

Strategic-Operational Integration In Public Administration: Lessons From The United Kingdom, The Republic Of Korea And Singapore

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how the United Kingdom, the Republic of Korea and Singapore have linked strategic priorities with operational planning, budgeting and performance monitoring in central government. Drawing on the closed-loop model of strategy execution, the theory of emergent strategy and the literature on strategic management in the public sector, the author proposes three linkages for assessing integration: goal–resource, goal–executor and goal–information. The comparative analysis shows that in all three countries the budget process is the decisive point of integration, while delivery units at the centre of government and the regular revision of plans prevent strategies from turning into static documents. The risks of target gaming, indicator proliferation and limited transferability of foreign models are also discussed. Recommendations are formulated for the implementation of the “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy

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Стратегическо-Операционная Интеграция В Государственном Управлении: Опыт Великобритании, Республики Корея И Сингапура

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Аннотация: В статье проведён сравнительный анализ способов увязки стратегических приоритетов с операционным планированием, бюджетом и мониторингом результативности в Великобритании, Республике Корея и Сингапуре. На основе модели замкнутого цикла реализации стратегии, теории эмерджентной стратегии и литературы по стратегическому управлению в государственном секторе предложены три критерия оценки интеграции: связь «цель – ресурс», «цель – исполнитель» и «цель –

информация». Анализ показывает, что во всех трёх странах решающей точкой интеграции является бюджетный процесс, а подразделения по обеспечению исполнения при центре правительства и регулярный пересмотр планов не позволяют стратегии превратиться в застывший документ. Рассмотрены риски манипулирования показателями, их чрезмерного разрастания и ограниченной переносимости зарубежного опыта. Сформулированы предложения по реализации Стратегии «Узбекистан – 2030».

Ключевые слова: стратегическо-операционная интеграция, подразделение по обеспечению исполнения, обзор расходов, бюджетирование «сверху вниз», блочный бюджет, стратегический форсайт, Стратегия «Узбекистан – 2030», показатели результативности.

Introduction. Over the past three decades, the focus of scholarly debate on strategic planning in public administration has shifted considerably. In the 1990s researchers were chiefly concerned with whether a government body had a strategic document at all, what it contained and how it was drafted. Later a different question came to the fore: by what route does an adopted strategy actually reach a ministry's annual work plan, its budget request and the criteria used to appraise its staff? T.Poister interpreted this change as a transition from strategic planning to strategic management and showed that when strategy and performance measurement are run as separate systems, each of them loses much of its force [7].

For Uzbekistan this question is practical rather than theoretical. In the passage from the Action Strategy to the Development Strategy, and from there to the “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy, the practice of expressing goals through measurable indicators has steadily strengthened [1; 3]. The “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy sets out five priority areas and one hundred goals [2]. As long as a set of goals of this scale is not fully translated into the day-to-day work of ministries and agencies, the gap between strategy and execution identified in the author's earlier study will persist [4]. It is therefore timely to examine systematically the experience of countries that have achieved tangible results in linking strategic and operational planning.

The article focuses on the United Kingdom, the Republic of Korea and Singapore. These three countries were selected because each has addressed the link between strategy and execution in a different way: the first through delivery oversight at the centre of government combined with budget agreements, the second through legislation and a single digital financial system, and the third by embedding long-term thinking in its administrative culture. The study draws on comparative institutional analysis, the examination of official documents and audit reports, and a systems approach.

Main part. Before comparing foreign practice, the meaning of “integration” needs to be clarified. R.Kaplan and D.Norton describe strategy execution not as a one-off document but as a closed management loop: a strategy is developed, translated into a strategy map and indicators, organisational units are aligned with it, operational plans and budgets are drawn up, and the strategy itself is then tested against the results of execution [5]. For the public sector the most valuable feature of this model is the emphasis it places on the flow back from the operational to the strategic level. H.Mintzberg's argument about emergent strategy leads to the same point: a strategy is partly intended in advance and partly takes shape in the course of execution [12]. J.Bryson views strategic planning in government as a discipline grounded in deliberation and agreement; in other words, it is not only an analytical exercise but also a political process that brings different stakeholders together around a common purpose [6].

Drawing these perspectives together, strategic-operational integration can be assessed through three linkages: the goal–resource linkage (is the strategic priority reflected in the budget?), the goal–executor linkage (is there a clearly responsible body for each goal?) and the goal–information linkage (do the results of execution feed back into the revision of the strategy?). The experience of the three countries is examined below against these criteria.

The experience of the United Kingdom. In 1998 the British government launched the Comprehensive Spending Review and linked it to Public Service Agreements. In exchange for a three-year funding settlement, each department agreed specific targets with HM Treasury. Strategic priorities and the budget thus met within a single framework. In 2001 the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit was established under the leadership of M.Barber. This small unit did not write new plans. Its task was to track the trajectory of results in a limited

number of priority areas, to map the “delivery chain” running from the minister down to the school or hospital, and to discuss problems openly at regular stocktake meetings chaired by the Prime Minister [8].

It would be misleading to describe the British experience solely in terms of success. Using the health system as an example, G.Bevan and C.Hood showed that when targets are imposed rigidly, those responsible for delivery tend to manage the indicator itself rather than improve the underlying result [9]. Partly in response to such criticism, the agreements system was abolished after 2010, giving way first to departmental business plans and, from 2015, to Single Departmental Plans. The National Audit Office noted that these plans were not yet adequately linking strategic objectives to resources [10]. The Outcome Delivery Plans introduced in 2021 rest on priority outcomes agreed during the spending review and separately identify cross-cutting outcomes for which several departments are jointly responsible. The Public Value Framework, in turn, sets criteria for judging expenditure by the value it creates for society [11].

The experience of the Republic of Korea. In Korea the disconnect between strategy and budget was openly acknowledged as a problem in the early 2000s: ministries compiled their annual budget requests from the bottom up, and the totals bore little relation to the government’s multi-year priorities. The problem began to be addressed through fiscal reforms carried out in the mid-2000s. The reform package had four components: a five-year National Fiscal Management Plan updated on a rolling annual basis; top-down budgeting, under which expenditure ceilings for each sector are first set at government level and ministries then allocate funds within those ceilings; a performance management system; and a single digital budgeting and accounting system known as dBrain [13]. The National Finance Act and the Framework Act on Government Performance Evaluation, both adopted in 2006, gave these mechanisms a stable legal basis.

The defining feature of the Korean model is that strategic goals, performance indicators and budget programmes are linked to one another within a single digital system. A ministry is free to allocate funds within its expenditure ceiling, but this freedom is granted in exchange for accountability for results. At the same time, OECD analyses point to the risks of an excessive proliferation of indicators and of the self-assessment of budget programmes gradually becoming a formality [14]. An indicator system, in other words, does not guarantee integration by itself; its quality has to be reviewed regularly.

The experience of Singapore. Singapore differs from the other two countries in that it does not produce a lengthy, detailed national strategic document. Long-term thinking there is embodied not in a separate document but in administrative institutions and practice. The government has used scenario-based planning on a regular basis since the 1990s; the Risk Assessment and Horizon Scanning (RAHS) programme was launched in 2004, and the Centre for Strategic Futures was set up within the Prime Minister’s Office in 2009. Block budgeting has been in place since 1989: ministries receive an overall allocation and enjoy wide discretion in distributing it according to their internal priorities. Results, meanwhile, are assessed publicly through the Singapore Public Sector Outcomes Review, which the government publishes on a regular basis.

B.S.Neo and G.Chen characterise Singapore’s approach as “dynamic governance” and identify three capabilities at its core: thinking ahead, thinking again and thinking across agency boundaries [15]. Put differently, in Singapore the bridge between strategy and execution is built not through documents but through the capacity of its people, analytical institutions and established habits of review. It should be remembered, however, that this model emerged in a small state with a compact administration and a public service built on rigorous professional selection.

A comparison of the three countries against the criteria defined above gives the following picture (Table 1).

Table 1

Foreign models of strategic-operational integration			
Criterion	United Kingdom	Republic of Korea	Singapore
Form in which priorities are set	Priority outcomes agreed in the spending review; Outcome Delivery Plans	Five-year fiscal management plan updated annually	Scenario analysis and agency foresight plans; no single long document

Criterion	United Kingdom	Republic of Korea	Singapore
Goal–resource linkage	Spending review process	Top-down budgeting, expenditure ceilings	Block budget
Institution overseeing delivery	Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit	Government performance evaluation system, dBrain	Public Sector Outcomes Review
Revision mechanism	Regular stocktakes, spending reviews	Annual update of the plan	Centre for Strategic Futures, scenario updates
Main risk	Target gaming	Indicator proliferation, formalism	Limited transferability

The comparison shows that in all three countries the budget process is the decisive point of integration. If a strategic priority is not discussed at the stage where budget decisions are taken, whether in a spending review, in setting expenditure ceilings or in allocating a block budget, it does not reach the operational level. The second common feature is the presence of a centre that oversees delivery. Such a centre does not collect reports; it acts as an analytical link that identifies problems early and brings them to the decision-maker. The third feature concerns the revision of strategy: both Korea’s rolling five-year plan and Singapore’s scenario analysis keep the strategy from hardening into a static document.

None of these experiences, however, lends itself to mechanical transfer. Britain’s rigid targets created a risk of gaming; in Korea indicators multiplied; and the Singaporean model rests on a personnel system built up over many years. For Uzbekistan it makes sense to adopt not individual elements of these models but their underlying logic, namely the principle of linking goals, resources, executors and information within a single management cycle.

Conclusion and recommendations. On the basis of this analysis, the following directions are proposed for drawing on foreign experience in implementing the “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy:

Turning the budget process into a forum for strategic deliberation: medium-term budget requests from ministries and agencies should be examined in relation to specific goals of the Strategy, and the budget message should openly show how funds are distributed across priority goals (UK and Korean experience).

Establishing a delivery unit: a compact analytical body should be created at the centre of government to track the delivery trajectory of the highest-priority goals of the 2030 Strategy, concentrating on identifying problem points rather than collecting reports (UK experience).

Introducing rolling medium-term plans: ministries’ three-year operational plans should be updated every year in step with the budget cycle (Korean experience).

Limiting and regularly reviewing indicators: a limited number of outcome indicators should be set for each strategic goal, together with an independent review procedure capable of detecting artificial “improvement” of indicators (lessons from the UK and Korea).

Institutionalising foresight capacity: an analytical unit dealing with scenario analysis and strategic foresight should be established, and its findings formally incorporated into the revision of the Strategy (Singaporean experience).

On the whole, strategic-operational integration is secured not by any particular organisational structure or document format but by a management cycle that continually links strategic goals with the budget, those responsible for delivery and feedback. Foreign experience shows that such a cycle can be built with different instruments. The task for Uzbekistan is to choose the combination of instruments that fits its national administrative traditions and institutional capacity.

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