

Patterns of government-IO interaction across different settings: what determines the IOs' access to policy change in the post-Soviet region?¹

Anna A. Dekalchuk (Associate Professor, National Research University Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg, Russia. E-mail: adekalchuk@hse.ru)

Ivan S. Grigoriev (Associate Professor, National Research University Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg, Russia. E-mail: igrigoriev@hse.ru)

Andrey Starodubtsev (Associate Professor, National Research University Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg, Russia. E-mail: astarodubtsev@hse.ru)

The paper explains how states and international governmental and non-governmental organizations (IOs) interact in the process of policy making by focusing on how this process unfolds in four countries of the former Soviet Union - Kazakhstan, Georgia, Armenia, and Uzbekistan. The focus of our analysis is social provision and social protection, including pensions, education and health care, as well as the prisoners' rights protection. More specifically, based on a series of in-depth interviews with the public servants, civic activists, academic experts and IO representatives conducted in these countries in 2019, we explore different patterns of state-IO interactions and explain what factors determine the formation of these patterns. We treat IOs as uniform in terms of their preferences for policy reform across countries of the region, and only adapting to the different environments they are embedded in different countries in terms of specific strategies pursued. We demonstrate that specific patterns of state-IOs relations arise from a combination of two country-level factors: institutional environment, which can be successfully characterized through adapting the model of political opportunity structure to describe civil society engagement in resource-poor or illiberal environments; and beliefs and actions of those in power. In the spheres of social provision and social protection, policy process includes the largest number of actors defending various policy alternatives and normatively the IOs' potential influence should be very substantial. However, we also show that the patterns of state-IOs relations differ not only in cross-nation, but also in cross-temporal perspectives.

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