazov died of a heart attack at the age of 66.

Immediately after Niyazov's death, the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov was appointed as the acting president during the combined session of the State Security Council and the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan (Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2006). The presidential elections of February 2007 involved more than one candidate running for the presidency for the first time since Turkmenistan became independent. Berdimuhamedov won the elections with 89% of

the votes cast (OSCE, 2008). He quickly started a range of economic, social and political reforms, inviting the international community to support them and to work together (UN in Turkmenistan, 2007). He also revoked some of the controversial decisions made by his predecessor (Peyrouse, 2012). Berdimuhamedov was reelected in 2012 and 2017 with 97.14% and 97.69% of the votes cast respectively (OSCE, 2017b). While certain transformations have taken place since 2007, some criticized the government for introducing 'cosmetic changes' and for failing to introduce real reforms, especially those in the political sphere and institutional reforms. A highly centralized presidential regime has remained a key characteristic of Turkmenistan's government since 1991, despite the change of power in 2007 (Peyrouse, 2012).

Throughout Turkmenistan's independence, the government exercised strict control over media outlets and civil society organizations. Essentially, all print, radio and broadcast media remained government-controlled and owned, although a range of foreign TV channels could be watched through satellite dishes (Peyrouse, 2012). Unlike in Kyrgyzstan, the civil society sector in Turkmenistan has not been vibrant, and only a small number of independent NGOs working in non-sensitive areas, as well as large government-affiliated NGOs, have been operating in the country (ADB, 2007).

Contemporary political system

According to its constitution, Turkmenistan is a presidential republic. The president is the head of the state and in charge of the executive branch of the government. There is no prime minister position and the Cabinet of Ministers is also headed by the president (MFATM, n.d.a). In line with the constitutional amendments of 2016, the presidential term of office has been extended from five to seven years. The 2016 amendments also abolished the maximum age limit of presidential candidates (which was 70 year in the previous version of the constitution) and cancelled the limitation with regard to the number of times the elected president can run for re-election (OSCE, 2016).

The unicameral national parliament (Mejlis) of Turkmenistan represents the legislative branch of the government, which has eight committees and whose 125 members are "elected for a five-year term in single-mandate constituencies" (OSCE, 2013, p. 1). According to the Constitution of Turkmenistan (Article 80), the speaker of the Mejlis, who is elected through a secret ballot by its members, chairs the sessions of the Mejlis. Since its independence in 1991, Turkmenistan's only registered political party was the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, which, according to the OSCE, "has dominated national politics for the last two decades" (OSCE, 2013, p. 3). In response to the president's appeals to diversify the political environment (Turkmenistan Golden Age, 2011), two more political parties were established in line with the 2012 Law on Political Parties: the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs in 2012 (TDH, 2012) and the Agrarian Party of Turkmenistan in 2014 (TDH, 2014). The last parliamentary elections took place in 2013 (TDH, 2013) resulting in the following distribution of seats:[3]

- Democratic Party – 47 seats;
- Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs – 14 seats;
- Trade Unions Organization – 33 seats;
- Women's Union – 16 seats;
- Youth Union – 8 seats;
- Citizen's groups – 7 seats;

[3] Although the Trade Unions Organization, Women's Union and Youth Union are not political parties per se, as registered public associations, they can nominate their candidates.

Turkmenistan's judicial system consists of the Supreme Court, Arbitration Court and courts of provincial, city and district-level jurisdictions (GOTM, 2014a). According to the Constitution of Turkmenistan (Article 100), all judges are "appointed and dismissed by the President of Turkmenistan."

One of the key characteristics of Turkmenistan's political system is the functioning of the People's Council (Khalk Maslahaty) of Turkmenistan. The People's Council was established in 1992 as 'the highest representative body of the people's power' under the chairmanship of the president (TPH, 1993). Since 1992 and until constitutional changes of 2008, the People's Council (consisting of 2,507 members) played a decisive role in the political system of Turkmenistan, initiating and endorsing important political, economic and social changes. For example, the lifetime presidency of Saparmurat Niyazov was approved by the People's Council in 1999. In line with the 2008 constitutional changes, the People's Council was abolished and its functions were redistributed between the president and the parliament (Nuryev, 2008). However, the Constitutional Law on People's Council of October 2017 (Article 2) resulted in the reemergence of the People's Council as "the highest representative body" with extended powers to "consider and approve main directions of internal and external policies of the state" (GOTM, 2017). These changes have been criticized by international observers as a retreat from commitments made in 2007 to implement democratic reforms (Eurasianet, 2017a).

Economy and natural resources

The major characteristic of the economies of the various republics of the Soviet Union was that they were "increasingly specialized" and "interdependent" (Walker, 2003). The economy of the Turkmen SSR was no exception and the republic mostly produced cotton, crude oil and natural gas (Peyrouse, 2012). By the early 1980s, the Turkmen SSR "produced 14 percent of the gas used in the Soviet Union and two-thirds of that consumed in Central Asia" (Peyrouse, 2012) and by 1990 it had the highest energy self-sufficiency ratio in all of the former Soviet Union (Riva, 1993). Yet, as in Kyrgyzstan's case, the Turkmen SSR was one of the poorest republics, with 36.6% of its population living under the Soviet poverty line in 1988 (McAuley, 1992). After disintegration of the Soviet Union, Turkmenistan, unlike Kyrgyzstan and some other former Soviet republics, adopted "a slow, evolutionary approach to reform" its economy and institutions (Ochs, 1997, p. 313) with limited privatization of state property and the state still dominating most of the economy, including the banking sector (Nørgaard, 2000). The vision of post-Soviet transition reforms in Turkmenistan proposed by President Niyazov in 1992 is illustrative of this gradualist approach:

> We think that at this transition moment there is a need in strong authority and state control over economic reforms. During a transition from the planned economy to the market economy, from state property to private property, from socialist emulation to [market] competition, the state will keep privatization and prices on a short leash and implement changes step by step, without haste. (as cited in TPH, 1993, p. 23)

Since its independence, provision of public subsidies, such as subsidized utilities and low prices for selected household items, was one of the key features of Turkmenistan's economy framed into the policy of "Ten Years of Prosperity" announced by President Niyazov in 1992 (TPH, 1993). With coming to power of President Berdimuhamedov in 2007, the social orientation of the economy and the extent of dirigisme in the economy did not change much. At the same time, President Berdimuhamedov announced institutional and policy reforms during his first presidential term, yet the approach to reform, according to some

observers, has been slow and unsystematic (Sabol, 2010). Participation in regional economic unions has remained limited throughout Turkmenistan's independence (Peyrouse, 2012) and the preferred approach to economic cooperation was mostly based on bilateral cooperation, rather than multilateral.

The World Bank classifies Turkmenistan as an upper-middle income country (MIC), which started its actual transition from a Soviet-type planned economy to a market economy only in the second half of 2000s. As emphasized by the World Bank, Turkmenistan's "abundant natural resources have arguably masked the need for a change, delaying first generation reforms such as price and trade liberalization, privatization, and the creation of institutions for market regulation, which began only after 2007" (World Bank, n.d.f). The country's economy is highly dependent on extractive industries. Turkmenistan possesses vast mineral resources, most notably natural gas. As of the end of 2016, according to the energy conglomerate BP, Turkmenistan was ranked fourth in the world in terms of proven natural gas reserves (BP, 2017). More than 150 "oil and gas, and gas-condensate fields" are operational in the country, with *Southern-Yoloten Osman* field being among the five largest fields in the world (Berdimuhamedov, 2010). However large the gas reserves may be, the delivery of natural gas to external markets has always been a key challenge for Turkmenistan since independence, as pre-existing pipeline infrastructure was controlled by Russia (Bohr, 2003). Construction of new pipelines to Iran and later to China has helped to reduce the country's reliance on gas exports to Russia.

GDP has been growing steadily since the early 2000s (World Bank, n.d.f) when prices for hydrocarbon resources were on the rise. However, with decreasing natural gas prices on the international markets, the GDP growth rate had declined from 14.7% in 2011 to 6.2% in 2016 (World Bank, 2017a). Turkmenistan's GDP in 2016 was USD 36.2 billion, almost 5.5 times more than that of Kyrgyzstan (World Bank, n.d.f). Table 4.5 provides key macro-economic indicators and the human development index. Although Turkmenistan's economic performance has been stable, with robust growth of per capita GDP and declining external debt during most of the 2000s and 2010s, the external observers denounced the social consequences of public administration reforms and economic decisions made by the government. By the end of the first decade of independence, the quality of public sector services had declined significantly, in part due to the closure of hospitals and kindergartens in rural areas, the reduction of schooling years and cutting of pensions and social benefits. Some observers associated the decline in the quality of public services in the 1990s and 2000s with the inefficient use of public resources, specifically for "prestige projects of dubious benefit" (The Economist, 2006). More recently, the suspension of natural gas delivery to Russia and Iran (formerly large consumers of Turkmenistan's natural gas) and the decline in the global prices of hydrocarbon resources resulted in hard currency pressures that reportedly contributed to price inflation and the shortage of food and certain commodity items (Eurasianet, 2017b). As reported by Oxford Analytica, "GDP increases over the years have not fed through to Turkmenistan's 5.5 million people" and as "the effects of reduced hydrocarbon revenues set in, the government seems to be struggling to ensure basic supplies of food items" (Oxford Analytica, 2017). Similar conclusions are drawn in the Foreign Policy Centre's recent report on Turkmenistan, which stresses "the headline GDP growth figures and other metrics do not convey the scale of the challenge" (2019, p. 7).

The country's key trading partners are "China, Turkey, Iran, Russia, United Arab Emirates, Italy, Afghanistan, United Kingdom, Republic of Korea and Japan", the combined trade with whom accounts for almost 80% of Turkmenistan foreign trade (Trapeznikov, 2017). The country is neither a member of the World Trade Organization nor of the Russia-backed Eurasian Economic Union and Customs Union.

However, it is represented in several regional economic cooperation organizations, such as the Economic Cooperation Organization headquartered in Tehran, the Asian Development Bank's Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program headquartered in Manila, and other regional initiatives.

Table 4.5: Turkmenistan 5-year average calculations for key macro-economic indicators and HDI

Indicators	1992-96	1997-01	2002-06	2007-11	2012-16
GDP (constant 2010 US$, billion) [a]	9,908	9,819	12,831	21,130	34,458
GDP per capita (constant 2010 US$) [a]	2,425	2,196	2,722	4,203	6,291
GDP growth rate (annual, %) [a]	-6.25%	4.40%	6.51%	11.15%	8.86%
Unemployment (% of total labour force) [b]	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Inflation, consumer prices (annual, %) [c]	N/A	28.73%	7.82%	5.57%	5.81%
Human Development Index [d]	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.669	0.685

Sources: [a] World Bank Open Data (https://data.worldbank.org/); [b] Unemployment statistics was available neither on government websites nor on the websites of international organizations [c] IMF World Economic Outlook database (https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2017/01/weodata/download.aspx) [d] UNDP Human Development Reports database (http://hdr.undp.org/en/data)

Development challenges

By the late 1990s, due to dislocation of economic ties with the other former republics of the USSR, "Turkmenistan's GDP decreased almost twofold in relation to the 1991 level, the republic faced a food crisis, was swept by inflation, living standards fell sharply, and many enterprises were closed" (Dankov, 2013, p. 88). The government under President Niyazov attempted to address those challenges by adopting the 'Ten Years of Prosperity' program launched in 1992 (TPH, 1993) and the *Strategy for Socio-Economic Transformation of Turkmenistan for the period until 2010* (hereinafter 2010 Strategy) launched in 1999 (GOTM, 2003a). To support citizens during this transition stage, the president signed a decree in 1992 authorizing the freezing of prices for electricity, natural gas and water for ten years (TPH, 1993).

According to the UN Country Team, "overall, Turkmenistan, like many MICs, has an unfinished development agenda" (UN in Turkmenistan, 2016, p. 15). Human development achievements in Turkmenistan are closely associated with its ability to capitalize on its hydrocarbon sector, which accounts "for more than 90% of exports and half of gross domestic product" (ADB, 2017, p. 2). Current development challenges faced by Turkmenistan include a combination of economic (e.g., diversification of the economy, privatization and further market reforms), social development (e.g., health, education and social protection) and governance-related challenges (e.g., government effectiveness and accountability, limited integration into global economy and weak civil society) (Peyrouse, 2012; World Bank, 2012). In addition, certain layers of society remain economically vulnerable despite the government's social assistance and provision of utility services at subsidized prices. The UN Office in Turkmenistan (2016) emphasizes that:

> Even with notable progress to address the needs of women, youth, persons with disabilities, children and other vulnerable groups, wide disparities do persist, by rural-urban status, region, wealth quintile, gender, disability, ethnicity, and vulnerability to natural disasters. The impact of such progress has been felt differently across different parts of the country and continues to require both major policy attention and additional efforts to ensure greater equity. (p. 14)

The main policy framework which outlines the country's current development vision is the *National Program for Socio-Economic Development of Turkmenistan for the period 2011-2030*. Broken into three

stages, it aims at diversifying the economy, improving living standards, intensifying market reforms, introducing institutional changes and promoting development of the provinces. The program was devised based on President Berdimuhamedov's *Epoch of New Revival* policy, which he proclaimed since coming to power in 2007 (GOTM, 2010).

4.4. Conclusion

Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan share many commonalities. Historically, they had been part of similar developments throughout their pre-independence periods. Their territories were invaded and conquered many times by numerous external powers, and integrated into their empires, kingdoms and khanates. In other words, they were part of the same historical developments in the past: their languages belong to the same group of languages, they practise the same branch of the same religion, they have related cultures and share many other similarities. Inclusion of both into the Russian Empire in the late nineteenth century and later into the Soviet Union in the 1920s made them even more closely related, in that they became part of the same political, governance and economic systems. Within the Soviet Union, they both experienced substantial improvements in living conditions, enjoying free social services and universal access to health care and education. At the same time, they were both predominantly used as the source of raw materials within the highly specialized economic system of the Soviet Union.

With disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan became independent. Their fate was in their hands and they could pursue independent courses of action in economic, political, social and other spheres. However, being geographically landlocked and surrounded by countries far greater in terms of their size and populations (e.g., Russia, China and Iran) made their transition highly vulnerable to external pressures and challenges. How to address those challenges, with what policy measures and with whose support, has become a critical issue, which influenced their foreign and domestic policies.

Kyrgyzstan selected a more open path and embarked on a *shock therapy* type of transition reforms from socialism to a market regime. It started active and dynamic cooperation with external actors, joining various global and regional initiatives. With support from international donors, Kyrgyzstan launched structural reforms in the economy, liberalized prices and initiated its privatization program. The first president's relatively open attitude toward political activism in the country, free media and a civil society sector has become, it could be argued, a key factor for the emergence of political opposition, a vibrant non-governmental sector and independent media outlets. Attempts to capture the political power in the country have been made at different stages of Kyrgyzstan's post-independence history. However, social mobilization in the country has been strong and its endurance was tested through two subsequent revolutions. The power of social mobilization is rooted deeply in the initial conditions – characterized by a relatively free political environment – that were set during the first years of independence.

On the other hand, Turkmenistan's more careful, gradualist approach toward reforms and social transformation in the country isolated it, making it an 'outlier' in many respects. Relying on its vast hydrocarbon resources, Turkmenistan did relatively well in terms of economic growth. However, the country has been repeatedly criticized by the international community for its slow pace of reforms, for maintaining a highly centralized presidential regime with less open political environment and poor governance. The change of power in 2007 has re-opened the country to the outside world. Yet, compared

to its more advanced reformer neighbors, Turkmenistan's political and economic systems still appeared monolithic to many outside observers, with top-down decision-making and governance systems.

What followed after the collapse of the Soviet Union was the appearance of two contrasting development contexts, as explained above. The external development actors, whose interaction with Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan started in the early 1990s, witnessed the emergence of two contrasting environments where they had to operate. These external actors established their offices and began supporting various reforms by launching development projects and programs. As Janine Wedel notes, "as 'transition to democracy' came into vogue, carpetbaggers and consultants, foundations and freelancers rushed to explore, and sometimes to exploit, the new frontier" (Wedel, 1998, p. 4). Yet, as Atlani-Duault stresses, these new players had limited understanding of the context and prevailing realities on the ground and lacked "the necessary know-how to operate there" (2007, p. 51).

The two countries, although pursuing different models of interaction with Western donors and using different tools in this process, managed to use that interaction for their own benefits. In some cases, as argued by Cooley, the availability of non-western aid (e.g., Chinese, Russian) "has empowered the Central Asian rulers to more forcefully resist Western attempts to promote democracy, economic reforms, and better governance" (2012, p. 9). In other cases, the Central Asian countries became embedded into Western security policies, especially after the events of 9/11, allowing them to manipulate the geopolitical rivalries between global and regional powers for their own interests (Olcott, 2005).

The next chapter discusses donor-recipient interaction on the regional level. It also discusses the emergence of the interaction between the recipients and donors in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan and the key developments that affected their interaction. By looking at government and donor data, as well as using the interview data, it aims to produce a general picture of donor-recipient interaction in the two countries.

Chapter 5 | Donor-recipient relations on the regional and country levels

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses Central Asian geopolitics and its re-emergence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. It also outlines the regional dimension of donor-recipient relations in Central Asia within the framework of the evolving geopolitical realities and examines how Central Asian countries interacted with donors and the kind of interests they pursued. It then discusses donor-recipient relations on the level of the two countries, specifically focusing on key stakeholders involved in development aid interaction, national and donor-driven coordination mechanisms and tools, as well as key events and factors which influenced that interaction. The purpose of this chapter is to situate Kyrgyzstan's and Turkmenistan's relations with the external players within the Central Asian geopolitical context and to show connections between regional geopolitical developments and the main parameters of donor-recipient interaction which the two countries have developed and pursued since their independence.

Regarding the recipient countries' interaction with donors, Swedlund (2017) emphasizes that donors and recipient governments mostly engage in three types of dialogues: *political*, *policy* and *technical*. According to Swedlund:

> The *political dialogue* focuses on diplomatic and geopolitical issues, while the *technical dialogue* is focused on more practical, disbursement-related topics and project implementation. Occupying the fuzzy middle is the *policy dialogue* [emphases added]. The policy dialogue focuses on big-picture development issues, such as the country's plan for combating poverty or improving the delivery of health services (2017, p. 61).

5.2. Geopolitics of Central Asia

After gaining independence in 1991, the Central Asian countries embarked on various reform programs to deal with the challenges they faced following the break-up of the Soviet economic system. The pace and magnitude of reforms was different in various countries (Ahrens & Hoen, 2013). The independence of the Central Asian countries exposed them to increased interaction with various external actors, including foreign donors.

The geopolitics of Central Asia re-emerged with the end of the Cold War and was shaped by newly evolving strategic priorities of a number of external players in the region, both global (e.g., the United States, Russia, China, European Union) and regional players (e.g., Turkey, Iran, India, Saudi Arabia and others) (Bayulgen, 2009; Kavalski, 2010). The initial stages of the Central Asian countries' engagement with external actors were characterized by the immediate pressures to ensure peace and stability in the region, especially taking into account the escalation of the civil conflict in Tajikistan (Allison & Jonson, 2001) and rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The external actors were also concerned about imposing tight control of and eventually eliminating the Soviet-era nuclear weapons and materials available in some of the Central Asian countries (Nichol, 2013), supporting domestic reform and modernization efforts of these countries as well as ensuring development of extractive industries, most notably natural gas and oil (Wilkinson, 2010). In at least two of the five countries – Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan – the politics of hydrocarbon resources has become the key geopolitical factor (Cooley, 2012) and the backbone of their economic stability, which ensured a steady flow of revenues to support their national post-Soviet state-building processes.

The 1990s witnessed the arrival in Central Asia of various multilateral and Western bilateral donors, international financial institutions and international non-governmental organizations, bringing foreign aid and investments as well as policy advice and technical assistance to countries, which had never received non-Soviet aid and investments in the past. The arrival of these external players in the early 1990s caused suspicion and concerns in Russia, which considered Central Asia as lying within its zone of influence. However, there was little Russia could do to resist these tendencies due to its own economic crisis of the 1990s, internal security issues (e.g., conflict in Chechnya) and other challenges (Rumer, 2007).

This interaction with the external players during the first several years of their independence has differed from country to country, depending on the level of openness of governments, availability of natural resources and dependence on external financial support. External donors have dealt with each country individually, without paying proper attention to the regional nature of most of the challenges faced by Central Asian countries, with some exceptions in the environment sector. This tendency has resulted in a lack of coherent regional policies on the side of the external players. As emphasized by Olcott, "although members of the world community talked of their uniform "Central Asian policy", most of them were developing policies that differentiated between states, with preference for engagement with the more energy-rich states of the region" (2005, p. 52).

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) and subsequent global campaign against terrorism changed the nature of Central Asian countries' engagement with the external powers and resulted in a greater U.S. presence in the region (Kubicek, 2010; Rumer, 2007; Wilkinson, 2010). Notably, regional security cooperation within the framework of what the U.S. Government called the *War on Terror* resulted in Central Asian countries becoming "the front line for operations against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan", with the U.S. Government signing "bilateral agreements for basing rights, flyover rights and refueling arrangements with the Central Asian states" (Cooley, 2012, p. 20).

Involvement of Central Asian countries in the global anti-terrorism agenda also undermined other priorities pursued by Western actors and donors, namely promotion of human rights and democratic values in the region (Smith & Kavalski, 2010). Western actors' anxieties regarding "dictatorial ways and disregard for human rights gave way to Realpolitik after 9/11" (Menon, 2007, p. 14). Since 2001, "the trend in the quality of democracy in the region clearly declined" (Cooley, 2012, p. 97) and "the United States has engaged with most of the states in Central Asia pragmatically, despite concerns over human rights and democratic deficits" (Crosston, 2008, p. 155). The US desire for engagement with Central Asian governments in the global fight against terrorism has increased those countries' bargaining power vis-à-vis the United States and other Western powers. The Central Asian governments took advantage of global and regional powers' conflicting interests (Kubicek, 2010). This is clearly demonstrated in the involvement of selected Central Asian countries in recently emerging regional economic alliances (e.g., Russia-backed Eurasian Economic Union, China-backed 'One Belt One Road' Initiative) and regional security initiatives (e.g., Shanghai Cooperation Organization) promoted by non-western players.

In response to the question of whether or not the norms and rules of interaction were imposed on Central Asian governments, while some authors claim that the interaction appears to have been influenced by "externally-promoted strategies aimed at the transmission of rules" (Kavalski, 2010, p. 10), others argue that Central Asian countries themselves have adapted international norms to their needs, thereby 'localizing' those norms (Cooley, 2012; Wilkinson, 2010). As put by Cooley, "Central Asian governments

have drawn up the 'local rules' that guide many of these geopolitical interactions, learning to leverage this interest and even perceptions of regional competition to guard their domestic political power and extract economic benefits" (2012, p. 9). Indeed, the dynamics of post-9/11 period demonstrates how Central Asian countries' relations with major external players shifted from one player to another in an effort to accommodate their own interests and objectives, creating "distinctly novel, innovative, and even unique regional institutions and practices" (Cooley, 2012, p. 5). Geopolitically, therefore, different orbits of influence emerged in the region, with Central Asian countries attempting to benefit from inclusion in those orbits of influence.

5.3. Foreign aid and donor-recipient relations in Central Asia

Geopolitical dynamics in Central Asia have changed significantly since the early 1990s, leading to the establishment of interaction between Central Asian governments and the external players. This resulted in foreign donors responding "to the challenges of the transition with an active array of governmental, intergovernmental, and non-governmental assistance programs" (Kissane, 2009, p. 240). The exposure of these countries to outside influences led some authors to assert that Central Asian countries became "a laboratory for development projects" (Cummings, 2012, p. 5).

As stressed by Atlani-Duault, while external actors have gradually established their presence, the Central Asian countries themselves "have also come to know the international development agencies, to understand their logic and to appropriate their rhetoric. Whether this appropriation was done for constructive or protective purposes, it was always done in ways different from the theoretical and practical aims of the agencies' policies and programmes" (2007, p. 108). This interaction between the recipients and donors and their negotiations over how development aid should be delivered, or what Haley Swedlund refers to as "the development dance", is a constantly evolving process in which recipients and donors reach compromises and agree on commitments, but constantly fail to deliver on them. This, in turn, leads to a situation where "the two parties are continuously searching for new ways of delivering aid" (Swedlund, 2017, p. 2). In other words, as they reach new compromises, they violate their agreements again in an attempt to deliver on new commitments.

The main donors providing development funding to Central Asian countries include a number of OECD member-states (e.g., United Kingdom, United States, France, Japan, Switzerland, Turkey and others), the UN agencies, the World Bank, the EU institutions, as well as multilateral funding mechanisms (e.g., the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, Global Environment Facility) and the regional development banks (e.g., Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) (OECD, 2018). Apart from traditional donors affiliated with the OECD, other countries have also been involved in the provision of development assistance to the Central Asian countries, such as Russia and China (Schmitz, 2013; Sergeev, Kazantsev, & Bartenev, 2013).

Available literature on development aid in the region and the role of external donors disproportionally focuses on those countries which have relatively more open political systems (e.g., Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan) and is characterized by a lack of studies and publications analyzing developments in countries with more closed political systems (e.g., Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan). Studies on Kyrgyzstan are diverse and examine an array of donor-funded sectors, including education (Deyoung, 2006; Merrill, 2013; Silova, 2011), civil society development (Bayalieva-Jailobaeva, 2014; Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008), health (Baschieri & Falkingham, 2006), security (Toktomushev, 2015) and other sectors. With regard to Turkmenistan, a

limited number of publications are available, which focus on Turkmenistan's foreign policy issues and provide a general overview of the country's development challenges (Anceschi, 2009; Peyrouse, 2012). In terms of donor-recipient interaction, John Heathershaw's (2009) research on Tajikistan provides a good example of how social realities are produced in the interaction between the government and the elites in Tajikistan on one side and major external donors involved in peacebuilding activities on the other.

A limited number of academic works study developments in Central Asia in a comparative perspective, mostly analyzing differences in countries' domestic policies and strategies and their relations with external players through the wider Central Asian geopolitical lenses. Sally Cummings' (2012) analysis of economic, social and political transition, Alexander Cooley's (2012) analysis of Central Asian countries' interaction with donors and localization of international norms, a series of articles included in Iveta Silova and Gita Steiner-Khamsi's book (2008) on education sector reform and involvement of NGOs in the reform process are useful examples employing comparative approaches. Atlani-Duault's (2007) ethnographic study of international development actors' priorities and practices in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention in Central Asia and the role of those actors in the emergence of local civil society organizations provides a useful framework to analyze development aid relations.

There are also a limited number of works focusing on donors' and host-governments' performance versus their commitments stemming from international aid governance policy documents (e.g., Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness), such as the degree of aid coordination, harmonization and aid fragmentation. Analysis of Tajikistan's development landscape carried out by Aminjanov, Kholmatov, and Kataev (2010) provides a detailed review of the activities of various international donors involved in development and humanitarian affairs, the types of projects and programs, and the degree of aid fragmentation and coordination. According to this study, since 2002, aid fragmentation has increased by almost two times in Tajikistan compared to the pre-9/11 period, with "social sector, education and population programs" having "the highest degree of fragmentation" (2010, p. 176).

Some authors suggest that priorities of external (mostly Western) donors have changed from addressing regional and country-specific development challenges to combating terrorism and religious extremism. As a result, as argued by Wilkinson, "previous international – and especially American – interests, such as the promotion of long-term economic and political reform and the defence of human rights, were downshifted in favor of a new commitment to geostrategic stability in the region" (2010, p. 142). The political upheavals in some of the former Soviet countries (e.g., Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan) led Central Asian governments to exercise greater control over the activities implemented by international and local NGOs funded by external donors. The activities of those NGOs were perceived as threats to the stability of regimes and as a potential source of influence by external donors on domestic affairs (Cooley, 2012; Kubicek, 2010), which to some extent, resulted in the increase of non-OECD development aid and investment to the region. For example, China and Russia have recently appeared as important sources of development assistance and loans to Central Asian governments (Schmitz, 2013). According to Sergeev et al. (2013), during the period from 2008 to 2012, Russia provided on average US$ 200 million of aid per year to the countries of Central Asia. China mainly provided development loans on concessional terms and investments in infrastructural development in Central Asia. In 2013, negotiations between China and countries of Central Asia led to the signing of bilateral investment agreements totaling about US$ 50 billion (Kuchins & Sharan, 2015). With no democratization, human rights or governance-related conditionalities attached to this assistance, "Central

Asian elites find relations with Russia and China in many ways more attractive" (Kubicek, 2010, p. 50) than relations with the Western donors.

Despite the seeming diversity of literature on development aid in Central Asia, topics related to aid management and donor-recipient interaction are under-researched. There is a limited number of comparative studies on aid relations in Central Asian countries, and specifically the comparison of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. Greater understanding of how aid is managed can potentially contribute to finding out why donors and host-governments behave in this or that way when managing aid-funded projects. This, in turn, can help to elaborate more optimal types of their interaction and adopt more cooperative practices of engagement, in Central Asia generally, and particularly in specific countries.

5.4. Donor-recipient relations in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan

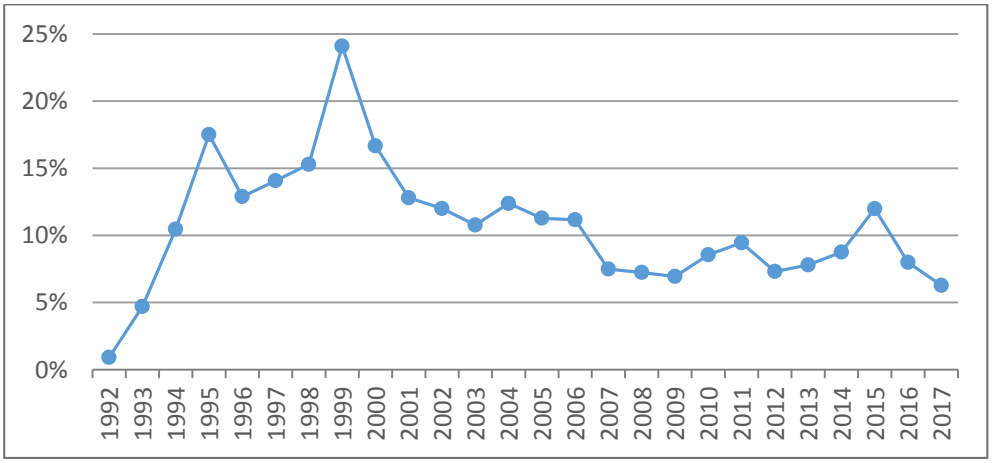
This section provides a general overview of key stakeholders in donor-recipient relations in the two countries. It introduces relevant actors representing both recipient countries and donor agencies. It will also analyze key events and developments which had an impact on relations between donors and recipients.

5.4.1. Kyrgyzstan's relations with the external donors and development partners

5.4.1.1. Donor-recipient relations at a glance

Kyrgyzstan is a member of more than 75 international organizations, conferences, agencies and other interstate bodies (MFAKG, 2018) including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Economic Union. Relations with the Western external donors and development partners, who expressed their willingness to support the country in implementation of liberal transition reforms, evolved across all sectors. As Morozova puts it, Kyrgyzstan "was forced not only to let the international markets, financial institutions and companies in, but also to open the public domain to international human rights organizations and various NGOs", becoming over time "one of the most favourite transition cases to be studied" (2013, p. 10). Kyrgyzstan was selected as a pilot country for various initiatives promoted by donors on the global and regional levels. It also developed national poverty reduction strategies (UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2003) whereas other countries in the region (e.g., Turkmenistan) avoided the word 'poverty' as such in their national development strategies and programs. It has been one of the largest recipients of ODA in Central Asia, which during certain years reached almost 25% of gross national income (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Net ODA received by Kyrgyzstan (% of GNI)

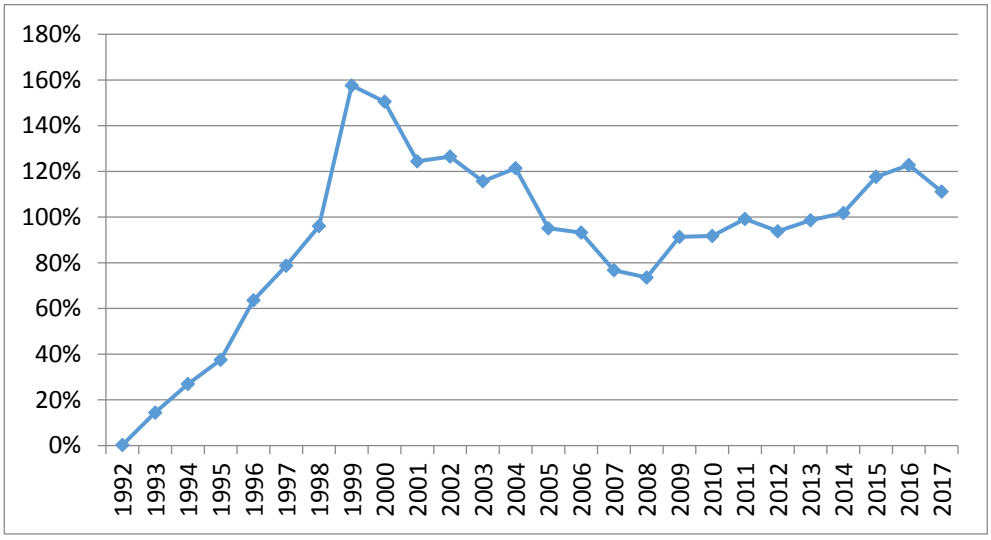


Source: World Bank Open Data

Donor-funded projects and programs (along with investments) constitute 47% of the total budget envisaged in the National Sustainable Development Strategy 2013-2017, with only 53% coming from the state budget (Levina, 2014).

Country-level mechanisms for coordination of externally-funded projects and programs have been in place for a long time. Government and key donors organized high-level development conferences during various years to discuss the country's development objectives and external donors' commitment to support national efforts (UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2003; GOKR, 2013). However, the institutional framework for coordination of foreign investments was altered with each power change, ranging from the State Commission on Foreign Investment and Economic Assistance under President Akayev, the Central Agency for Development, Investments and Innovations under President Bakiyev, to the Coordination Council on Macro-Economic and Investment Policy revitalized following the 2010 revolution (KG-GEN06; KG-ENV02). Some of the large national development projects are implemented through donor-funded Public Investment Programs (PIPs), which are part of the general government budget (Mogilevsky & Omorova, 2011). While there appear to be relevant institutions and policies regulating foreign investments and the investment climate in Kyrgyzstan in general appears to be more favorable to foreign investors than that of its neighbors (except for Kazakhstan), the downside is the heavy debt burden (see Figure 5.2). For example, the NSDS 2013-2017 emphasizes that the implementation of PIPs "leads to an increase in foreign debt burden and in the state budget" due to "inadequate selection of and control over the PIP projects." It further stresses that only projects focusing on "strategically important national infrastructure" should be supported and funded through the PIP (GOKR, 2013, pp. 66-67). In addition, the structure of the external funding used to finance government investment programs is very unbalanced. According to the Ministry of Finance data, 58.9% of public investment programs for the period 2014-2016 were financed through investment provided by China. Other donors contributed much less: e.g., Asian Development Bank – 11%, World Bank – 6.8%, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development – 5.4%, and other donors – 17.8% (Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2016).

Figure 5.2: Kyrgyzstan's external debt stocks (% of GNI)



Source: World Bank Open Data

Kyrgyzstan's formal donor coordination mechanism – the Donor Coordination Council – had been functioning since 2002, but underwent structural changes in 2009 and was renamed the Development Partners Coordination Council (DPCC), co-chaired by selected development agencies (UN in Kyrgyzstan, n.d.a). Since 2010, this mechanism has been functioning through an established secretariat, conducting regular meetings and maintaining an informative website with information on all key development partners working in Kyrgyzstan. As of 2018, the DPCC comprised 27 members and observers. Government agencies are invited to participate in the DPCC meetings. In addition, the aid management platform has been developed under the leadership of the Prime Minister's Office and overall coordination of the Ministry of Finance. The objective of the platform is "to track foreign development assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic" and "improve coordination between the Government of Kyrgyzstan and development partners, as well as among development partners to avoid duplication of efforts and to better align with government priorities" (GOKR, n.d.).

Existing mechanisms for development assistance coordination are in place and involve all relevant actors on both donor and recipient sides engaging in both policy and technical dialogues. Yet, according to a former Minister of Economy, "coordination of foreign aid is dispersed among several government institutions including the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economy", which results in "discontinuity in the coordination, planning and monitoring of projects" (as cited in Levina, 2014). In addition to technical and financial coordination of donor-funded projects and programs, several respondents noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Kyrgyzstan recently started playing a more proactive role, demanding that it be informed about donor initiatives and involved in coordination of their activities on the political level. A more proactive position of the MFA was especially evident since the power change in 2010 (KG-GEN10; KG-GOV06; KG-GOV09).

According to most of my respondents, government agencies have regularly participated in donor-led coordination mechanisms. The current Development Partners Coordination Council has regular interaction with various government partners, including the Prime Minister's Office. Relevant tools (e.g., aid management portal, joint assessments, joint trust funds) are used to coordinate donors' activities. There are also successful examples of sector-wide approach programs such as in the area of public health where donor coordination appeared to be strong (Ulikpan, Mirzoev, Jimenez, Malik, & Hill, 2014). Line ministries and other national institutions have big stakes in donor projects and are reportedly good at coordinating donor-funded projects, if and when considered necessary and beneficial for them. Nevertheless, the system of coordinating donors' activities is not systematic and involves a range of government agencies, as stressed above. In addition, coordination appears to be weaker on the local level due to different dynamics and different local players involved. Coordination is also hampered by what Ostrom (2011) calls *perverse incentives*. Local recipients would prefer to work separately with each donor because of access to parallel funding coming from various donors for similar activities (KG-GEN04; KG-GEN08; KG-GOV09). In general, the following key aid coordination challenges were identified by respondents:

- Different program cycles, cooperation agreements, program management procedures for each donor;
- Inter-agency tensions among donors;
- Coordination being mostly donor-driven, although government gets involved regularly;
- Competition over funding, priority areas and sectors;

- Lack of interest on the side of recipients organizations (especially line ministries) to have a coordinated approach in program implementation due to opportunities to access funding and resources from variety of sources.

5.4.1.2. Introducing the players involved in donor-recipient relations

The analysis of the interview data and donors' project and program documents produced the following list of government and donor agencies, as well as non-governmental players involved in donor-recipient relations in Kyrgyzstan. This list is comprehensive and covers all players irrespective of the sectors.

A) Government players

Based on interview data, the government players consist of the following categories:

- **Presidential Administration:** Conducts high-level political dialogue with donors but is not involved in day-to-day implementation and management of donor projects (i.e., in technical dialogue);
- **Prime-Minister's Office:** High-level focal point for developing and formulating strategic national development priorities and integrating donor support to the national development framework; one of the lead actors in conducting the policy dialogue;
- **Line ministries and other government agencies:** Directly involved in program/project formulation and implementation in line with the signed program/project cooperation agreements and project documents; also coordinate sectoral program formulation and implementation in cooperation with key donors involved in relevant sectors; mostly involved in the technical dialogue;
- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs:** Less proactive in the 1990s and 2000s, the MFA started playing a more prominent role since the mid-2010s, insisting that it should be regularly informed about donors' interaction with local recipients;
- **Ministry of Finance:** Works mostly with the international financial institutions (IFIs); monitors implementation of projects and programs funded by IFIs and other selected donors; is also in charge of managing domestic and external debts (GOKR, 2012a); historically, was one of the key players in donor-recipient relations;
- **Ministry of Economy:** Provides overall coordination of technical and grant assistance received by the country; works with other key donors in line with the Decree of the Government of Kyrgyz Republic on attracting and utilizing the international grants and technical assistance (GOKR, 2017).

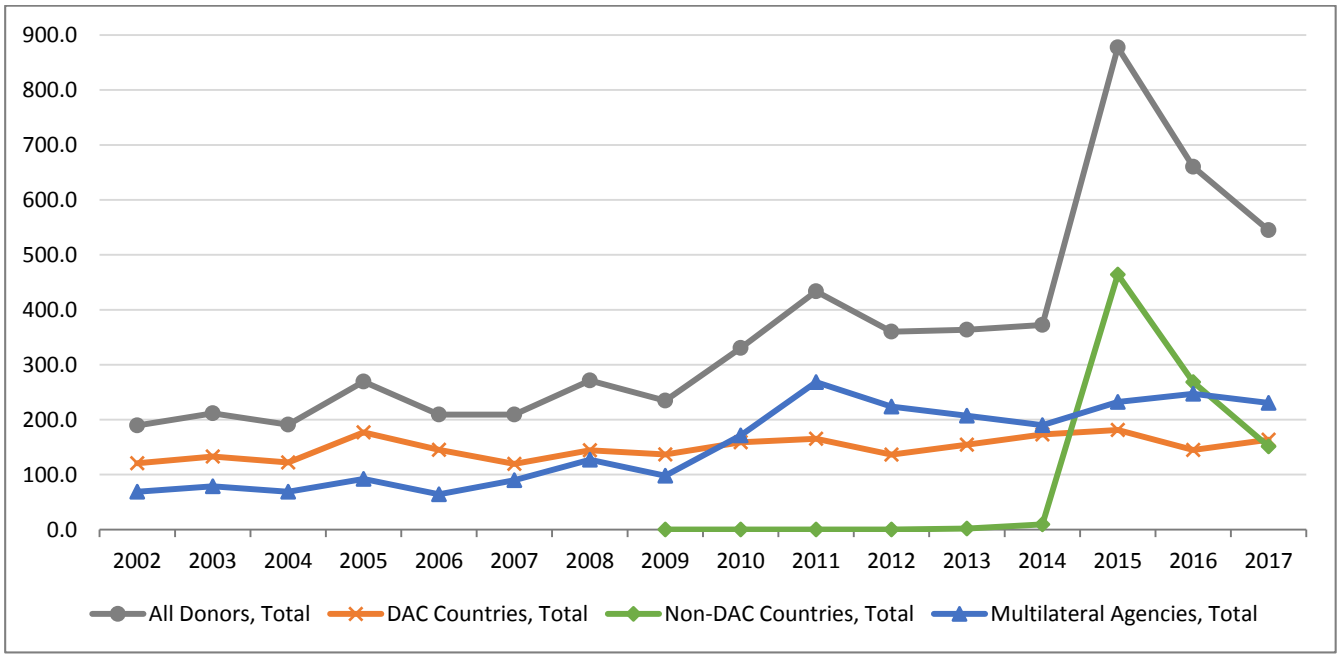
B) Players representing donor agencies

Different groups of donor agencies have operated in Kyrgyzstan since its independence. While some were OECD-affiliated, others represented non-western donors, some of whom increased their presence and level of funding over time (see Figure 5.3 for ODA disbursements by type of donors and Table 5.1 for disbursements by selected sectors). The following groups of donor agencies are identified based on the interview data and the analysis of donors' project and program documents:

- **Multilateral donors and development partners:** International financial institutions and regional development banks, including World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Finance Corporation (IFC), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); UN funds, programs and agencies; European Union (EU); Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and multilateral trust funds such as the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM) and Global Environment Facility (GEF);

- **Bilateral OECD donors and their development agencies:** German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Turkey International Cooperation and Development Administration (TICA);
- **Bilateral non-OECD donors:** China, Russia (through Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund established in 2014) and countries of the Gulf region. China made significant investments in Kyrgyzstan. As of the end of 2016, Kyrgyzstan owed 40% of its external debt (approximately US$ 1.5 billion) to the Exim Bank of China (Hurley, Morris, & Portelance, 2018). AidData's recently compiled database of Chinese ODA covering the period from 2000 to 2014 shows that approximately US$ 2.98 billion was disbursed or committed by China to Kyrgyzstan, including in loans, grants and export credits (AidData, 2017). Similarly, the Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund (RKDF) emerged as one of the key donors in Kyrgyzstan, providing over US$ 260 million to fund development projects in various sectors during the period from September 2015 to December 2017 (RKDF, 2017);
- **International NGOs and foundations:** Soros Foundation, Aga Khan Development Network, Mercy Corps; contractors of bilateral development agencies (e.g., International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute whose activities are funded through USAID grants); in addition, other, smaller international NGOs and non-profit organizations have been active in the country.

Figure 5.3: ODA disbursements to Kyrgyzstan by type of donors (constant 2017 USD, millions)



Source: OECD Query Wizard for International Development Statistics (https://stats.oecd.org/qwids/)

Table 5.1: ODA disbursements to Kyrgyzstan by selected sectors 2005-2017 (constant 2017 USD, millions)
DAC countries and multilateral agencies*

SECTORS	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Social infrastructure and services	**86.09**	**100.59**	**116.38**	**140.42**	**117.73**	**127.48**	**228.48**	**158.50**	**156.89**	**186.16**	**173.15**	**184.21**	**174.92**
Education total	8.16	11.88	13.97	17.22	20.21	20.98	33.82	27.62	23.51	27.80	31.47	42.99	57.95
Health total	20.83	24.10	26.93	29.08	27.01	27.65	40.13	29.45	29.61	37.39	33.29	28.33	37.23
Population services/reproductive health	8.15	4.44	8.26	13.29	5.13	8.86	10.18	8.83	10.18	7.37	8.48	5.09	3.35
Water supply and sanitation	7.53	9.77	7.74	5.07	10.24	7.66	20.90	12.28	11.78	23.04	17.32	38.20	11.55
Government and civil society	30.69	27.67	39.76	43.18	41.36	51.08	70.89	58.24	66.16	76.03	72.68	57.74	59.08
Other social infrastructure and services	10.74	22.73	19.71	32.59	13.77	11.25	52.56	22.08	15.65	14.52	9.90	11.85	5.76
Economic infrastructure and services	**26.99**	**32.22**	**21.76**	**23.73**	**30.25**	**53.55**	**87.84**	**76.51**	**99.66**	**106.49**	**120.97**	**84.86**	**105.67**
Transport and storage	1.30	1.52	6.54	8.20	5.79	26.29	52.56	51.54	40.09	43.75	52.68	22.67	37.87
Communications	4.76	1.88	1.07	0.88	0.09	0.76	4.46	0.29	0.15	1.23	0.38	0.62	0.65
Energy	10.65	17.57	6.44	3.70	15.60	17.66	15.34	17.10	29.78	18.02	44.25	16.79	31.86
Banking and financial services	8.76	7.91	2.60	4.97	1.65	0.83	5.27	1.87	10.22	32.91	16.52	35.34	16.45
Business and other services	1.52	3.34	5.11	5.98	7.12	8.01	10.21	5.71	19.43	10.58	7.13	9.45	18.84
Production sectors	**45.78**	**30.96**	**29.02**	**25.61**	**26.95**	**21.49**	**27.58**	**38.58**	**37.93**	**24.96**	**30.01**	**26.59**	**20.66**
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	27.67	16.85	16.92	17.54	20.19	16.98	20.62	26.61	25.68	14.39	18.28	11.31	5.62
Industry, mining and construction	16.62	12.89	10.53	6.06	1.59	2.36	4.14	6.11	9.51	6.38	9.76	9.40	9.90
Trade, policies and regulations	0.90	0.78	0.77	1.64	4.77	1.91	2.69	5.77	2.57	2.90	1.88	2.24	5.08
Tourism	0.59	0.44	0.80	0.37	0.40	0.24	0.12	0.10	0.17	1.29	0.10	3.64	0.06
General environment protection	**3.54**	**4.98**	**3.12**	**2.10**	**2.59**	**3.57**	**2.18**	**2.49**	**3.14**	**5.31**	**5.62**	**6.05**	**4.15**
Commodity aid	**34.99**	**6.90**	**14.13**	**49.72**	**28.12**	**36.51**	**28.51**	**27.16**	**28.87**	**13.33**	**39.63**	**28.01**	**28.04**
Humanitarian aid	**1.15**	**0.65**	**1.15**	**2.77**	**10.50**	**60.51**	**32.64**	**16.29**	**10.92**	**3.99**	**3.27**	**2.80**	**3.92**
Conflict, peace and security	**1.31**	**2.80**	**2.28**	**2.92**	**2.08**	**17.01**	**25.90**	**24.77**	**20.98**	**12.87**	**11.36**	**8.88**	**4.56**
Multi-sector support**	**11.71**	**11.72**	**18.68**	**20.53**	**8.71**	**22.39**	**21.47**	**29.95**	**14.44**	**14.00**	**21.53**	**18.30**	**22.69**

* No data for years 1992-2004 was available.

** Including rural and urban development, disaster risk reduction, food safety, food security, non-agricultural alternative development.

Source: OECD Query Wizard for International Development Statistics (https://stats.oecd.org/qwids/)

Modalities of implementation of donor-funded projects in Kyrgyzstan varied from donor to donor. While some donors implemented their projects mostly themselves (e.g., through establishment of project implementation units, hiring project personnel, etc.) or occasionally engaged government recipients to implement their projects, others relied heavily on contractors, such as home-country NGOs, private companies, academic institutions, etc. For example, according to the data of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), of 115 project data entries made by UNDP, 94 are implemented by UNDP itself, and 21 are implemented by government recipients. At the same time, of 226 project data entries made by USAID, the majority are implemented by US-based NGOs (69), US-based or local private sector companies (49), regional NGOs (17) and USAID itself. There appear to be no national partners involved in actual implementation of USAID projects.[4]

C) Local non-governmental players

Most donors work with and involve local non-governmental organizations in the implementation of their projects. Public Oversight Councils have been established since 2010 within most of the government ministries to ensure "public oversight of government policies and activities" (World Bank, 2013a, p. 46) and to encourage openness in allocation and utilization of financial resources. These councils consist of representatives of the NGOs, expert community, academia and others (KG-ENV01; KG-GEN06; KG-GOV02). Big donor agencies (e.g., World Bank, JICA, European Union) regularly consult local communities, NGOs and Public Oversight Councils during program development and implementation stages. According to the majority of respondents representing donor agencies, government welcomes the involvement of non-governmental players in the formulation and implementation of donor-funded projects and programs (i.e, their involvement in policy and technical dialogues). However, as one multilateral agency respondent put it, in more sensitive areas (e.g., human rights issues, corruption and inter-ethnic dialogue), the government can be cautious. In that respondent's conversation with a government official, the latter reportedly said: "You pay them [NGOs] to criticize us" (KG-GOV07).

Communication between all players involved in donor-recipient relations has always taken place through direct channels without any third-party [government agency] involvement and any formal written requests. Donors were free to contact local recipients directly through their desk-officers. Communication on senior management levels (e.g., heads of agencies, heads of ministerial divisions, and even ministers) was also direct, with one head of donor agency saying: "I personally interact with some ministers through 'Viber' app" (KG-GEN08). However, since the mid-2010s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became more proactive, insisting that donors should keep the MFA informed about their interaction with government ministries and agencies in written form (KG-GEN02; KG-GOV02; KG-GOV06; KG-ENV03).

5.4.1.3. Government preferences regarding the types of donors

While twelve interviewees emphasized that government recipients do not have strong preferences in terms of the types of donors (KG-GEN02; KG-GOV01; KG-GOV02; KG-GOV03; KG-GOV05; KG-GOV13; KG-RD01; KG-RD04; KG-RD05; KG-RD06; KG-RD10; KG-ENV03) and that they have been pragmatic in their relations

[4] The data for Kyrgyzstan can be generated through IATI's Datastore CSV Query Builder at http://datastore.iatistandard.org/query/. While IATI dataset might not be complete as donors voluntarily upload their data, even the rough analysis of the available data shows that different development partners use different project implementation modalities, ranging from direct donor implementation, direct recipient implementation to implementation by externally hired contractors.

and known what they wanted from donors, others stated that some preferences could still be observed based on:

- Level of funding, i.e., donors with large budgets are preferred (KG-GEN01; KG-GEN07; KG-GEN11; KG-RD09);
- Donor procedures, i.e., less bureaucratic, more flexible procedures are preferred (KG-ENV04; KG-GEN10; KG-GOV11; KG-RD02);
- Government's political ties with donor-countries, i.e., preference for donors with whom the government maintains close political ties, such as Russia (KG-ENV04; KG-GEN03; KG-GEN06; KG-GEN08; KG-GOV09);
- Absence of political conditionalities, i.e., preference for donors not demanding governance, institutional or other reforms (KG-ENV04; KG-GEN06; KG-GEN11; KG-RD03).

At the same time, there were also institutional preferences across different local players. Line ministries prefer to work with donors with strong sectoral expertise. They are capable of lobbying for their interests through donor-funded projects. The political leadership (e.g., Presidential Administration, MFA) have become more pro-Russian after joining the Eurasian Economic Union (KG-GOV07; KG-RD02).

Since the early 2010s, non-OECD donors have become more active (e.g., Russia, China, Middle Eastern countries), and they developed increasingly strong political ties with the country's leadership. They work mostly with and through the government, without engaging the non-governmental sector. There is also no governance, market reform or other conditionalities attached to their support (KG-ENV04; KG-RD04) (see also Box 5.1).

Box 5.1: Kyrgyz government's preferences in cooperating with donors

"The difference [in terms of the government's treatment of donors] has to do with the extent to which certain partners are considered as strategic partners. For example, relations with Russia are important for Kyrgyzstan . . . On the level of line ministries, they are open and cooperative. On the level of the Prime-Minister's Office, relations are good as well. The tension comes when you deal with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Administration. The MFA can be both constructive and damaging, while the Presidential Administration can intervene and block certain initiatives. They both follow a Russian narrative." (KG-GEN03, multilateral agency respondent)

"For government, less convenient organizations are various bilateral national development agencies and their contractors, including German (e.g., Friedrich Ebert Foundation) and American organizations (e.g., NDI, IRI, NED). They get their funds from their relevant national development agencies and work directly with local organizations, such as the NGOs, citizens groups, or local private educational institutions. Sometimes, political parties are their beneficiaries. Their grants and financial support are smaller from the budget point of view. You cannot compare it with what the IFIs give." (KG-GEN04, respondent from the academic sector)

"The senior officials in Kyrgyzstan were always very pragmatic at all times, and there were no major differences in treating different types of donors. Their preferences changed along with the changes of the political situation." (KG-GOV01, multilateral agency respondent)

"It depends on how much you give, plus political considerations. Since the crisis in Ukraine started [in 2013], things got different." (KG-RD09, multilateral agency respondent)

"After joining the Customs Union, Kyrgyzstan became more pro-Russian." (KG-RD02, bilateral agency respondent)

"Formally, the approach is the same towards all donors. Informally, they look at the efficiency of donor procedures." (KG-ENV02, multilateral agency respondent)

"No major differences [in terms of which donors to work with] . . . as long as they help us to achieve our objectives." (KG-ENV03, government agency respondent)

5.4.1.4. Key developments that affected donor-recipient relations in Kyrgyzstan

Donor-recipient relations in Kyrgyzstan have evolved in a more donor-friendly environment than in other Central Asian countries with more restrictive regimes. From an Ostromian perspective, Kyrgyzstan offered a more favorable *macroinstitutional environment* for donors to realize development projects and programs (Ostrom, 2011). The following developments appear to have influenced the donor-recipient relations in Kyrgyzstan, either on political or operational levels.

A) Establishment of a relatively liberal political system in the early 1990s

Kyrgyzstan created a relatively liberal political system in the early years of independence under President Akayev (Cummings, 2010; Wilkinson, 2010), laying a solid foundation for advancing the government's and local aid recipients' relations with foreign donors. As Wilkinson emphasized, "considering Kyrgyzstan's reputation as the most democratic country of Central Asia, it is unsurprising that there was an extensive international presence in Bishkek relatively soon after Kyrgyzstan had become independent" with donors being "keen to help Kyrgyzstan transition to democracy and promote the appropriate accompanying norms by assisting with state building" (2010, p. 141). Although the political environment remained volatile with two violent power changes taking place in 2005 and 2010, the relatively open interaction – involving donors, recipients and local and international NGOs – helped to set preconditions for using development aid to address *collective action problems* (Ostrom, 2011) in the country.

B) The events of September 2001

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Kyrgyzstan became one of the key regional partners in the US-led military operation in Afghanistan, agreeing to host the U.S. airbase, which "represented a key logistic hub in the region and served as a focal point in the US-led war in Afghanistan" (Toktomushev, 2015, p. 59). Kyrgyzstan's involvement in the US-led war on terror brought various material benefits to the country and generally resulted in certain Western donors closing their eyes to human rights and governance-related issues in return for the country's involvement in it (Cooley, 2012). Since the late 1990s, foreign donors and the international community started to increasingly criticize the Akayev government for retreating from its initially liberal agenda and moving towards authoritarianism. Therefore, the events of September 2001 offered a range of political opportunities for Kyrgyzstan in terms of minimizing Western pressure in return for military cooperation, which increased from US$ 1.88 million in 2000 to US$ 30.12 million in 2002, a year after 9/11.[5] In 2007, according to Lumpe (2010) the U.S. military and police aid to Kyrgyzstan surpassed the U.S. aid given for democracy promotion projects (US$ 38.30 million vs. US$ 5.36 million).

C) Revolutions of 2005 and 2010

The two revolutions of 2005 and 2010, while evolving differently, influenced donor-recipient relations significantly. Increasing concentration of executive power under Akayev had provoked public revolts, resulting in the termination of his presidency and the appointment of an interim government and the election of Kurmanbek Bakiyev as the new president. These changes opened opportunities for donors and local recipients to align their cooperation strategies with the new government's priorities. However, donors' attitudes gradually changed toward Bakiyev's administration. Corruption charges were one of the key

[5] Details of US government's military aid to Kyrgyzstan can be found at USAID's Foreign Aid Explorer website at https://explorer.usaid.gov/aid-trends.html

factors that contributed to the change of attitude, along with the attempts of the Bakiyev family to control foreign investments and donor funds through the establishment of the Central Agency for Development, Investments and Innovation headed by Bakiyev's son (KG-RD01). The revolution of 2010 resulted in another power change in Kyrgyzstan and was a key milestone in donor-recipient relations. The donors' conference in 2010 identified program and funding priorities in support of the new government (KG-GEN02). It also resulted in the NGO sector getting even stronger through their inclusion into the newly created Public Oversight Councils (ADB, 2012).

The revolutions of 2005 and 2010 had a significant impact on donor-recipient relations both politically and operationally. The volatile political environment and temporary power vacuum led to a short-term termination of project activities. As noted by the former head of a UN agency during the 2005 events, "nobody among donors had any counterparts for three months or so, and we spent most of the time doing emergency planning. We spent most of the time in limbo, there was no cooperation during that time" (KG-GEN01). At the same time, the periods following revolutions and establishment of legitimate regimes offered opportunities for both donors and local recipients to expand their interaction. Politically, changes in donors' country strategies took place after each revolution, introducing new programs in support of the newly-elected government's political, economic, social and other priorities (KG-GEN02; KG-GOV06; KG-RD10). Operationally, it led to an increase in budgets and the establishment of new institutions and mechanisms to coordinate donor projects and programs, especially after the 2010 revolution (KG-GEN06).

D) Financial crisis of the late 2000s

As is the case in other middle-income countries, the financial crisis of the late 2000s contributed to a decrease in development funding from certain OECD donors. For example, the OECD database of aid disbursements shows that ODA from Austria, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom steadily decreased starting from 2008. The ODA from the United States decreased from US$ 63.6 million in 2008 to US$ 52.5 million and US$ 57.6 million in 2009 and 2010, respectively.[6] Some informants from the UN system noted that core funding has decreased since the financial crisis and that they had to rely more and more on mobilization of extra-budgetary resources to implement their programs and projects (KG-ENV01; KG-GEN08). While in general Kyrgyzstan remained one of the top ODA recipients in Central Asia, foreign aid as a percentage of GNI gradually decreased between 1999 and 2015 (World Bank, n.d.b) and the financial crisis might have contributed to a reallocation of the core resources in favor of other countries. The financial crisis did not appear to have political implications on donor-recipient relations in Kyrgyzstan. However, it encouraged UN agencies and funds to diversify their funding sources.

E) Ethnic clashes in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010

The disturbances that took place following the April 2010 revolution provoked inter-ethnic conflict, which involved Kyrgyz and Uzbeks living in southern Kyrgyzstan, particularly Osh and Jalal-Abad cities. As stressed by the UN Office in Kyrgyzstan, "over 400 people lost their lives, with more than 2,300 injured . . . Large-scale destruction of public and private property, especially housing, occurred" and "some 765,000 people were affected overall, with 375,000 displaced (300,000 internally and 75,000 to neighbouring Uzbekistan)" (UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2010, p. 8). While the conflict contributed to significant social costs and loss of human lives, for the development community, it created many opportunities to get involved in such areas as peacebuilding and reconciliation (see Table 5.1). Operationally, additional funds have been

[6] Detailed data on ODA disbursements to Kyrgyzstan for the period 2008-2017 can be accessed at: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TABLE2A

allocated for country-level programming in these areas. For example, major development partners (e.g., UN, US, OSCE, SDC and others) "introduced a host of peacebuilding projects that advocated reconciliation between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks through inter-ethnic dialogue, mediation and joint social and infrastructure projects in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods" (Megoran, Satybaldieva, Lewis, & Heathershow, 2014, p. 2). The UN agencies' support was coordinated mainly through the UN Peacebuilding Fund, which allocated US$ 10 million during the first two years after the clashes took place and provided over US$ 15 million in 2013 (Jantzi, Faria, & Alymkulova, 2017). Politically, both development partners and the new government committed to work in these areas in order to prevent similar social tensions in future (KG-GEN02; KG-GOV05).

F) Constitutional reforms following 2010 revolution and establishment of parliamentary system

On the political level, donors generally welcomed the post-2010 constitutional reforms that aimed to introduce the parliamentary system and to strengthen participatory democracy. However, as emphasized by some respondents representing donor agencies, it resulted in the introduction of additional procedures and parliamentary approvals for projects which had a loan component. While projects having only a grant component were approved by implementing partners, projects which had a loan element (irrespective of its share in the project's total budget) had to be approved by Parliament (KG-ENV02; KG-RD10). This could substantially delay project initiation (KG-RD05).

G) Frequent changes of government and cabinet members

While greater openness of the country's political system is perceived to be a positive factor, there is also a downside, as noted by those involved in managing donor-funded projects. Frequent changes of government officials on various levels following the parliamentary elections, as stressed by several respondents, delayed implementation of projects and programs since additional time and effort were required to brief and share details about the projects with the newly-appointed officials, to build relations with them and to gain their trust (KG-GEN06; KG-GOV04; KG-GOV07).

H) Geopolitics and country's participation in new regional blocks

Geopolitics has played an important role in donor-recipient relations in Kyrgyzstan since its independence. Kyrgyzstan had to balance its relations with global and regional powers especially starting from September 2001, when it became directly involved in the global war on terror. Later, with increasing Russian (political, military and economic) and Chinese (mostly economic) influence in the region, Kyrgyzstan altered its relations with the external players in an attempt to balance their interests. Kyrgyzstan's membership in the Russia-backed Eurasian Economic Union and the establishment of the Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund (fully funded by Russia), as well as increasing economic cooperation with China, including through 'One Belt One Road' Initiative, have created additional opportunities for Kyrgyzstan in terms of attracting new sources of funding for its development initiatives. These additional opportunities, one could argue, made the government more intractable in dealing with traditional donors when their actions affected Kyrgyzstan's immediate interests. For example, immediately after the ethnic clashes in June 2010, the government imprisoned Mr. Azimjan Askarov, "a longtime human rights activist and leader of the Uzbek community in Jalalabad" (Buxton, 2015, p. 234), who was later awarded a human rights medal by the U.S. Government. This led to tensions between the two governments, resulting in Kyrgyzstan's renunciation of the US-Kyrgyz cooperation agreement in 2015 (GOKR, 2015), which had a negative influence on the US Government-funded activities in the country (KG-ENV01; KG-GEN06; KG-GOV02). Discussion of the geopolitical factor involves both political and operational dimensions, affecting the implementation of

projects funded by specific donors, subject to either improving or worsening of their relations with the Government of Kyrgyzstan (see also Box 5.2).

Box 5.2: The impact of geopolitical developments on donor-recipient relations in Kyrgyzstan

"There is a perception that after closing the air base [in 2014], the relations between the United States and Kyrgyzstan have worsened, but I think the issue is more complex than that. It could be related to the emergence of third-party players, such as Russia (new sources of Russian funding emerged recently, including the Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund), China of course… China is traditionally known as an investor, but they are getting more and more involved in development issues. There are geopolitical nuances for sure, behind aid relations." (KG-GEN04, multilateral agency respondent)

"Russia is regaining, China is increasing its presence and they don't have conditions attached to their support; plus they provide more resources. US-funded projects [i.e., those implemented by USAID and its grantees] have suffered from the increasing Russian and Chinese presence. All 'good governance' reforms implemented under Akayev were directly linked to donor support. After his departure, cooperation has probably become less active. Under Bakiyev, reforms became less important, especially reforms in the area of governance, and traditional donors' ideas became less relevant for the government. This change has happened after 2005 under Bakiyev when Chinese and Russian presence started increasing. With Kyrgyzstan's participation in Customs Union, these tendencies are still apparent." (KG-GOV09, respondent from the academic sector)

5.4.2. Turkmenistan's relations with the external donors and development partners

5.4.2.1. Donor-recipient relations at a glance

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkmenistan is a member of 44 international organizations. It is also an affiliated member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (MFATM, n.d.b). Since its independence, Turkmenistan has been engaging carefully with the external donors, cautiously selecting its partners and making sure donor activities do not have an impact on or influence its domestic policies. In his meeting with the ADB's Executive Director, President Niyazov reportedly said: "I do not support careless, continuous credit borrowing, which will have to be paid by future generations. We are in favor of equal and mutually beneficial relationships with the international financial institutions. . . . We want to see you not as donors, but as equal partners of Turkmenistan" (as cited in Shallyev, 2002).

According to Sabol, "Turkmenistan's evolution was clearly the most unusual in that it successfully resisted external pressures" (2010, p. 188). It also abstained from participating in "various customs and economic alliances elaborated in the 1990s between the Central Asian countries, such as the Central Asian Cooperation Organization" (Peyrouse, 2012, p. 199). In maintaining its relations with external partners, the government preferred bilateral relations, rather than multilateral (Sabol, 2010), although cooperation with the United Nations system has been the government's top priority in its foreign policies. As stressed in an interview given to IrinNews (2003) by Khaled Philby, former UN Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan, "they [the government] always make a point of being a member of the United Nations, of being a neutral country, because of the resolution of the General Assembly and they always make a point of stressing their cooperation with the United Nations and its organs" (as cited in IrinNews, 2003).

In terms of ODA allocation, Turkmenistan has one of the smallest shares of ODA in the region and much smaller than that of Kyrgyzstan. The highest percentage of ODA was received in 2001 and amounted to 2.18% of gross national income (see Figure 5.4). Despite this, the review of donor activities in Turkmenistan demonstrates that the government maintains an interaction with a wide spectrum of donors, including multilateral and bilateral agencies (European Commission, 2014). Several external donors provided their technical and financial support to Turkmenistan as part of their country and/or regional strategies (e.g., the

UN agencies, USAID, ADB, EBRD and GIZ) since the mid-1990s. The three development aid sectors on which this thesis focuses have been prominent themes in the development assistance strategies of these donors. For example, between 1993 and 2019, the US government has disbursed approximately USD 225 million in aid, of which USD 47.67 million (or approximately 21.2%) was disbursed under the 'Government and Civil Society' category.[7] Of three development objectives included in the USAID's Central Asian regional development cooperation strategy for 2015-2019 (which also covers activities focusing on Turkmenistan), two objectives related to promoting inclusive governance and enhancing regional cooperation on a range of environmental issues. The UN agencies support has been more concentrated and provided through joint country program documents, all of which focused on issues related to governance, environmental protection and area-based development and formulated with a reference to various national development strategies (UN in Turkmenistan, 2004; 2009; 2016).

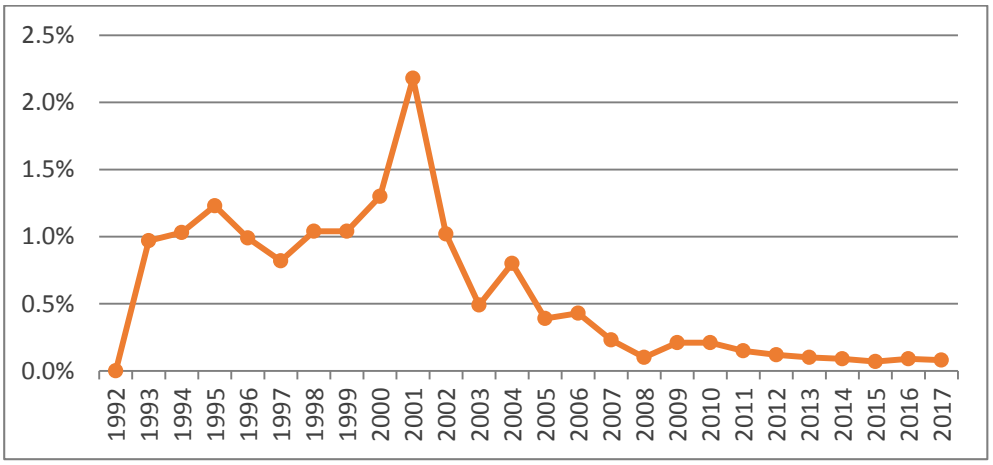
The smaller donor presence in Turkmenistan compared to Kyrgyzstan can be explained by several factors. First, as suggested by Anceschi, "a general reluctance to introduce economic reforms also limited the flow of multilateral aid" (2009, p. 84). Secondly, thanks to revenues received from the extractive industries, Turkmenistan is in a position to fund its own development projects and programs. Funds received from the export of hydrocarbon resources allowed the country to maintain much smaller external debt rates compared to Kyrgyzstan, except in the late-1990s when the delivery of Turkmenistan's natural gas was suspended due to price disagreements with Russia, a major buyer at the time (see Figure 5.5). With many external interests at play in this hydrocarbon-rich country, as stressed by Overland and Torjesen, Turkmenistan "has been relatively successful in terms of staying on reasonably good terms with all significant partners and potential partners, without coming under the control of any one of them" (2010, p. 147). However, some concerns have been raised recently in terms of Turkmenistan's increasing dependence on natural gas export to China, which became the largest consumer of Turkmenistan's natural gas in the recent decade (Aminjonov, 2017).

National mechanisms for coordination of technical assistance and donor projects were even less systematic than in Kyrgyzstan. According to one interviewee, the government's overall donor coordination efforts were stronger in the past (i.e., in the 1990s), when a special unit was established within the Cabinet of Ministers to deal with monitoring and coordination of donors' work. However, it was dissolved in the early 2000s (TM-GEN04; TM-GOV02). The current institutional framework for donor coordination appears to be unsystematic and there is no lead government agency in charge of donor coordination. In the absence of a government donor coordination agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assumes the overall coordination function within the government structure (TM-GOV07). However, the government's involvement in aid coordination appears to be stronger (and more visible) in relation to projects and programs implemented by UN agencies than those of bilateral agencies. For example, according to the UN Office in Turkmenistan, "together with the Government the UN Country Office formally established the joint National Steering and Coordination Committee and the Results Groups" within the framework of the Partnership Framework for Development 2016-2020 signed by the UN agencies and the government (UN in Turkmenistan, 2017, p. 7). According to the World Bank, the activities of other donor agencies are also brought under the umbrella of Government-UN partnership framework: "The government leads the UN-Turkmenistan Strategic Advisory Board – a development partners' coordination mechanism that meets periodically to discuss, review and approve projects in support of the country's national development" (World Bank, 2015b, pp. 19-20). These

[7] Detailed data on US foreign aid to Turkmenistan can be accessed at https://explorer.usaid.gov/data

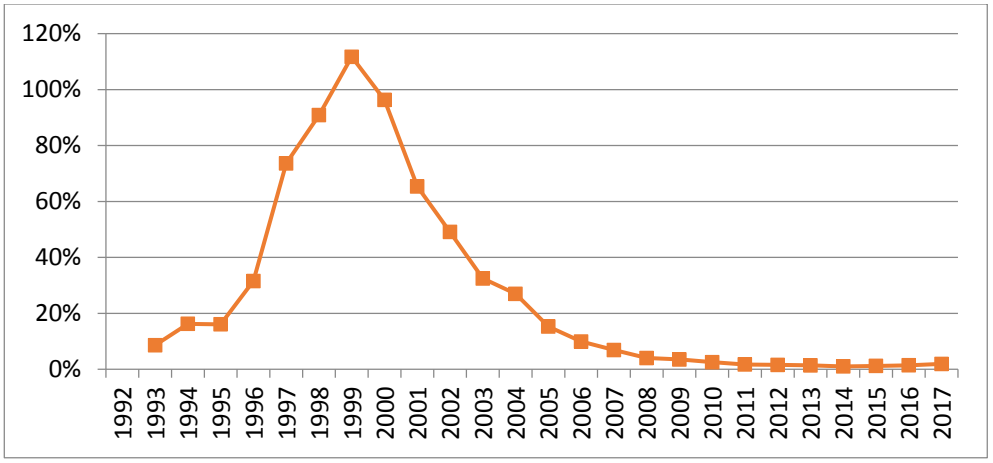
mechanisms, therefore, serve as platforms for the policy dialogue between the UN agencies and the government.

Figure 5.4: Net ODA received by Turkmenistan (% of GNI)



Source: World Bank Open Data

Figure 5.5: Turkmenistan's external debt stocks (% of GNI)



Source: World Bank Open Data

According to the Presidential Decree "On State Registration of Foreign Projects and Programs of Gratuitous Technical, Financial and Humanitarian Assistance and Grants", all donors must register their projects and programs with the Ministry of Economy and Development (merged with the Ministry of Finance in 2017). The Ministry was also mandated to maintain a "unified state register of foreign technical and financial assistance and humanitarian aid and grants" (GOTM, 2013). The decree also contains special provisions with regard to foreign technical and financial assistance to public associations and religious organizations registered in Turkmenistan. Some foreign observers raised concerns regarding the decree, stressing that it "would enable the government effectively to take financial control of all forms of non-profit activities" in the country (Eurasianet, 2013).

A formal donor coordination system, established by donors and facilitated by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, is in place. However, as stressed by several respondents, the meetings are formal and mostly used

for exchange of information with little program/project coordination taking place (TM-ENV07; TM-GOV07; TM-RD04). Yet, there are some examples of inter-agency work with donors pooling their funds and resources (e.g., UNDP-GEF-GIZ environmental projects; UNICEF-British Embassy juvenile justice project, and others). Stronger coordination exists between the UN agencies, funds and programs, as all of them are part of the same partnership agreement with the government, e.g., the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (TM-GEN01; TM-GOV08). The following reasons have been mentioned during the interviews as negatively affecting coordination among donor agencies:

- Competition for areas of work and for extra-budgetary funding;
- Limited areas of engagement and pressure to show results to HQs;
- Lack of interest on the national side to coordinate donors and lack of any formal government platforms to coordinate the work of the wider donor community, not just the UN system;
- Most coordination takes place on the level of senior management of donor agencies (which attend donor coordination meetings), with little coordination taking place on the technical/project level;

5.4.2.2. Introducing the players involved in donor-recipient relations

Based on the interview data analysis and the review of donors' publications, the following three groups of players involved in donor-recipient interaction have been identified. As in Kyrgyzstan, the list is comprehensive and covers all players irrespective of development sectors.

A) Government players

The list of government players in Turkmenistan includes the following:

- **Presidential Administration:** This is the highest government authority conducting the political dialogue with donors. Not directly involved in everyday program/project implementation (i.e., technical dialogue), it nevertheless approves donor-government cooperation agreements, cost-sharing and other agreements and project documents submitted to it by the offices of relevant Deputy Chairs of Cabinet of Ministers. It also approves requests for organization of project activities. Presidential Administration serves as the final approving authority (TM-GOV02).
- **Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan (CMT):** The involvement of the CMT in donor-recipient relations is not direct. According to the government structure, the CMT is chaired by the president, and there are several CMT Deputy Chairs (DC) each in charge of specific sectors or policy areas. For example, the DC in charge of the social sector would directly supervise the work of ministries and state agencies in charge of health, education, women's affairs, sports, tourism and other social sector activities. Project proposals and any ongoing project activities have to be approved by relevant DCs, depending on the project's focus area. Written communication from donors to government implementing partners/line ministries would, therefore, be sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in turn, sends it via the CMT to relevant line ministries. DCs' offices within the Cabinet of Ministers have the approving functions, and line ministries would not take any actions related to donor projects unless that approval is received (TM-GOV02).
- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA):** The MFA plays an important role in donor-recipient relations. All contacts of local implementing partners (i.e., line ministries, local NGOs or public associations) with the external donors have been channeled through the MFA since the early 2000s. In maintaining this arrangement, it could be argued that the government built a thorough system of controlling donors' activities and their relations in the country (TM-GOV03). The MFA, therefore,

serves as the main communication channel for all donors conducting political, policy and technical dialogues with any government actors.

- **Line ministries and other government agencies:** Line ministries are in charge of implementing donor-funded projects and programs and are regularly involved in the technical dialogue. They are also involved in project formulation together with donor agencies. However, in doing that they perform technical functions and are dependent on other state agencies in maintaining their relations with the external players (e.g., the Ministry of Foreign Affairs);
- **Ministry of Finance and Economy:** The structure and the mandate of the Ministry has changed several times since the early 1990s. Prior to 2008, Turkmenistan had a single Ministry of Finance and Economy; from 2008 to 2017, two separate ministries (i.e., the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy and Development) had been functioning in the country. In 2017, the two ministries were merged again. The ministry does not appear to have a strong influence in donor-recipient relations, although it has been directly involved in working with the IFIs, coordinated the registration of technical assistance projects and programs, and managed the country's domestic and external debts.

B) Players representing donor agencies

Donor presence in Turkmenistan is smaller than in Kyrgyzstan. Some of them started working in the early 1990s (e.g., UN system agencies and funds), while others came to the country later, in the late 1990s or early 2000s (e.g., ADB). The following development agencies and donors are currently represented in Turkmenistan (see also Figure 5.6 for ODA disbursements by type of donors and Table 5.2 for disbursements by selected sectors):

- **Multilateral donors and development partners:** International financial institutions and regional development banks (e.g., World Bank, IMF, ADB, EBRD), UN system funds, programs and agencies, European Union, OSCE and multilateral trust funds (e.g., GFATM, GEF).
- **Bilateral OECD donors and their development agencies:** GIZ, USAID, TICA have had larger ODA disbursements compared to such bilateral players as the United Kingdom, France and Japan. The United Kingdom operated small projects in the country.[8] No information was found on development projects implemented by France in the country. However, French companies implemented large commercial projects in the construction and other sectors. For example, during 1994-2010, the French company Bouygues alone implemented construction projects worth over EUR 2.0 billion (Moore, 2013).
- **Bilateral non-OECD donors:** China operates large investment projects in the country, especially in extractive industries. For example, it provided over US$ 7.0 billion for developing a large natural gas field in southeast Turkmenistan (Sands, 2017). According to AidData, China committed over US$ 10 billion (commitment amount deflated to 2014 constant US$) in loans, ODA-like grants and export credits to Turkmenistan.[9] Russian involvement in development work is limited. According to RusAid's website (Russian Aid Agency), it does not have any projects or activities implemented in Turkmenistan.[10]

[8] The list of UK projects can be found at the DFID's Development Tracker tool at https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/countries/TM/projects

[9] AidData's Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset covering the period 2000-2014 can be accessed at https://www.aiddata.org/data/chinese-global-official-finance-dataset

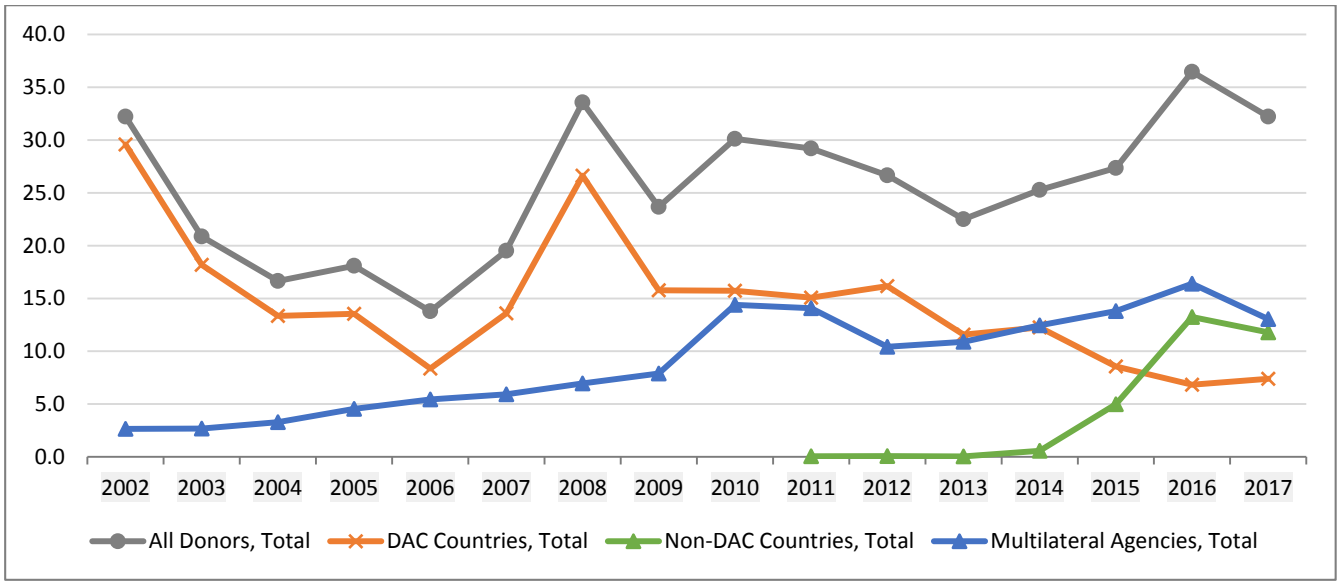
[10] More information on RusAid's activities in post-Soviet countries can be found at http://en.rus-aid.ru/country-activities/

- **International NGOs and foundations:** international NGOs and foundations do not have a large representation in Turkmenistan, unlike in Kyrgyzstan. Some of them have worked with national recipients without maintaining an office in the country (e.g., World Wide Fund for Nature, Fauna and Flora International, BirdLife International), while others once had their offices but had to close under various circumstances (e.g., Doctors Without Borders, U.S. Peace Corps).

Some of these donors, while implementing projects in Turkmenistan, do not have their full-fledged offices in the country. For example, GIZ has a small representation office, and its projects are implemented by project offices, with most of these activities being part of larger regional projects. Others closed their offices for various reasons. For example, in 2009, the European Union opened its 'Europa House' in Ashgabat, a small office in charge of the implementation of development cooperation projects (Council of the European Union, 2009). However, at the time when the fieldwork was conducted, the office had already closed. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees had closed in June 2016 at the time when interviews were conducted.

According to the IATI data, the implementation of donor-funded projects varied from donor to donor in Turkmenistan as well. For example, UNDP used a mainly direct implementation modality (with 20 out of 58 IATI database entries shown as being implemented by UNDP itself) and a national implementation modality (38 entries shown as being implemented by various government ministries and agencies). All 27 UNICEF entries are shown as being implemented by UNICEF's country office. In contrast, of USAID's 56 entries, the majority of activities are shown as being implemented by US-based NGOs (28) and private sector companies (18), with no government recipients being involved in actual project implementation.[11]

Figure 5.6: ODA disbursements to Turkmenistan by type of donors (constant 2017 USD, millions)



Source: OECD Query Wizard for International Development Statistics (https://stats.oecd.org/qwids/)

[11] Data generated through IATI's Datastore CSV Query Builder at http://datastore.iatistandard.org/query/

Table 5.2: ODA disbursements to Turkmenistan by selected sectors 2005-2017 (constant 2017 USD, millions)
DAC countries and multilateral agencies*

SECTORS	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Social infrastructure and services	**14.12**	**9.02**	**14.87**	**24.80**	**15.88**	**20.12**	**19.20**	**14.65**	**15.03**	**14.32**	**11.54**	**11.54**	**8.71**
Education total	1.86	2.26	2.39	2.43	2.65	3.85	3.70	4.13	3.18	2.87	2.14	3.23	2.45
Health total	1.87	1.95	2.75	1.51	2.67	6.01	6.14	2.63	5.71	4.58	3.10	2.41	2.90
Population services/reproductive health	0.78	1.00	1.11	1.94	1.51	0.73	1.14	1.02	1.12	1.04	0.95	0.65	0.17
Water supply and sanitation	0.00	0.04	0.06	0.00	0.03	0.02	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Government and civil society	2.78	3.21	3.08	7.10	8.71	9.00	7.47	6.65	4.72	5.60	4.67	4.52	2.55
Other social infrastructure and services	6.84	0.55	5.47	11.81	0.30	0.52	0.50	0.21	0.29	0.23	0.68	0.73	0.64
Economic infrastructure & services	**0.85**	**1.36**	**0.71**	**1.71**	**1.80**	**1.50**	**1.60**	**2.61**	**1.86**	**3.41**	**3.67**	**4.77**	**5.33**
Transport and storage	0.00	0.39	0.00	0.38	0.40	0.30	0.00	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.06	0.01	0.00
Communications	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.21	0.22	0.04	0.06	0.04	0.07	0.01	0.11	0.00
Energy	0.00	0.29	0.19	0.01	0.10	0.25	1.01	0.85	0.83	1.80	1.46	1.05	2.89
Banking and financial services	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.83	0.48	0.32	1.36	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.18	0.14
Business and other services	0.84	0.68	0.52	1.26	0.26	0.24	0.23	0.33	0.93	1.48	2.12	3.42	2.30
Production sectors	**0.03**	**0.02**	**0.04**	**2.46**	**1.85**	**1.32**	**2.66**	**3.79**	**2.39**	**2.46**	**1.93**	**1.26**	**0.47**
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0.00	0.00	0.04	1.10	1.07	1.02	1.63	2.00	0.30	0.03	0.06	0.06	0.06
Industry, mining and construction	0.01	0.00	0.00	1.34	0.77	0.22	0.23	0.21	0.00	0.96	0.96	0.80	0.13
Trade, policies and regulations	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.76	1.55	2.05	1.48	0.86	0.40	0.27
Tourism	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00
General environment protection	**0.58**	**0.83**	**0.44**	**1.10**	**0.72**	**1.13**	**0.57**	**1.22**	**0.61**	**1.93**	**1.90**	**1.81**	**1.08**
Humanitarian aid	**0.02**	**0.01**	**0.42**	**0.44**	**0.03**	**0.42**	**0.47**	**1.13**	**0.04**	**0.38**	**0.49**	**0.24**	**1.55**
Conflict, peace and security	**0.01**	**0.02**	**0.00**	**1.15**	**1.43**	**0.37**	**0.37**	**0.27**	**0.97**	**0.35**	**0.28**	**0.26**	**0.27**
Multi-sector support*	**1.19**	**1.31**	**2.55**	**1.95**	**2.22**	**4.18**	**3.86**	**1.32**	**1.09**	**0.00**	**0.35**	**1.78**	**1.60**

* No data for years 1992-2004 was available.
** Including rural and urban development, disaster risk reduction, food safety, food security, non-agricultural alternative development.

Source: OECD Query Wizard for International Development Statistics (https://stats.oecd.org/qwids/)

C) Local non-governmental players

Compared to Kyrgyzstan, independent civil society in Turkmenistan is almost non-existent. There are a small number of non-governmental organizations, which are otherwise known as public associations. According to the International Centre for Non-for-Profit Law, approximately 100 public associations were active in Turkmenistan in 2018 (ICNL, 2018). The process for registration of public associations is restrictive. For example, in line with the Law of Turkmenistan on Public Associations, national public associations should have at least 400 members, and international public associations should have at least 50 members in order to be registered with the Ministry of Justice (GOTM, 2014b). In this situation, some donors work with the government-NGOs, whose activities are fully funded by the state budget, or the small number of self-funded non-governmental organizations or citizens' groups (e.g., farmers associations, entrepreneurs and local businesses) working mostly in non-sensitive areas, such as farming, development of business skills, etc. Involvement of these organizations in donor-funded projects and programs is agreed and approved via the MFA.

Until the early-2000s, some direct communication between donors and recipients had taken place. Since then, communication between the donors and recipients is mostly maintained through the MFA in written form by submission of *notes verbales*. In this highly centralized system of interaction, no direct contact between the expatriate development staff and government staff takes place. In cases when in-person follow-up meetings are required, most of the interaction takes place between local staff of donor agencies and government agency staff. Formal written requests are to be submitted to MFA by the donors in cases where they want to arrange a meeting for expatriate staff to discuss project-related issues with their government counterparts. The MFA plays an instrumental role in everyday interaction between donor agencies and local implementing partners and recipients, as emphasized by 17 respondents working for donor agencies.

5.4.2.3. Government preferences regarding the types of donors

The government's preferences toward donors have remained unchanged since the UN General Assembly endorsed Turkmenistan's neutrality status in 1995. Cooperation with the United Nations was a priority and the UN agencies, in general, enjoyed better relations with government recipients compared to other development partners, as stated by 18 out of 28 respondents (see Box 5.3). According to these respondents, this could be due to: i) Turkmenistan's neutrality status supported by the UN; ii) the more neutral mandate of UN agencies compared to bilateral players; iii) more consultative program development and formulation process; iv) longer-term engagement through 3-5 year program cycles.

At the same time, the government adopted a cautious approach in cooperating with bilateral partners (especially the US-supported projects and programs) due to their strong political agenda (TM-GOV06; TM-GOV08; TM-RD04; TM-ENV05; TM-ENV07) and less flexible, less participatory project formulation processes with country-level projects being formulated by donors themselves or contractors hired by them (TM-GOV08; TM-RD02; TM-RD05; TM-RD06). On the technical level, however, when it comes to every-day project implementation, several donor officials reported that government bureaucracy affected all donor projects in the same way (TM-GOV03; TM-GOV07; TM-RD02; TM-RD04).

Box 5.3: Turkmen government's preferences in cooperating with donors
"The government is more confident working with the UN, because they realize they are part of the UN as well. Also, we are not seen as having the geostrategic agenda to impose, we are not here for hydrocarbon resources . . . The UN plays a bit different; because we are multilateral, the government would engage with us in a more or less risk-free way." (TM-GEN01, multilateral agency respondent)
"UN agencies have better access to data, to the field, to government people compared to any other multilateral or bilateral donors." (TM-GOV06, multilateral agency respondent)
"Multilateral aid is more preferred compared to bilateral aid, and the UN system is definitely more privileged." (TM-GOV08, bilateral agency respondent)
"There are differences, definitely. The projects of UN agencies are treated more positively by the government. The President regularly emphasizes that the UN is a trusted partner and a respected international organization. Therefore, lower-level government officials also treat the UN agencies more favorably . . . I mainly associate this special treatment of the UN with geopolitics. The USAID was expelled from Russia [in 2012] and Russian media, which is easily accessed in Turkmenistan, is getting increasingly anti-American. Therefore, Turkmenistan is adopting a more cautious approach to USAID projects. USAID projects are scrutinized more often than projects of any other donors." (TM-RD04, multilateral agency respondent)
"Yes, I think there are differences [in terms of government's preferences]. Those donors adapting their projects to national priorities have more chances to be accepted by the government and to be successfully implemented." (TM-RD05, government agency respondent)
"Government considers the UN as a strategic partner, because of the UN-backed neutrality status. The UN has a more neutral mandate, with development agenda prevailing over political, which is what the government prefers. In planning their activities, the UN agencies also consult with government counterparts more often than bilateral donors do. Projects implemented by some of the USAID grantees were shut down because there was limited consultation on local or central levels." (TM-RD06, multilateral agency respondent)
"UN agencies seem to be in the best position. Turkmenistan's neutral status was endorsed by the UN General Assembly. The UN, in general, enjoys a better position because a number of Turkmenistan's international initiatives have been endorsed through the UN General Assembly resolutions." (TM-ENV01, multilateral agency respondent)
"I think more attention is paid to projects proposed by multilateral donors. Why? Because of Turkmenistan's obligations under different international treaties and agreements. Plus, involvement in multilateral projects creates good visibility for the government." (TM-ENV02, multilateral agency respondent)

5.4.2.4. Key developments that affected donor-recipient relations in Turkmenistan

The following events and factors have reportedly been of particular importance with regard to donor-recipient relations, at either operational or political levels or both.

A) Lifetime presidency of Saparmurat Niyazov

President Niyazov's lifetime presidency was approved in 1999 by the People's Council of Turkmenistan. The international community criticized the country for granting unlimited powers to the president and expanding his tenure in office without any time limits. As one expatriate respondent put it, the OECD donors' attitude toward the government had changed, leading to less interaction between the external players and the government, including on business (e.g., investors and private companies), political (i.e., donor governments and organization) and development (bilateral and multilateral development agencies) spheres. It also resulted in fewer foreign visitors coming to Turkmenistan following the announcement of the lifetime presidency (TM-GEN04, multilateral agency respondent).

B) The events of September 2001

The events of September 2001 presented opportunities for the Government of Turkmenistan to expand its interaction with the external players. On the operational level, it led to the opening of new emergency

projects implemented by international players (e.g., the UN agencies) together with the government agencies. These projects focused on Afghanistan and aimed at supporting more complex emergency and recovery initiatives implemented there (TM-GOV05; TM-GOV07). According to Mr. Khaled Philby, the UN Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan at the time, "close to fifty percent of all the aid that went into Afghanistan during the war period came through Turkmenistan" (as cited in IrinNews, 2003). For example, the World Food Programme, MSF and UNICEF initiated humanitarian aid projects, delivering food aid and essential supplies to Afghanistan via Turkmenistan (RFERL, 2001).

Turkmenistan's participation in the US-led military operation in Afghanistan was mostly limited to the provision of logistical support and its airspace to the NATO-affiliated airplanes, as its neutrality status prevented it from being directly involved in the military operation itself (Tynan, 2011). Turkmenistan's and other Central Asian countries' participation in the global counter-terrorism agenda, as noted by some analysts, forced the Western actors to minimize their pressure on the governments with regard to a range of human rights and governance-related issues, which always constituted the core of the Western government's criticism (Crosston, 2008; Menon, 2007).

C) 2002 assassination attempt

In November 2002, there was an assassination attempt on President Niyazov. A group of individuals were arrested and imprisoned. This event led to greater scrutiny on the government's side in terms of implementation of the activities funded by the external partners, as some of those associated with the assassination attempt were foreign citizens, who were reportedly linked to foreign governments. Growing concern over the involvement of foreign governments (and external actors in general) in domestic affairs resulted in delays in the implementation of activities involving foreign partners. This applied to both bilateral and multilateral cooperation in development, political and economic spheres (TM-GEN04; TM-RD06).

D) The 'color revolutions'

The color revolutions in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005) increased the government's suspicion of foreign-funded projects and programs, especially those focusing on civil society development and supporting local communities and NGOs (TM-ENV02; TM-GOV05; TM-RD06). In addition, as one multilateral agency respondent mentioned, the expertise and knowledge (e.g., experts, consultants and trainers) from the countries affected by color revolutions was not welcomed by some Turkmen government counterparts (TM-RD06).

E) Existence of dual foreign exchange rate in the 1990s and the first half of 2000s

In the 1990s and 2000s, Turkmenistan experienced high inflation rates, which contributed to the emergence of black market exchange rate, which the World Bank called the *street rate* (World Bank, 2001a). The black market rate existed in parallel to the official exchange rate. At its peak, the difference between the official and black market exchange rates was almost five times. Most of the donor agencies had their country office budgets allocated in the USD or other currencies and, in line with donor rules and regulations as well as national laws, the procurement of local goods and services was to be done in the local currency (Turkmen Manat, or TMM). In addition, local vendors could not be paid in USD for local services they provided within the country. Therefore, local procurement done in TMM would make the price of the purchased item or service five times more expensive than its economic cost (TM-GEN04). For example, a laptop sold by a local computer company for TMM 8.0 million would cost donor agencies approximately

USD 1,540 if using the official exchange rate of TMM 5,200, which most donors had to use in line with their financial rules. The official exchange rate was fixed and did not change from the mid-1990s to the late-2000s. However, when using the black market exchange rate (around TMM 24,000 in the late 1990s-early 2000s) the price of a laptop would be approximately USD 333, which gives a difference of almost 4.6 times. While on the political level, the dual exchange rate did not have any implications on donor-funded activities, on the technical level it created significant problems, forcing donors to find operational measures to deal with it, including convincing their HQs to provide exceptions for Turkmenistan-related activities. The black market exchange rate disappeared in 2009 when Turkmenistan introduced currency reforms (Lönnberg, 2013). However, since the mid-2010s, the problems associated with the dual exchange rate have returned as Turkmenistan started experiencing currency pressures (The Economist, 2016).

F) President Niyazov's death

In 2006, President Niyazov passed away and, as a result, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov was first appointed as the interim head of government and later elected as president. This political transition opened more opportunities for donors to be involved in new program areas or to expand the existing program areas. For example, the United Nations agencies working in Turkmenistan launched a number of new projects following this political transition (UN in Turkmenistan, 2007). The power change had a relatively positive impact on relations between both bilateral and multilateral donors with the government. However, according to two of the former UN employees, the UN system agencies appeared to benefit more from the power change, compared to bilateral donors (TM-GEN02; TM-ENV02).

G) Financial crisis of the late-2000s and Turkmenistan's classification as an upper-middle income country by the World Bank in 2012

In 2012, the World Bank classified Turkmenistan as an upper-middle income country. The change of the country's income classification was highly welcomed by the government (Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2012). However, donor agencies increasingly felt the pressure to mobilize extra-budgetary resources for their programs and projects. Their regular resources were shrinking as a result of the financial crisis of the late 2000s. Subsequently, negotiations were launched between the UN Country Team in Turkmenistan and the MFA on sharing the costs of development projects in the country. The government was invited to provide co-funding for development activities that were implemented through the UN agencies (UNDP in Turkmenistan, 2016). This factor had both operational and political impact on Turkmenistan's relations with development partners, especially the UN system. On the operational level, regular funding for development projects has been decreasing (TM-GEN03; TM-GOV01; TM-GOV07), eventually leading to less project-related interaction funded through regular budgets. The interaction could be maintained through mobilization of extra-budgetary resources from other donors or through government co-funding (TM-RD05; TM-RD07). On the political level, the donor agencies advocated that the government cost-shares development projects and programs implemented in Turkmenistan. For example, UNDP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a new partnership agreement in 2012, in line with which the government committed to "be actively financing its own development programmes jointly implemented with UNDP" (UNDP in Turkmenistan, 2012).

5.5. Conclusion

Since their independence, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have pursued two different types of interaction with the external players. While Kyrgyzstan adopted more open, direct and flexible relations with donors from the very beginning, using relevant national donor coordination mechanisms, Turkmenistan embraced

a more selective approach, whose institutional framework was more restrictive. In the beginning, foreign donors enjoyed relative freedom in terms of their interaction with local partners in Turkmenistan. However, starting from the late 1990s-early 2000s, donors had mainly indirect interaction with the implementing partners through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While Kyrgyzstan's recipient institutions cooperated with all donor agencies and international players represented in the country, Turkmenistan clearly preferred cooperation with the United Nations.

There could be several explanations for this. First, the formative years of Kyrgyzstan's independence were characterized by relative political freedoms, relatively free mass media and a strong civil society sector. This created favorable conditions for donors to work in the country. The political environment in the country was more conducive to having open and direct engagement with local recipients with greater number of what Ostrom (1990) calls collective-choice arrangements. The foundation for this open and direct engagement was laid during those formative years, and donors continued to benefit from this engagement throughout their interaction with local players. Turkmenistan's political environment, unlike in Kyrgyzstan, was less donor-friendly in the sense that their activities were subject to constant monitoring and control. As the political economy analyses of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan show, and as suggested in Hypothesis 1, nature of the recipient country's regime appears to play an essential role in donor-recipient interaction.

Second, and related to that, the availability of natural resources or their absence (as suggested in Hypothesis 2), emerged as a strong factor for the two countries in pursuing their interaction with the external donors. While Turkmenistan was rich in hydrocarbon resources and was able to fund its own domestic development projects and programs, Kyrgyzstan had to resort to international donor assistance in the absence of hydrocarbon resources. The nature of the interaction of both countries with the OECD donors also correlates strongly with the debt level and the amount of aid disbursed to them. In particular, Kyrgyzstan received over 200 million annually from the OECD donors and multilateral agencies from the early 2000s to 2017. Aid allocations from the non-OECD donors increased significantly from the early 2010s, reaching USD 464 million in 2015 (see Figure 5.3). For 'social infrastructure and services' sector alone, from 2005 to 2017 Kyrgyzstan received on average USD 150 million annually from the OECD donors and multilateral agencies (see Table 5.1). At the same time, Kyrgyzstan's debt level remained above 100% of its Gross National Income (GNI) between the late-1990s and mid-2000s, and from 2014 onwards (see Figure 5.2). As for Turkmenistan, aid disbursements from the OECD donors and multilateral agencies were much lower than in Kyrgyzstan and remained below USD 20 million in the mid-2000s and below USD 30 million in the first half of 2010s (Figure 5.6). Unlike in Kyrgyzstan, for 'social infrastructure and services' sector, on average Turkmenistan only received USD 14.9 million annually from the OECD donors and multilateral agencies. Turkmenistan also managed to reduce its external debt over time. While its external debt reached almost 110% of GNI in 1999, it then gradually declined starting in the early-2000s and, by 2017, it was just 1.92% of GNI (see Figure 5.5).

Third, geopolitical factors arguably played an important role as well, as Hypothesis 5 suggests. Both countries have been geopolitically important for external players (especially after September 2001). Yet, the two countries used geopolitical realities differently when engaging with donors. While Kyrgyzstan cooperated with all major donors and accommodated their geopolitical and other interests, at the same time trying to benefit from this interaction, Turkmenistan preferred to cooperate mostly with multilateral institutions (and especially the United Nations) and looked cautiously at bilateral players some of whom

were associated with color revolutions in the region. Yet, it provided support to the US-led war on terror in Afghanistan, albeit logistical and humanitarian, without getting involved in military operation itself.

These three factors (i.e., nature of the recipient country's regime, availability or absence of natural resources, and geopolitics) have important implications for donor-recipient interaction. As stressed above, the sustainability of development aid interaction is hampered by the inability of both donors and recipients to 'make credible commitments' (Swedlund, 2017). While I agree with Swedlund's argument, I am also convinced, based on the analysis of donor-recipient interaction in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, that striking a credible bargain is subject to several factors, namely regime characteristics, availability or absence of natural resources, and geopolitics, which taken together are likely to affect the aid bargaining process in important ways.

In both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, the political dialogue appears to be a major determinant in donor-recipient interaction. Kyrgyzstan's political dialogue with donors included cooperation on a range of development policy issues, while Turkmenistan's political dialogue appeared to be more limited in scope. In other words, the political dialogue could be seen as a sieve, whose holes are smaller in Turkmenistan, as opposed to one that is used in Kyrgyzstan. The policy and technical dialogues are then sifted through the sieve of the political dialogue in both countries. The sieve that has larger holes allows a greater number of policy and technical issues to be sifted, compared to a sieve that has smaller holes. Therefore, donors' objectives in bargaining the delivery of aid is not to forcibly change the recipient governments' sieves, but rather to try to convince them to adjust their sieves by making the holes larger.

As a final remark, it should be stressed that the involvement of additional players brought in by bilateral donors (e.g., home-country contractors) increased the number of actors, contributing to complexity and greater intensity of donor-recipient interaction. This interaction was supposed to be entirely bilateral, involving the government recipients on the one side (in both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan), and bilateral donors' governments on the other side. Yet, unlike other development partners whose interaction with government agencies was less multi-actor and more direct (e.g., United Nations agencies, programs and funds), the projects funded by certain bilateral donors (e.g., USAID), were carried out by home-country contractors hired specifically for the implementation of those projects under grant agreements. These contractors, in turn, brought their expatriate staff/consultants and hired local staff to facilitate the project implementation.

Chapter 6 | Donor-recipient interaction in the governance sector

6.1. Introduction

With this chapter, I open the discussion of sectoral interaction between donors and recipients. I examine donor-recipient interaction in the governance sector in each of the two countries, followed by two other chapters, which examine donor-recipient interaction in the areas of rural development and environment.

This chapter consist of five sections. Following this introductory section, I provide a brief definition of the term *governance* (in most cases used by donors interchangeably with such adjectives as *good* or *democratic*) and discuss how it emerged as a dominant issue in the donors' agenda and their relations with the recipient governments in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I also review project/program areas that fall under the governance sector. The third and fourth sections focus on donor-recipient relations in the governance sector in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, respectively. Within these sections, I discuss the types of players involved in governance sector interaction, including government recipients, donor organizations and local non-governmental players. I also review national governance contexts (focusing on national strategies, policies and reforms) and donors' priorities and objectives in this sector, as well as their key areas of intervention. I look at formal and informal interaction mechanisms and technical interaction on the project/program level, discussing procedures for project/program initiation, approval and implementation. I also address key pain points affecting donor-recipient interaction, from both the recipients' and donors' perspectives. Finally, the fifth section will summarize this discussion by providing key concluding points.

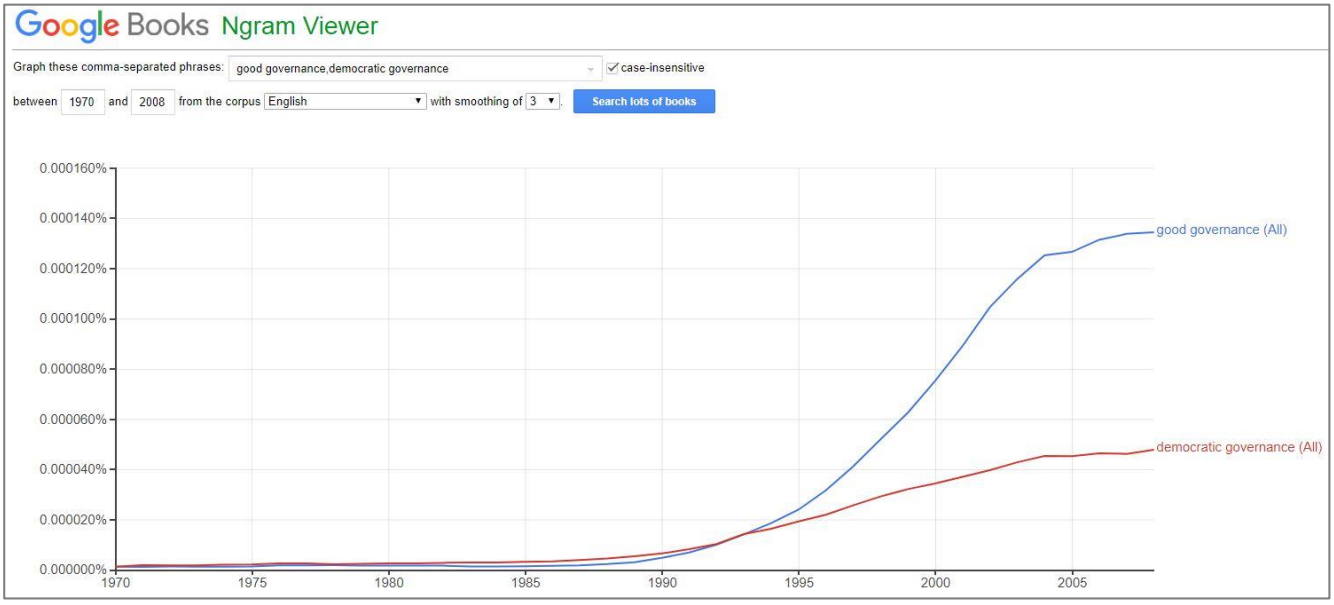
6.2. Defining 'governance'

Development cooperation of Central Asian countries with external donors (especially OECD donors and some multilateral agencies) in the area of governance appeared to be contentious given the sensitive nature of this sector. On one hand, donors and recipient governments have cooperated on a number of projects falling under governance, which in itself is a very contested term. On the other hand, the recipient governments' resistance to the externally-designed solutions to their governance problems is also obvious. By proposing and implementing aid-funded projects in the area of governance, donors aim to transform the core of the countries' political and economic systems. Changes in this area are quite sensitive to the recipient governments as they aim, implicitly or explicitly, to modify the domestic power structure and existing institutional frameworks. Analysis of donor-recipient relations in the area of governance, therefore, presents a good opportunity to delve into theoretical assumptions of the realist framework, which explicitly puts regime survival and self-preservation as the top priority for states in dealing with the external players. In parallel, it also allows testing some of the assumptions proposed by the institutionalist framework, which considers development-funded projects as a way of addressing collective action problems, the solution to which requires new cooperative forms of engagement.

Governance as a development sector has emerged quite recently. Introduced by the World Bank in the 1990s as a precondition for "creating and sustaining an environment which fosters strong and equitable development" (World Bank, 1992, p. 1), it soon became one of the key concepts that OECD and multilateral donors promoted in their development agendas. The World Bank's vision of good governance as an underlying factor of aid effectiveness contributed to increasing acceptance of this concept by major international donors (Kjaer, 2004). Indeed, the search results for 'good governance' and 'democratic

governance' at Google's Ngram Viewer show that the number of sources addressing 'good governance' has sharply increased from around the late 1980s-early 1990s (see Figure 6.1).[12]

Figure 6.1: Search results for 'good governance' and 'democratic governance' at Google Ngram Viewer



Source: https://books.google.com/ngrams

A solid foundation for initiation and expansion of governance-related projects and programs was provided to donors following the collapse of the socialist bloc countries, "where the end of the cold war had opened opportunities for democratic change" (Murphy, 2006, p. 276). "Good governance", "democratic governance" or simply "governance" became an important crosscutting element in international development strategies of the United Kingdom, France, Germany and other OECD member-states, with the argument being that donor-funded aid projects would not be successful without addressing the host-country's challenges related to governance (Riddell, 2007). Multilateral development agencies also embraced the concept of governance in their program strategies. For example, one third of UNDP's project expenses in 1994-1995 was disbursed for governance-related projects, with democratic governance becoming one of the core six programmatic areas by the early 2000s (Murphy, 2006).

Despite ubiquitous acceptance of governance as a key programmatic area in international development, there are diverse definitions of governance involving different issues and factors (see Box 6.1). UNDP's democratic governance programmatic area covers "parliamentary development, electoral systems and processes, human rights, justice, access to information and media, decentralisation and local governance, and public administration reform and anti-corruption" (UNDP, 2006, p. iv). The World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators include the following six dimensions of governance: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (World Bank, 2006).

[12] The time range for online search at Google's Ngram Viewer is from 1800 to 2008.

Box 6.1: Definitions of Governance

World Bank
"Process through which state and nonstate actors interact to design and implement policies within a given set of formal and informal rules that shape and are shaped by power" (World Bank, 2017b, p. 41).

UNDP
"The exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels" (as cited in Riddell, 2007, p. 374).

UK Department for International Development
"How the institutions, rules and system of the state—the executive, legislature, judiciary and military—operate at central and local level, and how the state relates to individual citizens, civil society and the private sector" (as cited in Riddell, 2007, p. 374).

US Agency for International Development
"The ability of government to develop an efficient, effective and accountable public management process that is open to citizen participation and that strengthens rather than weakens a democratic system of government" (as cited in Riddell, 2007, p. 374).

Roger Riddell
"Loosely, governance is the activities, institutions, and processes involved in effectively managing and running a country's affairs in all its different spheres, economic, political and administrative, including the relationships between the state and the wider society" (Riddell, 2007, p. 372).

Mark Bevir
"Sometimes, definitions of good governance had a narrow focus on competitive elections, clear lines of accountability, and the rule of law. Other definitions spread out more broadly to include pluralism, respect for human rights, and a broad base of political participation" (Bevir, 2012, p. 105).

For the purposes of analyzing donor-recipient relations in the governance sector, I mainly focused on projects and programs which fall under donor agencies' governance portfolios or program areas. These include projects and programs focusing on a wide range of issues, such as civil society development, civil service reforms, combating corruption, electoral assistance, legal reforms, promotion and protection of human rights, public administration reforms, strengthening rule of law, support to parliamentary development, and other related issues. I have also selectively used project evaluation documents for projects in other areas (i.e., education, health, combating drug trafficking, etc.), which focused on aspects that I thought were relevant to the governance sector (e.g., reforms in education, improving the national counternarcotic system, etc.). In addition, I used strategy documents of donors and governments, which contained relevant information on their priorities in the governance sector. As I stressed above, the notion of good governance appears to be an all-inclusive concept, yet its key feature is that it emphasizes the states' ability to effectively govern national affairs in a responsible way, on the basis of public accountability and rule of law.

6.3. Donor-recipient interaction in the governance sector: Kyrgyzstan

6.3.1. National objectives, policies and reforms in the governance sector

In Kyrgyzstan, following the launch of economic reforms in 1992, the new government had to deal with a number of key challenges. As Kyrgyzstan's representative stressed in his statement at the 47th Session of

the UN General Assembly in 1992, "Kyrgyzstan is now passing through a harsh economic crisis, the reasons for which are evident and well-known" and solving those problems without "the economic, financial, technical and humanitarian assistance" of the international donor community would be extremely difficult (United Nations, 1992, p. 58).

The most acute problems in the governance sector during the early years of independence related to economic governance. These included rising prices following price liberalization in the early 1992, increasing unemployment, rising levels of poverty and, against this background, the worsening of the living conditions and of the quality of public social services. The fiscal deficit and the inability of the government to make timely payments of salaries, pensions and to provide social benefits strongly hit the most vulnerable people and contributed to emigration (World Bank, 1993). The reforms announced by the government and developed with support from external partners such as the IMF and the World Bank (Baimyrzaeva, 2011; United Nations, 1993), were designed to solve most of these problems. Another key aspect directly related to Kyrgyzstan's challenges in the governance sector was the necessity to adopt new laws and establish new institutions to support the announced reforms (World Bank, 1993; GOKR, 2001a).

Kyrgyzstan's governance sector reforms and priorities can be divided into three stages, directly linked to the terms of office of the three presidents of Kyrgyzstan, namely Akayev (1991-2005), Bakiyev (2005-2010) and Atambayev (2010-2017).

During Akayev's presidency, a number of development policy documents were produced. These include the country indicative development plans for the periods 1996-1998 and 1999-2001 (GOKR, 1999), the *Interim National Strategy for Poverty Reduction 2001-2003* (I-NSPR) (GOKR, 2001b) and the *National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005* (NPRS) (GOKR, 2003a). In addition, the *Comprehensive Development Framework for Kyrgyzstan*, elaborated with the World Bank's support, outlined the general vision of country's development based on "effective and transparent state governance; fair society providing human development and protection; sustainable economic growth and development" (GOKR, 2001a). It served as an overarching framework for country's development until 2010. While these documents addressed numerous government objectives related to economic growth and modernization, poverty reduction and improving the living conditions of population, they had a strong emphasis on governance-related objectives and priorities as well. For example, the I-NSPR 2001-2003 had a section on good governance and legal reforms, which focused on public administration reform, decentralization, public finance management reform, corporate governance, judicial and legislative reforms. Other governance objectives in this document included gender equality, pension system reforms and support to persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups (GOKR, 2001b). Likewise, the NPRS 2003-2005 focused on "formation of an effective state" with such objectives as establishing democratic institutions, strengthening legislative and judicial systems, public administration reforms, decentralization and local self-governance, civil service reforms, e-governance and reforms in public financial management system. In addition, governance priorities were reflected in other chapters that focused on either social service provision or promoting sustainable economic growth. These included gender equality, corporate governance and labor market reforms, as well as activities related to anti-corruption and combating drug trafficking (GOKR, 2003a). Separate plans of action have been adopted on crosscutting issues such as promoting and protecting human rights (GOKR, 2003b).

With Bakiyev coming to power in 2005, the new government developed and approved the *Country Development Strategy for the period 2007-2010* (GOKR, 2007a), although the *Comprehensive Development Framework until 2010* adopted under Akayev was never official cancelled (UNECE, 2009). Like the previous national development strategy documents, governance objectives were integrated into the Country Development Strategy for the period 2007-2010 as well. Governance-related objectives in this document included development of private sector, financial sector reform, reform of taxation and customs services, building effective state apparatus, strengthening the judiciary system, increasing state agencies' accountability and transparency, decentralization and combatting corruption (IMF, 2007b).

Following the 2010 revolution and subsequent power change, the new *National Sustainable Development Strategy for the period 2013-2017* (NSDS) was adopted under President Atambayev. The strategy prioritized governance and rule-of-law issues under a separate chapter, focusing on the strengthening the legal system, aligning laws with the revised constitution, combating corruption, electoral reform, increasing transparency of governance, decentralization and local self-governance, and reforms in the judicial branch and in the law enforcement system. As inter- and intra-ethnic tensions were among the factors which contributed to public upheaval and the power change in 2010, the new strategy envisaged activities related to ensuring national unity, by proposing a range of policy measures on improving inter-ethnic relations (GOKR, 2013).

Despite the adoption of different policy documents and reform papers addressing governance sector priorities under different presidential administrations, one could observe some commonalities. Firstly, under all presidential administrations, the OECD and multilateral donors were directly involved in the development of national strategies and reforms. Secondly, the involvement of the non-governmental sector was also obvious in that they participated in policy development, implementation or monitoring. Thirdly, socio-economic data and baseline information were extensively presented in all documents produced in Kyrgyzstan since independence. Fourthly, the level of self-criticism was quite high, with government documents openly addressing weaknesses and shortcomings in the country's governance system. For example, as highlighted in the NSDS 2013-2017, "the governance system is susceptible to breakdowns, both horizontal and vertical" and "communication between central and local authorities remains weak and ineffective" (GOKR, 2013, p. 6). Finally, the poverty discourse was never avoided and the importance of external partners' involvement in eradicating poverty in the country has been continuously acknowledged. Government representatives openly conceded – including on the highest levels – the pervasiveness of poverty in the country. For example, Kyrgyzstan's representative stated during the 48th session of the UN General Assembly in 1993 that "like other relatively poor countries, we need our own Marshall Plan" (United Nations, 1993, p. 21). Likewise, President Akayev stressed during the 58th session of the UN General Assembly in 2003: "we are focusing our main efforts on the fight against poverty, but the Republic cannot resolve this problem without external assistance" (United Nations, 2003b, p. 2). Strategic documents (such as national development strategies, reform papers and poverty reduction strategy papers) also openly reflected on domestic poverty issues (GOKR 2001a; 2001b; 2003a; 2007a; 2013). All of these development policy-making characteristics are the type valued by traditional donors in aid-receiving governments in the sense that they were in conformity with the foreign aid governance principles such as those reflected in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and Accra Agenda for Action (2008).

6.3.2. Donor objectives and areas of involvement in governance sector

The relatively open policy environment established by Kyrgyzstan since the early 1990s created a fertile ground for proliferation of donor projects in the governance sector, with donor priorities evolving hand in hand with different national development strategies or other policy documents regulating the governance sector. That is, donors have been involved in nearly all areas that fall under the governance sector.

During the first decade of independence, donors' objectives were mostly concentrated on supporting the government's economic transition reforms with a focus on liberalization of the economy, decentralization of the governance system, macro-economic stability and private sector development (Abazov, 1999). The donors' objectives in the governance sector were to provide support to the country's transition to a market-oriented economy and in reforming its governance system. For example, the ADB's first country strategy for the period 1996-2003 focused on supporting market reforms announced by the government (ADB, 2012). Other major donors such as the World Bank, EU, SDC, USAID and UNDP have also been involved in supporting governance and transition reforms (EU Delegation in Kyrgyzstan, 2015; World Bank, 1998a; UNDP, 1996; U.S. Government, 1999; Gerster & Mogilevsky, 2002). For example, USAID's country-level activities focused on privatization, fiscal reform, financial reform, democratization and civil society development, local governance and private sector development (USAID, 1997a). In addition, USAID contractors such as the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute have been involved in electoral assistance and strengthening the capacity of the national parliament (USAID, 1995). UNDP's Country Program for Kyrgyzstan covering the period 1993-1996 envisioned project-level interventions to support "transition to a democratic system of government" (UNDP, 1995, p. 8), and its first Country Cooperation Framework covering the period 1997-1999 listed improving governance, supporting civil society development, promoting women's rights and employment generation as key governance-related objectives (UNDP, 1996). Other UN agencies and funds provided technical assistance as per their mandates. However, their support was limited compared to bilateral donors (UNDP, 1995).

Although formal donor coordination mechanisms were in place in the 1990s, donor projects and programs supporting national governance sector priorities were mostly fragmented, compared to 2000s and 2010s. Starting in the early 2000s, donors attempted to coordinate their approaches in supporting the government. For instance, major resident donors organized together with the Government of Kyrgyzstan a donor's Consultative Group meeting in October 2002 involving "15 international organizations and 16 donor-countries" to help the government in finalizing its NPRS 2003-2005. During this meeting, donors welcomed the inclusion of such governance issues as "human rights protection and building democracy and anti-corruption measures, in the development process of the country" (UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2003, p. 8). The UN agencies and funds, from their side, had gradually moved to more harmonized program cycles that would allow integration of programmatic activities of all agencies under the same program document entitled the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The first UNDAF document, that integrated all program and project activities of UN agencies into one coherent program document, was developed in 2004 and covered the period from 2005 to 2010. The document focused, among other key development issues, on good governance reforms, institutional development, supporting civil society organizations, private sector development and human rights protection (UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2004). The government's commitment to engaging on governance issues during the first decade of its independence was based on the assumption that economic growth and prosperity are not possible without political pluralism, respect for human rights and reform of the governance system. As stressed by President Akayev during the UN General Assembly session in 2002, "unless there is consistent democratization and human emancipation, progress and

prosperity cannot be achieved" (United Nations, 2002, p. 8). This rhetoric has been in line with the position of donors representing the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, in whose view good governance was the major precondition for growth (Ang, 2017).

In the aftermath of the first revolution in 2005, major development partners such as ADB, SDC, UK's Department for International Development, UN Agencies, World Bank, European Union, Government of Germany and the IMF developed a *Joint Country Support Strategy for the period 2007-2010* (JCSS). The objective of the JCSS was to help the new government implement its governance priorities outlined in the Country Development Strategy 2007-2010 (CDS) (DPCC, 2009). As stressed by the World Bank, "the CDS places improving governance high on the agenda, and on fighting and reducing corruption in particular" (2007, p. 16). Two of the JCSS focus areas concentrated on such governance issues as "reducing corruption, improving governance and effective public administration" as well as "strengthening the budget process and cross-cutting reforms in public financial management" (World Bank, 2007, p. ii).

Since 2010, with Kyrgyzstan's transition to a parliamentary governance model, several high-level donor meetings have taken place in Kyrgyzstan. The donor community, as it did previously, expressed its support for the new government's governance and development agenda. In a joint declaration following the high-level development conference in 2013, major donors and the government articulated their commitment to improving governance in the country: "we acknowledge that promoting human rights, democracy and good governance are an integral part of our development efforts" (DPCC, 2013a, p. 3). A joint conference document addressed a number of important governance priorities, including gender equality, financial sector reforms, public finance management, anticorruption efforts, strengthening local governance, legal reforms and conflict prevention. Furthermore, the document stated that "the political turmoil and new parliamentary constitution of 2010 set in train a governance transformation in the Kyrgyz Republic" with "commitments to democratic accountability, anti-corruption, transparency, reconciliation, the rule of law and public service efficiency" representing "a critical agenda for the coming four years" (DPCC, 2013b, p. 8).

Finally, while Kyrgyzstan had a significant level of engagement with donors in the governance sector, some observers were cautious about the potential financial burden resulting from this interaction. For example, Liebert and Tiulegenov maintain that the majority of public administration "reforms were funded through external loans to the government of Kyrgyzstan" and they "contributed considerably to Kyrgyzstan's level of external debt without significant results to show for these reforms" (2013, p. 96). Similarly, Abazov, analyzing the country's economic governance reforms of the 1990s, warned that despite "positive relations between Kyrgyzstan's government and international donor organizations", and taking into account the allocation of a "sizeable amount of international assistance to the republic", external borrowings "without a clear strategy of economic development" could contribute to substantial levels of external debt over time (Abazov, 1999, p. 221).

6.3.3. Key national players involved in governance sector interaction

6.3.3.1. Government actors and their motivations to request donor support

Content analysis of the interview data, various project and program evaluation documents, and the national development plans of Kyrgyzstan produced at various stages of its development shows that the government actors involved in development aid projects in the area of governance appear to be more extensive and diverse than in Turkmenistan. These actors can be divided into three categories, namely the implementing partners (those involved in implementation of donor-funded projects), coordinating partners (those state

actors performing some coordination functions with regard to donor-funded projects) and approving or ratifying partners (actors who exercise approval authority over donor-funded projects). The following is a snapshot of state actors involved in governance sector interaction in Kyrgyzstan.

A) Implementing partners

The following government implementing partners have been involved in governance sector interaction:

- **Line ministries:** Education and Science; Labor and Social Development; Health; Culture, Information and Tourism;
- **Law enforcement agencies:** Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Justice; State Committee for National Security; Prison Service; Drug Control Agency; Supreme Court; State Migration Service; Department for Registration of Civil Status Acts; State Agency for Execution of Punishment; General Prosecutor's Office;
- **Other state bodies:** Central Commission for Elections and Referenda; National Statistical Committee; Tax Service; National TV and Radio Broadcasting Corporation; Civil Service Academy; Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; State Agency for Architecture, Construction and Communal Services; State Agency for Youth Affairs; State Customs Service; State Agency for Local Self-Governance; the Office of Ombudsman; National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic; Kyrgyz Post Office; National Institute for Strategic Studies;
- **Local self-governance bodies**;
- **Local executive-authorities:** provincial and district level administrations;
- **Parliament and its relevant committees**: It should be stressed that, while Parliament has a ratifying and approving function, it also functions as an implementing partner, being directly involved in projects in the area of parliamentary development and other related areas.

B) Main coordinating partners

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Economy play the coordinating roles in donor-recipient interaction in the governance sector, serving as a bridge between the government's implementing partners and donors. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, according to several respondents (KG-GOV02; KG-GOV04; KG-GOV06; KG-GEN02; KG-GEN10), started playing a more proactive role since the early 2010s, urging donors to channel their official correspondence to other government agencies through the Ministry. According to these respondents, this was not the case prior to 2010.

The ministries of finance and economy, similarly, perform some coordination functions within their mandates as specified in relevant legal documents regulating their activities. According to these documents, both ministries collaborate with external donors and coordinate the implementation of their activities. For example, they are both involved in development of donor-funded projects and negotiate the mobilization of external grants and loans to support public policy implementation in the areas falling under their mandates (GOKR, 2012a; GOKR, 2012b). Yet, at the same time, these two ministries can also perform the functions of government implementing agencies, being directly involved in the implementation of donor projects. For example, the Ministry of Finance is named as the implementing agency for the World Bank's project on capacity building in public financial management (World Bank, 2016b).

C) Approving or ratifying partners

The following three players have approving or ratifying roles in donor-recipient interaction in the governance sector:

- **Parliament:** While Parliament benefited from donor-funded projects and was directly involved in their implementation, it also functioned as a ratifying entity. For example, grant or credit agreements with external donors are to be ratified by the parliament, in accordance with the law "On International Treaties of the Kyrgyz Republic" (GOKR, 2014).
- **Office of the President:** In accordance with the same law, the President approves credit and loan agreements ratified by the Parliament. In addition, the Office of the President co-chairs the Joint Steering Committee of the UN Peace Building Fund in Kyrgyzstan, which has provided over USD 40 million since its establishment in 2011, including for projects in the area of governance (UN in Kyrgyzstan, n.d.b). Therefore, all projects funded through the Peace Building Fund are to be approved by the President.
- **Prime Minister's Office:** Likewise, the Prime Minister's Office has acted as a co-signer of major donor strategy documents. For example, the UN Development Assistance Framework Document for the period 2012-2016 was signed (i.e., approved) by the Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan (UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2011), with the Prime Minister's signature representing an act of approval from the government's side.

D) Government actors' motivation to request support from development partners

Project and program evaluation documents contain minimal information on the motivations of government actors in requesting support from development partners. Therefore, I had to rely solely on interview data. The governance sector respondents interviewed during the fieldwork touched upon the following factors, which presumably motivated government recipients to get involved in donor-funded projects:

- Ten of 14 interview respondents emphasized the importance of government recipients gaining access to material resources such as equipment and other technical resources. Material resources are tangible things that recipients expect to get from donors. This could also include infrastructure objects (such as roads, hospitals, etc.). One of the respondents provided an interesting perspective on this motivational factor: "In public service, the issue of personal stability of government officials is a big challenge. It has an influence on the government's cooperation with donors along with state officials' personal motivation to work with them. For example, any state officials who are not confident about their political future will tend to make an emphasis on infrastructure projects when working with donors; infrastructure projects bring certain political dividends and can help the state officials to be re-elected. If state officials are confident that their political careers will be long, they will lobby projects focusing on policy issues" (KG-GOV13, freelance consultant).
- Access to funding has also been an important factor, with eight respondents identifying it as a strong motivation for government recipients to be engaged in donor-funded projects. Funding can be accessed both directly (cash transfers, direct budget support and other forms of funding to be used by recipients for project purposes) and indirectly (i.e., when donors pay themselves for certain activities or services performed for the benefit of the recipients as part of the donor-funded projects).
- Three of the respondents mentioned the importance of strengthening the capacity of government staff via donor-funded projects, especially given the high turnover of government officials (KG-GOV06; KG-GOV07; KG-GOV08).

- Two respondents mentioned gaining personal interests through involvement in donor-funded projects as a key factor for government officials to initiate and get involved in donor projects (KG-GOV01; KG-GOV09). As one respondent from the academic sector stated, "donor assistance is seen as a way of gaining personal benefits; corruption is widespread not only in the government sector, but also in the NGO sector" (KG-GOV01).

6.3.3.2. Local non-governmental players

Involvement of NGOs in donor-funded projects, as mentioned in previous chapters, has been quite extensive in Kyrgyzstan. These included not only local non-governmental organizations, but also the Public Oversight Councils within the ministries (consisting of civil society representatives), expert community and academic institutions not funded by or affiliated with the governments (e.g., American University in Central Asia). While some respondents said their agencies worked with local NGOs in general, without providing the names of those organizations (too many to name), others were more specific. These respondents specifically mentioned that their organizations worked with such non-governmental players as the American University in Central Asia, Women's Support Centre and other NGOs working in the area of gender empowerment, Association of Non-for-profit Organizations, numerous legal clinics, Civic Union for Reforms and Results, Rosa Otunbayeva Foundation, Golos Svobody (the Voice of Freedom) and various employers' associations (KG-GOV02; KG-GOV07; KG-GOV08; KG-GOV10; KG-GOV12).

In general, the abundance of local non-governmental players appeared to have been beneficial for the donor community, who could engage non-governmental players in their projects and programs in various capacities, ranging from actual project implementation, to capacity building of local project beneficiaries, and conducting research and public opinion surveys (KG-GOV02; KG-GOV04; KG-GOV10). For example, Bishkek-based "SIAR Research and Consulting" and "CAI Consulting" have participated in donor-funded projects or were hired by them to carry out research activities.[13] As one multilateral agency respondent put it, "we outsource some of our activities to local NGOs. For example, in the area of crime prevention, we involved them in public safety issues; they also developed local crime prevention plans" (KG-GOV02).

Asked about the government's position with regard to the involvement of non-governmental players in donor-funded projects in the governance sector, nearly all interview respondents stated that government counterparts in general welcomed and encouraged their involvement. One respondent succinctly summarized this: "government accepts their involvement; participation of the NGO sector in donor projects cannot be avoided" (KG-GOV09, academic sector respondent). Another respondent from the academic sector was more straightforward: "The precondition for government to get funding from Western donors was the existence of an active NGO sector" (KG-GOV01) (see also Box 6.2).

Compared to government agencies, NGOs appeared to have more flexibility when receiving funding from external donors as per local legislation. Government agencies, on the other hand, were required to open special sub-accounts to accept transfers from donors. In such situations, some national recipients (e.g., Central Commission for Elections and Referenda, Parliament) established semi-autonomous non-profit organizations attached to them (KG-GOV05; KG-GOV11). For example, the Centre for Electoral Technologies, a non-commercial organization affiliated with the Central Commission for Elections and

[13] For more information, visit http://siar-consult.com/en/category/projects/ and http://www.caiconsulting.org/projects/?c=KG

Referenda (CCER), was created to provide fee-based services to various non-state entities (including foreign donors).[14] The CCER used the Centre to receive funds as part of the donor-funded projects related to electoral assistance (KG-GOV11).

Box 6.2: Involvement of NGOs in the governance sector projects in Kyrgyzstan
"NGOs emerged as a result of the activities of the donor community. With the NGOs emerged the culture of criticizing the government . . . At a certain point, NGOs replaced the opposition, they were so active . . . For Westerners, this is a great achievement." (KG-GOV01, respondent from the academic sector)
"The government gives a lot of space to civil society. We never experienced any restrictions regarding that. No problem for us to work with local NGOs in the areas relevant to our mandate. But there are problems in the area of human rights, e.g., the Askarov case. The government is cautious to work in those areas." (KG-GEN08, multilateral agency respondent)
"NGOs use donors to introduce the required reforms and changes in the country. They are an important and required watchdog to monitor the efficiency of donor projects" (KG-GOV11, government agency respondent)
"NGOs' involvement depends on the area of work. Human rights and governance are sensitive areas." (KG-GEN02, multilateral agency respondent)

6.3.3.3. Mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects in the governance sector

A) Donor-driven mechanisms

Various donor-driven thematic or sectoral coordination groups have been functioning in the governance sector in Kyrgyzstan within the framework of Development Partners Coordination Council (DPCC). These include the DPCC working group on Social and Child Protection and the DPCC working group on the Rule of Law, both established following the high-level donor conference in 2013. The mandate of these working groups was to coordinate program activities in their respective areas (European Commission, n.d.). Another example is the DPCC Coordination Group in the area of education (KG-GOV03), co-chaired by the World Bank and UNICEF (UNICEF, 2017). Likewise, separate donor coordination thematic groups were established in the areas of electoral support, gender and prison reform, in which government counterparts participated on a regular basis (KG-GOV05; KG-GOV11; KG-GOV02).

While these are more recent examples of coordination mechanisms established by donors, efforts were made prior to 2010 developments as well, with donors establishing sectoral groups to coordinate their activities (OECD, 2006b). In addition, donors' interagency activities also covered some field missions and joint analytical work since the mid-2000s (OECD, 2011c). In general, the context was conducive for donor coordination in Kyrgyzstan and formal mechanisms to coordinate program interventions in the area of governance were in place since the early 2000s. The following paragraph from the evaluation of the criminal justice reform project (Project ID number KGZT90) implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2017) demonstrates the richness of donor-donor and donor-recipient interaction in the governance sector:

> UNODC made considerable effort to involve national counterparts in the decision-making processes by means of regular thematic coordination meetings, i.e., Coordination Council on Prison Reform, Joint Working Group of Prison Service and Drug Control Service, Working Group of Prison Service on National Prison Security Framework; Council on the Reform and Development of Law

[14] For more information on the Centre, visit https://shailoo.gov.kg/ru/ObuchenieOkutuu/Centr_izbiratelnyh_tehnologiyShayloo_tehnologiyalar_borboru/Obschaya_informaciyaJalpy_maalymat/

> Enforcement and Coordination Platform on Police Reform between the state bodies, civil society and international partners, Technical Committee under the Kyrgyz Accreditation Centre of the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic. In total, KGZT90 organized 109 coordination meetings with different groups of stakeholders under different components of the programme in the period between 2014 and 2016. (p. 32)

Several thematic coordination groups have been functioning within the UN agencies, funds and programs as an internal mechanism for the coordination of UN projects and programs, including the theme group on youth and the theme group on gender (UNFPA, 2016; UNDG, 2011a).

B) Nationally-driven mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects

On the recipient side, high-level government coordination structures were in place from the early-1990s. The State Commission on Foreign Investments and External Assistance, established in 1992, served as the overall national body in charge of coordinating foreign investments, whose objective was "unification and standardization of state policy in regard to foreign investment and the effective utilization of foreign aid for economic development" (World Bank, 1993, p. 48). Following the 2010 revolution, the Coordination Council on Macro-Economic and Investment Policy was revitalized to include more state and non-state actors and the new Business Development and Investments Council under the Government of Kyrgyzstan was established to improve domestic business environment (the Executive Board of the council also includes two representatives from the donor community).[15] Various donors made efforts to strengthen the capacity of government agencies to coordinate donor-funded projects (OECD, 2011c). According to the OECD, "in order to strengthen the government's capacity for coordination, a number of donors are providing technical assistance for capacity building in aid co-ordination" (2006b, p. 72). Despite these efforts, some concerns were raised with regard to the lack of holistic approach within the government (see Box 6.3).

Box 6.3: Kyrgyz government's donor coordination efforts

"The government does a good job in terms of coordination. It also has its own body, which brings together donor representatives, such as the EU, UK, Germany, ADB, Swiss Development Agency, UN agencies, USAID and others. The problem is that different donors have different national focal points." (KG-GEN03, multilateral agency respondent)

"At the moment, there is no common vision for coordinating donor support in the country because several agencies are involved in this process at the same time. I wish the government were in the lead position, i.e., literally dictating donors its demands, when developing sectoral projects. There should be a common approach to working with donors within the government. Also, some donor funding (e.g., USAID projects) was never reflected in national accounts. The solution to address this challenge could be that the line ministries should raise this issue when signing project agreements with donors. Without this clause, the projects should not be approved. All funding allocations from donors should be centralized. This is intrinsically linked to the issue of aid effectiveness." (KG-GEN09, government agency respondent)

On a sectoral level, various inter-departmental or inter-ministerial coordination councils were in place that dealt with governance related issues. Some of them include State Coordination Committee on Drug Control (UN in Kyrgyzstan, n.d.c), Coordination Council on Juvenile Justice, Inter-Ministerial Coordination Council on Social Protection and Children's Rights (UNICEF, 2017), Coordination Council on Prison Reform (UNODC, 2017), Interagency Working Group on Empowering Women in the Labor Market and Human Rights

[15] For more information on the council, visit http://www.investmentcouncil.kg/index.php/o-sovete/obshchie-svedeniya

Coordination Council (European Commission, 2018). Arrangements for the functioning of government-donor sectoral coordination groups were addressed in a Joint Conference Document prepared as an outcome of the High-Level Development Conference in 2013 (DPCC, 2013b). These coordination groups and councils involved representatives from various stakeholders, including government agencies, donor organizations, expert community and civil society representatives.

6.3.3.4. Donor-recipient interaction mechanism in project/program design and implementation

A) Formal procedures and actual practices for donor-recipient interaction in project/program design

Formal procedures for donors to develop and submit their projects and programs have remained decentralized from the beginning of Kyrgyzstan's interaction with donors. The primary sources I reviewed for governance sector analysis in Kyrgyzstan did not mention any barriers for interaction between government recipients and external donors in designing and submitting project and program documents. The interview respondents, for their part, also acknowledged that the process of designing projects/programs and submitting them to national recipients was direct and decentralized, although some exceptions applied as discussed below.

The UN system agencies, whose country program activities are integrated within the UN Development Assistance Framework Document (UNDAF), essentially used standard procedures as outlined in UN Development Group's (UNDG) program guidelines such as the UNDAF Guidance Document (UNDG, 2017). In accordance with the UNDG guidelines, the UN system agencies and funds prepared, jointly with government agencies, a Common Country Assessment (CCA). Based on the CCA document, potential program outcomes would be developed and reflected in the UNDAF Document, which then would be signed by the UN Resident Coordinator and the government representatives (which in Kyrgyzstan's case was the Prime Minister). Other multilateral and bilateral donors followed their corporate procedures in developing project and programs. For example, the IFIs would develop their country partnership strategies (e.g., World Bank, ADB) and EU-based bilateral donors signed bilateral agreements with the government, which also contained sections on development cooperation. The interaction with national partners – which involved formal and informal consultations, development of concept notes or other documents based on those consultations, validation of those documents or other similar events – remained direct most of the time and donors could organize meetings directly with project and program partners without third-party involvement.

The actual practice for developing and submitting project and program documents was the same as for the formal procedures, in that donors followed their relevant procedures, but interacted directly with the recipients. However, starting from the early 2010s, the MFA started pushing for greater coordination of national recipients' interaction with donors and attempted to intervene in this process (KG-GOV09). As one multilateral agency respondent put it, "although we organized meetings with national partners directly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was regularly informed about those meetings" (KG-GOV06). Likewise, as stated by another multilateral agency respondent, "the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tries to introduce some bureaucracy; however, they do not have sufficient resources" (KG-GOV04). Nevertheless, some donors specializing in criminal justice, combating corruption, drug trafficking and promoting human rights (e.g., UNODC, OSCE) submitted their proposals via the MFA (KG-GOV02; KG-GOV12), which then distributed them to national partner institutions. Yet, according to a multilateral agency respondent, "initial working-level consultations took place without MFA involvement" (KG-GOV02). In addition, following the 2010 ethnic tensions in southern Kyrgyzstan, the submission process was slightly different for projects located

in/focusing on Osh region (in southern Kyrgyzstan) where donors were expected to inform the local branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about their activities (KG-GOV06).

One important factor worth noting is the type of actors involved in designing donor-funded projects. While most of the UN projects and programs are co-designed by UN agencies and government recipients, some bilateral donors appeared to have a different approach. For example, the majority of USAID projects are implemented by US-based organizations contracted by USAID. The USAID selects contractors through the bidding process and the project activities start after a contractor is selected. In such cases, as emphasized by a respondent who previously worked with the USAID project on parliamentary development, "the Parliament cannot influence the tender process and will have to work with whichever contractor is selected by the USAID; potential bidders come to Kyrgyzstan, meet with all relevant local stakeholders, develop their project proposals and apply to the USAID grant" (KG-GOV05).

B) Formal procedures and actual practices for interaction in project/program implementation

Respondents representing donor organizations identified three main types of government focal points:

1) Project level focal points at each national recipient organization with whom donors worked as part of the project (e.g., a specific ministry or a national agency assigned by the government as an implementing partners);
2) Overall policy level focal points within government organizations who were assigned as national coordinating agencies for specific donors (e.g., Ministry of Finance serves as the coordination agency for ADB, World Bank and a few other large players);
3) Overall political level focal point (this function was assumed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs starting from the early 2010s).

In addition, nearly every ministry had a division in charge of working with the external partners (most commonly named the Division of International Affairs). These divisions served as the focal points for any external players who approached their relevant ministries with queries or requests. For example, the Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan as such did not implement projects with government institutions, and worked only with local civil society organizations who were the recipients of the Foundation's grants. However, the Foundation approached various government institutions requesting their involvement in certain activities, and the ministerial divisions in charge of international affairs were their key contact points in such cases (KG-GOV09).

In terms of the interaction between donors and the national recipients, there were no specific written formal procedures regulating their interaction in implementing projects and programs. Most of the management and implementation arrangements are reflected under the individual project and program documents or country cooperation strategies. The majority of respondents mentioned that the actual interaction was direct (both for local and expatriate staff) without the involvement of third-party national organizations, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see Box 6.4). These applied especially to interaction on the project level (working-level technical personnel) and to some extent on the policy level (managerial level within ministries). To arrange meetings on both levels, no official letters via the MFA were required and meetings could be arranged either formally or informally, but directly. Technical-level interaction was free of bureaucracy and central governmental control. As one expatriate respondent put it, "procedures are very simple: we are based in the government office, we meet on an everyday basis and there is no bureaucracy in our relations" (KG-GOV08, multilateral agency respondent). However, high-level meetings

with senior government officials were requested through the MFA, including for delegations visiting from regional offices or HQs.

Box 6.4: Donors' interaction with national partners in the governance sector (Kyrgyzstan)
"We had very informal interaction, including our expat Chief Technical Advisor." (KG-GOV05, bilateral agency respondent)
"No bureaucracy, [as an expat] I can meet with ministers without any problem." (KG-GEN03, multilateral agency respondent)
"Interaction with government partners was open and arranged directly." (KG-GOV09, respondent from the academic sector)
"Donors and government agencies interact freely, there is no bureaucracy, no formal rules" (KG-GOV13, freelance consultant, former government agency staff)
"It was a direct, open and simple interaction without complex arrangements. Both expat and local staff members could go and openly meet and discuss issues with government counterparts." (KG-GOV01, respondent from the academic sector)
"There is no bureaucracy for working level meetings; government is accessible in general." (KG-GOV07, multilateral agency respondent)
"New rules have been introduced recently that require donors to inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about new and ongoing projects by copying the MFA in all correspondence sent to line ministries. This created some difficulties for international organizations, but they have adapted. We copy all our correspondence to MFA, but we do not request their direct involvement in our projects." (KG-GEN02, multilateral agency respondent)

Although the expatriate staff of donor organizations had direct access to government officials, the role of national staff of donor organizations was particularly emphasized during an interview with a multilateral agency respondent (KG-GOV02). National staff played an important role and served as a bridge between the managements of recipient organizations and donor organizations, often informally serving as advisors for both.

6.3.4. Project/program management frameworks

6.3.4.1. Project/program management procedures

Nine respondents (eight representing donor agencies and one representing a government agency) stated that their respective organizations' project and program management guidelines, manuals, procedures and electronic systems were used in implementing their programmatic activities (e.g., UNDP's 'Atlas', GIZ's 'Capacity WORKS', UNODC's 'Profi', UNICEF's 'Vision ERP', etc.). This applies to both program implementation aspects (which include actual project activities such as making policy recommendations, revising legislation, capacity-building events, etc.) and operational aspects (which are related more to issues such as procurement, logistics, making payments, and other issues of an administrative nature). When local third-party contractors (e.g., NGOs, private consultancy companies) implemented projects, their project/program management rules were expected to be consistent with those of the main donor and with national legislation. According to a respondent working for the UN agency, "NGOs which get funding from us to implement program activities carry out those activities in line with their mandate and the national legislation. However, they used our agency's rules for reporting on utilization of funding" (KG-GOV06).

Some reasons provided by respondents as to why donors do not use national management procedures, include:

- There is a limited trust in government systems due to transparency issues (KG-GOV06);
- Donors find it difficult to use national systems as there might be huge discrepancies or even contradictions in certain aspects; for example, there is a vast difference in daily subsistence allowances and fees paid by donors and government agencies to consultants (KG-GOV07; KG-GOV09);
- Donors' preference to use their own procedures due to accountability to their own management boards and HQs (KG-GOV02; KG-GOV05).

I have searched for national procedures for managing projects in Kyrgyzstan and could not find any references and none of the respondents from Kyrgyzstan mentioned the existence of any such procedures. Based on that, one can assume that there are indeed no formal national procedures for managing development projects in Kyrgyzstan. Yet, this should not be interpreted as an indication of the recipients' passive stance on managing projects. For example, some national agencies uploaded the invitations to bid as part of the donor-funded projects on their own website, not on donors' websites.[16] Hence, they appeared to have played an active role in project and program management even though donor procedures are used consistently.

6.3.4.2. Project/program approval procedures

In the majority of cases, individual donor projects were integrated into wider, medium-term country program documents, cooperation strategies or operational plans. Program approval procedures varied from donor to donor, depending on their rules and the type of funding involved (e.g., loans, grants, government cost-sharing, etc.). These documents were prepared on the basis of preliminary consultations with the recipient organizations and country assessments done by the donors. For example, UN agencies jointly prepared the UNDAF document that served as an overall operational framework based on which individual agency Country Program Action Plans or similar documents would be prepared. For such plans, the approval was granted by agency HQs and the government and was signed by both parties. For some bilateral players (e.g., USAID), the country strategy was only approved by headquarters with no recipient government approval taking place (although preliminary discussions with government counterparts would be conducted regarding potential program areas). For IFIs (e.g., Asian Development Bank, World Bank), partnership strategies would be prepared based on extensive consultations.

Yet, individual project documents or project agreements still needed to be prepared and the following factors affected the project approval process:

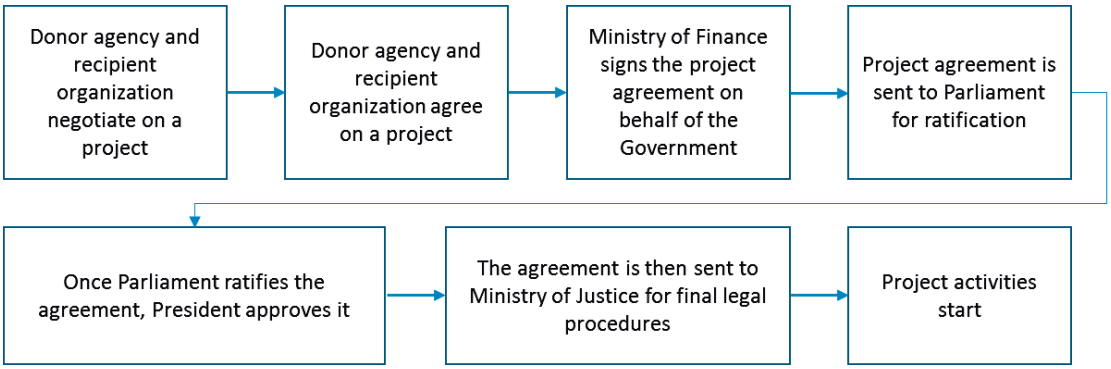
- **Project budgets**: Smaller projects are approved faster, as relatively less time is required to study the project documents;
- **Type of donors**: According to a government agency respondent, certain donors have more rigid approval procedures (e.g., European Union, UNDP) compared to others (e.g., Korean International Cooperation Agency) (KG-GOV11). Similarly, a respondent from the UN agency mentioned that approval of projects financed through extra-budgetary funding mobilized through the EU takes longer due to the EU's extended approval procedures and the necessity to get a clearance from several EU institutions and member-states (KG-GOV02);

[16] See for example the website of the National Statistical Committee of Kyrgyzstan and its invitation-to-bid posting as part of the World Bank funded project at http://www.stat.kg/ru/priglashenie-k-torgam/

- **Type of implementing partners**: Projects implemented by more powerful government agencies tended to get approved faster thanks to the possibility of lobbying the approval process (KG-GOV06; KG-GOV11)
- **Type of funding**: Projects with a loan element require parliamentary ratification and presidential approval, while grants do not (see Figure 6.2 below).

One key feature is that the process that led to the approval of projects and programs was direct between recipients and donors. Although some intermediaries were involved in the approval of the projects and programs (such as the Parliament or Presidential Administration), technical level interaction at the project identification and project development stages was free of central government control. All interaction between donors and recipients at these stages remained direct, with no intermediaries involved. Another important factor is that once the projects were agreed and approved, no further approvals were required (i.e., approval for organizing project activities on project output and outcome levels).

Figure 6.2: Approval process for projects with loan element in Kyrgyzstan



6.3.4.3. Project implementation modalities

Projects were implemented using different modalities, including donor agency implementation, NGO implementation, grantee implementation and government implementation through direct budget support. It should also be noted that any donor agency could have more than one project implementation modality. For example, some UN agencies used both government and NGO implementation, in addition to directly implementing the projects themselves (KG-GOV07; KG-GOV05). Larger agencies such as the Asian Development Bank, World Bank and others which provided direct budget support used government implementation modality through establishment of the Project Implementation Unit (PIUs) based within the government ministries and selected with the involvement of the government recipients. USAID projects, according to some respondents, were implemented through contracted grantees, which in all cases appeared to be the US-based NGOs and private companies (KG-GOV10; KG-GOV05). Implementation modalities in Kyrgyzstan looked more diverse than in Turkmenistan. In addition, government recipients in Kyrgyzstan appeared to get involved in the implementation of project activities more often than in Turkmenistan, reflecting greater national ownership of development projects and programs in the governance sector.

6.3.4.4. Procurement of goods and services

All respondents stated that their agencies used their own rules for procurement of goods and services as part of the projects. However, some agencies used national procurement systems such as the World Bank,

EU, UN and GIZ (OECD, 2011c), thus combining donor procurement guidelines with national procurement systems. In those cases, the donor procurement guidelines would serve as an overall framework while the advertisement and processing of procurement would be done through national system. Compared to other Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan has probably one of the most advanced public procurement systems. The donor community provided significant support to the government in developing this system, establishing public procurement authorities, adopting relevant laws and launching an electronic procurement system. Yet, the national procurement system was used by a limited number of donors (OECD, 2011c).

6.3.5. Key pain points affecting donor-recipient relations in governance sector

A number of pain points affecting relationships between donors and recipient organizations can be identified based on the interview data as well as the analysis of primary and secondary sources. These pain points could be identified from the perspective of both donors and government recipients.

6.3.5.1. The pain points from the perspective of government recipients

A) Channeling funding via local non-governmental players (all years)

The tendency by some donors to channel their funding via NGOs results in a situation when funding allocated for Kyrgyzstan bypasses government agencies. For example, in 2013 the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Section provided "30 grants to local NGOs for projects promoting democratic values and governance, including government transparency, conflict resolution, and the political participation of LGBT communities and other vulnerable groups" (USAID, 2014a, p. 11). This not only resulted in the government's frustration over funding, but also over how local non-governmental organizations are used by some external players in Kyrgyzstan. President Atambayev's speech at the Fifth Session of the National Council for Sustainable Development is illustrative of this point: "We cannot allow some personalities – who hide behind the guise of human rights defenders, opposition members or NGO representatives, but who actually work off the money received from abroad – to impose values which are alien to our people" (as cited in Kabar News, 2017b).

B) Inability for government recipients to influence the selection of foreign grantees contracted by donors to implement their projects (all years)

Some bilateral donors have consistently used the practice of contracting their projects to home-based NGOs, private consulting companies or other organizations (KG-GOV05; KG-GOV10). A number of USAID, EU and other bilateral donors' projects were implemented by contracted entities which did not have any institutional affiliation with the donor. A quick review of the European Commission's website with calls for proposals and tenders shows that a number of governance-related projects were awarded to entities not having organizational affiliation with the European Commission.[17] While it is a commonly accepted practice in development cooperation to outsource implementation of entire projects or some parts of them, the problem with bilateral agencies is that the Government of Kyrgyzstan does not have any voice over who the contract is awarded to. In cases of multilateral agencies (e.g., UN agencies), government counterparts can presumably participate in the selection process for international consultants or international institutions

[17] Advanced search results for tenders awarded for Kyrgyzstan related projects can be accessed at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome&nbPubliList=15&orderby=upd&orderbyad=Desc&searchtype=AS&pgm=&finpub=&ZGEO=35479&debpub=

to be involved in projects, albeit as observers with the possibility to simply voice their position, without decision-making authority.

C) High consultancy fees (all years)

Government recipients expressed concern over high consultancy fees for foreign consultants (KG-GOV04). Even if the project is implemented through grant funding and national recipients do not have anything to lose per se, this concern is more about the potential to use that money more productively. The following is a quote from a respondent of an EBRD-funded review (EBRD, 2012) of consultancy services in Kyrgyzstan:

> The services of international consultants are very, incredibly expensive. But, most importantly, they do not know the specifics of our country, do not understand the mentality, especially in rural areas. International consultants have problem-solving templates for countries such as Uganda and other countries. When they come to Kyrgyzstan, they simply put the word "Kyrgyzstan" on the Uganda report, for example, and that way provide recommendations to us on how to solve our problems. This is totally wrong. (p. 38)

D) The amount of time government agencies spend on donors' missions, requests and other activities (all years)

Because governance sector interaction is more intensive in Kyrgyzstan than in Turkmenistan, with a greater number of donors and other external players, government organizations spend a lot of their time accommodating these requests. Organizing donor missions, responding to various requests and engaging in other donor-funded activities requires mobilization of human and other resources within the government. According to the OECD (2011c), donors jointly organized only about one fifth of their missions during the period 2005-2010. According to a multilateral agency respondent (also a former government employee): "Donors take a lot of the government's time and there is not much time left for real work and activities. Joint missions and joint activities should be encouraged" (KG-GOV04).

E) Competition for funding and challenges associated with it (late 2000s and beyond)

Limited funding for development activities, as one multilateral agency respondent put it, "forces agencies to adopt a project logic" (KG-GOV02). According to that logic, when funding is limited, international agencies tend to compete for any funding, irrespective of whether or not a potential project contributes to their country programs, which serve as the overall operational frameworks for their activities in the country. This was echoed by another multilateral agency respondent: "With competition for funding, development agencies forgot about their mandates and comparative advantages. An example of this is that with the establishment of the Peacebuilding Fund following the 2010 events, everyone became a peace-builder" (KG-GOV07).

6.3.5.2. The pain points from the perspective of donors

A) Staff turnover on technical and senior levels resulting from political changes in the country (2005 and beyond)

Political changes in the country were identified by respondents as well as in the project evaluation documents as one of the main factors having a negative impact on project implementation. These changes resulted in staff turnover on the technical level (i.e., working level government officials) and the senior level (i.e., ministerial level) and directly affected donor projects (KG-GOV01; KOGOV02; KG-GOV04; KG-GOV06). As stated by the World Bank, "since the March 2005 revolution, in many institutions, technocrats have been

displaced by administratively inexperienced officials, and thus public administration has been weakened" (2007, p. 11). Independent evaluations of UNODC's criminal justice program and drug control project mention "high staff turnover" as one of the critical factors affecting the effectiveness of UNODC activities in these areas (UNODC, 2017; UNODC, 2016); similar comments applied to the World Bank Project on Social Safety Net (World Bank, 2000c). On a more senior level, too, political changes and frequent appointment of new ministers and heads of government agencies affected project and program implementation, including a number of World Bank projects in economic governance. The following extracts from World Bank project evaluation documents are indicative of this challenge:

- **World Bank's Social Safety Net Project (SSNP):** "Ministers supervising participating agencies changed frequently. For example, from 1994-98, the leadership of the MLSP [Ministry of Labor and Social Protection] changed 5 times (one individual served twice). New Ministers often changed many agency managers and staff, causing significant delay and turbulence for the SSNP. . . . New ministers and component coordinators had to learn and relearn the SSNP" (World Bank, 2000c, pp. 9, 13).
- **World Bank's Governance Technical Assistance Project (GSAC):** "A GSAC Coordination Council (CC) was set up to provide strategic guidance . . . The CC was chaired by the Deputy Head of the President's Administration and included the Vice Minister for Economic Development, Trade and Investment, the Minister of Finance and other members drawn from different branches of government. Between the 2005 and 2008 when the GSAC closed, there were at least eight changes in the CC Chairman together with other changes in CC membership. Loss of continuity undermined the CC's effectiveness" (World Bank, 2014a, p. 23).

B) Reorganization of government structure (2005 and beyond)

A related challenge that donors experienced as a result of political changes was a reorganization of government structure. For example, "new law enforcement reform launched in July 2016 which led to re-organization of SDCS [State Drug Control Service] and introduced plans for changes in the system of preparation of the staff of internal affairs bodies" was a major factor undermining the effectiveness of UNODC's activities in the area of criminal justice (UNODC, 2017, p. 8). As a multilateral agency respondent stressed: "donors invested heavily in law enforcement agencies of the country, and abolition of any law enforcement agency will have a major impact on donors' activities" (KG-GOV02). Likewise, the evaluation of the World Bank's project on Capacity Building for Economic Management noted that "the political disruption in 2010 provided additional constraints to effective implementation due to frequent changes in the management structure of the project and the multiple restructurings of the main beneficiary agency, the Ministry of Economy" (2015c, p. 4).

C) Lack of coordination between government agencies and between government and parliament resulting in delays in approval of donor-funded initiatives

Lack of coordination between government agencies, and between government and the parliament affected project implementation, and for new projects, caused delays in their approval. The parliamentary system of governance, introduced to avoid concentration of power within the executive branch and hailed by donors, has become a pain point for some donors. The World Bank notes that "limited ability to build consensus and coordinate action across the key economic and social agencies and ministries" has affected the implementation capacity and delayed the approval of projects, which were "often the subject of protracted discussion between the government and the legislature" (World Bank, 2013a, p. 35). According to a respondent working in one of the UN agencies, "the parliamentary system increased the number of

decision-making centers" (KG-GOV07). In certain cases, lack of coordination was complicated by inter-agency rivalry among government agencies. The UNODC project evaluation emphasizes that the inter-agency rivalry involving the State Drug Control Service, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and Border and Customs services had an impact on "effectiveness and sustainability of results" (UNODC, 2016, p. 67).

D) Government recipients' reluctance to cooperate in certain governance program areas considered to be sensitive from their perspective (2010 and beyond)

Despite general openness of government recipients in working with donor agencies, certain types of governance programming were seen by government as being very sensitive, according to respondents with experience in donor-funded initiatives in the area of governance (see Box 6.5). These included projects on anti-corruption, and especially projects focusing on inter-ethnic issues following the 2010 revolution, as well as projects that supported NGOs dealing with human rights issues, religious freedom and radicalism (KG-GEN01; KG-GEN02; KG-RD03; KG-RD10; KG-ENV05). One of these respondents noted: "Corruption and inter-ethnic dialogue are sensitive areas. I was previously involved in a small project on anti-corruption and some government agencies were not very happy to see Transparency International during our meetings" (KG-RD10). This point was also acknowledged in primary sources as well, with UNODC project evaluation stressing: "difficulties were also faced in cooperation with the MoI in the area of gender and minority representation in the police due to mainly sensitivity regarding the issue and the need of societal changes in relation to gender equality and inter-ethnic dialogue" (UNODC, 2017, p. 7).

The Government of Kyrgyzstan demonstrated no tolerance toward any donor when it came to inter-ethnic issues. The U.S. State Department's decision to give its 2014 Human Rights Defender Award to Azimjan Askarov, an ethnic Uzbek convicted and imprisoned by government for instigating ethnic clashes in southern Kyrgyzstan, resulted in instantaneous reaction by the government to renounce the US-Kyrgyz Cooperation Agreement signed in the early 1990s (Lisitsyna & Cherkasenko, 2015). The 2018 Country Report for Kyrgyzstan prepared by Bertelsmann Stiftung Foundation notes: "The most frequently raised and problematic issue, in which civil rights were compromised, concerns the issue of post-2010 justice – not just the court cases – and the related question of maintaining inter-ethnic peace. It has become a politically highly sensitive issue, with any critical probe immediately provoking a government reaction (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, p. 12).

Box 6.5: Sensitive areas in the governance sector (Kyrgyzstan)

"Challenges in project implementation emerge because of the attitudes and low capacity of local executive authorities. For example, a donor agency wants to implement a project on developing leadership skills among youth and nurturing politically active young people. Local partners question this project: why would donors need socially active and politically educated young people in Kyrgyzstan?" (KG-GOV13, freelance consultant, former government agency staff)

"One can recently observe – within the government structure, including the President's office – the use of hostile rhetoric towards grant-giving donors and local NGOs or communities receiving those grants. However, most of it often relates to NGOs who focus on political issues, democratic governance, human rights, rule of law and mass media. In other words, all those areas in which the opposition does not have the resources to deal with." (KG-GEN04, respondent from the academic sector)

"South of the country is the hot spot for projects implemented by international partners; the government is becoming very sensitive about what the international actors do in the south." (KG-GOV01, respondent from the academic sector)

6.4. Donor-recipient interaction in the governance sector: Turkmenistan

6.4.1. National objectives, policies and reforms in the governance sector

Just as in Kyrgyzstan, the collapse of the Soviet Union left Turkmenistan with a multitude of challenges. The governance-related challenges appeared to be the most acute within the context of building a new nation-state. Having gained its independence, Turkmenistan had to establish new a political system, and introduce new laws and strategies to implement reforms, while at the same facing the challenges of providing basic needs for its population and preventing the economy from collapsing at the time when economic ties with the former republics were breaking. The adoption in May 1992 of the Law of Turkmenistan "On the order of introducing the Constitution of Turkmenistan" was one of the first steps in outlining the contours of the future governance system. Further discussion of the future governance system took place on a nationwide level in December 1992, during the combined session of the newly established People's Council of Turkmenistan and the Cabinet of Ministers. During this session, President Niyazov announced the following three broad objectives (TPH, 1993), all of which related to governance in one form or another:

- Building a democratic state based on the rule of law;
- Strengthening secularity; and
- Building a self-sufficient and developed economy.

At this session, President Niyazov explicitly emphasized the importance of political stability and national unity during the transition stage that would last for ten years. Subsequently, the transitional policy vision entitled *10 Years of Prosperity* was proclaimed by President Niyazov and unanimously approved by the members of the People's Council and Cabinet of Ministers. The first ten years of independence were to be characterized by state domination in nearly all sectors of the economy, as well as government control over political activities. The government was also to control mass media and publishing activities, fearing that uncontrolled mass media could potentially lead to ethnic and other tensions resulting from publication of sensitive materials in independent newspapers, as had happened in neighboring former Soviet republics (TPH, 1993).

Governance-related objectives during Niyazov's presidency (1991-2006) were characterized by continuous focus on political stability, with less attention paid to democracy building and promoting inclusive governance in line with Western notions of democratic governance (Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2003; U.S. State Department, 1995; UNDP, 2000a). During this period, a number of national development strategies were adopted, including the 2010 Strategy (adopted in 1999) and the *Strategy for Economic, Political and Cultural Development of Turkmenistan until 2020*, adopted in 2003 (hereinafter 2020 Strategy).

Both documents placed a heavy emphasis on economic development, industrial growth and creating conditions to attract foreign investments, as well as on the provision of social support and subsidies to the population (GOTM, 2003b; UNDP, 2000a). While on the official level, the commitment to strengthen the rule of law and to further democratization of political and social spheres was expressed openly by President Niyazov; those objectives were to be pursued in the long-term perspective, without introducing instantaneous changes: "We believe that the process of creating [political] parties, other public organizations should proceed naturally, without forcing. . . . Haste here is fatal. In any case, the creation of parties cannot be an end in itself" (as cited in Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2001c).

Despite the establishment of some national institutions, such as the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (UN in Turkmenistan, n.d.), donor agencies' reflection on the prevailing governance context was not optimistic. As mentioned by USAID in one of its annual reports to the U.S. Congress, "the president has continuously emphasized stability over political reform" (U.S. State Department, 1995, p. 191). Similarly, UNDP expressed concerns that the presidential reform programs did not "contain explicit commitment to political and institutional reforms" (UNDP, 2000a, p. 4).

As for human rights, the government systematically opposed, or rather disapproved, the imposition of externally-promoted democracy building models, although it has ratified major UN human rights conventions. For example, Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister stated at the 51st session of the UN General Assembly: "One does not have to be a specialist in order to understand that, no matter how perfect a model proposed from outside may seem, it might not be effective when applied to a traditional Oriental society such as exists in Turkmenistan" (as cited in United Nations, 1996, p. 25). Attracting foreign investments, creating high-level governance structures, government regulation of pricing, strengthening taxation and fiscal systems, were also among governance objectives declared by the government in the 1990s (TPH, 1993).

Reforms in Turkmenistan were deliberately slow in the 1990s due to the government's concern over the potentially negative impact of shock-therapy type of market reforms on living conditions of the population. For example, in Russia, the liberal market reforms of the early-1990s based on liberalization of prices, massive privatization and removal of social subsidies took a heavy toll on the Russian population (O'Clery, 2012). At the same time, unrestrained political activism and unregulated mass media in other neighboring countries resulted in social tensions, as claimed by President Niyazov, who used social, economic and political disruptions in neighboring countries as a justification for adopting gradual approaches in transforming the country's economy, its society and political system (TPH, 1993).

Starting from 2007, with a change of leadership, the government outlined some new priorities in the area of governance, including strengthening the electoral system, reforming the system of local governance and introducing a multi-party system (UN in Turkmenistan, 2007; Turkmenistan Golden Age, 2017). Constitutional reform was announced to increase the role of parliament, with the number of MPs increasing from 50 to 125 (Haitov, 2016). Improving the public administration system also emerged as a priority objective, with the enactment of a new budget code, and new laws on combating corruption and introducing a public procurement system (World Bank, 2015b). The *National Action Plan on Human Rights for the period 2016-2020* was developed, to be used as a road map to help implement Turkmenistan's international human rights obligations (Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2016).

In the late 2000s, the government launched the *National Program for Social and Economic Development of Turkmenistan for the period from 2011 to 2030* (hereinafter 2030 Program), which serves as the blueprint for long-term national growth and development. The program, as with previous national development strategies, focuses heavily on economic growth, industrialization, private sector development and improving living conditions of the population (GOTM, 2010). Similarly, the 2030 Program does not contain any references to such governance issues as elections, parliamentary development, anti-corruption or strengthening accountability of public sector officials. Rather, the government priorities in these areas were reflected in presidential speeches and statements.

In general, the new leadership after 2007 sustained policy continuity in the area of governance by committing itself to implementing changes gradually and in line with prevailing national values, expressing concern that democracy-building initiatives can be often used by external or internal forces to promote their political objectives. For instance, in a 2012 interview to Russia-based 'Turkmenistan' Journal President Berdimuhamedov stated:

> In the modern world, the way democratization processes take place is often far from being unambiguous. There are many examples of how, under democratic slogans, destructive and even openly reactionary forces make their way through the political proscenium, spreading discord and irreconcilability among people, leading to disunity and chaos. (as cited in Turkmenistan Golden Age, 2012a)

In building its national governance model, Turkmenistan focused on achieving and sustaining political stability and establishing a highly hierarchical governance system with the key role played by the government, and especially its executive branch. Donor agencies were, therefore, expected to plan and implement their governance-related activities within the confines of this model.

6.4.2. Donor objectives and areas of involvement in the governance sector

A handful of donors worked in Turkmenistan in the area of governance in the early-1990s. From the onset of cooperation, key donor priorities included supporting the newly established government of Turkmenistan in introducing market reforms and creating institutions and a regulatory framework to attract foreign investments, helping the country to build democratic institutions and strengthening the rule of law (European Commission, 1997; 2000; U.S. State Department, 1995; UNDP, 1997). Cooperation in these areas was seen as a logical extension of activities that were implemented elsewhere in the region. However, Turkmenistan's government adopted a gradual approach toward market reforms and reform of its governance system. It also abstained from getting involved in such sensitive subjects as combating corruption, promoting political pluralism and media development (see Box 6.6).

Box 6.6: Sensitive areas in the governance sector (Turkmenistan)

"This whole human rights issue is a difficult subject in Turkmenistan. The joint UNDP-EU project [on strengthening the national capacity in human rights treaty body reporting] was seen as a major breakthrough; UNDP developed very close relationships with the government, while in the past any other donor would not even think of working in this area." (TM-GEN02, multilateral agency respondent)

"Project proposal on parliamentary development offered by the EU was not accepted by the government; It said no, as it was not a priority area." (TM-GOV02, multilateral agency respondent)

"Working on human rights conventions in a context like Turkmenistan… they take them on, but to work in that area is very challenging. International human rights norms have been adapted with Turkmen standards and images." (TM-GEN01, multilateral agency respondent)

"The impact of bilateral assistance is under question since certain projects proposed by bilateral donors are very sensitive. For example, democracy promotion projects." (TM-GOV08, bilateral agency respondent)

"Human rights issues were repeatedly raised by donors. Also, activities focusing on vulnerable groups or risk groups, or sexual minorities. I think national standards and values should guide donors in initiating joint projects with the government. Some projects sought to introduce legislative changes in relation to men having sex with men. We didn't want promotion of some of these issues." (TM-RD05, government agency respondent)

During the mid-1990s, the country program activities of the European Commission and the USAID had an objective of assisting the country in the introduction of market reforms, as well as institutional and legal changes to support the transition to a market-based economy (European Commission, 1997; USAID, 1997b). This transition involved a range of specific objectives, including carrying out privatization of public property, development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and private sector growth in general, development of a public procurement system, and creating a regulatory and legal environment to attract foreign investments. Other areas where donor projects (e.g., UN agencies, USAID) focused were democracy building, increasing transparency and accountability of government institutions, and promotion of human rights (UNDP, 1997; USAID, 1997b). Public administration reform, improvement of public services and public infrastructure modernization were also listed as program objectives in country strategies of USAID, European Commission, Government of Japan, the World Bank and the UN agencies (USAID, 1999; UNDP, 1997; European Commission, 2000; UN in Turkmenistan, 2007), along with civil society development and supporting local NGOs (UNDP, 1997; USAID, 1997b). Other agencies were involved in much narrower areas in line with their mandates, such as combating drug trafficking, strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies (e.g., UNODC), building capacity of national institutions dealing with refugees and issues of statelessness (e.g., UNHCR), combating human trafficking (e.g., IOM), promoting children's rights (e.g., UNICEF), and increasing awareness of reproductive rights (e.g., UNFPA) (UN in Turkmenistan, 2007).

By the late 1990s, some donor organizations were forced to change their strategies due to lack of progress in market reforms and limited government interest in democracy promotion initiatives. The EBRD reduced its activities to only the private sector, withdrawing its support from certain areas (EBRD, 2014). In terms of democracy building activities, as stressed in the USAID quarterly progress report for the year 1999, the government was "not willing to make the kind of changes which would justify greater support in democracy" (USAID, 1999, p. 13). This led the USAID to reorient its support in the 2000s to non-governmental organizations, local communities and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (European Commission, 2000). Other donor organizations continued to work with government beneficiaries and government-affiliated NGOs (GONGOs) as there were very limited opportunities to engage non-governmental players in donor-funded projects. Cooperation with government recipients also included revision of legislation, introduction of amendments to laws and legal acts, arbitration issues, and increasing the capacity of local lawyers, judges and representatives of law enforcement agencies, which were among the key objectives of GIZ and OSCE (Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2005b). Economic and social development planning, and improving the quality of basic social services were among objectives pursued by the ADB, UN agencies and the USAID (UN in Turkmenistan, 2004; ADB, 2017; USAID, 2014b).

There were no significant changes in donor objectives until the presidential transition in 2007. With the new reform agenda announced during the early years of President Berdimuhamedov (from 2007 to early 2010s), donor agencies responded by offering their support in governance areas. For example, UN agencies' projects aimed at strengthening the capacity of the expanded parliament, revising electoral legislation, strengthening the capacity of the Central Electoral Commission, assisting the government in implementing its human rights obligations and preparing the government for a dialogue within the framework of the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process (UN in Turkmenistan, 2007; OSCE, n.d.). The World Bank expressed commitment to support the country's integration into the global economy and intensifying market reforms (World Bank, 2015b). While the core of USAID objectives did not change, it took a lead role among donors in supporting the government to learn about WTO accession requirements (USAID, 2014b). The Embassy of the United Kingdom, although not having an active project representation

in the country, has contributed some funding to governance-related projects implemented by other agencies and organized ad-hoc events having relevance to the governance sector. Finally, with the post-MDG agenda, the UN agencies' joint development strategy entitled *Partnership Framework for Development* (PFD) envisioned cooperation in monitoring the progress toward achievement of the national post-MDG objectives by monitoring the progress and collecting quality data (UN in Turkmenistan, 2016).

Although the political system opened up somewhat in 2007, there was limited or no project-level interaction on anti-corruption issues. In one of the few such instances, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat organized some ad-hoc events (e.g., seminars, open day events) to raise the awareness on corruption issues (OSCE, 2018; 2014; UNODC, n.d.).

6.4.3. Key national players involved in governance sector interaction

6.4.3.1. Government actors and their motivations to request donor support

My data show that the following national partners are involved in donor-funded projects in governance sector. They can be divided into implementing partners (those involved in project implementation from the national side), coordinating partners (those ensuring overall coordination of donor-funded projects, and serving as the main channel of communication between donors and national partners) and endorsing partners (which approve donor-funded projects as well as their implementation on a case-by-case basis). These coordinating and endorsing partners are not involved in actual project design and project implementation but still have a decisive role in the life of every project.

A) Implementing partners

National partners involved in implementation of project activities included the following actors:

- **Parliament and its committees;**
- **Line ministries**: Mostly representing economic, financial and social bloc (i.e., ministries of Labor and Social Protection; Education; Health and Medical Industry; Finance; Economic Development);
- **Government-affiliated research and educational institutions:** Academy of Civil Service, National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, National Institute of Education and selected higher educational institutions;
- **Law enforcement agencies:** Ministries of Defense; Interior; National Security; Justice; state services in charge of border control, migration, drug control, customs;
- **Other national institutions:** Central Bank, State Statistics Committee, Central Election Commission;
- **Local executive authorities:** provincial and district-level administrations;
- **Local self-governance bodies.**

B) Main coordinating partners

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the main national body in Turkmenistan involved in coordination of donor-funded projects in the area of governance. All important stages in development projects' lifecycle – including initiation of the ideas, defining project and its goals, developing a project proposal, approving a project, implementing project activities – involve the MFA in one way or another. While it is not directly involved in implementing those activities, it plays a decisive role as the main channel of communication between the national implementing partners and donor organizations. All project-related correspondence

goes through the MFA. However, for projects which have a political agenda (e.g., promotion of human rights), the MFA also performs the approval function in the capacity of the main national institution in charge of coordinating those projects' activities. For example, although the project on strengthening the national capacity of Turkmenistan to promote and protect human rights (co-funded by the EU, UNDP and OHCHR) is implemented by donors in cooperation with the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan, the MFA approves project activities as "the lead ministry coordinating the work of the UN treaty body reporting" (Petrović, 2012, p. 15).

C) Main endorsing partners

The Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan (CMT), with offices of relevant CMT Deputy Chairs (DCs) in charge of issues falling under the governance sector is the first-level endorsing authority, to which the MFA forwards correspondence on activities of all donor-funded projects and programs. The DCs' offices have the endorsing authority over donor-funded projects and can provide recommendations on postponement of project activities, suggest revisions of project activities and make other decisions related to the project. As such, the CMT is not involved in implementation of project activities. In making their decisions, the DCs offices coordinate closely with the Presidential Administration.

The Presidential Administration is the second-level, highest endorsing authority to which the Cabinet of Ministers forwards the project proposals and project documents for final approval. As with the CMT, the Presidential Administration is not involved in project implementation and exercises its decision-making authority only with regard to donor-funded projects.

D) Government actors' motivation to request support from development partners

Respondents who work, or who previously worked in donor-funded projects in the area of governance, identified a number of factors, which in their opinion motivated government recipients to be involved in such donor-funded initiatives. These include:

- Necessity to carry out reforms (TM-GOV06; TM-GOV08) and to comply with the international commitments to which the country signed up (TM-GOV10);
- Gaining access to knowledge, best practices and expertise (TM-GOV02; TM-GOV03; TM-GOV06; TM-GOV07; TM-GOV08) or to supplies and technical equipment (TM-GOV10);
- Necessity to address the flaws in national systems and procedures (TM-GOV03; TM-GOV07);
- Prestige and opportunity to demonstrate government's cooperation with international partners (TM-GOV02; TM-GOV10).

Speaking of government recipients' requests for donor assistance, a multilateral agency respondent mentioned that, as such, donor agencies do not receive any requests from them, and that all project-related activities (including those related to project initiation) are donor driven (TM-GOV07). Two other respondents indirectly supported this statement, adding that even if the ideas belonged to government counterparts, these counterparts preferred that donor agencies initiated the discussion through the official channels themselves (TM-GOV01), and that government counterparts never openly accepted that they had problems (TM-GOV03) (see Box 6.7).

Box 6.7: Local recipients' behavior in project design (Turkmenistan)
"Even if some government partners have ideas, it is preferred that the discussion is initiated by donors themselves." (TM-GOV01, multilateral agency respondent)
"There is some realization that there are weaknesses in national systems and procedures. But, they never admit it officially. They communicate it in the sense that there is a scope for improvement of national systems, which could be addressed through a project collaboration." (TM-GOV03, multilateral agency respondent)

Rather, they used an elusive language through which they communicated to donors that there was some scope for improvements in national systems or procedures, which could be addressed through a joint initiative. The use of positive language was not only apparent in the recipients' communication with donors regarding the initiation of new projects, but also in everyday project-related reporting. For example, as mentioned in UNDP's project evaluation report for the project that focused on expansion of the access to information and communication technologies, "there is a strong tendency to gloss over weaknesses and to emphasize the positives in reporting" (Constable & Babaev, 2007, p. 30).

6.4.3.2. Local non-governmental players

A very small number of NGOs have been involved in donor-funded projects, in various capacities. Some of them were government affiliated NGOs (GONGOs), while others were registered as public associations with the Ministry of Justice. While some of them were involved as local partners in charge of implementing the projects (e.g., Deaf and Blind Society of Turkmenistan), others were involved in providing consultancy or other related services (e.g., Union of Economists of Turkmenistan). The following list of local NGOs were mentioned by the respondents during the interviews (TM-GOV01; TM-GOV02; TM-GOV06; TM-GOV09; TM-GOV10):

- **GONGOs:** National Children's Fund of Turkmenistan, National Red Crescent Society, Youth Union, Women's Union;
- **NGOs:** "Keyik Okara", Deaf and Blind Society of Turkmenistan, Bosphor Public Association, Union of Economists of Turkmenistan.

The number of NGOs involved in donor-funded projects in the area of governance has declined with the introduction in 2003 of amendments to the law that regulates the activities of non-governmental organizations. According to this law, the activities of non-registered NGOs and public associations were legally banned in Turkmenistan. As a result, some international donors "eventually decided to suspend their assistance programs to help protect their grantees from the risk of unintentionally violating the law" (ADB, 2007, p. 4) (see also Box 6.8).

Box 6.8: Involvement of NGOs in the governance sector projects in Turkmenistan
"In certain areas, we did have little working relationships. Their legal status is very fuzzy. This does not give them a lot of confidence to act. You can do some micro-level activities with them, but it's restricted by the fact that it is an area of strict supervision by the government. The thing with the Turkmen government is that they would like to project the image of being a modern up-to-date government with a range of policies in all areas, and so in that kind of a framework, then, NGOs are seen as a requisite for a developed modern state. But that runs counter to the control narrative that is also very strong." (TM-GEN01, multilateral agency respondent)
"GONGOs are encouraged to work with donors for sure, because they are affiliated with government." (TM-GOV02, multilateral agency respondent, former government agency staff)

6.4.3.3. Mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects in the governance sector

A) Donor-driven mechanisms

Institutionally, development partners' coordination mechanisms in charge of general coordination issues existed since the mid-1990s. In the area of governance, smaller groups have been established to coordinate thematic issues, led by a specific donor agency. For example, the UNODC was in charge of convening coordination meetings on law enforcement issues (UNODC, 2010). Another example is the thematic group on public finance and private sector development led by the World Bank and the EBRD (World Bank, 2015b). In the late 1990s, thematic coordination groups on gender (led by UNDP), civil society development (led by USAID) and education reforms (led by UNICEF) were functioning as well (European Commission, 2000).

However, as noted by respondents, donor coordination was generally weak (TM-GOV01; TM-GOV02; TM-GOV04; TM-GOV06; TM-GOV08) and meetings convened within the framework of formal coordination groups were mostly used to exchange information, rather than to discuss how donors could get involved in real inter-agency collaboration and support the same beneficiaries as part of a single project or program (TM-GOV05; TM-GOV07). As noted in a UNDP project evaluation report related to capacity building of national authorities in statistics, "despite the obvious overlap with the UNDP projects, there was no formal partnership between the EU and UNDP" (Constable & Nazarova, 2006, p. 24). A handful of joint projects were implemented in the area of governance with participation of more than one development agency. For example, the EU, UNDP and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) implemented a joint project on human rights beginning in the 2000s. Yet, each agency had its own role to play. Most of the funding came from the EU, with UNDP acting as an implementing agency (and providing some partial funding), and the OHCHR providing policy and advisory support (Petrović, 2012).

Compared to other donors, the UN agencies appeared to have greater coordination on governance issues within their harmonized program documents for Turkmenistan. The UN thematic group on development of economic and social policies and plans was established as part of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2005-2009 (UN in Turkmenistan, 2004), and a 'result group' on strengthening governance and rule of law was created as part of the UN-Government Partnership Framework for Development (PFD) for 2016-2020 (UN in Turkmenistan, 2016). These groups formally served as platforms for bringing UN agencies together and monitoring the progress toward common program outcomes.

B) Nationally-driven mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects

Development of government's capacity to coordinate efforts of foreign donors was listed as a priority area of support in UNDP's first *Country Cooperation Framework for Turkmenistan for the period 1997-1999* (UNDP, 1997). The European Commission's initiatives in the 1990s also aimed at strengthening the government's coordination of technical assistance projects (European Commission, 2000). However, no formal national mechanism for coordinating donors' work in the area of governance was established (UNDG, 2011b), apart from a small donor coordination team within the Cabinet of Ministers which functioned until the early 2000s (TM-GOV02), and a National Coordinating Unit also within the Cabinet of Ministers dealing specifically with the projects implemented as part of the EU's Technical Assistance to CIS program (European Commission, 2008).

Since the late 2000s, government's cooperation with external partners, and especially the UN system, resulted in the establishment of national coordination mechanisms with wider mandates covering a range of thematic issues. One of these is the "national coordination mechanism for SDG implementation with the Working Group of Deputy Heads of 47 national entities responsible for implementation" of the national sustainable development goals (UN in Turkmenistan, 2017, p. 8), including those covering governance issues. Another such example is the government-established Interdepartmental Commission on Human Rights, whose mandate includes coordination of government-wide efforts on UN human rights treaty body reporting, including those efforts which are implemented with support from the external partners (Petrović, 2012). Other efforts to coordinate donors were of an ad-hoc nature, such as organizing conferences or other public events with the participation of development partners (TM-GOV02) (see also Box 6.9).

Box 6.9: Turkmen government's donor coordination efforts

"Coordination was and still is donor-driven. All coordination meetings were convened by donors. In the 1990s, government representatives were invited and they selectively participated in donor coordination meetings. In the 2000s, government representatives stopped participating in those meetings." (TM-GOV07, multilateral agency respondent)

"Donor coordination implies that government consciously coordinates, which I did not see in Turkmenistan . . . In many countries donors work through sector-wide programs or through budget support, which is based on the government's development plans. In Turkmenistan, there is a lack of that framework to work in that way, which is a major reason why donors could not work together." (TM-GEN01, multilateral agency respondent)

"Institutionally, there are no instruments for integration of donor resources and funds." (TM-GOV08, bilateral agency respondent)

"There is no donor coordination body within the government right now. Donors are assigned to certain government agencies. For example, UN agencies, OSCE are assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Finance deals with the World Bank, European Union. Central Bank deals with the IMF. State Bank for Foreign Economic Affairs deals with ADB and so forth." (TM-GOV02, multilateral agency respondent, former government agency staff)

6.4.3.4. Donor-recipient interaction mechanism in project/program design and implementation

A) Formal procedures and actual practices for donor-recipient interaction in project/program design

The official procedures for submitting new projects to government implementing partners is heavily centralized, and has remained so since the early-2000s. All respondents working in the area of governance have stated that donor agencies would send their project proposals to government implementing partners via the MFA, by writing notes verbales, attaching the draft proposal and requesting the MFA to forward it to their government counterparts. The MFA would then send the project proposals to the respective offices of the Deputy Chairs at the Cabinet of Ministers, which in their turn, would forward all of this documentation with an internal memo to a respective government agency, which they supervised. Some donors, whose projects are implemented as part of a medium-term country program or a country strategy (3-5 years) approved by the government, prepared project documents and annual work plans for each project and submitted them to the MFA (and further down to respective national agencies as explained above). These projects are treated as part of a country program, which has several program outcomes, to whose achievement the individual projects contribute (TM-GOV01; TM-GOV02; TM-GOV06). Moreover, these respondents (all three affiliated with the UN agencies) added that in cases where preliminary consultations with potential beneficiaries were needed, formal requests for arranging the meetings would be submitted through the MFA, to discuss the idea and agree on potential project objectives. Final approval of donor-funded projects is granted by the Presidential Administration.

All interviewees confirmed that actual practice did not differ much from the official procedures. However, almost all of them added that informal discussions with government counterparts always took place. From the donors' side, these meetings included the local staff members of donor agencies, who could meet with government colleagues without having to make an official request for meetings. In addition, two of the respondents stated that some informal opportunities to discuss project ideas emerged during public events, such as conferences, round-table events and workshops organized by either donors or government agencies (TM-GOV02; TM-GOV03).

B) Formal procedures and actual practices for interaction in project/program implementation

Donor-recipient interaction in implementation of governance projects involves two types of national focal points:

1) Project-level focal points (e.g., a specific ministry or a national agency assigned by the government as an implementing partner; it could also be a GONGO or other national actors);
2) Overall policy-level focal points coordinating the work of selected donor agencies (e.g., the Ministry of Finance in its capacity of the national coordinator for the activities of the IFIs);
3) Overall political-level focal point (which is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for all donors).

The official procedures to interact with project-level or policy-level focal points to discuss daily project implementation issues are centralized. According to interview respondents, donor agencies willing to meet officially with project-level focal points have to send a note verbale to the MFA requesting a meeting. This is a mandatory procedure, especially in cases when participants from the donors' side include expatriate staff (i.e., international staff posted to the country) and/or foreign experts or donor agency staff from other offices (e.g., regional offices or HQs).

The actual interaction related to project implementation is the same as the official procedures. However, some flexibility exists. For example, if the expatriate staff is fluent in Russian or Turkmen, they can call project-level focal points and discuss project related issues by phone. In addition, donor agencies whose projects are implemented through Project Implementation Units (PIUs) located on the premises of national partners have greater access to national project-level focal points, and PIU staff members facilitate that interaction on a daily basis without any restrictions. Finally, nearly all interview respondents stated that local staff of donor agencies could meet informally with national focal points to discuss project implementation issues.

As discussed above, the role played by local staff of donor agencies becomes instrumental in the process of donor-recipient interaction. They act as the gatekeepers between the expatriate staff of donor agencies (who are the decision-makers representing the donor agencies) and senior management of government agencies. In most of the cases, local staff could meet informally with national focal points without any problems, and without having to submit official requests for meetings via the MFA. They have also facilitated most of the interaction both when designing new projects and implementing project activities on a daily basis (see Box 6.10).

Box 6.10: Role of local staff members in the governance sector interaction (Turkmenistan)
"For local staff members, there may be less control and there are generally more opportunities for informal interaction." (TM-GOV08, bilateral agency respondent)
"On daily basis, our Turkmen colleagues were in constant touch with government, almost every day. National officers met with them almost regularly; informally they would talk to them more openly." (TM-GEN01, multilateral agency respondent)

6.4.4. Project/program management frameworks

6.4.4.1. Project/program management procedures

All respondents confirmed that donors' project/program management rules were used in managing respective donor-funded projects, including in both program implementation and operational aspects. Asked about why donor-funded projects were managed on the basis of donor rules and regulations, the following reasons were provided:

- There are no formulated government rules for managing development projects (TM-GOV04; TM-GOV08; TM-GOV10). As one government agency respondent put it, "we have local procedures for working with donors, but not for managing their projects" (TM-GOV04);
- There is limited capacity within government institutions to administer aid-funded projects (TM-GOV05; TM-GOV06; TM-GOV10);
- Development agencies provide assistance under the condition that their management rules are used (TM-GOV02; TM-GOV09);
- The use of donors' project management rules is not questioned as they are considered as internationally-recognized standards for managing development projects (TM-GOV02);

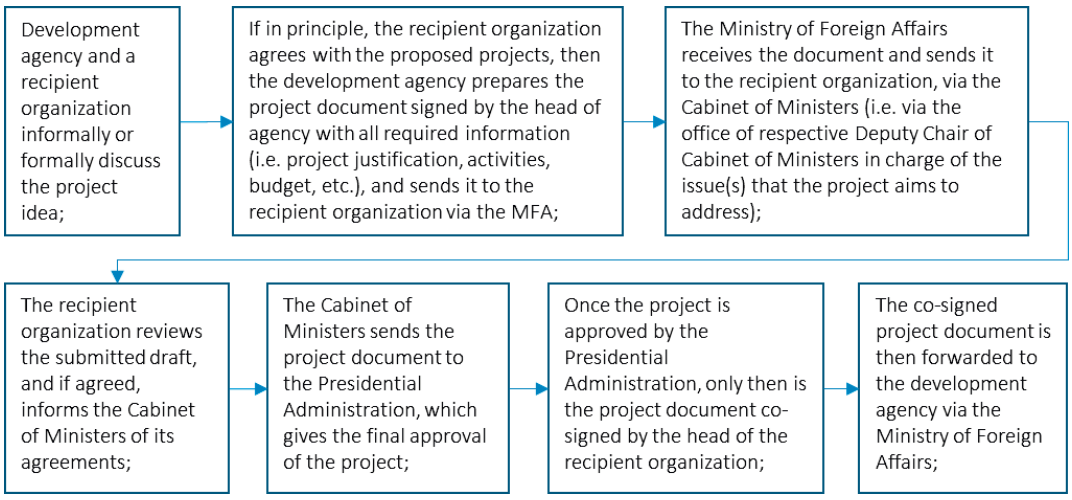
However, the fact that donors' project management rules are used should not serve as an indication that government agencies take them for granted without applying some local procedures. Indeed, four of the respondents admitted that some local procedures were used when managing donor-funded projects (TM-GOV05; TM-GOV08; TM-GOV09; TM-GOV10). This applied especially to the process of nomination of government participants to workshops and conferences (all workshop participants were assigned by the official decree signed by of heads of respective government ministries and organizations). Other local procedures included registering equipment and other assets acquired within the framework of donor-funded projects in the recipient organization's inventories and registering the project with the Ministry of Economy and other national authorities, if required.

6.4.4.2. Project/program approval procedures

Some development agencies had their country-level activities integrated into their regional strategies (e.g., USAID, GIZ), which were approved by their regional offices or headquarters. The approval on the government side would require co-signing a memorandum of understanding post-facto, after the development of the regional strategy that would contain country-level activities. Other development agencies implemented their country-level activities as part of their medium-term (three to five years) country program documents (e.g., UN agencies) which were developed in a more collaborative way, involving development agency staff and recipient organization staff, and co-signed by heads of UN agency country offices and relevant government officials.

Irrespective of the type of strategies used, project approval procedures have been highly centralized. Starting with the development of a project idea through to the approval of the project, procedures involved multiple players on the government side. Nearly all respondents mentioned the involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the main intermediary between the government organizations and development agencies. Schematically, the project approval process looks as shown in the following figure:

Figure 6.3: Project approval process for donor-funded projects in Turkmenistan



The above-mentioned project approval process has been in place since the early 2000s, when the interaction of national recipient organizations with development partners became centralized. As noted by three respondents, in the 1990s, recipient-organizations generally interacted with development partners directly and the project approval process did not involve intermediaries such as the MFA (TM-GOV05; TM-GOV07; TM-GOV10).

The following additional points should be made with regard to the project approval process.

- First, the time required for recipient organizations to approve donor-funded projects in the area of governance depends on many factors (such as project objectives, budget, project complexity, local implementing partners' capacity and previous experience in managing donor-funded projects);
- Second, projects cost-shared by the government took longer to approve as additional steps were added to the above-mentioned scheme (e.g., signing a separate cost-sharing agreement between the recipient organization and a development partner). The same applied to projects in which more than one development partner was involved, such as either a funding agency or an implementing agency.
- Third, and most importantly, further approvals are required even after the project gets approved. Organizing any activity as part of the officially approved project document and project work plan requires the agreement of the MFA and the government recipient agency in charge of the project from the national side, as well as approval on higher levels (i.e., Cabinet of Ministers, Presidential Administration).

6.4.4.3. Project implementation modalities

In terms of implementing project activities, nearly all respondents mentioned that donor agencies, or individuals and organizations affiliated with them, would be in charge of actually implementing project activities. These include donor agencies' program staff, project staff hired by donor agencies specifically to implement the project, international consultancy firms or non-profit organizations that would be contracted to implement the project (as grantees), or the local NGOs or GONGOs which would be entrusted to implement certain components of the project. Very little implementation of project activities was done by recipient organizations themselves, although they contributed to the development of terms of references, preparation of project reports and annual work plans. However, some national ownership was ensured, or appeared to be ensured, in projects with a 'national implementation' modality, which was used in some of UNDP projects, for example. In these cases, the government assigned a National Project Coordinator (NPC) who has a decision-making role in the project and who co-supervises the implementation of project activities along with the relevant UNDP senior manager. The project offices in such cases are mostly based in the recipient organization's buildings. In addition, in cases where development agencies are not represented in the country (i.e., non-resident development partners), or in a specific province, the project activities are implemented by the recipient organization.

6.4.4.4. Procurement of goods and services

All respondents stated that procurement of goods and services was done on the basis of donor agency rules and procedures, including for procurement of both minor items and of international consultancy services and expensive equipment and supplies. Use of national systems – be it procurement, financial management or other systems – is one of the fundamental principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Accra Agenda for Action. Yet, none of the agencies used the national procurement system. Various reasons were identified, including government bureaucracy and complicated procedures, and limited capacity of most of the recipient organizations to carry out procurement of goods and services internationally. One of the respondents mentioned that a recipient organization tried to procure supplies directly in the past, but that turned out to be ineffective and time-consuming in the end (TM-GOV05, former government employee).

6.4.5. Key pain points affecting donor-recipient relations in governance sector

6.4.5.1. The pain points from the perspective of government recipients

A) Rigid project implementation process based on donor procedures and using project staff/contractors hired by donors (all years)

Donor-funded projects are mostly implemented using donor procedures and with the involvement of contractors/grantees or project staff hired by development agencies specifically to implement the projects. In other cases, development agencies' program staff are in charge of the implementation of project activities. Only in rare cases do local recipient organizations appoint a national project coordinator and assign relevant staff to implement project activities. As noted in the UNDP governance portfolio review, "many donors prefer to deliver their programmes in cooperation with companies and organizations with headquarters in their countries" (Toritsyn, 2014, p. 10). On one hand, it appears to be a convenient process for the recipient organizations since they do not have to take care of any logistical or other arrangements, which are handled by donors. On the other hand, it undermines the ownership of development activities to the extent that one can argue there is no national ownership as such.

B) Project/program design with limited involvement of local recipients (all years)

Some development agencies, especially bilateral, design their country-level activities as part of more expanded regional strategies. Once finalized, these regional strategies or regional projects are presented to the government recipients, which are apparently invited to be part of the regional strategy/project by signing a memorandum of understanding. This project/program design approach appears to be less collaborative and participatory than the country program design process adopted by UN agencies. The UN agencies jointly develop the UNDAF document. They invite government counterparts, arrange formal brainstorming sessions to develop potential program areas, validate them through relevant workshops and arrange the co-signing of the document by the UN Resident Coordinator and the Minister of Foreign Affairs (UN in Turkmenistan, 2004). Nevertheless, even the UN's UNDAF process appears to have its own weaknesses. An evaluation of the UNDAF for the period 2010-2015 came to the conclusion that "all processes under the UNDAF are driven by United Nations Agencies: For example, all UNDAF Annual Reviews are organized by the United Nations and are seen as a "UN event" by the Government" (Kirby-Dorji, 2014, p. 5).

C) Donor projects becoming a burden for national recipients

The above two factors together contribute to donor-funded projects becoming a burden for national recipient organizations. The practice of hiring external companies or grantees (the system used by the USAID, EU and some other bilateral partners) to implement donor-funded projects undermines the effectiveness of development assistance (TM-GOV02). These foreign companies often have little or no knowledge about the country and develop their project proposals based on this limited knowledge. In the words of one of the respondents, who previously worked for the government agency, "local recipients are not interested in foreign projects since those projects become a burden for them… they have to assign people, those people have to spend their time on project activities. There is not much interest on the side of the government to implement such projects" (TM-GOV02).

6.4.5.2. The pain points from the perspective of donors

A) Limited opportunities to engage non-governmental players in governance sector projects (2003 and beyond)

The 2003 changes in the national legislation regulating NGO registration became a major challenge for development partners in involving non-governmental players in their projects and programs. Those development partners who worked with the NGOs directly, engaging them as either implementing partners or providing their assistance to them in their capacity of project beneficiaries, faced operational and legal difficulties in implementing their projects and programs. As stated in the UNHCR project evaluation, failure of local NGO partners to register would result in a situation when "programme activities would be hampered and UNHCR's capacity building efforts would be jeopardized" (UNHCR, 2004, p. 2). Others who targeted local NGOs as their project beneficiaries had to change their strategies. The USAID's contractor who worked in the area of civil society development, for example, "was forced to adjust its strategy to reflect the new challenges of working in Turkmenistan by shifting the focus from NGOs to local level community development" (USAID, n.d., p. 4). In other cases, development agencies were left with no other choices but to work with local organizations who "were able to register under other categories, such as commercial non-profit groups" (USAID, 2007, p. 2). Those "quasi private entities", according to UNDP project evaluation, "are allowed to operate only so long as they comply with official policy and practice" (Constable & Nazarova, 2006, p. 9).

B) Government registration of print materials produced within the framework of donor-funded projects (2011 and beyond)

Donor-funded projects having large communications and advocacy components suffered from lengthy and complicated procedures used to register their printed materials and publications. Although this finding appears only in one project evaluation report, it seems to apply to all other projects. According to a UNDP project evaluation report, such procedures were introduced by a presidential decree in 2011. In line with these procedures, "registration is mandatory and done only by the State Publishing Service" (Petrović, 2012, p. 22).

C) Lack of socio-economic and other baseline data required to justify project interventions (all years)

Lack of data has been another major challenge for development agencies operating in Turkmenistan. With poor baseline data, donors were not well placed to justify their project interventions, and to conduct their monitoring and evaluation activities as part of their project and program activities. According to UNDP's governance portfolio evaluation, "lack or limited statistical information and unwillingness of authorities to share statistics to develop effective interventions and monitor their impact" was one of the major challenges for UNDP's activities in the area of governance (Toritsyn, 2014, p. 46). Similarly, a UNICEF evaluation report emphasizes that access to data is "absolutely crucial" and that "the scarcity of relevant and reliable data poses a major challenge" (Pfaffe, Haitov, & Sedaghat, 2008, p. 11). This issue is also raised in a UNODC project evaluation report, which stresses that "lack of information has hampered monitoring and evaluation at the outcome level" of UNODC's border control project (UNODC, 2010, pp. 4-5) (see also Box 6.11).

Box 6.11: Access to data in Turkmenistan
"There is no baseline data in Turkmenistan; if you don't know what the baseline is, how to measure the progress? The data issue is highly challenging." (TM-GEN01, multilateral agency respondent)
"International partners develop project objectives and input baseline data for government recipients." (TM-GOV01, multilateral agency respondent)

D) Dual currency exchange rates (late 1990s to late 2000s; and mid 2010s onwards)

There were two currency exchange rates in effect in the late 1990s to late 2000s: the official exchange rate and the black market (or street) exchange rate, with a difference of nearly 4-5 times between them. Taking into account that donor agency budgets were allocated in USD or other currencies (e.g., Euro), and that local purchases were expected to be made in the local currency, development agencies would lose significant amounts from their project budgets during the conversion using the official exchange rate. According to UNHCR's audit report, its country office in Turkmenistan "could lose as much as US$ 450,000 in 2004, by applying the "official rate" instead of the "commercial rate" (UNHCR, 2004, p. 3).

E) Highly hierarchical and centralized decision-making process for all project- and program-related activities (from early 2000s onwards)

The government's decision-making system with regard to the activities implemented as part of donor-funded projects has become hierarchical and centralized since the beginning of the 2000s. A World Bank project evaluation report for a project that focused on institution building in the mid-1990s identified a top-down management style as one of the key issues that had a negative impact on the implementation of the project. According to the evaluation report, a significant "negative factor was that the administrative system was based on "one hand management," meaning that all decisions affecting the project had to go through

the executive branch," which "crippled project implementation" (World Bank, 2004a, p. 14). According to other development agencies, this system resulted in a lack of motivation among local recipient organizations "to innovate and initiate new projects" (Toritsyn, 2014, p. 46) and was not in general "conducive to project implementation" (UNODC, 2010, p. 4).

F) Involvement of intermediary organizations (early 2000s and beyond)

The involvement of intermediaries (e.g., MFA, Cabinet of Ministers) between the development partners and national recipient organizations had a significant impact on the way development agencies have interacted with local recipient organizations. As per UNODC's project evaluation report, "no international or foreign agency has direct access to national agencies" and the official communication is maintained only "through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs" (UNODC, 2010, p. 7) . UNDP's project evaluation report further mentions that "a practical illustration of the way in which political factors constrain progress relates to the approvals required from MoFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], the Cabinet of Ministers and even the Deputy Prime Minister [i.e., Deputy Chair of Cabinet of Ministers] before NISSI [National Institute of State Statistics and Information] professionals can travel for overseas training, study tours and/or international statistical conferences" (Constable & Nazarova, 2006, p. 18).

G) Lack of commitment to implement donor-funded projects in the area of governance

Commitment issues can have several causes. As stated previously, the cumbersome decision-making process could contribute to a lack of commitment on the part of recipient organizations (especially the technical level) and prevent them from being innovative, proactive and assertive of their objectives in dealing with the external donors. Other commitment issues could have different causes. One of them, according to the World Bank's project evaluation document is that "as an oil and gas producing country, Turkmenistan is potentially able to earn a good deal of foreign exchange", which reduces government's dependence on external aid and results "in the lack of motivation in implementing the agreed project" (World Bank, 2004a, p. 14). Similarly, the extent to which government pursues governance reforms as a way of responding to external pressures or responding to its international commitments (stemming from various international agreements to which it acceded) could be another cause. A UNDP evaluation report for the project that focuses on strengthening the national capacity on human rights treaty body reporting emphasizes that national authorities "consider human rights to be a foreign policy issue, and not a course of reform" and that "there is an obvious limit to the extent they are willing to pursue human rights as a vehicle for change of policies and practices" (Petrović, 2012, p. 10).

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter looked at governance sector interaction in both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. Governance sector interaction is perceived to be the most sensitive sector as donor projects in this sector aim at modifying the core characteristics of states, their institutional basis and the laws governing it, by bringing in international expertise that might often not be aligned with national governance models. They also aim at expanding the number of players involved in the country's development (in social, economic and political spheres) by funding non-governmental actors and trying to get them involved in processes and matters of state importance.

As the analysis has shown, in Kyrgyzstan, the government's objectives in the governance sector have been diverse, usually reflecting donors' values in democratic or good governance. The interaction was open, decentralized, with little central-level government control, and involved a range of government recipients,

local and international non-governmental players, and an array of donors and development agencies. This interaction was supported by the availability of socio-economic data which allowed donors to design their projects, programs and country strategy documents based on evidence and facts. The government has also established national institutions to jointly govern and coordinate aid-funded projects (i.e., Ostromian type of collective-choice arrangements). These attributes of governance sector interaction, it could be argued, made Kyrgyzstan an attractive destination for traditional donors affiliated with the OECD DAC, a kind of 'a donor darling' of the post-Soviet environment. The OECD DAC donors valued and frequently emphasized the importance of those recipient-country attributes. In other words, Kyrgyzstan, having a more open political system, had much greater exposure to donor-funded projects and was generally more cooperative and amenable to donors' initiatives compared with Turkmenistan (Hypothesis 1)

The efforts of the government, in its turn, aimed at presenting Kyrgyzstan as a trusted development partner, whose macroinstitutional environment (i.e., governance context) would be fit for investments and development funding. This interaction was one of the ways for mobilizing external funding in light of limited domestic financial resources and a lack of natural resources. It could be argued that the lack of revenue-generating industries in Kyrgyzstan compelled it to seek for development funding from external sources (Hypothesis 2). Yet, this interaction was not without its flaws. Frequent political transformations, resulting in recurrent personnel changes on the technical level, had a major impact on governance sector projects. Moreover, the parliamentary governance model, one of the variations of participatory democracy that donors supported and praised, in certain cases turned out to have a negative impact on donor-recipient interaction, with decision making on donor-funded loans falling victim to intra-parliamentary and intergovernmental (legislative vs. executive branches) disagreements. Finally, despite Kyrgyzstan's generally positive relationships with donors, when it came to sensitive issues of national importance (i.e., inter-ethnic issues, especially following the 2010 revolution), the government acted firmly when donors' involvement in those issues was seen as undermining domestic stability and inter-ethnic accord (Hypothesis 3). At the same time, following the 9/11 events Kyrgyzstan managed to minimize the Western donors' pressure in certain governance areas in return for Kyrgyzstan's involvement in the global war on terror (Hypothesis 5). These findings suggest that although Hypothesis 1 appeared to be the dominant narrative in Kyrgyzstan, Hypotheses 3 and 5 can take precedent over Hypothesis 1 because, despite having a relatively open polity and less structured relations with donors, the Kyrgyz government can become restrictive when it comes to protecting its own interests.

As for the application of internationally recognized principles of aid governance (Hypothesis 4), both donors and recipients embraced an active involvement of non-governmental players in aid-funded projects and programs in Kyrgyzstan, demonstrating their commitment to provisions of the agreements adopted in Accra and Busan. Yet, although relevant aid coordination platforms in the governance sector were in place, the implementation of Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was hampered by both donors and the government, as explained in Section 6.3.5. Some of these pain points affecting the implementation of Paris Declaration include the failure of donors to use national systems (including the procurement system), inability of government recipients to influence the selection of foreign grantees for projects implemented by bilateral donors, lack of coordination within branches of government and between government agencies resulting in delays of donor-funded projects.

On the other hand, Turkmenistan's governance objectives (which initially had some similarities with those of Kyrgyzstan, at least on the level of rhetoric and especially in economic governance) evolved around

building a politically stable system with a centralized governance model. Its main characteristic was a strong executive branch, whose objective was to resist external pressures, minimize interaction with external actors on highly sensitive issues, and centrally regulate the government recipients' relationships with external donors (Hypothesis 1). In addition, Turkmenistan's ability to generate substantial revenues thanks to its extractive industries, made it less dependent, in fact scarcely dependent at all, on external grants and loans (Hypothesis 2).

It should also be emphasized that "making a credible commitment" (Swedlund, 2017) seems more problematic in the governance sector, especially in Turkmenistan, due to the limited nature of the political dialogue (Hypothesis 3). Given Turkmenistan's persistent efforts to protect its governance system from external influences, as well as donors' inability to "make credible threats to suspending aid" (Swedlund, 2017, p. 30), it is unlikely that donors will be able to guarantee that Turkmenistan compromises in policy issues and areas such as political accountability, political pluralism, anti-corruption and other highly sensitive governance sector areas.

The application of aid governance principles in Turkmenistan appears to be weaker than in Kyrgyzstan (Hypothesis 4), taking into account an extremely limited involvement of non-governmental players in donor-funded projects, lack of opportunities for donors to initiate sector-wide approach programs or coordinated budget support programs, and less systematic government efforts in aid coordination. This is hardly surprising, since Turkmenistan is not a signatory to the Paris Declaration. As in the case of Kyrgyzstan, several pain points affected the implementation of aid governance principles in Turkmenistan, which have been discussed in Section 6.4.5.

Finally, wary of how local non-governmental players were used in donors' activities in other neighboring countries (Hypothesis 5), Turkmenistan also introduced in 2003 legal provisions regarding the registration of local NGOs, and criminalized the activities of non-registered NGOs. These legal changes allowed the government to successfully control the activities of local NGOs and limit the Western donors' interaction with local NGOs, especially in projects that address politically sensitive governance issues.

In such a governance context, interaction appeared to be limited compared to Kyrgyzstan and less coordinated by government, but rather controlled by it, which leads us to assume that Hypothesis 1 (the nature of the regime) and Hypothesis 2 (availability of domestic resources) are the two dominant narratives in Turkmenistan. However, even in this restrictive governance context, a certain adaptation of the local *institutional matrix* (North, 2005) has taken place, with local staff members of donor agencies serving as a kind of *adaptive agents* (Ramalingam, 2014). Donor agencies' local staff members played a pivotal role, acting as a bridge between donor agencies and their expatriate managers on one hand, and government agencies and their high-and mid-level officials on the other hand.

In theoretical terms, the governance sector interaction suggests that the realist theory's narrative of state survival appeared to be the main factor in the two countries' relations with the external donors in this sector. The comparative summary of governance sector findings for Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan is provided in Table 6.1. The table provides differences and similarities in governance sector interaction in the two countries.

Table 6.1: Comparative summary of governance sector findings: Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan

Issues	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmenistan
▪ *Government's objectives*	Comprehensive governance reforms; Transition to a market economy based on large-scale privatization and price liberalization; Establishing a multi-party political system	Emphasis on domestic stability by establishing a strong executive branch of the government and control of all political activities; Careful implementation of market reforms and state domination in the economy
▪ *Sector sensitivity*	Sensitive	Sensitive
▪ *Issues contributing to sector sensitivity*	Interaction on issues related to corruption, religious extremism, inter-ethnic relations in Southern Kyrgyzstan	Interaction on issues related to corruption, human rights, civil society and democracy promotion
▪ *Opportunities to make 'credible commitments'*	Generally strong; However, appear to be limited in some governance sector areas (see above)	Mostly limited due to sensitivity of governance sector projects
▪ *Degree of interaction*	Direct, decentralized interaction	Indirect, centralized interaction
▪ *Role of government intermediaries*	Limited during most of the 1990s and 2000s; Some attempts have been made in the early 2010s to channel the interaction through Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Strong, with all interaction being maintained through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
▪ *Involvement of NGOs*	Involvement of local NGOs is encouraged by the government; A large number of NGOs working in governance sector, performing various functions as part of donor-funded projects (e.g., project implementation, capacity building, policy advocacy, research)	Limited involvement of NGOs and a limited number of NGOs working in the governance sector; Local NGOs mostly involved in capacity building initiatives, with no or limited involvement in policy advocacy (except for government-affiliated NGOs)
▪ *Availability of sectoral coordination mechanisms*	Various thematic groups established as part of the Development Partners Coordination Council	Some thematic groups established by donors; However, sectoral coordination appears to be stronger among the UN agencies, ensured mostly through UNDAF thematic groups
▪ *Participation of government officials in donors' coordination mechanisms*	Participate regularly	Do not participate
▪ *Participation of donor agencies' expatriate staff in daily project/program interaction*	Active, with direct engagement with government counterparts	Limited, due to the necessity to request government approvals for any project/program-related interaction, including meetings with project counterparts
▪ *Role of donor agencies' local staff in project/program interaction*	Important	Highly important, given that the expatriate staff do not have direct interaction with government counterparts
▪ *Involvement of donors in formulation of sectoral development policies*	High	Limited

Chapter 7 | Donor-recipient interaction in the rural development sector

7.1. Introduction

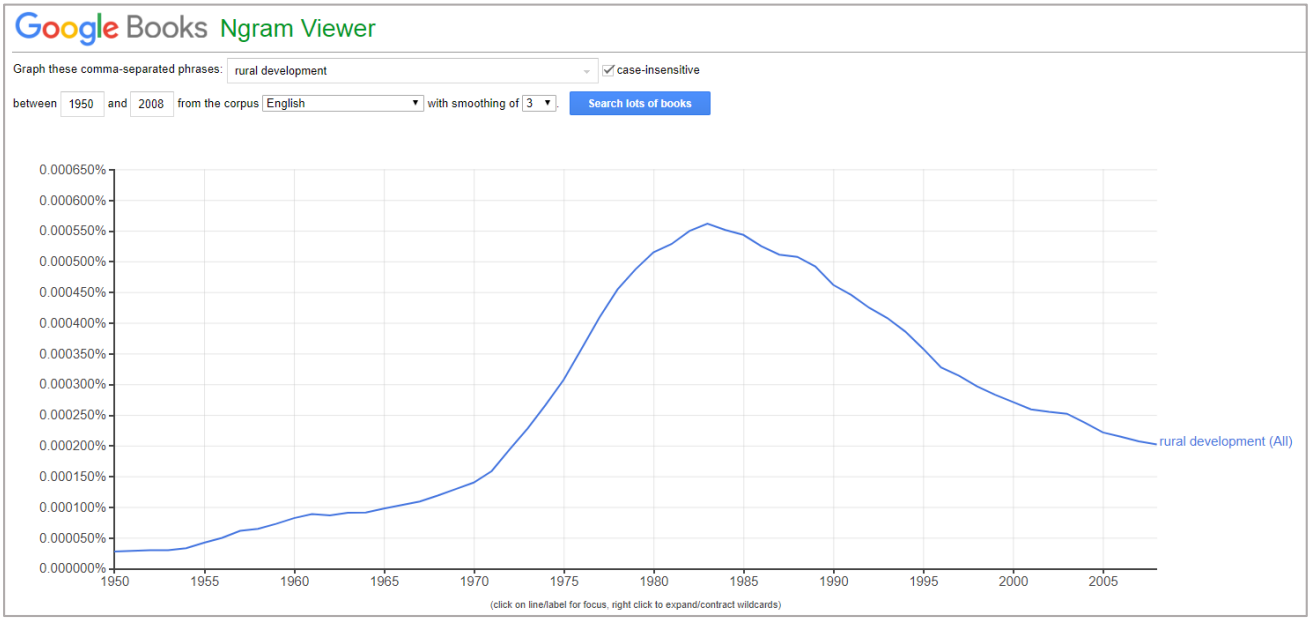
This chapter analyzes the interaction between government recipients and donors in the rural development sector in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The structure of this chapter follows the same format used in Chapter 7. However, in this chapter I am not looking at issues that relate to project/program management frameworks and procedures, such as how projects are approved, managed and implemented, what kind of decision-making bodies are established, and whether project procurement is carried out in line with donors' or recipients' rules. The assumption, borne out by interview data, is that donors' project and program management rules apply equally to all projects, irrespective of the sector in which they are implemented. For example, UNDP's projects in the governance sector are approved, implemented and managed in the same way as its projects in other sectors and in line with the same program management rules (i.e., UNDP's Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures).

I will briefly discuss the concept of *rural development*, its emergence and the type of projects that it covers. I will then review donor-recipient interaction in the rural development sector in Kyrgyzstan, looking at the government's and donors' priorities in this sector, the type of players involved (including government agencies, donor organizations and non-governmental players), and key pain points that had an impact on donor-recipient interaction in this sector. I will then be looking at similar issues in the context of Turkmenistan. Finally, I will provide a brief concluding summary for this chapter.

7.2. Defining 'rural development'

The emergence of the rural development concept dates back to the 1950s, when it appeared "as a distinctive field of research and has acquired a central role in theory and practice of development" (Behera, 2006, p. 13). As shown in the search results for rural development in Google Books Ngram Viewer, the number of publications in English devoted to rural development steadily increased starting in the 1950s and gradually decreased after the mid-1980s (see Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Search results for 'rural development' at Google Books Ngram Viewer



Source: https://books.google.com/ngrams

While initially the concept of rural development was based on the idea that the development of rural areas could be achieved through *agricultural modernization* (i.e., strong focus on agriculture), it gradually transformed into a more inclusive concept. The importance of going beyond agricultural development was emphasized, with policy-makers being urged to "focus on improving the quality of life, sustainable livelihoods, environmental sustainability, community development and gender equality" (OECD, 2016a, p. 64). Rural development as a concept has undergone several thematic transformations since its emergence in the 1950s, focusing on *community development* in the 1950s-1960s, growth of small farms in the 1960s-1970s, *integrated rural development* in the 1970s-1980s, *market liberalization* in the 1980s-1990s, *participatory rural development* in the 1990s, *poverty reduction* in the 1990s-2000s (Ellis & Biggs, 2001), and *sustainable development* from the 2000s and beyond (OECD, 2016a).

Most definitions of rural development emphasize the importance of reducing poverty in rural locations and improving the living conditions of rural residents (see Box 7.1), since living standards tend to be lower in rural areas than in urban areas. There also appears to be a consensus in that rural development is not only about agricultural development (Rivera & Qamar, 2003). A recent OECD document outlines the following two key attributes of the new rural development paradigm. According to the OECD (2016a, p. 16), the new rural development paradigm:

- "is multi-sectoral: focusing not just on agriculture, but also rural industry and services; and not just rural focused, but also building on rural-urban linkages";
- "is multi-agent and multi-level: involving not just national government, but also local and regional governments, the private sector, international donors, NGOs, and rural communities".

Box 7.1: Definitions of Rural Development

The World Bank

"Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people – the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas. The group includes small-scale farmers, tenants and the landless" (World Bank, 1975, p. 3).

Robert Chambers

"Rural development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of development. The group includes small-scale farmers, tenants, and the landless" (Chambers, 2013, p. 147).

Peter Oakley and Christopher Garforth

"Rural development is a process integrated with economic and social objectives, which must seek to transform rural society and provide a better and more secure livelihood for rural people" (Oakley & Garforth, 1985, p. 5).

Katar Singh

"The term rural development connotes overall development or rural areas with a view to improve the quality of life of rural people. In this sense, it is a comprehensive and multidimensional concept, and encompasses the development of agriculture and allied activities; village and cottage industries; crafts, socio-economic infrastructure, community services and facilities, and above all, the human resources in rural areas" (Singh, 2009, p. 3).

Michael Todaro and Stephen Smith

"The broad spectrum of rural development activities, including small-farmer agricultural progress, the provision of physical and social infrastructure, the development of rural nonfarm industries, and the capacity of the rural sector to sustain and accelerate the pace of these improvement over time" (Todaro & Smith, 2012, p. 417).

Taking into account the various definitions of rural development and its key objectives, to review donor-recipient relations in the rural development sector, I decided to concentrate on projects and programs that deal with the following issues:

- Improving agricultural production and strengthening the agro-industrial sector;
- Ensuring food security;
- Livestock development;
- Development of small-scale farming;
- Infrastructure development in rural areas (including construction of roads, hospitals, schools and other infrastructure objects);
- Provision of public services to residents of rural areas (including services related to public health, education, water supply and sanitation, and other public services provided in rural areas);
- Land reform;
- Developing capacity of local communities and local farmers.

7.3. Donor-recipient interaction in the rural development sector: Kyrgyzstan

7.3.1. National objectives, policies and reforms in the rural development sector

The collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 and subsequent transition reforms in Kyrgyzstan resulted in the deterioration of living conditions in rural areas, which in turn contributed to widespread rural poverty. By the mid-1990s, nearly 50% of the rural population lived below the national poverty line, much higher than among the urban population (30.3%). By the late 1990s, rural poverty reached 60% of rural dwellers. The situation was further aggravated by that fact that the majority of rural residents were involved in agriculture, of which 80% lived under the poverty line (GOKR, 2001b). Taking into account that almost 62% of Kyrgyzstan's population in 1991 lived in rural areas (World Bank, 1993), the challenges that rural areas of Kyrgyzstan faced were immense.

Therefore, Kyrgyzstan's national objectives during the early years of independence focused on development of rural areas through implementation of reforms and policies aimed at improving the living conditions of rural dwellers. These reforms and policies focused on agriculture, livestock, irrigation, development of rural infrastructure and provision of basic social services to rural populations. Reforms in these areas were among the key development objectives of the government of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan (GOKR, 1994). As stressed in previous chapters, Kyrgyzstan was one of the most advanced reformers in the post-Soviet environment, including in sectors that targeted the development of rural areas. For example, the government's agrarian reforms resulted in price liberalization and massive privatization in the agricultural sector (GOKR, 1994). The proportion of arable land managed by the private farmers increased from just 2% in the late 1980s to almost 75% in the late 2000s (Lerman & Sedik, 2009). The agrarian reforms, as stressed by Mogilevskii et al., were "among the most radical and comprehensive transformations of agriculture to be implemented in the countries of the former Soviet Union" (2017, p. 13).

Rural development priorities, focusing mostly on poverty reduction in rural areas, land and agrarian reforms, local self-governance, regional infrastructure projects, irrigation and water management, development of private sector, were reflected in national development plans and sectoral development plans adopted under the presidencies of Akayev, Bakiyev and Atambayev (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: List of national strategies and plans containing rural development objectives in Kyrgyzstan

Title	Adopted in	Adopted under
The Concept of Economic and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic up to 2000	1994	Akayev
The Strategy for Economic Development of the Kyrgyz Republic up to 2005 and Indicative Socio-Economic Plan for the period 1996-1998	1996	Akayev
Indicative Plan for Socio-Economic Development of the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 1999-2001	1999	Akayev
Comprehensive Development Framework of the Kyrgyz Republic up to 2010	2001	Akayev
Interim National Strategy for Poverty Reduction for the period 2001-2003	2001	Akayev
The National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005	2003	Akayev
The National Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic "Integrated Development of Villages up to 2010"	2004	Akayev
Country Development Strategy for the period 2007-2010	2007	Bakiyev
The National Sustainable Development Strategy for the period 2013-2017	2013	Atambayev
The Program for Development of Local Self-governance in Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2013-2017	2013	Atambayev

One of the first long-term national policy documents was the *Concept of Economic and Social Development of the Kyrgyz Republic up to 2000* (GOKR, 1994). Among a range of other developmental objectives, it aimed at increasing agricultural production, promoting private sector involvement in the agricultural sector, creating incentives for local farmers through provision of targeted financial support packages (e.g., agricultural credit), and administrative and territorial reforms. It also identified agriculture as one of the primary sectors for attracting development loans, grants, technical assistance and foreign investments (GOKR, 1994). Short-term indicative development plans for the periods 1996-1998 and 1999-2001 proposed more specific policy measures aiming at the improvement of living conditions in rural areas, increasing agricultural production and promoting growth in the country's provinces. They also proposed land reform, agricultural market liberalization, institutional reforms with a focus on rural areas, as well as the implementation of infrastructure projects in rural areas, including roads, communication infrastructure, power engineering and social infrastructure objects such as hospitals and schools (GOKR, 1996; 1999).

With Kyrgyzstan becoming one of the few pilot countries in the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework process in 1999 (World Bank, 2000b), the government's rural development objectives consisted of a number of poverty-oriented policy measures, including in two of the national poverty reduction strategies for the periods 2001-2003 and 2003-2005. These strategies placed particular emphasis on balanced development of the provinces with a focus on reducing rural poverty, provision of quality social services to rural populations, additional local self-governance reforms and implementation of rural infrastructure projects. They also proposed measures for further transformation of the agro-industrial complex and development of supporting services such as land and water management services (GOKR, 2001b; 2003a).

Under President Bakiyev, the government developed the Country Development Strategy for the period 2007-2010 (CDS 2007-2010). The CDS 2007-2010 retained the focus on rural poverty reduction and proposed to implement "local poverty reduction programs" in all provinces. Same as the previous policy

documents, the CDS 2007-2010 also focused extensively on development of the agro-industrial complex and implementation of rural infrastructure projects (GOKR, 2007a). After the 2010 revolution, the new government formulated the National Sustainable Development Strategy for the period 2013-2017, which addressed the inconsistencies of previous reforms and policy measures, including in local self-governance, agriculture and regional development. In local self-governance, the strategy aimed at improving the quality of municipal services, raising the capacity of municipal authorities, and introducing institutional arrangements to have a clearer separation of functions between local executive authorities and local self-government agencies. In agriculture, achieving food security through increased agricultural production and increasing competitiveness in the agricultural sector were among key goals. Finally, regional development was a key pillar in the strategy, which proposed to link each province to specific national projects, taking into consideration specific socio-economic characteristics of the provinces (GOKR, 2013).

However, a number of critical observations were made in terms of government reforms targeting rural areas and the rural development sector in general. According to Lerman and Sedik (2009), despite massive privatization and price liberalization in the agricultural sector, the government's efforts at creating auxiliary services and new "supply and marketing channels" that would support agricultural production appeared to be insufficient. They further emphasize that "the Soviet services were geared specifically to a few hundred large-scale agricultural enterprises, whereas land reform has produced over a million small and medium-sized producers with fundamentally different needs" (Lerman & Sedik, 2009, p. 2). Furthermore, marketization of the agricultural sector did not contribute to reducing the poverty in rural areas given the small-scale nature of farming activities. It further resulted in decreasing the role of the government in the agricultural sector. As stressed by Zhantemirov, "as a result of unreasonable expansion of the role of the market as a regulation tool and the reduction of the role of the state, the government bodies in charge of the agrarian sector practically became observers, rather than an active player in the market" (2011, p. 14).

In addition, corruption in implementation of public investment projects targeting rural areas emerged as a key challenge. For example, corruption controversies in a large ADB-funded project on rural water supply resulted in project suspension (GOKR, 2012c), with the then-Prime Minister Otorbayev stating that "money was literally pilfered" (in Mashalo, 2012). Similarly, corruption appeared as a major issue in a large road construction project (Putz, 2017) and a project dealing with the delivery of medical supplies to the country's health facilities (Eurasianet, 2012).

A number of observations should be made in terms of Kyrgyzstan's rural development goals and objectives. First, national objectives in the agricultural sector were based on a genuine commitment to introducing market reforms and expanding the role of private sector, which was in line with the country's chosen path of market liberalization in all industries and sectors. Second, the government appeared to have actively engaged donors in the implementation of its rural development policies and reforms. Nearly all policy documents developed and implemented in Kyrgyzstan since its independence mentioned the expected contribution of major donors or their involvement in implementation of national development objectives. Third, non-governmental actors (such as the NGOs) played an important role at all times, performing various functions, including monitoring of public policies, service provision, policy implementation, capacity building and others. For example, local NGOs played a crucial role in finding irregularities and evidence of corruption in the implementation of the 'Taza Suu' water supply project funded by donors (Isabekova, Ormushev, Omokeev, Williams, & Zakharchenko, 2013). In other words, their participation was taken as a 'given' and never seemed to be questioned. Fourth, the content and language in which the national

development strategies were written appeared to be aligned with the donors' foreign aid discourse, expressing commitment to cooperation with multilateral and bilateral donors. Fifth, all policy documents used baseline indicators and socio-economic data, including relevant poverty statistics in rural areas. As stressed by a senior program staff member from a bilateral donor agency, "in implementing donor projects, donors' access to official data is seen as a national security issue in other Central Asian countries; not so much in Kyrgyzstan" (KG-RD01). Finally, despite the change of power and formulation of development policy documents under three different presidents, policy continuity in the rural development sector appeared to be sustained, with nearly all documents focusing on increasing agricultural production, improving water management and irrigation systems, improving the quality of basic social services in rural areas, implementation of rural infrastructure projects and local self-governance.

7.3.2. Donor objectives and areas of involvement in rural development sector

The pervasiveness of rural poverty, declining quality of social services and deteriorating infrastructure in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan made rural development a priority sector for international donors starting from the early-1990s, especially large players such as the development banks and a selected number of multilateral (e.g., European Commission, UN agencies) and bilateral development players (e.g., United States, Japan, Switzerland, Germany). At the same time, non-governmental players such as the Aga Khan Development Network, Mercy Corps and the Soros Foundation also implemented their projects in rural areas.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the World Bank, ADB, European Commission (EC), SDC and USAID were among the key players supporting the transition of Kyrgyzstan's agro-industrial sector to a market-based system (ADB, 2000; U.S. Government, 1999; European Commission, 1995). EBRD, GIZ, and the UN agencies and funds (e.g., WFP, FAO, IFAD) gradually expanded their program activities in these areas in 2000s and 2010s (EBRD, 2015; IFAD, 2018; FAO, 2018; UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2011; WFP, 2017a). ADB, EBRD, GIZ, JICA, World Bank, USAID and UN system agencies implemented projects aiming to reduce rural poverty, improve the quality of rural social services (e.g., health, education) and promote community based-development (EBRD, 2015; JICA, 2010; UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2004; 2011; USAID, 2015a; World Bank, 2007). The development of small and medium enterprises in rural areas and providing micro-financing to rural farmers and entrepreneurs were among the objectives of UN agencies, ADB, EBRD and USAID (ADB, 2000; U.S. Government, 1999; EBRD, 2015; UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2011). UNDP and USAID supported the government's efforts in territorial and administrative reforms by implementing projects on local self-governance and decentralization (UNDP, 2000b; UNDP, 2017; USAID, 1997a; USAID, 2015a). Finally, donor support was provided in implementation of rural infrastructure projects, including construction and rehabilitation of roads, social infrastructure objects (e.g., schools, health clinics), water and sanitation systems, and power engineering infrastructure (EU Delegation in Kyrgyzstan, 2015; JICA, 2010; UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2004; EBRD, 2015).

The review of donors' more recent profiles on the website of the Development Partners Coordination Council (DPCC)[18] shows that the most active areas of support (as of 2018) have been programs and projects in the following areas:

- Reducing rural poverty and promoting local development;
- Agricultural development and providing support to farmers;

[18] The list of donor agencies which are the members of the DPCC can be found at http://www.donors.kg/en/agencies

- Providing micro-financing and development of small and medium enterprises in rural areas;
- Improving the quality of rural social services (health, education, social protection);
- Rural infrastructure projects (roads, power generation systems);
- Local self-governance and decentralization; and
- Water and sanitation projects.

Nearly all development agencies listed on the DPCC website implemented projects in rural areas or projects targeting rural areas. However, the IFIs appeared to be the largest donors. For example, the Asian Development Bank funded more than 30 projects, focusing on agriculture, natural resources management and rural development with the total amount of committed funding exceeding USD 990 million.[19] The World Bank also implemented over 40 projects targeting rural areas. The search for projects covering only such areas as rural services and infrastructure, rural policies and institutions, decentralization, land administration and management, rural markets and municipal governance produced 42 results on the World Bank's projects database with a total committed amount of USD 609.87 million.[20]

The following observations should be made in terms of donors' involvement in the rural development sector. First, donors have extensive representation in rural areas, through their field or project offices. For example, the UNDP established sub-offices in Batken, Naryn and Osh provinces to coordinate the implementation of its area-based development projects, as well as the projects of other UN agencies with similar objectives (UNDP, 2017). Likewise, the establishment of UNICEF's Decentralized Zonal Office in Osh province reportedly contributed to effective implementation of its program activities in that province (Gotsadze & Shalyeva, 2016). Other development agencies, such as the GIZ, had their offices in provinces where they implemented their project or program activities (KG-RD01).

Second, Kyrgyzstan presented extensive opportunities for donors to establish local institutions that would support them in implementing their program objectives. For example, the Kyrgyz Investment and Credit Bank, established in 2001 with support and funding from major donors (e.g., Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development, EBRD, World Bank, German government-owned KfW Bank), became one of the lead players providing financial support to farmers and rural entrepreneurs.[21] Similarly, Aga Khan Development Network's Micro Credit Company emerged as an important source of funding to support rural farming, whose nearly 90% of clients come "from peri-urban and rural areas" (AKDN, 2016, p. 8). The government also established certain institutions to facilitate the implementation of donor-funded projects. The Community Development and Investment Agency was founded in 2003 in line with the presidential decree to facilitate the implementation of projects focusing on poverty alleviation in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan.[22]

[19] The search query for 'Kyrgyzstan' on ADB's "Projects and Tenders" website (https://www.adb.org/projects/country/kgz/sector/agriculture-natural-resources-and-rural-development-1057) provides information on 33 projects under "Agriculture, natural resources management and rural development" sector.
[20] The search query for Kyrgyzstan can be run on the World Bank's Projects Database at http://projects.worldbank.org/search?lang=en&searchTerm=&countrycode_exact=KG
[21] More detailed information on the bank and its activities can be found at https://en.kicb.net/welcome/
[22] The mandate, details of the projects implementation by the agency and other relevant information can be found at http://www.aris.kg

Third, donors' coordination efforts and their alignment with government priorities became especially strong after the revolutions in 2005 and 2010. Following the 2005 events, major donors such as the ADB, European Commission, German Government, Government of Switzerland, UK Department for International Development, the UN agencies and the World Bank formulated the Joint Country Support Strategy (JCSS) for the Kyrgyz Republic. The strategy, among many development challenges, also focused on agriculture and agro-processing, local development and other issues having a cross-cutting nature such as local infrastructure and rural public services (DPCC, 2009). Likewise, the 2013 High-level Development Conference brought together major development players who committed to support the new government's reforms through a more effectively coordinated partnership (DPCC, 2013b).

Fourth, the period after the 2010 events saw a sharp increase in Chinese investments in Kyrgyzstan, part of which focused on developing rural infrastructure, agriculture and local economic development.[23] The Chinese investments in Kyrgyzstan were relatively modest during 1995-2008 (approximately USD 135 million), and increased by almost 6.5 times during the period 2009-2013, reaching almost USD 870 million (Meshkova, 2015). In addition, while Russia had been one of the key investors since Kyrgyzstan's independence, the establishment of the Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund (RKDF) in 2014 resulted in the creation of an institutional framework for delivering Russian aid and generally made it more accessible to local businesses and farmers. According to RKDF's 2016 Annual Report, 70% of projects funded by RKDF were based in the provinces of Kyrgyzstan, with over 290 projects implemented in the agricultural sector alone (RKDF, 2016).

7.3.3. Key national players involved in rural development sector interaction

7.3.3.1. Government actors and their motivations to request donor support

Chapter 6 discussed the functions of the main coordinating partners (e.g., MFA, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy) and the national approving/ratifying partners (Office of the President, Prime Minister's Office and Parliament). As their functions are the same with regard to donor projects in all sectors, this chapter will not repeat that material.

The following government recipients involved in rural development sector interaction were mentioned during interviews and in various donor program documents and cooperation strategies:

- **Parliament and its relevant committees** (e.g., Committee on Agrarian Policy, Water Resources, Ecology and Regional Development);
- **Line ministries and their provincial branches:** Agriculture, Food Industry and Melioration; Transportation and Roads; Health; Education and Science; Ministry of Emergency Situations;
- **Other state bodies:** State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry; National Institute for Strategic Studies; State Agency for Local Self-governance and Inter-ethnic Relations; State Geological Agency; State Inspection for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Security; Community Development and Investment Agency; National Bank of Kyrgyz Republic; State Committee for Industry, Energy and Subsoil Use; state-funded research institutions (e.g., Livestock Research Institute);
- **Local executive authorities:** provincial and district level administrations;
- **Local self-governance bodies**.

[23] AidData's Global Chinese Official Finance Dataset covering the period 2000-2014 can be accessed at https://www.aiddata.org/data/chinese-global-official-finance-dataset

In interacting with external donors, the government recipients were motivated by gaining access to material resources such as equipment and other technical resources (KG-RD01; KG-RD02; KG-RD04; KG-RD07; KG-RD09), access to financial resources (KG-RD03; KG-RD04; KG-RD06; KG-RD09), access to knowledge and expertise (KG-RD06; KG-RD08; KG-RD10), and building the capacity of national partners (KG-RD03; KG-RD06; KG-RD10). As stressed previously, living conditions deteriorated significantly following the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially in rural areas, and external financial and technical support played a crucial role in supporting the government's poverty reduction efforts. According to a former senior government official, "if there was no donor support, we would have been in crisis, as the state budget could not provide funding for important activities, especially in the social sector" (KG-RD05).

The government, therefore, was open toward donors' involvement in rural areas and generally encouraged the participation of local recipients in donor-funded projects. As stressed by a multilateral agency respondent, "the key motivation for national recipients to request donor support was the hard social and economic situation in the country; the government just gave the freedom to people and said do whatever you want" (KG-RD02). On the central level, the national recipients' ability to request and use donor assistance appeared to depend on the number of years a given recipient agency had interacted with donors. The more experienced implementing national partners were those who worked with donor agencies for a number of years (KG-RD01; KG-RD06) and who could have developed an institutional capacity to work with donors.

On the local level, national recipients eagerly got involved in donor projects as these projects could provide material benefits for the local communities, or as the respondent from an international NGO said: "local recipients do all this [i.e., work with donors] for themselves; therefore they have a good vision in terms of how to use the assistance provided by our organization" (KG-RD07). According to a respondent from the bilateral agency, the government recipients gradually developed a good understanding of how donors function and what kind of support they provide: "if they want big money, they go to the World Bank and Asian Development Bank; if they want long-term impact, they go to Western donors; if they want quick technical assistance, they go to technical development agencies" (KG-RD01).

7.3.3.2. Local non-governmental players

As in governance sector interaction, the involvement of non-government players in donor-funded projects has been extensive, including local communities, local non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, professional associations (e.g., water users associations), private farmers, stockbreeders, livestock consultants and other local players. Nearly all respondents mentioned that government counterparts generally welcomed their involvement in donor-funded projects, with one of them adding that "some community-based organizations became more powerful than local executive authorities in terms of mobilizing donor funding" (KG-RD02, multilateral agency respondent), and another respondent stressing that "there are even state orders for certain types of NGO activities" (KG-RD04, respondent from an international NGO) (see also Box 7.2).

Box 7.2: Involvement of NGOs in the rural development sector projects in Kyrgyzstan
"There is an active, loosely affiliated civil society in Kyrgyzstan. They do not have large budgets, but there is freedom to work. There is a lot of democracy on village level too." (KG-RD01, bilateral agency respondent)
"The NGO involvement [in donor-funded projects] is generally welcomed by the government. . . . "There are even state orders for certain types of NGO activities" (KG-RD04, respondent from an international NGO, former government agency staff)
"Leadership on the provincial level encourages the NGOs' involvement in our projects." (KG-RD07, respondent from an international NGO)
"The government is quite fine with their involvement in our projects. Depends on the area . . . Corruption and inter-ethnic dialogue are sensitive areas." (KG-RD10, bilateral agency respondent)

7.3.3.3. Mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects in the rural development sector

A) Donor-driven mechanisms

Following the 2010 events, the DPCC served as an overall framework to coordinate donor projects in the rural development sector (European Commission, n.d.). The donors could also explore opportunities for greater coordination within the framework of the national development planning processes, such as the poverty reduction strategy papers, country development frameworks or other similar processes. According to a former government official, "all national strategies have been developed with the involvement of donors, and their implementation involved donors too" (KG-RD02).

In addition to high-level coordination frameworks, sectoral sub-groups have been established to ensure greater coordination on a technical level. For example, the working group on Agriculture, Food Security and Rural Development was established as part of the DPCC coordination mechanism in the area of rural development and agriculture "to contribute towards effective and coordinated formulation and implementation of national policies, strategies, plans and programmes" (European Commission, 2016, p. 14). Other examples include the Social Protection working group co-chaired by WFP and UNICEF (WFP, 2017b, p. 2) and the Dairy Sector Coordination Group jointly chaired by FAO and the World Bank (World Bank, 2016c).

Nearly all respondents representing donor agencies mentioned that their organizations participated in donor coordination events regularly. Views on the efficiency of such mechanisms varied (see Box 7.3). Some respondents stressed that donor coordination mechanisms allowed them to work together, to share information regularly and to adjust program approaches in order to minimize duplication based on the interaction that takes place through DPCC and its thematic groups (KG-RD06; KG-RD08; KG-RD09; KG-RD10). As stressed in the ADB Country Partnership Strategy for the period 2013-2017, "donor coordination in the Kyrgyz Republic is exemplary and . . . the development partners' coordination council and its sector working groups regularly meet to discuss common issues" (ADB, 2013a, p. 9). Other respondents questioned the efficiency of donor coordination platforms, mentioning that they were too formal and used mostly for information sharing (KG-RD01; KG-RD03; KG-RD04; KG-RD05). As a bilateral agency respondent stressed, "development partners coordination council is more of a talking shop" and that greater coordination was achieved on the project level, with "project managers interacting in parallel and getting along well together" (KG-RD01). The USAID report on food security policy comes to a similar conclusion: "The DPCC and its sector working groups meet regularly to present on programs and discuss common issues. Some development partners interviewed noted that they would like the DPCC to move beyond

information sharing and play a more proactive role in harmonizing and monitoring donor food security and nutrition projects" (USAID, 2014c, p. 27).

Box 7.3: Donor coordination efforts in the rural development sector (Kyrgyzstan)
"The Kyrgyz government is getting better at telling donors what they want. Parallel work has been reduced. Donors among themselves know who is good at what . . . As for donors not wanting to work together, I have not seen it openly. There is always a way of fitting in." (KG-RD01, bilateral agency respondent)
"Some duplication has taken place in certain provinces. All donors needed success stories and some degree of healthy competition took and will take place." (KG-RD02, multilateral agency respondent, former government agency staff)
"If there is duplication between donors, this is the fault of the government, not donors. The government should be on top of what every donor does [in the country] (KG-RD05, government agency respondent)
"I have not seen direct duplication. Coordination is an important element of donors' work in the country. But, activities can be similar to a certain extent." (KG-RD09, multilateral agency respondent)

Interestingly, according to two of the respondents, donors' coordination efforts were hampered by the relatively free political environment in the country (see Box 7.4). On the local level, "there were active community-based organizations who requested money from everyone, thus resulting in some duplication" (KG-RD02). At the same time, as emphasized by a government agency respondent, on the central level "any government agency could approach donor organizations directly and request their support" (KG-RD05).

Box 7.4: Local context in Kyrgyzstan
"Global Funds' Country Coordination Mechanism [CCM] is supposed to be an effective coordination mechanism. However, the NGOs and local beneficiaries such as TB patients and local TB hospitals [which are institutional members of the CCM] can boycott its decisions thereby having a negative impact on project implementation. Without the CCM's approval, project activities cannot be implemented. Too much democracy is not always good in project management." (KG-GEN02, multilateral agency respondent)
"The strict control of donors' activities in Turkmenistan might be well justified taking into account how donors worked in Kyrgyzstan at the beginning of the 1990s." (KG-RD03, respondent from a local NGO)

B) Nationally-driven mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects

The government made regular attempts to coordinate donors in the rural development sector. In agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Industry and Melioration occasionally organized round-table sessions with the involvement of donors following the 2010 events (KG-RD07). In the area of food security, the Council on Food Security served as "a high-level advisory body" to coordinate policies and activities in this area (USAID, 2014c, p. 7). Similarly, the State Agency for Local Self-governance and Inter-ethnic Relations conducted a donor mapping to have a better understanding of the donors' work in the area of local self-governance (KG-RD08). National coordination mechanisms also functioned in the 1990s and 2000s. For example, the Coordinating Council for Water Supply and Sanitation was established in 2000 under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture (World Bank, 2001b).

Several respondents stated that government counterparts indeed made efforts to coordinate donors' activities (KG-RD01; KG-RD02; KG-RD04; KG-RD07; KG-RD10). Government recipients also participated in coordination events organized by donors, which contributed to greater awareness by national counterparts of donors' projects and programs. However, some respondents emphasized that national aid coordination policies were incoherent at the central level (KG-RD03; KG-RD05), resulting from the fact that rural

development projects could be overseen by several national bodies (i.e., Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Office of the Prime Minister, MFA) in addition to national sectoral recipients such as the line ministries.

7.3.3.4. Donor-recipient interaction mechanism in project/program design and implementation

A) Formal procedures and actual practices for donor-recipient interaction in project/program design

The formal approaches in designing new programs and projects vary from donor to donor, as discussed in Chapter 6. While some bilateral donors develop their programs on the basis of inter-governmental consultations leading to formulation of country assistance/cooperation strategies endorsed by the Government of Kyrgyzstan (e.g., GIZ, JICA), other bilateral players conduct consultations with various government counterparts resulting in country cooperation strategies endorsed only by the donor's own governments (e.g., USAID). IFIs (such as the World Bank, ADB and EBRD) formulate similar medium-term country assistance/partnership strategies. The UN agencies, in addition to their own agency-specific country program documents or strategies, also jointly formulate the five-year UNDAF document, which serves as the overall framework for UN assistance to the country. The process for developing these donor assistance strategies involve detailed national needs assessments or surveys and donor mapping exercises to avoid or minimize duplication of similar activities (KG-RD04; KG-RD06; KG-RD07).

The actual interaction in designing new projects and programs in rural development sector was the same as the formal interaction mechanisms, with respondents stating that the meetings with national partners could be organized directly in most of the cases, both on central and local levels. As stated by senior program staff from a Western bilateral development agency, "all our staff can interact with recipients without any involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Economic Development" and "project managers have regular meetings with national partners" (KG-RD01). One respondent working for the USAID-contracted organization, however, mentioned during the interview in August 2016: "Things started to change in certain regions recently. There is a branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Osh[24], and all meetings with local partners (including the mayor's office) should be organized through them" (KG-RD08). I could find no evidence of this office's intervention in donor-funded projects in southern Kyrgyzstan.

B) Formal procedures and actual practices for interaction in project/program implementation

As explained previously, the number of players in rural development sector interaction is more diverse than in governance sector interaction. Project/program implementation interaction in governance sector consisted of:

1. Project-level focal points (i.e., a government ministry or agency acting as the national implementing partner for specific projects);
2. Overall policy-level focal points (i.e., a government ministry or agency assigned to coordinate the work of specific donors);
3. Overall political-level focal point (i.e., the Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

In addition to these three players, three more actors could be added in rural development sector interaction:

4. Local executive authorities (i.e., offices of local governors);

[24] The official title of this office is "Plenipotentiary Representative Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic in the South of Kyrgyzstan". There are no similar MFA offices in other parts of Kyrgyzstan.

5. Local self-governance bodies (in their capacity of direct project beneficiaries);
6. Local non-governmental players, such as private farmers, local communities, local entrepreneurs, associations (e.g., water users associations), etc.

As in governance sector interaction, there were no written procedures regulating the national recipients' interaction with donors, on either local or central levels. On the central level, the interaction was direct and informal, and meetings could be arranged via phone, emails, letters and other means of communication (KG-RD01; KG-RD03; KG-RD04; KG-RD06; KG-RD08; KG-RD09; KG-RD10). Development partners with field offices or Project Implementation Units based in the provinces enjoyed the same level of freedom in interacting with government recipients based in provinces and rural areas (KG-RD02; KG-RD07; KG-RD08) (see also Box 7.5).

Box 7.5: Donors' interaction with national partners in the rural development sector (Kyrgyzstan)

"Project managers have regular meetings with national colleagues. There are also unofficial contacts between our officers and national counterparts. All our staff members (including local and expat) can interact with recipients without any involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Economic Development." (KG-RD01, bilateral agency respondent)

"Interaction was open and both expats and locals could engage freely with local akims' offices [governors' offices]." (KG-RD02, multilateral agency respondent, former government agency staff)

"No strict official demands. We have good working relations and our interaction is maintained via email or phone." (KG-RD04, respondent from an international NGO, former government agency staff)

"Thanks to donors, provincial governors earn reputational points because of the positive changes introduced within the framework of donor projects." (KG-RD07, respondent from an international NGO)

"Our [expatriate] head of office meets on working level with government partners, and meetings are arranged through phone, there is no bureaucracy in general." (KG-RD06, bilateral agency respondent)

"Local self-governance bodies and local communities approach us with requests to support their local initiatives. We then have consultations with mayors of those small towns or employees of the mayors' offices . . . For example, officials from Kant [a small town in Chuy province] approached us with a request to support them in preparing their town development strategy. Initially, Kant was not part of our project, but we decided to help them." (KG-RD08, bilateral agency respondent)

"Procedures are very informal. However, things started to change in certain regions recently. For example, meetings with local partners in Osh province [southern Kyrgyzstan] from now on have to be arranged via the local branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." (KG-RD08, bilateral agency respondent)

7.3.4. Key pain points affecting donor-recipient relations in the rural development sector

7.3.4.1. The pain points from the perspective of government recipients

Most of the pain points discussed in governance sector interaction would appear to also apply to the rural development sector. These include:

- Channeling funding via local non-governmental players (all years);
- Inability for government recipients to influence the selection of foreign grantees contracted by donors to implement their projects (all years);
- High consultancy fees (all years);
- The amount of time government agencies spend on donors' missions, requests and other activities (all years);
- Competition for funding and challenges associated with it (late 2000s and beyond).

Additional pain points from the recipient's perspective include:

A) Difficulties associated with tracing donor activities (all years)

Overall, the emergence of a donor-friendly context in Kyrgyzstan, characterized by the government's openness, availability of access to rural areas and to potential project counterparts, resulted in donors freely launching and implementing their programs and projects. While having a positive impact on the implementation of donor-funded projects, this freedom also brought some uncertainty with donors becoming somewhat uncontrolled (KG-RD02; KG-RD05) despite the existence of coordination instruments both among donors and between donors and the government. Opportunities for any government agency to approach any donor organization without having to obtain central government approval have also contributed to this uncertainty. This open system, with all its positive aspects, induced both donors and government recipients to engage in disorganized behaviour. While this behavior can seem to be perfectly organized and logical from the point of view of donors or recipients achieving their individual objectives, it can contribute significantly to disorganization of overall aid coordination efforts in the country. It should be noted, that while this problem might also apply to other sectors, its magnitude appears to be greater in the rural development sector given a larger number of players involved on the recipient side (not only the central government and line ministries, but also a range of players based in the provinces and rural areas).

B) Accountability of non-governmental players to donors, rather than to local communities or to national government (all years)

NGOs, Rural Advisory Services and other local players mobilizing donor funds to implement rural projects can become more accountable to donors than to project beneficiaries in rural areas or to the government. Donor projects became a multi-million dollar engagement in Kyrgyzstan, and non-governmental players mobilizing donor funds would tend to be more accountable to donors than to rural beneficiaries, given their dependency on donor funding. For example, as noted by Schmidt, rural "service providers are oriented more to the demand of donors than of farmers" and "accountability of the service providers to farmers is weak" (2012, p. 8).

C) Lack of donors flexibility in modifying procurement rules and regulations (all years)

Quite naturally, donors seem to follow their procurement rules and regulations strictly, showing little flexibility in modifying them or adapting them to the context of rural areas. The procurement capacity of players in rural areas might not be as strong as the capacity of central government agencies. The World Bank (2016d) project evaluation makes this point clear:

> Simple procurement procedures for activities to be implemented by poor rural populations are essential for smooth implementation of such activities. The inclusion of World Bank's sophisticated procurement procedures intended for small grants under the Credit Line discouraged PFIs [Participating Financial Institutions] from working with small sub-loans as they found the procurement processes complex and difficult to follow. This delayed overall disbursements under this component. However, once the procedures were simplified the Credit Line rapidly picked up its pace of implementation and disbursed its entire allocation within 18 months. (p. 26)

7.3.4.2. The pain points from the perspective of donors

The following pain points from the perspective of donor organizations, which were discussed in governance sector interaction, also apply to rural development sector:

- Staff turnover on technical and senior levels resulting from political changes in the country (2005 and beyond);
- Reorganization of the government structure (2005 and beyond);
- Lack of coordination between government agencies and between government and parliament resulting in delays in approval of donor-funded initiatives (2010 and beyond).

Considering that the majority of rural development sector projects are associated with infrastructure projects and include large procurement activities, the following additional pain points emerge in rural development sector interaction:

A) Corruption

Corruption in donor-funded projects, which target rural areas (especially infrastructure projects), has a negative impact on the government's reputation and raises questions about its ability to manage public investments. There were several cases where donor funds would be either mismanaged or embezzled, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Chayes (2016) considers development loans and grants provided for infrastructure projects as one of the key "revenue streams" for what she calls *corrupt networks* of Kyrgyzstan. The U.S. State Department similarly argues that "several failed infrastructure projects, tied to corruption allegations, plagued the government's development efforts" (U.S. State Department, 2018).

B) Government's increasing reliance on non-traditional donors

Starting in the late-2000s, the share of development loans and grants coming from non-Western donors (e.g., China, Russia, countries of the Gulf region) increased significantly, including in rural infrastructure and rural development projects. For example, in 2017, the Arab Coordination Group agreed to provide USD 357 million in financing to the government for implementation of various projects in the areas of agriculture, water supply, energy, transport and other sectors (Kudryavtseva, 2017). Since its establishment in 2014, the Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund has provided over USD 260 million, of which USD 56.07 million were allocated for the agriculture sector alone (RKDF, 2017). According to AidData, China has committed over USD 2.24 billion for projects related to agriculture, road construction and rehabilitation, and rural infrastructure (AidData, 2017). With little or no governance-related conditionality, and presumably less stringent anti-corruption clauses, the loans and grants provided by these donors for infrastructure-related activities have already changed the funding structure of development projects in Kyrgyzstan. As stated by the World Bank, "projects financed by China, Russia, Turkey and others are not traditionally included in the PIP" [Public Investment Programs] (2014b, p. 6). While this does not seem to represent a substantial problem for OECD donors, it can potentially contribute to the Kyrgyz Government being selective in accepting the OECD donors' aid (especially aid with governance and other conditions attached), as additional sources of funding provided by non-traditional donors could increase Kyrgyzstan's bargaining power versus traditional OECD donors.

C) Price fluctuations resulting from unstable economic situation

Where rural development projects involve large procurement components, constant price fluctuations (a byproduct of the free market economy) have a significant negative impact on those projects. According to a report evaluating the ADB's Community-Based Infrastructure Services Sector Project, "the increase in the

prices of steel, cement, pipes, and petroleum products increased the overall construction cost of the water supply infrastructure" (ADB, 2014, p. 1).

Finally, it could be argued that Kyrgyzstan's relatively open political system creates certain barriers for donors. Availability of public feedback mechanisms led to greater parliamentary and administrative scrutiny with regard to donor-funded projects. As written in the World Bank's (2003) evaluation report for the Sheep and Wool Improvement Project:

> Inadequate public reaction in the person of deputies and other political and state officials also affected the project implementation progress. They always evaluated the project implementation progress subjectively and it led to repeated audits of fiscal and other respective agencies. Such situation did not always reflect positively on effectiveness of fulfillment of planned activities and took resources and time. (p. 23)

7.4. Donor-recipient interaction in the rural development sector: Turkmenistan

7.4.1. National objectives, policies and reforms in the rural development sector

The foundations of Turkmenistan's long-term objectives in the rural development sector were laid during the session of the People's Council in December 1992, during which the government approved several laws related to rural development, including the those "On subsoil" and "On the order of solving issues of administrative and territorial arrangements". Establishment of farmers associations became the first step in reforming the structure of the country's agricultural system. To support the activities of newly-established farmers' associations, the government envisioned creating the pool of machinery and equipment used in the agricultural sector, including tractors, combine harvesters and other agricultural machinery (TPH, 1993).

Sustaining the levels of agricultural production was one of the key objectives of the government following independence. Pursing this objective contributed to the accumulation of "significant food reserves", along with the import of agricultural products from abroad as part of the agreements concluded with other countries (TPH, 1993). These efforts allowed to support the people's basic needs in food items during the difficult years of post-Soviet transition. The launch of the *Grain Program* in 1991 was expected to help the government achieve food security in the country (Stanchin & Lerman, 2017), which the government named as its key objective in the agricultural sector. Other objectives during the early years of independence included building production facilities in the regions, including in the agricultural sector (e.g., cotton processing factories) as well as in other sectors and industries (e.g., chemical, construction, transportation, health, education) (TPH, 1993).

The People's Council session in 1992 also reflected broadly on the development of the transportation system connecting various provinces of the country, including construction of railways and roads. Another decision made during the session was the establishment of seven free economic zones in selected districts (one in each of the five provinces and two in districts adjacent to the capital city) to boost private sector development and attract investments. The priority sectors within these economic zones were wide-ranging and essentially reflected the comparative advantage of each province. In five out of seven such zones, agricultural production and processing were included as priority areas. Finally, administrative-territorial issues discussed during the session resulted in introducing the process for appointing the heads of the

executive branches in the provinces. These issues also touched upon the establishment of the people's representative bodies in rural areas (TPH, 1993).

In short, the decisions of the People's Council session of December 1992 created the basis for the transformation of the rural development sector, by addressing the following components:

- Legal component (passing of the relevant laws);
- Infrastructural component (building factories and other production facilities in the regions; construction of railways and roads connecting the country's provinces);
- Trade component (establishing free trade economic zones);
- Agricultural component (increasing agricultural production with an overall objective of achieving food security);
- Technical component (procuring machinery, equipment and other technical items);
- Institutional component (establishing farmers associations; creating state companies to facilitate the activities of farmers associations);
- Administrative component (arranging territorial division of the country);
- Governance component (creating local self-governance bodies).

Development of agriculture, ensuring food security, provision of quality social services to rural populations, and further development of production facilities and infrastructure in the regions were also reflected in ensuing policy documents adopted during the presidency of Saparmurat Niyazov, such as the 2010 Strategy (United Nations, 2000). Similarly, the 2020 Strategy had also outlined the government's priorities in the rural development sector. The strategy, among other development objectives, focused on increasing agricultural production with a view to achieving food security, developing power-engineering and building production and processing facilities in provinces (including those related to the garment industry, chemical industry, construction industry, cotton-processing, etc.). Construction of hydro-engineering facilities and of a man-made lake in northwestern Turkmenistan were also among the objectives of the 2020 Strategy along with the reconstruction of existing and construction of new railways and roads (GOTM, 2003b). Further agrarian reforms were envisaged, with government policies aiming to support farmers by giving them greater autonomy in terms of crop production. However, the external partners criticized some of those reform measures. For example, the agrarian reforms were criticized for excessively focusing on "self-sufficiency in grain production and for increased cotton production", as well as for a lack of incentives for farmers to produce cotton and wheat because they were obliged to sell their harvest to the government significantly below the export prices (EBRD, 2004, p. 18).

Following the election of President Berdimuhamedov in 2007, the government developed the 2030 Program and the *National Programme for Transformation of Living Conditions of Population of Villages, Rural Settlements, District Towns and Centres up to 2020* (hereinafter the Rural Development Program). These documents reflected the government's new long-term objectives in the rural development sector, along with other sectors.

The 2030 Program, divided into three stages (2011-2015; 2016-2020; 2021-2030) outlined a range of policy measures that aimed at ensuring balanced development of the provinces. Priority areas under the 2030 Program included: increasing agricultural productivity, creating jobs in provinces and rural areas, increasing the productivity of land resources, improving the quality of irrigated areas, introducing more

effective technologies in the agrarian sector, building agro-processing infrastructure in rural areas, developing transportation systems (including new railway networks and roads), and introducing more effective livestock management practices (GOTM, 2010). The 2030 Program also focused on improving the living conditions in the country's provinces by taking advantage of their production capacities. Aligning itself with previous national development strategies, this program focused on increasing the productivity in the agricultural sector and achieving food security in the country.

The Rural Development Program concentrated more specifically on improving the living conditions of the population of rural areas. It focused on developing communication systems, transportation and civil engineering infrastructure in rural areas, rational use of natural resources, job creation, increasing incomes of rural residents and creating logistics systems in the provinces (GOTM, 2010). To ensure the achievement of the objectives outlined in the Rural Development Program, separate provincial socio-economic development plans were introduced, covering the period 2012-2016 and aiming at 'stable' and 'balanced' development of the provinces of Turkmenistan (Turkmenistan Golden Age, 2012b).

Although the government developed relevant policy documents aiming to improve the living conditions in rural areas, and generally expressed commitment to introduce reforms in agriculture, the pace of reforms was limited. The following extract from the Food and Agriculture Organization's agricultural sector review (FAO, 2012) emphasizes the lack of progress in agricultural reforms in Turkmenistan:

> Despite the many declarations of reform by the current leadership, the overall economic environment in Turkmenistan remains highly restrictive and lacks many of the institutions that would be required to support a market economy. Although the private sector is important for some agricultural products, the state sector still heavily dominates the production and processing of four strategic commodities (cotton, wheat, sugar beets and rice). Moreover, there are few institutions supporting the private sector. There are no private commercial banks in Turkmenistan as all banks are state-owned and the availability of credit for entrepreneurial activities outside of the state order system is limited, as banks are not adapted to working with small businesses. (p. x)

Several points can be made in terms of Turkmenistan's objectives in the rural development sector. First, despite the presidential power change in 2007, policy continuity appeared to be ensured in the rural development sector, with policy documents under both presidents focusing on the improvement of living conditions in rural areas, provision of better social services for rural populations, industrial development on the provincial level and development of infrastructure. The achievement of food security continually remained one of the main objectives following independence. The government invested significant amounts of funding to modernize the agricultural sector and changed the structure of agricultural production in order to achieve this objective. Government's investments in the agricultural sector increased by 4.5 times between 2007 and 2015 (Trapeznikov, 2016). A different source (Aganov, Kepbanov, & Ovezmuradov, 2016) indicates that the government's investments in the agriculture increased from TMM 159.2 million in 2000 to TMM 1.2 billion in 2013 (or by 7.4 times), although there was no reference as to which rate, current or real, was used in providing this estimate and whether these figures are inflation-adjusted or not. By the late 2000s, the proportion of grain and cotton cultivation reached about 95% of the total cultivated areas (Aganov, et al., 2016). In 2011, Turkmenistan reported achieving this objective and becoming, for the first time since gaining independence, a wheat exporting country (Turkmenistan Golden Age, 2017). Secondly, same as Turkmenistan's governance system, the rural development sector has been managed based on a

highly hierarchical system, with the executive branch playing a dominant role in rural development and agricultural policy-making and implementation (Aganov et al., 2016).

Thirdly, the government appeared to have made continual efforts to minimize external influence by largely using domestic funding (i.e., public investments) for implementation of rural development initiatives. For example, in 2012, the government reported utilizing over TMM 2,247 billion of government funding for the implementation of activities under the Rural Development Program (Turkmenistan Golden Age, 2012b), which is approximately USD 788.4 million using the official exchange rate. Similarly, over two billion US Dollars of public funds was spent by the government as part of the "Awaza" project whose objective was to turn the Caspian shore of Turkmenistan into a world-class tourist zone (Turkmenistan Golden Age, 2013). In the agriculture sector, as reported by Aganov et al. (2016), construction of agro-processing factories in Turkmenistan's provinces were largely funded through public investments. Furthermore, the government also introduced monetary incentives for best-performing districts (in terms of achieving the greatest progress in social and economic development in their territories) to reward district administrations (Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2013).

At the same time, only limited information was available in government sources in terms of external funding in the rural development sector, although some donors (e.g., JICA, ADB) reported providing loans for infrastructure development and transportation projects in rural areas (JICA, 2009; ADB, 2017). In addition, since its independence, Turkmenistan has never requested the IMF's financial assistance under its Balance of Payments financing mechanism (IMF, 2018). A partial explanation of the government's proclivity for minimizing dependence on external funding could be that it tried to resist the conditionality imposed through loan agreements. For example, in the early 2000s, Turkmenistan declined the USD 50 million line of credit from the EBRD to be used for reconstruction of one of the main highways, presumably because of the EBRD's insistence on increasing petrol prices used for domestic consumption (Shallyev, 2002).

7.4.2. Donor objectives and areas of involvement in the rural development sector

International donors were initially keen to support the Turkmen government's efforts in developing rural areas as these areas had less developed infrastructure and a greater prevalence of poverty than urban areas (World Bank, 2001c). Turkmenistan's population in the 1990s was nearly 55% rural and the agricultural sector engaged 46% of working-age population (Atayev & Talmy, 1999). These factors served as a justification for external players to get involved in rural development.

Donors' activities mostly concentrated on providing basic social services (e.g., health, education services), water and sanitation, improving agricultural practices and agricultural policy advice, livestock management, local development and local self-governance, community development, infrastructure development and improving the wellbeing of youth and children.

Improving health services in rural areas was a key objective of the UN agencies (e.g., UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNHCR, UNDP), Doctors Without Borders (MSF), USAID and its contracted organizations from the 1990s to the 2010s. UNFPA provided support in improving reproductive health services and health services for youth in the provinces (GOTM, 2003a; UNFPA, 2015). MSF, WHO, USAID and UNDP implemented activities on treatment and prevention of patients in rural areas (GOTM, 2003a; USAID, 1999; MSF, 2010; UNDP, 2015). UNHCR focused on the provision of health services to refugees in rural areas (UN in Turkmenistan,

2007). Both UNDAF documents developed by the UN System (for the periods 2005-2009 and 2010-2015) prioritized access to improved health services to rural populations (UN in Turkmenistan, 2004; 2009).

In the 1990s, the EU projects focused on livestock improvement, supporting local farmers, food processing (European Commission, 2000), while USAID provided policy advice to the Ministry of Agriculture (USAID, 1999) and supported local farmers by increasing their knowledge and capacity (USAID, 2007). Starting from the late 2000s to the early 2010s, other external actors joined the agricultural sector, specifically ADB (ensuring food safety), EBRD (developing agribusiness) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which implemented a regional project on animal disease control of which Turkmenistan was a part (ADB, 2017; EBRD, 2014; FAO, 2012).

The World Bank, UNICEF and UNDP worked on improving water and sanitation services, aiming to improve water quality, expanding access to water and preventing water-borne diseases (GOTM, 2003a; USAID, 1999; UN in Turkmenistan, 2016). The U.S. Peace Corps deployed a number of volunteers in various provinces of the country to educate rural residents on health issues and to teach the English language in rural schools (USAID, 1999). UNICEF implemented its "Velayat [Provincial] Programme for Children" to assist local authorities and service providers in the effective delivery of social services targeting children (UN in Turkmenistan, 2007). Infrastructure development projects were mostly implemented by IFIs and to some extent the Government of Japan. The Islamic Development Bank provided over USD 500 million in development loans for construction of health facilities in some of the provinces, as well as for implementation of transportation and water supply projects (Islamic Development Bank, 2007; 2010; 2011). The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JIBC) provided USD 152 million in loans for renovation of a power generating plant in eastern Turkmenistan (JIBC, 2018).

Local development and local self-governance have been among UNDP's priority areas since it opened its office in the mid-1990s. UNDP provided support to the government in "formulation of local area-based economic development programmes" in the 1990s (UNDP, 1997, p. 7) and later provided micro-financing in selected pilot villages to improve village infrastructure (i.e., schools, roads, water supply systems, etc.) and conducted capacity-building events for local self-governance bodies (UNDP, 2014). GIZ and UNDP worked on sustainable land management issues, with GIZ working in this area as part of its Regional Programme covering other Central Asian countries (GIZ, n.d.), and UNDP working as part of its country program documents (UN in Turkmenistan, 2009; 2016). Finally, USAID implemented community empowerment projects providing legal support and counselling to residents of rural areas (ABA, n.d.) and building the capacity of local community-based organizations to contribute to decision making on the local level (U.S. State Department, 2003).

Despite the diversity of externally-funded rural development projects in Turkmenistan, very few projects (and personnel for that matter) were actually based in the provinces. Based on the analysis of project documents and donor profiles, most international development partners appeared to manage their projects from their offices based in Ashgabat. Nevertheless, there were some exceptions. For example, the USAID's grantee Counterpart International implemented its Civil Society Support Centers in Dashoguz and Mary provinces, which were helping local community-based organizations, local cooperatives and other non-state players with various local community development issues (Counterpart International, 2008). Likewise, all activities implemented by the U.S. Peace Corps (e.g., health education, English language training) were carried out by Peace Corps volunteers who were US citizens deployed in various parts of the

country, including rural areas. Doctors without Borders (MSF) had been working in Turkmenistan since the late 1990s, implementing TB treatment and prevention projects in Dashoguz and Lebap provinces, claiming to be "the sole accredited international NGO with a permanent presence outside the capital" (MSF, 2010, p. 4). Yet, despite their long-standing record of cooperation with the government, both the Peace Corps and the MSF had to close their offices in 2012 and 2009 respectively. The Peace Corps was closed in 2012 with the active volunteers being sent back to the United States (Cleek, 2012). The MSF had to close its programs in 2009 and leave the country under controversial circumstances, after the efforts to extend its presence did not bring results. The MSF concluded "that its effectiveness had been dramatically reduced and, worse, that the organisation was increasingly complicit in masking problems in the health care system rather than addressing them" (MSF, 2010, p. 4). In return, the government expressed its concern over the inappropriate level of education of MSF's expatriate project staff whom the government did not consider qualified enough to treat the TB patients (Turkmenistan Internet Newspaper, 2010).

Based on my review of donors' project and program documents, it appears that as of the early 2010s, none of the donors had project offices based in the provinces, with very few of them having any form of local representation such as project focal points or local project coordinators based in the provinces. The online search using the Google search operators has confirmed these results.

7.4.3. Key national players involved in rural development sector interaction

7.4.3.1. Government actors and their motivations to request donor support

The main endorsing partners (Cabinet of Ministers, Presidential Administration) and the main coordinating partners (i.e., the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) are the same for donor-funded projects implemented under all sectors. Their roles and responsibilities with regard to donor-funded projects have been explained in Chapter 6 and will therefore not be repeated in this chapter.

In terms of the national partners involved in rural development sector interaction, my interview data were complemented with data from primary sources. Collation of these two sources shows that the following government partners were involved in donor-recipient interaction in the rural development sector:

- **Parliament of Turkmenistan** and its Committee on working with Local Representative and Local Self-governance Bodies;
- **Line ministries**: Mostly representing social, agro-industrial and transportation sectors, such as the ministries of Health and Medical Industry, Education, Agriculture, Water Management, Nature Protection, Road Transportation, Railway Transportation;
- **State services and associations:** State Livestock Association, State Association for Food Industry, State Veterinary Service, State Sanitary-Epidemiological Service, National Center for AIDS Prevention;
- **Research and educational institutions:** Institute for Strategic Planning and Economic Development, State Agricultural University;
- **Local executive authorities:** provincial and district level administrations;
- **Local self-governance bodies**.

Access to best practices and expertise appeared to be the main factor in terms of government actors' motivation to get donor funding (TM-RD02; TM-RD03; TM-RD05; TM-RD06; TM-RD07). However, government partners were mostly reactive to what donor agencies proposed and very rarely approached

the agencies with specific requests (TM-RD01; TM-RD04; TM-RD06). As explained by one of the respondents from a multilateral agency, "Turkmenistan is an upper middle-income country and is not dependent on donors" (TM-RD01). Another multilateral agency respondent also attributed this lack of government interest in requesting donor support to financial self-sufficiency: "We [donors] stopped receiving requests from around the mid-2000s due to the 'we are not poor' position of the government" (TM-RD06). This led to a situation where all donor-funded projects became "donor-driven" in the words of one respondent: "Government partners do not request donors' support as such. Donors would normally find gaps in national development policies, and propose their projects to fill in those gaps" (TM-RD04). It could be argued that the lack of interest in donor-funded projects eventually results in a lack of commitment to implement projects offered by donors, and a lack of motivation to implement projects that were already launched. The evaluation of the FAO's regional animal disease control project, noting the 18-month delay in project approval, emphasizes: "This delay in endorsing the project document is probably symptomatic of the limited ownership these countries [Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan] have shown on the project, and will most probably have a negative impact on the sustainability of the project activities after the project ends in these countries" (FAO, 2012, p. 17).

Compared to government partners, the non-governmental players such as the local community-based organizations, farmers' associations and local entrepreneurs appeared to be more proactive in taking advantage of donors' assistance, by coming up with proposals and requests for small grants to implement various local community initiatives. However, these initiatives (mostly funded by USAID and not formally reflected in official cooperation strategies or agreements endorsed by the government) were impeded by local executive authorities. For example, the USAID-funded Community Empowerment Program reported in 2008: "During the negotiations with the etrap Hakimlik [district administration] to build the canal, the Hakim [head of the district] suddenly stopped project implementation, saying that he wanted to construct it without using international donor funds" (Counterpart International, 2008, p. 6).

7.4.3.2. Local non-governmental players

The types of non-governmental players in rural development sector interaction appear to be more diverse than in governance sector interaction. It also involved non-governmental players other than NGOs and government-affiliated NGOs. The analysis of the interview data and data from primary sources shows that the following non-governmental players were involved in various capacities in donor-funded projects in the rural development sector:

- Government-affiliated NGOs (Youth Union, Women's Union, National Red Crescent Society) and public associations (e.g., The Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan);
- NGOs (e.g., "Keyik Okara", "Ynam", Deaf and Blind Society of Turkmenistan and its provincial branches);
- Local community groups;
- Farmers' associations and private farmers;
- Local entrepreneurs and local small enterprises.

As emphasized in Chapter 6, the activities of local non-governmental players were affected by the introduction of a new law in 2003 requiring the registration of all non-governmental organizations and criminalizing the activities of non-registered NGOs. The UNDP evaluation of the national program on AIDS prevention, which was implemented both on the central and provincial levels, stresses that prior to adoption of the law, UNDP was working with a number of unregistered local NGOs whose activities had to

be stopped in line with the new law (Booth W., 2003). Finally, speaking of specific roles of the local NGOs, a multilateral agency respondent noted that while they were mostly involved in activities related to service provision or capacity building, they were never independently involved in policy dialogue or policy advocacy, unless invited to take part in projects funded by the international organizations, such as the UN agencies (TM-RD07) (see also Box 7.6).

Box 7.6: Involvement of NGOs in the rural development sector projects in Turkmenistan

"We provided grants to various NGOs and local communities all over Turkmenistan. We also helped them in planning, implementing and evaluating their community-based projects. There were more than 20 NGOs and 50 communities from all velayats [provinces] of Turkmenistan. At that time, there were some difficulties and government discouraged the NGOs and local communities in getting involved in our project. Those difficulties probably stem from shortcomings in national legislation regulating the work of NGOs." (TM-RD02, bilateral agency respondent)

"I mostly worked with private farmers and farmers associations. We trained local coordinators from among those farmers for USAID projects. Initially, there were no barriers or problems with their engagement. Later, when local authorities learned that the project was funded by USAID, they started requesting more information and details about the project and its activities." (TM-RD04, multilateral agency respondent)

"Government encourages their involvement, if all information on their roles and responsibilities is provided in advance." (TM-RD06, multilateral agency respondent)

"It depends on how donors adapt their strategies to government priorities. For example, the USAID-funded project implemented their activities with no consultation with the central government and worked directly with local NGOs and communities. The government was cautious about this type of interaction since it did not have any control of it." (TM-ENV02, multilateral agency respondent)

7.4.3.3. Mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects in the rural development sector

A) Donor-driven mechanisms

While donors were arranging generic coordination meetings starting in the mid-1990s, there are no references indicating that specific working groups on rural development or area-based development were established. In that sense, there were no systematic donor efforts to coordinate their program activities in the rural development sector. Coordination was rather ensured through bilateral or trilateral negotiations between the donors, with two or more donor agencies coordinating with each other (TM-RD02; TM-RD06). Respondents found donor coordination on rural development issues weak, due to the following reasons:

- Context-specific reasons: the working environment is generally complex, in which there are limited opportunities for success stories (TM-RD01; TM-RD04; TM-RD06); therefore, "donors try to achieve results individually" (TM-RD04);
- Donors prioritizing the implementation of their own projects: because of the difficult working environment, donors tend to ensure that their own project activities are implemented in the first place, thereby giving a preference to the achievement of individual agency objectives rather than to ensuring greater coordination among all donors (TM-RD01; TM-RD05; TM-RD06);
- Different rules and procedures: the difference in program and operations procedures, branding and other requirements, as well as differing cooperation strategies or country program documents make it difficult for donors to initiate joint programs (TM-RD02; TM-RD05; TM-RD07) (see also Box 7.7).

Box 7.7: Donor coordination efforts in the rural development sector (Turkmenistan)
"There was no donor coordination on the project level in the area of local community development, but some discussions on the level of heads of agencies." (TM-RD01, multilateral agency respondent, former government agency staff)
"To a certain extent, government counterparts did not like inter-donor coordination; they wouldn't want to invite other donors to our project events. In general, coordination is weak because there are limited opportunities in terms of showing successful development results. Therefore, donors try to achieve results individually." (TM-RD04, multilateral agency respondent)
"I think donors work mostly in an isolated way. The reason for this could be that donors feared to fail their agency projects. Therefore, they are not interested in supporting the work of each other." (TM-RD06, multilateral agency respondent)

B) Nationally-driven mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects

National coordination efforts were in general minimal (TM-RD01; TM-RD02; TM-RD04; TM-RD06) and were mostly of an ad-hoc nature (TM-RD01; TM-RD04; TM-RD07). If the government was really interested in bringing together donors, the approach would be to organize a one-off public event with the involvement of donor agencies. For example, the government organized a public event for embassies and international organizations following the adoption of the sustainable development goals in 2015, articulating Turkmenistan's planned efforts in their implementation (TM-RD01; TM-RD07).

National coordination efforts were probably the strongest in health care provision, including in rural areas. The Ministry of Health and Medical Industry (MOHMI) played a lead role in coordinating donors' activities in prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) through an Inter-Ministerial Task Force on AIDS/STI (Booth W., 2003). Likewise, the MOHMI coordinated the work of the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) for the implementation of a TB prevention project funded by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. The CCM was used as a coordination platform in this specific case, bringing together "representatives from government, multilateral and bilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and people living with TB" (UNDP, 2013, p. 9). Yet, although government ministries formally act as coordinating entities, the actual work appears to have been done by donors. According to a respondent, "the entire Global Fund application was led by the UN system, although the application documents were signed by government representatives" (TM-RD06, multilateral agency respondent).

7.4.3.4. Donor-recipient interaction mechanism in project/program design and implementation

A) Formal procedures and actual practices for donor-recipient interaction in project/program design

As in the governance sector, formal procedures for designing new projects and programs in the rural development sector, and for involving government recipients in this process, remained centralized since around the early-2000s. All interaction between government recipients and representatives of donor agencies in designing new projects and programs is to be maintained via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Donor agencies should write formal letters to the MFA, requesting it to arrange meetings with and forward documents to the potential project beneficiaries (TM-RD01; TM-RD02; TM-RD04; TM-RD05; TM-RD06; TM-RD07). In the rural development sector, there were also various approaches in designing new initiatives (ranging up to five-year program approaches to individual project-level interventions), as well as different players involved on the donors' side. While the UN agencies and multilateral players relied mostly on their program staff and consultants hired for the purposes of developing the project/program documents (TM-

RD01; TM-RD06), bilateral agencies such as the USAID mostly used US-based consulting firms or NGOs to develop projects. These companies and NGOs eventually submitted their bids for the implementation of projects for which the USAID then awarded the grant (TM-RD02; TM-RD04).

The actual procedures for government recipients' interaction with donors did not differ from the formal, with a multilateral agency respondent stating that "formal channels prevail, in line with which we send letters or notes verbales through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to initiate a discussion on a new project" (TM-RD01).

Regarding the interaction between donors and non-governmental recipients, there were no formal procedures as such. Donor program staff could interact with local project community leaders or NGOs without any formalities in designing new projects (TM-RD01; TM-RD02).

B) Formal procedures and actual practices for interaction in project/program implementation

The following types of national players are involved in implementation donor-funded projects and programs in rural development sector in Turkmenistan:

1. Project-level focal points;
2. Overall policy-level focal points;
3. Overall political-level focal point;

As in Kyrgyzstan, in addition to central-level government actors, the following local-level actors are involved in donor-recipient interaction in rural development:

4. Local executive authorities;
5. Local self-governance bodies;
6. Local non-governmental players (i.e., private farmers, local communities, local entrepreneurs, etc.).

Formal procedures for donors' interaction with all players except for local non-governmental players were based on the centralized system, with the MFA being a key mechanism through which the interaction took place. The system of written communication was used extensively for discussion of any project-related issues, with donors submitting their requests to national partners via the MFA (TM-RD01; TM-RD02; TM-RD04; TM-RD05; TM-RD06; TM-RD07). This also applies to conducting monitoring trips and visits to project sites based in the provinces, i.e., donors were required to write a note verbale to the MFA, requesting the ministry to facilitate the process and asking it to forward the information to project partners based in the provinces (see Box 7.8).

Actual practices align with formal procedures in project/program implementation. The process is very formal and written communication prevails. However, in words of one respondent, "there was a mix of formal and informal ways of interaction" (TM-RD04). While all donors were required to use formal channels via the MFA on all matters related to project/program implementation, the donor agencies could use their local staff to approach the government recipients without following the formal procedures. The interaction was also direct and less formal between the national recipients and the staff of donor-funded project implementation units (PIUs) which were based within the premises of national institutions (TM-RD04).

Box 7.8: Donors' interaction with national partners in the rural development sector (Turkmenistan)
"Formal channels of communication prevail [i.e., exchange of letters, notes verbales, etc.]. All communication goes through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." (TM-RD01, multilateral agency respondent, former government agency staff)
"In our local community development project, we interacted with NGOs and local communities, our main project beneficiaries, without any formal procedures; either through phone calls or in-person visits. Usually, they visited our office. With our current program, we don't have that direct interaction with beneficiaries, who are civil servants. We send requests for meetings via official channels, i.e., notes verbales." (TM-RD02, bilateral agency respondent)
"Interaction between the expats and government counterparts was always arranged through written requests submitted via notes verbales. In reality, there was a mix of formal and informal ways of interaction . . . [as] local project staff or staff of the Project Implementation Unit could meet directly without sending written requests." (TM-RD04, multilateral agency respondent)
"Procedures to interact with government focal points were more informal for local staff. For monitoring trips to the regions, a more formal approach was used by government counterparts even for local staff, requiring to send a note verbale to MFA to get their approval, even if that trip was part of the approved project work plan." (TM-RD06, multilateral agency respondent)

While the interaction between donors and government recipients was mostly based on formal channels, with some opportunities for informal interaction, the interaction between donors and local recipients not associated with government was not based on any formal procedures, and representatives of donor agencies could interact with them directly (TM-RD01; TM-RD02). As these local non-governmental recipients did not represent any government agency, they appeared to have greater freedom in maintaining their relations with donors. However, as some project reports show, the local governments could find ways to limit this interaction. For example, the USAID's report states: "Local authorities in Ahal, Dashoguz and Lebap provinces continue to exert pressure on TCEP [Turkmenistan Community Empowerment Program] communities. . . . Several communities . . . were invited to the offices of the local administrations" and "were warned not to work with international organizations since the government was already taking care of the community's needs" (Counterpart International, 2008, p. 29). Another USAID project mentioned "interferences from the local authorities in the provinces . . . and inability to directly engage with the project private beneficiaries" as the key barriers to successful project implementation (USAID, 2015b, p. 29). Similarly, UNDP's project evaluation mentioned "lack of opportunities for inclusion and participation by local farmers and households" as one of the project challenges (Tortell, 2012, p. 21). These examples are taken from evaluation reports prepared after 2005. According to respondents, the donors' interaction with local and central-level focal points have been more direct during the 1990s and early-2000s.

7.4.4. Key pain points affecting donor-recipient relations in the rural development sector

7.4.4.1. The pain points from the perspective of government recipients

The following two pain points, which I explained in Chapter 6 and which related to project/program implementation and project/program design, logically apply to rural development sector interaction as well. These include:

- Rigid project implementation process based on donor procedures and using project staff/contractors hired by donors (all years);
- Project/program design with limited involvement of local recipients (all years).

The assumption that these two pain points also possibly apply to the rural development sector is based on the fact that donors' project/program implementation and design procedures tend to be the same for any project, irrespective of the sectors and I heard no evidence to the contrary in interviews.

Two additional pain points emerge from the analysis of the interview data and primary sources.

A) The first relates to the *level of knowledge and capacity of the experts hired by donors*. For example, the evaluation of the World Banks's transportation project, which aimed at improving the quality of public transit in urban provincial centers, mentions: "The commitment to change and the related project risks are much more difficult to judge, not least because this requires Bank teams to have nontraditional skills, a substantial professional experience, and country experience. None of these is in abundant supply" (World Bank, 2001a, p. 18). This observation is supported by the interview data, including from other sectors (TM-RD03; TM-GOV02; TM-GOV04; TM-ENV02; TM-ENV05).

B) The second pain point relates to the *tendency to spend much of the project budgets for consultancy services*. The evaluation report of the World Bank's water supply and sanitation project emphasized: "Government was especially critical of the gross imbalance in the proportion of technical assistance activities carried out vis-a-vis investments. . . . Of the total amount disbursed, about US$3.7 million (61%) was spent on technical assistance, while the remainder was spent mainly on procurement of goods and operational costs" (World Bank, 2004b, pp. 6-7).

7.4.4.2. The pain points from the perspective of donors

In Chapter 6, I discussed a number of pain points from the donors' perspective. Given that these issues can have a serious impact on all donor-funded projects, they are symptomatic of the rural development sector as well. These include:

- Limited opportunities to engage non-governmental players (2003 and beyond);
- Government registration of print-materials produced within the framework of donor-funded projects (2011 and beyond);
- Lack of socio-economic and other baseline data required to justify project interventions (all years);
- Dual currency exchange rates (late-1990s to late 2000s; and mid-2010s onwards);
- Highly hierarchical and centralized decision-making process for all project and program related activities (early 2000s onwards);
- Involvement of intermediary organizations, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (early 2000s and beyond).

In addition, the following three pain points could be proposed based on the analysis of donors' evaluation reports:

A) Lack of commitment to implement reforms in the rural development sector

Several donors identified the lack of the government's commitment to implement reforms in the rural development sector as the key challenge. The European Union, for example, noted that reforms in the area of agriculture were "marginal" and the government's focus on cotton and wheat cultivation dominated agricultural production (European Commission, 2000). The World Bank's evaluation report identified the government's lack of "commitment to change" as one of the key challenges for implementation of its transportation project (World Bank, 2001a). Another report evaluating the World Bank's water supply project stressed that, while initially the government agreed to introduce some policy changes allowing for

introduction of fee-based services, it later "reinstituted the requirement for water supply services to be provided to the population free of charge" (World Bank, 2004b, p. 6).

B) Limited opportunities to work in provinces

The examination of donors' projects targeting rural areas shows that there are limited opportunities for donors to work in the provinces. As explained above, the MSF and the U.S. Peace Corps were among the few external players having their projects or expatriate staff based in the provinces. However, both had to leave, though under different circumstances. While some external players had difficulties implementing their project activities in provinces, others seemed to have better access to provinces. According to the USAID project report, the central authorities "placed restrictions on training activities outside of the Ahal" province, which surrounds the capital city (USAID, 2015b, p. 20). On the other hand, UNDP's TB prevention and treatment project managed to organize most of its training activities targeting project beneficiaries on the provincial level (UNDP, 2013). However, the project did not have a permanent presence in the provinces and was implemented by its PIU based in the capital city.

C) Reluctance of local authorities to work with donors

This pain point appear to refer mainly to US Government funded activities, which faced numerous challenges in provinces where they worked. The final program evaluation report of the U.S. Peace Corps noted that Peace Corps volunteers were "prevented from undertaking project plan activities" with local authorities not allowing them "to conduct health education in the classrooms where they can be most effective" (Peace Corps, 2009, p. i). Commenting on the work environment in the provinces, one of the volunteers noted: "I think there's a disconnect between policies at the national level and what's happening at the local level. The national government supports things that the local government won't let us do" (Peace Corps, 2009, p. 5). Two of the USAID projects, on the other hand, complained about local authorities interfering in or putting pressure on USAID's project activities (Counterpart International, 2008; USAID, 2015b).

7.5. Conclusion

Analyzing donor-recipient interaction in the rural development sector provides an opportunity to see the extent of expansion of donor activities into the rural areas. Because rural development projects tend to deal with infrastructure development, improvement of social service delivery, agriculture and other related issues (i.e., less politicized areas), they appear to be less politically sensitive compared to governance sector projects. One important aspect that makes rural development projects somewhat sensitive is the extent to which donors are able to work on the provincial level and in rural localities.

This is not to say that rural development projects do not require the involvement of the central government, or that rural development projects are not based in capital cities. The argument here is that the majority of project activities in the rural development sector take place in rural areas. In the governance sector, it is seemingly easier to monitor donors' projects and activities, as most of them are based in the country's capital, or in some cases, in the provincial capitals. Implementation of a greater number of donor-funded projects at the provincial level and in rural localities (i.e., projects in rural development sector) could serve as an indication of the government's openness to donor-funded initiatives. Conversely, the more limited the presence of donors in rural areas, the greater the government's willingness to control donor activities and keep donors compactly in one place, which logically happens to be the capital city where the government's capacity to monitor donors is the strongest.

As this chapter discusses, two contrasting types of interaction with donors in the rural development sector emerged in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. Kyrgyzstan was generally more open in its interaction with donors, most of whom established field offices, project offices or other local representation offices outside the capital (Hypothesis 1). Donors had unrestrictive access to rural areas of Kyrgyzstan and used it to initiate and implement projects in most of the country's provinces and in all areas falling under the rural development concept. Given the lack of domestic resources, funding from traditional donors appeared to play an important role in addressing rural development challenges in Kyrgyzstan, with government being generally more open for interaction with foreign donors, allowing them to work on provincial and district levels (Hypothesis 2). Institutions designed to facilitate the implementation of donors' rural development projects emerged as well, providing rural advisory services, small grants and credits, building the capacity of local farmers and carrying out other activities. In other words, the "macroinstitutional environment" (Ostrom, 2011) was more conducive for the emergence of "collective-choice arrangements" (Ostrom, 1990). Compared to the governance sector, donors, in general, did not experience resistance to their projects from the Kyrgyz government's side and there appeared to be no cases when the government would deliberately boycott the projects of traditional donors in the rural development sector (Hypothesis 3). However, the emergence of non-OECD funding alternatives (especially China) to finance rural development projects (Hypothesis 5) could potentially weaken the aid coordination architecture established and promoted by Western donors. Arrival of new donors, especially ones who do not play by the same Paris-based rules, can increase the Kyrgyz government's bargaining power versus Western donors and could serve, in the long-term perspective, as an instrument to resist Western influences, which introduces certain modifications to Hypothesis 2.

At the same time, as in the governance sector, Western donors involved a range of non-governmental players in their projects who could freely take advantage of the country's development cooperation with the external actors. While the involvement of non-governmental players and their relative freedom in engaging in aid interaction demonstrates commitment to Accra and Busan provisions, this freedom of action also contributes to a certain level of complexity resulting from the emergence of networks of players and actors (on both sides) with their interests and incentives (Apthorpe, 2012). Within this complex interaction, both donors and recipients appeared to pursue their individual objectives to the detriment of the central government's aid coordination efforts, departing from the agreed aid governance principles (Hypothesis 4).

In Turkmenistan, the situation was different due to a more restrictive political context. As in the governance sector, interaction in the rural development sector was subject to intense central government scrutiny. Most of the projects focusing on rural areas did not have full-fledged project offices in rural areas, and those external players which managed to establish a presence in the country's provinces had to eventually suspend their provincial- and district-level activities and leave the country (Hypothesis 1). Although Turkmenistan received development loans from certain non-OECD donors, according to the sources reviewed, the government predominantly used its own resources to fund development initiatives and large infrastructure projects targeting rural areas. At the same time, the number of development loans from Western donors was very limited (Hypothesis 2). There were also instances where the government declined development loans from traditional donors, as they presumably demanded to introduce policy or institutional changes in return. In general, while the government did not reject cooperation in the rural development sector altogether, it devised a system which allowed continuous monitoring of donors' activities targeting rural areas and making timely interventions if those activities were seen as a threat to

national interests. In other words, despite their technocratic nature, the government treated donors' rural development projects as a 'foreign policy' interaction, rather than a 'development policy' interaction. The importance of treating development aid projects not as technocratic but as politically motivated engagement has been repeatedly emphasized (Carothers & De Gramont, 2013; Armstrong, 2013). Yet, in Turkmenistan, donor-funded projects addressing even purely technical [rural development] issues can be subject to extreme politicization because of the government's fear that through rural development projects Western donors could potentially access rural areas, which in itself can be highly sensitive (Hypothesis 3).

As in the governance sector, the involvement of the NGOs in donor-funded projects in the rural development sector remained limited in Turkmenistan, although the type of non-governmental actors was a little more diverse than in the governance sector. The principles of Accra and Busan that encourage more inclusive development aid interaction were abandoned in the rural development sector as well. Likewise, the implementation of Paris Declaration principles was undermined by a range of pain points experienced by both donors and recipients (Hypothesis 4). Finally, the impact of geopolitical developments in the rural development sector appeared to be less relevant in Turkmenistan as there was no evidence suggesting that Turkmenistan's selective involvement in the global war on terror or in other geopolitical initiatives had an impact on donor-recipient interaction in the rural development sector (Hypothesis 5). Yet, closely watching regional developments that culminated in regime changes or contributed to regime destabilization in which local civil society groups played an active role, the government managed to avert the emergence of independent local NGOs which the Western donors could use in their projects and programs.

In both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan Hypotheses 1 and 2 are the key narratives that shaped the donor-recipient interaction in the rural development sector. In both countries, the nature of their regimes as well as the availability of non-aid revenues were the dominant underlying factors that influenced the interaction between donors and recipients. Nevertheless, in Kyrgyzstan, both narratives can be trumped by Hypothesis 5, i.e., the country's involvement in political and economic initiatives backed up by non-Western donors, and the government's ability to extract financial and other resources from its involvement in those initiatives can make the government less amenable to traditional donors' initiatives.

From theoretical point of view, these findings suggest that the propositions of the realist theory (that state survival and interest maximization are the primary objectives of the states) have come into play with collective action theory, whose proponents argue that actors representing different groups are capable of jointly addressing collective action problems as long as they have aligned interests. Specifically, despite the emergence of collective choice arrangements in Kyrgyzstan supported by traditional donors and the national partners, the government's increasing engagement with non-OECD donors in the rural development sector has put the state survival and interest maximization narrative in the first place. In Turkmenistan, this narrative has always remained a dominant narrative in the rural development sector interaction.

Table 7.2 provides a comparative summary of rural development sector findings for Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, including similarities and differences both between the countries and between the governance and rural development sectors.

Table 7.2: Comparative summary of rural development sector findings: Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan

Issues	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmenistan
▪ *Government's objectives*	Improving living conditions in rural areas; Agrarian reform, including large-scale privatization and market liberalization in this sector; Local self-governance reforms; Balanced development of provinces; Improving rural infrastructure.	Improving living conditions in rural areas; Agrarian reform based on state-controlled governance of agriculture; Food security and self-sufficiency; Balanced development of provinces; Local self-governance reforms; Improving rural infrastructure.
▪ *Sector sensitivity*	Less sensitive compared to the governance sector	Sensitive
▪ *Issues contributing to sector sensitivity*	Corruption in rural development projects, due to implementation of large infrastructure projects	Government's proclivity to limit the presence of donors mostly to the capital city, leaving very little opportunities for donors to work in provinces
▪ *Opportunities to make 'credible commitments'*	Appear to be stronger than in the governance sector, as projects in this sector allow the government to close its funding gaps to address rural poverty issues	Somewhat limited, due to lack of opportunities for donors to work on the rural level and government's reluctance to acknowledge poverty in rural areas
▪ *Degree of interaction*	Direct, decentralized interaction; A large number of donor projects and some field offices in rural areas	Indirect, centralized interaction; Limited number of donor projects in rural areas; No field offices
▪ *Role of government intermediaries*	Limited during most of the 1990s and 2000s; Some attempts have been made in the early 2010s to channel the interaction through MFA, including through its branch in Osh province in Southern Kyrgyzstan	Strong, with all interaction being maintained through the MFA
▪ *Involvement of NGOs*	Encouraged by the government; A large number of NGOs working in rural development projects, performing various functions (e.g., project implementation, capacity building, policy advocacy, research, public investigation of corruption in rural development projects)	Same as in the governance sector. However, there is a presence of other local non-governmental actors, such as farmers' associations, local community groups and entrepreneurs
▪ *Availability of sectoral coordination mechanisms*	Various thematic groups established as part of the Development Partners Coordination Council	No thematic groups established by donors; Stronger sectoral coordination among UN agencies
▪ *Participation of government officials in donors' coordination mechanisms*	Participate regularly	Do not participate
▪ *Participation of donor agencies' expatriate staff in daily project/program interaction*	Active, with direct engagement with government counterparts	Limited, due to the necessity to request government approvals for any project/program-related interaction, including visits to rural project sites
▪ *Role of donor agencies' local staff in project/program interaction*	Important	Highly important, given that the expatriate staff do not have direct interaction with government counterparts
▪ *Involvement of donors in formulation of sectoral development policies*	High	Limited

Chapter 8 | Donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector

8.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector. Environmental projects and programs address problems that are commonly considered through the public goods perspective and aim to improve the way common pool resources are managed and sustained (Ostrom, 2009; Kaul, Grunberg, & Stern, 1999). These projects address the management of common pool resources at various levels, including at the country level (e.g., conserving biological diversity or protection of endangered species of flora and fauna endemic to specific locations), regional level (e.g., dealing with cross-border river pollution) and global level (e.g., climate change). However, analysis of the relations between government recipients and donors in the environment sector might also demonstrate the extent to which recipient countries remain committed to implementing their international environmental obligations while at the same time developing their economies and advancing their extractive industries.

This chapter has the same structure as the previous chapter on rural development. I will start by reviewing *environment* as a concept, its evolution and relation to the field of international development, as well as the areas it covers. I will then analyze the national objectives of the two countries in the environment sector, as well as the donors' program activities and objectives. I will also look at the type of players involved in this interaction and project/program design and implementation procedures they used in managing donor-funded projects in the environment sector. Finally, I will review various pain points which both donors and recipients experienced in their interaction within this sector and provide a summary of key findings for this chapter.

8.2. Defining 'environment'

Environment as a concept and as an international development field emerged in the 1970s. Technological development in industrially advanced countries of the world contributed to a range of environmental concerns, including resource deterioration, biological and chemical pollution, as well as physical and social disruptions (United Nations, 1972; 1987). The UN Conference on the Human Environment, organized in Stockholm in 1972, became the first event which raised environmental issues on a global scale and resulted in the founding of a specialized UN body in charge of environmental issues, i.e., the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (UNDP, 2008).

In 1983, UNEP established the World Commission on Environment and Development. In 1987, the Commission produced its report entitled *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Commission Report (United Nations, 1987), which formulated the concept of *sustainable development*:

> Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:
>
> - the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
> - the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs. (p. 41)

The Brundtland Commission Report thus "brought environmentalism into poverty reduction and poverty reduction into environmentalism in a neat and simple formula" (Black, 2011, p. 99). The Brundtland

Commission Report also laid the ground for subsequent international events culminating in the organization of the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil in 1992. The 1992 conference, for its part, resulted in formulation and adoption of two important UN conventions (on climate change and on biological diversity) and led to the establishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a new multilateral mechanism providing funds for environmental initiatives in developing countries (UNDP, 2008). The UN Conference on Environment and Development, along with a series of other global conferences that took place at the beginning of the 1990s (e.g., the World Summit for Children, the World Conference on Education for All) served as the basis for formulation of the MDGs launched in 2000 (Hulme, 2009), with one of the eight goals focusing on environmental sustainability. With the passing of the global deadline for achieving the MDGs in 2015, global environmental goals and targets were articulated in three out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015).

Since its emergence in the 1970s, environment as an international development field has integrated a wide range of areas. In selecting aid-funded projects for the analysis of donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector, I concentrated on projects and programs falling under the thematic areas of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), including "climate change, disasters and conflicts, ecosystem management, environmental governance, chemicals and waste, resource efficiency, and environment under review" (UNEP, n.d.). Alternatively, taking into account UNDP's extensive involvement in the environment sector, I extended my analysis to projects and programs linked to the following environmental program areas of UNDP: "Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, including Forest Management; Sustainable Land Management and Desertification; Water and Ocean Governance; Climate Change; Energy; Chemicals and Waste Management; Green Economy; and Extractive Industries" (UNDP, n.d.).

8.3. Donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector: Kyrgyzstan

8.3.1. National objectives, policies and reforms in the environment sector

At the time of gaining independence, Kyrgyzstan's environmental challenges were diverse and included poor quality of drinking water and limited drinking water supply in rural areas, air pollution, desertification, degradation of land resources resulting from unsustainable agricultural practices and poorly regulated grazing, problems associated with biodiversity conservation and depletion of forest resources. Outdated legislation regulating the environment sector was also a key challenge (GOKR, 2003a). As well, Kyrgyzstan had to deal with radioactive and chemical pollution produced by decommissioned uranium mining sites operated during the Soviet period (Herrfahrdt-Pähle, 2009). Finally, Kyrgyzstan was prone to natural disasters due to melting glaciers, which reduced in area by 18% between 1960 and 2000 (OECD, 2016a). According to Herrfahrdt-Pähle, "more than 1,210 disasters were counted in the period between 1992 and 1999" (2009, p. 217). At the regional level, the government had to deal with a range of environmental issues associated with the disappearance of the Aral Sea and cross-country water resource management and allocation, which became especially acute following the collapse of the all-Union Soviet water management system (UNECE, 2000).

To address these challenges, Kyrgyzstan adopted various environmental policies and integrated environmental objectives within its national development plans and poverty reduction strategy papers produced during different presidencies. The first national development strategy to address environmental objectives was the *Strategy for Sustainable Human Development*, which was adopted in 1996 and pursued environment-friendly economic development (UNECE, 2000). The first short-term sectoral plan with specific environmental policy objectives was the *National Environmental Action Plan* (NEAP) for the period

1995-1997 (World Bank, 1995). NEAP was replaced by the *Ecological Security Concept* in 1997 (UNECE, 2009). According to Muratbek Imanaliyev, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kyrgyzstan was the first former Soviet republic to adopt the National Environmental Action Plan and the first country in Central Asia to develop the Ecological Security Concept (United Nations, 1997). The 1997 Ecological Security Concept was later amended under President Bakiyev in 2007 and became "the country's main strategic document of environmental policy" until the year 2020 (UNECE, 2009, p. 23). The document addresses global and regional environmental challenges and explores their connection to Kyrgyzstan. It also explores national environmental challenges and outlines policy objectives in the areas of air and water pollution, land degradation, depletion of forest resources, biodiversity of mountain ecosystems, waste management and industrial pollution (GOKR, 2007b). With support from international donors, Kyrgyzstan also introduced water sector reform (Herrfahrdt-Pähle, 2009) and pasture management reform (Crewett, 2015).

The following development policy documents formulated in the 1990s-2010s have also broadly reflected on environmental concerns and outlined national objectives in this sector:

- Indicative Socio-Economic Plan for the period 1996-1998 and Indicative Plan for Socio-Economic Development of the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 1999-2001: emphasize balanced economic growth and propose strategic objectives in nature protection, management of water and land resources, waste management and air pollution (GOKR, 1996; 1999);
- Comprehensive Development Framework up to 2010: aims at improving environmental policies and modifying legal and institutional frameworks (UNECE, 2009);
- Interim National Strategy for Poverty Reduction for the period 2001-2003 and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005: include relevant sections with environmental priorities related to long-term sustainable development, nature protection, improvement of air and water quality and rational management of land resources (GOKR, 2001b; 2003a);
- Country Development Strategy for the period 2007-2010: addresses environmental sustainability with two broad environmental objectives, including ensuring environmental security and managing natural disasters through effective emergency preparedness system (GOKR, 2007a);
- National Sustainable Development Strategy for the period 2013-2017: focuses on environmentally sustainable development through strengthening the environmental security and improving the national emergency preparedness system in cooperation with civil society (GOKR, 2013).

In the international arena, Kyrgyzstan has been an active supporter of international and regional environmental cooperation and continuously expressed its commitment to global efforts in this area. The analysis of the statements delivered by Kyrgyz officials during the annual sessions of the UN General Assembly from 1992 to 2017 shows that the Government of Kyrgyzstan (under all presidencies) embraced the concept of sustainable development by integrating it into relevant development policy documents. The analysis of General Assembly statements also shows that Kyrgyzstan actively engaged in international environmental cooperation by agreeing to host regional and global events (especially those devoted to the sustainable development of mountainous areas) and to take part in donor-funded environmental initiatives. For example, Kyrgyzstan is one of the three countries in the former Soviet Union to implement the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative (UNPEI, n.d.). It was also selected as a pilot country under the "Partnership for Action on Green Economy" supported by several UN agencies (PAGE, 2017). At the regional level, it contributed to the formulation of the *Central Asian Regional Environmental Action Plan* in 2001 and actively participated in the work of the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development, the establishment of which was initiated by the government of Central Asian countries (UNECE, 2009).

Kyrgyzstan acceded to/signed several international treaties in the area of the environment (see Table 8.1). Its international cooperation with donors thematically evolved around these treaties (Ministry of Ecology and Emergencies of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2005). The current portfolio of projects implemented by the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry (SAEPF) aligns with the objectives of these international environmental treaties (SAEPF, n.d.). The donor-funded projects implemented by the government particularly focus on the following components:

- Raising awareness on environmental issues;
- Building capacity of domestic players involved in environmental policy and implementation;
- Improving national environmental legislation;
- Strengthening environmental monitoring;
- Implementing the environmental action plans, strategies and other national documents;
- Expanding and promoting regional cooperation on environmental issues;
- Exchanging knowledge and ideas;
- Preparing national reports under various environmental conventions.

Table 8.1: International Environmental Treaties to which Kyrgyzstan is a party

International Treaties	Accession/Signature	Source:
Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, 1971)	Nov 2002 (A)	1
Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (1979)	May 2000 (A)	2
Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (1985)	May 2000 (A)	2
Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987)	May 2000 (A)	2
Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (1989)	August 1996 (A)	2
Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (1991)	May 2001 (A)	2
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992)	May 2000 (A)	2
UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)	August 1996 (A)	2
UN Convention to Combat Desertification (1994)	September 1997 (A)	2
Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1997)	May 2003 (A)	2
Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus, 1998)	May 2001 (A)	2
Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2000)	October 2005 (A)	2
Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2010)	June 2015 (A)	2
Paris Agreement (2015)	September 2016 (S)	2

Sources: [1] UNESCO (https://en.unesco.org/countries/kyrgyzstan/conventions); [2] United Nations Treaty Collection (https://treaties.un.org/Pages/Index.aspx?clang=_en);

Yet, according to observers, structural changes of national environmental authorities in 2001 and 2005,[25] as well as the limited funding allocated for environmental sector priorities affected the implementation of environmental reforms and policies. In 2008, roughly 0.07% of the country's GDP was allocated for activities in the environment sector (ADB, 2013b), and in 2017, this figure was still less than 1% (UNPEI, 2017). In addition, government support to the agriculture and mining sector appeared to be misaligned with its environmental objectives (SAEPF, 2007). As argued by the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative, "agriculture and energy subsidies take a substantial share of public funds yet they may have a negative effect on the environment, biodiversity and climate change adaptation efforts" (UNPEI, 2017, p. 2).

8.3.2. Donor objectives and areas of involvement in the environment sector

In the early-1990s, environmental issues did not appear to be among donors' priorities. For example, the First Country Program of UNDP (1993-1996), currently one of the main players in the environment sector in Kyrgyzstan, did not prioritize environmental activities. Although the Country Program stressed "the need for attention to problems of environmental degradation", it nevertheless prioritized support to democratization and transition to a market-oriented economy due to "immediacy of economic reforms" (UNDP, 1995, p. 5). Donors started to provide more focused support in the environment sector from the second half of the 1990s. UNDP's country program for the period 1997-1999 focused on Aral Sea problems and building the capacity of national authorities in charge of environmental protection and implementation of the NEAP (UNDP, 1996), which was formulated with support from the World Bank (World Bank, 1995). The World Bank, UNDP and other donors launched a number of GEF-funded regional projects that focused on regional water issues (including the Aral Sea degradation) as well as land and water resources management (UNECE, 2000). Other donor agencies active in the 1990s and early 2000s were the U.S. Government, which supported the energy sector reforms, and the Asian Development Bank, which contributed to strengthening of the environmental monitoring system and provided support in radioactive waste management (U.S. Government, 1999; ADB, 2000). In addition, GIZ and the German Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union implemented projects on biodiversity conservation and strengthening protected areas, while the European Union's TACIS Program implemented projects on uranium mining waste management and raising public awareness on environmental issues (UNECE, 2000).

With the change of President in 2005, several donor agencies developed a Joint Country Support Strategy (JCSS) for the period 2007-2010. The joint strategy, which brought together the ADB, European Commission, governments of Germany and Switzerland, UK's DFID, UN agencies and the World Bank Group, proposed coordinated donor support in the implementation of the new government's development objectives, including in the environment sector. The strategy specifically prioritized such environment sector areas as "disaster risk management", "energy conservation and renewable power provision", "energy efficiency", "irrigation modernization", "environmental and natural resources management", and capacity-building as a cross-cutting objective (World Bank, 2007). Donor agencies not part of the JCSS were JICA, OSCE and EBRD, which implemented their activities as part of their individual country strategies (UNECE, 2009).

[25] In 2001, the Ministry of Environmental Protection was amalgamated with the Ministry of Emergency Situations, with the new ministry being named the Ministry of Ecology and Emergencies. In 2005, further structural changes of the Ministry of Ecology and Emergencies led to the establishment of a separate environmental protection agency called the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry (UNECE, 2009).

As indicated in the 2009 Environment Performance Review for Kyrgyzstan, "main priorities for international environmental cooperation . . . are in general managed through participation in worldwide conventions" (UNECE, 2009, p. 67). With international conventions providing the framework for the environmental policy making and implementation in Kyrgyzstan, various donor agencies provided funding and carried out environmental projects that supported the implementation of Kyrgyzstan's international environmental commitments stemming from those conventions. For example, according to UNECE (2009), from the mid-1990s to the late-2000s, donors implemented environment-related projects worth USD 451.5 million, including in such areas as:

- Agriculture (USD 207.1 million);
- Water (USD 94.2 million);
- Energy (USD 61.3 million);
- Environment policy (USD 24.3 million);
- Biodiversity (USD 28.3 million);
- Desertification and land degradation (USD 28.4 million);
- Science and technology (USD 5.3 million);
- Climate change (USD 2.3 million);
- Waste disposal and management (USD 0.3 million) (UNECE, 2009, p. 67).

In the 2010s, the activities of the UN focused on sustainable natural resources management, energy efficiency and strengthening national capacities to respond to natural disasters. These activities were implemented as part of the joint UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) document for the period 2012-2016. The UN agencies whose country programs contributed to these objectives include the FAO, the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNDP, UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNEP, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP (UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2011). Other multilateral players implemented projects that focused on nuclear/radioactive waste management (EU, World Bank, EBRD), water resources management (World Bank, EBRD, DFID, JICA and SDC) and improvement of environmental legislation (ADB) (EU Delegation in Kyrgyzstan, 2015; World Bank, 2016e; EBRD, 2015; ADB, 2012; 2013a). At the regional level, donors promoted Kyrgyzstan's cooperation with other Central Asian countries on such issues as desertification and sustainable land management (GIZ), trans-boundary water cooperation (World Bank, USAID), energy sector improvements (USAID), regional biodiversity conservation (World Bank), and environment and security (OSCE) (ADB, 2012).

The current portfolios of donor-funded activities listed on the website of the Development Partners Coordination Council in Kyrgyzstan[26] and the website of the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry[27] focus on the following areas:

- Climate change adaptation and mitigation, and introduction of climate-friendly economic development policies;
- Water supply, water quality and improving irrigation systems;

[26] The list of agencies which are part of the Development Partners Coordination Council in Kyrgyzstan is available at http://donors.kg/en/agencies

[27] More detailed information with Kyrgyzstan's international cooperation in the environment sector can be accessed on the website of the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry at http://www.ecology.gov.kg/page/view/id/60

- Natural resource management, including land, water and forest resources;
- Promoting sustainable livelihoods and strengthening community resilience;
- Trans-boundary water management and allocation;
- Biodiversity conservation;
- Combating desertification;
- Radioactive waste management, particularly uranium mining waste;
- Expanding access to environmental information;
- Promoting community involvement in natural resource management;
- Strengthening environmental monitoring;
- Disaster risk reduction, risk management and emergency preparedness;
- Energy sector reforms, particularly introducing improvements in energy efficiency, developing renewable energy sources and revision of energy tariffs.

Apart from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, environment sector interaction in Kyrgyzstan has also involved numerous international NGOs, including the Soros Foundation (through its branch office in Kyrgyzstan), Aga Khan Development Network and its affiliated agencies, Mercy Corps, German Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union, World Wide Fund for Nature Protection (WWF) and others. At the same time, regional players specializing specifically in the environmental issues as well as in disaster risk reduction (but not having permanent offices in Kyrgyzstan) have also been involved in environmental sector projects and initiatives, including UNEP, UNECE, Central Asian Regional Environment Centre (CAREC), and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) (UNECE, 2000; 2009). Participation of a number of regional actors in the environment sector interaction indicates that Kyrgyzstan's environmental challenges are indeed regional in nature and donor-funded projects aimed to promote the interaction with other Central Asian states through various platforms.

In terms of donor funding, the largest amount of funding for the environment sector projects is provided by the IFIs. According to the open data on ADB's projects in Kyrgyzstan, ADB has provided over USD 600 million (through grants, loans and technical assistance) for the implementation of projects in the areas of land and water resources management, climate change, energy efficiency and emergency preparedness during the period from 2005 to 2018.[28] The World Bank's projects database[29] shows that 23 projects have been implemented in Kyrgyzstan during 1993-2018 related to water resource management, pollution management, environmental health, land management, natural disaster management, environmental resource management, climate change, biodiversity conservation, and environmental policies and institutions (with a total commitment amount worth USD 327 million). During certain periods, some bilateral agencies have also made significant financial contributions. For example, according to the OECD, "the large portion of climate-related development finance (i.e., about 30%) for the energy sector is committed to the multi-focal (i.e., mitigation and adaptation) project on "At Bashy Hydro Power Rehabilitation Programme" supported by Switzerland" (2016b, p. 10).

Another important source of environment sector funding is the Global Environment Facility. Kyrgyzstan has been involved in 48 projects from the mid-1990s to mid-2010s, of which 24 were implemented at the

[28] The open data for ADB's projects can be accessed at https://data.adb.org/dataset/adb-sovereign-projects/resource/5032c344-a738-4600-94f9-c2e2b218fe0c

[29] The search query for Kyrgyzstan can be run on the World Bank's Projects Database at http://projects.worldbank.org/search?lang=en&searchTerm=&countrycode_exact=KG

country level (with a total budget of USD 33.74 million) and 24 at the regional or global level (with a total budget of USD 109.73 million). The areas with the largest financial support received are biodiversity conservation, land management and climate change.[30] The GEF is also one of the largest sources of extra-budgetary funding for UNDP-implemented environmental projects. From 2012 to 2018 only, the GEF provided over USD 10.41 million for environmental projects that were implemented by UNDP during this period.[31]

8.3.3. Key national players involved in environment sector interaction

8.3.3.1. Government actors and their motivations to request donor support

The list of government actors involved in environment sector interaction is prepared on the basis of the interview data and the review of the following secondary sources which provide a comprehensive analysis of the environmental policies and institutions in Kyrgyzstan:

- Environmental Performance Reviews for Kyrgyzstan prepared by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE, 2000; 2009);
- OECD's 2016 Country Study titled "Financing Climate Action in Kyrgyzstan" (OECD, 2016b);
- Joint SAEPF-UNDP publication titled "Kyrgyzstan: Environment and Natural Resources for Sustainable Development" (SAEPF, 2007).

The following national actors are involved in environment sector interaction:

- **Parliament and its relevant committees** (e.g., Committee on Fuel and Energy Complex and Subsoil Use and Committee on Agrarian Policy, Water Resources, Ecology and Regional Development);
- **Line ministries**: Agriculture, Food Industry and Land Reclamation; Emergency Situations; Transport and Roads; Health;
- **State Committees, Agencies and Services:** Environmental Protection and Forestry; Fuel and Energy Regulation; Architecture, Construction and Communal Services; Geology and Mineral Resources; Hydrometeorology; Industry, Energy and Subsoil Use; State Register;
- **Local executive authorities:** provincial and district level administrations;
- **Local self-governance bodies;**
- **Research institutions**: Institute of Seismology, Research Institute for Earthquake Engineering;
- **Organizations affiliated with the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry** (i.e., nature reserves, national parks, etc.).

With regard to government recipients' motivation to participate in donor-funded projects, four out of five respondents stated that one of the key motivations was to get access to funding (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV02; KG-ENV04; KG-ENV05) either to close funding gaps in the state/ministerial budgets or to address domestic challenges. In addition, respondents also mentioned the building of infrastructure (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV05), improving national environmental legislation (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV04) and building the capacity of national environmental authorities (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV03). Involvement in donor-funded projects also allowed the

[30] The CSV file with GEF-funded projects in Kyrgyzstan can be accessed at https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/projects/gef-projects.csv
[31] The CSV file with details of UNDP projects in Kyrgyzstan can be accessed at https://open.undp.org/profile/KG/recipientprofile

national recipients filling in the human resources gaps resulting from the high turnover of technical staff within the recipient agencies. As one of the government respondents stated, "government agencies have high staff turnover, they have to attract donor experts and consultants" to implement their organizational priorities (KG-ENV03).

8.3.3.2. Local non-governmental players

Non-governmental players have been active in the environment sector in Kyrgyzstan and their number has remained high from the 1990s to the present time. For example, a USAID-funded Biodiversity Assessment for Kyrgyzstan mentioned that there were 160 registered environmental NGOs in 2001, of which 33 worked in the area of biodiversity conservation (Chemonics International, 2001a). The 2009 Environment Performance Review emphasizes that the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry has encouraged participation of local NGOs in the environmental initiatives and involved them "in various governmental environmental processes and activities, including State and public environmental expertise of projects, draft laws, regulations, programmes and concepts" (UNECE, 2009, p. 3). The involvement of the NGOs in donor-funded projects appeared to increase over time. As one respondent underlined, "since 2010, there was a greater insistence on the donors' side to engage NGOs in their development projects" (KG-ENV04, freelance consultant, former government employee).

Diversity and abundance of local NGOs allowed donors to take advantage of those organizations' expertise and knowledge of local context by involving them in their projects and programs. Four respondents in the environment sector stressed that donor agencies involved NGOs in various capacities in their environmental projects, including as implementing agencies and subcontractors for various types of activities (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV02; KG-ENV04; KG-ENV05). They also stressed that government counterparts generally had a positive attitude toward the NGOs' involvement in joint projects (see Box 8.1).

Box 8.1: Involvement of NGOs in the environment sector interaction in Kyrgyzstan
"Non-governmental sector is very vibrant and we coordinate with them." (KG-ENV01, multilateral agency respondent)
"We hire NGOs as sub-contractors or directly fund their initiatives. Before doing that, we assess our reputational risks . . . The areas in which we are involved are not sensitive, we don't have problems with that. Overall, government partners are fine with the NGO involvement in our projects." (KG-ENV02, bilateral agency respondent)
"Participation of local NGOs is beneficial and useful. It allows sharing responsibilities between them, government agencies, and local communities. Their involvement is like an airbag; you need that." (KG-ENV05, multilateral agency respondent)

However, according to respondents, while government agencies were generally positive about the NGOs' participation in donor-funded projects, these respondents emphasized that their organizations "assess reputational risks" before involving local NGOs (KG-ENV02, bilateral agency respondent) and try not to engage NGOs which "were previously involved in initiatives discrediting the government and damaging its reputation" (KG-ENV04, freelance consultant, former government employee).

8.3.3.3. Mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects in the environment sector

A) Donor-driven mechanisms

The Development Partners Coordination Council has been the main coordination body in charge of development policy coordination in the environment sector. Although it does not have a separate thematic

working group devoted to environment (based on the review of its website and the reports produced by it), environmental activities appear to have been integrated into other sectoral priorities, including on "Agriculture, Food Security and Rural Development", "Disaster Risk Reduction/Disaster Preparedness", and "Water Supply, Sanitation and Urban Services". These priorities have been outlined following the High-Level Development Conference in 2013, which was convened by donors and the government under President Atambayev to ensure that donors' country program objectives were aligned with the National Strategy for Sustainable Development for the period 2013-2017 (DPCC, 2013b). Similar coordination arrangements had been devised by donors previously under President Bakiyev, whose cabinet received the coordinated support of several largest donors within the framework of the Joint Country Support Strategy for the period 2007-2010, including in the area of 'Ensuring Environmental Sustainability and Natural Resource Management' (World Bank, 2007).

Resident and non-resident UN agencies, funds and programs have developed joint country program documents since the mid-2000s, which integrated environmental issues either as crosscutting activities or under separate program areas. Relevant thematic working groups or results groups established by the UN agencies coordinated the implementation of these environmental activities (UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2004; 2011; 2017). There are also examples of inter-agency coordination at the project level provided by the respondents. For example, the World Bank and the Swiss Government have jointly established the National Water Resources Management Project Trust Fund (KG-ENV02), with the Swiss Government providing USD 8.52 million to improve water governance in the country (World Bank, 2013b). UNDP and GIZ have supported the National Statistics Committee to integrate environmental data to the national statistical accounts (KG-ENV03).

In general, respondents stressed that donors regularly communicated amongst themselves to coordinate their projects (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV02; KG-ENV03; KG-ENV04; KG-ENV05) as they had known each other for a long time and had experience in initiating joint projects in the past. According to a government official, the extent of donor coordination depends on the government counterparts: if government agencies know their priorities and have strong managerial capacities, they can bring several donors with similar projects to the same table (KG-ENV03). Nevertheless, respondents mentioned that the donors' ability to coordinate was influenced by the donors' competition for extra-budgetary funding (e.g., for GEF funding), lack of government counterparts' capacity to work with donors, and the government agencies' preference to implement donor-funded projects with similar objectives in order to access funding from multiple sources (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV03; KG-ENV04) (see also Box 8.2).

Box 8.2: Donor coordination efforts in the environment sector (Kyrgyzstan)

"Mixed feelings . . . On a personal level, there is an awareness of the need to coordinate . . . But, at the same time, each agency has its own mandate and objectives." (KG-ENV01, multilateral agency respondent)

"In the water sector, there is no duplication since very few donors work in this area." (KG-ENV02, bilateral agency respondent)

"Aid coordination . . . is linked to an issue of personality. Government agencies don't have the capacity to work with donors . . . If one wants, it is possible to bring donors together and try to coordinate their projects." (KG-ENV03, government agency respondent)

"No major overlaps in program work." (KG-ENV05, multilateral agency respondent, former government agency staff)

B) Nationally-driven mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects

The Government of Kyrgyzstan established several national coordination mechanisms in charge of inter-departmental or inter-ministerial coordination of environmental activities. These include the National Centre to Combat Desertification coordinating national and donor-funded activities on desertification (UNECE, 2000), National Climate Change Committee, National Water Council, Inter-departmental Commission on Emergency Prevention and Elimination, Inter-departmental Expert Council on Environmental Education and Inter-ministerial Commission in charge of issues related to the ozone layer depletion (UNECE, 2009). Some of these national coordination bodies (e.g., National Climate Change Committee) brought together relevant actors from various sectors and organizations (OECD, 2016b) including donor agency officials (KG-ENV01), while others were established with support from donors (UNECE, 2000; UN in Kyrgyzstan, 2011). Although government efforts in establishing relevant coordination mechanisms at the central level was commended by respondents, at the level of line ministries, the approach to coordinating donors' activities was not proactive (KG-ENV05), and was hampered by the government agencies' preference to implement parallel projects as this would allow them to access donor funds from multiple projects (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV04).

8.3.3.4. Donor-recipient interaction mechanism in project/program design and implementation

A) Formal procedures and actual practices for donor-recipient interaction in project/program design

The interaction during the project/program design stage, for the most part, is the same as in other sectors. The project approval process depends on the type of funding provided (grants vs. loans), the approach to providing development assistance (project support vs. program support) and the sources of funding (donors' own regular resources vs. extra-budgetary funds mobilized through multilateral funding mechanisms such as the GEF). Donor agencies formally organize feasibility studies, kickoff workshops or other types of analytical and fact-finding events (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV02; KG-ENV03; KG-ENV04), some of which are attended by not only government recipients but also the NGOs, local communities and other potential project/program beneficiaries (KG-ENV04). These events are arranged via direct interaction between donor agencies and recipients; when and if written communication is required, letters are exchanged directly between donors and recipients. However, one of the respondents working for a donor agency mentioned about the MFA's insistence to keep it informed when new initiatives were launched (KG-ENV01).

Respondents reported that the actual interaction between donor agencies and government recipients during the project/program design process was not very formalized. Donors and government recipients interact directly with each other for the most part (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV02; KG-ENV03; KG-ENV04).

B) Formal procedures and actual practices for interaction in project/program implementation

Interaction in project/program implementation in the environment sector involves project-level focal points (i.e., project implementing partner assigned by government), policy-level focal points (i.e., government agencies assigned to coordinate the work of specific donors or to coordinate specific development sector), and overall political-level focal point (i.e., the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). As in the rural development sector, the interaction also involved local executive authorities, local self-governance bodies and non-governmental players.

None of the respondents mentioned specific rules regulating the interaction between donors and recipients during the implementation stage. This interaction appeared to vary depending on the level of seniority of government recipients and the importance of the issues raised. For example, the interaction on the working level does not require any formal requests and can be arranged via informal interaction channels, including phone conversations and email messages. Meetings to discuss important policy issues, or meetings with senior-level government officials (e.g., ministers or other senior ranking officials) are arranged through formal requests (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV02; KG-ENV04). As of the early 2010s, donor agencies are required to share copies of their letters sent to national recipients with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (KG-ENV01; KG-ENV04) (see also Box. 8.3).

Box 8.3: Donors' interaction with national partners in the environment sector (Kyrgyzstan)
"To arrange meetings, we don't have to write notes verbales to the MFA. All correspondence goes directly to beneficiaries. However, the MFA insists that we keep them informed." (KG-ENV01, multilateral agency respondent)
"On the working level interaction is ok, no formal requests are required. As for ministers, in the past, we would write a letter directly to that ministry. Now, we have to write a formal request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." (KG-ENV02, bilateral agency respondent)

8.3.4. Key pain points affecting donor-recipient relations in the environment sector

8.3.4.1. The pain points from the perspective of government recipients

In the previous two chapters, I mentioned several pain points of a generic nature from the recipients' perspective. These issues also apply to environment sector interaction and include:

- High consultancy fees;
- The inability of government recipients to influence the selection of grantees and consulting companies hired by donors;
- Complicated donor procedures; and
- The amount of time government agencies spend on donors' missions and requests.

In addition, the following pain points appear to have some relevance with respect to environmental projects:

A) Competition for funding (all years)

Competition among resident donor agencies for extra-budgetary funding provided by multilateral funding mechanisms appears to be an issue (KG-ENV01). For example, competition for GEF funding can increase transaction costs for government officials since several donor agencies can approach government agencies when preparing their funding applications in parallel.

B) Limited project ownership (all years, but especially after the 2010 events)

Limited ownership of development projects comes in many forms, including the donors' unwillingness to use national financial and procurement systems, limited involvement of the recipients in hiring experts and consulting companies, and failure to locate development projects in the recipients' premises. All respondents acknowledged that donors used their own rules and procedures in managing their projects. Some donor agencies have also stressed that none of their projects is located in government premises. For example, UNDP's environmental projects previously implemented under NEX modality (national execution) have been converted to DEX modality (direct execution) following the 2010 events, i.e., none of them was

based in government agency premises (Bellamy & Satybekov, 2012; KG-ENV05). UNDP's decision might be well justified as some NEX projects have suffered significantly due to acts of vandalism, stealing of equipment and the loss of project documentation at the time when the 2010 events took place (Bellamy & Satybekov, 2012). Yet, the decision to switch back to DEX modality has not been made (KG-ENV05) and all UNDP projects at the time of the interviews were still located in UNDP-designated premises and not in the premises of government recipients. While it does not seem to be a major issue, it can potentially detach government counterparts from environmental projects, eventually affecting their incentives to co-manage these projects.

Finally, the policy changes promoted by donors as part of the large energy projects, and government's commitment (in line with the signed project documents) to implement these policy changes, could trigger serious public resentment. For example, starting in the early 2000s, the World Bank consistently advised the government to 'commercialize' the power sector and increase electricity prices in the country as a way of making this sector financially sustainable (World Bank, 2008b). Electricity prices have remained unchanged since 2002 and the government's decision to double these prices starting in January 2010 led to public revolts and resulted in the ousting of President Bakiyev in April 2010 (Kasymbekov, 2012).

8.3.4.2. The pain points from the perspective of donors

Several pain points discussed in previous chapters apply equally to environment sector interaction. These include:

- The prevalence of corruption;
- Price fluctuations;
- High turnover of government staff;
- Political instability and power changes (2005 and 2010).

In addition, the following pain points are worth exploring in detail:

A) Limited public investments in the environment sector (all years)

The environment sector interaction has been affected by limited state funding allocated to address the environmental challenges. As stressed in the 2009 Environmental Performance Review, the government "does not devote sufficient regular budget resources to environment protection" (UNECE, 2009, p. 4). According to a more recent estimate, environmental sector investments were only 0.07% of GDP (ADB, 2013b). The implementation of UNDP's environmental projects, for example, was reportedly jeopardized by the lack of government co-funding (Zenan, 2014).

B) Political weakness of national authorities in charge of environmental policies (all years)

National authorities in charge of the environmental policy making and implementation have gone through structural changes several times. The Ministry of Environmental Protection was amalgamated with the Ministry of Emergency Situations in 2001 and later transformed into the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry (SAEPF). These changes could have affected not only the internal structures but also the mandates. As argued by Tortell and Hasanov, "the restructuring and downgrading of the environment agency has reduced its influence and effectiveness within the machinery of Government (2007, p. 20). These changes also resulted in "the marginalisation of the environment sector" in general (Williams, 2015, p. 28). Similarly, UNECE argues that "downgrading of environmental authorities has

important implications because performing key functions often requires the appropriate status to initiate and facilitate inter-ministerial and intersectoral cooperation" (2009, p. 1).

In addition, the following two issues have to be considered with regard to the environment sector interaction. First, the relatively open political system that allows contesting government decisions in Kyrgyzstan made it possible for some local players to oppose the implementation of donor-funded projects. One example that illustrates how local players resist the implementation of donor-funded projects comes from the UNDP project evaluation report prepared in 2015. The SAEPF and UNDP implemented a project whose objective was to establish the national park in southern Kyrgyzstan. While the agreement of six *ayil okmotus* (local self-governance bodies) from the surrounding areas were secured, one *ayil okmotu* resisted the establishment of the park[32] despite the efforts of local authorities, SAEPF and UNDP "to convince, coerce, cajole and coax them into agreeing with the establishment of the park" (Williams, 2015, p. 18). Second, liberalization of the mining sector brought in numerous private players. By the mid-2000s, over 160 companies were active in the mining sector and the government "issued about one thousand licenses for prospecting, exploration and mining" (2007, p. 31). By the late 2010s, the number of licenses had more than doubled reaching 2,571 (Levina, 2019). The increase in the number of private license holders and their activities, coupled with the flaws in the mining sector legislation (IISD, 2018) and the limited capacity of national authorities to monitor the environmental impact of the mining sector activities, can potentially affect the implementation of the government's environmental objectives and policies. Taking into account the profitability of mining sector activities, the implementation of the government's sustainable development and environmental goals can run counter to its economic growth objectives.

8.4. Donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector: Turkmenistan

8.4.1. National objectives, policies and reforms in the environment sector

In 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkmenistan inherited a number of environmental challenges, including poor water quality, water scarcity, land degradation, air pollution, problems stemming from the disappearance of the Aral Sea, desertification and declining biological diversity (GOTM, 2003a). National development plans adopted during Niyazov's presidency included very few references to environmental issues. The first session of the People's Council of Turkmenistan, which laid the foundation of the country's political system, governance mechanisms and institutions contained only a short reference to the rational use of Turkmenistan's abundant natural resources (TPH, 1993). The 2020 Strategy also emphasized the importance of using the country's natural resources wisely. In addition, it suggested addressing the water shortage problem by building an artificial lake in the Karakum desert (called "Altyn Asyr" Lake and translated as 'The Lake of Golden Age') and expanding the capacity of existing water reservoirs and hydraulic facilities (GOTM, 2003b).

The government's environmental objectives were mainly reflected in national plans and strategies related specifically to the environment sector, such as the 1997 *National Action Program to Combat Desertification* (NAPCD), the 2002 *National Environmental Action Plan* (NEAP), the 2002 *Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan* (BSAP) (UNECE, 2012) and the *National Strategy on Climate Change* adopted in 2012 (OECD, 2016c). The NEAP served as the main sectoral policy document which outlined the government's objectives in the area of environment until 2010. It focused on seven key priority areas, including "water resources; land

[32] The national park was later established within the framework of the project "Improving the Coverage and Effectiveness of Protected Areas in the Central Tian Shan Mountains" implemented by UNDP.

resources; air; state of environment at Turkmen Zone of the Aral Sea Disaster; oil and gas complex and energy; biological diversity, natural and cultural heritage" (MONP, 2007, p. 72).

The 2030 Program developed under President Berdimuhamedov in 2010 provides more specific references to environmental issues, such as creating conditions for developing the 'green economy', introducing green technologies, ensuring greater synergies between environmental protection activities and the country's main industries, as well as other measures. Unlike previous national development strategies, the 2030 Program also provides average yearly allocations for the activities of the Ministry of Water Economy and the Ministry of Nature Protection[33], the two main ministries involved in environment sector activities (GOTM, 2010). The government's interest in environmental cooperation with external partners appeared to have intensified during Berdimuhamedov's presidency. This can be observed by analyzing the statements delivered by Turkmenistan's representatives at the sessions of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) from 1993 to 2017. Fourteen statements delivered between 1993 and 2006 contain sporadic references to environmental issues. Of these 14 statements, only five refer to environmental issues, mostly expressing commitment to global environmental actions or providing an update on what was done by Turkmenistan to contribute to those global actions. Starting in 2007, the year when Berdimuhamedov was elected as president, nine out of 11 statements delivered at the UNGA sessions contained an explicit commitment to increase cooperation in the environmental sector at the regional and global levels. During this period, Turkmenistan repeatedly called for developing joint solutions to address the region's environmental concerns and proposed to host high-level regional conferences on environmental issues having a significant impact on countries of the region. Turkmenistan also actively lobbied for the establishment of a regional center, under UN auspices, that would deal with climate change issues affecting the countries of the Caspian region and Central Asia. Turkmenistan's representatives stressed the government's willingness to host such a center and to create conditions for its work during the UN General Assembly sessions in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015.

The expansion of the government's environmental sector interaction with development partners at the regional level shows that Turkmenistan has not objected to externally developed solutions to the region's and country's environmental problems. As stressed in Chapter 6, the government has been critical of externally proposed democracy-building initiatives and universal approaches in ensuring human rights and freedoms, claiming that each country has specific political and social characteristics. In the environmental sector, this universalism appears to have been adopted by the government, with President Berdimuhamedov stressing at the 65th session of the UN General Assembly in 2010:

> Turkmenistan believes that water disputes should be settled on the basis of the universally recognized norms of international law, taking into account the interests of all countries of the region, with the world community represented by the United Nations and with the active participation of other reliable international organizations. (as cited in United Nations, 2010, p. 14)

[33] The names of these two ministries have changed on several occasions. They also went through structural changes and were merged with other government agencies. I have decided to use the names that were in effect at the time I collected the secondary sources, i.e., 2015-2016. In 2016, the Ministry of Nature Protection was merged with the Land Resources Committee and renamed "The State Committee for Nature Protection and Land Resources". In January 2019, it was amalgamated with the Ministry of Agriculture and the new institution was named "The Ministry of Agriculture and Nature Protection", while the Ministry of Water Economy was renamed "The State Committee for Water Economy".

Turkmenistan acceded to and ratified several major international environmental treaties (see Table 8.2). Main sectoral plans (e.g., BSAP, NAPCD) have been developed in response to national commitments stemming from these treaties, the implementation of which has been monitored by the State Commission to Guarantee the Implementation of Commitments of Turkmenistan Arising from UN Environmental Conventions and Programs (UNECE, 2012).

Table 8.2: International Environmental Treaties to which Turkmenistan is a party

International Treaties	Ratification/Accession	Source:
Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar, 1971)	July 2009 (A)	1
Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (1985)	November 1993 (A)	2
Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987)	November 1993 (A)	2
Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (1989)	September 1996 (A)	2
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992)	June 1995 (A)	2
UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)	September 1996 (A)	2
Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (1992)	August 2012 (A)	2
UN Convention to Combat Desertification (1994)	September 1996 (R)	2
Kyoto Protocol (1997)	January 1999 (R)	2
Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus, 1998)	June 1999 (A)	2
Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea (Tehran, 2003)	December 2012 (R)	3
Paris Agreement (2015)	October 2016 (R)	2

Sources: [1] Ramsar Convention Secretariat (https://www.ramsar.org/wetland/turkmenistan); [2] United Nations Treaty Collection (https://treaties.un.org/Pages/Index.aspx?clang=_en); [3] Tehran Convention Secretariat (http://www.tehranconvention.org/spip.php?article2)

The state budget has been the main source of funding in the environment sector, with some financing provided by donors as discussed below (MONP, 2007). The figures for state funding varied from source to source. In 2007, Turkmenistan reported allocating around USD 200 million annually for national activities related to protection of the environment (United Nations, 2007). President Berdimuhamedov stated in 2018 that Turkmenistan's allocation for environmental protection and water-related projects was over USD 500 million annually (Hasanov, 2018). According to figures provided in the 2030 Program, combined average annual commitment for the activities of the Ministry of Water Economy and the Ministry of Nature Protection is almost USD 254 million[34] for the period 2011-2030 (GOTM, 2010). Some of the projects implemented by Turkmenistan in the environment sector indeed require significant public investment and the figures shown in the 2030 Program could be related to those projects, including the construction of the artificial lake and implementation of the 'Green Belt' nationwide tree-planting project (TDH, 2018).

Environmental experts, however, criticized the construction of the lake, arguing that it "will simply disappear through evaporation under the fierce desert sun, leaving salt sediments that will poison the entire area" (Stanchin & Lerman, 2009, p. 38). Others pointed to technical difficulties, indicating that the project

[34] Converted using the official exchange rate of TMM 2.85 effective at the time when the 2030 Program was launched.

would have serious "environmental consequences" (Zonn & Kostianoy, 2014, p. 6). At the same time, concerns were raised with regard to insufficient linkages between the environmental objectives and objectives pursued in other sectors of the economy, first and foremost in agriculture: "There is an inherent contradiction between a policy of mandating large growth targets for outputs of various commodities, such as cotton, and improving water use efficiency and conserving the environment" (ADB, 2003, p. 14). Finally, as the hydrocarbon producing country, Turkmenistan has the second highest level of per capita CO_2 emissions in Central Asian region (slightly lower than that of Kazakhstan, another hydrocarbon producer)[35] and had the highest levels of energy intensity[36] among the former Soviet republics with about 90% of greenhouse gas emissions being contributed by the hydrocarbon sector (OECD, 2016c, p. 6).

8.4.2. Donor objectives and areas of involvement in the environment sector

The environment sector interaction involved donor agencies specialized in environmental issues or agencies with environmental portfolios or program components. While some of them had resident country offices or project offices (e.g., UNDP, USAID, GIZ, OSCE, EU), others did not have resident offices and implemented their projects through other donors or directly with the Ministry of Nature Protection. These include UNEP, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), UNECE, UNESCAP and UNESCO. Other players, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), were not directly involved in project or program implementation but provided funding via resident donor agencies for implementation of environmental projects.

It should be noted that the absence of reliable statistics makes it difficult to estimate how much funding Turkmenistan received from the external donors in the environment sector. Neither official sources nor donor-produced environment sector reviews contain detailed financial data. For example, while the UNECE's environment sector review for Kyrgyzstan (UNECE, 2009) contained detailed information on donors' contribution to this sector, the UNECE's environment sector review for Turkmenistan (UNECE, 2012) did not, citing lack of data as a key challenge.

Environmental sector interaction in the 1990s and 2000s involved several resident and non-resident donor agencies. UNICEF's environment sector activities addressed mostly water and sanitation issues and provision of safe drinking water (UN in Turkmenistan, 2007). USAID, EU, World Bank and GIZ implemented their activities mainly as part of their regional programs and projects, focusing on sustainable energy issues, strengthening regional cooperation on water issues and addressing environmental problems associated with the Aral Sea disappearance (ADB, 2003; European Commission, 2000; U.S. State Department, 1995; Holland, 2002). UNEP, UNDP, EU and the World Bank provided support in the formulation and implementation of the National Environmental Action Plan until 2010 (UNDP, 1997; European Commission, 2000; UNECE, 2012). WWF implemented projects on the conversation of endangered species of fauna (Chemonics International, 2001b) and GIZ promoted participatory approaches in natural resource management in rural areas of Turkmenistan (Annaklycheva, 2002). EBRD provided advisory support in conducting environmental impact assessment (EBRD, 2004). UNESCO worked with the Ministry of Nature Protection on the management of biosphere reserves and protection of flora and fauna in wetlands (Church, 2014), managing its activities from UNESCO's Cluster Office in Tehran.

[35] Detailed figures of CO2 emissions in Central Asian countries can be accessed through the World Bank's Open Data at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC?locations=TM-KG-TJ-UZ-KZ

[36] Energy intensity is defined as "the ratio of Total Primary Energy Supply (TPES) to real GDP" (OECD, 2016c, p. 6).

Starting from the mid-1990s, donors also promoted the establishment of regional inter-state bodies, such as the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development headquartered in Ashgabat (UNECE, 2012). These bodies served as coordination platforms for the implementation of regional environmental projects, including the Aral Sea Basin Program (World Bank, 1998b). UNECE and UNESCAP served as two additional platforms for coordination of regional environmental activities, including regional water-related activities (Church, 2014). Another example of a donor-funded initiative with strong regional cooperation component is the Caspian Environment Program, which involved the Caspian littoral states (Holland, 2002).

Cooperation in the environment sector intensified in the second half of the 2000s, with the government under President Berdimuhamedov actively promoting the involvement of Turkmenistan in regional environmental initiatives and expressing commitment to host high-level regional meetings and conferences (Church, 2014). New projects were launched in the second half of the 2000s by UNDP with emphasis on climate change adaptation and energy efficiency (UN in Turkmenistan, 2007) and by GIZ focusing on climate-sensitive land management (GIZ, n.d.). With the commissioning of large transportation projects in the late 2000s, the Asian Development Bank assisted in conducting environmental impact assessment for those projects (ADB, 2017). The UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA), established in 2007 with headquarters in Ashgabat, became another regional platform that promoted "water diplomacy" and policy dialogue on "trans-boundary water management" among Central Asian countries (UNRCCA, n.d.). The linkages between environment and security were also promoted by the OSCE and USAID, while UN system agencies (e.g., UNDP, UNICEF) implemented projects on disaster risk reduction with funding coming from the European Union (European Commission, 2014).

Looking at donors' involvement in environment sector interaction, one could argue that a key factor in the selection of areas for environment sector interaction was the country's international obligations and commitments stemming from various international conventions and treaties. Donor-government interaction in this sector appears to have been reflective of these obligations on both country and regional levels. As stressed in UNDP's Second Country Cooperation Framework for Turkmenistan (2000-2004), the government had been "committed to the implementation of these conventions" albeit "within its own boundaries" (UNDP, 2000a, p. 7).

At the country level, donor-funded projects and programs covered diverse topics, focusing on biodiversity conservation, combating desertification, natural resource management, rational use of water resources, water and sanitation, wetlands protection, energy efficiency, sustainable development, environmental impact assessment for large infrastructure projects, climate change, and introduction of climate responsive policies and measures in the country's economy and agriculture. Donors also played an active role in the formulation of key environmental policy documents such as the National Environmental Action Plan, Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, National Action Program to Combat Desertification (UNECE, 2012) and National Climate Change Strategy (UNDP, 2015). In terms of donors' cooperation in the environment sector, Foellmi notes that "of all sectors of international cooperation in Turkmenistan, this is probably the most active one" (2013, p. 6). It should also be emphasized that the environment sector involved international NGOs and societies who cooperated with the Ministry of Nature Protection, including WWF, Fauna and Flora International, BirdLife International, British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the World Conservation Union (MONP, 2002; UNECE, 2012).

At the regional level, most of the donors' initiatives focused on regional environmental issues, such as the Aral Sea problem, Caspian ecosystem, and trans-boundary cooperation on water issues. As noted by Church, "the environment is the most advanced sector in terms of subregional cooperation and Turkmenistan played an important role" in regional initiatives (2014, p. 305). The UNECE also commended the country for "significant level of involvement by Turkmenistan with the international environmental community in activities related to biodiversity, nature conservation and desertification" (2012, p. xxvi).

Of all resident donor agencies, UNDP has the largest portfolio of environmental projects, including projects focusing on biodiversity conservation and desertification, industrial pollution, climate change, and environmental issues associated with the Caspian Sea ecosystem and the Aral Sea disappearance (UNDP, 1997; 2000a; 2015). UNDP is also one of the key players providing policy advice to the State Commission in implementing Turkmenistan's obligations in line with international environmental treaties (UNDP, 2000a) and building capacity of the government's environment sector institutions on environmental governance issues (UN in Turkmenistan, 2007). Most projects implemented by UNDP in the environment sector were funded or co-funded by the Global Environment Facility, which has been the largest source of donor funding for Turkmenistan in the environment sector. The analysis of UNDP's projects database for Turkmenistan (covering the period 2012-2018) shows that the GEF was the second largest source of extra-budgetary funding for UNDP (after the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) and the largest source of extra-budgetary funding mobilized for implementation of the environment sector projects.[37]

Turkmenistan's cooperation with the Global Environment Facility started in 1997 and GEF funding was mobilized for projects that focused on management of protected areas, biodiversity conservation, desertification, natural resources management, climate change, water resource management and other areas that fall under international environmental treaties (Ballyev, 2016). Since 1997, according to the GEF's projects database,[38] 16 national projects (with a total grant amount of USD 23.90 million) and 18 regional and global projects (with a total grant amount of USD 80 million) have been implemented in Turkmenistan with GEF funding.

8.4.3. Key national players involved in environment sector interaction

8.4.3.1. Government actors and their motivations to request donor support

Main government partners with functions of endorsing and coordinating donor-funded projects (i.e., Cabinet of Ministers, Presidential Administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) are the same for projects in the environment sector as they are in other sectors. The list of national partners involved in donor-funded projects in the environment sector was compiled based on the interview data and using the following documents produced by donor agencies:

- The First Environmental Performance Review for Turkmenistan produced by UNECE in 2012 (UNECE, 2012);
- OECD's 2016 Country Study titled "Financing Climate Action in Turkmenistan" (OECD, 2016c);
- Harmonized program documents prepared by UN agencies and co-signed by the Government and the United Nations, including the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for

[37] The CSV file with details of UNDP projects in Turkmenistan can be accessed at https://open.undp.org/profile/TM/recipientprofile

[38] The CSV file with GEF-funded projects in Turkmenistan can be accessed at https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/projects/gef-projects.csv

Turkmenistan for the period 2010-2015 and the UN-Turkmenistan Partnership Framework for Development (UNPFD) for the period 2016-2020.

The following national partners are involved in designing and implementing development projects in the environment sector:

- **Parliament and its relevant committees** (e.g., the Committee on Environmental Protection, Natural Resources Management and Agro-industrial Complex);
- **Line ministries:** Ministries of Nature Protection; Agriculture; Economy and Development; Oil and Gas Industry and Mineral Resources; Water Economy; Energy; Construction;
- **State services and agencies:** Turkmen Gas State Concern, State Committee for Fisheries, State Committee on Hydrometeorology under the Cabinet of Ministers, State Agency for the Management and Use of Hydrocarbon Resources under the President of Turkmenistan;
- **Local executive authorities:** provincial and district level administrations;
- **Local self-governance bodies;**
- **Research and educational institutions:** Mary State Energy Institute, Turkmen State University;
- **Organizations affiliated with the Ministry of Nature Protection**: National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna; nature reserves;
- **Interdepartmental bodies:** State Commission to Guarantee the Implementation of Commitments of Turkmenistan Arising from UN Environmental Conventions and Programs.

Given that the Government of Turkmenistan ratified various environmental treaties and conventions and was expected to implement its international obligations stemming from them, access to international best practices and expertise was an important motivational factor in being involved in donor-funded projects (TM-ENV01; TM-ENV04; TM-ENV06). As emphasized by Jon Church, "there is a general agreement that the country needs technical assistance and capacity building, as many experts left the country after the collapse of the Soviet Union" (2014, p. 304). Access to GEF funding (TM-ENV04) and to material resources such as technical equipment, computers (TM-ENV04; TM-ENV03; TM-ENV06), or to "tangible things" in the words of a multilateral agency respondent (TM-ENV06), appeared to play a strong role too. Finally, two of the respondents working for the international donor agencies emphasized the importance for the government agencies to demonstrate their cooperation with the international community (TM-ENV01; TM-ENV07). According to these respondents, the demonstration of this cooperation could have two dimensions. First, there is an external dimension whereby the government in general showcases its active involvement in international environmental cooperation (TM-ENV01). Second, there is an internal dimension, whereby line ministries not generating sufficient revenues and generally dependent on state funding (such as the Ministry of Nature Protection) demonstrate to higher authorities (i.e., President, Cabinet of Ministers) their relevance and contribution to increasing the country's reputation by working with international donors (TM-ENV07).

8.4.3.2. Local non-governmental players

As in other sectors, the number of local non-governmental players in Turkmenistan involved in the environment sector is limited. Prior to the introduction of legal changes in the process of registration of NGOs in 2003, there appeared to be some local NGOs which specialized in environmental issues and were involved in donor-funded environmental projects. The USAID's Biodiversity Assessment for Turkmenistan

carried out in 2001 lists five registered local NGOs of which four had some connection with the government and one was financially supported by donors (Chemonics International, 2001b). Following the legal changes, two of these, NGOs "Catena" Ecological Club and Dashoguz Ecological Club, could not extend their registration. According to Erika Dailey, "in early 2004 the government summarily stripped two of the country's most serious and long-standing NGOs of their legal registration, rendering them vulnerable to criminal prosecution for continued work. The Dashoguz Ecological Club and the Ecological Club Catena have both appealed the court rulings, so far unsuccessfully" (Dailey, 2004).

According to respondents working in the environment sector, the following non-governmental players were involved in environment sector projects:

- Government-affiliated societies and organizations (Turkmen Society for Nature Protection, Turkmen Society of Hunters and Fishermen, "Tebigy Kuwwat" [The Force of Nature] Public Association);
- Local community groups.

Respondents representing donor agencies noted the limited number of opportunities for NGOs' involvement in the environment sector projects in Turkmenistan (see Box 8.4). According to the UNECE's 2012 Environmental Performance Review, "Turkmenistan has a limited number of registered, and therefore active, environmental NGOs, known as public associations", which are mostly "engaged in raising public environmental awareness, education and training, and environmental improvements in areas such as nature conservation" (UNECE, 2012, p. 73). In addition, as noted in the ADB's 2003 report on desertification issues in Turkmenistan, "the current legal situation prevents NGOs from engaging in a number of activities and from raising funds, which makes them entirely dependent on the good will of the Government" (2003, p. 11). Five of the interviewed participants representing donor agencies reported that they involved mostly government-affiliated environmental NGOs in their projects (TM-ENV01; TM-ENV02; TM-ENV04; TM-ENV06; TM-ENV07).

Box 8.4: Involvement of NGOs in the environment sector interaction in Turkmenistan

"Donors' adaptation in the country is extremely important; if they manage to adapt, there is no problem regarding the NGOs' participation in donors' projects . . . Hazar Project [a UNDP project on conservation of biodiversity in Caspian coastal areas] was more successful in terms of integrating local NGOs in the project. First, it had a cost-sharing element contributed by the government. Second, project objectives were aligned with government priorities. Third, the language of the project document was sanitized and made more government-friendly, so that government officials could understand it. Finally, stakeholder involvement is key in the project. We had regular interaction with the deputy governor of Hazar city and invited him to Project Board meetings so that the government would be confident about donor transparency." (TM-ENV02, multilateral agency respondent)

"In terms of environmental NGOs, there are not so many of them to work with, in general." (TM-ENV04, multilateral agency respondent)

"The government encouraged the involvement of NGOs, if they were loyal to the government." (TM-ENV06, multilateral agency respondent)

8.4.3.3. Mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects in the environment sector

A) Donor-driven mechanisms

Donor coordination in the environment sector was mostly arranged through the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Turkmenistan, with UNDP acting as a lead agency for convening donors working in the environment sector. The donors' sub-group on environment, chaired by UNDP, brings together key donors

working in this sector (TM-ENV06; TM-ENV07). Environment was also included as a separate program outcome in all harmonized UN framework documents for Turkmenistan, including in UNDAF 2005-2009, UNDAF 2010-2015 and UNPFD 2016-2020 (UN in Turkmenistan, 2004; 2009; 2016). Subsequently, coordination groups or results groups were established to coordinate the UN agencies' activities in the area of environment during each program cycle. For example, a result group for strategic program outcome "Environmental Sustainability and Energy Efficiency" was established to implement the environmental activities within the framework of UNPFD 2016-2020 (UN in Turkmenistan, 2016).

While six out of seven respondents mentioned that there was some coordination on the donors' side and that regular environment thematic group meetings took place (TM-ENV01; TM-ENV02; TM-ENV04; TM-ENV05; TM-ENV06; TM-ENV07), they also emphasized that these coordination efforts were affected by several factors, including:

- **Context-specific factors:** as in other sectors, interviewees in the environment sector emphasized that the working environment was in general complex, making it somewhat difficult for donors to coordinate their activities (TM-ENV04; TM-ENV06).
- **Competition for extra-budgetary resources and for areas of development intervention:** because of the complex working environment, donors have to compete for extra-budgetary funding (especially coming from sources such as the GEF) and for areas of interventions in order to demonstrate their own success stories (TM-ENV01; TM-ENV02; TM-ENV04; TM-ENV07). One multilateral agency respondent even went as far as stating that "donors steal each other's project ideas" (TM-ENV01).
- **Different rules and management procedures:** as in the previous chapter, two respondents in the environment sector emphasized that different management procedures and rules affected donors' ability to implement joint projects (TM-ENV02; TM-ENV04). For example, some bilateral donors hire their own experts and buy equipment produced in their home countries; at the same time, according to UN rules, services and goods should be procured through an open bidding process.

B) Nationally-driven mechanisms for coordination of donor-funded projects

In the environment sector, the Ministry of Nature Protection has served as a key national coordination body for donor-funded environmental projects and was one of the main recipients of donors' technical assistance and financial support (UN in Turkmenistan, 2004; 2009). It also served as the main government agency in charge of environmental policy making and implementation. At the same time, several state commissions were established to coordinate the implementation of Turkmenistan's international obligations regarding the environment (UNECE, 2012). For example, the State Commission on Climate Change is in charge of inter-ministerial coordination of government activities related to climate change. It also serves as the key national institution for monitoring the implementation of Turkmenistan's obligations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (OECD, 2016c), including those activities that are supported by donor agencies. Similarly, the State Commission to Guarantee the Implementation of Commitments of Turkmenistan Arising from UN Environmental Conventions is in charge of coordinating the activities of government agencies related to the implementation of all international environmental conventions and treaties (UNECE, 2012).

However, despite the availability of national mechanisms for coordination of environmental projects, respondents from donor agencies stressed that coordination was in general minimal and mainly driven by donor agencies (TM-ENV01; TM-ENV02; TM-ENV04; TM-ENV07). Donor documents reviewing the

environment sector indicate that national coordination mechanisms are not effectively utilized by government. According to ADB, the State Commission in charge of implementation of Turkmenistan's international environmental commitments "is not being used as a coordinating forum to exploit synergies between various conventions at the policy or programmatic levels" (2003, p. vii). UNECE (2012) came to similar conclusions with regard to all other state commissions involved in the environment sector:

> The importance of the coordinating role of the interdepartmental State commissions dealing with environment-related concerns cannot be underestimated. Their effectiveness is far from satisfactory. Their legal status and rules for their operation, including the issues of their powers and decision-making procedures, are unclear. (p. 13) (see also Box 8.5)

Box 8.5: Donor coordination efforts in the environment sector (Turkmenistan)

"The main reason for some donors to avoid coordination is the visibility issue. They want their logo to appear everywhere, and they see this as an opportunity to show their work. . . . I didn't see any government effort to coordinate foreign technical assistance. But, it's the government who decides which donors should be allowed to work in specific sectors." (TM-ENV01, multilateral agency respondent)

"The process of coordinating donor assistance is not led by the Government of Turkmenistan . . . it's not demand driven." (TM-ENV02, multilateral agency respondent)

"The national side does not care whether or not donors work together." (TM-ENV04, multilateral agency respondent)

"Donors tried to coordinate through the UN. But, everyone followed their own agenda and did whatever was written in their country strategy documents." (TM-ENV06, multilateral agency respondent)

"Sometimes, international partners tried to work together. . . . There is some coordination between GIZ and UNDP. Some GIZ funding goes through UNDP projects as co-funding." (TM-ENV05, government agency respondent)

8.4.3.4. Donor-recipient interaction mechanism in project/program design and implementation

A) Formal procedures and actual practices for donor-recipient interaction in project/program design

The official procedures for designing donor-assisted environmental projects/programs are the same as in other sectors, i.e., it is very formalized with all official correspondence going via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The first stage of the process is the collection of initial data by donors to develop proposals either through working-level consultations or by organizing formal workshops or round-tables, during which initial ideas are discussed and the information is collected. Once the data are collected and initial consultations conducted, the donor agency then develops project proposals either by hiring an international consultant or a consulting company or by involving their program staff (TM-ENV01; TM-ENV02; TM-ENV03 TM-ENV05; TM-ENV07). After the proposal is developed, it is formally submitted to the project beneficiary by writing a note verbale to MFA and requesting that it forward the note verbale to a relevant government recipient agency. Any flow of communication in either direction is always maintained via the MFA. This standard procedure has been in effect since the early-2000s, as discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

Taking into account that most environmental projects are funded by GEF and implemented by UNDP, GEF has been involved as an additional player in this interaction. All project proposals requiring GEF funding were submitted to GEF after approval of the projects by implementing donor agencies and the national project beneficiaries. This is done by sending an endorsement letter signed by the Minister of Nature Protection along with the Project Identification Form prepared by the implementing donor agency (TM-ENV04; TM-ENV05; TM-ENV07).

The actual procedures were the same as the officially required procedures; yet, there were some opportunities for informal interaction when developing project proposals, especially for local staff of donor agencies who could meet their counterparts from the national recipient agencies without formal communication (TM-ENV01; TM-ENV02; TM-ENV06).

B) Formal procedures and actual practices for interaction in project/program implementation

The government focal points involved in the implementation of environmental projects consisted mainly of project-level focal points (i.e., the Ministry of Nature Protection and agencies affiliated with it, the Ministry of Water Economy, etc.), and political-level focal points (i.e., the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its relevant sections). Project-level recipient ministries assigned a senior-level official to serve as the National Project Coordinator (NPC). As most of the environment sector projects have been implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Nature Protection, either the Deputy Minister or the Minister of Nature Protection serves as the NPC for most of the donor-funded projects. Other ministries which have been directly or indirectly involved in the environment sector projects have their International Relations Divisions, the heads of which normally serve as the focal points for donor-funded projects (TM-ENV02; TM-ENV04; TM-ENV07).

In line with the official procedures, donors interact with all government focal points through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see Box 8.6). As in the governance and rural development sectors, donor agencies are required to write notes verbales to the MFA on all issues related to project implementation, which the MFA then forwards to relevant project-level focal points (TM-ENV01; TM-ENV02; TM-ENV04; TM-ENV06; TM-ENV07). Working meetings with project-level focal points for expatriate staff are also arranged through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Box 8.6: Donors' interaction with national partners in the environment sector (Turkmenistan)

"All interaction was done through official channels. In reality, our local staff can meet with beneficiaries without formal requests [i.e., sending a note verbale to via MFA]; they can go to local ministries, talk to them, discuss projects, get their initial informal feedback, etc. Expat employees cannot do this." (TM-ENV01, multilateral agency respondent)

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a central role in this interaction: all communication between donors and government recipients takes places through the MFA." (TM-ENV02, multilateral agency respondent)

"National Program Officers or project staff have informal meetings and face-to-face conversations with the Ministry [of Nature Protection]. For Deputy Resident Representative or Resident Representative [expatriate staff members], we have to write a note verbale to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requesting a meeting with government counterparts. Informally, expats have an opportunity to chat during receptions, workshops or other public gatherings." (TM-ENV04, multilateral agency respondent)

"Official procedures to meet with local partners are based on written requests for meetings. Expats could make a direct phone call (if proficient in Russian), but again, meetings were arranged by sending notes verbales to MFA. However, expats could meet and discuss issues during conferences and other public events organized by the government . . . National staff members can have more open interaction with government officials." (TM-ENV06, multilateral agency respondent)

However, in practice, there were some opportunities for the expatriate staff to interact with government focal points during formal events, such as conferences and workshops (TM-ENV04; TM-ENV06). For the local staff of donor agencies, there appeared to be no restrictions; they could meet with project-level focal points without submitting formal requests (TM-ENV01; TM-ENV04; TM-ENV06). Finally, local staff members of PIUs located on the premises of a government agency have greater flexibility and can interact with government counterparts without any formal barriers on a daily basis. As stressed by one of the

respondents who previously worked with a donor-funded project located in a government building, "as the PIU members, we were almost like part of the ministry's structure and had regular interaction with the ministry's senior officials" (TM-ENV02) (see also Box 8.6).

8.4.4. Key pain points affecting donor-recipient relations in the environment sector

8.4.4.1. The pain points from the perspective of government recipients

Several pain paints identified in previous chapters appear to apply to the environment sector as well, including:

- Rigid project implementation process based on donor procedures;
- Limited involvement of local recipients in project/program design; and
- Spending large proportion of a project budget for international consultancy fees.

Based on the interview data and the review of primary and secondary sources, the following pain points have been experienced by government recipients in their interaction with donors:

A) Limited project ownership (all years)

As stressed in Section 8.3.4, limited government ownership of development projects has several characteristics, including whether or not the government recipients are involved in selection of project consultants, procurement of goods and services, and implementation of project activities in general. A UNDP project evaluation notes that "apart from the Deputy Minister in his role as the National Project Coordinator, there is no evidence that any staff have been deployed to work with the Project's management". It further stresses that "the Project appears to be working in isolation from the Ministry and [it] displays no ownership" (Edwards, 2012, p. 5). Another evaluation report (Williams, 2014) for the same project noted that the UNDP Country Office (UNDP-CO) was essentially involved in every aspect of project administration even though the project's implementation was based on the national execution modality, in line with which the projects should be managed and administered by the national partners:

> The project was implemented under UNDP Nationally Executed (NEX) modalities with the Ministry of Nature Protection (MNP) as the project's Executing Agency. However, all contractual payments were made directly by the UNDP-CO. As such, the UNDP-CO [country office] managed all project funds, including budgetary planning, monitoring, revisions, disbursements, record keeping, reporting and auditing. (p. 11) (see also Box 8.7)

Box 8.7: Project implementation issues in the environment sector interaction (Turkmenistan)
"Projects were implemented by our office, plus people hired under the SSA contracts [special service agreement]. It was a pure self-implementation." (TM-ENV06, multilateral agency respondent)
"They [government counterparts] were interested in using UNDP procedures. For example, they were interested in doing all the procurement through UNDP and in line with UNDP procedures to avoid responsibility." (TM-ENV07, multilateral agency respondent)

Two of the interviewed government officials also mentioned that national recipients are no longer involved in the selection of project experts and consultants (TM-ENV03; TM-ENV05) as was the case previously in the 2000s. Speaking of the ownership, one of these respondents stressed the importance for the MONP to build its own capacity to apply to GEF funding, whose resources are mostly mobilized by the UNDP Country Office on behalf of the Ministry of Nature Protection and who charges significant management fees (between

5% to 7% of the total mobilized GEF funding). The management fees, according to this respondent, are indirect losses for the government, who otherwise could have used these funds for national initiatives (TM-ENV05).

B) Donors' preference to hire English-speaking project experts and staff (all years)

According to two of the interviewed government officials, donor agencies preferred to hire English-speaking project managers and other staff with little or no knowledge of environmental issues (TM-ENV03; TM-ENV05). According to one of them (TM-ENV03):

> Donors bring in incompetent people to manage their projects. Local project staff are mostly skilled in English, but they are not specialists in environmental issues. They hire people who suit their needs, i.e., those who have the ability to speak and write in English. Environmental projects should hire people having good knowledge of environmental issues, not good language specialists.

While this observation might be valid from the recipients' perspective, the lack of qualified local environmental experts and consultants was repeatedly identified as a barrier to effective implementation of environmental projects (Edwards, 2011; Brann, 2014). As noted in the UNDP project evaluation, "recruiting qualified local project managers and experts is an ongoing challenge, partly due to the limited number of qualified professionals in the country", resulting in "the fact that there are situations where one person is managing more than one project" (Lenoci, 2014, p. 28).

8.4.4.2. The pain points from the perspective of donors

Some of the pain points from the donors' perspective have been discussed in previous chapters, including:

- Lack of reliable baseline data;
- Limited opportunities to engage local NGOs in donor-funded projects;
- Lengthy government procedures stemming from centralized decision-making system; and
- Reluctance of local project beneficiaries to interact with donors until the green light is given by the central authorities.

These pain points can also be observed in environment sector interaction as discussed below. The *lack of reliable baseline data and statistics* was mentioned in the environmental projects of UNDP and GIZ (Lenoci, 2014; Melikyan, 2017; Annaklycheva, 2002) and lack of detailed public expenditures in the environmental and energy sectors was emphasized in the Environmental Performance Review for Turkmenistan (UNECE, 2012). Regarding the *involvement of NGOs*, while in other countries they play an important role in advocating for policy changes in the environment sector, NGOs appeared to play an extremely limited role in Turkmenistan's environment sector. According to the USAID-funded Biodiversity Assessment for Turkmenistan produced in 2001, the involvement of local NGOs in donor-funded environmental activities 'has been problematic' (Chemonics International, 2001b, p. 33) in the sense that these NGOs had to work under difficult circumstances with limited opportunities for conducting environmental monitoring. The introduction of these provisions, according to UNECE, had "a considerable impact on public participation on environmental matters" (2012, p. 66). As for the *government's centralized decision-making system* and generally complex working environment, these challenges remained unchanged since the beginning of Turkmenistan's interaction with donors. A number of project evaluations identified them as key barriers to implementation of donor-funded projects (Ballard-Tremeer, 2007; Brann, 2014; Edwards, 2012; Lenoci, 2014; Porter, 2005; UNECE, 2012; USAID, 2017). The fourth pain point – *reluctance to cooperate in the absence of authorization from higher levels of authority* – has been observed in environmental projects as

well, in addition to other sectors. A UNDP project evaluation notes that provincial and district level partners "have engaged quite energetically and mostly enthusiastically once official bureaucratic procedures have been complied with, but remain hesitant of cooperation and giving necessary information until such authorisation has been given" (Edwards, 2012, p. 5). A related observation was made in relation to GIZ's project on combating desertification in the late 1990s:

> The co-operation on the community level was usually more formal and superficial. It was observed that most of the people in the group did not feel free to express their opinions and views, even if they were the members of one community and had the same interest and problems. The situation was even worse when the representatives of village authorities attended the meetings (Annaklycheva, 2002, p. 98).

In addition to the four pain points discussed above, the following two issues should be mentioned that are specific to the environment sector:

A) Political weakness of the Ministry of Nature Protection

Unlike government agencies in charge of extractive industries, the Ministry of Nature Protection does not generate revenues and is fully dependent on state funding. The Ministry appears to have had limited powers within the government structure at all times. UNDP's 2005 environmental outcome evaluation notes that the ministry "is undoubtedly much weaker politically than ministries such as agriculture and water" (Porter, 2005, p. 24). More recent evaluations come to similar conclusions. The 2011 UNDP project evaluation emphasizes that the weakness of the ministry does not allow it to drive environmental policy changes in the country, "working carefully within the strongly centralised and regulated system" (Edwards, 2011, p. 36). Likewise, the 2014 project evaluation characterizes the Ministry of Nature Protection as "marginalized and disempowered" and weakest of all eight government agencies supervised by a Deputy Chair of Cabinet of Ministers in charge of the agro-industrial complex, water and nature protection issues (Williams, 2014, p. 13). The recent renaming of MONP to State Committee for Nature Protection and Land Resources in 2016, and its amalgamation with the Ministry of Agriculture in 2019 appear to support this argument.

B) The disconnect between economic development goals and environmental objectives

Turkmenistan is one of the largest natural gas producers in the region and the hydrocarbon sector is the main source of state revenues. As stated in the Environmental Performance Review for Turkmenistan, "the production and export of oil and gas can cause severe damage to the environment and there are no publicly available data which ensure that preventive measures are taken during these activities" (UNECE, 2012, p. xxx). In addition, Turkmenistan is one of the major cotton producers in Central Asia and irrigation methods used in cotton cultivation cause serious damage to environment, contributing to soil contamination and degradation (FAO, 2013). Achievement of the country's environmental objectives and implementation of its international environmental obligations, therefore, might be undermined by the government's wider economic development goals based on natural gas extraction and cotton cultivation and their further exportation to the world markets.

8.5. Conclusion

This chapter presented the final case study of the thesis, i.e., donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector. Environment sector interaction appears to be less sensitive than in the governance sector as the environmental projects mainly deal with somewhat less politicized issues and challenges unless these

projects have regional implications and involve several countries pursuing their own national interests and agendas. Moreover, environmental projects generally do not aim at changing the political systems of the countries. Although they can affect the governance systems of the two countries by promoting institutional and policy changes related to environmental governance, their impact on domestic politics and overall political climate appears to be somewhat limited.

By committing to engage in environment sector cooperation, the two countries also ultimately have to balance their environmental commitments with important national economic objectives. This balancing act requires them to comply with their obligations in the area of environment and sustainable development; it also requires them to implement their commitments in line with the endorsed donor-funded environmental programs and projects, at the same time prioritizing the development of profit-generating industries (e.g., extractive industries, agriculture and mining). These industries are important components of their economies, the revenues from which contribute significantly to the formation of national budgets.

Both countries acceded to a number of international environmental treaties and conventions and used them as the framework to pursue cooperation with development partners. This treaty-based interaction evolved thematically with various treaties forming the basis for interaction since the mid-1990s. As well, both countries were involved in a range of regional environmental initiatives along with other Central Asian countries supported by donors and development agencies. Regionalization of environmental cooperation has been an important feature of donor-recipient interaction in Central Asia, and both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan appeared to express their commitments to solving regional environmental challenges by participating in donor-funded projects and programs, agreeing to host international and regional events and expressing a willingness to accommodate regional bodies. Yet, the daily donor-recipient interaction in designing and implementing environmental projects in the two countries have differed.

Kyrgyzstan's engagement with donors in the environment sector for the most part has been direct as in the other two sectors. It also involved multiple actors representing resident and non-resident donors, local and international non-governmental players. This cooperation resulted in the adoption of important environmental policy documents, with Kyrgyzstan becoming the first post-Soviet country to develop its National Environmental Action Plan and Environmental Security Concept. The interaction in designing and implementing projects and programs has evolved in an environment with relatively greater political freedoms and allowed donors and recipients to interact directly with each other (Hypothesis 1). At the same time, lacking abundant natural resources, Kyrgyzstan's participation in donor-funded projects was motivated by access to funding, the attraction of which required a willingness to compromise and to build a donor-friendly political system (Hypothesis 2).

Nevertheless, the daily interaction was affected by several pain points, including the political weakness of national authorities in charge of environmental policies, limited public investment in the environment sector, donors' competition for funding and limited national ownership of development projects. In addition, two other important characteristics of donor-recipient interaction in Kyrgyzstan deserving attention are the side effects of relative political and economic freedoms. While the relatively free political environment allows local communities to express their disagreements, it also makes it possible for them to oppose (in certain cases) the implementation of donor-funded projects. As for the latter, privatization of the state property and the mining sector in particular, as well as the increasing number of license holders for mining activities (while in itself could be seen as a sign of successful market transition) runs counter to the

government's environmental objectives, especially taking into account the imperfect mining sector legislation and weak regulatory framework.

As in governance and rural development sectors, the environment sector interaction in Kyrgyzstan is characterized by active involvement of local and international NGOs in donor-funded projects, availability of joint trust funds, joint cooperation strategies and government's coordination platforms devised to ensure more coordinated delivery of donors' support. These are some of the examples of how donors and the government have facilitated the implementation of aid governance principles on both country and regional levels. Yet, the implementation of these principles was affected by a range of pain points both from donors' and the recipients' perspectives, as in the other two sectors (Hypothesis 4). The relevance of Hypothesis 5 appears to be limited, in the sense that the 9/11 events and Kyrgyzstan's subsequent involvement in the US-led war on terror had a limited influence on donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector.

In Turkmenistan, the government has been generally more open for cooperation with donors in the environment sector, compared to the governance and the rural development sectors. In addition, on several occasions, the government has advocated for the use of universal approaches and solutions to addressing environmental challenges (e.g., combating Aral Sea degradation, trans-boundary water management). Unlike in the governance sector, in which the government has consistently resisted applying universal democracy-building principles and global human rights values, it appeared not to have objected to this universalism in the environment sector. Nevertheless, donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector (as in the other two sectors) evolved in a restrictive political context where access to environmental data has been limited. The daily management of aid-funded projects and programs has taken place under similar conditions, i.e., it was subject to detailed government control and scrutiny (Hypothesis 1). On the other hand, Turkmenistan's revenues from the hydrocarbon sector allowed it to invest significant amounts of own funds for large environmental projects, thus reducing reliance on external donors (Hypothesis 2).

Despite a relatively more active interaction in the environment sector, this interaction was affected by the political weakness of the national authorities in charge of environmental issues, which underwent several structural transformations recently. In addition, as a country whose economy depends on natural gas and cotton production, the implementation of Turkmenistan's environmental objectives pursued within the framework of donor-funded environmental projects can also be undermined by the country's continuous reliance on extractive industries and involvement in unsustainable farming practices. Same is true in Kyrgyzstan too, as its mining and agriculture sectors continue to be important sources of domestic funding.

As in other two sectors, the involvement of local NGOs in donor-funded projects has been limited to a few local environmental NGOs (some of which were affiliated with the government), although the number of international NGOs involved in the environmental projects and programs appeared to be more diverse compared to interaction in the other two sectors. While the involvement of a limited number of non-governmental actors runs counter to the Accra and Busan agreements, mostly donor-driven coordination efforts and donors' underutilization of national systems are at variance with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which advocates for greater national ownership of development projects (Hypothesis 4). As in Kyrgyzstan, Hypothesis 5 appears to have limited relevance in Turkmenistan as well, given that Turkmenistan's involvement in the global war on terror was minimal and it abstained from participating in most of the regional economic, political and security initiatives except in the environment sector.

The analysis of donor-recipient interaction in the environment sector shows that there appear to be greater opportunities for policy and technical dialogues, once the dialogue has been established on the political level, which revolves around "diplomatic and geopolitical issues" (Swedlund, 2017, p. 61). Politically, both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have agreed to cooperate on a range of regional environmental issues as part of the international environmental treaties ratified by them. They have also agreed to set up various regional institutions to follow-up on the implementation of those treaties, and supported those institutions in different ways (e.g., logistically, politically, etc.). This laid the ground for further interaction on technical and policy issues, which, compared to governance sector interaction, appeared to be more diverse in the environment sector (especially in Turkmenistan) (Hypothesis 3). In addition, compared to other sectors, Turkmenistan's cooperation in the environment sector, despite taking place in a restrictive context, appeared to be more active and involved activities in diverse areas. In the governance sector, Turkmenistan avoided implementing activities in several politically sensitive areas (e.g., political parties, combating corruption, etc.), successfully limiting donors' involvement in these areas (Hypothesis 3). In the environment sector, therefore, despite Hypotheses 1 and 2 being the dominant narratives, Hypothesis 3 could take precedence over Hypothesis 1. This was especially noticeable in relation to Turkmenistan and its involvement in donor-led environmental initiatives.

The main theoretical implication of these findings is that in less politically sensitive sectors, the recipient governments' interaction with donors can be more dynamic, with recipients showing a greater degree of receptivity to donors' initiatives and greater willingness to adapt. The comparative summary of rural development sector findings for Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan is provided in Table 8.3, which also covers sectoral differences and similarities.

Table 8.3: Comparative summary of environment sector findings: Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan

Issues	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmenistan
▪ *Government's objectives*	Radioactive waste management and utilization; improving water quality; land degradation; biodiversity conservation; natural disasters and emergency preparedness; grazing and unsustainable agriculture; energy efficiency; regional environmental cooperation	Improving water quality; water scarcity; land degradation; biodiversity conservation; desertification; energy efficiency; environmental impact assessment for oil and gas sectors; regional environmental cooperation
▪ *Sector sensitivity*	Less sensitive compared to the governance sector	Less sensitive compared to the other two sectors
▪ *Issues contributing to sector sensitivity*	Politically weak environmental authorities and their structural changes; Misalignment of environmental objectives with government's support to agricultural and mining sectors; Limited public investments	Politically weak environmental authorities and their structural changes; Misalignment of environmental objectives with government's support to agriculture (e.g., cotton production) and extractive industries
▪ *Opportunities to make 'credible commitments'*	Appear to be stronger than in the governance sector due to the less political nature of environmental projects	Appear to be stronger than in the governance and rural development sectors
▪ *Degree of interaction*	Direct, decentralized interaction	Indirect, centralized interaction
▪ *Role of government intermediaries*	Limited during most of the 1990s and 2000s; Some attempts have been made in the early 2010s to channel the interaction through Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Strong, with all interaction being maintained through the MFA
▪ *Involvement of NGOs*	Encouraged by the government; A large number of NGOs working in the environment sector, performing various functions as part of donor-funded projects	Same as in the other two sectors. However, a few local environmental NGOs are actively involved in donor-funded projects; Also, the involvement of international environmental NGOs appears to be more active than the other two sectors
▪ *Availability of sectoral coordination mechanisms*	Thematic groups established as part of the Development Partners Coordination Council; Also, there are regional coordination platforms supported by main donors	Donor's thematic group on environment established; Also, there are regional coordination platforms supported by main donors
▪ *Participation of government officials in donors' coordination mechanisms*	Participate regularly, including in regional environmental platforms	Participated more actively in the 1990s; Limited participation as of the early-2000s; However, regular participation in regional environmental platforms
▪ *Participation of donor agencies' expatriate staff in daily project/program interaction*	Active, with direct engagement with government counterparts	Limited, due to the necessity to request government approvals for any project/program-related interaction
▪ *Role of donor agencies' local staff in project/program interaction*	Important	Highly important, given that the expatriate staff do not have direct interaction with government counterparts
▪ *Involvement of donors in formulation of sectoral development policies*	High	Donors' involvement in formulation of environmental policies appears to be more active than in other two sectors

Chapter 9 | Conclusion

9.1. Introduction

This thesis provides a comparative analysis of donor-recipient interaction in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The analysis has evolved within two dimensions: one that has compared donor-recipient interaction in general in the two countries, and the other that has compared the interaction within the three development sectors: governance, rural development and environment.

This thesis contributes to the existing knowledge on aid relations in general (Mosse, 2004; 2005; 2011; Ferguson, 1994; Swedlund, 2017), and aid relations in countries of the former Soviet Union and Central Asia in particular (Wedel, 2001; Atlani-Duault, 2007). Specifically, the contribution to knowledge of this thesis is three-fold. First, it expands the knowledge on the agency of the recipient government by putting it at the core of the analysis. While the existing literature on aid management focuses extensively on normative prescriptions on how aid should be co-managed by the recipient governments, little (apart from Swedlund's and Mosse's works) appears to be written on what the recipient governments actually do in managing aid. Second, it explores the regional (i.e., Central Asian) dimension of aid management, situated in broader geopolitical developments. By comparing the behavior of the two countries in engaging with the external donors across various development aid sectors, this thesis contributes to the existing comparative analyses of Central Asian countries. However, it broadens that knowledge by focusing on the comparison of cross-sectoral aid interaction, in which research is scarce. Thirdly, it provides a detailed account of how development aid has been managed in Turkmenistan, a research area that remains largely unexplored and under-researched. Previous studies on Turkmenistan's relations with the external players mainly focused on the politics of hydrocarbon resources, as well as economic and political aspects of post-Soviet transition (Peyrouse, 2012; Anceschi, 2009; Olcott, 2005; Cummings & Ochs, 2002; Sabol, 2010), with very little written on how donors and recipients interacted on a daily basis.

This concluding chapter briefly reviews theoretical and practical issues related to the management of development aid. It emphasizes that using a political economy perspective (that looks at structural conditions within which aid interactions take place) along with international relations theories (that look at macro-level geopolitical factors) and new institutional economics (that looks at micro-level issues) can produce a more comprehensive analysis of aid interactions, covering the dynamics on micro- and macro-levels. This concluding chapter also discusses research limitations and provides a summary of key findings across both countries as well as aid sectors. Finally, it suggests new areas for further research and provides final concluding remarks.

9.2. Contextualizing aid interactions across countries and sectors

Most of the studies on foreign aid have focused on its effectiveness and explored its impact on economic growth and development in the recipient countries. Several generations of aid effectiveness studies have explored this linkage at length. Foreign aid has become a prominent subject in the area of international development since the origination of the concept in the late-1940s. Some theories (e.g., modernization) suggested that aid had played an important role in boosting economic growth in developing countries and allowed them to 'take off'. Other theories were extremely critical of foreign aid, arguing that it made poor countries dependent and exposed them to unequal relations with richer countries (e.g., dependency theory), and suggesting that aid contributed to corruption and generally perpetuated poverty rather than addressing it (e.g., neoliberalism). Alternatively, proponents of new institutional economics argued that aid

could be instrumental in achieving developmental objectives in countries where good policies and inclusive institutions were established.

Because foreign aid interactions are complex, evolve in environments with constantly changing conditions, and involve multiple players with different motivations and interests, analyzing this interaction within a single theoretical framework does not appear to produce a comprehensive picture of "how aid happens" (Wedel, 1998, p. 6). Utilizing propositions from the political economy, international relations, and new institutional economics offers a more inclusive framework that captures key attributes of this interaction on both micro- and macro-levels. This thesis attempted to demonstrate that integrating context-specific historical, social, economic and political factors with larger geopolitical developments allows understanding the behavioral models adopted by the recipient countries in their interaction with donors. Furthermore, the thesis attempts to show that the recipients' behavior is not homogenous in that they do not use them uniformly across all development sectors in maintaining their relations with donors. As this thesis suggests, the recipient countries tend to adopt different behavior within various development sectors, depending on whether or not the interaction within those sectors has the potential to weaken or reinforce the regime's foundations.

Aid interaction, as Swedlund (2017) rightly observes, is like a dance, with two partners engaging in the tango. In certain parts of the world, the tango is popular and if one talks about dance, the tango would be a logical choice. However, in the Central Asian context, dance does not involve tactile contact between dancers. Here, the preferred choice is a non-contact dance. Dancers do not touch each other, yet their interaction has all the components of a dance: physical movements, music and emotions (joy, sometimes anger about the partners' way of dancing, or even indifference). A non-contact dance, unlike the tango, requires less physical coordination since the partners do not touch each other; they do not lead and are not being led. Yet, there are still rules. Partners are supposed to look occasionally at each other's eyes in order to show respect and to move in a way that would somehow be aligned with each other's movements. After all, it is not respectful when partners behave as if they are involved in completely different activities.

When more experienced outside dancers come to a new dancing ground, they will try to impose a new dancing style on local dancers. The process of negotiating which dancing style to use is similar to negotiating the process of delivering aid and prioritizing aid sectors. When local dancers have certain advantages (e.g., fancy clothes, shiny shoes – i.e., oil, natural gas, other resources) or some other partners to dance with (e.g., a partner from a nearby neighborhood willing to dance the local dancers' way – i.e., non-traditional donors), their behaviour will tend to be uncertain. They might not want to learn a different dancing style; even if they decide to learn, they will probably only learn those movements which they like the most (i.e., aid sectors). When local dancers do not have a lot of advantages, realizing that they would gain from learning a new dancing style, they would tend to be more predictable, and even more congenial. The interplay of local dancers' personal advantages and disadvantages, therefore, shapes their behaviors when interacting with the outside dancers, just as it does in aid interactions. Thus, the first key message of this thesis is that aid interactions should be contextualized across not only countries but also the development sectors within which the interaction takes place.

9.3. Reconstructing the agency of aid recipients

The second key message is the importance of reconstructing the agency of aid recipients. The analysis of donor-recipient relations within the framework of the dominant discourse on foreign aid portrays aid

recipients as passive players, dependent on foreign aid and having a range of disadvantages in bargaining with donors (Whitfield & Fraser, 2010). The notion that aid recipients are passive agents in aid interactions is widespread; it is partly supported by the fact that current aid governance architecture has been devised by donors and remains donor-led for the most part (Riddell, 2007). Yet, as the evidence rejecting the recipients' passivity is gradually accumulated, it becomes obvious that the agency of recipient actors should not be downplayed; that they are indeed able to pursue their objectives and protect their interests.

As this thesis has argued, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have used different techniques to protect their interests in maintaining their relations with foreign donors and used this interaction for their own benefits. Kyrgyzstan has managed to take advantage of a shifting security paradigm in the early 2000s. By agreeing to host the U.S. airbase following 9/11, it has minimized the Western governments' pressure for governance reforms, which allowed the Akayev government to increase the role of the executive branch to the detriment of participatory democracy. Kyrgyzstan has also been successful in attracting significant amounts of foreign aid following the 2005 revolution, with the Bakiyev government securing the agreement of major donors to support his government's reform efforts, while at the same time continuing to consolidate his personal power. Likewise, in the aftermath of the 2010 revolution, the new government has organized a series of high-level donor conferences securing donors' commitment to support the new reform agenda (who agreed to pledge millions of dollars in development grants and loans), while at the same time minimizing their influence in areas deemed highly sensitive for nation-building (e.g., interethnic dialogue). In Turkmenistan, while donor-recipient interaction has been more limited in scope and the government's approach to working with donors was highly centralized, it could still reap certain dividends from this interaction (especially reputational dividends intended for external and domestic audiences) while at the same time downplaying donors' pressure for political and governance reforms. Further, both countries appeared to benefit from the increasing presence of non-OECD donors (e.g., China, Russia) whose financial support has played an important role in domestic economic development and who have not required governance reforms in return.

The examples of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan demonstrate that the recipient governments' agency is not always that of a passive and compliant actor in the donor-recipient interaction. Their experiences of interacting with external donors and counterbalancing relations between OECD and non-OECD donors show that they used various tactics to derive benefits from donors while at the same time pursuing their objectives. They also took advantage of what Whitfield and Fraser (2010) call 'structural conditions', a range of contextual opportunities (e.g., geopolitical factors) which helped them to increase their bargaining powers. The agency of recipient governments deserves much attention from theoretical and policy perspectives, especially in Central Asia, where various recently launched regional economic integration initiatives co-exist (e.g., Eurasian Economic Union, 'One Road One Belt' Initiative, Shanghai Cooperation Organization) along with the Western development agenda.

9.4. Summary of key findings

In exploring the cross-country and cross-sectoral donor-recipient interaction in the two countries, I have used the following hypotheses:

- **Hypothesis 1:** That the nature of the recipient country's regime is a significant factor in how it interacts with donors: a more open, democratic regime will be more amenable to donors' initiatives.
- **Hypothesis 2:** That the country's level of dependence on foreign aid or, conversely, its access to non-aid revenue such as revenue from hydrocarbons, will affect how the government and donors interact:

the more dependent the country is on foreign aid, the more amenable will the recipient government be to donors' initiatives.

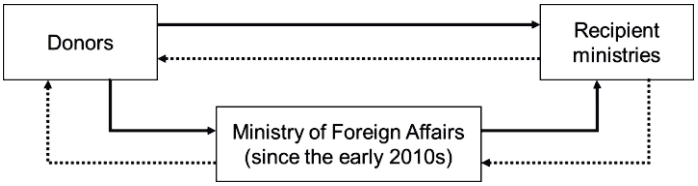
- **Hypothesis 3:** That the nature of the donor-recipient interactions differs from one sector to another. Specifically, that the more politically sensitive is the sector or the more the sector is likely to affect the nature or survival of the recipient country's regime, the more the recipient government tries to avoid, deflect, and/or distort donors' initiatives in that sector.
- **Hypothesis 4:** That, while donors and the governments are expected to express rhetorical support for the international donor-recipient compacts, the implementation of aid-funded initiatives is not characterized by universal application of those principles and standards by donors and governments across all aid-funded sectors. Rather, that recipient governments and donors apply those principles selectively across different aid sectors, departing from the agreed commitments based on their immediate interests and objectives.
- **Hypothesis 5:** That the way foreign aid is managed in and by Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan is affected by the geopolitical importance attached to these recipient countries by Western donors within the framework of the wider "war on terror" and the global and regional politics of hydrocarbon resources.

What conclusions can we draw regarding these hypotheses? The following sub-sections discuss the key findings with regard to donor-recipient interaction in the two countries.

Hypotheses 1 and 2

Kyrgyzstan's political regime has evolved into one of the most open and democratic in Central Asia. While Kyrgyzstan is not probably the best example of liberal Western democracy, its regime facilitated the emergence of political contestation and activism, allowed relatively independent mass media and generally did not oppose the emergence local NGOs and civil society organizations, which thrived and became professionally engaged in political, economic and social spheres. It has also embraced active interaction with external donors and has become one of the largest recipients of development assistance in the region. Not a country rich in natural resources, Kyrgyzstan viewed aid interaction as one of the ways to attract external financial resources in order to address its development challenges, especially during the early years of independence when the socio-economic situation following the collapse of the Soviet Union was harsh. The lack of domestic financial resources forced Kyrgyzstan to resort to foreign aid, which in turn led it to adopt an open model of interaction with donors, allowing its recipient institutions to work directly with donor agencies. However, beginning in the early-2010s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became increasingly assertive in demanding that donors communicate via the MFA; the situation did not change much as donors and recipients continued to interact directly, for the most part, creating a mix of direct and indirect interaction channels (see Figure 9.1).

Figure 9.1: Donor-recipient interaction in Kyrgyzstan



Kyrgyzstan was generally more amenable to donors' initiatives than Turkmenistan. Indeed, donor-recipient interaction in Kyrgyzstan was one of the most active in Central Asia; Kyrgyzstan has volunteered to become

a pilot country in a range of donor-funded initiatives; it has developed poverty reduction strategies at the time when its neighbors rejected the mere notion of the existence of poverty in their countries. These arguments support Hypotheses 1 and 2, i.e., that the nature of the political regime and the country's dependence on aid have a significant impact on donor-recipient interaction.

At the same time, it should be noted that the more open and democratic regime has its drawbacks. While allowing leeway for government recipients as well as local NGOs, CSOs and other local actors to interact with donors freely, it also contributed to a certain degree of uncertainty in managing aid interactions. Members of Parliament delaying loan agreements due to protracted parliamentary approval procedures, local communities resisting implementation of donor projects, and local recipients approaching any donors to ask for parallel funds are just a few examples of how a relatively open political regime can undermine the principles of development aid effectiveness promulgated in the Paris Declaration and other policy documents. Although donors and the government have established relevant institutions to coordinate aid-funded projects in various sectors, the rules of engagement were not clearly defined, since any donor agency (and its subcontracted partners from home countries) could approach any government recipients as well as a large number of non-government recipients at any time. All of this taken together made development coordination difficult to achieve, which is more of a problem for the central government and OECD donors (as they are jointly expected to implement the provisions of aid effectiveness policies), rather than for individual government agencies, large number of NGOs and donor-affiliated subcontractors who appear to benefit from this situation. The attempts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan (since the early 2010s) to introduce central government control of donors' activities (i.e., all donors being requested to inform the MFA of their project and program activities) could be seen as one of the ways to regulate the disorganized behavior of actors on both sides.

Nevertheless, in Kyrgyzstan, one can observe a greater tendency for establishing and using 'collective-choice arrangements' (Ostrom, 1990). A wide range of coordination mechanisms set up by both donors and the government, donors' joint country cooperation strategies, sector-wide approaches in certain areas, and other collective-choice arrangements have been used to manage aid-funded activities. In managing these activities, the principle of tit-for-tat appeared to have been practised since the country began its interaction with donors. While donors provided development grants and loans, the country responded by agreeing to implement transition reforms and maintaining a moderately open political system, with relatively free media and a dynamic NGO sector. This type of positive reciprocity has been one of the key features of donor-recipient interaction in Kyrgyzstan.

Unlike in Kyrgyzstan, the political regime has remained highly centralized since Turkmenistan gained its independence in 1991. Its political system remained dominated by a single political party until the early 2010s. The establishment of two new political parties (i.e., the Agrarian Party and the Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs) did not introduce substantial changes to domestic politics and the absence of political contestation continued to be the key feature of Turkmenistan's governance system. At the same time, mass media and the civil society sector remained state-controlled. During the first decade of independence, there appeared to be greater opportunities for donors to implement their projects and programs and they could interact more or less directly with local recipients. However, as the political regime became increasingly centralized and took its current form, the government built a system whereby any actions on the donors' side became subject to strict government control and scrutiny. This system, based on the MFA acting as the channel of communication on any issues related to donor-funded projects, required that foreign donors

interact with local recipients through the exchange of notes verbales submitted via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2: Donor-recipient interaction in Turkmenistan

Establishment of this MFA-facilitated donor-recipient interaction could be viewed, in all likelihood, as an attempt to bring development policy cooperation into the realm of foreign policy, irrespective of the development aid sectors involved. In addition, joint documents (such as the cooperation strategies, country program documents, etc.) co-signed by donors and government recipients were sanitized by the government to exclude certain highly sensitive words (e.g., 'poverty', 'inequality'). Furthermore, the government took measures to regulate the activities of local non-governmental organizations, by introducing strict legal procedures for registration of the NGOs. These changes decreased the opportunities for donors to involve independent local NGOs in project/program implementation, serving as an institutional mechanism introduced by the government to resist the external intervention in domestic policy issues. Therefore, donors had to operate within the limited 'structure of opportunities' (Ostrom, 2007) in Turkmenistan.

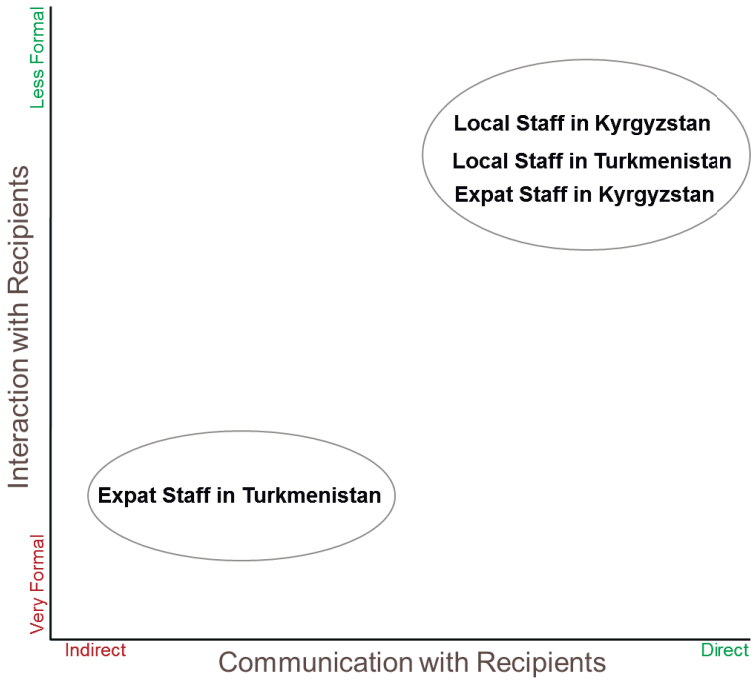
Having mentioned these facts, it should also be emphasized that the availability of rich hydrocarbon resources allowed Turkmenistan to generate enough revenues to fund most of its domestic development projects, including large infrastructure projects in rural areas, towns and the capital city. Turkmenistan's interaction with foreign donors, therefore, appears to correlate with the nature of its political system and availability of non-aid revenues, which supports Hypotheses 1 and 2. Nevertheless, even in this authority-intensive and control-based environment, localized collective action institutions emerged. Namely, local staff of donor agencies played a decisive role in donor-recipient interaction, in both project/program design and implementation. Unlike expatriate development staff members, the interaction of donor agencies' local staff members with government recipients has not been subject to strict government control. They generally interacted with government recipients freely, without having to submit official requests for meetings.

The number and intensity of collective-choice arrangements appears to be much more limited than in Kyrgyzstan. Yet, some arrangements were still in place, through which the government recipients and donors attempted to work together and coordinate their actions (e.g., UN Development Assistance Framework documents prepared by UN agencies and government recipients, joint projects, various thematic coordination groups). However, they appeared to be initiated more on a bilateral than on a multilateral level, with government preferring to work with donors individually, only rarely bringing them together on an ad-hoc basis. The absence of a national aid coordination mechanism in Turkmenistan, as the macro-level collective-choice arrangement for managing and coordinating aid-funded projects, indicates Turkmenistan's preference for a series of bilateral collective-choice arrangements over multilateral. It should also be noted that, in implementing aid-funded initiatives, the preference was given to the United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds and programs.

In addition, Figure 9.3 illustrates the extent of formality and directness of interaction between the recipient organizations and the local and expatriate staff members of donor agencies. As stressed previously, while

expatriate and local staff members of donor agencies had less formal and more direct interaction with recipients in Kyrgyzstan, in Turkmenistan only local staff members enjoyed that flexibility, playing a pivotal role in everyday project/program implementation, which could be viewed as an example of adaptive interaction (Ramalingam, 2014) (see Figure 9.3).

Figure 9.3: Donor-recipient interaction in project/program design and implementation



Hypothesis 3

Despite Kyrgyzstan generally being more open to cooperating with donors, when it came to protecting its interests in response to hostile actions on the side of the donors, the government has reciprocated by using a negative tit-for-tat strategy (e.g., renunciation of the US-Kyrgyzstan cooperation agreement). This behavior indicates that in certain sensitive areas (e.g., inter-ethnic issues, religious extremism), the government's flexibility and openness have their limits, which supports Hypotheses 3 and 5; i.e., that the nature of donor-recipient interaction differs from one sector to another, with the government trying to avoid or deflect donors' initiatives in sensitive areas, and that geopolitics affects the management of aid. At the same time, in other less sensitive sectors such as environment and rural development, the government has been generally more open toward cooperation with donors and international NGOs, which implemented a wide range of projects and established their field offices in rural areas of the country. These findings also indicate that Hypothesis 3 (and Hypothesis 5 to a certain extent) can trump Hypothesis 1, suggesting that, despite its open political regime and active interaction with donors, Kyrgyzstan's government was prepared to be much more restrictive when it came to politically sensitive inter-ethnic and human rights issues, especially after the 2010 inter-ethnic clashes.

In terms of sectoral interaction, in certain sectors the principle of 'tit-for-tat' cannot be observed in Turkmenistan at all, as the government does not seem to compromise on issues which are foundational to its existence (civil society development, political pluralism, media freedom, political accountability and combating corruption). Donors' proposals to cooperate in these areas were routinely ignored by the

government. Generally, the interaction appeared to be sensitive particularly in the governance sector; there were no projects in certain governance areas, such as combating corruption, or promoting political pluralism or media freedom. In the rural development sector, the interaction appeared to somewhat sensitive mainly due to the issue of the lack of donors' access to rural areas. Interestingly, despite the technical nature of rural development sector projects, for government, mere access of donors to rural areas has been very sensitive judging by the limited number of their projects at provincial and district levels. In the environment sector, the interaction seemed to be more diverse, at both country and regional levels, with government cooperating with donors in most of the areas that fell under the international environmental treaties ratified by Turkmenistan. Moreover, with power transition in 2007, Turkmenistan's involvement in regional environmental initiatives has increased as it began hosting regional events, with its new leadership stressing that countries should adopt universal approaches in addressing regional environmental challenges, something that the government consistently opposed in the governance sector. These findings are in conformity with Hypothesis 3, which argues that the recipients' interaction with donors differs from sector to sector.

Hypothesis 4

As a signatory to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, Kyrgyzstan has endorsed the current international policy framework on aid effectiveness. Both the government and donors established relevant donor coordination mechanisms, donor agencies developed joint programs and projects and most of them engaged the recipient actors in project design and implementation, thus trying to promote the implementation of key Paris Declaration principles. I could not find much evidence in terms of the validity of Hypothesis 4 in Kyrgyzstan (with some exception in the area of public health where successful sector-wide approach program has been implemented), i.e., that the implementation of donors' activities will not be characterized by the universal application of Paris Declaration principles across all development aid sectors. The thesis argues that despite the existence of joint coordination arrangements and successful examples of joint programming (e.g., sector-wide approach in public health), a number of factors affected the implementation of some of these principles in nearly all sectors. These include national ownership issues, donors' failure to use the national procurement system, donors' competition for areas of intervention and lack of interest by some recipient organizations in adopting a coordinated approach (as they tried to benefit from donor funding received from several parallel projects).

As in the case of Kyrgyzstan, there was limited information that I could use to confirm or reject Hypothesis 4 in the case of Turkmenistan. It should be stressed that Turkmenistan is not a signatory to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and I could not find any evidence in government sources (e.g., speeches and statements of government officials, state media sources, etc.) that would refer to Turkmenistan's endorsement of Paris Declaration principles. Therefore, I found it difficult to trace the sectoral implementation of aid effectiveness principles. In general, the national aid coordination system appeared to have a different objective than in Kyrgyzstan. It was predominantly concerned with controlling donors' activities rather than ensuring greater coordination and effectiveness of their activities. In that sense, this system runs contrary to the established objectives of the Paris Declaration. One specific feature of the national aid coordination system is that UN agencies seemed to enjoy greater government involvement in UN inter-agency coordination processes such as the UNDAF, with representatives of recipient agencies participating in the activities of the UNDAF thematic working groups and contributing to program design and implementation. Nevertheless, development projects in all sectors suffered from limited national ownership, donors' failure to use national systems in implementing their projects, and their competition for

areas of intervention in this restrictive environment where the chances to demonstrate success stories have been very limited.

Hypothesis 5

Finally, donor-recipient interaction in Kyrgyzstan was also influenced by various geopolitical developments in the region and beyond, as suggested by Hypothesis 5. In the aftermath of 9/11, Kyrgyzstan expressed its commitment to support the US-led global war on terror (e.g., by agreeing to host the American airbase and providing logistical support). Its involvement in this campaign provided various material benefits to Kyrgyzstan and helped it to minimize western countries' criticism of increasing concentration of power within the executive branch during the Akayev presidency. During this time, the U.S. Government's military aid to Kyrgyzstan was seven times more than its aid in the area of democracy promotion. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan's increasing integration into regional political, economic and security arrangements initiated by non-OECD donors in the 2000s and 2010s (i.e., Russia, China) could have influenced Kyrgyzstan's behavior regarding traditional donors, with the government going as far as to renounce its cooperation agreement with the United States in 2015. These developments were taking place at the time when the United States was withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan, with President Obama stating that "America's combat mission in Afghanistan came to a responsible end" in late 2014 (The White House, 2016). Therefore, geopolitical shifts, as argued in this thesis, have had a significant impact on Kyrgyzstan's interaction with traditional donors.

Turkmenistan's interaction with external donors, as in Kyrgyzstan, has been influenced by various geopolitical developments taking place in the region and beyond. While Turkmenistan used its neutrality status to avoid participating in global/regional political and security arrangements, it was nevertheless involved in providing logistical support to the US-led war on terror following the 9/11, which turned out to be beneficial for the government as it helped to minimize the Western donors' pressure for governance and political reforms. At the same time, the government's search for new opportunities to export its hydrocarbon resources resulted in greater economic and political rapprochement with China, which became the largest buyer of Turkmenistan's natural gas over time. This, in turn, made Turkmenistan even less dependent on aid from traditional donors, once again confirming that aid from traditional donors fell under the domain of foreign policy, and not development policy.

A comparative summary of specific findings across sectors and countries is provided in Table 9.1.

Through this cross-country and cross-sectoral analysis of donor-recipient interaction in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, I have aimed to show that development aid's sustainability is affected not only by the inability of donors and recipients to "make credible commitments" (Swedlund, 2017), but also by a range of internal and external factors, such as the nature of the recipient country's regime, availability or absence of natural resources, and geopolitical factors. These factors play a crucial role in striking a credible bargain by donors and recipients. The ability to strike a credible bargain also appears to depend on the nature of development aid sectors, in which the interaction takes place. It is highly likely that greater opportunities for making a credible commitment are present in sectors that do not address sensitive issues (e.g., environment sector), as opposed to sectors that aim to alter the political and governance systems of the recipient countries (e.g., governance sector).

Table 9.1: Comparative summary of country-specific findings

Hypothesis	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmenistan
H1. The nature of the recipient country's regime is a significant factor in how it interacts with donors.	- A more open political regime, with a well-represented NGO sector and relatively free mass media; - Direct and open interaction between donors and recipients; - Lack of central government control over donors' everyday activities (although attempts are made by the MFA to introduce some kind of control); - PRSPs and other national development documents prepared in line with donors' recommendations; - More amenable to donors' initiatives.	- A closed political regime, with little political contestation, state-controlled mass media and a small NGO sector; - Interaction between recipients and donors is maintained mostly via the MFA, with limited opportunities for direct interaction; yet, local staff of donor agencies have greater flexibility; - Activities of donors are subject to central government control; - No PRSPs developed; national strategies contain no references to poverty and the language is generally sanitized to avoid negative connotations; - Less amenable to donors' initiatives.
H2. The country's level of dependence on foreign aid or, conversely, its access to non-aid revenues affects how the government and donors interact.	- One of the largest aid recipients among former Soviet republics and the largest in Central Asia; - Some deposits of gold and other minerals; rich in hydropower; lacks hydrocarbon resources; - More amenable to donors' initiatives, e.g., CDF, PRSP.	- Not dependent on aid; ODA as a percentage of GNI remained low at all times, with the highest share received in 2001 (2.18%); - Large exporter of natural gas and cotton; - Less amenable to donors' initiatives, e.g., no PRSP or projects in anti-corruption; But greater involvement in regional environmental cooperation.
H3. The nature of donor-recipient interactions differs from one sector to another.	- Generally open and active interaction in all sectors; - Donors' projects were implemented at all levels, including central, provincial and rural; However, in certain areas (e.g., inter-ethnic issues and religious extremism, which previously caused societal tensions) the government was less willing to compromise if donor projects were seen as undermining domestic stability.	- Governance sector interaction appeared to be limited, compared to the environment sector. There were almost no projects on anti-corruption, political pluralism and other sensitive areas; - While interaction in the rural development sector did not address sensitive political issues, donors' activities on provincial and rural levels were limited, with most of their activities taking place in the capital city, making it easier for government to control them.
H4. The implementation of donor-aided development projects and programs is not characterized by universal application of aid effectiveness principles by donors and governments across all sectors.	- Signatory to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness; - Government and donor mechanisms for aid coordination are in place; - However, implementation of PD principles are jeopardized by national ownership issues, donors' failure to use national procurement system and 'perverse incentives' on the side of the donors (e.g., competition for areas of intervention, for extra-budgetary funding) and recipients (e.g., engaging in multiple projects to benefit from several donors); - Limited information applicable to Hypothesis 4.	- Not a signatory to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness; - Mechanisms for development aid coordination are weaker compared to Kyrgyzstan; the strongest aid coordination efforts are observed within the UN system (e.g., common programming such as the UNDAF, harmonized program cycles); - No systematic government efforts to coordinate aid-funded activities; rather, most of the government efforts are directed toward constantly monitoring their activities; Control of both bilateral and multilateral agencies. - Problems related to national ownership and donors' competition for areas of intervention can be observed; - Limited information applicable to Hypothesis 4.
H5. Differing geopolitical importance attached to the recipient countries by Western donors affects the way foreign aid is managed.	- Geopolitical shifts of the 2000s and 2010s (e.g., 9/11, the launch of regional integration processes by non-OECD actors) created additional opportunities for Kyrgyzstan who appeared to benefit from being included in those processes (financially, technically, politically); - These developments appeared to have increased Kyrgyzstan's bargaining power in negotiating with OECD donors.	- Turkmenistan used its neutrality status to avoid participating in global/regional political and security arrangements. Yet, it provided some logistical support to the US-led war on terror, which helped it minimize Western pressure for reforms; - Rapprochement with China allowed Turkmenistan to extract financial resources from the export of its gas to China, whose credits are also used to implement large infrastructure projects.

While the findings of this study focused predominantly on the OECD donors, it would be reasonable to ask whether these findings have implications on the two recipient governments' interaction with non-OECD donors. This question is difficult to answer, partly because of the way the research objectives and questions were formulated. While aid interaction with the OECD donors focuses on achieving the national development goals, the relations of the two recipient governments with non-OECD donors evolves, for the most part, around economic and security interests. Such aid interaction even in countries with more open political regimes appears to be less transparent (e.g., lack of official data) and less inclusive (e.g., non-involvement of NGOs and channeling most of the funding through central government) compared to the interaction with OECD donors. This leads us to assume that while the nature of the recipient country's regime can play a significant role in how it interacts with non-OECD donors (as argued in Hypothesis 1), less transparent and less inclusive aid bargaining and implementation process makes it difficult to attribute the nature of the political regime with the degree of amenability to donors' initiatives.

Likewise, the applicability of Hypothesis 2 can also be questioned, in the sense that the availability of domestic natural resources might not correlate with the degree of the recipient government's amenability with donors' initiatives. For example, despite Turkmenistan's rich hydrocarbon resources, it experienced significant challenges in exporting its resources to the external markets. During certain periods, its natural gas delivery to Russia was suspended and Russian control of major gas pipelines in the European direction made the transit of Turkmenistan's natural gas through the Russian territory impossible. Challenges in Turkmen-Russian economic relations eventually resulted in the emergence of China as the only buyer of Turkmenistan's natural gas. These developments subsequently made Turkmenistan dependent on both Russia and China (although for different reasons), potentially increasing the degree of Turkmenistan's amenability with Chinese [predominantly] economic initiatives.

As for Hypothesis 3, the main non-OECD donors (i.e., Russia, China, countries of the Gulf region) themselves being often criticized by Western donors for poor governance indicators, do not seem to care about development interaction in highly sensitive political areas. As stressed above, their interaction with the recipient governments is maintained through the central government and embedded into wider economic, security and political agendas promoted through various regional and sub-regional initiatives. Non-OECD donors consider such issues as the promotion of human rights and strengthening democratic governance as highly contested narratives promoted by Western donors as universal values, which run contrary to the national visions of democracy and respect for human rights. Analyzing sectoral interaction between the recipient governments and non-OECD donors, therefore, becomes complicated since their areas of interaction are narrower, compared to OECD donors. Regarding Hypothesis 4, it should be excluded from such an analysis, since non-OECD donors are not part of the international aid governance compacts.

Finally, Hypothesis 5 appears to have some relevance in the case of non-OECD donors. As the Central Asian countries got involved in various regional economic and security initiatives promoted by non-Western donors, they could benefit from such interaction by receiving grants and loans from the non-OECD donors. As the case of Kyrgyzstan shows, integration of the country into the Russia-based Eurasian Economic Union resulted in the establishment of the Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund through which Russian funds have been provided for projects in areas of mutual interests. Likewise, Turkmenistan's rapprochement with China increased their economic interaction and resulted in the provision of significant amounts in Chinese

loans and grants. Yet, a detailed analysis of the Central Asian countries' engagement with the non-OECD donors is difficult to conduct, due to transparency issues and data challenges.

9.5. Theoretical implications

What theoretical implications can we derive from these findings? As outlined in the conceptual framework (Chapter 2), the analytical model of donor-recipient interaction brings together the realist theory, collective action theory as well as the evolutionary theory and adaptive behaviour approaches. Based on the analysis of the empirical data, this model suggests that such variables as geopolitics, the recipient countries' resource base, the nature of their political regimes, and the political sensitivity of the sector have a direct impact on how the recipient governments interact with traditional donors.

At the most general level, the main theoretical implication is that the recipient governments are guided by the narratives of state survival (realist theory) in their interaction with donors on a macro-level. This interaction, however, is also shaped by micro-level (i.e., daily) aid management processes (collective action theory), through which the recipient governments and donors develop institutional arrangements to manage aid-funded projects on the country level. These arrangements can be cooperative or not, depending on the interplay of the above-mentioned variables. As the interaction on both macro- and micro-levels evolves, the recipient governments and donors get to know each other better and adapt to each other's actions over time, devising new arrangements and adaptive strategies (evolutionary theory and adaptive behaviour approaches).

More specifically, this thesis offers several theoretical implications. First, the recipient governments' aid interaction with donors is guided by macro-level national development and security priorities, which according to realist theory are the principal concerns of all nation-states. In engaging with donors, both countries dependent and less dependent on aid pursue their national interests. While in the case of Kyrgyzstan, aid interaction was one of the ways of attracting foreign funding to implement its domestic development objectives, in Turkmenistan funding received from the export of natural resources successfully limited donors' involvement in domestic affairs and influence in the country. In the case of the former, the state objective appeared to be taking as much advantage from aid interaction as possible, while at the same time introducing the elements of open/democratic political regime and developing some sort of a social contract with citizens. In the case of the latter, the state objective was to limit the donors' engagement in domestic matters to the extent possible and to build a hierarchical governance system based on a strong executive branch. Thanks to the availability of revenues from the export of natural resources, the government also abstained from developing a social contract with citizens, who would be given natural resource rents in return for loyalty. While the two countries accepted aid differently, nevertheless, in their aid relations they both were guided by their immediate national objectives framed into a wider state survival narrative.

Second, moving beyond the macro-level interaction, the recipient governments' relations with donors is also shaped by micro-level, daily management of aid. Collective action theory suggests that actors involved in managing 'collective action problems' are capable of developing 'collective choice arrangements', as long as their motivations and interests are aligned. In doing so, these actors devise formal and informal institutions, which they use either to facilitate or constrain the implementation of aid-funded initiatives. As the analysis of the empirical data demonstrated, both countries used various institutions, country-specific arrangements and processes to manage their relations with donors on a daily basis. Kyrgyzstan's adherence

to global aid governance compacts was stronger and involved a range of joint aid coordination mechanisms (in line with Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to which it was a signatory) and local institutions facilitating the implementation of donor-funded projects. In other words, its donor-interaction context appeared to be more favorable. It was essential for Kyrgyzstan to build this favorable context as through aid interaction, it could access development loans and grants, which were of existential importance for its state-building objectives, especially in the 1990s. At the same time, in Turkmenistan (which is not a signatory to Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness), daily management of aid interaction was characterized by a limited number of 'collective choice arrangements' and development aid interaction appeared to fall under the domain of foreign policy rather than development policy. As is the case with a macro-level interaction, on a micro-level too, the government's immediate objective was associated with its ability to control donors' activities, which is ultimately linked to the realist theory's narrative of state survival.

Third, despite having a relatively open political system and generally donor-friendly environment, and despite showing a greater tendency to adapt and strike a bargain with donors, in certain governance areas which are deemed politically sensitive, the Government of Kyrgyzstan acted firmly and showed little willingness to compromise. The sensitivity of a given aid sector, therefore, can overpower such variables as the regime openness and the degree of aid dependence. Conversely, despite having a highly hierarchical political system and generally being less amenable to donors' initiatives in the governance sector, the Government of Turkmenistan seemed to develop a relatively more active interaction in the environment sector at both country and regional levels. As it appears, then, that the degree of regime openness/democracy and the degree of aid dependence are not always the dominant factors in aid interactions and other considerations, such as the sector-based interaction, come into play. Drawing on the collective action theory, therefore, one could argue that in less politically sensitive sectors the recipient governments are more willing to build collective choice arrangements and show greater tendency to interact with donors. Yet, taking into account the basic tenets of the realist theory, in more politically sensitive sectors, in which the engagement of donors can change the domestic balance of power, domestic governance structures and institutions, the donor-recipient interaction is likely to be constrained, with little opportunities to make 'credible commitments'.

9.6. Research limitations

In Chapter 3, I discussed several methodological limitations related to this study. These include limited access to data on Turkmenistan, greater openness of Kyrgyz respondents during the interviews compared to respondents from Turkmenistan and an uneven number of respondents across countries and sectors. I have also explained that these limitations should not have had a major impact on the validity of the findings as I attempted, as much as possible, to triangulate my findings and to address data gaps by utilizing various sources of information. Indeed, the number of sources used for each of the three case-study chapters was close to 100. Combined with the interview data, this has ensured, in my opinion, proper representation of facts and evidence. Lack of data on the activities of non-OECD donors was another limitation. However, as explained in Chapter 1, their activities have been analyzed occasionally. As such, they were not the focus of this research.

9.7. Areas for further research

Donor-recipient interactions constantly evolve as both donors and recipient countries try to find innovative ways of delivering foreign aid (Swedlund, 2017). Several areas can be proposed for further research. First, a number of OECD countries have recently started applying concepts from behavioral economics in solving

their domestic public policy issues. Governments from the OECD member-states have experimented with the concept of *nudge* in an attempt to make a positive influence on the behavior and choices made by citizens with regard to certain public services, such as submitting tax reports online, using water resources more effectively, improving academic performance in schools and other services (OECD, 2017b). Special *Nudge Units* and *Behavioral Insight Units* have been established in some OECD member-states to coordinate government-wide behavioral analytics work (Afif, 2017). International organizations (e.g., UN, World Bank) have followed suit by establishing similar units (United Nations, 2016; Sánchez-Páramo, 2019). The World Bank's 2015 World Development Report, titled "Mind, Society, and Behavior", was devoted entirely to behavioral factors influencing the development processes around the world (World Bank, 2015d). Adopting a behavioral economics perspective in analyzing donor-recipient interaction appears to be a promising area. As donor agencies and countries will continue to provide their assistance to developing countries within the global SDGs framework, it becomes essential to adopt innovative ways of learning as to how developing country citizens, institutions and governments make their decisions in engaging with donors. Having reviewed various primary sources, I have not found evidence of nudging (or other aspects of behavioral economics in general) being used by donors or recipients in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

Secondly, the analysis has shown that the recipient country's development policy framework has an impact on donor-recipient interaction. Kyrgyzstan's national development plans and strategies were formulated with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders (e.g., government recipients, NGOs, donors, civil society, and expert communities) and were aligned with donors' standards of development policy formulation, i.e., the process was participatory in that the voices of diverse groups of stakeholders were heard. At the same time, Turkmenistan's national development plans and strategies were formulated almost entirely with the involvement of government agencies and government-controlled public associations and had no references to sensitive issues (e.g., poverty, corruption). Linking the analysis of donor-recipient interaction with the process of formulation and implementation of national development plans appears to be a promising research area as well. As emphasized by Chimhowu, Hulme and Munro, "the number of countries with a national development plan has more than doubled, from about 62 in 2006 to 134 in 2018" (2019, p. 76). Reflecting on the typology of the plans formulated since the late 2000s, Chimhowu et al. proposed categorizing the plans into the following types:

- "Type A – Top-down, expert-led plans with a strong evidence base but limited social embeddedness;
- Type B – Bottom-up, collaboratively created plans with a strong evidence base and high social embeddedness;
- Type C – Top-down plans, disjointed and with weak evidence and limited social embeddedness;
- Type D – Bottom-up plans with weak evidence base and limited social embeddedness" (2019, p. 83).

Applying these typologies offers a useful analytical framework to study donor-recipient interaction within the framework of larger development policy formulation and implementation processes in the recipient countries. For example, countries having a *Type C* national development plan would tend to minimize donors' involvement in domestic policy reform and create a limited space for participation of non-governmental players. Conversely, countries with a *Type B* plan would tend to adopt a participatory process while formulating their plans and invite a wide range of stakeholders (including foreign donors) to contribute to the plan formulation, implementation and financing. From a political economy perspective, adopting these typologies would cover key relevant units of analysis, including governments and donors, their relevant institutions, their preferences and incentives, as well as other groups involved in donor-recipient interaction, such as the NGOs, civil society groups, farmers' associations and others. The content

analysis of development plans produced by Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan supports the validity of this argument. While Kyrgyzstan's development strategies (e.g., poverty reduction strategies, Country Development Strategy 2007-2010) contained relevant baseline data, were prepared through collaborative engagement of various state and non-state actors and recognized the role of donors, Turkmenistan's National Program for Socio-Economic Development for the period 2011-2030 had "weak evidence base" and its preparation was mostly government-driven.

Finally, it transpires that program and project evaluation reports produced by donors (and in certain cases co-produced by government recipients) contain rich and diverse materials on barriers to donor-recipient interaction, across countries and sectors. For example, the World Bank's project evaluation reports provide a thorough review of the bank's and the recipient's performance. They also contain detailed lessons learned as part of the project interaction in different development aid sectors. Methodologically, these reports are probably not aligned with academic research requirements. However, for the most part, they are prepared based on stakeholder interviews, an analysis of primary sources, and a desk review of context-specific primary and secondary data. Hence, they provide firsthand information on macro- and micro-level barriers that development projects face. Documenting these barriers and categorizing them will undoubtedly result in important findings, from both policy and theoretical perspectives. The project, program and outcome evaluation reports which I used for my research contained information and facts highly relevant for analyzing donor-recipient interaction on micro- and macro-levels. Yet, I have come across only very limited number of academic research papers (e.g., Rondinelli, 1993) using and/or referring to those reports.

9.8. Concluding remarks

As emphasized in Chapter 1, the thesis does not focus on aid effectiveness. I believe, however, that its findings have direct implications on the issue of aid effectiveness and contribute to aid effectiveness discussion in important ways. Analyzing donor-recipient interaction provides useful insights into how donors and recipients operate, how effective their relations are in terms of the processes and institutions they use to maintain their relations. For example, in a more politically constrained environment where every decision has to go through several layers of approvals, transaction and opportunity costs (for recipient institutions, but especially for donors) will tend to be high. Also, considering the recipient government's proclivity to limit donors' engagement in more politically sensitive sectors/program areas, donors have to have an in-depth understanding of the country's political economy so that country program strategies are developed in line with local constraints and opportunities. Therefore, understanding aid relations appears to be an important prerequisite to study aid effectiveness. This point is emphasized by Riddell (2007) succinctly:

> "… if donors wish to address the problems of aid in particularly difficult environments, they need to spend less time developing and commissioning studies aimed to producing general 'how-to' manuals and templates for dispensing different types of aid in different forms, to be applied willy-nilly across aid recipient countries. Rather, they need to devote resources to understanding better the political economy of each country to which they provide aid, focusing especially on trying to isolate and understand the nature and effects of the constraints which limit the ability of aid to work more effectively." (p. 377)

Throughout the thesis I argued that donor-recipient interaction in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan has been influenced by various domestic and external geopolitical factors and that the nature of interaction differed from one sector to another. I have shown how these factors shaped the way donor-funded projects and

programs have been managed in the two countries. While the objective of this thesis was not to provide recommendations on improving aid relations, findings from this thesis allow making some high-level conclusions in terms of the next steps that the recipient governments could make in order to improve the delivery of aid in both countries.

In Kyrgyzstan, despite the prevalence of what Swedlund calls 'commitment problems', both government and donors seem to have developed relatively good knowledge of each other and a demonstrated commitment to development cooperation. The key issue in Kyrgyzstan appears to be how to manage the uncertainty (resulting from a relatively free political context and under-regulated donor-recipient interaction) and strengthen collective-choice arrangements in managing aid-funded initiatives. Currently, the function of aid coordination is dispersed among several government agencies, including the ministries of Finance, Economy, and Foreign Affairs. While the latter began to get involved in aid coordination only recently, the first two have dealt with coordination of activities implemented under development loans and technical assistance projects for a long time, sometimes with overlapping mandates. The lack of a cohesive national aid coordination system makes tracking aid-funded activities difficult. It also complicates the bargaining process as several government interlocutors are involved in negotiating with donors. Introducing a more cohesive system of managing development aid could be an alternative to the current institutional system with blurred and overlapping mandates.

Is there another alternative to the current highly centralized aid management system in Turkmenistan? As mentioned in previous chapters, development cooperation is predominantly treated as a foreign policy/national security interaction. Turkmenistan has obviously underutilized donors' assistance, including first and foremost, their technical assistance. While Kyrgyzstan has benefited significantly from interacting with donors in terms of building a homegrown capacity (i.e., NGOs, local experts and consultants), Turkmenistan deprived itself of the opportunity to build the capacity of domestic actors, which compared to their counterparts in Kyrgyzstan, had more limited interaction with donors. The government could gradually open up, by moving certain areas (e.g., capacity building) from a foreign policy domain to a development policy domain, and facilitating the interaction with donors in those areas under more favorable domestic 'structural conditions'.

Annex I: List of interviewees

KYRGYZSTAN

	Interviewee code	Type of interview	Date	Affiliation
1	KG-GEN01	Skype	12/05/2016	Head of multilateral agency
2	KG-GOV01	In-person	08/07/2016	Academia
3	KG-RD01	In-person	08/07/2016	Portfolio manager at bilateral agency
4	KG-GOV02	In-person	09/07/2016	Project coordinator at multilateral agency
5	KG-RD02	In-person	12/07/2016	Program officer at multilateral agency
6	KG-GOV03	In-person	14/07/2016	Advisor at bilateral agency
7	KG-GOV04	In-person	19/07/2016	Project officer at multilateral agency
8	KG-GEN02	In-person	22/07/2016	Head of multilateral agency
9	KG-ENV01	In-person	22/07/2016	Portfolio manager at multilateral agency
10	KG-GOV05	In-person	25/07/2016	Project expert at bilateral agency
11	KG-GOV06	In-person	26/07/2016	Program associate at multilateral agency
12	KG-GOV07	In-person	27/07/2016	Program officer at multilateral agency
13	KG-RD03	In-person	27/07/2016	Head of local NGO
14	KG-RD04	In-person	27/07/2016	Portfolio manager at international NGO
15	KG-GOV08	In-person	28/07/2016	Program expert at multilateral agency
16	KG-GEN03	In-person	29/07/2016	Head of section at multilateral agency
17	KG-GOV09	In-person	29/07/2016	Academia
18	KG-RD05	In-person	03/08/2016	Former senior government official
19	KG-GEN04	In-person	04/08/2016	Academia
20	KG-RD06	In-person	05/08/2016	Project officer at bilateral agency
21	KG-GEN05	In-person	08/08/2016	Head of department at government-funded agency
22	KG-ENV02	In-person	09/08/2016	Senior advisor at bilateral agency
23	KG-GOV10	In-person	11/08/2016	Section director at bilateral agency
24	KG-GEN06	In-person	11/08/2016	Analyst at multilateral agency
25	KG-GOV11	In-person	12/08/2016	Former deputy director at government agency
26	KG-GEN07	In-person	15/08/2016	Head of consulting agency
27	KG-RD07	In-person	16/08/2016	Program officer at international NGO
28	KG-GEN08	In-person	16/08/2016	Head of multilateral agency
29	KG-ENV03	In-person	16/08/2016	Head of department at government agency
30	KG-ENV04	In-person	17/08/2016	Freelance consultant
31	KG-ENV05	In-person	17/08/2016	Project manager at multilateral agency
32	KG-GOV12	In-person	18/08/2016	Portfolio manager at multilateral agency
33	KG-RD08	In-person	19/08/2016	Program director at bilateral agency
34	KG-GOV13	In-person	19/08/2016	Freelance consultant

35	KG-GEN09	In-person	22/08/2016	Head of division at government agency
36	KG-RD09	In-person	23/08/2016	Head of multilateral agency
37	KG-RD10	In-person	24/08/2016	Program coordinator at bilateral agency
38	KG-GEN10	In-person	24/08/2016	Head of government agency
39	KG-GEN11	Answered by email	26/08/2016	Freelance consultant

TURKMENISTAN

Interviewee code		Type of interview	Date	Affiliation
1	TM-GEN01	In-person	27/04/2016	Head of multilateral agency
2	TM-GEN02	Skype	12/05/2016	Head of multilateral agency
3	TM-RD01	In-person	20/05/2016	Multilateral agency
4	TM-GOV01	In-person	23/05/2016	Multilateral agency
5	TM-RD02	In-person	24/05/2016	Bilateral agency
6	TM-RD03	In-person	25/05/2016	Government
7	TM-GOV02	In-person	26/05/2016	Multilateral agency
8	TM-ENV01	In-person	26/05/2016	Portfolio manager at multilateral agency
9	TM-ENV02	In-person	28/05/2016	Multilateral agency
10	TM-GOV03	In-person	30/05/2016	Analyst at multilateral agency
11	TM-GOV04	In-person	01/06/2016	Government
12	TM-RD04	In-person	02/06/2016	Multilateral agency
13	TM-GOV05	In-person	04/06/2016	Government
14	TM-ENV03	In-person	05/06/2016	Government
15	TM-GOV06	In-person	08/06/2016	Deputy head at multilateral agency
16	TM-ENV04	In-person	14/06/2016	Multilateral agency
17	TM-GEN03	In-person	17/06/2016	Multilateral agency
18	TM-GOV07	In-person	21/06/2016	Multilateral agency
19	TM-RD05	In-person	22/06/2016	Government
20	TM-RD06	In-person	22/06/2016	Multilateral agency
21	TM-GOV08	In-person	22/06/2016	Bilateral agency
22	TM-ENV05	In-person	23/06/2016	Government
23	TM-GOV09	In-person	24/06/2016	NGO
24	TM-GOV10	In-person	24/06/2016	Multilateral agency
25	TM-ENV06	In-person	11/07/2016	Portfolio manager at multilateral agency
26	TM-RD07	Answered by email	26/07/2016	Multilateral agency
27	TM-ENV07	Skype	22/08/2016	Multilateral agency
28	TM-GEN04	In-person	30/08/2016	Head of multilateral agency

Annex II: Interview guides

A1) Questions for interviewees representing donor agencies and international NGOs (English)	
• Introduction of the project and the researcher's background; • Explanation of interview procedures and objectives; • Requesting consent;	
Opening questions	
1a)	My research is about how aid gets managed by donors and recipient governments. Can we start with you please briefly telling me about your career in managing aid projects?
1b)	How long have you been involved in managing aid to (Kyrgyzstan/Turkmenistan) and what jobs have you held?
2a)	In the job, which you just mentioned, which local aid recipients you have worked with?
2b)	In which development sectors have you been mostly involved? How has your role in the implementation of donor-funded projects changed over the years?
2c)	What are some of the key roles you performed in dealing with aid projects in the country?
Context-specific questions	
3a)	In the governance/rural development/environment sector in which you worked, did donor agencies work together when implementing their activities?
3b)	Can you give me a concrete example based on your experience working with other donor agencies?
3c)	Can you recall the number of times you or your agency's representative participated in donor coordination events organized by any of the donor agencies?
4a)	If donors have not worked together, what do you think were the reasons?
4b)	Did the government make any efforts to coordinate technical assistance provided to the country by donors or was it rather interested in working separately with each donor?
4c)	To your knowledge, approximately how many times was your agency invited to government-organized donor coordination events?
5a)	Can you tell me what the official procedure was for your agency to submit its project proposals to the government?
5b)	And what was the actual practice? How did you propose new projects in reality?
5c)	Can you share concrete examples, providing the details of your agency's project?
6a)	You have worked with various government agencies throughout your career. Do you perceive any differences in the way government works with different types of donors? For example, between bilateral donors (e.g. GIZ, USAID) and multilateral donors (e.g. UN, WB, OSCE); or between resident (e.g. UNDP, EU) and non-resident (e.g. UNEP, ILO) donors?
6b)	If so, what were those differences?
7a)	Given your knowledge of the context, what role do you think the local non-governmental actors who received aid money/development support from donors have in the country?
7b)	Has your agency worked together with any local NGOs, community organizations, media and academic institutions?
7c)	Do you think the government encourages or discourages involvement of those in implementation of donor-funded projects?
8a)	Has your agency been assigned a national focal point within the government to coordinate your agency's projects?
8b)	What were the procedures to interact on daily basis with local project beneficiaries?
8c)	How did you interact with them in reality?
Sector-specific questions	
9a)	In your view, what was the motivation of the government to request development assistance from foreign donors in the area of governance/rural development/environment?
9b)	Do you think the government has a good vision in terms of how to use that assistance? Can you provide some stories/examples?
9c)	Were there occasions when government requested your agency's support in those areas/issues, which were not covered in the approved country program document or joint cooperation agreement?
10a)	Can you tell me about the program/project management procedures which were used to implement projects in which you were involved?

10b)	Did the project team use your agency's management procedures, or was the project managed on the basis of government's management procedures? Why?
11a)	Thinking of the last project on which you worked/the most recent project on which you worked, how long did it take for the government to approve a project, from project identification to the start of project activities?
11b)	What were the key steps in project approval process on each side (your agency's and government)?
12a)	Talking about project implementation, how were your agency's projects (in which you were involved) implemented? Were the projects implemented directly by the government project partner, or were they implemented by your agency?
12b)	Did your agency provide cash advance to the government project partners to pay for project activities, or were all project expenses paid for by your agency?
12c)	How were the decisions made? What were the key decision-making bodies, individuals? Who approved the project disbursements?
12d)	Were the services and goods procured using your agency's or government's procurement regulations?
13a)	In your opinion, were there any important events that shaped the government's cooperation with foreign donors, either on the country level, or on the regional and global levels?
13b)	If yes, how did that affect the implementation of your agency's projects in the area of governance/rural development/environment?
	Expression of gratitude. Closing remarks.

A2) Questions for interviewees representing donor agencies and international NGOs (Russian)	
•	Представление проекта. Краткие сведения об аспиранте;
•	Цели проекта; объяснение процедур проведения интервью;
•	Получение согласия на принятие участия в интервью;
	Вопросы общего плана
1a)	В моем научном проекте анализируются вопросы управления донорской помощью со стороны доноров и реципиентов, представляющих госучреждения. Не могли бы Вы для начала кратко рассказать о вашем опыте управления донорскими проектами?
1b)	Как долго Вы были вовлечены в управление донорскими проектами в (Кыргызстане/Туркменистане) и на каких позициях Вы работали?
2a)	Работая в должности, которую Вы только что упомянули, с кем из госучреждений Вам довелось работать?
2b)	В каких секторах в основном Вы работали? Каким образом менялась ваша роль в реализации донорских проектов с течением времени?
2c)	Какие основные функции Вы выполняли при реализации проектов?
	Вопросы, касающиеся контекста
3a)	В секторе госуправления/местного развития/охраны окружающей среды, в котором вы проработали, работали ли доноры вместе в реализации своих мероприятий?
3b)	Не смогли бы Вы привести конкретный пример на основе вашего опыта работы с другими донорами?
3c)	Не смогли бы Вы вспомнить, приблизительно, сколько раз Вы или ваши коллеги принимали участие в мероприятиях, организованных другими агентствами, которые были посвящены вопросам координации донорской деятельности?
4a)	Если доноры не работали вместе, каковы были причины, на ваш взгляд?
4b)	Предпринимало ли правительство какие-либо усилия для координации донорской помощи или оно предпочитало работать с донорами по отдельности?
4c)	На ваш взгляд, приблизительно сколько раз ваше агентство было приглашено на мероприятия, посвященные координации донорской помощи, которые были организованы правительством?
5a)	Можете ли Вы сказать, каковы были официальные процедуры представления проектных предложений вашего агентства правительству?
5b)	Какова была практика на самом деле? Каким образом Вы предоставляли проектные предложения в реальности?
5c)	Можете ли Вы привести конкретные примеры, с указанием деталей проектов?

6a)	Вы работали с различными госучреждениями в течение вашей карьеры. На ваш взгляд, делало ли правительство какие-либо различия между разными донорами? Например, между двусторонними донорами (ГИЗ, ЮСАИД) и многосторонними донорами (ООН, ВБ, ОБСЕ); или между донорами резидентами (ПРООН, ЕС) и донорами нерезидентами (ЮНЕП, МОТ)?
6b)	Если да, каковы эти различия?
7a)	Учитывая ваше знание странового контекста, какую роль играли неправительственные учреждения в реализации донорских проектов в стране?
7b)	Работало ли ваше агентство с какими-либо местными НПО, общественными организациями, СМИ или ВУЗами?
7c)	На ваш взгляд, правительство поощряет или не поощряет участие этих учреждений в реализации донорских проектов?
8a)	Назначило ли правительство контактное лицо для координации проектов вашего агентства?
8b)	Каковы были процедуры для взаимодействия с местными бенефициарами на ежедневной основе?
8c)	Как ваше агентство взаимодействовало с ними в реальности?
	Вопросы, касающиеся секторов
9a)	На ваш взгляд, какова была мотивация правительства в предоставлении запроса на получение донорской помощи в области госуправления/местного развития/охраны окружающей среды?
9b)	Как Вы думаете, имеет ли правительство четкое видение того, как использовать эту помощь? Можете ли Вы предоставить примеры?
9c)	Были ли случаи, когда правительство запросило поддержку вашей организации в тех областях, которые не были охвачены в утвержденном программном документе или соглашении о совместном сотрудничестве?
10a)	Не смогли бы Вы рассказать о процедурах управления программами/проектами, использованных при реализации проектов, в которые вы были вовлечены?
10b)	Использовала ли проектная команда процедуры управления вашей организации, или же проект осуществлялся на основе процедур управления правительства? На ваш взгляд, что является причиной этого?
11a)	Если взять в качестве примера последний проект, над которым вы работали, сколько времени заняло, чтобы правительство утвердило ваш проект, начиная со стадии идентификации проекта до начала реализации проектных мероприятий?
11b)	Каковы ключевые стадии утверждения проекта с обеих сторон (т.е. вашего агентства и правительства)?
12a)	Говоря о реализации проекта, каким образом были реализованы проекты вашего агентства (в которых вы принимали участие)? Были ли проекты реализованы непосредственно госучреждением, или они были реализованы вашим агентством?
12b)	Предоставляло ли ваше агентство денежный аванс местным партнерам для оплаты проектных мероприятий, или все расходы были оплачены вашим агентством?
12c)	Каким образом принимались решения в рамках проекта? Какие ключевые руководящие органы, должностные лица принимали решения? Кто утверждал финансовые выплаты?
12d)	Закупались ли услуги и товары на основе правил закупок вашего агентства или правительства?
13a)	На ваш взгляд, были ли какие-либо важные события, которые повлияли на сотрудничество правительства с донорами, на уровне страны, или на региональном и глобальном уровнях?
13b)	Если да, то как это повлияло на реализацию проектов вашего агентства в области госуправления/местного развития/охраны окружающей среды?
	Выражение благодарности. Заключительные замечания.

B1) Questions for interviewees representing government and other local recipients (English)	
•	Introduction of the project and the researcher's background;
•	Explanation of interview procedures and objectives;
•	Requesting consent;
	Opening questions
1a)	My research is about how aid gets managed by donors and recipient governments. Can we start with you please briefly telling me about your career in managing aid projects?
1b)	How long have you been involved in managing aid to (Kyrgyzstan/Turkmenistan) and what jobs have you held?

2a)	In the job, which you just mentioned, which development donors you have worked with?
2b)	In which development sectors have you been mostly involved?
3)	How has your role in the implementation of donor-funded projects changed over the years? What are some of the key roles you performed in dealing with aid projects?
	Context-specific questions
4a)	In the governance/rural development/environment sector in which you worked, did donor agencies work together when implementing their activities?
4b)	Can you give me a concrete example based on your experience working with foreign donors?
4c)	If they have not worked together in this sector, what do you think were the reasons?
5a)	Can you tell me what was the official procedure for donors to propose new projects to your organization?
5b)	And what was the actual practice? How did donors propose new projects in reality?
5c)	Can you share concrete examples, providing the details of a project and the donor(s)?
6a)	You have worked with various donors throughout your career. Do you perceive any differences between different types of donors? For example, between bilateral donors (e.g. GIZ, USAID) and multilateral donors (e.g. UN, WB, OSCE); or between resident (e.g. UNDP, EU) and non-resident (e.g. UNEP, ILO) donors?
6b)	If so, what were those differences?
	Sector-specific questions
7a)	In your view, how well did donors understand the challenges in the area of governance/rural development/environment in Kyrgyzstan/Turkmenistan? Can you provide some stories/examples?
7b)	Were there occasions when donors offered their support in those areas/issues, in which the government did not need external support?
8a)	Do you think the donors' assistance in your area of expertise [governance/rural development/environment] was appropriate to the needs of your organization?
8b)	In what ways was it (not) appropriate?
9a)	Can you tell me about the program/project management procedures which were used to implement donor-funded projects?
9b)	Did the project team use donor's management procedures, or was the project managed on the basis of your organization's management procedures? Why?
10a)	Thinking of the last project on which you worked/the most recent project on which you worked, how long did it take to approve a donor-funded project in the area of governance/rural development/environment from project identification to the start of project activities?
10b)	What were the key steps in project approval process on each side (donor and government)?
11a)	Talking about project implementation, how were the donor-funded projects (in which you were involved) implemented? Were the projects implemented directly by your organization, or were they implemented by donors themselves?
11b)	Did your organization receive cash advance from donors and pay for project activities using the cash advance, or were all project expenses paid for by the donors?
11c)	How were the decisions made? What were the key decision-making bodies, individuals? Who approved the project disbursements?
11d)	Were the services and goods procured using donor's or your organization's procurement regulations?
12a)	In your opinion, were there any important events that shaped your government's cooperation with donors, either on the country level, or on the regional and global levels?
12b)	If yes, how did that affect the implementation of donor-funded projects in your sector?
	Expression of gratitude. Closing remarks.

B2) Questions for interviewees representing government and other local recipients (Russian)	
•	Представление проекта. Краткие сведения об аспиранте;
•	Цели проекта; объяснение процедур проведения интервью;
•	Получение согласия на принятие участия в интервью;
	Вопросы общего плана
1a)	В моем научном проекте анализируются вопросы управления донорской помощью со стороны доноров и реципиентов, представляющих госучреждения. Не могли бы Вы для начала кратко рассказать о вашем опыте управления донорскими проектами?

1b)	Как долго Вы были вовлечены в управление донорскими проектами в (Кыргызстане/Туркменистане) и на каких позициях Вы работали?
2a)	Работая в должности, которую Вы только что упомянули, с кем из доноров Вам довелось работать?
2b)	В каких секторах в основном Вы работали?
3)	Каким образом менялась ваша роль в реализации донорских проектов с течением времени? Какие основные функции Вы выполняли при реализации донорских проектов?
Вопросы, касающиеся контекста	
4a)	В секторе госуправления/местного развития/охраны окружающей среды, в котором вы проработали, работали ли доноры вместе в реализации своих мероприятий?
4b)	Не смогли бы Вы привести конкретный пример на основе вашего опыта работы с международными донорами?
4c)	Если доноры не работали вместе, каковы были причины, на ваш взгляд?
5a)	Можете ли Вы сказать, каковы были официальные процедуры представления донорами своих проектных предложений вашему учреждению?
5b)	Какова была практика на самом деле? Каким образом доноры предоставляли проектные предложения в реальности?
5c)	Можете ли Вы привести конкретные примеры, с указанием деталей проектов?
6a)	Вы работали на различных позициях в течение вашей карьеры. На ваш взгляд, есть ли какие-либо различия между разными донорами? Например, между двусторонними донорами (ГИЗ, ЮСАИД) и многосторонними донорами (ООН, ВБ, ОБСЕ); или между донорами резидентами (, ПРООН, ЕС) и донорами нерезидентами (ЮНЕП, МОТ)?
6b)	Если да, какие между ними различия?
Вопросы, касающиеся секторов	
7a)	На ваш взгляд, насколько хорошо доноры понимают проблемы в области госуправления/местного развития/охраны окружающей среды в Кыргызстане/Туркменистан? Можете ли привести примеры?
7b)	Были ли случаи, когда доноры предлагали свою поддержку в тех областях, в которых правительство не было заинтересовано?
8a)	Считаете ли Вы, что помощь доноров в вашей области [госуправление/местное развитие/охрана окружающей среды] соответствовала интересам вашей организации?
8b)	Каким образом эта помощь была уместной или неуместной?
9a)	Не смогли бы Вы рассказать о процедурах управления программами/проектами, использованных при реализации донорских проектов?
9b)	Использовала ли проектная команда донорские процедуры управления проектами, или же проект осуществлялся на основе процедур управления вашего учреждения? На ваш взгляд, что является причиной этого?
10a)	Если взять в качестве примера последний донорский проект, над которым вы работали, сколько времени заняло, чтобы правительство утвердило этот проект, начиная со стадии идентификации проекта до начала реализации проектных мероприятий?
10b)	Каковы ключевые стадии утверждения проекта с обеих сторон (т.е. донорского агентства и правительства)?
11a)	Говоря о реализации проекта, каким образом были реализованы донорские проекты (в которых вы принимали участие)? Были ли проекты реализованы непосредственно вашим учреждением, или они были реализованы непосредственно донорским агентством?
11b)	Получало ли ваше учреждение денежный аванс со стороны доноров для оплаты проектных мероприятий, или все расходы были оплачены непосредственно самими донорами?
11c)	Каким образом принимались решения в рамках проекта? Какие ключевые руководящие органы, должностные лица принимали решения? Кто утверждал финансовые выплаты?
11d)	Закупались ли услуги и товары на основе правил закупок донорского агентства или вашего учреждения?
12a)	На ваш взгляд, были ли какие-либо важные события, которые повлияли на сотрудничество вашего правительства с донорами, на уровне страны, или на региональном и глобальном уровнях?
12b)	Если да, то как это повлияло на реализацию проектов, финансируемых донорами в вашем секторе?
	Выражение благодарности. Заключительные замечания.

B3) Questions for interviewees representing government and other local recipients (Turkmen)	
• Ylmy iş hem asiparant barada gysgaça maglumat; • Ylmy işiň maksatlary; söhbetdeşligi geçirmek barada düzgünler; • Söhbetdeşlikde gatnaşmaga razylygy alyş;	
Umumy soraglar	
1a)	Meniň ylmy işim donorlar we ýerli partnýorlar taparpyndan bilelikde halkara kömeginiň dolandyryşyny gözden geçirýär. Başlangyç sorag hökmünde, Siz şu soraga degişli öz işiňiz barada gürrüň berip bilmersiňizmi?
1b)	Haçandan bäri siz Türkmenistanda halkara kömegini dolandyryş bilen meşgullanýaňyz, we haýsy wezipelerde işläpdiňiz?
2a)	Şol ýatlap geçilen wezipede işlän wagtyňyz, haýsy halkara donorlar bilen işläpdiňiz?
2b)	Haýsy ösüş toparlarynda Siz umuman işleýärsiňiz?
3)	Siziň halkara kömegini dolandyryşyna degişli rolyňyz wagty bilen üýtgäpdimi? Esasan, Siz halkara taslamalary ýerine ýetirmege degişli haýsy rollary oýnapdyňyz?
Kontekste degişli soraglar	
4a)	Siz hökümeti dolandyryş/ýerli ösüş/tebigaty goramak toparda şonça ýyllap işläpsiňiz; şol toparda halkara donorlar öz işlerini durmuşa geçirenlerinde birlikde işläpdilermi?
4b)	Siz öz tejribäňiziň esasynda aýdyn mysal berip bilmersiňizmi?
4c)	Egerde olar bilelikde işlemedik bolsa, şonyň esasy sebäbi näme diýip pikir edýärsiňiz?
5a)	Donorlar tarapyndan täze taslamalary hödürlemek üçin resmi düzgünleri barada gürrüň berip bilmersiňizmi
5b)	Şol soraga degişli çynlakaý praktika nähili? Halkara donorlar öz taslamalaryny hakykatda nähili hödürläpdiler?
5c)	Belli taslamaň esasynda aýdyn mysal berip bilmersiňizmi?
6a)	Siz dürli halkara donorlar bilen işlediňiz. Siziň pikiriňiz boýunça, dürli donorlaryň arasynda tapawut barmy? Meselem, ikitaraplaýyn donorlaryň (GIZ, ÝUSAID), we köptaraplaýyn donorlaryň arasynda (BMG, HB, ÝHHG); ýa-da ýurtda ýerleşýän donorlaryň (BMGOM, ÝB) hem ýurtda ýerleşmeýän donorlaryň arasynda (BMGTGG, HZG)
6b)	Egerde olaryň arasynda tapawut bar bolsa, şol tapawutlar nähili?
Sektora degişli soraglar	
7a)	Siziň pikiriňiz boýunça, halkara donorlar hökümeti dolandyryş/ýerli ösüş/tebigaty goramak topara degişli problemalary gowy düşünýärlermi? Mysal hökmünde hakykatda bolan wakalar barada aýdyp bilmersiňizmi?
7b)	Donorlar hökümediň işleşmäge islemeýän toparynda/soraglarynda öz kömegini hödürläpdilermi?
8a)	Siziň pikiriňiz boýunça, tejribäňize degişli toparda [hökümeti dolandyryş/ýerli ösüş/tebigaty goramak] donorlaryň hödürlän kömegi siziň edaraňyza peýdaly boldumy?
8b)	Nähili derejede şol kömek peýdaly (ýa peýdasyz) boldy?
9a)	Donorlaryň taslamalaryny/maksatnamalaryny amala aşyrmak üçin ulanylýan düzgünleri barada gürrüň berip bilmersiňizmi?
9b)	Taslamanyň topary haýsy tarapyň dolandyryş düzgünlerini ulanýar, donor-edaranyň düzgünlerini ýa-da siziň edaraňyzyň dolandyryş düzgünlerini? Şonyň sebäbi näme?
10a)	Egerde iň soňky amala aşyrylan taslamany mysal hökmünde alsak, donor tarapyndan maliýeleşdirilen hökümeti dolandyryşa/ýerli ösüşe/tebigaty goramaga degişli taslamany tassyklamak näçe wagt aldy (taslamany anyklamak tapgyryndan başlap, tassyklamanyň işlerini başlangyç tapgyryna çenli)?
10b)	Taslamany tassyklamak üçin haýsy esasy tapgyrlar ulanyldy (donor hem hökümet tarapyndan)?
11a)	Taslmalaryň amala aşyrlyşy barada gep etsek, şol taslamalar nädip amala aşyryldy (siziň işlän taslamalaryňyzy mysal hökmünde alsak)? Şol taslamalar ministrligiň özi amala aşyrdymy ýa-da şol taslamalary donor-edalaryň özleri amala aşyrdylar?
11b)	Siziň edaraňyz donor-edaralar tarapyndan taslamanyň işlerini geçirmek üçin nagt pul alypdymy, ýa-da bar çykdaýjylary donor-edaranyň özleri töledimi?
11c)	Taslama degisli kararlar nähili kabul edildi? Taslamanyň dolandyryşyna degişli esasy kararlary haýsy organlar, wezipeli işgärler kabul etdi? Çykdaýjylary kim tassyklady?
11d)	Hyzmatlar we harytlar siziň edaraňyzyň ýa-da donor-edaranyň düzgunleri boýunça satyn alyndymy?

12a)	Siziň pikiriňiz boýunça, hökümediň we halkara donorlaryň aragatnaşygyna ýurt, sebit ýa-da global derejede täsir eden wakalar boldymy?
12b)	Eger-de bolan bolsa, şol wakalar donorlar tarapyndan maliýeleşdirilýän taslamalara nähili täsir etdi?
	Minnetdarlygy bildirmek. Jemleýji sözler.

C1) Questions for interviewees representing academia, consulting agencies, freelance experts (English)	
•	Introduction of the project and the researcher's background;
•	Explanation of interview procedures and objectives;
•	Requesting consent;
	Opening questions
1)	My research is about how aid gets managed by donors and recipient governments. Can we start with you please briefly telling me about your experience with donor-funded projects?
2a)	In the job, which you just mentioned, which donors you have worked with?
2b)	In which development sectors have you been mostly involved?
2c)	What are some of the key roles you performed in dealing with aid projects in the country?
	Context-specific questions
3)	In the governance/rural development/environment sector in which you worked, did donor agencies work together when implementing their activities?
4a)	If donors have not worked together, what do you think were the reasons?
4b)	Did the government make any efforts to coordinate technical assistance provided to the country by donors or was it rather interested in working separately with each donor?
5a)	You have worked with various donor agencies throughout your career. Do you perceive any differences in the way government works with different types of donors? For example, between bilateral donors (e.g. GIZ, USAID) and multilateral donors (e.g. UN, WB, OSCE); or between resident (e.g. UNDP, EU) and non-resident (e.g. UNEP, ILO) donors?
5b)	If so, what were those differences?
6a)	Given your knowledge of the context, what role do you think the local non-governmental actors who received aid money/development support from donors have in the country?
6b)	Do you think the government encourages or discourages involvement of those in implementation of donor-funded projects?
	Sector-specific questions
7a)	In your view, what was the motivation of the government to request development assistance from foreign donors in the area of governance/rural development/environment?
7b)	Do you think the government has a good vision in terms of how to use that assistance? Can you provide some stories/examples?
8a)	In your opinion, were there any important events that shaped the government's cooperation with foreign donors, either on the country level, or on the regional and global levels?
8b)	If yes, how did that affect the implementation of your agency's projects in the area of governance/rural development/environment?
	Expression of gratitude. Closing remarks.

C2) Questions for interviewees representing academia, consulting agencies, freelance experts (Russian)	
•	Представление проекта. Краткие сведения об аспиранте;
•	Цели проекта; объяснение процедур проведения интервью;
•	Получение согласия на принятие участия в интервью;
	Вопросы общего плана
1)	В моем научном проекте анализируются вопросы управления донорской помощью со стороны доноров и реципиентов, представляющих госучреждения. Не могли бы Вы для начала кратко рассказать о вашем опыте работы в рамках донорских проектов?
2a)	Работая в должности, которую Вы только что упомянули, с кем из доноров Вам довелось работать?

2b)	В каких секторах в основном Вы работали?
2c)	Какие основные функции Вы выполняли в рамках реализации донорских проектов?
	Вопросы, касающиеся контекста
3)	В секторе госуправления/местного развития/охраны окружающей среды, в котором вы проработали, работали ли доноры вместе в реализации своих мероприятий?
4a)	Если доноры не работали вместе, каковы были причины, на ваш взгляд?
4b)	Предпринимало ли правительство какие-либо усилия для координации донорской помощи или оно предпочитало работать с донорами по отдельности?
5a)	Вы работали с различными госучреждениями в течение вашей карьеры. На ваш взгляд, делало ли правительство какие-либо различия между разными донорами? Например, между двусторонними донорами (ГИЗ, ЮСАИД) и многосторонними донорами (ООН, ВБ, ОБСЕ); или между донорами резидентами (ПРООН, ЕС) и донорами нерезидентами (ЮНЕП, МОТ)?
5b)	Если да, каковы эти различия?
6a)	Учитывая ваше знание странового контекста, какую роль играли неправительственные учреждения в реализации донорских проектов в стране?
6b)	На ваш взгляд, правительство поощряет или не поощряет участие этих учреждений в реализации донорских проектов?
	Вопросы, касающиеся секторов
7a)	На ваш взгляд, какова была мотивация правительства в предоставлении запроса на получение донорской помощи в области госуправления/местного развития/охраны окружающей среды?
7b)	Как Вы думаете, имеет ли правительство четкое видение того, как использовать эту помощь? Можете ли Вы предоставить примеры?
8a)	На ваш взгляд, были ли какие-либо важные события, которые повлияли на сотрудничество правительства с донорами, на уровне страны, или на региональном и глобальном уровнях?
8b)	Если да, то как это повлияло на реализацию проектов вашего агентства в области госуправления/местного развития/охраны окружающей среды?
	Выражение благодарности. Заключительные замечания.

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