THE ‘TULIP REVOLUTION’
AND
THE ROLE OF INFORMAL DYNAMICS IN KYRGYZ POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

THE 'TULIP REVOLUTION' AND THE ROLE OF INFORMAL DYNAMICS IN KYRGYZ POLITICS

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This dissertation aims to uncover the main parameters, the decisive dynamics within Kyrgyz politics not only through an examination of the socio-political context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, but also through an analysis of the events that came to be known as the 'Tulip Revolution'. It examines the general and immediate contexts, course of events, dynamics and implications of the 'Tulip Revolution' in order to understand what kind of dynamics account for the continuing instability in Kyrgyzstan in its aftermath. Despite a variety of factors can be considered as relevant, this study argues that the continuity in the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics accounts for the continuing instability in Kyrgyz politics. Bases of the informal dynamics are embedded in Kyrgyzstan's historical context and they are strengthened by its transitional context; they played decisive roles in shaping the course of events during the 'Tulip Revolution' and their decisive role remained as such in its aftermath. Not only various developments in Bakiev era, but also the events that led to the end of it provide reinforcing evidence for such continuity. Hence, the 'Tulip Revolution' did not bring about an 'impetus for democratization', but indicated to an 'impetus for the decisive role of informal dynamics' in shaping Kyrgyz politics, which paves the way for the persistent instability in the country.

Key Words: Post-Soviet, Central Asia, Kyrgyz Politics, 'Tulip Revolution', Formal/Informal Dynamics

ÖZ

‘LALE DEVRİMİ’
VE
KIRGIZ SİYASETİNDE ENFORMAL DİNAMİKLERİN ROLÜ

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Bu çalışma, Kırgız siyasetinin temel parametrelerini, belirleyici dinamiklerini ortaya çıkarmak üzere, post-Sovyet Kırgızistan’ın sosyo-politik bağlamını incelemesinin yanında, ‘Lale Devrimi’ olarak adlandırılan olayları analiz etmiştir. Kırgızistan’da süregelen istikrarsızlığın ardında yatan dinamiklerin neler olduğunu anlamak üzere, ‘Lale Devrimi’nin zeminini hazırlayan genel ve özel koşullar, olayların gelişimi, dinamikleri ve açılımlarını incelemiştir. Kırgızistan’da süregelen istikrarsızlığa dair pek çok faktör ileri sürülebilecek olsa da, bu çalışma, enformel dinamiklerin Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte oynadığı belirleyici roldeki sürekliliğe dikkat çekmiştir. Enformel dinamiklerin zeminleri, Kırgızistan’ın tarihsel bağlamında gizlidir ve bu dinamikler, Kırgızistan’ın geçiş süreci çerçevesinde güçlenmiştir; ‘Lale Devrimi’nde belirleyici rol oynamışlardır; belirleyici rolleri, ‘Lale Devrimi’ sonrasında da sürmüştür. Bakiev dönemindeki pek çok gelişme yanında, bu dönemin sona ermesine sebep olan gelişmeler de bu sürekliliğe dair destekleyici kanıtlar sunmuştur. Bu çerçevede, ‘Lale Devrimi’, bir ‘demokratikleşme ivmesi’ sunmak yerine, ülkede süren istikrarsızlığa zemin hazırlayan enformel dinamiklerin, Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte oynadıkları önemli role ivme kazandırmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Post-Sovyet, Orta Asya, Kırgızistan Siyaseti, ‘Lale Devrimi’, Formel/Enformel Dinamikler

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation intends to analyze the general and immediate contexts, dynamics and implications of the events that came to be known as the 'Tulip Revolution' as a stretching board to uncover not only the main parameters of Kyrgyz politics, but also to have an understanding of what accounts for the continuing instability in its aftermath. Put differently, this study endeavors to grasp the 'Tulip Revolution' in its singularity by examining its timeline, participants, major and minor roles played by the informal and formal dynamics along with its implications for Kyrgyz politics and to situate this singularity within the socio-political context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. By doing so, it intends to uncover the main parameters, better-said the decisive dynamics of Kyrgyz politics in order to understand what accounts for the continuing instability in Kyrgyzstan.

Starting from the beginnings of February 2005, there have been mass demonstrations throughout Kyrgyzstan. Protests intensified in the south of the country especially after the second round of the Parliamentary Elections of 2005 and led to the end of Askar Akaev's presidency on 24 March 2005. President Akaev and his family left the country and found asylum in the Russian Federation (Kulikova, 2007: 2). The initial interpretations of these events as 'revolution'

mainly stressed not only the international factors behind these mobilizations, but also the elements of civil society in Kyrgyzstan that were assumed to be fostered by international democracy assistance (Cummings, 2008: 223-224; Cummings & Ryabkov, 2008: 242). This initial euphoria either cherished these events as another chain in a wave of 'colored revolutions' where people were assumed to unite behind an opposition to bring down their authoritarian leaders after electoral fraud (Cummings, 2008: 223), or criticized these events as a Western backed coup d'état (Heathershaw, 2007). Soon, more detailed analyses came to light which stressed either the formal domestic factors or informal domestic factors behind these events (Cummings & Ryabkov, 2008: 245) who considered the 'revolutionary' nature of these events on more critical grounds (Cummings, 2008:224). On the plane of these diverse interpretations, this study situates itself on the research avenue that mainly stressed the roles of informal dynamics in shaping the course of events during the 'Tulip Revolution'.[1]

According to Sally Cummings and Maxim Ryabkov, there appeared several possible focuses regarding informal dynamics in Kyrgyzstan. Among these research paths, they stressed mainly four as follows: "the origins of informal politics; its role in democratization and state building; the relation between formal and informal institutions; and, finally, horizontal and vertical informal power relations" (Cummings & Ryabkov, 2008: 245). On parallel grounds with these concerns, this dissertation makes use of the studies that emphasized the role of

[1] To make my reservations clear about the debate of 'colored revolutions' and 'democratic meaning' attributed to these events, I employ the term 'Tulip Revolution' always put in commas and at times, I employ the term February-March 2005 events interchangeably.

informal dynamics during the 'Tulip Revolution' as a stretching board for its own concerns.

For the concerns of this dissertation, studies that stressed the role of informal dynamics behind the mobilizations (Radnitz, 2005, 2006; Jones, 2007; Temirkulov, 2007, 2008; Kupatadze, 2008) are advantageous for several reasons compared to the other approaches that mainly stressed formal dynamics (Bunce &Wolchik, 2006a; Beissinger, 2007, 2009). First of all, these studies argue that the primary actors, contexts, dynamics and implications of the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' are more complex than those portrayed by the mainstream literature that mainly focused on formal dynamics. It is partly because they depict a very different picture of the political competition in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. In their account, it is not between an authoritarian leader and people united behind an opposition (which assumes a clear cut distinction between state and society), but between various actors, mainly informal forces in the country. These studies, thereby, takes the multiple levels of political competition in Kyrgyzstan into account, where the informal level of politics in-between state and society is taken into consideration (Juraev, 2008: 262). On these grounds rests what this study calls upon as the informal dynamics, which are not only active routinely in shaping Kyrgyz politics, but also during mobilizations (Juraev, 2008: 260).

Secondly, studies that stressed the major role of informal dynamics in shaping the 'Tulip Revolution' provide not only various supporting evidence for the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping post-Soviet Kyrgyz politics in general, but also they present a better stretching board for us to account for the continuing instability that followed suit these events. The initial euphoria of the

studies that stressed the international factors and the elements of civil society supposedly nurtured by the international democracy assistance led quickly to disappointment in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution'. This reminds us of a similar euphoria that ended up with disappointment as well: namely the international community's hailing of Kyrgyzstan as an 'island of democracy' in the early 1990s. Soon, it became clear that the analysis and projections of this strand of thought was not in place in regard of the socio-political developments that followed suit the so-called 'democratic revolution' in Kyrgyzstan (Radnitz, 2006:133; Beacháin, 2009: 213; Cummings, 2008: 224). The studies which implied that the 'Tulip Revolution' brought about an impetus for democratization, soon got disappointed with respect to the fact that there was neither any significant change in the system of governance in the country (Berg, 2006b: 215), nor the people saw any improvement regarding their living conditions (Berg, 2006a: 138). Although the 'Tulip Revolution' brought about a "transfer of power", in its aftermath, democratization did not prevail as assumed, instead political instability in Kyrgyzstan has deepened considerably (Radnitz, 2006:133).

Despite the fact that a range of factors can be considered as related, drawing upon the insights of the studies that stressed the major roles of informal dynamics during the 'Tulip Revolution', this study argues that the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics accounts for the continuing instability in Kyrgyzstan. Despite the fact that the names at the top were changed, the main dynamics that shaped the nature, parameters and course of Kyrgyz politics, namely the informal dynamics remained intact (Radnitz, 2006: fn1). In this respect, it was not surprising to see that Bakiev era strongly looked liked

Akaev era (ICG, 2008:1; ICG, 2010a: 1; Joldoshov, 2010: fn14; Kurmanov, 2006: 53). In the subsequent five years, as Bekbolotov concisely puts into words, "it's become almost a tradition in the past few years for springtime in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek to be a memorable season with mass protests voicing political discontent" (Bekbolotov, 2008) among which appeared various demonstrations since 2006, but most importantly April 2010 events that led to the end of Bakiev era. In this context, as the rule of the game shaping the nature and course of Kyrgyz politics, namely the decisiveness of the informal dynamics, did not change even strengthened; political instability continued to reign in the country (Radnitz, 2006: 133).

Such instability brought about severe consequences for the country. Among these grave consequences, one can cite "rising numbers of assassinations and unruly crowd actions" (Radnitz, 2006: 133); various conflicts between several actors whose influences mainly depended on their ability to mobilize wider communities by relying upon their informal ties to these communities, which led to numerous protests, demonstrations since the immediate aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution' (Khamidov, 2006a; Bekbolotov, 2006). Furthermore, another massive uprising occurred in April 2010 that led to the overthrow of President Bakiev (ICG, 2010a). Moreover, a humanitarian crisis took place in the south of the country in June 2010 (ICG, 2010b). It is in this context that this study argues that the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics accounts for the continuing instability in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution'. Kyrgyzstan has been thrown into this vicious circle of instability on the grounds paved by the

strengthened pivotal role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution'.

To have an understanding of the extent of the decisiveness of the informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics that laid behind not only the 'Tulip Revolution', but also the above-mentioned events, in this study, I search into the key elements, features and implications of informal dynamics in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. In this regard, it is argued that the bases of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics lay in Kyrgyzstan's historical context and they are strengthened by its transitional context.

Among the main components of the historical context of Kyrgyzstan, one can cite its early history along with its experiences under Tsarist and Soviet rules. These rules, on the one hand, left their traces on the socio-political fabric of Kyrgyz society; on the other hand, they retained the elements of existing fault lines within Kyrgyz society that would provide the bases of informal dynamics in the aftermath of its sudden independence (Gleason, 1997; Roy, 2000; Collins, 2006).

Among the main features of the transitional context of Kyrgyzstan, the impact of the multi-dimensional transformation processes have taken the lead. These processes that transformed Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic of the Soviet Union into a nation-state (Akçalı, 2005b: 96), whose main components appear as the economic and political liberalization (Chenoy, 2007: 62), have definitely strengthened the hands of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics Khamidov, 2006a: 41). Economic liberalization implemented in a chaotic and uncontrolled manner through shock therapy brought about social trauma (Abazov,

2004; Joldoshov, 2010) and compelled people for their social security needs into the arms of traditional solidarity whose elements are often manipulated by the informal leaders at all levels of governance, where state institutions could not provide these needs as they did not exist apart from their nominal roles (Temirkulov, 2007: 7). Political liberalization strengthened the hands of informal dynamics as well by creating a state that constitutes only the very playground for these dynamics to tap state resources for their own narrow interests at all levels of governance (Temirkulov, 2007: 8; Collins, 2006: 245).

The decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping politics in Kyrgyzstan was already evident during the first decade of independence. Informal ties were very important in mobilizing popular support during elections, referenda, appointments and from the beginnings of 2000s; it became apparent that they were effective as well during mobilizations of popular support into protests (Juraev, 2008: 260). One of these mobilizations appears to be the 'Tulip Revolution'. Indeed, the 'Tulip Revolution' was not the first one in this regard. Aksy events in 2002, (where the imprisonment of a local/regional "political entrepreneur"[2] from the south, to be precise, Azimbek Beknazarov's arrest) gave the first signs of the potentials of informal ties for mobilizing masses for particular influential figures in the country (Juraev, 2008: 258; Radnitz, 2005). In this respect, Aksy events displayed the personalized and informal nature of power in the country three years before the 'Tulip Revolution'. Aksy events, which carry

[2] Jones (2007: 153) has coined this term to refer to the mid-level local–regional leaders who have generated the support of their villagers, extended family and regional affiliations into protests. In Jones' words, "I label these political leaders *political entrepreneurs* because of their interests in using the protests to advance their personal, political and often business interests" (Jones, 2007: 153). I find it convenient to use the same term for these actors occasionally as well.

out various similarities with the 'Tulip Revolution' (Tursunkulova, 2008) revealed the decisiveness of the informal dynamics in shaping the course of Kyrgyz politics. These events gave us various hints regarding the dynamics of the 'Tulip Revolution' and indeed, constituted its "domestic example" (Tursunkulova, 2008: 349). In this context, Lewis has a point when he says; "...the remote villages of Aksy were more of an inspiration for the revolution than Belgrade, Kiev or Tbilisi" (Lewis, 2008: 267). In this regard, the main factors that played leading roles in the overthrow of President Akaev derived from local and domestic dynamics in contrast to external sources (Lewis, 2008: 275).

Analyzed within these confines, an introductory account of the February-March 2005 events indicates to the fact that the forces that intensified the mobilizations were mainly in the south which signaled to the regional tones of the protests (Jones, 2007: 70-71). The major roles in the peripheral protests were played by local informal leaders ('political entrepreneurs') on "a 'middle-down' organization" (Radnitz, 2006: 133). Such an organization once again revealed that the distinction between state and society that generates a stress on formal dynamics of politics along with a top to bottom or bottom to up analysis is misguided in understanding the nature of these events. As Jones points out, the protestors were mainly mobilized on behalf of their informal leaders, who were either disqualified prior to the Parliamentary Elections of 2005 or later lost in these elections (Jones, 2007: 153) which signaled to the personalized and informal nature of power in the country once again. These figures, some of them with criminal affiliations as well (Kupatadze, 2008: 284) were disappointed with the election process and to make their dissatisfaction apparent, owing to their

informal ties to local communities, they started to call upon their supporters to protest (Radnitz, 2006:133) as one witnessed during Aksy Events as well (Radnitz, 2005: 419). In doing so, they relied upon personal loyalty and various sources of traditional solidarity for the legitimization and authorization of the mobilization (Temirkulov, 2008). Among the elements of traditional solidarity, Temirkulov draws attention to institutions such as aksakal (elders) and kurultai (people's assembly) along with palvan (wrestlers) (Temirkulov, 2008: 317).

Given this brief review of the dynamics of February-March 2005 events, which will be detailed in Chapter 4, it is clear that neither Western-backed NGOs, nor party-based or supposedly united opposition, youth groups and media were the driving forces during February/March 2005 events (Lewis, 2008: 275). As Lewis accurately puts into words, "this virtual political world was remote from the real political dynamics" in the country (Lewis, 2008: 276). The real political dynamics in the country were actually taking place where mainstream studies that stressed formal dynamics in understanding these events were not often searching into, namely on the informal level.

In fact, the disjuncture Lewis points out to between the virtual world of the elements of Western backed civil society and the real political dynamics at play in the country became even more evident in the aftermath of the so-called 'Tulip Revolution'. Despite President Akaev, who was depicted as an increasingly authoritarian leader towards the end of his office, was ousted as a result of these events; soon, it became clear that his ouster did not change the course of politics in the country (Radnitz, 2006: fn1); did not bring about any change in the conditions of the people for the better (Berg, 2006a: 138) and did not create any

momentum for democratization (Radnitz, 2006: 133). This study argues that this was mainly because the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics which were apparent not only in the socio-political context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan during its first decade of independence, but also during the 'Tulip Revolution' remained intact in the aftermath of these events as well. Put differently, the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' did not bring about an 'impetus for democratization', but an 'impetus for the decisiveness of the informal dynamics' in shaping Kyrgyz politics. Not only various developments in Bakiev era, but also the course of events that led to the end of it provided reinforcing evidence for such continuity in the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics and their role in generating persistent instability in the country.

Within these confines, this study, which aims to uncover the decisive dynamics that shape the nature and course of post-Soviet Kyrgyz politics, consists of six chapters that proceed chronologically. The first chapter introduces the thesis of the dissertation along with an overview of the rest of the chapters. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical grounds for responding to the following research question; 'how can one best understand the dynamics of the 'Tulip Revolution' and explain the continuing instability in its aftermath? Are approaches that mainly focus on formal actors and institutions on state or society level adequate alone for understanding the dynamics of the 'Tulip Revolution' and explaining the continuing instability in its aftermath?' Here, after examining the main analytical perspectives presented for the explanation and understanding of the 'Tulip Revolution' in Kyrgyzstan, I argue that the most adequate way of understanding and explaining these events and the continuing instability in its aftermath would

be to take the informal dynamics in Kyrgyz politics into account. Focusing mainly on the formal dynamics of Kyrgyz politics may provide partial explanations of February - March 2005 events and they are inadequate to account for the continuing instability in its aftermath. In this respect, in this chapter, I dwell upon the key elements, features and implications of the informal dynamics in Kyrgyz politics. For this end, I refer to the studies that stressed the informal dimensions of politics in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan to describe the theoretical tools that I have made use of throughout the study and followed this description with an account of the texts and interviews that informed this study.

This is followed in Chapter 3 by a discussion on how the interaction between historical context and transitional context of Kyrgyzstan merged and provided a convenient ground for the informal dynamics to flourish in the aftermath of its sudden independence. In this regard, this chapter starts with a brief review of the historical context which refers to the historical influences that have left their traces on the socio-political fabric of Kyrgyz society (Gleason, 1997), economics and politics to varying extents (Abazov, 2004). In other words, I start by presenting brief accounts of the main traits of Kyrgyzstan's early history, experiences under Tsarist and also Soviet rule (Collins, 2006). Here, I also dwell upon the socio-political atmosphere in the last years of Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic on its way to the collapse of Soviet Union and its independence (Abazov, 2004; Spector, 2004; Huskey, 1997b, 2002).

Consequently, I examine the complex ways in which the socio-political context that appeared at the times of the independence of Kyrgyzstan has been redesigned by the multi-dimensional transformation processes. In other words, I

present a review of the post-1991 transformation of socio-political context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan and to describe this transitional context, I mainly draw attention to the challenges faced by the newly independent Kyrgyz Republic. By providing a chronological account of what has happened from independence up to the beginning of 2000s, in this chapter I endeavor to lay out the general coordinates of the socio-political atmosphere in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan to underline the decisive role of informal dynamics at all levels of governance (Collins, 2006: 101); the localized and personalized nature of political contestation in Kyrgyzstan (Juraev, 2008); dispersed nature of power (Melnykovska, 2008:21) despite a seemingly strong president; the weak institutionalization of the formal channels (Temirkulov, 2007) and that such a political atmosphere was conducive to socio-political unrest and protests.

Within the context of this socio-political atmosphere conducive to protests and unrest, in Chapter 4, I present the immediate context, course of events, dynamics and implications of February-March 2005 events. In this chapter, I begin with examining the developments up until the beginning of 2005, with a special focus on the Aksy Events and their consequences and implications for Kyrgyz politics (Radnitz, 2005). These events are put under scrutiny for their potential in bringing out the decisive roles played by the informal forces in shaping the political scene in Kyrgyzstan, signaling to the fertile atmosphere for social unrest shortly before February - March 2005 events (Radnitz, 2005; Tursunkulova, 2008). Subsequently, I follow the course of events, better-said the evolution of the protests in order to grasp the dynamics of the uprisings and to place these events in a timeline (Jones, 2007). Then I examine the participants of

the events in order to emphasize the significant roles played by the informal dynamics, rather than formal ones such as the elements of civil society or international influences as the conventional wisdom initially assumed (Lewis, 2008). Lastly, I provide an assessment of the implications of February-March 2005 events for Kyrgyz politics.

Chapter 5 mainly searches into the political developments that followed suit in the aftermath of February-March 2005 events. This chapter analyses in detail the socio-political and socio-economic developments of the past five years, namely the Bakiev era. Here it is argued with various supporting evidence that February-March 2005 events that led to the overthrow of Askar Akaev did not lead to any kind of change with respect to the main parameters of politics in Kyrgyzstan (Radnitz, 2006; ICG, 2006, 2008, 2010a, 2010b). The decisive role of informal dynamics at all levels of governance remained intact even strengthened; the formal aspects of politics increasingly presented merely a playground for various informal dynamics.

Such continuity in the main parameters of politics in Kyrgyzstan during Bakiev era, indeed, since early 2006, paved the way for the fall of President Bakiev as well. Expectedly, he was overthrown by another massive uprising in April 2010. In view of these mass uprisings, this chapter also provides a review of the dynamics of April 2010 events and briefly compares them with February-March 2005 events. Lastly, the challenges facing the provisional government that has arisen on the ruins of Bakiev era are briefly dwelled upon with a special focus on the violent conflicts that took place in the immediate aftermath of the overthrow of Bakiev (Osmonov, 2010c; Nichol, 2010a, 2010b; Shepherd, 2010a,

2010b) and the course of the referendum 2010 that transformed Kyrgyzstan from a presidential to parliamentary system, at least on theoretical grounds (Osmonov, 2010d). Finally, Chapter 6 presents the key findings and concludes the dissertation.

In the overall account, this study intends to stress that Kyrgyz politics is taking place where analysts that mainly focus on formal dynamics are often not digging into, or simply sideline. Put differently, I aim to point out to the fact that the mainstream literature often by-pass what is actually happening in Kyrgyz politics by sidelining the decisive role of informal level of politics (Conrad, 2006: 257) or analyzing it through the context of civil society by assuming a clear cut distinction between state and society in the country (Dittmer, 2000: 290). As Bogatyrev properly puts into words, "in a society where political institutions are well-developed, the major decisions are made in the 'formal' sphere. However, a certain part is still informal. In Kyrgyzstan, where political institutions are almost not present, the most decisions are made informally - about 90 per cent of all decisions" (Bogatyrev quoted in Safin, 2008). As apparent in this observation of Bogatyrev, in a country where informal dynamics play such a pivotal role in shaping the nature and course of politics, focusing mainly on the formal dimensions often lead to inadequacy, various misunderstandings and quick conclusions such as the hailing of Kyrgyzstan in the early 1990s as an 'island of democracy' or lately with respect to February-March 2005 events that came to be known as the 'Tulip Revolution'. In this respect, taking the informal dynamics of politics in Kyrgyzstan into account is not only a crucial key to a better understanding of the main parameters of Kyrgyz politics, but also it provides a

convenient stretching board to account for the continuing instability in Kyrgyzstan.

Within these confines, by assigning myself to the attentive work outlined above, I hope that this dissertation will be helpful to anyone who desires to learn about Kyrgyz politics or who is concerned with developing comprehensive analysis regarding the current developments in Kyrgyzstan.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the literature on post-Soviet Central Asian politics mainly focused on the formal dynamics of politics. As Kathleen Collins also points out, during 1990s, "a large corpus of…literature has focused overwhelmingly on the formal and elite level, on getting the formal institutions right to consolidate democracy" (Collins, 2006: 9)[3]. Assuming a clear cut distinction between state and society, mainstream literature mostly centered on the evolution of the formal dynamics for understanding politics in the region and endeavored to explain political developments with a special focus on elite or institutional level of analysis (Collins, 2006: 9).

Soon, when it became apparent that the projections and accompanying prescriptions of these analyses fail in the Central Asian context their explanations once again revolved around formal dynamics (Collins, 2006: 11). In Collins' words, they indicated to "the lack of elite commitment to democracy, elites desire to hold onto power, and do so by creating super-presidential institutions" (Collins, 2006: 11). In this regard, these studies further introduced the concept of 'hybrid

[3] For a brief summary of this large corpus, namely the democratization literature, See: Collins, 2006: 1-22; Joldoshov, 2010: 176-180.

regimes' to account for the area between liberal democratic rule and authoritarian rule (Carothers, 2002). Terms such as 'semi-democracy', 'formal democracy', 'electoral democracy', 'pseudo-democracy', 'illiberal democracy' and 'delegative democracy' made the scene (Collier & Levitsky, 1997; Diamond, 2002; Joldoshov, 2010: 175).

In this regard, what the studies that mainly focused on formal dynamics in order to understand the main parameters of Central Asian politics in general and that of Kyrgyzstan in particular did was to fit the political developments of the countries under their scrutiny into their ideal schemes of analysis, instead of creating new and suiting schemes that could account for the actual political developments in these countries (Carothers, 2002: 18-19). As Carothers accurately puts into words; "by describing countries in the gray zone as types of democracies, analysts are in effect trying to apply the transition paradigm to the very countries whose political evolution is calling the paradigm in question" (Carothers, 2002: 10). As he puts it differently, mainstream literature was busy only with "trying to do a little of everything according to a template of ideal institutional forms" (Carothers, 2002: 18-19). Hence, mainstream literature and its accompanying focus on formal dynamics of politics within the Central Asian context acquired a prescriptive tone, not an adequately explanatory one.

For the concerns of this dissertation, one of the reasons why the mainstream literature on post-Soviet Central Asian politics failed in understanding the complexities of the region lays in its sidelining of the informal level, better-said, the importance of informal dynamics in shaping post-Soviet Central Asian politics. Indeed, existing research has often remained silent about the informal

level of politics (Conrad, 2006: 257) as the above-mentioned studies did, or made use of the concept of civil society in understanding informal politics in the region, which did not appear very useful as well (Dittmer, 2000: 290).

The main reason why the concept of civil society did not prove useful in accounting for the informal level of politics in the context of post-Soviet Central Asia as well can be deduced from the analysis of Lowell Dittmer conducted with respect to the experiences of East-Asian countries (Dittmer, 2000: 290). He points out to the fact that the clear cut distinction this concept assumes between the state and society is not in place with respect to this part of the world (Dittmer, 2000: 290-291). Here, he indicates to a kind of blending, a mutual transformation between these realms. Put in his words;

> The analysis of 'civil society,' which was greatly stimulated by the collapse of communist regimes…seems initially more promising as a conceptual bridge to span the hiatus between state and society. But the concept has in its most recent incarnation been too exclusively identified with a 'public' realm (consisting of 'voluntary associations,' 'interest groups,' the market, an autonomous mass media) that is sharply differentiated from and opposed to the 'state' to be particularly useful which...are typically characterized by compromise formulations...emphasizing 'fusion' rather than sharp contraposition. (Dittmer, 2000: 290-291).

Boris-Mathieu Pétric also underlines the inadequacy of the concept of civil society in accounting for the societal level of developments in the Central Asian context (Pétric, 2005). He argues that analyses that drew upon the concept of civil society, which was indeed an outcome of particular works of Western political philosophy (Pétric, 2005: 320) "describes 'How society should be' rather than

‘how it really is’” (Pétric, 2005: 321). His critique, therefore, in a way, repeats what Carothers criticized about the studies that mainly focused on elites and institutions. Yet, he indicates to a similar inadequacy on societal level. In his account as well, analyzing the experiences of post-Soviet Central Asian countries through the concept of civil society indeed amounted only to an attempt to fit the experiences of these countries to the ‘ideal template’ of civil society (Pétric, 2005).

To summarize what has been discussed above, studies that focused on the formal dynamics of Central Asian politics, either on state level through elites and institutions or societal level through the concept of civil society failed in accounting for the real political dynamics in Central Asian context. In both cases, a clear cut distinction between state and society has been presumed, where it does not actually exist.

This is a point that has already been stressed by few studies that have taken into account not only the blurred boundaries between state and society in post-Soviet Central Asia, but also the significance of the informal level of politics (Collins, 2006). Studies depending on a more historically and sociologically informed analysis of the political developments in post-Soviet Central Asia, argued for rethinking the democratization literature which has until recently paid little attention to informal dynamics of politics in these cases (Collins, 2006: 10-11).

Drawing upon various studies that downplayed the role of elites and instiutions, few studies stressed in contrast the significance of “social divisions, informal actors and informal politics at the sub-national level” (Collins, 2006:

14).[4] Taking the lead, Kathleen Collins examined the relationship between the social organizations and regimes in post-Soviet Central Asian context (Collins, 2002, 2004, 2006). Especially regarding the contributions of state-in-society literature, she drew attention to "a dynamic 'mutual transformation'" between state and society, instead of considering them as distinct spheres (Collins, 2006:14). In view of such an insight, Collins underlined the specific characteristics of Central Asian societies. On the one hand, she pointed out to the fact that in this geography, it would be inadequate to expect, in her words, "individualist and voluntary associations that de Tocqueville and others have argued are the basis of Western and democratic civil society" (Collins, 2006: 8). In her account, in Central Asian context, one comes across social organizations that mainly "promot[e] communal norms and values" instead of civil society (Collins, 2006: 8). On the other hand, again drawing upon the 'state-in-society' literature, she suggested that assuming "a strong Weberian state or autonomous state elites" (Collins, 2006: 332) would not be fitting to the Central Asian context as well, because, here, most of the "political and economic activity is informal" (Collins, 2006: 332). This is to suggest that in analyzing the regimes in Central Asian context, focusing mainly on formal dynamics and sidelining informal dynamics would not get us far in understanding the main parameters of politics.

Indeed, Aleksandr Knyazev confirms her onus on the need of taking into account the informal level in Central Asian context. In his words, "in reality, in Central Asia, in contrast to the party-political factor familiar to Anglo-Saxon

[4] Among these studies, Collins cites the works of state-in-society literature presented by Joel Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, works of Douglass North along with various studies that stressed the informal level of analysis in the context of Africa, Middle East and the south of Italy (Collins, 2006: 13-16).

civilization, internal politics are defined by a reasonably complicated complex of regional, clan, tribal, ethnic, criminal and other, most frequently latent, connections" (Knyazev, 2005:11 quoted in Wilkonson, 2007: 15). The connections he underlines are important in Central Asian context not only because they play decisive roles in shaping the course of politics, but also they have both stabilizing and destabilizing impacts on Central Asian societies and regimes (Collins, 2006: 214, 226).

According to Collins, on the one hand, these connections played stabilizing roles especially in the aftermath of the sudden independence (Collins, 2006: 214). They do so, in Collins' words, by providing "a social safety net to meet the everyday needs of its citizens in the absence of effective state institutions" (Collins, 2006: 214). On the other hand, due to the already weak formal aspects of politics, they produce destabilizing effects which became apparent more frequently in late 1990s (Collins, 2006: 226). In Collins' words, this is evident in various acts such as "their use of nepotism, control of cadre appointments, patronage of their own group, and blatant asset stripping of state resources" (Collins, 2006: 226). Especially with respect to these destabilizing effects, informal dynamics which grow on the grounds of above-mentioned connections generate a fertile ground of instability for the regimes in which they play decisive roles in shaping the nature and course of politics.

Considered within these confines, one can argue that political developments in post-Soviet Central Asian context in general and in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan in particular is shaped largely by informal dynamics, rather than formal ones (Bogatyrev, 2008). In other words, informal dynamics are more

decisive in shaping Kyrgyz politics compared to the formal dynamics. Therefore, if one aims to have a better understanding of the main parameters of Kyrgyz politics, he/she needs to take the bases, features and implications of these dynamics into account when analyzing political developments in the country, instead of mainly focusing on the formal dynamics. In a nutshell, instead of constantly indicating to what the political developments should move towards or what they lack according to a template (Carothers, 2002), it is a necessity to understand first of all how they actually operate.

For doing so, above mentioned accounts provide a convenient stretching board for the concerns of this study that intends to have a better grasp of the main parameters of politics in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan in comparison to the ones that mainly focus on formal dynamics and stress either elite and institutional (in)capacity or the nature of the civil society. Instead of assuming a virtual distinction between state and society in the region, these studies invite us to focus on the "sphere that overlaps civil society and the state, a sphere where the relationship between the two is fought out" (Starr & Immergut, 1987: 222 quoted in Fukui, 2000: 9). With such an invitation, they highlight the significant roles of informal level in Central Asian politics that must not be underestimated.

In fact, Dittmer properly puts into words the consequences of underestimating or sidelining the informal level in our analyses: "just as a failure to take into account the informal economic sector can lead to inaccurate estimates of a nation's GDP, the neglect of informal politics can lead to a serious misunderstanding of political realities" (Dittmer, 2000: 291). In this regard, falling short of taking into account the informal dynamics of politics, in Fukui's

words, “this understudied category of social interaction” (Fukui, 2000: i), can often end up distorting our understanding of the main parameters of Central Asian politics in general and Kyrgyz politics in particular.

Indeed, such negligence and misunderstanding is what one comes across not only regarding the mainstream literature during 1990s, evident for instance, in the hailing of Kyrgyzstan as an ‘island of democracy’, but also regarding the mainstream literature on the ‘Tulip Revolution’. Studies that mainly sidelined the informal level, ended up with describing a ‘virtual democratic revolution’ in Kyrgyzstan, whereas if they have taken informal dynamics into account, as few studies did, they would possibly depict only a mere “transfer of power” no change with respect to the main parameters of Kyrgyz politics (Radnitz, 2006: 133).

2.2. Literature Review on the ‘Tulip Revolution’

Cummings and Ryabkov categorized the literature on the ‘Tulip Revolution’ into three broad areas of inquiry: “an assessment of the Akaev years from a democratization and state-building perspective; the nature of and relationship between formal and informal institutions prior to and after March 2005; and, finally, the domestic and international factors behind mobilization” (Cummings & Ryabkov, 2008: 241). This dissertation, placing itself into their second line of inquiry, however, suggests a categorization of two broad areas of research regarding the ‘Tulip Revolution’. On the one hand, there are studies that focus on formal dynamics in Kyrgyz politics, either on societal level (stressing ‘people power’ or the elements of civil society) or state level (elite or institutional

in(capacity)) in explaining the 'Tulip Revolution'. On the other hand, there are studies that take informal dynamics in Kyrgyz politics into account in explaining the 'Tulip Revolution'. For the concerns of this dissertation, the latter view has more explanatory power with respect to the ones that mainly focused on formal aspects of Kyrgyz politics.

These studies that point out to the significant extent of the role of informal dynamics during the 'Tulip Revolution' are advantageous for several reasons. They take into account the multi-layered composition of political contestation in Kyrgyzstan, whose bases, as implied above, have been shaped around social, political, cultural divides, clans, tribes, regionalism, traditional solidarity, illegal business connections, criminal networks (Temirkulov, 2004; 2007; 2008; Khamidov, 2006; Bogatyrev, 2008; Kupatadze, 2008). By examining the role of informal actors and institutions during February-March 2005 events, instead of a 'democratic revolution,' these studies depicted a mere "transfer of power" (Radnitz, 2006:133). Moreover, while studies that mainly focus on formal dynamics cannot account for the continuing instability in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution', studies that stressed the significance of informal dynamics during these events, not only pave the way for a better understanding of the complexities of these events, but also provide a convenient stretching board in addressing the continuing instability that followed suit.

2.2.1. Approaches that Stress Formal Dynamics in the 'Tulip Revolution'

Theories of 'colored revolutions' considered February-March 2005 events in Kyrgyzstan as the 'Tulip Revolution', in Heathershaw's words, "as the final stop on the journey of the democratic revolution model across the post-socialist space" (Heathershaw, 2009: 303). 'Tulip Revolution' has been mainly situated in a chain of similar events; namely 'colored revolutions', stretching from Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine to Kyrgyzstan (Cummings, 2008: 223). In this account, people were portrayed as rising up against their authoritarian leaders and brought them down (Heathershaw, 2007). In Ariel Cohen's words, in these events "the people of Kyrgyzstan have spoken and acted" against their increasingly authoritarian leader Askar Akaev and brought him down[5] (Cohen, 2005).

On a similar ground, several other studies emphasized the primary role of opposition movements, better-said the elements of civil society, which were assumed to be fostered by international democracy assistance (Cummings, 2008: 226). Opposition movements, in this account, not only learned from earlier examples of 'colored revolutions' (Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine), but also were fostered by international funds of democracy assistance (Bunce & Wolchik, 2006a, 2006b; Beissinger, 2007, 2009). For instance, Martha Brill Olcott, at the time, was stating that "U.S. policy makers should be very pleased by the developments in Kyrgyzstan, as they do provide strong evidence that sustained

[5] P. D'Anieri, in contrast to views that stress the 'people power,' argued that the 'colored revolutions' in general were generated by elites (D'Anieri, 2006).

support for grassroots political organizations can prove effective" (Olcott, 2005a:10). As apparent in this statement, it was assumed that with the help of the external support and other influences such as trans-boundary learning, opposition movements have been able to mobilize supporters against their authoritarian rulers and led to their collapse (Bunce & Wolchik, 2006a, 2006b; Beissinger, 2007, 2009).

In this view, Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik argued that 'colored revolutions' have taken place when oppositions followed an "electoral model of democratization"[6] (Bunce & Wolchik, 2006a: 5) that paved the way for a shift "from an illiberal to a more liberal government" (Bunce & Wolchik, 2006a: 6). The electoral model that they have described, in practice, required a unified opposition that has the potential for mobilizing support through media or election monitors; for organizing protests and demonstrations in the case of manipulated elections (Bunce & Wolchik, 2006a: 5-6). In this context, in their account, international support, complemented by facilitating domestic conditions, has led to a wave of electoral revolutions in post-communist countries, among which the 'Tulip Revolution' stood as the last chain with unclear consequences of success in regard to democratization (Bunce & Wolchik 2006a:7).

Following Bunce and Wolchik, Mark R. Beissinger, on a parallel ground, argued that the 'post-communist revolutions' in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003),

[6] Concerning the role of elections, Emir Kulov stressed them as "more than a catalyst" (Kulov, 2008: 339). In his account, "protests may be triggered not only by stolen elections or at least by the perception of elections being stolen, but also by elections, which were manipulated throughout the election period" (Kulov, 2008: 339). J. Tucker (2007: 536) confirms his onus and V. Cheterian also stressed the time of elections as the weakest time for prevailing regimes (Cheterian, 2009:145).

Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005) – were interrelated (Beissinger, 2009:76). He explains such interrelatedness by claiming that "each successful democratic revolution has produced an experience that has been consciously borrowed by others[7], spread by NGOs, and emulated by local social movements" (Beissinger 2007: 261). In his account, the 'Tulip Revolution' was also influenced by the earlier examples and by doing so overcame its poor structural conditions for a 'democratic revolution' (Beissinger, 2007: 271-272). In this regard, in Beissinger's account, what has happened in March 2005 was as follows:

> Kyrgyz opposition leaders organized their own 'Tulip Revolution' in the wake of fraudulent elections, drawing inspiration from Georgia and Ukraine; instead of orange, they sported yellow and pink, seizing a number of towns in southern Kyrgyzstan, installing a power parallel to the government, and calling on Akaev to resign. Eventually, the revolution spread to the north, leading to riots and the violent storming of the presidential palace when a demonstration of ten thousand, spearheaded by Kelkel, was attacked by thugs loyal to the Akaev regime (Beissinger, 2007: 262).

As the above-mentioned depiction of Beissinger clearly displays, studies that stressed formal dynamics on societal level underlined the role of Western-backed NGOs, media, youth groups and a united opposition forming on top of these elements, that mobilized 'people power' against the authoritarian leaders and brought them down (Lewis, 2008: 265). Yet, is this really what happened in the course of events? Were these elements playing the primary roles in the

[7] John Heathershaw presented a constructivist approach regarding 'colored revolutions'. He accepted the link between cases of 'colored revolutions', however, contrary to the model of diffusion presented by Beissinger, emphasized the inter-subjective and contingent nature of these processes, where they were not mere copies of each other, but translations with respect to domestic dynamics at hand (Heathershaw, 2009).

mobilizations, especially in Kyrgyzstan? As Cummings properly put into words, "the narrative that exaggerated external factors and the role of civil society has been used by neighboring authoritarian leaders, in their own interests. It also raised expectations of political change in Kyrgyzstan that were unlikely to be fulfilled" (Cummings, 2008: 226). Considered especially with respect to the case of Kyrgyzstan, these accounts clearly gave too much weight to the role of international influence along with the elements of civil society (Beachain, 2009: 199).

Indeed, David Lewis underlined the reasons behind such exaggeration. He pointed out that, this narrative, which was a mere reflection of what the political system in Kyrgyzstan is supposed to be from the Western point of view, was given too much weight for several instrumental reasons (Lewis, 2008: 266). Among these reasons, he mentions the following: "this view fitted with a narrative that was comprehensible to outside observers, who knew little about internal Kyrgyz politics. Second, it fitted into existing favored discourses, both among those supporting US-led democracy promotion strategies, and those opposed to them" (Lewis, 2008: 266). Indeed, John Heathershaw confirmed his point by indicating to the reception of this narrative in post-Soviet circles as well.

Heathershaw (2009: 314) contends that despite the fact that the international democracy assistance as the primary factor behind the 'colored revolutions' was a 'myth', it found echo in post-Soviet circles. In his words, "while the idea of a western-backed grand strategy of colored revolution was a myth, it was one that was increasingly widely believed across the former Soviet Central Asian republics" (Heathershaw, 2009: 314). Yet, while the Western

perception cherished these events as an impetus for democratization, their portrayals of the same events revolved around negative depictions. Post-Soviet leaders considered these events as "foreign intervention" (Beacháin, 2009: 209) and perceived them as foreign-backed coup d'états and illegitimate threats to their sovereignty and stability (Kimmage, 2005; Luzianin, 2005; Herd, 2005; Wilson, 2009). In other words, they considered these mobilizations as, in Becháin words, "a cover for more sinister motives, and aimed generally at extending US influence over the CIS" (Beacháin, 2009: 209). As a manifestation of such perceptions, it is not surprising to see post-Soviet Central Asian leaders putting tighter controls on various international organizations and domestic NGOs in an effort to preempt any possible spill over effect[8] (Kimmage, 2005; Berg, 2006a: 135).

Criticizing the 'civil society' component of the above-mentioned narrative, not only Lewis, but also Scott Radnitz drew attention to the misleading portrayal of the 'opposition', which was stressed to be united and skillful in the organization of supporters with the help of democracy assistance from NGOs and international donors (Lewis, 2008: 270; Radnitz, 2006:133). In this account that is shared by Beachain as well (Beachain, 2009), the role of these elements were insignificant in the mobilizations of 2005 in Kyrgyzstan; what took place in February-March 2005 in Kyrgyzstan was the work of a loose coalition of local informal leaders mobilizing their supporters by making use of their informal ties to local communities (Radnitz, 2006:133, 138).

[8] As an example of tighter controls by the Central Asian neighbors of Kyrgyzstan, one can point out to the events that took place on May 13, 2005, in Andijan, Uzbekistan. These events resulted with deaths of hundreds of civilians when security forces of Uzbekistan opened fire on the protestors that gathered to demand an end to the trial of a local businessman (Hill & Jones, 2006; Marat, 2006e: 35-38; BBC News, 2005).

Along with the narrative that overstated the role of external factors and elements of civil society during the 'Tulip Revolution', there appeared another strand of approach that stress formal dynamics in the 'Tulip Revolution' as well, but on domestic grounds. In other words, while studies mentioned above emphasized the role of international factors and the elements of civil society behind the mobilization by conducting a bottom-to-up analysis of the 'Tulip Revolution'; studies that emphasized the role of formal domestic factors behind the mobilization underlined the incapacity of formal actors and institutions by way of a top-to-down approach in accounting for the context of these events.

One such approach is presented by Lucan Way, who provided a structural account of the 'colored revolutions' (Way, 2008). In his words, he intended to "provide a means of identifying *a priori* which regimes may be most vulnerable to opposition challenges" (Way, 2008: 55). In doing so, he argued that 'colored revolutions' were not cases in an interrelated wave in contrast to what Beissinger argued with respect to his model of diffusion as covered above (Beissinger, 2009: 74). In Way's account, events that came to be known as 'colored revolutions' were outcomes of several structural conditions (Way, 2008: 59 - 60). For the framework of these structural conditions, he points out mainly to the level of the consolidation of the authoritarian rule in the countries which experienced these events (Way, 2008: 62). Put differently, instead of a supposed strength of the 'opposition' in these countries, the main factor for Way that provided the grounds for these events to take place was the weakness of the authoritarian regime (Way, 2008: 62). Better-said, Way suggested that the key factor in 'colored revolutions' in general was the nature of the ruling regime, its failure in "authoritarian

consolidation" (Way, 2008: 60, 62). In this respect, they were not to be evaluated as revolutions, but considered as "authoritarian breakdowns" (Way, 2008: 56, fn3).

In Way's account, for a regime to be vulnerable in face of the challenges of the 'opposition', it needs to lack several structural conditions, among which he cites the followings: "a single, highly institutionalized ruling party; an extensive and well-funded coercive apparatus…; or state discretionary control over the economy" (Way, 2008: 62). In Way's analysis, if a regime is capable of at least one of the criteria mentioned-above, then it is more secure in face of possible challenges from opposition; but if a regime is weak in any of these dimensions, then it is more prone to challenges from the opposition (Way, 2008: 62).

When one projects Way's account onto the 'Tulip Revolution', what he suggests appears that the regime during Akaev era was weak and prone to opposition movements, protests, mass uprisings because it lacked all of these structural conditions (Hess, 2010: 35-36). In other words, Akaev regime was built upon, in Hess' words, "short-term patronage to hold together the ruling coalition" (Hess, 2010: 35). It depended on security forces which were, again in Hess' words, "substantially smaller, less experienced, and less well equipped" (Hess, 2010: 36). Moreover, it could not establish domination over economics and politics (Hess, 2010: 36). Therefore, it was more prone to challenges from opposition compared to more strongly authoritarian regimes. Put differently, despite the fact that the Akaev regime was increasingly becoming authoritarian, it started to fragment in face of protests, since it was not structured around a well-institutionalized single party, with an effective coercive capacity which prevented

it from dominating political and economic resources in the country (Way, 2008: 62-66).

Henry Hale, taking up where Way left, suggested that learning from other 'colored revolutions' was not enough for such an event to take place in a country if there is not a "window of opportunity" such as a "succession crisis" (Hess, 2010: 30). Better-said, he considered the 'colored revolutions' as a result of succession crises leading to elite fragmentation, within a political structure, which he entitles as "patronal presidentialism" (Hale, 2006: 306-307). In Hale's account, patronal presidentialism refers to a political system in which the president holds power at his disposal and uses various tactics, in Hale's words, "not only formal but immense informal authority based on pervasive patron-client relationships" (Hale, 2006: 307) to repress challengers of his rule in order to prevent them unite against himself (Hess, 2010: 30). According to Hale, if the president's position is considered secure, elites in his ruling coalition do not tend to leave his ruling coalition; however, when time comes for the president to leave office with respect to the end of his term or illness, the ruling coalition gets weaker and more prone to elite fragmentation by paving the way for an opening of a window of opportunity (Hale, 2006: 308). Put differently, as Hess aptly summarizes what Hale suggests; "succession crises appear to be very important in opening windows of opportunity for opposition activists to take advantage of lame ducks, outgoing presidents, and emerging factional divisions within ruling coalitions and to push for regime change" (Hess, 2010: 37).

When Henry Hale's perspective is projected onto the 'Tulip Revolution', it appears that it was Akaev's incapacity to manage his succession process by

delaying to announce his successor that led to elite fragmentation in his ruling coalition, and eventually opposition's protests and his overthrow (Hess, 2010: 37). In Hale's account, such incapacity must have led many to consider him as a "'lame duck,' someone who is increasingly seen as irrelevant to the political future and hence increasingly powerless to maintain the unity of his…team" (Hale, 2006: 308). In other words, Akaev's mismanagement of his own succession made his ruling coalition, which only depended on a loose short-term patronage to fragment and led to his overthrow (Hess, 2010: 37).

Hale seems well aware of the fact that such an overthrow does not necessarily lead to democratization in Kyrgyzstan (Hale, 2006: 306). Indeed, he adds that there is not much prospects for democratization in the country in the aftermath of these events (Hale, 2006: 306). In his words, "the opening is only likely to last, resulting in 'true' democratization, if it involves a change in the fundamental institutions of patronal presidentialism. But this has not been the case in Kyrgyzstan…which now show few signs of true democratic progress" (Hale, 2006: 306). Indeed, in his account, the main institutions of the regime which he calls upon as 'patronal presidentialism' did not change even a bit; to the contrary, its main parameters remained the same in the aftermath of the so-called 'Tulip Revolution'(Hale, 2006: 306).

The analysis provided by Way and Hale have merit in emphasizing the domestic factors behind the mobilization vis-à-vis the exaggeration of external influence on the opposition movements. They also downplay the 'democratic nature' of the 'Tulip Revolution' and the misleading depiction of calling upon these events as 'democratic revolution'. However, for doing so, they mainly stress

the features of the prevailing regime in Kyrgyzstan, either mainly its institutional (in)capacity, or its elite (in)capacity in dealing with opposition. In doing so, their analysis by-pass the multi-layered and dispersed nature of power and contestation based on the fragmented nature of Kyrgyz society. Hence, their analyses need to be complemented with a more layered analysis that involves a particular focus on the roles of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics and regime in the country.

Furthermore, these analyses could not account for the continuing instability in the aftermath of March 2005 events as well. For instance, all the three prerequisites for a regime to be considered strong vis-à-vis opposition movements in Way's account were seemingly in place during Bakiev era especially since the end of 2007. Yet, they could not save Bakiev from the fate of Akaev in April 2010. Similarly, when April 2010 events broke out, there was no succession crisis that could provide a window of opportunity for the elites to defect from his ruling coalition. Indeed, almost six months before his fall; Bakiev got a victory in the presidential election. There must have been other dynamics that rendered the regime in Kyrgyzstan prone to political instability, on which studies that stress the informal dynamics in 'Tulip Revolution' may provide useful hints.

2.2.2. Approaches that Stress Informal Dynamics in the 'Tulip Revolution'

Several studies took the informal dynamics in Kyrgyz politics into account when analyzing February - March 2005 events (Cummings & Ryabkov, 2008:

244-247; Cummings, 2008: 226-228). As Cummings and Ryabkov mentioned "the nature of and relationship between formal and informal dynamics prior to and shortly after March 2005 has also attracted scholarly attention" to a certain extent as well (Cummings & Ryabkov, 2008: 241). Among these studies, the analysis presented by Scott Radnitz (2006) takes the lead. He points out to "the significance of localism" during these events (Radnitz, 2006: 137). He indicated that the organization of these events could not be confined to clan politics or regionalism but made possible on local grounds through mechanisms that underlined "the importance of informal interpersonal ties" and "patronage" (Radnitz, 2006: 137). The disappointed local leaders were, in his account, the primary actors in these events, who made use of their informal ties to local communities and triggered these events (Radnitz, 2006: 133). In this context, he suggested that mobilization during the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' was an artifact of "local support for personalities rather than for issues" (Juraev, 2008: 258). In this regard, Radnitz downplayed the role of the elements of civil society in the mobilization of February-March 2005 in Kyrgyzstan (Radnitz, 2006: 138-139). He stressed that these processes basically by-passed the formal elements of society, such as coalitions of political parties and NGOs (Radnitz, 2006: 138-139). In the overall account, he considered these events, not as a 'revolution,' "not even a regime change," but instead a "transfer of power" (Radnitz, 2006: 133).

Similarly, Shairbek Juraev underlined the nature of contestation in Kyrgyzstan in order to downplay the exaggerated democracy narrative that dominated the interpretations of February-March 2005 events (Juraev, 2008). In his account, these events once again revealed the complex nature of contestation

in the country (Cummings, 2008: 226). In his words, it was "partially linked to the traditional societal organization of the Kyrgyz ethnic group and particularly to its multilayered division into sub-ethnic groups that are in a state of stable competitive relationship to each other" (Juraev, 2008: 253). This was to suggest that what happened during February-March 2005 events were more of a contestation between these various forces, rather than 'people power' and an authoritarian leader.

Azamat Temirkulov, on a parallel ground, argued that "informal actors and institutions operated by patronage networks played an active and significant role" in February - March 2005 events in Kyrgyzstan (Temirkulov, 2008: 317). Analyzing the motivations of the protestors in February-March 2005 events, he referred to several "informal resources" and claimed that people were persuaded for the mobilization by a blend of "material and solidarity incentives" (Temirkulov, 2008: 318). Among the elements of informal institutions, he pointed out to "traditional solidarity…and preexisting organizations and institutions, such as the institutions of aksakal (elder), kurultai (assembly) and palvan (wrestler)" and argued that these elements were active during the mobilization in March 2005 (Temirkulov, 2008: 317).

Alexander Kupatadze, on a similar ground, stressed the role of criminal networks during these events (Kupatadze, 2008). He argued that an "'unholy alliance' of state, market and crime or a political-business-criminal nexus" (Kupatadze, 2008: 280) that appeared during the transitional context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan played significant roles during the mobilizations that came to be known as the 'Tulip Revolution', and their roles remained significant as well in

the aftermath of these events (Kupatadze, 2008: 286-292). As Cummings confirms "Alexander Kupatadze argues that the Tulip Revolution, frequently referred to as an 'anti-crime' and 'anti-corruption' event, was followed by the empowerment of organized crime groups" (Cummings, 2008:226). In a nutshell, he suggested that criminal networks as part of the informal dynamics effective on Kyrgyz politics were active during February-March 2005 events and they were strengthened in the aftermath of these events due to the power vacuum that followed suit.

To summarize, above-mentioned studies and several others that this study draws upon for its concerns, delved into the decisive role of informal actors and institutions and taken into account the multiple levels of political competition in Kyrgyzstan by conducting a close investigation of February - March 2005 events. Searching into informal patterns in Kyrgyzstan, they have implied that these events once again revealed the fragmentation of society along with the significant roles that the informal dynamics played not only on local grounds, but also with the help of personal loyalty, traditional solidarity and underworld. These studies revealed that in the so-called 'Tulip Revolution', sub-national cleavages, summoned together in various combinations and creating various informal networks, played an important role in mobilizing the protestors. Lastly, these analyses offered empirical insights for indicating to the complex relations of informal dimensions of politics in Kyrgyzstan and paved the way for a better understanding of the continuing instability in the aftermath of the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' in Kyrgyzstan as well. Radnitz, for instance, signals to the fact that "loyalty to particular leaders, and a weak central state, has threatened the stability

of Kyrgyzstan and weakened the prospects for sustainable change in the direction of greater democracy" (Radnitz, 2006: 139). This is to imply that as long as informal dynamics remain intact in the country, they would definitely hinder prospects for the establishment of formal dynamics and democratization and generate instability.

2.3. Informal Dynamics in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan

It is not easy to define informal dynamics and their roles in shaping politics in a given country (Fukui, 2000: 3). This is mainly due to the fact that they are not easy to identify and they make use of various fluctuating fault lines existing in the society, using diverse tactics and strategies in accordance with the interest at hand that holds together these dynamics (Fukui, 2000: 3). This is why in the literature; there are various definitions of the elements of the informal level of politics. Most of these definitions differentiate informal dynamics vis-à-vis formal grounds of politics.

It is often pointed out to the sources of the rules and norms that guide the behaviors of the members of a given society in differentiating between the informal and formal levels of politics (Fukui, 2000: 2). If the rules and institutions are created by an established authority such as the president or the parliament, then it is mainly referred as formal politics (Fukui, 2000: 2); if the rules and institutions "simply evolve as 'conventions and codes of behavior'" then, they provide the grounds for informal politics (North, 1990: 4 in Fukui, 2000: 3). Put differently, if the rules and norms that guide a given society are agreed upon on

formal grounds and find consistency in written statements such as constitutions and institutions, then one can talk about formal politics; if the rules and norms that guide the behavior of the members of a given society remain outside of these channels, then one can refer to fertile grounds for informal politics. Fukui makes this distinction clear by referring to another similar definition presented by Douglas Pike, which is as follows: "interpersonal activities stemming from a tacitly accepted, but unenunciated, matrix of political attitudes existing outside the framework of legal government, constitutions, bureaucratic constructs and similar institutions" (Pike, 2000: 281 in Fukui, 2000: 3). On these grounds, Fukui as well mainly differentiates informal dynamics of politics in regard to a distinction between 'the rule of man' and 'the rule of law', underlining the personalized nature of power within the context of informal politics;

> Often equated with the 'rule of man', as opposed to the 'rule of law', this type of politics is nearly universally suspect and often condemned as arbitrary, unfair, or corrupt. Besides, the workings of such politics tend to be sporadic, erratic, and invisible, making them much harder than formal politics for outsiders to observe in detail, describe accurately, and explain coherently. Nonetheless, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence of the ubiquitous presence and pervasive influence of informal politics in both the scholarly literature and journalistic accounts of politics in wide-ranging societies and organizations (Fukui, 2000:3).

Dittmer, on the other hand, raises the following question; "how may informal politics be most usefully defined? Although, it is obviously a form of politics that is not formal, we require a definition that is not…residual of another definition" (Dittmer, 2000: 291). Put differently, can we find a sphere that the

informal dynamics of politics rest and from there on shape the course and nature of politics in a given country? In response, Dittmer, drawing upon previous work on informal economics and informal institutions and focusing on East Asian experiences, conceptualizes informal politics as follows: "sandwiched between 'formal politics'…[which] consists of the use of legitimate means to pursue legitimate public ends…[and] 'corruption' [which] consists of using illegitimate (i.e., at least immoral, possibly illegal) means to pursue private ends, thereby constituting a violation of the 'public interest,' or 'trust'" (Dittmer, 2000: 292). For the concerns of this dissertation, this definition provides a convenient stretching board in comparison to the above-mentioned definitions (though they also provide significant contributions), because it underlines the distinctiveness of the informal level of politics with respect to not only the interests at hand, namely private or public interests targeted to be achieved, but also the means employed to achieve these ends, namely through legitimate or illegitimate channels.

In this context, bearing this definition in mind, it will be beneficial to peel out "the surrounding layers of our definitional onion" (Dittmer, 2000: 293). For this end, in the following sections, the key elements, features and implications of informal dynamics with respect to the experiences of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan will be examined. Regarding the key elements of informal dynamics of politics in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, existing fault lines in the country will be taken at hand. Concerning the features of the informal dynamics of politics, the way informal dynamics permeate formal grounds will be stressed. For the implications of the informal dynamics of politics, their impact not only in hindering the establishment

of formal grounds of politics, but also in creating political instability will be underlined to be detailed in the following chapters.

2.3.1. Key Elements

In Central Asian societies, there are various fault lines embedded in their social organizations (Kynazev, 2005:11 in Wilkonson, 2007: 15). As Juraev indicates, there are two main elements that have been stressed among the fault lines within Central Asian societies in the literature: "the groups based on kinship-based bonds and geographic location (often referred to as regionalism)" (Juraev, 2008: 259). On the one hand, Kathleen Collins (2002; 2006), focusing on the former, argue that kinship-based groups (clans) keep control of political power in Central Asian context (Gullette, 2007: 377-379). Pauline Jones Luong (2002), on the other hand, stresses regional affiliations as the main parameter of the fragmented nature of societies in Central Asian context (Gullette, 2006: 6). It will be beneficial to dwell upon these perspectives briefly in order to enrich these views with various other key elements of informal dynamics as well.

Collins mainly stresses clans as the most significant form of informal organizations that are effective in shaping Central Asian politics (Collins, 2006: 24; Gullette, 2007: 377). She defines clan as follows: "an informal social institution in which actual or notional kinship based on blood or marriage forms the central bond among members…identity networks consisting of an extensive web of horizontal and vertical kin-based relations" (Collins, 2002: 142). In her account what determines the nature of regimes in the Central Asian context is the

contestation between clans defined as above and the establishment and durability of pacts between these clans (Gullette, 2006: 42).

Regarding the persistence of clans in Central Asian context, Collins points out to three circumstances that promoted clans: "…late state formation, in large part to colonialism;…late formation of a national identity…and the absence of a market economy" (Collins, 2006: 44). She contends that while Tsarist rule did not disrupt clan formation as it was indirect; Soviet rule, despite it endeavored to do so, could not eradicate them as well (Gullette, 2006: 42). Indeed, according to Collins, Soviet rule even fostered them owing to several of its policies. Gullette well summarizes Collins' account of these policies and their impact on clan politics in Central Asian context as follows:

> the introduction of the *kolkhoz* system which kept local clan groups together and the policy of *korenizatsiya*, which turned local elites into Party members…During the Brezhnev era, many elites from one 'clan' were permitted to remain in power for long periods. However, this changed with the introduction of *perestroika* under Gorbachev. 'Clans' began to create pacts for greater political power (Gullette, 2006: 43).

While Collins dwells upon Tsarist and Soviet era policies regarding the persistence of clan politics in Central Asian context in this way, regarding the characteristics of clan politics and their impact on the political order in Central Asia, she indicates to the relations between clans and formal regime (Collins, 2002, 2006). She argues that "clan networks infiltrate, penetrate, and transform the formal regime, creating an informal regime based on the informal rules of clans" (Collins, 2006: 21). According to her, the formal regime amounts to "the

official, legal ordering of power and governmental institutions" and the informal regime means "the informal ordering of power and institutions of governance among informal actors and networks – exists behind the exterior facade" (Collins, 2006: 211). These definitions are in line with the above-mentioned definitions of informal politics presented by North, Pike, Fukui and also Dittmer.

According to Collins, the access of clans into the 'official ordering' occurs at all levels (Collins, 2006: 249). In other words, it is not only confined to the level of presidency, but it happens in all of the levels of the system of governance, on regional and local grounds as well (Collins, 2006: 249). In her words, "key democratic institutions – elections, the separation of powers, parties, and civil society – have been steadily undermined, penetrated, or, one might say, crowded out of business by clan politics" (Collins, 2006: 249). This is to suggest that clans play decisive role in shaping the course of politics in Central Asian context. Indeed, Bogatyrev also supports this point with respect to the case of Kyrgyzstan: "the presence of family clans may be seen not only within state structures (executive branch of power, deputies, judicial power) but also within political parties, and to a less extent – within non-governmental organizations" (Bogatyrev, 2008). In Collins' account, for doing so, better-said, in order to permeate into the formal regime, clans make use of several mechanisms (Collins, 2006: 52, 211). Among these mechanisms, tactics, strategies, she mentions the following: "kin-based patronage, asset stripping, and 'crowding out' of formal institutions through clan-based mobilization" (Collins, 2006: 52), along with nepotism, patronage and cadre choices (Collins, 2006: 211).

Within these confines, regarding the consequences of clan politics, Collins concludes that the decisive role of clans in shaping the nature of regimes in the Central Asian context end up not only with creating a "personalistic, particularistic, and exclusivist rule" (Collins, 2006: 212), but also results in the waning of the already weak formal institutions that are in the making and regime via the use of state assets for particular interests (Collins, 2006: 212, 249).This is what hinders political and economic reforms (Collins, 2006: 249).

When Collins' perspective is projected onto Kyrgyz politics, she appears to suggest that as long as the informal pacts between clans continue to operate, the regime would give the impression of being stable; however if the informal pacts between the prominent clans break down due to the capture of state assets by the clan in power, then this dominant clan is challenged by others or another, leading to instability in the political order prevailing in the country (Gullette, 2006: 6). Indeed, this is actually what happened, according to Collins, before the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' and brought Akaev regime down (Collins, 2006: 345-346; Gullette, 2006: 44).

While Collins stresses 'clans' as the main unit of informal dynamics in Central Asian context, Pauline Jones Luong (2002), on the other hand, points out to the regional affiliations for this position (Gullette, 2007: 375 - 377). Jones Luong interprets the impact of Soviet policies on clans/tribes quite different than Collins. In her account, rather than fostering clan/tribal affiliations, these policies weakened these cleavages along with those related with religious and national ones on behalf of regional political identities (Jones Luong, 2002: 52). In her account, such a transformation came through with respect to three processes, in

Gullette's summary, "the Soviet administrative-territorial structure, economic specialization, and the creation and expansion of a national cadre" (Gullette, 2006: 40). All of these policies, in her account, fostered regional cleavages vis-à-vis other affiliations (Jones Luong, 2002: 63-70).

Moreover, in Jones Luong's account, the regional cleavages that got the upper hand over other affiliations remained intact in the aftermath of the sudden independence of Central Asian states as well (Jones Luong, 2002: 53). In her words, "the persistence of regional political identities after independence simultaneously ensured that the very same actors, interests, and basis for evaluating power asymmetries would continue to dominate decision making in the post-Soviet period" (Jones Luong, 2002: 53). Put differently, in the account of Jones Luong, after independence, political elites in Central Asia continued to view politics through the lenses provided by regionalism as well (Jones Luong, 2002: 53).

When Jones Luong's perspective is projected onto Kyrgyz politics, the political contestation in Kyrgyzstan mainly appears to take place between the northern and southern regions which were politicized under Tsarist and Soviet rules (Jones Luong, 2002: 74). In her account, the contestation between southern and northern elites is critical to have an understanding of the course and nature of Central Asian politics and carry out important implications for understanding the dynamics of the 'Tulip Revolution' as well.

Alongside the above-mentioned approaches coined by Collins and Jones Luong, David Gullette (2007:379-380) mentions several other perspectives that combine both regional and clan affiliations and indicate to fluid boundaries

between these cleavages (Khanin, 2000; Temirkulov, 2004; Khamidov, 2008). In Gullette's account, "these analysts argue that 'clans' find support among other 'clans' from their region, and…develop into broader, territorial organizations, which resemble patron-client networks" (Gullette, 2006: 46). In these views, these networks include various connections between diverse political actors not only on national, but also regional level along with several other forms of relations such as friends, business connections, professional affiliations etc (Gullette, 2007: 380). Put differently, in these accounts, the informal networks do not solely refer to kin-ship ties or regional affiliations; they are enriched by various other connections as well.

Such fluctuating boundaries between clans and regional affiliations apparently attracted the attention of various researchers (Gullette, 2007: 380). For instance, Scott Radnitz, examining the Aksy events (2002) in Kyrgyzstan, pointed out to "vertical networks" (Radnitz, 2005: 406, 421) along with "horizontal networks" (Radnitz, 2005: 422). This is to suggest that, on the one hand, leaders of Aksy events organized a vertical web of relations at various levels of governance, namely on the "different levels of state administration and local self-government" (Gullette, 2006: fn38); on the other hand, they made use of other affiliations such as "classmates, colleagues, or neighbors…horizontally" (Radnitz, 2005: 422). In this regard, Radnitz argues that these demonstrations could not be confined to clan politics or regionalism, but included various other sorts of connections (Radnitz, 2005: 417-419). For the 'Tulip Revolution' as implied in the previous section, he underlined the significance of localism on village level, rather than clan or regional level as well (Radnitz, 2006: 137).

Temirkulov also stressed the interactions between main elements of the fault lines prevalent in Kyrgyz society (Temirkulov, 2004, 2007, 2008). He also takes into account the horizontal level of informal networking in Kyrgyzstan and conducts research on the incentives behind the mechanisms of the informal networking during February- March 2005 events (Temirkulov, 2008). He suggested in my interview that "though clans are considered as informal organizations with stable structure, clear leadership and hierarchy, in reality, this is not so due to their fluctuating nature with other affiliations such as friends, relatives, regions, criminal networks and business connections" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). This is to stress the complexity of the informal networking in Kyrgyzstan. By indicating to various key elements of informal dynamics, Temirkulov acknowledged the multi-layered political contestation in the country, instead of downgrading such competition to only clans or only regions.

Gullette, on a different yet parallel ground, explored the fragmented nature of Kyrgyz society on discursive dimensions (Gullette, 2006). He examined the discursive production of the elements of factionalism in Kyrgyz society and employs the notion of "traibalizm" in order to account for how people in Kyrgyzstan actually conceptualize existing fault lines prevailing in the social organization in strategic ways (Gullette, 2006: 46). This is to suggest that they make use of these fault lines interchangeably with respect to the situation and interest at hand.

Under the light of thus far has been discussed, the key elements, in other words, bases of informal dynamics in post-Soviet Central Asian politics in general

and Kyrgyzstan in particular include various fault lines embedded in its social organizations: family clans with formal positions in the state institutions as analyzed by Kathleen Collins; regional elites, in a power struggle vis-à-vis each other and central elites as emphasized by Pauline Jones Luong. There are also studies that emphasize in-between categories, combinations of various affiliations in a variety of strategical ways. Gullette's conceptualization of traibalizm; Temirkulov's, Khanin's and Khamidov's stress on the fluctuating boundaries between various affiliations stretching from clans and regions to criminal networks and business connections; Radnitz's emphasis on the way these elements are gathered together through vertical and horizontal webs can be cited among these in-between categories which endeavor to have a grasp of the key elements and characteristics of informal dynamics in Central Asian context in general and in Kyrgyz politics in particular.

In the overall account, informal dynamics - which this study does not confine to any of the above-mentioned elements but considers this term (informal dynamics) as an umbrella term above them - arise upon these fault lines and strategically make up networks in pursuit of particular interests. Hence, informal networks can better be understood as "imagined interest groups", better said, loose coalitions that include not only kinship based or regional affiliations, but also friends, business associates, relatives, extended family along with criminal affiliations etc (Temirkulov, Author's Interview, October 13, 2010, Bishkek). As Bogatyrev precisely puts into words, "each of these groups varies according to the way and extent of inclusion into power relations, technologies it uses, formats of political activities and type of relations with formal political institutes"

(Bogatyrev, 2008). The above-mentioned key elements of informal dynamics intermingle in a complex way and get together within an informal network according to the situation at hand. This is why I summoned up the key elements discussed above under the rubric of informal dynamics and aimed mainly to point out to the fact that whatever key element take the lead among these informal dynamics, the important point is that the nature and course of politics is not shaped on formal grounds, but on informal level and this is what causes persistent political instability in the country. Within this context, the important point is the implications and consequences of the merging of these key elements into informal networks, activating informal dynamics that shape the nature of Kyrgyz politics.

2.3.2. Features

In order to have a better grasp of the decisiveness of informal dynamics in shaping the nature and course of Kyrgyz politics, there are several points to underline here regarding their main features that have already been implied in the previous section. First of all, one should emphasize that clans and regional affiliations and other above-mentioned horizontal connections along with the traditional solidarity institutions they make use of do not present problems by themselves for the concerns of this dissertation (Temirkulov, 2007:6). In Temirkulov's words, "the practice of…solidarity they promote would not create any problems if they remained outside the structures of official state organizations", better-said the formal aspects of politics (Temirkulov, 2007: 7). Biryukov also stresses this point as follows: "what makes these redistributional

coalitions special is not their origin…; however their short-sighted resource extracting behavior and their significant impact on the rest of the society" (Biryukov, 2008: 58). Indeed, it is clear that after independence, due to the social trauma created by the multi-dimensional transformation processes of sudden independence, traditional solidarity has gained significant importance in Kyrgyz society (Temirkulov, 2007:7). Traditional solidarity groupings and institutions were helpful for the general populace in dealing with the new economic and political conditions brought about by the challenges of the multi-dimensional transformation processes. This was facilitated by the fact that, in Temirkulov's words, "the state [was] not able to provide people with the necessary conditions of social protection" (Temirkulov, 2007: 7). Within this context, sub-national affiliations/traditional solidarity groupings and institutions have provided people with social protection in the absence of appropriate state institutions in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet state. Matteo Fumagalli, on a parallel ground, stresses the stabilizing effect of the networks they generated just after the independence as well as follows:

> Local patrons …act (to their own benefit, of course) as 'social safety nets' in societies where Soviet rigid mechanisms of control and coercion had imploded and no routinized instruments of conflict resolution had been established. Put simply, they have contributed to make the fall-out from the Soviet collapse somehow less painful and less uncertain for the local population. In so doing they have performed a crucial stabilizing function in the country…by filling the gap left by state withdrawal, local patrons have performed a function which at the same time complements and substitutes formal institutions (Fumagalli, 2007: 225-226).

On the other hand, despite the fact that in the years just after independence, networks based on traditional solidarity played the role of "social safety net" (Collins, 2006: 214) and had a stabilizing effect in the absence of state institutions; in the following years, they were strengthened to an extent to swallow up the formal dynamics that were in the making. This brings us to the second point that is worth noting.

The penetration of informal dynamics to an extent to shape the nature of politics in the country seemed to stem from the fact that clan/tribal/regional groupings and traditional institutions merging with various horizontal levels of affiliations provided the very bases of informal networks, often make use of strategies such as clientelism, favoritism, nepotism and corruption (Collins, 2006:52, 211). Temirkulov gives an illustrating example on this matter:

> In personnel selection, for instance, behind a question such as 'Where do you come from?' is covered an intention, namely 'How can I control and use you more effectively?' Hence, why there are incidences of regionalism/tribalism in state structures is not hostility to natives of other regions - it is, simply, corruption. Yet a person seeing corruption in certain state institutions and finding out that given officials are natives of the same region will believe that the causes of their seeking bribes and a biased personnel selection is hostility and antipathy towards natives of *his* region (Temirkulov, 2007: 8).

Temirkulov above illustrates how the regional affiliations are used by local/regional/central political entrepreneurs and how traditional solidarity and institutions are manipulated for the achievement of private ends. Put differently, "the problem is that in Kyrgyzstan these traditional institutions based on territorial and clan-family solidarity are used by a corrupted elite and officials within the

framework of state structures" (Temirkulov, 2007: 9). This is indeed the core of the relationship that saw the seeds of persistent political stability in the country.

Fumagalli also points out to the fact that there is mutual interest, yet uneven advantages for the local/regional/central political entrepreneurs and the wider communities they are tied to on informal grounds (Fumagalli, 2007: 228). While the former maintain his/her status, namely formal position, therefore his/her access to political and economic resources with the help of the support of their informal networks and ties to communities; the wider communities are assisted by the former in various aspects of their social needs (Collins, 2006: 29). This takes place, according to Collins, "in finding jobs, dealing at the bazaar, gaining access to education, getting loans, obtaining goods in an economy of shortages, and obtaining social or political advancement" (Collins, 2006: 29). These are actually the work of formal institutions and organizations in developed states (Collins, 2006: 30). Hence, the wider communities, which form the power base of the political entrepreneurs of all sorts, are indeed manipulated for private interests in return of social protection that could not be offered in the shape of public interests by the state-in-the-making. In fact, the maintenance of this relationship is one of the reasons why the establishment of formal institutions and generation of public interests are delayed. As long as this relationship remains intact, the wider community that constitutes the power base of political entrepreneurs is rendered dependent upon these figures, instead of turning into citizens that could acquire these social needs as their rights through formal channels.

Given the above mentioned features, what holds together these networks or brings them together is a matter of concern as well. According to Dittmer, "the

‘glue’ that holds…together is personal loyalty”, where “the patron reciprocates that loyalty by assuring the client's” needs (Dittmer, 2000: 300). In other words, personal loyalty is very important in the creation and maintenance of informal networks. How this works is properly put into words by Dittmer: “if a patron…wins a promotion based on this type of trophy achievement, the assumption is that the entire entourage will benefit” (Dittmer, 2000: 305). Dittmer’s ladder metaphor well illustrates this point. In his words, “there is a ceaseless struggle to climb the ladder of legitimacy and claim the legitimacy of formal office, publicity, and procedural legality. Descending the ladder of legitimacy, one moves simultaneously from the formal to the informal realm” (Dittmer, 2000:302). This brings about further blurring of the lines between state and society along with those between legal and illegal. Within these confines, informal politics appears very “pragmatic” and makes use of a vast “repertoire of tactics” (Dittmer, 2000: 302). In gathering together various sorts of affiliations, these networks often make use of traditional solidarity institutions, such as aksakal, kurultai, palvan etc. (Temirkulov, 2008: 317) as well as personal loyalty.

One should also underline the fact that the coalitions these informal networks constitute are not steady (Temirkulov, 2008: 320). They transform in time in regard to the interest and situation at hand. In Temirkulov’s words, “they form, dissolve and join other networks. They are continually evolving…It is possible to find networks, which previously had antagonistic interests, suddenly closing ranks because of a common interest” (Temirkulov, 2008: 320). Swift changes of sides within the ‘opposition’ in Kyrgyzstan can better be understood within these confines.

Along with the existing factionalism within Kyrgyz society on various fault lines, one should take the criminal elements of informal dynamics into account as well (Kupatadze, 2008). Aida Alymbaeva, Director of the Social Research Center, American University of Central Asia, argued that before 2005, criminal groups were playing a significant role in shaping the course of politics in the country, but they were not closely related with the government. In her account, it was Kurmanbek Bakiev who legitimized these groups to secure the support of all informal networks to remain in power (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). She also stressed that same goes for businessmen as well. In her words, "in order to protect their business, businessmen not only need protection from the state, but also from criminal groups…as they can not solve their problems through the court, as the court is very corrupt, they refer to the criminal groups for the solution of their problems" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). Fiacconi also stressed the close relations between formal and criminal worlds in Kyrgyzstan (Fiacconi, 2010: 5). In his words, "people in Kyrgyzstan are used to think that politics and business are going together and that parliament deputies might have a sponsor that is not always too far from the criminal world" (Fiacconi, 2010: 5).

In this regard, with supporting evidence provided by the above mentioned analysis, the establishment of the legitimacy of formal institutions is postponed and people tend to follow the informal channels to deal with their needs, business, problems and conflicts, instead of following the rule of law that is not only in the making, but also corrupted under the influence of few figures and circles (Dukenbaev & Hansen, 2003: 35).

2.3.2. Implications

Given the above-mentioned key elements and features of informal dynamics, it is clear that informal dynamics bring about various implications for a country in which they play decisive roles in shaping the nature and course of politics. Among these implications, mainstream literature mostly refers to the impact of informal dynamics on democratization (Merkel & Croissant, 2000). There are also various parallel views that stress the negative impact of informal dynamics on state-building and the rule of law (Conrad, 2006: 257-258). As I have implied above, the literature on Central Asian politics that takes into account the role of informal dynamics also stress these consequences (Collins, 2006: 249). As discussed in the previous section, these consequences are indeed the outcomes of the way informal dynamics relate to and make use of formal dynamics. According to Dittmer, the formal grounds of politics constitute a "'feeding trough'…for the practices of informal politics" (Dittmer, 2000: 295). Indeed, this was a point that several of the respondents of my interviews likewise underlined. Maxim Ryabkov, Director of OSCE Academy in Bishkek, confirmed this point by stressing that "formal institutions constitute the very playground for informal networks to reach out for resources and same goes for formal actors who depend on these informal networks to remain in power" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 11, 2010).

On a parallel ground, Askat Dukanbaev, from Open Society Institute in Bishkek, confirmed this nature of the interplay between formal and informal institutions. He said that "in Kyrgyzstan, of course we have formal institutions,

constitution, parliament, presidency, all those branches of government, laws, regulations etc, but the major decisions were not taken in these formal institutions, but in informal institutions covertly and then came the laws to justify, legitimize these informal decisions" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010). Bogatyrev also confirms these points. In his words, "power is concentrated not within political institutes which at best may serve as a means for legitimization of power and actions of various groups who have the real power" (Bogatyrev, 2008). Thus, given the above mentioned sustaining remarks, one can argue that the informal networking provide the main parameter of Kyrgyz politics to an extent to sideline formal dynamics.

Regarding the above-mentioned pattern of intimate relations between formal and informal levels of politics, it is clear that informal dynamics permeate and shape formal ones (Collins, 2006: 249). They provide a fertile ground for persistent political instability as they undermine the establishment of a solid base for governance (Radnitz, 2006:139); render the nature of power mainly personalized and dispersed (Melyskova, 2008: 21), leading to the manipulation of the general population for narrow interests (Khamidov, 2006a: 42). Put differently, when taken into account, it becomes clear that informal dynamics are basically manifestations of personalized and at the same time dispersed power between various informal forces and networks, without any central authority above them and a weakly institutionalized state and politics (Melyskova, 2008: 21), to which Carothers (2002: 10) refers to as "feckless pluralism".

Within these confines, the political realm in Kyrgyzstan appears to have a more informal and personalized nature, than a formal one (Bogatyrev, 2008). In

Fumagalli's words, "formal institutions progressively became more ceremonial, thus making an analysis of the role of informal ones all the more pressing for understanding how politics was conducted outside formal channels" (Fumagalli, 2007: 212). Therefore, focusing mainly on the formal dynamics of politics would not provide much help in understanding the main parameters of Kyrgyz politics as Kyrgyz politics in particular and Central Asian politics in general is mainly shaped around informal dynamics whose key elements, main organizational forms and features have been outlined above.

In this context, in a country such as Kyrgyzstan where formal dynamics are already weak, almost vacuous and there is no solid mechanism for conflict resolution and the main parameters of politics is shaped by the decisive role of informal dynamics, it is not surprising that one frequently comes across mass uprisings, conflicts, even violence and endemic instability with grave consequences for the country. This is what one indeed witness in Kyrgyzstan especially since the end of 1990s and also in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution'. It is in this context that one must definitely take the roles of informal dynamics in shaping politics in Kyrgyzstan into account as they are not only crucial keys to a better understanding of Kyrgyz politics, its main parameters, but also a convenient stretching board to account for the continuing instability in Kyrgyzstan.

2.4. Conclusions

For the concerns of this dissertation, above-mentioned characteristics of Kyrgyz politics indicate to a process that politics is taking place mainly on the informal level. The short-comings of the mainstream literature on the post-Soviet experiences of Kyrgyzstan up until 2005 and the literature on 'colored revolutions' stems from a presumed dichotomy between state and society accompanied by their focus on mainly formal aspects of politics (Collins, 2006:10-11). The former failed to take these informal dimensions of politics into account because of its insistence of the elite-level, top-down analysis; the latter because of its focus on the formal social organizations within the society such as a presumably united opposition, NGOs, media, namely the elements of civil society. This is to assume a clear cut distinction between state and society, which is absent in the case of Kyrgyzstan. This dissertation suggests that analyzing with this assumption and its accompanying focus on mainly formal dynamics of politics complicates and remains partial not only in understanding the nature of socio-political context in the country and the dynamics of February- March 2005 events, but also in accounting for the continuing instability in post-2005 Kyrgyzstan. One needs to take into account the zone of indistinction between state and society in Kyrgyzstan, where the informal level rests, where the lines between legal and illegal, revolution, coup, regime or government change and popular upheaval get constantly blurred.

In this regard, this dissertation, by focusing on the informal level, intends to illustrate how informal dynamics of politics has a decisive role in shaping

Kyrgyz politics, and argues that they account for the continuing instability in Kyrgyzstan in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution'. For this end, an examination of the dynamics of the 'Tulip Revolution' indeed provides a great opportunity in bringing out the often sidelined informal dynamics of politics as mobilizations "provide a lens through which a researcher can analyze and identify groups of agents and underlying interests" (Wolters, 2006: 3).

Studies that stressed the informal dynamics in explaining the 'Tulip Revolution' indeed searched into often sidelined informal level in the mainstream literature and provided valuable empirical insights of the dynamics of these events, by describing 'how things really worked', instead of 'how they should be working'. Therefore, for the concerns of this dissertation, they have more explanatory power in explaining the dynamics of the 'Tulip Revolution' and in providing a convenient stretching board in understanding the lines of continuity between pre- and post March 2005 events with respect to the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics.

This study, on the one hand, draws upon their empirical insights, in its analysis of the context, dynamics and implications and underlines the decisive role played by the informal dynamics in these events to point out that the main parameter of Kyrgyz politics is shaped around informal dynamics. On the other hand, this study builds upon them by addressing the role of the informal dynamics in the continuing instability in Kyrgyzstan as well. Put differently, in order to complement the empirical insights of the studies stressing the informal dynamics in March 2005 events that downplayed the 'revolutionary' or 'democratic meaning' attributed to them, I also intend to indicate to the fact that the main

parameters of Kyrgyz politics remained the same. The decisive role of informal dynamics continued to shape Kyrgyz politics and paved the way for the continuing instability in the aftermath of March 2005 events as well.

Despite the fact that the 'Tulip Revolution' led to the overthrow of Akaev, soon, it became clear that these events did not lead to change in the political system (Radnitz, 2006:133). Indeed, in Radnitz's words "old patterns reproduc[ed] themselves" and instability has worsened (Radnitz, 2006:133). This study points out to the informal dynamics as the main decisive factor in this continuing instability in Kyrgyzstan. In other words, I assert that the continuing instability was a result of the informal dynamics remaining intact in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution' in shaping the nature and course of Kyrgyz politics. In a nutshell, I argue that the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' did not amount to an 'impetus for democratization' or concluded an era, but signaled to an 'impetus for the decisive role of the informal dynamics of politics' in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.

In order to provide evidences for this thesis, I made use of primary sources; speeches of various political actors in Kyrgyzstan, legal documents, reports (such as Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Reports, Institute for War and Peace (IWPR), International Crisis Groups (ICG) Reports etc.). I have also conducted in-depth interviews in Bishkek in 2010 with a number of scholars from different universities and research institutes in Bishkek, along with politicians, who were key figures in various movements. I have checked any information obtained from one source with other respondents along with published material. Each of my interviews lasted for one hour and was conducted in English and Turkish. These informative interviews provided me with

an invaluable source of discussion and material. I have also utilized secondary sources; books, book chapters, articles, internet resources (such as Eurasia Insight, CACI Analyst, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Eurasia Digest, Ferghana.ru, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, The Times of Central Asia, etc.) which I have systematically analyzed between 2007 and 2010.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF POST-SOVIET KYRGYZSTAN

3.1. Introduction

In order to have a grasp of the key elements of informal dynamics in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, it will be beneficial to dwell briefly upon the main traits of its historical context. This will enable us to see that despite several waves of influences passed through Central Asia and left their marks on the social fabric of the populations and their politics, the region has adapted to these influences and retained its traditional tones and self-governance to a certain extent (Gleason, 1997; Roy, 2000; Collins, 2006). Among the Central Asian societies, Kyrgyzstan stands out for the concerns of this dissertation.

Many historians claim that at the end of the eleventh century, Tian-Shan mountain range was entirely occupied by Kyrgyz (Abazov, 2004: 8). It is mainly assumed by a reference to the oral epic of Manas[9] that Kyrgyz people travelled from Siberia across the Altai to this region (Abazov, 2004: 8; Kort, 2004: 156-157). Inhabited in this area, the most important feature of the early history of Kyrgyz people seems to be the nomadic nature of Kyrgyz society. This is to say

[9] In Abazov's words, this epic is "a story about a legendary hero of the Kyrgyz people and an encyclopedia of Kyrgyz oral history and traditions" (Abazov, 2004: 19).

that Kyrgyz society at early times had economics based on "vertical pastoral nomadism" (Abazov, 2004: 10) and their politics depended on loose "tribal regional confederations" (Abazov, 2004: 10). This socio-political structure pointed out to the fact that there was no central authority. There were plural authorities. In Abazov's words, there was "not a single Sultan or Khan, a leader whose authority is recognized by all tribes: each tribe was ruled by tribal leaders, Manaps" (Abazov, 2004: 9). Indeed, to underline the plurality of authorities in early times, Abazov draws attention to "one of the translations of the name 'Kyrgyz'…which means 40 tribes (clans)" (Abazov, 2004: 9). Juraev also confirms this point. In his account, not only in early times, but also throughout 19th century, northern and southern tribes were in constant contest with each other and they did not recognize any central authority above them (Juraev, 2008: 260). In his words,

> No part of the Kyrgyz population developed a practice of exercising political power over territory or people, and no particular tribe secured authority over others; furthermore, no formal law was ever established that was equally applicable to all…At the same time, kinship-based groups had their own hierarchy of authority as well as a set of unwritten principles, referred to as customary, informal rules or law (Juraev, 2008: 260).

The socio-political structure described above that depended on loose confederations of tribes with no central authority overseeing them, did not change much under the rule of Kokand Khanate between 1762 and 1831 (Abazov, 2004:10, 14). This was mainly because, in Collins' words, Kokand Khanate "did not attempt to modernize the population, declare fixed state boundaries, or impose

a national or civic identity…they exerted little control over the territory or the population, especially over the rural and nomadic population of the steppe and mountains" (Collins, 2006: 77). In this respect, according to Gullette, the Kokand Khanate for the most part could not take the full control into its hands, leaving it to the already existing traditional pacts, especially in the nomadic northern Kyrgyz compared to the more sedentary southern Kyrgyz (Gullette, 2006: 18-19, 69-70).

Although from late 18th to early 19th centuries, the rule of the Kokand Khanate remained indirect, Kyrgyz tribes both in the north and the south resisted this rule (Jones Luong, 2002: fn64). According to Abazov, they could not succeed in repelling the rule of Kokand Khanate mainly because they were "too divided and too weak" (Abazov, 2004: 9). Therefore, towards the end of 19th century, they started to look for external forces to cooperate with in their resistance to the Khanate (Abazov, 2004: 9). Such an ally appeared to be the Russian Empire, which became increasingly interested in the region, especially within the context of the 'Great Game', where Russia and Britain had competed for expanding their spheres of influences (Abazov, 2004: 10, 133; Aydın, 2001). Gradually Russian Empire started to challenge the interests of the Kokand Khanate and in 1876, achieved the control of the region, bringing the rule of the Kokand Khanate on the region to an end (Abazov, 2004: xxiv). Subsequently, all of the territory under the weak control of Kokand Khanate rendered a part of "the Governorate-General of Turkestan" (Gullette, 2006: 181).

Actually, the Russian Empire was in pursuit of mainly economical interests in its approach to Central Asia (then called upon as Turkestan) (Collins,

2006: 78). In Collins' words, with respect to calculations stemming from "geostrategic expansion, new tax revenues, and economic exploitation of the region's resources, especially cotton" (Collins, 2006: 78), it took the control of Central Asia, yet, it did not endeavor to transform the societies in the region to a full extent, besides making a few arrangements to facilitate its colonial exploitation of the natural resources of the region (Collins, 2006: 77). Among these arrangements, Abazov (2004: 14) cites the restructuring of administrative borders, often cutting across existing tribal confines along with a settlement program that brought in mainly Slavic immigrants into the region. Abazov draws attention to the rise of tensions between these immigrants and the indigenous populations as a result of such settlements. In his words, this was mainly due to the "increasing social disparities, growing poverty and loss of lands and pastures" on part of the indigenous populations (Abazov, 2004: 16). Moreover, he notes about Tsarist endeavors to develop "educated native administers" for undertaking issues of local governance, which led to a "significant rise in the literacy rate among the indigenous population" in Kyrgyz as well as in Russian (Abazov, 2004:17). On economical grounds, Abazov indicates to the transformation of the cities and towns, the bringing in of new technologies, industrialization and transportation lines into the region, which facilitated communication between different parts of Kyrgyzstan to a certain extent (Abazov, 2004: 12-13).

In the overall account, however, despite the above mentioned arrangements of the Russian Empire, its rule remained indirect in the region (Collins, 2006: 79). This was evident, according to Abazov, in the fact that "tsardom…left local administration and jurisdiction in the hands of the native

tribal leaders" (Abazov, 2004: 14). Indeed, Collins confirms this point: "the tsarist colonial government was indirect; local identities persisted, and many native institutions continued to function; the system operated much in the way that the British Empire operated in British India" (Collins, 2006: 79). In this regard, the social organization in the region we now call upon Kyrgyzstan was not changed much and the native local authorities continued to hold on to power.

Subsequently, the Soviet Union took control of the region. In this respect, the name of the region was first changed to the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Gullette, 2006: 181) and later, in 1920, it was "renamed the Turkestan Soviet Socialist Republic" (Gullette, 2006: fn 212). The Soviet rule then immediately started to reorganize Central Asian societies along multiple levels of governance with respect to various policies stretching from national delimitation, indigenization, purges, industrialization, collectivization, Sovietization etc. (Glenn, 1999; Roy, 2000). Soviet economic, social, and political structures amounted to one of the most important elements of the historical contexts of Central Asian societies which merged with transitional contexts that emerged in the aftermath of the collapse of the Union. This is best illustrated not only in the key problems faced by the newly independent states of Central Asia, but also in their political and economic organizations (Gullette, 2006: 183-184; Merry, 2004; Abazov, 1998).

Soviets immediately started to apply policies on multi-dimensional grounds and rearranged Central Asia. Among these policies, national delimitation has taken the lead. Soviets replaced Central Asia with national republics which were created on the criteria of ethnicity in order to pave the way for modern

socialist identities intended to be achieved in the long run (Suny, 1993; Slezkine, 1994; Edgar, 2002). In Fumagalli's words, "Soviet ethno-federalism, according to which the territory was divided into hierarchically organized units each associated with one particular ethnic group (of which it was supposed to be the historical homeland) defined the institutional design of the Soviet state" (Fumagalli, 2007: 216). Within the confines of this policy, as Gullette well summarizes the course of events; "in 1924, the Kara-Kyrgyz [[10]] Autonomous Oblast was formed. On 1 February 1926 the Soviet granted the status of Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Finally on 5 December 1936, this was changed to the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic, a full member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)" (Gullette, 2006: 19)[11]. Accompanying these arrangements, there was the administrative division regarding the regions (oblasts). Soviets arranged the territory today we call upon as Kyrgyzstan into regions which more or less remained as such until the break up of the union: Frunze (renamed in 1991 as Bishkek), Chuy, Talas, Karakol, Naryn, Osh, and Jalal-Abad (Abazov, 2004: 21).

National delimitation policy was also accompanied by the installation of Soviet state structures in each of the republics (Collins, 2006: 81). This meant installing in each republic a "Party first secretary along with a Central Committee" (Collins, 2006: 81). This was paralleled by, on the one hand, purges

[10] Abazov notes that up until 1926, while Kazakhs were called as 'Kyrgyz' or 'Kaisak-Kyrgyzs', 'Kyrgyz' were called upon as 'Kara-Kyrgyz' (Abazov, 2004: 20).

[11] See also, d'Encausse, 1994: 256-257; Jones Luong, 2002: 77 Table 3.2.

and deportations,[12] on the other hand, the policy of indigenization (nativization - *korenizatsiia*). Abazov defines this policy as "involvement of the native Kyrgyz in the ruling party apparatus, administration, and management at all levels through a complicated system of quotas and promotions" (Abazov, 2004: 21). Within the confines of this policy, Soviets were mainly in pursuit of producing new indigenous elites that would remain loyal to the policies and visions of the centre especially regarding modernization (Abazov, 2004: 29).[13]

Consequences of this arrangement, however, did not come out as presumed. In Collins' words, "the creation of institutional structures that were always Soviet in form – both communist and nationalist – but largely Central Asian in content…leading to the Party's 'traditionalization,' as much as society's modernization" (Collins, 2006: 100). This outcome was indeed a result of the fact that the new Kyrgyz elite Soviets intended to create, were actually embedded in their local socio-cultural settings and they made use of the institutions of the republic for their own ends (Collins, 2006: 100). Collins well captures this process and summarizes it as follows:

> In the process of fixing administrative units and Party cells, traditional relations were no doubt strained. The disruption of the local socio-economic system led to

[12] Soviet's administrative arrangements also included coercive strategies (Hanks, 2005: 326; King, 2005: 24) In Abazov's words, "the policy of political isolation and elimination of the influential pre-Soviet intelligentsia and tribal leaders was also introduced through their exclusion and prohibition to hold state or party positions and later through deportation to remote parts of the Soviet Union" (Abazov, 2004: 22).

[13] One such example of loyalty under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev (1961-1985): Turdakun Usubaliev (northerner, from Naryn oblast) was the first party secretary of the Kyrgyz SSR and remained as such until Gorbachev era (Jones Luong, 2002: 79 Table 3.3). His long-lasting office, in Abazov's account, was an outcome of his full loyalty to the centre (Abazov, 2004: 22).

> the redistribution of power among these cleavages, destruction of tribes and some traditional clans, and the empowerment of new ones on regional accounts. Yet, given the weak reach of the Soviet government into Central Asia and the inherent challenges of fitting together a modern institutional structure and a peasant social organization, traditional local power structures and social cleavages were very often reinforced. The weakness of local Party institutions, especially in the peripheral republics and their rural areas, furthermore, gave local cadre ample possibilities to manipulate the Party to serve their demands (Collins, 2006: 100).

In this regard, as Collins properly put into words above, the institutional arrangements of Soviets regarding Central Asian societies, among which stands out Kyrgyzstan for the concerns of this dissertation, did not bring about the full control of the region; to the contrary, often fostered existing local self-governance by providing, though unintentionally, various means to nurture prevailing traditional groupings and institutions (Collins, 2006: 101).

These institutional and administrative arrangements were paralleled on economical grounds as well. Soviets endeavored to absorb Central Asian societies into a unified division of labor by centralizing the planning of their economies through the policy of collectivization (Abazov, 2004: 23). In the case of Kyrgyzstan, within the context of this policy, in Gullette's words, "nomads were forced to join collective farms *(kolkhozs)*...to produce agricultural products on a large scale" (Gullette, 2006:19). Kyrgyzstan, like all other Central Asian Soviet Socialist Republics, therefore rendered dependent on the subsidies that would come from the central Union budget (Abazov, 2004: 24). Various disadvantages of Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic- "landlocked position, remoteness from major markets, mountainous landscape, and small population" (Abazov, 2004: 23)

- also contributed to and expanded the extent of such dependence on this all-union economic structure(Abazov, 2004: 23).

Along with the absorption of the republics into the centralized economic planning came the flow of migrants - mainly Russians, Ukrainians and Germans Turks, Crimean Tatars, Greeks, Koreans in order to meet the needs of the industrialization efforts (Abazov, 2004: 26). The flow of migrants not only had a deep impact on the ethnic composition of Kyrgyzstan as I will dwell upon in the following sections, but also it brought about, in Abazov's words, "social, economic, and cultural differences and divides between the urban and rural populations" (Abazov, 2004: 27).

However, despite various social changes these arrangements brought about with them, Abazov argues that "Kyrgyz society preserved some important characteristics of the traditional lifestyle that curiously mixed with certain elements of Soviet modernity" (Abazov, 2004: 29). In other words, the social organization of Kyrgyz society displayed a blend of traditional and modern elements.

Within these confines, Collins seems to have a point when she argues that Soviet rule, despite its strong influence on the region, remained indirect to a certain extent(Collins, 2006: 84).[14] In her words, "in contrast to common Western assumptions about the totalitarian nature of Soviet rule and the success of Soviet modernization, a post-Soviet perspective on the history of Soviet Central Asia reveals that this region retained a significant level of unofficial or informal self-

[14] Jones Luong, to the contrary, assumes that Soviet rule mainly destroyed traditional groupings and institutions in the Central Asian context by replacing them with administrative ones on regional grounds (Jones Luong, 2002: 63).

governance" (Collins, 2006: 84). This is to suggest that despite various policies of the Soviets briefly mentioned above, Soviet rule could not achieve the full control of the region as well (Collins, 2006: 101; Roy, 2000). According to Collins, as implied above, this was mainly due to the traditional groupings and institutions that continue to prevail in the region by sustaining themselves by making use of the political and economic institutions Soviets brought into the region for modernization (Collins, 2006: 67). Put differently, she argues for an interaction between strong state policies and informal organizations of society in the region. In her words;

> In Central Asia, the Soviet legacy is one of the interactions between the strong and often brutal state policies of the Communist Party and the pervasive informal organizations of society and their institutions and norms. That interaction is dynamic and…forces us to rethink our understanding of the nature and power of the Soviet system, which was at once devastatingly strong and surprisingly weak (Collins, 2006: 62-63).

In the overall account, the historical context whose main features have been briefly outlined above reveals the fact that despite the reorganization of the main elements of the socio-political organization of the region now we call upon as Kyrgyzstan by various significant influences, it still retained its traditional tones, existing fault lines and self-governance on local grounds. In other words, despite the socio-political organization of Kyrgyzstan changed, transformed and merged with the effects of various influences, it preserved its ability to self-govern throughout history to a certain extent (Collins, 2006: 84). In this regard, the bases of the informal dynamics of politics that made the scene even more

stronger than before in the transitional context of Kyrgyzstan are clearly embedded in and preserved within this historical context. The ability of Kyrgyz society to adapt to various influences that have left their traces on its socio-political fabric gives us some hints on the origins and bases of informal dynamics of politics we come across today.

3.2. Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic on Its Way to Sudden Independence

By mid-1980s, the Soviet Union found itself in stagnation. In order to get the Union out of this stagnation, to revive its economy and politics, Mikhail Gorbachev took several measures and introduced policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) along with *samoupravlenie* (active participation) (Dukanbaev & Hansen, 2003: 26). These policies enforced by Gorbachev made a profound effect on each of the republics, including Kyrgyz SSR. For the most part, in Kyrgyz SSR, Gorbachev's policies triggered power struggles between conservatives (those who were against Gorbachev's policies) and reformers (those who support his policies) (Spector, 2004: 6).

The first effect of his policies came in 1985, when Gorbachev removed the First Secretary of Kyrgyz Communist Party, Turdakun Usubaliev from office (who was in office since 1960s) and reinstated a southerner, Absamat Masaliev (Dukanbaev & Hansen, 2003: 26; Alkan, 2009: 359). Despite the fact that Masaliev "was also reluctant to implement Gorbachev's reforms," (Alkan, 2009: 360) Pandora's Box was opened once and for all. New actors appeared to take part in the political processes of the republic and a reformist wing (among which

Askar Akaev stands out), various social groups and movements came about that would confront policies of the conservatives[15] (Spector, 2004: 6; Huskey, 1997b: 250).

Among the developments that challenged the authority of the conservatives, the riots in 1990, which broke out in Osh between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities, have taken the lead. Concerning the context of these events, Fumagalli points out to the socio-economic atmosphere. In his words, "the conflict had essentially socio-economic causes, but it manifested itself along ethnic lines and demands started to take on ethnic tones, including requests for recognizing Uzbek as official language or even a request for annexation of parts of territory to Uzbekistan" (Fumagalli, 2007: 218). Abazov also confirms this point. In his account, these events were related with the worsening socio-economic conditions such as rising unemployment and land shortages which paved the way for an increasing hostility between the communities in the south (Abazov, 2004: 27). Valery Tishkov, on a parallel ground, indicates to the role of "economic mafia's activities" which were on the rise due to the changes came about with the policies enforced by Gorbachev which led to rearrangements among prominent forces in the region (Tishkov, 1995: 134).

In the overall account, these events came about when ethnic Kyrgyz tried to reallocate land from Uzbeks which triggered a violent reaction on part of the Uzbeks (Spector, 2004: 6-7; Asankanov, 1996) and led to the death of almost 200

[15] To give an early example of such confrontation, in 1989, Kyrgyz youth having trouble in finding accommodation in Frunze (now Bishkek) seized land and constructed homes for themselves near the capital as the government did not keep its promise in allocating housing to their part (Allworth, 1994: 585-586).

people and left several hundred injured (Tishkov, 1995: 135; Bohr & Crisp, 1996: 396). In sum, in Huskey's words, these events destroyed "the ethnic and political harmony in the republic" on the way to independence (Huskey, 1997b: 252).

Conservative leadership largely failed to handle these events (Spector, 2004: 7). The incapacity of the leadership to deal with these events delicately strengthened the hands of the reformist wing vis-à-vis the conservatives (Spector, 2004: 7). As Spector properly puts into words;

> In the eyes of the population, Masaliev had been discredited for failing to address the country's socio-economic problems and ethnic tensions…Akaev used this opportunity, not only to disagree with Masaliev and other conservatives, but also to openly blame the leadership and the Party for not responding to socio-economic crises and simmering ethnic tensions" (Spector, 2004: 7).

In other words, the reluctance and incapacity of conservatives in tackling socio-economic problems and inter-ethnic tensions within the republic played into the hands of reformists especially that of Askar Akaev just before the last elections of Kyrgyz SSR. Askar Akaev[16], indeed, first came to the fore within the reformist wing in the context of these last elections of the Kyrgyz SSR (Huskey, 1995a: 813) and barely won the elections held in October 1990 (McGlinchey, 2003: 113-115; Alkan, 2009: 360).

[16] Born in 1944 in northern Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev, after studying "optics and computer science from 1962 to 1977 in Leningrad" (now, St. Petersburg), returned to Frunze (now Bishkek) to pursue an academic career (Spector, 2004: 5). Later, in 1981, he joined the Communist Party. In 1986, he served as the head of the Central Committee Department of Science and Higher Educational Institutions and then as the head of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences until 1989 (Spector, 2004: 5; Tolipov, 2006: 67).

In the aftermath of these elections, initially, Akaev had to work within the framework of the Communist Party organization, which constrained his maneuvers (Huskey, 1997b: 253). However, in Huskey's words, "the balance of power shifted decisively in Akaev's favor…in 1991," when the August 1991 coup in Moscow, aimed at removing President Gorbachev from office, failed (Huskey, 1997b: 253). The shift of power on his behalf was indeed related with the fact that Akaev was the only Central Asian leader against the coup that sought to turn around the impact of Gorbachev's policies[17] (Jones Luong, 2004: fn1). Moreover, he managed to preserve his office in face of a similar coup attempt performed by the conservatives in Kyrgyzstan (Akçalı, 2005a: 42; Spector, 2004: 10). These developments further strengthened the hands of Akaev, "who adopted an early…stance against the coup-plotters" (Huskey, 2002: 82).

In the following months, various Soviet Socialist Republics declared their independence.[18] On August 31, 1991, Kyrgyzstan declared its independence from the Soviet Union (Hanks, 2005: 328). Subsequently, in October 1991, Akaev was elected as the first president of the newly independent state of Kyrgyzstan without any opposition (Huskey, 2002: 82-83) and at that time, in Collins's phrase "symbolized the birth - or rebirth - of the Kyrgyz nation" (Collins, 2006: 179). However, despite his victory, Akaev had a disadvantage compared to the other Central Asian leaders who could depend on the Communist Party as their power

[17] Other Central Asian leaders were indeed anxious about the future of their respective republics if the Union was to collapse. As a manifestation of such worries, Akiner points out to the votes of Central Asian states in the March 1991 referendum on the future of the Soviet Union: "the Central Asian republics returned a vote of over 90 per cent (in Turkmenistan 98 per cent) in favor of preserving the Union" (Akiner, 2005:fn1).

[18] Consequently, the Union collapsed on December 25, 1991, when Gorbachev gave up his office in the CPSU of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Collins, 2006: 166).

bases (Spector, 2004: 8). In Spector's words, "he had neither significant political experience nor solid political backing at the republican level" (Spector, 2004: 8). Emir Kulov confirmed this point in my interview as well. He argued that Akaev was very fresh when he came to power; he did not have much experience in politics. However, Kulov considered him as the most self-learning politician in Central Asian context who managed to device various strategies and political tactics in a very short period of time (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010).

Various scholars drew attention to the swiftness of the independence that came about to Central Asia. For instance, M.B. Olcott underlines the paradox of independence in Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union as follows: "few people in the world have ever been forced to become independent nations. Yet, that is precisely what happened to the five Central Asian republics in 1991 when the Soviet Union dissolved" (Olcott, 1997a: 556). Similarly, Allworth stresses the way the union ended, without much of a say on part of the Central Asian Republics. In his words, "Central Asians could feel some dismay in the circumstance that the end of the Soviet era, like its beginning on November 7, 1917, came about almost entirely without their direct participation" (Allworth, 1994: 603). In a nutshell, independence was too sudden, in Jones Luong's words, "by default" meaning that without "widespread popular or sociopolitical movement demanding independence" (Jones Luong, 2002: 105) and brought about various difficulties for the newly independent states of Central Asia (Akçalı, 2005b: 96).

3.3. Multi-Dimensional Transformation Processes

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, while the adherents of liberalism celebrated the 'victory' of Western political and economic institutions (Fukuyama, 1992) vis-à-vis those of communism (Hann, 2002); the newly independent Central Asian states surely did not welcome the collapse of the Soviet Union (Hyman, 1996:19) owing to mounting problems they faced in its immediate aftermath. The newly independent states of Central Asia, among which post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan stands out for the concerns of this dissertation, gained independence, yet, they did not have the required institutions, better-said the necessary framework to deal with it (Akçalı, 2005b: 96). In Akçalı's words, "there was the need of transformation from being one of the Soviet Socialist Republics of the former Soviet Union to the legal status of independent statehood, without having in place the institutions of a nation-state" (Akçalı, 2005b: 96). In this context, to account for the prerequisites of a nation-state, the newly independent states of Central Asia had embarked on to rebuild their economies, restructure their political arenas and also construct a national belonging among their populations (Akiner, 2005: 131) and they were to do so in an era in which liberalism was celebrating its victory vis-à-vis the collapse of the Soviet Union.

To deal with various challenges, the liberal prescription was already in place. According to Chenoy, this prescription simply assumed that free market and democracy would support the development of each other (Chenoy, 2007: 62). Indeed, in my interview, Altynbek Joldoshov also underlined this point: "it was simply assumed that liberalization would bring about democratization" (Author's

Map 1– Post-Soviet Central Asia[19]

[19] Retrieved from http://mapsof.net/armenia/static-maps/jpg/caucasus-central-asia-political-map-2000

Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010). Such prescription simply expected post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan to create "good governance" that would combine "issues of democratization and efficiency" (Koichumanov et. al., 2005: 27 - 28). This was to suggest that, as Cheterian properly puts into words, "competition in the political field would reflect the competitive economic interests, as privatization was expected to create differentiated social interests and the emergence of a middle class, which in its turn would stimulate the development of civil society" (Cheterian, 2009: 137). In this regard, democracy would appear on the grounds of a competitive political sphere that would not only include opposition parties, NGOs, but also media independent from state control (Cheterian, 2009: 138).

Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan went along with the above-mentioned liberal prescription. In Baimatov's words, "…of all the Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan has been the most willing to follow a clear pro-Western political and economic course" (Baimatov, 2006: 15). In this regard, following the liberal prescription, post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, for restructuring economics out of the all-union model of economics chose shock therapy as its path; for reconstructing the political scene out of state control followed the path of decentralization (Elebaeva & Margarita, 2007: 68).

Actually, according to Huskey, Kyrgyzstan's 'choice' of this liberal path was almost an obligation in view of the low amount of "strategic bargaining chips" she had in the international arena in comparison with other newly independent states of Central Asia due to its disadvantageous position on various grounds (Huskey, 2002: 75). Huskey summarizes these disadvantages as follows:

"…a small[20], mountainous[21] and geographically isolated country…without nuclear weapons, vast energy reserves[22], or a border with the troublesome regimes in Iran and Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan seemed at first to hold little natural attraction for Western businesses or governments" (Huskey, 2002: 75). However, despite its disadvantaged position given its above-mentioned features, post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, like all other newly independent states of Central Asia, was devastated by the dissolution of the all-union structure of economy[23] (Akçalı, 2005a: 46). Given the fact that just before the collapse of the Union, more than half of the Kyrgyz SSR's budget was provided by the central budget (Akçalı, 2005a: 46), one can consider how devastating it could be the fall of the union for post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan's economy. Akiner indicates to the extent of this difficulty as well. In her words, "the abrupt termination of budgetary transfers from the central government (one of the principal sources of funding for welfare services) and the dislocation of inter-republican trade and transport links caused great distress" (Akiner, 2005: 118). Therefore, post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan was in need of significant amount of economic assistance and such assistance, as the union was gone, could especially come from the West (Huskey, 2002: 75).

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[20] Kyrgyzstan, with a land area of 198,500 square kilometers comes after Tajikistan in the Central Asian region (Kort, 2004:149).

[21] Tian-Shan and Pamir mountains occupy 87 per cent of the lands of Kyrgyzstan (Abazov, 2004: 1-2).

[22] In terms of natural resources and raw materials, Kyrgyzstan is not rich compared to other Central Asian countries. Kyrgyzstan's only significant asset is its water resources (Akçalı, 2005a: 47), yet these are not well taken care of since the Soviet times and are under the impact of widespread corruption as will be covered in Chapter 5.

[23] All-union economy was basically designed according to the general interests of the Union; economies of the republics were structured with respect to these interests (Akçalı, 2005a: 46-47). Given the high level of dependence of republics on the central planning and budget of the union, in King's words, "when the Soviet Union crumbled so did Kyrgyzstan's fledgling industry" and its economy in general (King, 2005: 39).

Yet, getting financial aid from the West was linked to the condition of moving towards the liberal path (a democratizing and free market oriented nation-state) it prescribed in the aftermath of the Soviet Union (Juraev, 2008: 255). As Juraev properly puts into words, suggested that "liberal policies of early 1990s…represented a compromise between the Kyrgyz authorities and foreign donors, whose aid to Kyrgyzstan was linked to...the liberalization of the economy and governance" (Juraev, 2008: 255). Akaev administration quickly realized these expectations and pragmatically embarked on offering what was expected, in Beacháin's words, "a success story" (Beacháin, 2009: 201). Pétric also draws attention to the situation in which post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan found itself: "abandoned by Moscow, this small republic's elite has had to convert to the international catechism of democracy in order to tap international funds" (Pétric, 2005: 322). Huskey, even goes further and argues that in face of grave economic difficulties, Akaev regime had not much chance, but to "[sell] Kyrgyzstan to the world as a model of democratizing and market-oriented politics…consumers of this 'good' were…Western governments and international financial institutions" (Huskey, 2002: 75). Kulikova also confirms these calculations on part of Akaev administration when she argues that Akaev used the initial period of reforms as a "'window dressing' for the international community to back up his policies with aid in the form of low-interest grants and loans, as well as political support" (Kulikova, 2007: 22). Within these confines, it would be hard to evaluate post-Soviet democratization efforts of Kyrgyzstan as an "indigenous, self-sustainable process" (Juraev, 2008: 255). Indeed, it would be better to argue that they stemmed out of pragmatic concerns described above.

Akaev's pragmatism initially bared fruit. Beyer aptly argues that "the willingness of the patient to go on with the treatment prescribed by international organizations…brought Kyrgyzstan the reputation of a particularly reform-oriented country" (Beyer, 2006: 44). Kyrgyzstan started to be considered as displaying democratic impetus and attracted the attention of various international actors. This was indeed evident in the support provided by the donor community to Kyrgyzstan. Not only international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank etc, but also various states such as the United States, Germany, Switzerland, Japan and Turkey supported the initial trajectory of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan with their funds (Dukenbaev & Hansen, 2003: 28).

Yet, the depiction of Kyrgyzstan as an 'island of democracy' in the rough Central Asian context, in return of its seeming impetus for a democratizing and market-oriented state, did not last long. The optimistic expectations and assumptions of the liberals were soon disappointed in the face of the experiences of Kyrgyzstan that proved the contrary of their projections. It became clearer by the time that, as Chenoy properly put into words; "societies like those in Central Asia needed to be analyzed from their own historic traits rather than from a single experience or model of democracy that fits all sizes" (Chenoy, 2007: 66). Chenoy indeed, regarding the experiences of Central Asian states, underlines the devastating effects of an imposition of market based democracy on social aspects as follows:

> The experience of the Central Asian Republics shows that there is no necessary link between markets/capitalism and democratic institutions. It is evident that

> democracy is a process that evolves when democratic institutions grow out of domestic roots and processes. Imposition of these institutions without the evolution of a democratic culture results in their rejection and distortion. Also, when markets are imposed suddenly, they cause shocks and lead to unintended consequences and hardships for the population, at the same time as they deter rather than promote democratic forces (Chenoy, 2007: 66).

In other words, market oriented economic liberalization accompanied by political decentralization prescribed by the international organizations did not bring about democratization in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan; to the contrary, these swiftly implemented policies undermined such prospects by adding on to the social trauma in the aftermath of the collapse of the all-union structures. In this respect, in Cheterian's words, "the term 'democracy' has been emptied of any meaning of equality between citizens, social justice, or participation in decision-making on major issues" (Cheterian, 2009: 139). On a parallel ground, these policies strengthened the hold of informal dynamics in the country.

3.3.1. Economic Restructuring through Shock Therapy

Kyrgyzstan quickly embarked on radical economic reforms to transform into a free market economy as prescribed and went along with the 'big-bang' strategy of the IMF which necessitated removing state control over economics and letting the emergence of a free-market (Baimyrzaeva, 2005: 29; IMF, 1999). This program consisted of various policies. Among these policies, Baimyrzaeva cites "simultaneously initiating and implementing macro-economic stabilization, price and market reforms, enterprise restructuring and privatization, and institutional

reorganization" (Baimyrzaeva, 2005: 29-30). These processes, however, were not based on any well-defined and realistic strategy (Aydın, 2003: 157) and put into practice "fairly rapid and loosely managed" (Jones Luong, 2002: 114). In my interview with Umut Asanova, (current head of the department of journalism in Kygyz-Manas University and a colleague of Rosa Otunbaeva back in 1976-1977) she stressed the unorganized nature of the policies regarding mass privatizations adopted since 1991. She underlined that everyone took what they had access to during these chaotic move towards marketization. As she puts it; "it was done in such a disorganized way that it led to a chaotic transformation and a social trauma" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 12, 2010).

As a result of the prescribed reforms by "liberal international economic advisers" (Pétric, 2005: 323), on the one hand, the economic restructuring gained Kyrgyzstan "a string of notable firsts in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)" (Beacháin, 2009: 201). Among these, Beacháin cites Kyrgyzstan, being the first to privatize its land, to leave ruble zone by introducing its own currency (som) and to join the World Trade Organization in 1998 (Beacháin, 2009: 201). However, on the other hand, the same policies that gained 'a string of notable firsts' to Kyrgyzstan created extreme economic hardship. Various statistical data (though they do not include the numbers regarding 'shadow economy'[24]) about the economic performance of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan in the first decade of its independence, indeed, suffice to display the extent of this hardship. According to

[24] Abazov underlines that the statistical data regarding the economic performance of the country only account for the formal aspects of economics and they do not take the 'shadow economy' of the country into account (Abazov, 2004: 44). In order to indicate to the significance of this informal level of economics in accounting for the economic performance of the country, he mentions that "in 2001, the *Economist Intelligence Unit* estimates that the 'shadow economy' might account for up to %40 of GDP, which is among the highest in the CIS" (Abazov, 2004: 44).

various sources, production and consumption levels, the gross domestic product, capital investment, agricultural output dropped drastically (Abazov, 2004: 43). Furthermore, Pétric pointed out to the fact that Kyrgyzstan got under considerable amount of debt to international organizations, leaving its economic policy into the hands of IMF and World Bank's instructions (Pétric, 2005: 323).

Within these confines, it was not a surprise that policies concerned with economic liberalization ended up with a social trauma. Poverty increased dramatically; social inequalities and social polarization grew remarkably and the gap between the poor and rich widened significantly (Elebaeva & Margarita, 2007: 69). Furthermore, the social welfare expenses have been reduced considerably (Chenoy, 2007: 64). As Chenoy puts it; "the withdrawal of the state of Kyrgyzstan from social sectors such as health, education, sanitation and childcare led to new forms of social distress and human insecurity…for the… beneficiaries of these sectors in earlier times" (Chenoy, 2007: 64), creating a sense of nostalgia among the people for Soviet times (Abazov, 2006).

Along with the significant reduction of the budget concerning the social welfare services, the situation was even getting harder owing to extreme levels of corruption prevailing in the country. In Abazov's words, "the public service was turned into a corrupt machine whose main interest and work culture was increasingly built around extracting rent from ordinary people" (Abazov, 2006). Abazov's point is indeed supported by the research conducted by German Development Institute on the local economic development and participation in Kyrgyzstan. This research reveals that "bribery, lack of legal security" (Grävingholt et. al., 2006: 116), "dysfunctioning of the formal channels" caused

informal channels to gain significant importance and in this context people tend to find "the right connections" (Grävingholt et. al., 2006: 118) for their social security needs and problems. This atmosphere clearly provided a ripe ground for intimate relations between the legal and the illegal realms (Çokgezen, 2004). This is a point underlined by Kupatadze as follows:

> …the period of transition to a market economy, which involved privatization, the opening up of the market and the liberalization of trade, collusive links were formed between the underworld and the upperworld…representatives from the 'formal' and 'legitimate' sector became key actors in illegal activities…[in this context] organized crime can be described as an 'unholy alliance' of state, market and crime or a political-business-criminal nexus (Kupatadze, 2008: 280).

Along with the extent of corruption and the alliance between legal and illegal worlds, the economic restructuring also fostered social and regional disparities (Abazov, 2004: 43). Indeed, as Todua properly put into words; "the efforts to plant a Western model of reforms in disregard of the local realities and traditions exacerbated all the domestic problems, regionalism being the most dangerous of them" (Todua, 2005:17). This was mainly because, although economic restructuring had significant impact on every aspect of society (Liu, 2003: 5), it especially made the conditions of the rural people in Kyrgyzstan worse compared to the urban population due to shortages along with massive unemployment and poverty (Abazov, 2004: 43; King, 2005: 38). Indeed, Abazov confirms this point by indicating to the fact that "in Kyrgyzstan…business activities and investments were increasingly concentrated in the major urban centers such as Bishkek, while other regions, especially small towns and villages

in the south and east of the country, experienced a steep economic decline" (Abazov, 2004: 43). Therefore the unpleasant outcomes of economic liberalization were especially felt in the southern regions which stimulated the 'north-south' contention already prevalent in the country (Abazov, 2004: 43).

In the overall account, the reforms that were supposed to be helpful in improving the living conditions of the general population, in Baimyrzaeva's words "did not deliver the promised empowerment to the people" (Baimyrzaeva, 2005: 29). Indeed, it would not be wrong to say that they had not only had disastrous effects on social aspects, but also paved the way for the strengthening of the informal dynamics on various grounds, especially evident in the extreme levels of corruption and intimate relations between legal and illegal worlds mentioned above.

3.3.2. Nation-Building Processes and the Fragmented Nature of Society in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan

Along with the restructuring of economy, creating a new sense of belonging was also among the struggling areas of the newly independent states (Akiner, 2005: 131).[25] Bhavna Dave indicates to the fact that, initially, there was no harmony among the Kyrgyz elite on the main route of the nation building

[25] The newly independent states make use of various strategies regarding their nation-building processes. Among these strategies, Akiner cites renovating of "the state symbols…flags, emblems, and anthems…postage stamps, banknotes…renaming of cities and streets; pre-Soviet titles and institutions were revived…new architectural ensembles…paintings and sculptures" (Akiner, 2005: 131). Akçalı also refers to the rewriting the history of the nation, enforcing of new national education and language policies (Akçalı, 2005b: 101-102). In the case of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan as well, one can come across the usage of many of the above-mentioned strategies (Lowe, 2003).

processes (Dave, 2004: 141). In his account, along with "international pressure for reform and liberalization", this was mainly due to the fragmented nature of the society in Kyrgyzstan, which was evident not only in its multi-ethnic composition of demography, but also in the existence of various traditional groupings and institutions within its social organization (Dave, 2004: 141). Within this context, he argues that Kyrgyzstan has "oscillated between supporting ethnic entitlements and embracing civic norms" (Dave, 2004: 141). Such oscillation soon ended up on behalf of the moderate stance which meant to gather the members of population under a "civic identity" that was expected to by-pass other sub-national affiliations on "ethnic, linguistic, religious or regional" grounds (Dave, 2004: 123). In the case of Kyrgyzstan, such endeavors proved to be hindered by various elements embedded within the social organization of the country, among which multi-ethnic composition and sub-ethnic cleavages have taken the lead.

3.3.2.1. Multi-ethnic Composition

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the multi-ethnic composition of Kyrgyzstan was indeed a result of the migration policies enforced during Tsarist and Soviet rule in the 19th and 20th centuries (Abazov, 2004: 14-17, 31; 1999, 2002). As a result of these settlement programs, when Kyrgyzstan gained its independence, it appeared as an ethnically heterogeneous country. Ethnic Kyrgyz constituted only 52,4 per cent of the population; 21,5 per cent Russians (concentrated mainly in the northern regions of Kyrgyzstan) and 12.9 per cent Uzbeks (concentrated in the southern regions, Osh, Jalal-Abad and

Batken, neighboring Uzbekistan) (Fumagalli, 2007: 212 Table 1). There were also 2,5 per cent Ukrainians and 2,4 per cent Germans and other ethnic groups including Uyghur's, Tajiks, Tatars, Kazaks etc (Fumagalli, 2007: 212 Table 1).

Even in face of such heterogeneous ethnic composition, in the aftermath of the sudden independence, Dave notes that there appeared several "political movements, such as *Asaba,*" that initially "championed the goal of realizing 'one state, one nation, and one language' and endorsed certain pan-Turkic symbols, especially shifting the alphabet to Latin" (Dave, 2004: 142). In this regard, the initial language[26] and land policies[27] were mainly designed on behalf of ethnic Kyrgyz (Huskey, 2002: 76). According to Huskey, behind these language and land policies that mostly benefited ethnic Kyrgyz laid the "occupational legacy" left by the Soviet rule (Huskey, 2002: 76). This legacy was an outcome of economic and political modernization, but it also "offered little opportunity for the traditionally rural and nomadic Kyrgyz to move into the better paid and more prestigious jobs in the industrial sector"[28] (Huskey, 2002: 76). Huskey, indeed, argues that it was this "occupational legacy" that raised discontent among ethnic Kyrgyz after the independence (Huskey, 2002: 77). In his words, in the sudden

[26] Abazov notes that "The Law on Languages suggested that the Kyrgyz language should become the state language (Article 1), symbolizing Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty (Article 2), and replacing Russian. It also required compulsory usage of the Kyrgyz language by management and administrative personnel (Article 8)…The law also required translation of signs in all public places, cities, and streets into Kyrgyz" (Abazov, 2004: 38-39). See, also: Dave, 2004: 136-141).

[27] The Law on Land enforced in 1991 dictated that "'land in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan is the property of the Kyrgyz'" (Akçalı, 2005a: 53).

[28] During the Soviet era, Slavic people, especially Russians had the upper hand in technical occupations, which were mainly located in the north (D'Encausse, 1994: 261–262; Alkan, 2009: 358). Uzbeks were mainly involved with trade in the south, while Kyrgyz held positions in bureaucratic, educational, agricultural, and cultural realms (Huskey, 2002: 77).

aftermath of the independence, ethnic Kyrgyz felt that they were "ill-prepared to compete in a market-based economy" (Huskey, 2002: 77). Such self-perception stemming from the Soviet's occupational legacy, in the account of Huskey, paved the ground for the initial remedial policies regarding land and language (Huskey, 2002: 77).

Expectedly, these remedial policies of the ethnic Kyrgyz triggered discomfort among minorities, especially the Russians and Russified Kyrgyz (Huskey, 2002:76). As a result, initial arrangements that favored ethnic Kyrgyz led thousands of minorities to leave the country (Abazov, 1999:237-238).[29] Akaev was well aware of the fact that this mass departure of minorities would have negative political and economic consequences (Huskey, 1997b: 255). Alkan well summarizes Akaev's calculations regarding not only his moderate stance concerning the nation building process, but also regarding economic concerns. Alkan puts it as follows: "the possibility of pursuing a policy based on nationalization was hindered not only by the multiethnic structure, but also by a possible immigration of Russian and European labor, which could impede the limited production in the country, deepening the economic recession" (Alkan, 2009: 359). In this regard, Akaev tried to put a stop to the outflow of minority groups by referring to various strategies (Akçalı, 2005a:53). Among these strategies one can cite the reversion of the initial remedial policies, for instance, his changing of the expression in Land Law from "property of Kyrgyz" to

[29] Between 1989 and 1995, almost 600000 people left Kyrgyzstan (Abazov, 1999:237-238), who were mainly "Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Germans, and some other ethnic groups as well as some Kyrgyz" (Abazov, 2004: 40). Both Abazov and Huskey note that in ten years, the number of ethnic Russians declined from 21 per cent in 1989 to 11 per cent in 2002 (Abazov, 2004: 40; Huskey, 1997b: 255).

"property of the people of Kyrgyzstan" (Akçalı, 2005a: 53); his endeavors towards giving Russian[30] the status of official language since 1995, though he could achieve this goal only in 2000 (Dave, 2004: 136-137).

Akaev, who was a representative of the Russified northern regions, as Dave points out, not surprisingly, depended on non-Kyrgyz groups along with the support of northern clans and regional authorities for these policies (Dave, 2004: 150). In Dave's words: "support for…bilingualism has come mainly from the northern regions, mainly Talas, Chu and Issyk-Kul, which have a high number of Russians as well as Russian-speaking Kyrgyz;…the southern region…and Naryn Oblast in the east are more rural with a very small number of Russians or Slavs" (Dave, 2004: 137). This division of support revealed one of the fault lines within the social organization of Kyrgyz society, namely the grounds of the contention between southern and northern regions and indicated to the fact that Akaev regime's power base depended on the latter.

Another instrument of Akaev's moderate stance regarding nation building processes was revealed by his establishment of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kyrgyzstan (Abazov, 2004: 78; Huskey, 1997b: 254). According to Murzakulova and Schoeberlein "the apparent utility of the Assembly [was]…in its symbolic value. The Assembly paint[ed] an image of multicultural Kyrgyzstan sustained by an ideology of 'interethnic harmony'" (Murzakulova & Schoeberlein, 2009: 1239). On the other hand, Huskey argues that this institution had a legitimizing role for informal leaders in their communities as well (Huskey, 2002: 77). Along

[30] Dave mentions that despite "the 1989 Soviet census data showed that about 97 per cent of titular Kyrgyz claimed proficiency in the language of their own nationality"; in reality, however, such percentage was lower than indicated (Dave, 2004: 127).

with the Assembly of the Peoples of Kyrgyzstan, one should also mention his use of the symbols and rituals of traditional Kyrgyz history (Spector, 2004:12). Among these symbols, Manas millennium celebration in 1995 takes the lead, which provided, in Huskey's words, not only "country's founding myth" but also a chance to highlight "Manas' universal values and his multi-ethnic entourage" (Huskey, 2002: 79).

Yet, these maneuvers on part of Akaev designed as concessions to minorities to stop their outflow were also balanced with the expectations of ethnic Kyrgyz (Huskey, 1997b: 254-255). Put differently, Akaev was aware of the fact that if he had only enforced a civic nationalism, he would have various difficulties vis-à-vis Kyrgyz nationalists (Huskey, 1997b: 254-255). In order to avoid such difficulties, Akaev took various measures to appease them as well. He tried to find a very delicate balance between ethnocratic and civic nationalisms. On the one hand, he passed decrees that seem to only favor ethnic Kyrgyz, such as "reserving one-half of the newly privatized land for ethnic Kyrgyz farmers" (Huskey, 1997b: 254); on the other hand, as mentioned above, he changed the controversial expression in land law to "property of the people of Kyrgyzstan" (Akçalı, 2005a: 53). Relying upon balancing arrangements such as these, Akaev tried to find equilibrium between various actors regarding the main direction of the nation building processes of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. [31]

[31] According to Huskey, the moderate stance of Akaev in nation building processes had to do with his upbringing. He points out to the northern roots of Akaev, who spent his youth in Leningrad that contributed to his "respect for, and knowledge of, European culture and traditions" (Huskey, 2002: 77). Huskey also pointed out to the fact that "to the more traditional ethnic Kyrgyz, he projected the image of the favorite son who retained his cultural roots while mastering the ways of the larger world" (Huskey, 2002: 77).

In the overall account, as Fumagalli argues, Akaev enforced a moderate nationality policy, tried to maintain the multi-ethnic composition of the state and avoided inter-ethnic tensions, probably also keeping in mind the unpleasant consequences of the riots that brought him to power back in 1990 (Fumagalli, 2007: 218). Put in Fumagalli's words, "with all his shortcomings and contradictions, the Akaev regime managed to preserve a balance between groups by never allowing grievances to spill out of control" (Fumagalli, 2007: 227). Hence, he managed to take the multi-ethnic composition of the country under control, preventing tensions among various communities.

Nonetheless, such moderate stance could not put an end to the outflow of minorities. Despite Akaev's moderate stance, the demographic composition of the country has changed considerably in only one decade (Abazov, 2004: 40; Huskey, 1997b: 255). Especially the Russian population has decreased to approximately 10 per cent and the Uzbek population appeared as "the second largest community" (approximately 14 per cent) (Fumagalli, 2007: 219) in the country (Fumagalli, 2007: 212 Table 1). The emergence of the Uzbek population as the second largest community in Kyrgyzstan towards the end of 1990s, not only raised expectations among the Uzbek population about their rights, but also concerns among the ethnic Kyrgyz (Fumagalli, 2007: 219). There appeared a fertile ground for stereo-typing between these communities, especially in the south of the country (Dave, 2004, 144). Indeed, Dave notes that "the prevalent ethnic stereotypes portray Uzbeks as entrepreneurial…and calculating" (Dave, 2004, 144)[32]. With respect to

[32] Among various differing features of Uzbek and Kyrgyz communities in Kyrgyzstan, Pınar Akçalı draws attention to religious perceptions (Akçalı, 2005a: 50). She argues that Islam among the Kyrgyz people is mainly shaped around nomadic traditions, pre-Islamic beliefs and rituals in

such perceptions, Kyrgyz nationalists considered ethnic Uzbeks, in Dave's words, "either as posing a separatist threat or as wresting control of the local economy" (Dave, 2004:144). According to Fumagalli as well, behind such concerns laid the idea that any compromise with the Uzbek community on socio-political rights might lead to further ones (Fumagalli, 2007: 219). These considerations actually constitute the very basis of various tensions that broke out between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in the south of the country, which are occasionally fueled by power and security vacuum along with socio-economic depression.

Despite the fact that this issue will be taken at hand in Chapter 5, to suffice for now, as mentioned in the section of 3.2. of this chapter, one can argue that when Kyrgyzstan was on its way to sudden independence, in an atmosphere where power vacuum was apparent along with the general economic depression, Kyrgyz SSR experienced the riots of Osh in 1990. In June 2010 as well, similar conditions along with a security vacuum has paved the ground for violent conflicts. In June 2010 events, where a humanitarian crisis has taken place, one once again came across the same ingredients for a crisis between these communities with devastating consequences not only for all the inhabitants of the southern region in particular, but also throughout the entire country (ICG, 2010b).

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contrast to the perception of Islam among sedentary Uzbeks (Akçalı, 2005a: 50). In her words, "nomadic Kyrgyz [especially northerners] traditionally practiced Islam quite differently...The Uzbeks are known to be a lot more religious than the Kyrgyz" (Akçalı, 2005a: 50).

3.3.2.2. Sub-Ethnic Affiliations: Traditional Solidarity Groupings and Institutions

The multi-ethnic composition was not the only source that complicated the nation building processes in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. As hinted above, the nation building processes have been even further complicated by the sub-ethnic/sub-national cleavages in Kyrgyzstan (Dave, 2004). Furthermore, Akaev seemed not so delicate when managing these sources of complication contrary to his more attentive approach towards the multiethnic composition of the country. Indeed, he seemed to start out as attentive, yet, in the mid-1990s, he shifted the balance of power on behalf of his own affiliations (Collins, 2004: 225, 248).

As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, scholars have emphasized the importance of the role played by sub-national forces in Central Asian politics, in which various groups are contesting for power. To remind, in the literature, there are two elements that attracted special attention: "groups based on kinship bonds and geographic location" (Juraev, 2008: 259). The important point is that these fault lines of fragmentation within Kyrgyz society "maintain a high relevance to current political processes, particularly in those involving popular support mobilizations such as elections or protest actions" (Juraev, 2008: 260). The decisive role of these fault lines within informal networks is what necessitates further elaboration.

The kinship groups paralleled by the division of the country into north and south regions according to the mountain ranges cross-cutting the country, are

subject to different categorizations[33]. According to Geiss, "all sources identify two wings *Ong* and *Sol* of a tribal confederacy. In addition, a third grouping, the *Ichkilik,* is sometimes mentioned as a separate unit. There is no consistency about the number and names of the 'tribes' and 'lineages', however" (Geiss, 2003: 38).

Otuz Uul tribal confederation as an umbrella term includes not only Ong but also Sol wing and consists of three tribal alliances: Tagay, Adagine and Mungush (Jones Luong, 2002:75 Figure 3.2). Kyrgyz to the north of the country are considered offspring of Tagay alliance which includes clans of Sary Bagysh, Solto, Salak, Cherik, Azyk, Mosoldor, Bugu, Tynymselit, Chekir Salak, Jediger, Bagysh, Suu Murun, Baaryu (Jones Luong, 2002:75 Figure 3.2). Kyrgyz to the south "are considered descendants of the tribal group of Ichkilik" (including clans of Kypchak, Telit, Joo Kesek, Bpston, Avat, Naiman, Kesek, Kandy, Hoigut, Tooles) with linkages to Adagine (including clans of Kokyrat, Boru, Kara Bagysh, Joru, Bargy, Sarttap) and Mungush (including Jagalmal, Kosh Tamga) (Jones Luong, 2002:75 Figure 3.2). According to various sources, the Bugu clan dominated the early Soviet Kyrgyzstan, while later; the Sary Bagysh clan took its place. Akaev and many other influential figures came from Sary Bagysh clan (Khamidov, 2008; Dukanbaev & Hansen, 2003: 26).

Given these divisions, it is not surprising that the "Kyrgyz flag adopted after independence depicts a sun with forty rays as a symbolic representation of the forty sub-tribes of the Kyrgyz people" (Caspiani, 2000: 236). Hence, Kyrgyz

[33] According to the tribal map presented by Geiss (Geiss, 2003: 266 Map 2), Kyrgyz tribes seem to be divided into three units: Otuz Uul/Ong Kanat/Right Wing, Sol Kanat/Left Wing and Ichkilik. In his categorization, Otuz Uul is considered as a synonym for Ong Kanat, instead of an umbrella term that consists of both Ong and Sol wings. There are various contradictions between the names of the clans presented by Geiss and Jones Luong as well.

flag well illustrates the fragmented nature of the Kyrgyz society, which is symbollic in an understanding of socio-political context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.

The Tian-Shan and Pamiro-Alai Mountain ranges cross-cut the country and hindered communication between the above-mentioned tribes by creating natural limits throughout history[34](Abazov, 2004: 2). They played significant roles not only in the emergence of these divisions, but also in their regional connotations (Abazov, 2004: 3, 10). Put differently, the geographical margins provided by the mountain ranges contributed to the emergence of political and economic disparities in the shape of a north/south division in Kyrgyzstan. In other words, regionalism (based on common geographical location) refers to a competitive relationship between northern regions and southern ones and merges with clan/tribe affiliations among the Kyrgyz population that helped to create solidarities (Dukanbaev & Hansen, 2003:24).

Northern Kyrgyzstan, which has low mountain ranges and cut through by Chuy and Talas rivers, is divided into four administrative regions (oblasts): Chuy, Naryn, Talas, and Issyk-Kul (Abazov, 2004: 2). The north is considered more developed on political and economical grounds; most of the non-Kyrgyz populations inhabit these areas who are less conservative in comparison to the southern populations (Todua, 2005:17; Akçalı, 2005a: 50). Southern Kyrgyzstan, on the other hand, is considered the western and south western parts of the

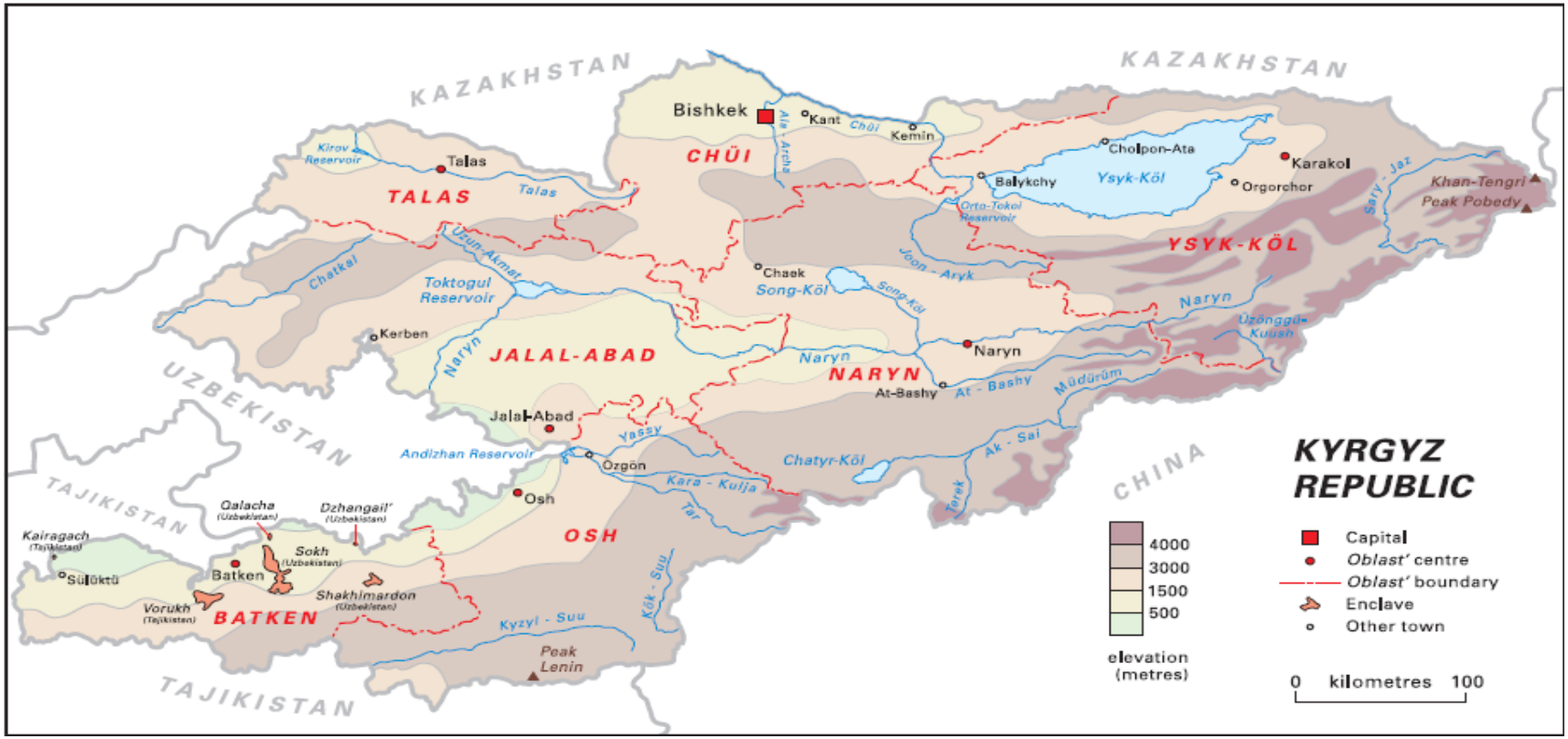
[34] Geiss notes that in Tsarist era, "Kyrgyz tribesmen at the Issyk-Kol had no direct information about the Kyrgyz tribes in southern Kyrgyzstan" (Geiss, 2003: 39). Even today, as Pannier underlines with respect to the limitations regarding flights and television and radio broadcasts, communication between north and south of the country is still difficult (Pannier, 2010a).

country (Abazov, 2004: 2). This part is divided into Batken, Jalal-Abad, and Osh regions, just across the border with Uzbekistan (Abazov, 2004: 2). Communities in the south of the country are less developed on economic grounds and until the 'Tulip Revolution', one may argue, they were mainly excluded from decision-making processes as these processes were under the control of northern clans and regions (Todua, 2005:18; Dukanbaev & Hansen, 2003: 25). According to the 2009 census, Uzbek population make up 40 per cent of the population in Osh (ICG, 2010b:1).

However, Dukanbaev and Hansen warn us about avoiding "a simplistic rich north/poor south dichotomy" as well (Dukanbaev & Hansen, 2003: 25). In their account, there are other divisions cross-cutting the north-south divide, such as the urban-rural divide. In their words;

> Naryn province is considered 'northern' although…the rural poverty and lack of access to resources controlled by the state make it one of the poorest and most isolated parts of Kyrgyzstan…Issyk-Kul province…considered a 'northern' area, is also not part of the power equation that dominates the capital and the state. It would be equally inaccurate to view Chuy and Talas provinces as being particularly well off as well. [In] Bishkek, there is also …immense…urban poverty (Dukenbaev & Hansen, 2003: 25).

Within these confines, after independence, Akaev regime is said to be prudent in balancing the interests of clans and regions, rather than supporting his own. (Collins, 2006: 225). In other words, he started with a moderate stance regarding the sub-national cleavages existing in the country as he did regarding the multiethnic composition of demography (Collins, 2006: 225). Collins



Map 2 – Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan (Gullette, 2006: xi)

confirms this point by pointing out to his speeches, where he invited people to abandon the communal customs of clans and tribes and replace them with formal ones (Collins, 2006: 225). However, according to Collins, towards the end of 1994, as the clans that initially carried Akaev to power started to back off their support from Akaev by opposing his reforms, Akaev gradually moved away from this moderate stance and endeavored to maintain his power by depending on his own clan's and region's support (Collins, 2004: 225, 248). He began relying on his own clan in Kemin and his wife's in Talas (Collins, 2006: fn144, 232). By doing so, he contributed to the strengthening of certain clans' along with northern regions' hand on economic and political processes of the country (Collins, 2004: 248). Huskey as well points out that "at one point in the late 1990s, both the president and prime minister hailed from the same small district in the north, Kemin" (Huskey, 2002: 79). These developments indeed signaled to convenient grounds for informal dynamics to flourish on in the country and gain significance in shaping Kyrgyz politics in the years to follow.

In this context, the circle of Akaev increasingly excluded the southern clans, as well as the Uzbek population from political and economical processes (Collins, 2006: 225).[35] Collins provides various evidences of such exclusion on the grounds of clan politics by pointing out to the way how Akaev's close circle increased its hold on power. In her account, Kush'chu, Sary Bagysh, Solto, Kochkor, and Bugu clan networks appeared as the most influential ones since

[35] To be discussed in Chapter 5, it is worth noting that Kurmanbek Bakiev who became the second president of Kyrgyz Republic in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution', came from the south of the country, namely from Jalal-Abad region (Saidazimova, 2008). In Saidazimova's words, "while not every southern politician supports Bakiev, the region acted as his main power base" (Saidazimova, 2008).

mid-1990s, whose members held prominent positions in Akaev regime (Collins, 2006: 225). In Collins' words, "…use of nepotism, control of cadre appointments, patronage of their own group, and blatant asset stripping of state resources had destabilizing political and economic consequences by the late 1990s" (Collins, 2006: 226). Hence, as Akaev failed in finding a balance regarding sub-ethnic cleavages, rivalries and power struggles based on these divisions made the scene and gained the leading role in shaping the nature of post-Soviet Kyrgyz politics.

Along with the regional affiliations that merged with clan or tribe networks, one should also take into account the role that the traditional solidarity institutions play. Azamat Temirkulov draws attention to this point. He argues that in the immediate aftermath of the sudden independence, state was in a position that was incapable of providing social security needs of the people (Temirkulov, 2007:7). This led to socio-economic trauma among Kyrgyz people and directed them into the arms of traditional solidarity groupings and institutions that in Temirkulov's words, "give some social security to affiliates…a guarantee of mutual aid" (Temirkulov, 2007:7). Yet, this was not the only role played by these institutions. The important point Temirkulov stresses is the manipulation of the traditional solidarity institutions, such as aksakal (elders) by various informal networks for the legitimization they provide in the eyes of the population for particular ends (Temirkulov, 2008: 321)[36]. Temirkulov dwells upon such a usage of elders (aksakal). In his account, aksakal, "whose authority derives from

[36] See, also: Baimatov, 2006: 22-24.

traditional respect for age", [37] are taken advantage of or cooperated not only with the political leadership in maintaining social control in a given community[38], but also with the 'opposition' in mobilizing supporters during elections, referenda and lately mobilizations (Temirkulov, 2008: 321). Indeed, aksakal, as an example of traditional solidarity institutions in Kyrgyzstan "play[ed] a very important role in the mobilization of communities towards collective action" as one witnessed during the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' (Temirkulov, 2008: 321).

In the overall account, there appears an amalgam of various affiliations prevailing in Kyrgyzstan, which not only includes affiliations on the grounds of specific administrative-territorial units or kinship, but also ties to traditional solidarity institutions. Reminding ourselves the multi-ethnic composition of the country covered in the previous section as well, one can argue that Kyrgyzstan presents not only a country of various complications with respect to national cohesiveness, but also a very fertile ground for fierce and multi-layered contestation that clearly invites informal dynamics onto the political scene.

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[37] According to Temirkulov, aksakal have basically two informal powers; *uiat* (shame) and *bata* (blessing) (Temirkulov, 2008: 321). *Uiat* is to condemn or isolate a person from the community for his immoral behavior or act (Temirkulov, 2008: 321); *Bata,* on the other hand, is a "traditional ceremony, where elders publicly bless members of the community at the beginning of a new business or collective action" (Temirkulov, 2008: 321).

[38] Indeed, Temirkulov notes that "Article 12 of the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic ('about local self-government and local state administration') January 2002" even gave a formal status to the aksakal regarding their role in social control of a given community (Temirkulov, 2008: 321).

3.3.3. Institutionalization and Democratization

As mentioned before, post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan's initial years started out with democratization efforts accompanied by institutional reforms, yet they were not indigenous mainly designed as a "window dressing" to obtain international funds (Kulikova, 2007: 22). In this respect, Kyrgyzstan not only adapted a new constitution, established a multi-party system, but also - at least initially as a window dressing - encouraged elements of civil society; media**,** NGOs and opposition (Öraz, 2007: 61).

In May 1993, the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic has been adopted.[39] 1993 Constitution, which "has adopted a strong version of French type semi-presidentialism," (Özbudun, 1993: 27 in Öraz, 2007: 70) enforced a separation of powers into legislative, executive and judicial branches and emphasized basic human rights (Elebaeva &Margarita, 2007: 69; Dukanbaev & Hansen, 2003: 30). While many cherished this constitution of 1993 as a liberalizing step, a closer look displayed that it already included very broad powers for presidency even before the consequent amendments in the following years. Dukanbaev and Hansen make this point clear as follows:

> The Constitution [of 1993] gave the president broad political powers which created the conditions for domination of the political system by the executive...he received power to appoint the prime minister, determine the structure of the government, appoint various key political figures at the national level, as well as the heads of the regional administrations. These officials are the most powerful

[39] The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic. (1993). Retrieved from http://missions.itu.int/kyrgyzst/Constitut.html

> representatives of the president and his administration at the regional and local levels. Appointed by the President and serving at his pleasure, they control the regional budgets and are easily able to secure the compliance of local representative bodies. Also, the President enjoys the right to veto legislation passed by Parliament and, in some cases, to dissolve the legislature. This has gradually diminished the political role of parliament (Dukanbaev & Hansen, 2003: 30).

With respect to these broad powers, from the start, the relations between the branches were not well balanced: the presidential office appeared as the dominant one among the executive branch along with its significant power on other branches (Dukenbaev & Hansen, 2003: 35). The mere role of the government was to implement and take responsibility for the policies mainly designed and initiated by the presidential office, in which it had not much of a say (Dukenbaev & Hansen, 2003: 35). Concerning the judiciary, it was a similar story. Instead of serving the public interest, courts were under the control of the narrow interests of a few powerful figures (Dukenbaev & Hansen, 2003: 35). Similarly, in Dukanbaev and Hansen's words, "with regard to the public bureaucracy, it is a far distance from what may be described as the Weberian ideal-type, understood here as meritocratic, transparent, professional, neutral, accountable and competent in which the public and private interest are strictly separated" (Dukenbaev & Hansen, 2003: 35-36). In this respect, it is not surprising that people generally tended to "resolve their problems not through courts, laws and the like, but through *informal* channels of communication (contacts)" (Dukanbaev & Hansen, 2003: 24). In other words, they generally tended to look for the "right connections" (Grävingholt et. al., 2006: 118).

However, all these were sidelined at the time due to the euphoria of celebrating Kyrgyzstan as 'an island of democracy' at the heart of Central Asia. To back this image, instead of indicating to the potentials that the broad powers of the president and the corrupt operations of the other branches carry out with them along with the informal dynamics they strengthened, it was stressed that in the initial years of independence Akaev administration encouraged the development of a civil society. This was considered evident in the developments such as "independent political parties and social movements were allowed to emerge and develop essentially unrestrained" (Jones Luong, 2002: 110). Indeed, until the mid 1990s, Kyrgyzstan had media relatively free from state control compared to neighboring Central Asian states (Jones Luong, 2002:110). Kyrgyzstan had also constituted a fertile ground for the proliferation of NGOs (McMann, 2004). It was often stressed that in a short period of time, the number of NGOs increased extremely as if the growth of civil society could be proven on the increase in the number of NGOs (Pétric, 2005: 325). Within these confines, in the initial years of independence, Kyrgyzstan was portrayed as the only democratizing state with "social pluralism" in Central Asia due to its relatively free speech and press along with tolerance towards opposition (Anderson, 2000: 79; Beshimov, 2007). All of these, according to transitologists, were signs of Kyrgyzstan's determination in following the path towards Western style market-democracy.

In reality, however, the elements of this image were virtual (Lewis, 2008). There was a gap between the above-mentioned seemingly democratic leaning and the political realities of the country. In Lewis' words, there was a "disjunction between visions of democracy as promoted by many international actors in the

country and the actual social, political and economic conditions" in Kyrgyzstan (Adamson, 2002: 199 in Lewis, 2008: 268). I have dwelled upon the potentials carried out in the constitution of 1993 and the accompanying structure of the corrupted institutional design above. To give another example of this virtuality, one can point out to the NGOs, which were and are mainly disconnected from Kyrgyz society, based in Bishkek and in Osh; with a very limited influence on the society via some influential figures they have been organized around (Alisheva, 2006: 87; Jailobaeva, 2007: 6); with funding channels from Western governments and foundations (Lewis, 2009: 269). Despite the fact that there were several international NGOs and Western foundations in Bishkek, in order to assist Kyrgyzstan with respect to its efforts regarding democratization, according to Lewis "these programmes were failures with respect to their own terms…never achieved any traction in the Kyrgyz political context" as well (Lewis, 2008: 269). In this context, the world of NGOs mainly remained tangent to the political realities of Kyrgyzstan, though they have been often portrayed otherwise.

In reality, behind the seeming tendency towards democracy, the informal dynamics, which made use of the fault lines and traditional solidarity institutions embedded within the social organization of Kyrgyz society, covered in the previous section, were playing the decisive role in shaping Kyrgyz politics. In Collins' account, behind the scenes, "the informal ordering of power and institutions of governance among informal actors and networks – exist[ed]" (Collins, 2006: 211). However, this only became visible to the studies that mainly focused on the formal dynamics of politics (either on state or society level) in Kyrgyzstan as authoritarian tendencies of Akaev made the scene in the late-1994.

In other words, the disjunction between the virtual world of civil society, the democratizing nature of politics in the country and the actual social, political and economic conditions in Kyrgyzstan made the fore in late 1994, revealing the wishful thinking of the mainstream literature.

Among the first signs not only for the authoritarian tendencies of Akaev, but also for the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics was the emergence of various political maneuvers, apparent in the confrontation between Akaev and the parliament concerning his reforms in 1994 (Kulov, 2008: 344). To overcome such a confrontation and to by-pass the parliament to carry on his reforms, Akaev not only made use of two referenda in 1994 (Öraz, 2007: 85-86), but also worked together with the regional governors to dissolve the parliament (Huskey, 1997b: 265). Hence, from this point on, one comes across various maneuvers of Akaev, his use of a blend of formal and informal tactics (Hale, 2006: 307).

Akaev then called upon another referendum - this time to carry on two amendments to the Constitution of 1993; one was concerned with an arrangement that would grant the right to the president to make constitutional amendments through referenda, the other was about creating a new bi-cameral parliament entitled as the Jogorku Kenesh (Öraz, 2007:85). Both turned out with 86 per cent of support (Öraz, 2007: 86).

This was followed by the 1995 Parliamentary Elections. Huskey describes these elections, as a turning point for "the criminalization and regionalization of politics in Kyrgyzstan" (Huskey, 1997b: 265). In other words, he argues that "the Kyrgyz parliamentary elections of 1995 highlighted…the ways in which

traditional politics penetrated and distorted nominally democratic procedures" (Huskey, 1997b: 259). Among the elements of the regionalization of politics, he cites the strengthening of the already strengthened hands of regional governors (akim) not only due to their cooperation with Akaev to dissolve the parliament, but also the electoral rules that promoted localism (Huskey, 1997b: 260). Among the elements of the criminalization of politics, he mentions what he calls upon as the "new plutocracy represented by the state enterprise directors and private… businessmen" who provided the financial resources for the electoral campaign of Akaev (Huskey, 1997b: 260). These figures got into the parliament along with various figures known to have criminal affiliations, achieving immunity regarding their illegal businesses (Huskey, 1997b: 264). In this context, one can argue that the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping the nature and course of Kyrgyz politics gave its first signs especially since 1995 Parliamentary Elections and have become gradually more evident in the developments that followed suit.

In these elections, another point that drew attention was the minor role of political parties, signaling once again that the politics is conducted not through formal channels, but informal ones. These elections, in Huskey's account, revealed not only the importance of personality and wealth of independent candidates relying upon their informal ties to wider communities to be elected to the parliament, but also the weak quality of the party-based politics (Huskey, 1997b: 261-263). Akiner confirms this point: "where independent parties have emerged, they tend to revolve round an individual who has a strong personality and/or sufficient wealth to establish a power base," shaped by personal–regional alliances leading to weak organizational capacity (Akiner, 2005: 127). Tolekan

Ismailova from the Forum of Civil Leaders summarizes this point in a succinct fashion: "political parties…cannot conduct negotiations with the government, can't work with the population, do not have the trust of the people, and do not have a strategy" (quoted in ICG, 2002: 14). Indeed, he seems right given this and following parliamentary elections in the country, which repeatedly revealed political parties' lack of programmes for the political, social and economic development of Kyrgyzstan (Alisheva, 2006: 82). Instead of trying to formulate alternative solutions and priorities for the political trajectory of Kyrgyzstan, the members of the so-called 'opposition' seems busy with only expressing their discontent with the president and the government, often reactive to their own exclusion from access to state assets (Asanova, Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 12, 2010).

In this respect, it would not be wrong to argue that to win a formal position, better said, to climb up the ladder that Dittmer describes from the informal to formal grounds necessitates strong power bases in other words powerful informal ties to local communities ("local intermediaries who have a certain level of legitimacy in social life") rather than organizations provided by political parties (Pétric, 2005: 324). Put differently, formal posts are not achieved through political parties on formal grounds; rather, it seems possible only through informal networks, depending on one's own allies. In this regard, "complex relations that link individuals through personal bounds (friendships, kinship ties,…alliances, professional bounds, etc.) of patronage" play decisive roles (Pétric, 2005: 325). Collins confirms this point as well. She indeed summarizes this situation by referring to its consequences for the post-election periods

(Collins, 239-240). In her words; "the national and local legislatures had become infiltrated by deputies who represented their own personal networks, at the expense of a broader ideological agenda, set the course of the legislature's post-election behavior. Without a party to keep their behavior in check, deputies were bound only by personal ties" (Collins, 239-240). Within this context, not surprisingly, following the parliamentary elections of 1995, deputies coming from mainly Akaev's circle and the north misused their formal posts. "[They] brought economic wealth to themselves and their network of supporters, as well as to their broader clan and regional base" (Collins, 2006: 245). In a nutshell, they captured the assets of politics and economics and made use of these assets for their narrow interests relying upon illegitimate means, neglecting the needs of the general populace, namely the public interests (Dittmer, 2000: 292).

Developments that fueled informal dynamics in the country were not confined to the above-mentioned developments. In the fall of 1995, Akaev called for another referendum. In his referendum campaign, he made use of not only various populist strategies; but also the influence of aksakal (elders) to mobilize support (Huskey, 1997b: 266). "[Elders] extolled the virtues of Akaev daily on television and radio" throughout the campaign (Huskey, 1997b: 266), confirming what Temirkulov argued regarding their role in mobilizing supporters during elections, referenda by the authorities (Temirkulov, 2008: 321) that pursue their own ends and interests. However, Akaev's referendum campaign came to an end as the parliament refused to go for the referendum and rescheduled the presidential elections for December 1995 which was supposed to be held in October 1996 (Huskey, 1997b: 267).

In the Presidential Elections of 1995, Akaev was challenged by several prominent opponents; however, most of them had been deregistered due to various technicalities (Öraz, 2007: 82-83) – a strategy one will come across in every election that followed suit. As a result of the disqualification strategies Akaev enforced, he managed to compete only with Medetkan Sherimkulov and Absamat Masaliev (Collins, 2006: 235). In Collins' words, "the cultural and socio-economic norms of informal politics pushed voters to coalesce behind major figures" – either Akaev from the north or Masaliev from the south (Collins, 2006: 235). In the end, Akaev once again came out as the winner with 71,6 per cent of the votes, while Masaliev received 24,4 per cent of the vote (Abazov, 2004: 35). In this context, Collins compares the Presidential Elections of 1991 and 1995. In her account, Akaev was elected as "a national unifier and father figure" back in 1991; while in 1995, he clearly lost such a unifying position and relied mostly on "his own clan network, that of his wife, and those of their closest clan allies" (Collins, 2006: 232). Her comparison reveals how far Akaev moved away from his initial moderate stance and fueled informal dynamics by a blend of formal and informal staretegies.

Though Collins mainly underlined the indications of these elections for clan politics, the results of these elections made the potentials for regional confrontation even more visible as well. Huskey, for instance, draws attention to Akaev's considerably decreased popularity in the south by pointing out to his 97 per cent in Naryn region; 87.2 per cent in the Chuy Valley and 92.2 per cent in the Issyk-Kul region, while only 51 per cent in Osh and 61.3 per cent in Jalal-Abad (Huskey, 2002: fn16). Hence, both on the grounds of clans and regions, informal

dynamics were at play, mainly manipulated by the president, yet dispersed throughout the whole governance system as well. The policies of Akaev were just the tip of the iceberg, while the rest of the iceberg also operated within the informal level of politics.

In the aftermath of his success in the Presidential Elections in 1995, Akaev not only continued to consolidate his power in the north, by appointing loyal figures mainly from his and his wife's family, clans, regions and other connections (Collins, 2006: 232), but also sought additional ways for widening his presidential capabilities, especially by limiting those of the parliament (Öraz, 2007:91). Since then, Akaev's regime in Kyrgyzstan increasingly displayed practices widespread among Central Asian regimes such as repression towards opposition[40] and strengthening of his patronage system on both central and regional levels. On the one hand, on central level, as Kulikova puts it, since the election of a new parliament in 1995, Akaev grasped "the opportunity to boost up credibility, suppress the emerging opposition, consolidate power and create a more 'obedient' parliament'" (Kulikova, 2007:11). On the other hand, Akaev strengthened his hand on regional level as well (Huskey, 2002: 84). To remind, in his first term as president, he decentralized political power with respect to regional governors. He achieved this primarily by, in Jones Luong's words "Soviet-style practice of promoting from within" (Jones Luong, 2002: 108). This was to suggest that he was appointing regional governors to regions in which

[40] Akaev's close circle began to restrict media activities by closing down newspapers, by making use of criminal prosecution (Huskey, 1997b: 258). These moves further revealed the wishful thinking on the democratic image of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.

these figures had their power bases: a southern to the south, a northern to the north. Spector cites Akaev admitting this strategy as well:

> Indeed, many key positions are still occupied by the 'old guard'. If you do not keep the reality of a situation in mind, however, you can destroy everything. Let's say I appoint a democrat, but he is not accepted in the region. He will be rejected. Everything will stop. The reforms will stop. It is easier for me to direct a conservative akim than to appoint a democrat and then suffer because the people do not understand or accept him (quoted in Spector, 2004: 17).

However, following his election to a second term in 1995 and February 1996 referendum, Akaev began appointing regional governors more loyal to him (Huskey, 2002: 84). This largely meant "swift rotations of cadres and appointments" (Auuhor's Interview with Kulov, Bishkek, October 13, 2010) disregarding the regional power bases of the regional governors (Huskey, 2002: 84). Thus, Akaev, to strengthen his hold on power, shifted the balance of his relations with regional governors by appointing loyal figures to regions where his popularity has been on the decline (Huskey, 2002: fn16). By doing so, he clearly touched upon already existing tensions between north and south regions of the country (Huskey, 2002: 84).

Consequently, as the presidential election of 2000 came closer on the political agenda of Kyrgyzstan, Akaev intensified his efforts to remain in office, once again relying upon a mix of formal and informal tactics (Hale, 2006: 307). He claimed that he should be allowed to run in the upcoming elections for a third term because the first election in 1991 should not be taken into account as it was held before the adoption of the constitution of 1993 (Spector, 2004: 21). To

provide a convincing formal approval for his claim, he resorted once again to his informal ties and appointed Cholpon Baekova to the head of the Constitutional Court (Collins, 2006: 229). She was known to be "a kin relation of Akaev, from the Sarybagysh clan" (Collins, 2006: 229). Not surprisingly, Baekova closed her eyes to the validity of the elections held prior to 1993 and rendered Akaev's claim legitimate by arguing that Akaev's candidacy in the election to be held in 2000 would only amount to a second term under the 1993 Constitution (Collins, 2006: 231). Huskey considers the decision of the Constitutional Court "a prelude to a presidential election campaign in 2000 that shattered any remaining illusions on formal grounds about Kyrgyzstan's claim to be an oasis of democracy in Central Asia" (Huskey, 2002: 86). Collins also indicates to the implications of this decision. In her words; "in placing the interests of the clan before those of the constitution, Baekova…undermined the juridical foundations of the Kyrgyz Republic's democracy" (Collins, 2006: 231). For the concerns of this dissertation, this was a clear manifestation of the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping the course of Kyrgyz politics.

Having arranged his ticket for a third term, needless to say, on the way to presidential elections of 2000, Akaev used various strategies to ensure his success. Using a language law that required the president to speak Kyrgyz, he managed to exclude eight challengers (Spector, 2004: 21; Huskey, 2002: 86). He had his strongest rival for the presidency - Felix Kulov arrested[41] (Huskey, 2002: 86).

[41] Born in 1948, Felix Kulov was the Minister of National Security in 1997, from which he resigned in 1999 and created his own political party, Ar-Namys (Dignity) (Adami, 2006; Peuch, 2005). After failing to enter the parliament in 2000 Parliamentary Elections, Kulov announced his candidacy for presidency in the presidential elections of 2000 (Adami, 2006; Peuch, 2005).

Akaev also manipulated newspapers, radios, and televisions and suppressed them with the help of law suits and tax deficits (Huskey, 2002: 87; Birismanova, 2008). Moreover, loyal figures to Akaev mobilized regional and local officials; imposed various limitations on public meetings (Huskey, 2002: 86 - 87). According to the results of the elections, Akaev got 74 per cent of the votes (ICG, 2001: 2). Election monitoring organizations pointed out to various wrongdoings, such as bribing and pressure on opposition (OSCE, 2000: 1, 12 - 14) and concluded that these elections mainly "failed to comply with OSCE commitments for democratic elections" as they were not free, fair and accountable (OSCE, 2000: 1).

In the aftermath of these elections, Akaev regime appeared more and more shaped by a few influential figures, mostly his family members, where almost all decision-making and economic resources were captured by Akaev's close circle (Joldoshbek Ulu, 2008: 42). Joldoshbek Ulu provides various evidences regarding the extent of Akaev's family rule in Kyrgyzstan, clearly revealing the extent of the capture of state and business assets by Akaev's close circle:

> President's wife Mayram Akaeva were fund 'Merim', Shopping Centre 'Bereket Grand', the advertising company 'Continent'…President's daughter Bermet Akaeva headed American University in Central Asia as well as the party 'Alga Kyrgyzstan!' (Forward Kyrgyzstan!). Her husband Adil Toygonbaev supervised cement-slate factory in Kant, mercury plant in Kadamzhaj, sugar factory in Karabalta, 'Manas Airport', network of gasoline stations 'Shnos', "Kyrgyz Telecom"….Furthermore Askar Akaev's son Aidar Akaev, when he was 29, became the adviser of Minister of Finance and the president of Olympic committee of the country. And also under his control were network of gasoline stations 'NK Alians', 'Kyrgyzneftgaz', GSM operators 'BITEL' and 'FONEX', TV channel 'NBT' and TV channel 'Piramida' (Joldoshbek Ulu, 2008: 42).

As the above-mentioned picture of the family rule of Akaev regime depicts, in the beginnings of 2000s, the regime in the country was mainly revolved around few powerful individuals within Akaev's close circle, pursuing their private interests depending on their informal ties and making use of political and economic assets in the country (Engvall, 2007: 36), while one could not find almost any established formal mechanisms, institutions to pursue public interests through legitimate means, which further fostered the salience of informal dynamics on various grounds. Engvall, indeed, captures this point clearly: "during the formative period of economic and political restructuring under Akaev enrichment and political connections became synonymous" (Engvall, 2007: 36). This is to imply that during the first decade of independence, formal dynamics, without having any chance to bloom, quickly turned into tools with which a few influential individuals and groups gained access to benefits, sidelining the needs of the population in general (Baimyrzaeva, 2005). On the other hand, given the economic hardship and lack of social security from formal dynamics, people in general, fragmented around various fault lines, ran into the arms of informal channels for their needs, despite the imbalanced acquisitions they get in return (Fumagalli, 2007: 228). This pattern definitely threw Kyrgyz politics into a vicious circle of instability.

Given thus far has been discussed regarding institutionalization and democratization efforts of the post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, the immediate depiction of Kyrgyzstan as an 'island of democracy' in the initial years of its independence faded swiftly. "Kyrgyzstan's reputation as the only country in Central Asia, which had achieved certain democratization" has been undermined in a very short period

of time (Tolipov, 2006: 67) if democracy is considered to have meanings such as "equality between citizens, social justice, or participation in decision-making on major issues" (Cheterian, 2009: 139) accompanied by the necessary institutional setting on formal grounds.

3.4. Conclusions

Contrary to the expectations and the initial euphoria of the international community that hailed Kyrgyzstan as an 'island of democracy', democratization did not follow suit the efforts of economic liberalization and political decentralization in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan (Chenoy, 2007: 62, 66). Indeed, the initial euphoria of haling Kyrgyzstan as an 'island of democracy' was a very quick conclusion to jump in, a sort of wishful thinking. It was a natural outcome of focusing only on the formal dynamics of politics in the country. Such wishful thinking, not surprisingly, ended up with disappointment by mid-1990s. As Carothers (2002) has pointed out before, it was the failure of the lenses designed only to see formal aspects in understanding the main parameters of politics in Kyrgyzstan. Such lenses were indeed inadequate for their sidelining of the often more decisive informal dynamics in shaping the nature of politics in the country. This chapter, contrary to such sidelining, has mainly endeavored to indicate to the fact that if one is to understand the main parameters of Kyrgyz politics and to have a grasp of the sources of instability Kyrgyzstan is experiencing today, it is a must to take the decisive role of informal dynamics into account before jumping into quick conclusions.

Within these confines, in this chapter, I have argued that informal dynamics, which manipulate and rely upon various fault lines, not only the multi-ethnic composition of the country, but also especially sub-ethnic cleavages in the social organization of Kyrgyz society, take root from Kyrgyzstan's historical context. The historical context whose main elements have been briefly outlined in the introduction to this chapter reveals that despite various significant influences that reorganized the socio-political organization of Kyrgyzstan; it still retained its traditional tones, fault lines and self-governance on local grounds (Collins, 2006: 84). In other words, despite the socio-political organization of Kyrgyzstan changed, transformed and merged with respect to various influences, it preserved its ability to self-govern throughout history to a certain extent (Collins, 2006: 84). Therefore, the significant milestones of Kyrgyzstan's historical context give us some hints on the bases from which informal dynamics of politics feed on.

On the other hand, informal dynamics are definitely strengthened by the nature of the system of governance created during the first decade of Kyrgyzstan's independence, in which Akaev had contributions, but he cannot be considered the only source. His maneuvers must be situated within a structural context: the historical context, that preserved the ground for informal dynamics to flourish, is merged, transformed and strengthened with the new dynamics brought about by the multi-dimensional transformation processes, namely the economic restructuring, the multi-ethnic composition of the country along with prevalent sub-ethnic affiliations, and weak efforts at institution building. Economic liberalization where formal institutions did not exist besides their ceremonial roles meant a disaster in social aspects and compelled people for social security needs

into the arms of various forms of traditional solidarity groupings and institutions (Temirkulov, 2007:7). Political decentralization strengthened the hands of informal dynamics by producing a state-in-the-making that constitutes only the very playground for the adherents of these dynamics in tapping the state resources for their own narrow interests (Temirkulov, 2007: 8; Collins, 2006: 245). Hence, informal dynamics, arisen on the grounds of various prevailing fault lines within Kyrgyz society, strengthened by the multi-dimensional processes, appeared as the determining factor in the shaping of the socio-political trajectory of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan by pervading formal dynamics. In the last section of this chapter, I mainly referred to the roles of informal dynamics visible around the president and his close circle implying that they are active indeed at all levels of the governance system and on societal grounds (Collins, 2006; Bogatyrev, 2008).

To summarize what has been discussed above, the general coordinates of the socio-political atmosphere in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan in the first decade of independence are shaped around the decisive role of informal dynamics with respect to various supporting evidences given above. The salience of the informal dynamics led to not only a personalized and at the same time localized nature of power and multi-layered political contestation in Kyrgyzstan; and the weak institutionalization of formal channels. Such a political atmosphere was conducive to socio-political unrest and protests. Hence, informal dynamics are not only effective during routine politics at all levels of governance, but also effective during mobilizations as will be demonstrated in the following chapter, feeding on from the various fault lines existing in the social organization of Kyrgyzstan endeavored to be outlined above and economic hardship in the absence of formal

channels to seek public interests, rather than private interests through illegitimate means.

CHAPTER 4

IMMEDIATE CONTEXT, DYNAMICS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE 'TULIP REVOLUTION'

4.1. Introduction

Having discussed the general coordinates, main features of the socio-political atmosphere in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan up until the beginning of 2000s and revealed the decisive role of informal dynamics in routine politics in the previous chapter; in this chapter, it will be beneficial to dwell upon the role of informal dynamics during political mobilizations. In this regard, several developments on the way to the 'Tulip Revolution', among which the Aksy Events stand out, draw attention. This is mainly because these events not only signal to the fertile ground for social unrest in Kyrgyzstan shortly before March 2005 events, but also signify the decisive role of informal dynamics during mobilizations.

The trigger for the Aksy events (2002), which paved the way for the so-called 'Tulip Revolution', was government's deal with China and further plans with Uzbekistan regarding transfers of a part of Kyrgyz territory, which led to various protests in the south of Kyrgyzstan (Eurasia Insight, 2002a, 2002b; ICG, 2001: iv, 3). The government initially denied such deals, yet, later declared that

the transfers in the context of these deals were in the best interest of Kyrgyzstan (Abazov, 2004: 46). However, such declaration did not convince critics, who continued to hold demonstrations against these deals - as "the transit corridor" planned to be granted to Uzbekistan in the context of the deals would lead to the encircling of the Aksy district by territories of Uzbekistan (Alkan, 2009: 362).

Among the protestors, a member of the parliament and a lawyer from the southern Kyrgyzstan, Azimbek Beknazarov came into prominence with his critics, which led to his imprisonment, being "accused of abusing his former office as Prosecutor General" (Berg, 2006b: 214). However, in contrast to the calculations of the government, his arrest did not appease the demonstrations, triggered further ones (RFE/RL, 2007a). Indeed, for the sake of Beknazarov, protestors went on to hunger strikes and organized meetings not only in Bishkek, but also in the south, Jalal-Abad (Abazov, 2004: xxxiii). These protests intensified from January to March 2002 and on March 17, 2002 in the district of Aksy (Jalal-Abad region), led to the gathering of a vast crowd that called for Beknazarov's release (Tursunkulova, 2008: 355; RFE/RL, 2002). The government did not hesitate to respond violently; police opened fire and killed six demonstrators along with injuring more than sixty people (Abazov, 2004: 47; RFE/RL, 2002). The authorities blamed the protesters for initiating the violence and putting the police in a self-defensive position (RFE/RL, 2007a), despite the videos of the events displayed the contrary (Pannier, 2008b).

The deaths triggered further protests, blocking of roads in Aksy and surrounding districts (ICG, 2002: 5). In these protests, which continued for a few months, protestors demanded not only the punishment of those responsible for the

killings on March 17, 2002, but also their slogans gradually called for the resignation of Akaev (ICG, 2002: 5).[42] Subsequently, protestors held a Kurultai[43] (Kirey, 2002), where the participants insisted on these demands and underlined their determination by stating that unless these demands were met, the demonstrations would continue (Tursunkulova, 2008: 356).

Despite this tense atmosphere, Akaev refused to resign; instead, he gave several concessions to the protestors (ICG, 2002: 4). He not only forced the cabinet along with then the Prime Minister, Kurmanbek Bakiev to stand down, but also paid lip service on the constitutional changes and the liberalization of media (ICG, 2002: 4-5). Among the concessions Akaev enforced to escape resignation, the most important one with the utmost effect was Beknazarov's release and the dropping of charges against him (ICG, 2002: 5-6). Only after this concession, mass protests in the south came to an end (ICG, 2002: i). However, nobody was punished for the deaths of six civilians at the time; since then, there have been only minor trials regarding these events (Pannier, 2008b; 2007a).

Radnitz points out to several features of these protests (Radnitz, 2005). Regarding the primary actors within these events, Radnitz points out that these events took place with the help of a "strategic coordination" of various informal figures (Radnitz, 2005: 406). The distinctive feature of these figures was that they

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[42] ICG Report signals to an interesting and symbolic act on part of elders around this time. According to the report, "Aksy elders [aksakal] allegedly began conducting a ritual cursing of Akaev, known in Kyrgyz as "*kargysh*". This is a rare and extreme curse reserved for those accused of serious crimes against the people" (ICG, 2002: fn19).

[43] Jones describes 'kurultai' as follows: "an ancient gathering, dating back to the selection of Khans and Emirs with the purpose of choosing the next ruler through an election process. It has no legal authority, but was a very powerful revival of an ancient custom" (Jones, 2007: 107-108). In Kyrgyzstan, organizing kurultai, considered as "a genuine people's meeting", is a strategy that not only the leadership, but also the forces of 'opposition' make use of for gaining the legitimatization of their acts in the eyes of the general population (Temirkulov, 2008: 325).

had no connections to opposition parties or external donors and they were only respected in their own local communities with ties to these communities to an extent to be able to mobilize them (Radnitz, 2005: 419). Among these figures, Radnitz indicates to "unofficial village leaders who utilized the structure of village government and networks of personal relationships, which worked to solidify the movement and draw people into participation in demonstrations" (Radnitz, 2005: 406). Within the framework provided by this 'strategic coordination' to which Radnitz points out, Aksy events made use of various strategies. Among these strategies, one can cite the blocking of roads, marching towards Bishkek, organizing large scale local protests and holding of kurultai (Jones, 2007: 92). These acts provided a wide repertoire for the following protests in the country as will be displayed during the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' (Lewis, 2008: 268). Hence, given the primary actors, their ways of networking and repertoire of actions, Aksy events, indeed, signaled to how informal dynamics operate during mobilizations in practice, giving us hints in understanding the dynamics of the 'Tulip Revolution' (Radnitz, 2005, 2006).

Regarding the implications of these events, many scholars underlined the fact that Aksy events amounted to a noteworthy moment in the socio-political history of Kyrgyzstan for several reasons. Firstly, these events demonstrated the extent to which informal dynamics have power over shaping the course of the formal ones. As Lewis properly put into words, "a relatively small protest over a single parliamentarian caused real panic in the political elite" (Lewis, 2008: 267), leading to the resignation of the cabinet and the Prime Minister (Lewis, 2008: 268). Secondly, Aksy events indicated to the decisive role of informal dynamics,

this time, in mobilizing people to participate in mass protests. In this case, Beknazarov's arrest was the main trigger that mobilized his supporters (ICG, 2002:4) from his region in the south of the country along with his family, relatives, neighbors, friends, etc (Radnitz, 2005: 415, 420). These people gathered together mainly on the grounds of personal and traditional solidarity to release him out of prison, once again disclosing the personalized and informal nature of politics in Kyrgyzstan.

Thirdly, in connection with the first of the implications mentioned above, as Beacháin puts it; "it was a cruel irony that to appease southern anger at the killing of protesters in Aksy, the southerners lost 'their' prime minister. Bakiev was replaced by Nikolay Tanayev, an ethnic Russian born in Russia and therefore unlikely to have strong clan allegiances in Kyrgyzstan" (Beacháin, 2009: 216). Put differently, Aksy events once again revealed and revived the tensions between south and north of the country.

Fourthly, as in the aftermath of these events, the government trying to escape the blame for the killings on March 17, 2002, blamed it on the security forces, policemen responded with protests and strikes against the government (Tursunkulova, 2008: 357; ICG: 2002: 5).

Lastly, owing to his mishandling of the crisis and the killings brought about by his poor management of the situation, Akaev's credibility dropped significantly after the Aksy events[44] (Khamidov, 2002). In Hale's words,

[44] A similar event to Aksy events took place in Ukraine, namely the Kuchmagate Scandal, which not only decreased the credibility of President Kuchma in the eyes of the people, but also paved the way for the events that came to be known as the 'Orange Revolution' (Kuzio, 2007). In this scandal, Grigorii Gongatze, who was a journalist critical of Kuchma regime, was murdered and according to tape recordings, the President Kuchma appeared to be related with his murder and

"Akaev's violence against the Aksy protesters in 2002 surely contributed to his unpopularity, which was crucial to his fall from power" (Hale, 2006: 325). Indeed, Umut Asanova confirmed this point in my interview as well, stating that these events were the "first match, first trigger" for further protests in Kyrgyzstan (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 12, 2010). Askat Dukanbaev also confirmed in my interview that "Aksy events were the first step in delegitimizing Akaev's power and for further protests" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010). In this regard, given these remarks, the Aksy events can be considered to pave the way for March 2005 events that resulted in Akaev's fall (RFE/RL, 2007a).

In the aftermath of the Aksy events, in order to restore his credibility in the eyes of the population, in February 2003, Akaev called for a constitutional referendum (Eurasia Insight, 2003). In Beyer's words, "on 2 February 2003, the Kyrgyz citizens were called upon to go to the pools to make two decisions: whether a new version of the Kyrgyz constitution should be adopted and whether President Askar Akaev should remain in office until the end of his term in October 2005" (Beyer, 2006: 51). Referendum passed by over 75 per cent of the votes for each questions (OSCE, 2003:7; ICG, 2004: fn14) and brought about various changes to the Constitution. Dukenbaev and Hansen underlined the most important of the amendments brought to the Constitution with this referendum as follows:

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various other illegal acts (Kuzio, 2007: 42). As a result, Kuchma's credibility dropped considerably - as did that of Akaev after the Aksy events - and already tense political atmosphere has been further aggravated. Taras Kuzio even argues that "if there had been no 'Kuchmagate' there would have been no Orange Revolution" (Kuzio, 2007: 44).

> (1) immunity of the president and his family members from prosecution upon his retirement; (2) replacement of the bi-cameral parliament with a uni-cameral one having seventy-five deputies, and (3) abolition of party-list voting for parliament, destroying proportional representation in favor of a single member majoritarian run off system (Dukenbaev & Hansen, 2003: 31).

With these amendments, according to Alkan, Akaev had in his sight a two-fold political maneuver: on the one hand, by decreasing the number of deputies in the parliament, he was after a small legislative body that could be easily controlled by his close circle; on the other hand, in case of the first path led to a dead-end, he was preparing himself for the aftermath of his presidency by expending the presidential immunity to his family members (Alkan, 2009: 364).

However, his plans regarding his intentions to have a strong hold on the parliament via the new electoral design carried out potentials that would eventually work against Akaev circle. According the International Crisis Group (ICG) Report, this was mainly because "under the new rules, parties played almost no role…the system encouraged local authority figures – businesspeople and informal leaders, some with links to criminal groups - to run in their neighborhoods, ensuring that kinship and clan links would be key elements" in shaping the course of elections (ICG, 2005b: 1). Moreover, given Akaev's increasingly authoritarian tendencies, the domination of his close circle on business and politics, this electoral design further created discomfort among many figures in his wider circle, as these arrangements considerably increased the extent of the already fierce political competition in the country (ICG, 2004: 8-12). In this respect, in Kulov's words, such design was evidently "more prone to conflicts

among candidates and to the inability of the incumbent to cope with numerous 'critical' constituencies" (Kulov, 2008: 343) and this is indeed what followed suit during the Parliamentary Elections of February 2005.

Towards the end of 2004, the Parliamentary Elections of February 2005 appeared on the political horizons of the country and presidential elections were set for October 2005. In October 2005, Akaev was supposed to leave office according to the constitution; however, remembering his unconstitutional candidacy for a third term in office back in 2000, many believed that he would not easily give up his office (Sysoev, 2004). There were various rumors that Akaev was planning to broaden his term with the help of the parliament if he could manage to fill it with his supporters in the upcoming parliamentary elections (Kulov, 2008: 339). There were anecdotes in mid-2004 that "the president [was] already preparing nineteen of his relatives to run in the next parliamentary election" in order to have full control of the parliament (Collins, 2006: 248). Despite the fact that Akaev did not declare any of his intentions in this respect, there were various rumors and several signs that sufficed to create discomfort on part of various influential 'opposition' figures (Khamidov, 2005; Saidazimova, 2005a). Apart from the constitutional amendments in 2003 Referendum, many considered the establishment of a pro-Akaev party; Alga Kyrgyzstan! (Forward, Kyrgyzstan!) in 2003 by Akaev's daughter Bermet Akaeva among these signs (Kurmanov, 2005:8; Todua, 2005:19; ICG, 2004: 7, 20; 2005b: 1).

In face of such moves on part of Akaev and his close circle, various figures who had been until recently excluded from business and politics by Akaev circle "including Beknazarov, Madumarov, Tekebaev, Sadyrbaev, Masaliev,

Asanov, and Abdumomsunov – with clan ties to Osh, Batken and Jalal-Abad provinces have united in opposition" (Collins, 2006: 249). Nine parties were gathered together under the umbrella of an 'opposition' bloc, namely the People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan (PMK) and its leader appeared as Kurmanbek Bakiev (Kurmanov, 2005: 12). Several other prominent figures in Kyrgyz politics, such as Rosa Otunbaeva, also joined this camp (Kurmanov, 2005:12; Saidazimova, 2005a). However, expectations were not high concerning the impact of this 'opposition camp' on the election campaign and elections. As Emir Kulov properly put into words;

> There have been periods especially during pre-parliamentary elections in 2000 and the events in Aksy during 2002, when prominent opposition individuals have informally been close to each other, either for tactical reasons…or in expressing resentment….However, no formalized and sustained opposition groupings have followed from such intentions (Kulov, 2008: 342).

Indeed, during the Parliamentary Elections of February 2005, the 'opposition camp' was not very influential as assumed (Radnitz, 2006: 138-139). According to ICG Report, this was mainly due to the "long-standing personal differences and a division between the older figures and those who had joined more recently, plagued the opposition during the electoral campaign" (ICG, 2005b: 2-3). Moreover, this 'camp' did not play much role during the events that followed suit parliamentary elections until the very last day of protests in Bishkek as will be covered in the following sections (Radnitz, 2006: 138-139).

In the overall account, the above-mentioned developments indicate not only to a very tense political scene prior to the Parliamentary Elections of

February 2005 and signal to further probable unrest, but also provide the immediate context for the 'Tulip Revolution'.

4.2. Protests

There are four major phases in the course of events that came to be known as the 'Tulip Revolution' which led to the flight of Akaev on March 24, 2005. The first period is the prelude, better-said, the pre-election period, between the end of January to the first round of the Parliamentary Elections held on February 27th (Jones, 2007: 97). During this period, protests were mainly led by de-registered candidates, excluded from the Parliamentary Elections 2005 (Jones, 2007: 99). The second period is from the first round to the second round held on March 13th; the third period is from the second round to March 24th (Jones, 2007: 97). During the second and third periods, protests were led by both de-registered and losing candidates, "using the protests to advance their personal, political and often business interests" (Jones, 2007: 153). And lastly, the events on March 24, 2005 in Bishkek, leading to the flight of Akaev appears as the phase of closure (Jones, 2007: 97).

In order to have a full grasp of these protests, it is essential to bear in mind that the role of the Parliamentary Elections of 2005 in triggering these protests is effective only on the grounds of underlying conditions. One should keep in mind not only the above mentioned immediate context, but also the more general socio-political context created in the first decade of independence, whose main features have been covered in the previous chapter. Only by paying close attention to the

actualities of these events, one can avoid quick and misleading conclusions regarding their dynamics, implications and nature.

4.2.1. Prelude: Initial Protests following the Disqualifications of Candidates

Starting from mid-2004, Akaev gave signs of his anxiety concerning the events in Georgia and Ukraine (Jones, 2007: 95-96). This was evident not only in the pro-Akaev media[45] and Akaev's own speeches (Ragozin, 2005; Beshimov, 2004; Sysoev, 2004; ICG, 2005b: 1), but also in his criticisms directed towards international organizations or NGOs.[46] Such anxiety clearly escalated as the Parliamentary Elections drew closer (Gordoyev, 2005).

Among the missteps caused by Akaev's anxiety, the disqualification of several candidates by the Central Election Commission (CEC) on few technicalities appeared to be the most challenging one for him according to various analysts (Kurmanov, 2005: 11). Some candidates, especially former ambassadors among which Rosa Otunbaeva stands out (Gordoyev, 2005), were not allowed to register due to falling short of residency requirements (Kulov,

[45] Saralaeva (2004) indicates to the coverage of the state newspaper Slovo Kyrgyzstana in June 2004. Around this time, international organizations such as National Democratic Institute (NDI), OSCE, Freedom House, Soros were accused of "pursuing the common goal of overthrowing the current regime, along the lines of the Georgian and Serbian popular revolutions" (Saralaeva, 2004).

[46] Indeed, such anxiety was widespread among various CIS countries (Tomiuc, 2004). In July 2004, Russian Federation and eight other CIS countries, among which Kyrgyzstan stands out, made a written statement that mainly criticized OSCE for not respecting their sovereignty (Tomiuc, 2004; Joint Statement, 2004).

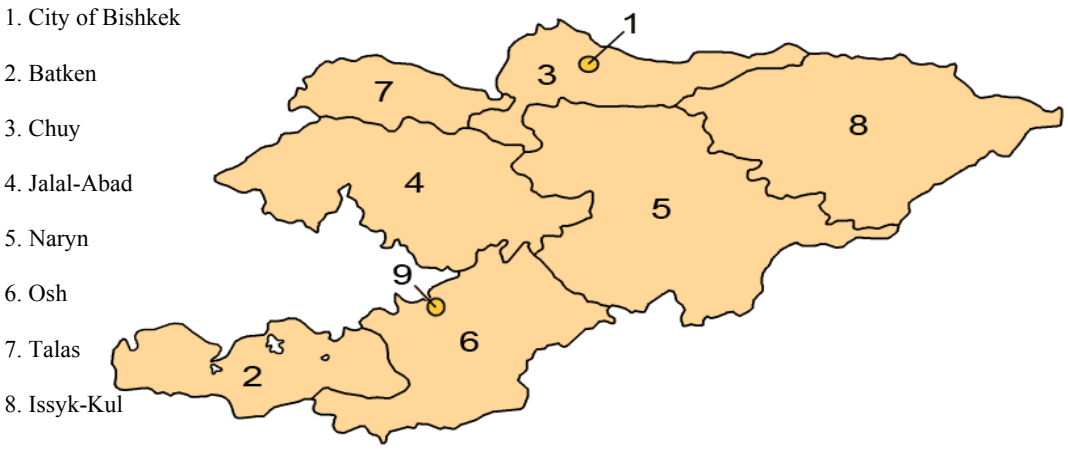
2008: 340; Berg, 2006b: 212) [47]. Otunbaeva's candidacy was however actually rejected because, in Berg's words, "she wanted to run for office in the same election districts as the daughter of the president, Bermet Akaeva" (Berg, 2006b: 212)[48]. Her deregistration was followed suit by others as well (ICG, 2005b: 3). While in Tyup district, Sadyr Japarov was deregistered to open the way for Akaev's wife's sister; in Ton district of Issyk-Kul region, the candidacy of Aslanbek Maliev was cancelled on parallel grounds (ICG, 2005b: 3). Also in Kochkor district of Naryn region, Akylbek Japarov was deregistered on accusations of vote-buying (ICG, 2005b: 3-4).

The disqualification of candidates from the upcoming Parliamentary Elections immediately triggered demonstrations. Jones argues that "the problem for the Akaev regime was that the deregistered candidates were very popular and had strong local support they were able to immediately rally onto the streets" (Jones, 2007: 98). Indeed, this is what actually happened: disqualified candidates called upon their supporters to protest their disqualifications. On the one hand, Rosa Otunbaeva organized protests in Bishkek, which did not lead to much echo outside the capital (Kulov, 2008: 340); on the other hand, protests, in Kulov's words, "more important and less manageable for the regime" broke out in Naryn, Talas and Issyk-Kul regions (Kulov, 2008: 340). In these regions, supporters of

[47] Now the 'caretaker president' of the Kyrgyz Republic until the end of December 2011, Rosa Otunbaeva served as Deputy to the UN Secretary-General's special representative for Abkhazia-Georgia conflict (2002-2004); ambassador to the United Kingdom (1998- 2001); to the USA (1992–1994), therefore, she was out of Kyrgyzstan for several years (Tursunkulova, 2007: fn5; ICG, 2005b: 22).

[48] See, also: Saidazimova, 2005e; Kurmanov, 2005:12.

the deregistered candidates blocked main roads and demanded the re-registration of their candidates (Kartawich, 2005: 19; ICG, 2005b: 4).



Map 3 – Provinces of Kyrgyzstan[49]

The reason why the de-registration of candidates triggered so much tension was mainly because the parliamentary election was the doorway to a formal office that would provide the candidates with various advantages; not only "immunity from prosecution", but also "access to state resources during a potentially turbulent political period up to the presidential elections in October" (Lewis, 2008: 275). Indeed, this time, the competition to get such a post was harder compared to the previous elections due to the electoral design adopted back in 2003 Referendum that not only decreased the number of seats in parliament to 75 (Dukanbaev & Hansen, 2003: 31), but also "removed the partial party list system in favor of first-past-the-post constituencies" (Lewis, 2008: 275). This design clearly invited all the elements of informal dynamics into the political scene and

[49] http://www.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6d/Kyrgyzstan_provinces_map.png

according to Kulov, made it difficult for the Akaev circle to control the process (Kulov, 2008: 343).

A point which drew the attention of many observers around this time was the fact that security forces were almost invisible during these protests (ICG, 2005b: 4). Indeed, according to ICG Report, "the rapidity with which state power evaporated once protestors took to the streets would be repeated in…March" (ICG, 2005b: 4). Another point worth noting was that these protests were actually similar to those that took place during the previous elections (Lewis, 2008: 273). However, as Lewis properly put into words, "in this case, the number of candidates excluded was reaching a more dangerous level… and intra-elite political struggle and mass mobilization was starting to coalesce" (Lewis, 2008: 273). In this respect, these initial protests were giving the first signs of the upcoming and more intensified demonstrations.

One should also not neglect the fact that these initial protests led to the reconsideration of the disqualifications of various candidates by the Supreme Court (Jones, 2007: 100). While the Supreme Court re-established Sadyr Japarov's candidacy in Tyup; in Kochkor and Ton districts of Issyk-Kul region, "the decisions went against the deregistered candidates" (ICG, 2005b: 4). As a result, while in Tyup, protestors of Sadyr Japarov put an end to the demonstrations; in Kochkor and Ton, protests continued (ICG, 2005b: 4). According to Jones, this "reinforced the localized nature of the protests" and the fact that these protestors were not in pursuit of the fall of Akaev at the time; they were only after the re-registration of 'their' candidates (Jones, 2007:100).

In the overall account, "although [these] protests…did not generate significant public resonance in other regions and constituencies, they nevertheless added more to the increasing resentment" (Kulov, 2008: 340). These early protests were the second sign of Akaev's decreasing credibility after the Aksy events and another indicator for further protests that would lead to a mass uprising at the end of March 2005.

4.2.2. Protests following the First Round of the Parliamentary Elections

Given the disqualifications of candidates and following protests, people in Kyrgyzstan generally expected that the elections would not be fair similar to those held in the past (Jones, 2007: 95). Candidates mainly promised taking care of the local needs of the population; according to ICG Report, "to build bridges, improve roads and renovate schools - all things the state should do, but its weakness and poverty were such that people saw deputies as more likely to act" (ICG, 2005b:3). Within these confines, the electoral campaign, as usual, was based on populist themes (ICG, 2005b:3) and based on "personalities, rather than programs" (Radnitz, 2006:138).

In the first round on February 27th, where 60 per cent of voters participated, the pro-presidential party Alga Kyrgyzstan won the majority of the seats in the parliament (Kartawich, 2005: 6). 31 of 75 seats were decided in this round and most of these seats were taken mainly by local businessmen that were loyal and known to be close to Akaev (Berg, 2006b: 212). The opposition was

very disappointed: only a few, better-said, most influential figures such as Beknazarov in Aksy entered the parliament (ICG, 2005b: 5).

The CIS mission and that of the OSCE displayed differing views on the elections. While the CIS mission stated that "the vote had been free and fair, and any slight problems had not influenced the results" (ICG, 2005b: 5); the OSCE, to the contrary, asserted that "while more competitive than previous elections, [the elections] fell short of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections in a number of areas" (OSCE, 2005a:1). The OSCE/ODIHR final report stated as well that there was "widespread vote-buying, deregistration of candidates, interference with independent media, and a low level of confidence in electoral and judicial institutions on the part of candidates and voters" (OSCE, 2005a:1).

The next day after the elections, more protesters came out for demonstrations, this time, for their losing candidates. On February 28th, supporters of T. Alimov in Aravan (Osh); on March 2nd, supporters of J. Jeenbekov in Kogart (Jalal-Abad); on March 3rd, supporters of D. Sabirov and P. Tolonov in Kara-suu (Osh); on March 4th, supporters of D. Sadyrbaev in Nooken (Jalal-Abad) continued with their protests (ICG, 2005b: 5; Radnitz, 2006: 135; Jones, 2007:101-102).

On March 4th, further protests broke out in Jalal-Abad (Kurmanov, 2005: 13). For the first time, supporters of Jusupbek Bakiev seized the regional administration building in Jalal-Abad and held it under control from March 4th to March 24th, with the exception of March 20th (ICG, 2005b: 6; Jones, 2007:103-104). Among the demands of the crowds were the resignations of various

officials, such as Akaev, the governor of Jalal-Abad region and his deputy, the mayor etc (Jones, 2007:103).

Jones points out that until the seizing of the regional administration building in Jalal-Abad, the tactics and strategies made use by the protestors belonged to the "repertoire" that had been created during the Aksy events (Jones, 2007: 153). However, during these protests "taking over of the government buildings" appeared as a new strategy (Jones, 2007:153-154).

On March 5th and 6th, supporters of D. Chotonov in Kara-Kulja (Osh); supporters of N. Kasiev and Kulbaev in At-Bashy (Naryn) continued to protest and supporters of Ishenbai Kadyrbekov in Naryn blocked the main road between Kyrgyzstan and China (Jones, 2007: 104). On March 7th, protests intensified in Issyk-Kul region (Jones, 2007: 105). On March 8th, the supporters of Jusupaliyev in Uzgen (Jalal-Abad) seized the mayor's office (Jones, 2007: 105). On 9 March 9th, supporters of A. Tolonov in Kara Suu (Osh) attempted to take over the government building (Jones, 2007: 106).

Besides these uprisings, there were also low-profile demonstrations in Bishkek, mainly organized by student groups, such as Birge (Jones, 2007: 106). Until the very last day of protests, however, Bishkek remained relatively quite: most of the protests took place in the south of the country (Author's Interview with Baisalov, Bishkek, October 14, 2010).

4.2.3. Intensification of the Protests following the Second Round of the Parliamentary Elections

The second round of elections was held on March 13th and there was voting for the remaining seats (RFE/RL, 2005). Not surprisingly, the majority of seats in the parliament were once again won by figures loyal to Akaev, Akaev's close associates or family members (Eurasia Insight, 2005a). "As the opposition got about five places, 90 per cent of the new parliament [would] be pro-presidential. President Askar Akaev's daughter and one son are represented there" (Madi, 2005). Only a few opposition figures win in this round, while Kurmanbek Bakiev lost (ICG, 2005b: 6). According to the OSCE, this round as well "fell short of OSCE commitments and other international standards in a number of important areas" (OSCE, 2005a:1).

Following the second round of elections, the protests increased in intensity in the south of the country. To start, on March 14th, supporters of A. Madumarov seized administration buildings in Uzgen (Osh); supporters of M. Sultanov blocked the main road to Osh in Alay (Osh); supporters of R. Jeenbekov blocked roads, took over the government buildings and hostages in Talas as well (Madi, 2005; ICG, 2005b: 6; Jones, 2007:107).

On March 15th, a kurultai was held in Jalal-Abad, which gathered together various prominent figures of the 'opposition camp', such as Bakiev, Otunbaeva and Beknazarov (ICG, 2005b: 6). In this kurultai, Kurmanbek Bakiev was elected as the leader of the 'opposition' camp (Berg, 2006b: 212). According to Temirkulov, the aim of the gathering was mainly "to legitimize the protestors'

actions in the eyes of the rest of the population and to persuade more followers to mobilize" (Temirkulov, 2008: 325) along with an intention to unite protests or at least give the impression of such unification (Jones, 2007: 157). Indeed, Jones argued that "the main role of the Council was to provide at least some type of unified face to the media and the international community" (Jones, 2007: 157). Within these confines, as Temirkulov notes, the coordinating council of the kurultai not only declared the following demands: "(1) the immediate resignation of Akaev; (2) pre-term presidential elections; (3) the annulment of the parliamentary elections' results; (4) new parliamentary elections in six months time" (Temirkulov, 2008: 327), but also made use of the traditional solidarity institution of aksakal to legitimize the protests (Temirkulov, 2008: 321). In this respect, elders gave supporting speeches of the events and demonstrated their approval of the protests (Temirkulov, 2008: 321). In Temirkulov's words;

> At the end of their speeches, aksakal blessed the people with bata, thereby giving a traditional symbolic character and legitimacy to the event. Using their social status and authority, aksakal urged the population to support and take part in collective actions in defense of their patron and leader. In this way, the aksakal generated solidarity incentives. The main incentive was a feeling of acting unanimously with one's own group and one's own fathers and grandfathers (Temirkulov, 2008: 321-322).

Despite the legitimizing effect of the kurultai and aksakal on the protests in the eyes of the general populace, one can not argue that all of the protests came under the control of this kurultai (Jones, 2007: 157). Indeed, kurultai seemed to be formed on top of the local protests taking place in the south in a unsystematic

manner. Jones provides supporting evidence for this point. He argues that the representatives of the protests in Talas, Koch-kor, Issyk-Kul and Osh did not participate in the kurultai; they were not under direct control of this gathering (Jones, 2007: 157). This is probably why following the kurultai in Jalal-Abad on March 15th, kurultai were also held in Talas and Osh (Eurasia Insight, 2005d).

At around this time, the governor's offices all held in Jalal-Abad and Osh by the protestors (Rahmetov, 2008: 45), Akaev gave an address in television and cautioned against the possiblity of a 'civil war' (Pala, 2005). He stated that "some of the losing candidates had 'taken off the mask of democracy and stepped on the path of illegal seizure of power'" (quoted in Pala, 2005). Consequently, to suppress the discontent, on March 20th, he, who must have decided to do something in face of the aggravating situation in the country, gave orders to evacuate the regional government building in Jalal-Abad which was under the control of the protestors since March 4th (Radnitz, 2006: 135). As Marat indicates, this was the first incidence since the Aksy events back in 2002 that the government referred to security forces (Marat, 2006e: 11). Violence on part of the government against its citizens created further impetus for the protests (Jones, 2007: 110-111) and interestingly, the protestors managed to re-took the building on the evening of the same day (Rahmetov, 2008: 46). In the overall account Akaev's maneuver for repressing discontent in the country apparently back-fired. Jones describes the course of events on March 20th in Jalal-Abad as follows:

> About 2,000 were armed with sticks and stones and used a bus to break down the police building. They burned the Interior Services building and the prosecutor's

> office. More than 700 protesters moved into the Governor's building, hanging banners out the window demanding Akaev's resignation...Later in the day the Jalal-Abad airport was seized and covered with rocks and burning tires were lit around the airport with the goal of preventing the government from flying in special troops to quell the uprising (Jones, 2007: 111-112).

The next day, similar events took place in Osh as well (ICG, 2005b:7). By this time, according to various eyewitnesses, security forces left the streets to the protestors (Jones, 2007: 112). According to Jones, they were either "gone home, with many of them refusing to wear their uniforms outside" (Jones, 2007: 112).

Given the strengthening of the hands of the 'opposition' camp, Akaev tried to calm down the situation by calling upon the CEC and the Supreme Court to investigate the violations during the elections, by firing the Interior Minister and Prosecutor General and by arranging pro-Akaev protests in Bishkek (Jones, 2007: 115). Yet, it was too late to negotiate. It is telling what Rosa Otunbaeva states around this time, "we have one aim only: to oust this government...There is no need for talks anymore" (quoted in Jones, 2007: 115).

After the protests gained the upper hand in the south, they moved north to Bishkek and "northerners also joined the fray, ultimately toppling Akaev" (Hale, 2006: 315). Better-said, "only after the Akaev government's fate was sealed in the south, did the NDK and other oppositionists mount protests in Bishkek" (Radnitz, 2006:136). Indeed, marching towards the capital was a tactic we are familiar with from the Aksy events.

The first demonstration in Bishkek, which remained relatively quiet until this day took place on March 23rd (RFE/RL, 2005). However, the participants of

the meeting were very different from those that participated in the protests up until this day (Jones, 2007: 116). There were representatives of the diplomatic and international organization communities, students (from Birge, Kelkel and from American University) and civil society members who have not been involved in the protests until this day (Jones, 2007: 116). In face of this gathering, Akaev responded with force; police broke up the meeting and arrested its participants (Rahmetov, 2008: 46). In response to the harsh reaction on part of Akaev, in Berg's words, "several opposition politicians, among them Bakiev and Otunbaeva, appealed to their followers to come to a big joint demonstration on the morning of 24 March in Bishkek" (Berg, 2006b: 213). At around this time, the situation was out of the control of Akaev regime, which was apparently fading away (ICG, 2005b: 8).

4.2.4. Closure: March 24, 2005 Protests in Bishkek and the Flight of President Akaev

On March 24th, as scheduled, the demonstrations started in Bishkek. As Jones makes it clear, the protests held on March 24, 2005 were planned and performed not by the elements of civil society or the international community - as they barely heard about them-, but by the local/regional political entrepreneurs and national 'opposition' camp that formed on top of them (Jones, 2007: 117). Existence of various groups (representatives from all over the country, Naryn, Kochkor, Jalal-Abad, Talas, Osh) carrying "placards" acknowledging the region and political leader they support indeed provides evidence for this point (Jones,

2007: 118). ICG Report confirms not only the decisive role of the local/regional political entrepreneurs and their supporters, but also the heterogeneous nature of the crowd that gathered together at the very last day of the protests as follows:

> The protestors were very diverse: Bakiev, Usen Sydykov and Beknazarov brought their supporters; Rosa Otunbaeva helped transport activists from the south; Jeenbekov brought people from Talas and Japarov from Kochkor, while supporters of Atambaev and Melis Eshimkanov came from their villages near the capital. Workers at bazaars, many of them from the south, joined in. There were also young people from groups such as Kelkel, and other urban residents…for support (ICG, 2005b: 8).

The crowd that was made up of very diverse elements as described above, initially, gathered and listened to the speeches of their leaders (Peuch, 2005) in which, in Jones' words, "the opposition leaders repeated many times that, 'We've come to get a change in government'" (Jones, 2007: 119). Jones well summarizes the course of events that followed suit as follows;

> After a short time of speeches, from the side of the park between the White House and the crowd, young men came running towards the crowd with shields, wearing helmets and blue ribbons and started throwing stones at the crowd. At first, the crowd started to disperse and moved towards the edge of the square… A small group of soldiers came down Chui many of them on horses and pushed the crowd back, but again the crowd surged back towards the police who quickly scattered and ran away to the gates, some were caught and beaten by the crowd…[then] a crowd of about a 100 young men arrived from Osh wearing yellow ribbons. They were sportsman [palvan] trained in the south and served as an important catalyst and energy in responding to the police. They marched to the gates of the White House and then helped to break down or climb over the fence and break into the White House (Jones, 2007: 119-120).

Within a very short period of time, protestors broke into the presidential building easily as there was no resistance on part of the security forces (ICG, 2005b: 8). Akaev was not in the White House when the protestor entered in the building, as he had fled to Moscow, where he and his family found asylum (Kulikova, 2007: 2). According to Akaev's own remarks, his last order before his departure from the White House to the security forces was not to use force against the protestors (Jones, 2007:177). He also explained his flight by underlining his reluctance "to cause bloodshed and civil war had he been forced to protect himself and his supporters" (Kulikova, 2007: 5).

Though various analysts stressed the surprise factor of the course of events, especially the breaking into the presidential building, Umut Asanova, in my interview stated that it became clear later that Kurmanbek Bakiev indeed prepared the setting for the storming of the White House, while other leaders such as Tekebaev or Otunbaeva was not in the intention of such an act. In her words, "it was all set up in advance. Bakiev's family, relatives, supporters carried him to the center of the square and demanded him to give a speech and screamed out loud that 'we selected you as the president'" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 12, 2010).

After the storming of the White House, in Marat's words, "instead of celebrations, looting…overtook Bishkek" (Marat, 2006e: 15). Indeed, Adami indicates to the extent of the looting as follows: "looting reportedly became so extreme that people from the countryside were streaming into the capital to participate" (Adami, 2006). According to many of the respondents of my interviews, looting was the result of widespread poverty and a sense of revenge

vis-à-vis Akaev's fifteen years long regime. Gulnova Ibraeva stated in my interview in particular that "lootings are always the backstage of all types of uprisings because people who enter mass crowds lose their individuality and this anonymity provide a sense that you will not be punished for what you will be doing as the mechanisms which keeps norms and rules in place lose ground" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). According to ICG Report, only the release of Felix Kulov relatively appeased the lootings, though only to certain extent. According to the same report, "it took several more days for the security situation to return to normal" (ICG, 2005b: 9).

Despite in the aftermath of the flight of Akaev, there was a concern that Akaev circle, especially from Kemin, would hold on to power and enter into confrontation with the forces of the 'opposition' camp, these concerns did not come true (ICG, 2005b: 9). Akaev resigned in Moscow on April 4 (ICG, 2005b: 17; Saidazimova, 2005c).

McGlinchey, at this point, indicates to a point of irony by recalling the riots of Osh back in 1990. As he puts it, "ironically, public protest, instrumental to Akaev's own ascent to power in 1990, ultimately unseated the president in Kyrgyzstan's March 2005 'Tulip Revolution'" (McGlinchey, 2009: 128). His remark indeed once again underlines the power of mobilizations on the course of events in the country and the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping these events and thereby Kyrgyz politics, to an extent to force the president down from his office.

4.3. Protestors

As implied above, most of the protesters were supporters of the candidates/ local-regional political entrepreneurs, who had been de-registered or lost in the elections (Jones, 2007: 153). Supporters were mainly coming from the poorest stratum of the society, in Radnitz's account, often from rural areas (Radnitz, 2006:133). According to ICG Report, most of the protestors were in expectation of "improvements in their lives…land and jobs" (ICG, 2005b: 12) and they considered the candidates who were deregistered or lost in the elections more responsive to these and similar needs than the formal institutions under the domination of Akaev's close circle (Jones, 2007: 151). Hence, in Jones' words, "when these local parliamentarians were blocked from getting into office…the people were protesting to prevent the future loss of patronage and in thanks for what they had already received" (Jones, 2007: 151).

The local/regional political entrepreneurs made use of traditional solidarity groupings and institutions such as aksakal, palvan and kurultai to attain legitimization in the eyes of the general population for the protests they organized (Temirkulov, 2008: 325, 328 Figure 1). Women were also actively involved in the mass mobilizations during the events of March 2005 and afterwards (Temirkulov, 2008: 323). According to Temirkulov, on the one hand, "the image of elders and women as weak and defenseless was widely…used in mobilization" (Temirkulov, 2008: 323). On the other hand, "the participation of women – mothers, sisters and wives – symbolized peace and fair intentions" (Temirkulov, 2008: 322). Women were also organized around the "Group of Women for Special Tasks (OBON)"

which included “40–60-year-old women with a strong physique, a loud voice and a forceful character” (Temirkulov, 2008: 323). These women, according to Temirkulov, were motivated into this organization by material compensations offered by their informal leaders in return for their participation in the protests (Temirkulov, 2008: 323).

Along with the women and apart from already mentioned aksakal (elders) and kurultai, Temirkulov also points out to the role of palvan (wrestlers) in the events (Temirkulov, 2008: 324). He notes that in the aftermath of the collapse of the Union, palvan were organized in Baiaman Erkinbaev’s ‘Alysh’ sports association and made use of to oversee illegal trade, drug smuggling and various other illegal business all over the Ferghana valley, though there were many independent palvan who did not belong to this organization (Temirkulov, 2008: 324). According to Temirkulov and also Kupatadze, during February - March 2005 the events, wrestlers were active in almost every protest in the south and played significant roles in the storming of the White House on the very last day as well (Temirkulov, 2008: 324; Kupadatze, 2008: 286).

Regarding the other strands of social forces, in my interview, Umut Asanova stated that writers, poets, academicians, teachers joined the protests, yet for very different reasons, such as being against the ongoing corruption, repression of democratic rights, etc who joined the crowds only on the weekends as they worked in the weekdays (Author’s Interview, Bishkek, October 12, 2010). Jones also notes that although they did not attend the protests much, “some of the organizations and individuals that worked in Jalal-Abad collected money to assist the protesters in buying food, lodging, etc” (Jones, 2007: 149). However,

according to him, there was an apparent difference between the attitudes of local residents towards the protests in Osh compared to those in Jalal-Abad; local residents in Osh mainly considered the protests as a "criminal fighting" therefore did not get involved or supported the demonstrations (Jones, 2007:147).

Regarding the ethnic composition of the protestors, various reports mention that the Uzbeks did not participate in the events (ICG, 2005b:16). ICG report, for instance, argued that "the great majority of protestors were ethnic Kyrgyz, many from the south, which has traditionally been more nationalist than the more multiethnic north" (ICG, 2005b:16). Uzbeks in the south generally distrusted both the southern Kyrgyz and the northern Akaev circle at the time of events (ICG, 2005b: fn35) and moreover, few Uzbek candidates who managed to register in the elections won their seats, therefore did not have much reason to take part in the protests (Jones, 2007: 145).

One should also not neglect the fact that there was a difference between the compositions of the crowds in the protests concentrated in the south and the one held on March 24th in the capital. As Jones properly put into words, the latter "included people that had been protesting for weeks in the south, people who joined off the streets that morning and student leaders from the north…[and] for the first time, representatives of the civil society community" (Jones, 2007: 148). This depiction clearly reveals that the formal societal forces, namely the elements of civil society whose roles during the mobilizations have been exaggerated by various analysts (Beachain, 2009: 199; Cummings, 2008: 226), joined the protests that have been going on in the country since the beginning of February 2005, only on the last day, thereby, they did not play a significant role in the mobilizations in

the overall account (Radnitz, 2006: 138; Lewis, 2008). They were indeed mainly side-stepped throughout the protests that began in the beginnings of February 2005 (ICG, 2005b: 19). The protests had more of a local nature mainly concentrated in the south of the country until the very last day, March 24, 2005 (Jones, 2007: 2).

4.4. Minor Role of Formal Dynamics, Major Role of Informal Dynamics

Not only the close examination of the course of the protests, but also a close up to the protestors involved in February-March 2005 events apparently downplayed the role of formal dynamics of politics; the international involvement, NGOs, party-based opposition, youth groups and media (Radnitz, 2006; Lewis, 2008). As must have been clear by now, these factors did only play minor roles in February/March 2005 events.

In Jones' account, if western-backed NGOs had played any minor role, it was to "facilitate the spread of information" concerning the course of events in the regions, not only to the international community, but also the local population in the north (Jones, 2007: 134). Radnitz, indicating to their minor role as well, even argued that "NGOs reacted rather than acted" (Radnitz, 2006: 138). Therefore, it was the Western-funded civil society that was sidelined in the February-March 2005 events in contrast to the initial euphoria regarding their roles (ICG, 2005b: 19).

The same goes for the 'opposition' camp as well. As Beachain also draws attention, among the first ingredients of the recipe for a successful 'colored

revolution' presented by Bunce and Wolchik was "the formation of a unified opposition" endowed with the ability to mobilize people in face of electoral fraud (Bunce & Wolchik, 2006a: 6). Bessinger also stressed the necessity of a unified opposition backed by foreign funds and learning from previous examples (Bessinger, 2007: 261). Yet, in the case of Kyrgyzstan, there was little evidence for such unity. Beacháin indeed draws attention to the fragmented nature of the 'opposition' camp. She asserts that "there was a multitude of opposition leaders…the parties were generally weak, fragmented, disunited and personality-driven" (Beacháin, 2009: 205). Kulov also confirms this point by pointing out to the inability of the 'opposition' camp in making decisions and creating strategies (Kulov, 2008: 341). Hence, Kyrgyz party-based opposition had only a minor role in the February - March protests, mainly giving an impression of a unified front to the international community (Jones, 2007: 157). This is apparent in the case of People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan (PMK). In Radnitz's words, despite "bring[ing] together several influential figures with bases in the north and south" (Radnitz, 2006: 134), its ingredients could not synchronize an agenda or produce a long-term strategy besides calling for the resignation of Akaev (Radnitz, 2006: 138). Hence, despite the fact that political parties and coalitions was in place prior to the Parliamentary Elections and the protests, they did not play a significant role not only during the election campaign, but also during the protests (Radnitz, 2006: 138).[50] Indeed, the local nature of the protests led by local/regional political

[50] In Ukraine, however, the opposition parties played considerable role during the election campaign and mobilization, though they depended on informal dynamics, mainly formed by regional oligarchic clans against Kuchma regime (Melnykovska, 2008:11). These regional oligarchic clans were not in favor of Kuchma's "'divide and rule' strategy" which in their account created "uncertainty and instability", made use of the 'Orange Revolution' to oust him

entrepreneurs without much links between the regions supports this point of view (Jones, 2007: 140, 156). In Beacháin's words, "there was no single leader or group that united these disparate interests or channeled their hopes into a coherent call for change" (Beacháin, 2009: 220) despite attempts in this direction via the gathering of kurultai in Jalal-Abad on March 15, 2005. These fragmented protests only "on the last day came together for the brief protest that ousted the government" (Jones, 2007: 2). Even then, as Collins indicates, "the revolutionaries could not even agree on the color or flower of their revolution" (Collins, 2006: 347). Therefore, it was not surprising to see that their supposed unification did not last long. When Akaev was overthrown, the elements of the 'oppositional' forces fell apart (Temirkulov, 2008: 318), revealing that it was an anti-Akaev camp, rather than a real 'opposition' that was in pursuit of radical changes in the main parameters of Kyrgyz politics. In other words, as the 'opposition' meant only to be 'anti-Akaev' at the time, when Akaev was gone, they were left with no unifying agenda to move on from (Lewis, 2008: 275). Indeed, Gulnova Ibraeva, in my interview argued that "we do not have here have a real, developed, strong formal opposition. Who is opposition is actually unknown. It depends on the fluctuating interests. Opposition is mostly and really deeply rooted in informal dimensions; these are the basic, core elements of political

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(Melnykovska, 2008: 23). On the rise of Ukraine's oligarchs, See: Puglisi, 2003. Radnitz also notes the differing organization structure of the protests in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan; "whereas…Ukrainian mobilizations worked through a top-down structure in which activists were recruited via party and…NGO networks, Kyrgyzstan's protest movement was the fruit of a 'middle-down' organization run by local elites that gathered supporters locally – NGOs were insignificant'" (Radnitz, 2006: 133).

events such as the so-called Tulip Revolution" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010).

Along with the sidelined Western-backed NGOs and the fragmented 'opposition', media, as well played a restricted role before and during the elections and protests in Kyrgyzstan (Jones, 2007: 127). This was mainly because Akaev circle controlled televisions and suppressed newspapers (Birismanova, 2008: 89-90; ICG, 2005b: 3; Jones, 2007: 127). "There was no national level opposition media that systematically reported on the events across the country" (Jones, 2007: 127). According to various reports, few channels of the media managed to operate during the events. ICG Report cites among these the Russian language newspaper MSN published in Bishkek; U.S.-funded Azattyk (Radio Liberty) and the BBC Kyrgyz-language service (ICG, 2005b: 3). According to Lewis, "more influential was the Kyrgyz-language service of Radio Free Europe, which…broadcast to much of the country until its service was interrupted by the government on the eve of the elections" (Lewis, 2008: 269). It is also noted that the often emphasized use of the internet during the mobilizations (Kulikova & Perlmutter, 2007) was actually limited (ICG, 2005b: 3). It was mainly utilized in Jones' words "by those in the capital to follow what was happening in the regions" (Jones, 2007: 128). Hence, it was not as widely used in the south where the protests were actually taking place.

Lastly, youth groups such as Kelkel or Birge, often portrayed in Western media in the leading ranks of the events, according to Lewis, they were not influential as well (Lewis, 2008: 270). Heathershaw (2009: 309-312) and Radnitz (2006: fn6) also confirm their minor roles in circulating the information about the

protests. Khamidov, indeed, instead of formal youth groups, rather indicates to the use of informal youth groups during the mobilizations (Khamidov, 2006b: 85). In his words:

> Because of disunity among the opposition groups and the weaknesses of formal institutions, influential political leaders and business elites chose to work with and channel resources for protests through their informal patronage and local networks rather than through formal youth organizations. These local networks included informal youth groups that turned out to be far more effective at mobilizing youth activists than formal groups (Khamidov, 2006b: 85).

However, in the aftermath of March 2005 events, as Lewis aptly points out, Western reports and media depicted a very different picture of the role of the above-mentioned formal dynamics.[51] In his words, "the view that the revolution had been financed and planned by US institutions or by NGOs backed by the US gained wider credence" " (Lewis, 2008: 269). As covered in Chapter 2, this was a view that found echo not only among those supporting external democracy assistance programs, but also among those that criticized such assistance as a foreign interference in the internal affairs of Kyrgyzstan. According to Lewis behind this depiction laid several reasons (Lewis, 2008: 271). In his account, the exaggeration of the external factors and elements of civil society provided a very

[51] In the case of the 'Orange Revolution' as well, the roles of the elements of civil society in Ukraine were exaggerated (McFaul 2005; Beissinger 2007). However, a closer examination of these events also revealed the decisive role of informal dynamics. Melnykovska confirms this point: "the widespread traditions of political manipulations on and financial patronage of civil society in Ukraine undermined the autonomy of the public protests during the Orange Revolution" (Melnykovska, 2008: 8). She further indicates to the fact that "the members of the oligarchic clans supporting the 'orange camp' took part in the public protest personally or indirectly through financial and media resources" (Melnykovska, 2008: 9). Behind such support were the expectations of these figures to an access to formal positions that would enable them to ensure economic and political interests along with immunity (Melnykovska, 2008: 10-11). It is often argued that the decisive role of the informal networks in shaping Ukrainian politics feed on from the historical regional divisions of Ukraine (Puglisi, 2003).

convenient instrument not only for Akaev regime, international community, journalists, but also the neighboring states (Lewis, 2008: 271). In his words:

> For Akaev and the ruling elite, it provided an excuse for their ousting from power that removed the focus from their own political miscalculations and shortcomings. For the international community, it preserved the useful myth that they could have a significant impact...on internal developments within the Kyrgyz polity. For journalists, it was a narrative that can be presented to readers who knew little of the complexity of domestic Kyrgyz politics. For neighboring countries…the alleged Western involvement in the Kyrgyz events provided the perfect excuse to close down or restrict NGO activities in their countries, and to achieve geopolitical gains at the expense of the US in the region (Lewis, 2008: 271).

As Lewis properly put into words above, one can conclude that the role of external assistance and the elements of civil society were exaggerated for instrumental reasons and far from the real course of events that took place from February-March 2005 in Kyrgyzstan. Indeed, in contrast to the Western interpretations of these events as a triumph of international democracy promotion and NGOs, when evaluating the role of democracy assistance of the US in the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' that led to the overthrow of President Akaev, one should definitely take into account the fact that Akaev regime was getting assistance from the West until his very last days (Jumagulov, 2005; Beacháin, 2009: 212-213). Beacháin well captures this point by stating that "by pumping money into friendly dictatorships without calling them sufficiently to account, the West may have postponed 'revolution' rather than precipitated it" (Beacháin, 2009: 222). Moreover, according to Lewis, the international organizations would have

remained silent if Akaev would have tried to run for another term (Lewis, 2008: 268-269), which reveals the fact that events stemmed from domestic, mainly local grounds rather than backed or promoted by external factors (Lewis, 2008: 269).

On the whole, the role of the international involvement, NGOs, party-based opposition, media and youth groups, namely the formal dynamics, was minor not only in general in influencing the nature or course of Kyrgyz politics, but also particularly during the February/March 2005 events in contrast to the initially otherwise depicted picture of these events (Lewis, 2008:269-270). The major roles were played by the informal dynamics, which signaled to the pursuit of private interests endeavored to be achieved through informal means.

Regarding the bases, key elements of informal dynamics, one can cite the influence of regionalism, which was already an integral feature of Kyrgyz politics as discussed in Chapter 3 and in the introduction to this chapter regarding the immediate context of the so-called 'Tulip Revolution'. Regionalism played an influential role in the overthrow of Akaev to a certain extent as the protests have been intensified in the south of the country especially in the aftermath of the second round of the parliamentary elections.

The north-south confrontation was fuelled by Akaev circle, which gave the majority of formal posts to northerners and excluding southerners from the processes of politics and economics and provoked a "sense of injustice" (Beacháin, 2009: 215), not only especially since 1995, but also in the immediate context of the February-March 2005 events.[52] Yet, one should not neglect the fact

[52] In Ukraine, as well, regional divisions are significant, though they are based on ethnicity and language, therefore differing from those in Kyrgyzstan. On the regional division and politics in Ukraine, See: White & McAllister, 2009; Barrington & Herron, 2004.This became apparent during

that anti-Akaev sentiments prevailing in the south was also complemented with the support of the northern politicians that felt gradually excluded from Akaev's close circle (Hale, 2006: 315; Lewis, 2008: 274). This became mostly apparent, however, only after protests gained the upper hand in the south. As mentioned before, according to Hale, only then events moved to Bishkek, "where, northerners also joined the fray ultimately toppling Akaev" (Hale, 2006: 315).

Bearing these regional disparities in mind as a background, one can argue that February-March 2005 events more importantly signaled to a personalized and local nature. In Juraev words, these events were "product[s] of local support for personalities, rather than for issues" (Juraev, 2008: 258). Put differently, these events did not break out for principles of democracy or even for a well defined aspiration for overthrowing Akaev (Lewis, 2008: 276); they were triggered by local/regional political entrepreneurs that were blocked or lost in the elections (Jones, 2007: 153). This is to suggest that local/regional political entrepreneurs, who were blocked or lost in the elections, also lost their chances to obtain a formal position, which meant for them no access to resources with which they maintain their power bases to wider communities. Put differently, they were discontent due to the fact that they were not let to ascend to the formal realm from the informal realm through the ladder Dittmer described (Dittmer, 2000: 302).

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the 'Orange Revolution' as well. In these events, on one side, there was the 'blue camp', whose candidate was Viktor Yanukovych. This camp had a regional base in Russophone eastern and southern Ukraine (namely, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv and Odessa regions) (Melnykovska, 2008: fn10, Kuzio, 2007:30-31). On the other side was the 'orange camp', whose candidate was Viktor Yushchenko, had its regional base in Ukrainophone western and north/central Ukraine (namely Lviv and Kyiv regions) (Melnykovska, 2008: fn10, Kuzio, 2007:30-31).

Lewis, in this context, aptly marks the disjunction between the "democracy and reform narrative of the revolution" and "the discourse of the mass of protestors and their leaders" (Lewis, 2008: 276). He suggests that the protestors were not in pursuit of a radical change in the main parameters of politics, but they were only after reinstating their discontented local/regional political entrepreneurs in the expectation of support for their needs, which unless these figures are in the parliament would not be taken care of in the absence of well-operating formal institutions (Lewis, 2008: 276). Radnitz indeed indicates that the protestors involved in the events were "compatriots…of the disaffected candidates, acting not out of principle or anger at Akaev, but for reasons of personal interest and social obligation" (Radnitz, 2006: 137).

In order to deal with this situation, in the absence of a mechanism of conflict resolution, local/regional political entrepreneurs called upon their supporters by making use of their informal ties to local communities, not in the name of democracy, radical change in the political system of the country or even to bring down Akaev, but by way of implicit promises for taking care of the needs of these communities, which otherwise would not be taken care of in the absence of developed formal institutions. In Joldoshbek Ulu's words, "that's why the supporters of the candidates, which were excluded from the elections…started protests, spontaneous meetings, overlapping of roads, captures of buildings of administrations" (Joldoshbek Ulu, 2008: 31).

In fact, the respondents of my interviews described how this relationship worked in practice during February-March 2005 events. Umut Asanova, for instance, stated that "local/regional leaders used the deprivation of people under

socio-economic hardship for their own goals and mobilized these crowds to attain a seat in the parliament" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 12, 2010). Aida Alymbaeva also supported that "every leader was responsible for bringing their own supporters from their provinces. For this end, they had invested time, money and effort to a great extent" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). Temirkulov, in fact, pointed out to the fact that "if it was not for these networks, people would not be mobilized by themselves. They were, indeed, not only the object, but also the subject of the informal networks, who were in pursuit of their narrowly defined interests" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010).

In this context, given the above-mentioned supporting remarks, protests were mainly organized to attain narrowly defined private interests of the local/regional political entrepreneurs, instead of the interests of the general public. In pursuit of their private interests, the local/regional political entrepreneurs did not organize their protests through formal channels (which were indeed not very effective as mentioned when discussing their minor roles), but made use of personal loyalty and traditional solidarity and mobilized their supporters into mass demonstrations to restore their chances for a formal position.

In the overall account, Juraev seems right when he points out to an inverse correlation between competitive informal dynamics and democratization (Juraev, 2008: 261). In his account;

> localistic competition provides an explanation for the persistence of political pluralism and contestation at the national level over many years. Political opposition, while having little financial and ideological resources, has always had human resources that provided vital support during elections and protest

> actions; the loyalty of these human resources has depended less on the performance of political leaders (Juraev, 2008: 260).

Lastly, one should also take into account the involvement of the criminal figures in the February-March 2005 events (Tabyshalieva, 2006). Many analysts in fact pointed out to the role of criminal leaders in providing material and technical support during these mobilizations (Kupatadze, 2008; Cornell 2006: 64; Demirtepe, 2006). According to Kupadatze, there were mainly two reasons for the underworld figures' support to the February-March 2005 events: on the one hand, some of these figures were after more power (he gives the example of Rysbek Akmatbaev for this aim); on the other hand, some of them were in pursuit of defending and expanding their existing businesses (he gives the example of Baiaman Erkinbaev for this intention) (Kupadatze, 2008: 284). He indeed writes about the role of Baiaman Erkinbaev during the mobilizations as follows:

> Baiaman Erkinbaev, member of the Jogorku Kenesh, infamous for drugs trafficking from south Kyrgyzstan, played a major role in the public uprising in the south. He provided logistics for the demonstrations and contributed financially as well. He also mobilized two thousand men, palvan from his Alysh sports association for traditional wrestling, who stormed the state offices in Jalal-Abad and Osh (Kupadatze, 2008: 286).

In order to indicate to the "public endorsement of a criminal leader" (Kupadatze, 2008: 290), Kupatadze also points out not only to the slogans such as "'Baiaman is the hero of Kyrgyz nation'" (Kupatadze, 2008: 286) voiced in Osh and Batken during the mobilizations of February-March 2005 due to various

services he provided for the local communities of these regions (Kupatadze, 2008: 290), but also Erkinbaev's success in the parliamentary elections of February 2005 (Kupadatze, 2008: 286). It flows from this analysis that these criminal figures gained considerable strength during the fifteen years of Akaev regime to an extent and such strength enabled them to challenge the prevailing regime, in Kupadatze's words, "to act independently from the ruling elite, articulating their own interests" (Kupadatze, 2008: 284). In the overall account, such strength and their involvement in the February-March 2005 events indicate to the fact that the losing of the control over the underworld by Akaev circle in the immediate context of the February-March 2005 events paved the way for the fall of Akaev as well (Kupadatze, 2008: 284). Kupadatze's analysis signals to an in-between sphere between legal and illegal realms which further aggravates the prevailing instability in the country.

4.5. Conclusions

In the years leading up to March 2005 events, there were already more than enough conditions that created a vicious circle for social unrest and grounds for mobilizations in Kyrgyzstan as covered in Chapter 3 and in the introduction to this chapter. Among these conditions, one can cite the informal nature of politics in Kyrgyzstan. Especially between 1995 and 2005, this 'political game' led to the family rule of President Akaev, widespread corruption, nepotism (Collins, 2006: 249); various problems stemming from weak formal institutions along with high levels of poverty and inequality (Elebaeva & Margarita, 2007: 69). As a result,

Kyrgyzstan remained in a state of persistent instability, which was fostered by the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics.

Trapped in this vicious circle, since late 1990s, there appeared several demonstrations and protests in Kyrgyzstan. Among these protests, the Aksy events (2002) before February - March 2005 events were the first sign for further mobilizations in the country as the respondents of my interviews suggested. In contrast to what Beissinger argued, who suggested that the events that took place in Georgia in 2003 and in Ukraine in 2004 are the external examples for the 'Tulip Revolution' in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 (Beissinger, 2007: 260), Tursunkulova argued that Aksy events in 2002 constitute a "domestic example" for March 2005 events and "opened up possibilities for the 2005 March events as much and even more than external modular examples" (Tursunkulova, 2007: 349). He argued that Aksy events were the ones that set the margins of the "ideas, models and repertoires of behavior" for further mobilizations in the country, showing in practice that it was possible to mobilize people and protest in Kyrgyzstan (Tursunkulova, 2007: 359). Radnitz also asserted that Aksy events "set the stage for the national mobilization of 2005 in two ways - by demonstrating to the public that mobilization was possible and effective, and by providing training…in organizing people" (Radnitz, 2005: 406). According to Lewis, as well, these events provided the background of February - March 2005 events. In his account, "the remote villages of Aksy were more of an inspiration for the so called 'Tulip Revolution' than Belgrade, Kiev or Tblisi" (Lewis, 2008: 267). Indeed, the dynamics of Aksy events were very similar to those in 2005 regarding the key roles of informal dynamics, rather than formal ones: localism and regionalism

which were influential throughout the Aksy protests were among the main dynamics in 2005 as well. In 2005, the support of the criminal figures in the mobilizations were more apparent in comparison to Aksy events.

The so-called 'Tulip Revolution' became another critical moment in the political history of Kyrgyzstan. Given the political atmosphere fertile for social unrest, Akaev's repressing tactics triggered the mobilizations (Kurmanov, 2005: 11). First, deregistered, later losing candidates, namely the local/regional political entrepreneurs called upon their supporters, villagers, extended family, friends, relatives, business connections, criminal affiliations, regional solidarities on informal grounds and started out mass protests (Jones, 2007: 153; Radnitz, 2006: 133; Kupadatze, 2008: 284). These figures made use of various traditional solidarity groupings and institutions, among which stand out kurultai along with aksakal (elders), and palvan and also women (Temirkulov, 2008) along with personal loyalty (Juraev, 2008:

Various forces tried to coordinate the process, yet no one actually managed to do so (Beacháin, 2009: 220). Only towards the end of the protests, anti-Akaev camp gave the impression of a united opposition under the common goal of overthrowing Akaev (Jones, 2007: 157). Finally, in 24 March 2005 the White House fell, the president fled the country and later resigned (ICG, 2005b: 17; Saidazimova, 2005c). When Akaev was brought down, the glue that held together the 'opposition', better said various informal networks dried out; the forces of the 'opposition' fell apart owing to internal conflicts in the absence of any uniting agenda (Temirkulov, 2008: 318; Lewis, 2008: 275).

These events once again revealed the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping the course of Kyrgyz politics (Khamidov, 2006b: 92). In other words, these events once again made "an analysis of the role of informal…in shaping the political scene in Kyrgyzstan all the more pressing for understanding how politics was conducted outside formal channels" (Fumagalli, 2007: 212). When paid attention to these elements of informal politics, February-March 2005 events signaled to the fact that there is no disjuncture between formal and informal aspects of politics, and informal actors and institutions permeate formal ones in Kyrgyzstan which challenges the main focus of transitology and 'colored revolutions' on the elements of civil society and the formal aspects of politics (Lewis, 2008).

In the overall account, for the concerns of this dissertation, these events, instead of an 'impetus for democratization' indicated to an 'impetus for the decisive role of the informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics'. Whether the president or national 'opposition' camp or local/regional political entrepreneurs, by depending on informal networking, they all take advantage of the weakness of the political system to pursue their own projects. People, on the other hand, given the economic hardship and absence of formal social security, ran into the arms of these figures. As a result, the formal institutions further lose ground and the general population is manipulated. In this context, it is not surprising to see that the fade of the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' drifted away easily and further instability followed suit. This was actually an expected outcome of the continuity in this political game which remained intact in the aftermath of these events as well.

CHAPTER 5

CONTINUING INSTABILITY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 'TULIP REVOLUTION'

5.1. Introduction

In the immediate aftermath of the overthrow of Akaev, instead of change came "uncertainty and…paralysis" (ICG, 2005a: 22). After a short period of time, it became clear that the so-called 'revolution' did not represent a "true break with the past" (ICG, 2005a:1). The "transfer of power" at the top (Radnitz, 2006: 133), in other words, reshuffling of elites "presented as democratic change" (Tastenov, 2007:33) did not bring about a real change regarding the main parameters of the regime (Berg, 2006b: 215) and therefore, did not lead to better conditions for the people (Berg, 2006a: 138; Cummings, 2008: 223-224). In contrast, further instability started to reign in the country (Kang & Turner, 2010).

The respondents of my interviews also confirmed this point. As Umut Asanova puts into words: "it became clear soon that a revolution did not take place as these events did not lead to a systematical, rationalized and radical change concerning the bases of the society and the institutions the regime has been shaped around" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 12, 2010). In a similar vain, Ibraeva asserted that "in terms and categories we use in sociology, I

do not think that it is a revolution because for it to be a revolution, apart from the support of people, concerning the outcome, there need to appear radical changes of different spheres of the regime and institutional mechanisms. However, nothing like this followed suit" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). These remarks straightforwardly challenge any depiction of the February-March 2005 events as a 'democratic revolution'.[53]

Indeed, the forces behind the 'Tulip Revolution' which flourished during the first decade of independence remained influential after Akaev's fall (Radnitz, 2006: 132). In Radnitz's words, "besides Akaev's family and immediate associates, the majority of individuals governing before maintaine[d] influence and the 'rules of the game' have not changed substantially" (Radnitz, 2006: fn1).[54] In this respect, it was not surprising to see that the parliament, instead of turning into a platform for democratic dialogue to tackle public issues, remained as a playground for the manipulation of the informal dynamics, better-said "a means to protect its members' private interests", full of businessmen and local leaders with apparent criminal connections (Radnitz, 2006: 140).

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[53] Similarly, as Melynkovska argues "events occurred during and after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine hardly confirm the idea of a revolutionary regime overthrow" (Melnykovska, 2008:5). According to her, with respect to the level of change it brought about, these events fell short of their exaggerated depiction (Melnykovska, 2008:5). However, it is not among the intentions of this dissertation to delve into the 'Revolution Theory'. As Melnykovska properly argues "comparisons of color revolutions with classical revolutions do not provide any clarity because color revolutions can be explained in a variety of different ways" (Melnykovska, 2008:5). One can consider these events as revolutions only by revising the definition of revolution radically as endeavored by many; or one can reject the term revolution completely with respect to various criteria at hand (Melnykovska, 2008:6).

[54] In Ukraine, as well, the new leaders who had come to power in the aftermath of the 'Orange Revolution' were related with the old regime. In Tuduroiu's words, "Yushchenko himself had been Kuchma's Prime Minister; during the scandal related to the assassination of Georgi Gongatze, he had supported the president and signed a joint letter with Kuchma" (Tuduroiu, 2007: 330). Hence, in Ukraine as well, one can only talk about a reshuffling of elites, which did not bring about a rupture from the past.

Within these confines, in the following five years, Kyrgyzstan drifted further away from any kind of radical change or democracy. As Radnitz aptly argues "instead of breathing a new and more democratic spirit into the polity, March 2005 events appear…mostly to have worsened Kyrgyzstan's political instability, with rising numbers of assassinations and unruly crowd actions" (Radnitz, 2006: 133). According to Elebaeva and Margarita, February-March events, indeed, strengthened existing fault lines in the country. In their words, they "added vigor to all sorts of regional, ethnic…clan, and other groups" (Elebaeva & Margarita, 2007: 72), therefore provided an impetus for the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics. Kurmanbek Bakiev contributed to this outcome by employing intensified policies, tactics and strategies of Askar Akaev that fostered informal dynamics and contributed to the maintenance of a political system under control of his family rule and widespread corruption (ICG, 2008:1). Hence, expectedly, supposedly 'revolutionary' president Kurmanbek Bakiev was also overthrown with another mass uprising in April 2010, just five years after the 'Tulip Revolution' (ICG, 2010a:1).

In order to indicate to the fact that behind the continuing instability in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution' laid the continuity in the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics, in this chapter, firstly, I will dwell upon various developments during Bakiev era. It will be convenient to examine these developments that reveal the decisive roles of informal dynamics in shaping the course of Kyrgyz politics in two parts, by taking 2007 Parliamentary Elections as a milestone. This is mainly because in the aftermath of these elections, Bakiev strengthened his hold on power by intensifying his use of informal dynamics,

though he could not consolidate the dispersed nature of power in the country. Secondly, I will examine April 2010 events that led to the end of Bakiev era. Last but not least, I will indicate to the current events under the provisional government, namely the violent conflicts of 2010 and the constitutional amendments that followed suit.

5.2. Bakiev Era and Continuing Instability

The initial euphoria of the 'revolution' did not last long. Bakiev intensified Akaev's policies and in the words of ICG Report "created a narrow-based political structure run by his own family" (ICG, 2010a: 1). In other words, within the context of the informal nature of politics in the country, Bakiev and his close circle too have captured already limited resources of Kyrgyz economics and politics through a blend of formal and informal dynamics; while on the other hand, the 'opposition' was depending on the informal dynamics in challenging such rule as well. Hence, there have been more venues for continuity than change regarding the main parameters of the regime. As Radnitz properly puts into words: "old patterns reproduced themselves and hindering efforts at real reform on major issues such as corruption and equitable distribution of resources" (Radnitz, 2006: 133). Altynbek Joldoshov underlines this irony as well by indicating to a depiction common among Kyrgyz population: "nothing has changed after the so called 'Tulip Revolution' besides the two letters… A(Akaev) replaced B(Bakiev)" (Joldoshov, 2010: fn14). Kurmanov confirms the points of Radnitz and Joldoshov when he argues as follows: "the new elite turned out to be

an exact copy of the old one...the disillusioned revolutionaries, politicians, and ordinary people all say: 'this is the old power with new names'" (Kurmanov, 2006: 53). As these remarks make it clear, the main parameter of politics in the country did not even change a bit in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution'; Kyrgyz politics remained to operate through and within informal channels, even more rigorously.

5.2.1. Developments from March 2005 Events to December 2007 Parliamentary Elections

Following the so-called 'Tulip Revolution', the High Court of Kyrgyzstan annulled the elections of March 2005 (Burke, 2005). Despite the expectations that new elections would be held in order to form a new parliament, the parliament March 2005 elections brought about was recognized (ICG, 2005b:10). In other words, it was decided that the parliament that came to power with the March 2005 elections continued to govern with minor changes until 10 July 2005 presidential elections (ICG, 2005b:10).

This parliament appointed Kurmanbek Bakiev[55] as the prime minister and acting president (ICG, 2005b:10). Azimbek Beknazarov has claimed that Bakiev was chosen as the leader of the opposition front only because he had financed the 'revolutionary' protests in the south, especially in Jalal-Abad (Ferghana.ru,

[55] Born in Jalal-Abad, in 1949, Kurmanbek Bakiev worked in various positions since independence; such as the chairman of the State Property Fund in 1994; governor of Jalal-Abad (1995-1997) and Chuy provinces (1997-2000); prime minister from 2000 until he resigned in 2002 after Aksy Events. He entered parliament in 2004 and was chosen as the leader of the 'People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan' (PMK) (ICG, 2005b: 22).

2008a). Among other reasons for choosing Bakiev seems to be related with the north-south contention in the country. The 'opposition' forces of the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' seemed to agree upon selecting a representative from the south of Kyrgyzstan due to the fact that protests that brought down Akaev regime were intensified in the south.[56]

Along with Bakiev appointed as the prime minister and acting president, ministries were also distributed mainly among the 'revolutionary' figures,[57] most of whom were former ministers, serving in the previous administrations under Akaev regime[58] (ICG, 2005b:10). Other opposition figures from the anti-Akaev camp such as Almazbek Atambaev[59] and Baiaman Erkinbaev[60] were left aside (ICG, 2005b: 10). In this context, in Alkan's words, "a 'new' period began with a

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[56] To remind, since 1961, Kyrgyz SSR was led solely by the representatives of the north until Absamat Masaliev, who was the only southern leader for many years, was appointed by Gorbachev and served between 1985 and 1991 (Jones Luong, 2002: 79 Table 3.3).

[57] Many of the members of the anti-Akaev People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan (PMK) formed the acting government. As covered in Chapter 4 of this study, this coalition was formed in September 2004, chose Bakiev as its leader and later was joined by Rosa Otunbaeva, Omurbek Tekebaev, and Azimbek Beknazarov among others (Collins, 2006: 249; Kurmanov, 2005: 12).

[58] The members of the 'new' government are listed as follows (ICG, 2005b:10): Usen Sydykov (head of the presidential administration); Dastan Sarygulov, (Akaevs' close friend, state secretary); Rosa Otunbaeva (foreign minister); Daniyar Usenov (businessman, deputy prime minister in charge of the economy); Azimbek Beknazarov (prosecutor-general); Myktybek Abdyldaev (minister of internal affairs); Tashtemir Aitbaev (former security chief and head of the National Security Service under Akaev); Medetbek Kerimkulov (former Mayor of Bishkek and first deputy prime minister); Akylbek Japarov (minister of finance); Omurbek Tekebaev (Speaker of the Parliament).

[59] Almazbek Atambaev, a northern businessman who achieved his wealth owing to the chaotic privatization processes during Akaev era has considerable support in the Chuy region and other parts of the Northern regions financing protestors from his region during the 'Tulip Revolution', (ICG, 2005b:17).

[60] As mentioned in the previous chapter, Baiaman Erkinbaev was a southern parliamentary deputy and businessman active during the so-called 'Tulip Revolution', with apparent connections in the criminal world (Kupadatze, 2008: 284; ICG, 2005b:17). In Tabyshalieva's words, "despite his reputation of a narco-baron, he was elected three times to the National Parliament" (Tabyshalieva, 2006). He was killed on 21 September 2005 (ICG, 2005a: 6).

president who was the ex-prime minister of the ousted Akaev, with a cabinet consisting of those close to the ex-president and the leaders of the revolution, and with a legislative composition in which Akaev's son Aydar was also an MP" (Alkan, 2009: 365). The composition of the legislative was again personalized and informal (Radnitz, 2006: 140). ICG Report well summarizes such composition as follows: it was mainly "characterized…by region (north against south), background (former deputies, business, semi-criminal leaders) and financial or other links deputies had to each other" (ICG, 2005b:11). Such composition is telling in its indication to the continuity in the fertile grounds for the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping the course and nature of Kyrgyz politics.

In this context, contrary to the optimistic expectations after the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' for an end to the decisiveness of the informal ties in shaping politics, in other words, "dependence on relatives and…supporters", from the very start, the 'not so new' administration continued to operate in the way the Akaev administration worked (ICG, 2005b:11). The new leadership gave signs of its readiness to the usage of nepotism, favoritism and regional affiliations in order to guarantee that allies, relatives and supporters are put into important positions at both central and regional levels of governance (ICG, 2005b:11).

Following the distribution of ministries and the emergence of Bakiev as the key figure for presidency, on the way to presidential elections of July 2005, Felix Kulov,[61] who announced his candidacy on April 25, emerged as Bakiev's

[61] Born in Chuy province, Felix Kulov held various positions after independence; minister of internal affairs (1991-1992), vice president (1992-1993), governor of Chuy province (1993-1997), minister of national security (1997-1998), and mayor of Bishkek (1998-1999). He created his own political party, *Ar-Namys* (Dignity) in 1999 (Adami, 2006). Akaev, in order to block his candidacy

most challenging rival (Adami, 2006). However, two weeks later, Kulov surprisingly withdrew from the presidential race (Eurasia Insight, 2005c). Soon it became clear that Bakiev and Kulov agreed on for the upcoming presidential elections (Eurasia Insight, 2005f). According to this agreement, in the case of Bakiev's victory, he would appoint Kulov as his prime minister in return for his withdrawal from the race and joining Bakiev's campaign (Abdrakhmanova, 2005: Adami, 2006; Beacháin, 2009: 219; Berg, 2006b: 215). The calculation behind such an arrangement was related with the fact that "the vote might otherwise have been split between Kulov's supporters in the north of Kyrgyzstan and Bakiev's support-base in the south" (IWPR, 2007). Radnitz confirms this calculation as well. In his words, "with Kulov's support coming primarily from the north and Bakiev's from the south, their cruise to an easy combined win averted a campaign that would likely have exacerbated regional tensions" (Radnitz, 2006: 140). Hence, it was expected that the Bakiev-Kulov alliance could help to appease any possible confrontation on the grounds of north versus south of the country (Saidazimova, 2008). The international observers at the time evaluated this arrangement as Bakiev's guarantee to a victory in the upcoming elections (Berg, 2006b: 215).

Just before the electoral campaign started, there appeared various developments that caused further insecurity among the population while increasing doubts on the view that February - March 2005 events would bring a radical change with the past. In Berg's words, "violence and shootings resulted in

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in 2000 presidential elections, put corruption charges on him and had him arrested (CH3:113). He was released after March 2005 events (Saidazimova, 2008; ICG, 2005a: 2).

many causality and several dead persons" (Berg, 2006b: 216). On 10 June 2005, parliamentarian Jyrgalbek Surabaldiyev, who was an influential figure close to Akaev, was killed in Bishkek due to a property dispute (Eurasia Insight, 2005b). Furthermore, the White House was attempted to be occupied by the supporters of Mekenim Kyrgyzstan (My Homeland Kyrgyzstan) (ICG, 2005a: 2). According to ICG Report, "Mekenim was founded by Urmat Baryktabasov, a wealthy businessman from Issyk-Kul who had recently been denied registration as a candidate for the upcoming presidential elections he was a Kazakh citizen" (ICG, 2005a: 2). In response to the attempt of the supporters of Baryktabasov to occupy the presidential building, police forced out the protestors and many participants of these events were arrested (ICG, 2005a: 2).

Soon after these events, the day came for the Presidential Elections. As Kulov was sidelined with the help of the above-mentioned arrangement, projections of the international observers came true: Kulov's withdrawal and backing of Bakiev paved the way for Bakiev's victory (Adami, 2006; Geiss, 2006: 35). Bakiev obtained 88.71 per cent of the vote (OSCE, 2005c: 23). According to electoral observers, there were numerous wrongdoings during the voting (OSCE, 2005b).

Speaking after his victory, Bakiev assured that "there will be no return to a corrupt regime" and promised that he will fight corruption as long as it takes (Eurasianet, 2005). In order to do so, "Bakiev pledged to appoint individuals 'with a stainless reputation' to key posts and ensure that the government's work is transparent" (Eurasianet, 2005). He also mentioned embarking on with the

constitutional amendments.[62] Bakiev stated to make it a priority to review the constitution in order to limit presidential powers to escape Akaev's mistakes (ICG, 2005a: 2). However, it became soon clear that Bakiev was just paying lip service. None of these promises came true in the following years of his administration.

Despite his initial promises, Bakiev regime's unwillingness to solve the prevailing socio-economic and socio-political problems of the country made the surface very soon. According to ICG Report, there were various problems prevailing in the country at the time of Bakiev's inauguration (ICG, 2005a: 4-10). Among these problems, the property redistribution took the lead, which comes into view whenever there is a change of power or power vacuum in the country since the last years of the Kyrgyz SSR. ICG Report well summarizes the complexity of this issue: "property was being redistributed in a chaotic and sometimes violent manner as government, criminals and other interests scramble for the country's valuable assets, including many that the Akaev family monopolized" (ICG, 2005a: i). The struggle over property included the assets dominated by Akaev family', along with markets and land, such as the Karasuu Bazaar in the Osh province and the Karakeche coal mines in Naryn province, and land near Bishkek (ICG, 2005a: 4-10). These struggles often led to clashes and killings[63] (ICG, 2005a: 5-6), revealing that criminal groups were also active in the

[62] On the other hand, he stated that the new government would revise the base rented by the USA, by reminding the declaration that compelled Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to provide a timetable for the expulsion of American military bases, signed by the members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization a week ago in Kazakhstan (Demirtepe, 2005).

[63] The dispute over Karasuu Bazaar led to the death of an influential criminal figure, Baiaman Erkinbaev on September 21, who had been one of March 2005 events main financier and supporter

redistribution of country's assets (Kupadatze, 2008: 283). Confirming this point, Felix Kulov has stated around this time that "the revolution caused the reactivation of criminal groups. In a few localities, some groups started working energetically as if they defended the revolution, while in reality illegally redistributing property" (quoted in Tabyshalieva, 2006). Especially near Bishkek, various informal land appropriations took place (Eurasia Insight, 2005e). According to ICG Report, "thousands…claim[ed] a right to occupy 'unused' land and in some cases have threatened to construct homes on occupied plots" considering them as their "just reward" in return for their performance in the 'Tulip Revolution' (ICG, 2005a: 9).

Killings were not only related with the property disputes in this period. There were also widespread problems regarding Kyrgyzstan's penal system which were apparent in various revolts that made the scene in October 2005 (ICG, 2005a: 13). These revolts resulted with the death of Tynychbek Akmatbaev, who was a parliamentarian and the chair of the Committee on Defense, Security, Law Enforcement and Information Policy (ICG, 2005a: 13) and followed suit by various others.[64]

In face of the above-mentioned disputes, revolts and killings, authorities reacted reluctantly, did not provide any solutions; did not even endeavor to legitimize "legal mechanism of conflict resolution" in the eyes of the general

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as mentioned in the previous chapter (Kupadatze, 2008: 284; Alkan, 2009: 366; ICG, 2005a:i, 5-6).

[64] Tynychbek Akmatbaev's brother, Ryspek Akmatbaev – "who went on trial for multiple murder charges in November 2005" (ICG, 2006: 2) accused Felix Kulov for the murder of his brother (ICG, 2006: 2). Later in 2006, Ryspek Akmatbaev was killed in Bishkek as well (Chadova, 2006).

population (ICG, 2005a: 9). Such reluctance definitely carried out potentials for further contestations (Bekbolotov & Juraev, 2006). In other words, Bakiev administration did almost nothing in face of continuing killings, and the growing influence of criminal networks taking advantage of the power vacuum in the aftermath of the overthrow of Akaev (ICG, 2006: 2). Indeed, according to Tabyshalieva, "only after pressure from civil society groups and mass demonstrations against a merger of criminal groups and officials in Bishkek, Bakiev publicly stated his disapproval of organized crime" (Tabyshalieva, 2006). Though, he did not take any measures regarding the issue.

Along with the above-mentioned disputes and murders, there were also concerns about the security forces in the country (ICG, 2005a:17). Elebaeva and Margarita point out to the waning legitimacy of the security forces among the general populace. In their account, "the wave of crime was also rising because the public had lost faith in the law-enforcement structures" (Elebaeva & Margarita, 2007:73). There was a rising concern that the weak state the security forces found themselves in, in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution' would drew the attention of the criminal networks that could take advantage of them in order to advance their own influence (ICG, 2005a: 17). Such concerns were indeed manifestations of further prospects for "more chaos and criminality" (ICG, 2005a: i) that further undermined already waning rule of law in the country (ICG, 2005a:17).

In face of the above-mentioned grave problems, Bakiev administration continued to turn a blind eye and did not even intend to resolve them. According to ICG Report, "rather than face up to these problems, the government, in the meanwhile, was struggling with internal dissent" (ICG, 2005a: i). Indeed, given

the above-mentioned disputes and assassinations signaling to the strong hold of criminality in the country, Bakiev began to lose support of various figures from the anti-Akaev camp and found himself in confrontations with these figures (ICG, 2005a: 10-12). Such confrontations within the so-called 'revolutionary' camp gave their first signs with the exclusion of former PMK members from office, such as acting Prosecutor General Beknazarov, and the March 2005 events' prominent figure and then the acting foreign minister Rosa Otunbaeva at the end of 2005 (ICG, 2005a:i,10-12). Later on, these expelled figures structured "the nucleus of a new opposition movement" against Bakiev[65] (ICG, 2005a: i) that later gathered around the movement entitled as "For Reforms!" (*Za reformy!*) (ICG, 2006: 1).

This movement consisted of mainly parliamentarians, former members of Bakiev administration along with wealthy businessmen, such as Omurbek Tekebaev, Melis Eshimkanov and Azimbek Beknazarov, Almazbek Atambaev and Rosa Otunbaeva; and Edil Baisalov (ICG, 2006: 1-2; Heathershaw, 2007). Indeed, this movement endeavored to force the regime to distribute available resources among more actors through various protests starting out in the beginning of 2006[66] (Heathershaw, 2007). In these protests, mainly "accusations of criminal involvement in the government" have been raised (ICG, 2006: 3) and

[65] Similarly, rivalries between prominent figures within the 'orange camp' made the surface soon in Ukraine. Given the lack of cohesion within the 'orange camp' as well, with the support of the Russophone Southern and Eastern regions, Viktor Yanukovych became the Prime Minister of Ukraine in March 2006 parliamentary elections and later elected in February 2010 Elections (BBC News, 2010a).

[66] For a detailed list of protests in 2006, See: Bekbolotov, 2006.

call for reforms along with checks and balances of presidential power have been staged (Eurasia Insight, 2006a).

Without a doubt, as early as 2006, there was an increasing discontent with the way Bakiev regime operated, where Bakiev's family, relatives and supporters gradually widened the scope of their power on the economics and politics of Kyrgyzstan, reminding the main parameters of Akaev era (ICG, 2005b:11). Bakiev circle not only started to hurt the business interests of northern political elites, but also there was a growing influence of organized crime figures with apparent connections to political figures in the government (ICG, 2006: 2). Such tendencies "brought back memories of the Akaev years" especially with respect to the "unfair regional balance of power" (ICG, 2006: 2), where northerners gradually felt marginalized from politics and economics (ICG, 2006: 2).

Around this time, following the assassination attempt on Edil Baisalov, (Ababakirov, 2006: 16) 'opposition' camp (this time anti-Bakiev) declared a list of demands called "Ten simple steps towards the people" which included the following: (ICG, 2006: 2)

> an increased struggle against organized crime and corruption; immediate constitutional reform; law enforcement reform; the resignation of certain key figures in the administration...(namely: SNB chief Aytbayev, presidential administration head Usen Sydykov, State Secretary Dastan Sarygulov, and Prosecutor General Kambaraly Kongantieyv); the end to political pressure on businessmen and entrepreneurs; the transfer of all government institutions currently under direct presidential control (including the SNB and the financial police) to ministerial control; the transfer of state-run KTR television to public ownership; an end to the ownership dispute over the privately run 'Piramida'

television station; reform in the construction and building supplies marketplace; and greater guarantees of press and civil freedoms (ICG, 2006: fn5).

In face of these demands - which were indeed manifestations of Bakiev not keeping any of his promises since taking power in contrast to what he had promised - Bakiev did not do much to appease the 'opposition', besides making a few changes by replacing the names mentioned in the list above (ICG, 2006: 3). Other demands were side-stepped and the confrontation between Bakiev camp and anti-Bakiev camp gained momentum.[67]

In fact, to remind, when Bakiev came to power, among his promises were the reviewing of the constitution with a tendency to limit presidential powers in order not to repeat Akaev years' mistakes (ICG, 2005a: 2). However, as mentioned above, Bakiev acted with hesitancy to embark on such a revision concerning the constitution, giving signs of delaying such an effort to the aftermath of the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2010 (ICG, 2006: 7). In Shepherd's words, "Bakiev increasingly seemed reluctant to cede any of his authority to the legislative branch and alternatively stalled and ignored both his supporters' and the opposition's demands" (Shepherd, 2010c). Within this setting, the 'opposition' that has been staging various protests in Bishkek since the spring of 2006, made constitutional reforms their priority in their demands, especially

[67] An incident that provided an impetus to the confrontation between Bakiev and anti-Bakiev camp was the 'Matreshkagate' scandal, which took place in September 2006 (ICG, 2006: 3). In this incident, while Omurbek Tekebaev was passing through customs at the Polish Airport, some amount of heroin was found in his luggage (Alkan, 2009: 367; Eurasia Insight, 2006b). When he returned to Bishkek, he blamed Bakiev administration for setting him up (Marat, 2008b; ICG, 2006: 3). To investigate this case, the parliament formed a commission and put the blame on SNB; despite the fact that Janysh Bakiev, deputy head of SNB and president's brother, refused any relations to the case, he resigned (Marat, 2008b; ICG, 2006: 3).

towards the end of 2006 (Elebaeva & Margarita, 2007: 75). These demands and following demonstrations in the beginning of November 2006 resulted in a new "compromise constitution" signed by Bakiev on November 9, 2006 (ICG, 2006: 1,6). In a nutshell, November 2006 protests forced Bakiev to comply with the constitutional arrangements that gave some of his powers to the parliament (Khamidov, 2006a: 39).

The 'compromise constitution' of November 9 brought several changes (Elebaeva & Margarita, 2007: 76; Nichol, 2007: 2-3). It limited the presidential power, in Orozbekova's words, "by allowing the winning party to pick a prime minister and cabinet" (Orozbekova, 2007). It changed the structure of the parliament and the election design as well, in Pannier's words, "by raising the number of seats from 75 to 90…party lists instead of the single-mandate system" (Pannier, 2006). Moreover, the parliament gained the right to approve the high level appointments and the National Security Service was subordinated to the government (Marat, 2006d).

As a result of the usual focus on the formal dynamics and on the short-term outcomes of political developments in Kyrgyzstan, many viewed Kyrgyzstan's 'compromise constitution' as a success of 'democratic' forces[68] and cherished it as a success story of the anti-Bakiev 'opposition' camp (Khamidov, 2006a: 39). However, before delving into Bakiev's u-turn regarding the 'compromise constitution' of November 2006, one should not neglect the fact that informal dynamics played a decisive role in November 2006 protests as well

[68] For instance, Marat argued that "confrontation between Bakiev and the opposition was yet another manifestation of Kyrgyzstan's move towards a democratic state with high rates of civic engagement" (Marat, 2008a: 232).

(Khamidov, 2006a: 39). In Khamidov's words, "informal localism and kinship ties have played a decisive role in the opposition's ability to pressure the president to consent to constitutional changes" (Khamidov, 2006a: 39). Such roles, indeed, signaled to the fact that the pivotal role of informal dynamics in shaping the course of Kyrgyz politics, in this case, leading up to a 'compromise constitution' remained intact in the country.

A closer examination of the 'opposition' protests since early 2006 supports this point, which reminds us the dynamics of the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' as well (Khamidov, 2006c). As Khamidov properly puts into words, "the majority of protesters were tied to influential leaders of the opposition through influential localism ties…to support 'their man' in Bishkek" (Khamidov, 2006a: 40). Moreover, the confrontation between Bakiev versus anti-Bakiev camps had a regional character in which Bakiev depended on the southern regions (especially Jalal-Abad and Osh regions), and the 'opposition' depended on support from the north (especially Chuy and Talas regions) (ICG, 2006: 1). Indeed, Khamidov makes these informal ties clear as follows:

> Almazbek Atambaev, a rich industrialist, brought in his supporters from Chuy province and residents of Aksy region came to support Azimbek Beknazarov…Omurbek Tekebaev, former speaker of Kyrgyz parliament, brought in his supporters from Jalal-Abad. Melis Eshimkanov, an MP and owner of the oppositionist newspaper 'Agym' brought in his supporters from Naryn province (Khamidov, 2006a: 40).

Furthermore, these protests were financially backed by wealthy businessmen such as Almazbek Atambaev, Omurbek Babanov, Temir Sariev

(Khamidov, 2006a: 41). These figures not only provided the resources necessary for transportation, food and lodging of the protestors, but also brought about their supporters, employees, relatives and friends to the protests (Khamidov, 2006a: 40-41) once again revealing the nature and dynamics of the informal networking not only on vertical, but also on horizontal lines (Radnitz, 2005). Indeed, Marat as well points out to such connections and support as follows:

> [These] demonstrations showed that local political leaders have sharpened their skills in staging mass gatherings. The demonstrations' basic tool-kit included organization of transportation for demonstrators from rural areas, setting up yurts and tents, serving warm meals, providing drinking water, handing out uniforms and posters to protestors, and arranging entertainment programs by inviting popular singers and musicians (Marat, 2007a).

Within this context, these protests revealed the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics. Put differently, "protests once again highlight the fact that localism networks and kinship ties remain a potent force in politics" (Khamidov, 2006a: 41). It has become once again clear that informal leaders - regional/local political entrepreneurs/wealthy businessmen – depended on popular support to carry on their interests, by manipulating the general population (Khamidov, 2006a: 42). Such manipulation is indeed apparent in the fact that the so-called and short-lived constitutional reform only took place as a bargaining between Bakiev versus anti-Bakiev camp, discouraging any possible alternative thinking among the population (Heathershaw, 2009: 316). In this

respect, it is not surprising to see that with its various contradictions,[69] the 'compromise constitution' provided a fertile ground for the manipulations of the President Bakiev who quickly started to maneuver for getting back what he gave the impression to have given away.

The first opportunity for Bakiev in this respect came with the resignation of Felix Kulov on December 19, 2010, in his words to "accelerate the holding of parliamentary elections" that was assumed to be able to resolve the contradictions brought about by the 'compromise constitution' (Pannier, 2006). Turning this into an opportunity for his own ends, Bakiev quickly came up with a new set of constitutional amendments (Alkan, 2009: 367), which would strengthen his powers (Orozobekova, 2007). In face of these amendment package, in Orozbekova's words, "deputies…felt they had no option as Bakiev had put a gun to their heads by threatening to dissolve parliament unless they accepted his terms" (Orozbekova, 2007). In this respect, November 9 version of the constitution only lasted until December 30 and parliament has passed an amended version giving back the powers Bakiev lost a month ago (Marat, 2007b; Sershen, 2007a).

After the approval of the constitutional amendments on December 30, 2006, Bakiev continued further to widen his hold on power by a maneuver that would led to the breaking of his alliance with Felix Kulov, pushing him to the side

[69] Among these contradictions, it is cited that the new version of the constitution dictated the government to be formed with respect to the majority party in the parliament, where in reality, there was no majority party in the parliament; while the new version of the constitution dictated an election design depended on party lists, in reality, the deputies in the parliament were independent candidates elected on limited regional majority system, numbering only 75, vis-à-vis the arrangement of November 9, 2006 that dictated the number of deputies to be 90 (Pannier, 2006; Alkan, 2009: 367). To overcome these problems, a new election seemed to be awaiting Kyrgyzstan at the time.

of the ‘opposition’, namely the anti-Bakiev camp (Dzyubenko, 2007; Sershen, 2007c). He managed to do so by suggesting Kulov for parliamentary approval two times, yet, both of these proposals were rejected by the parliament (Sershen, 2007c). Despite his promise to Kulov that he would propose his name for a third time, (if he had done so, the parliament had to accept Kulov this time as otherwise Bakiev had the right to annul the parliament) to the surprise of many, Bakiev nominated Azim Isabekov for parliamentary approval, which was approved right away (Alkan, 2009: 368). In face of such a conduct on part of Bakiev, Kulov joined the ‘opposition’ camp (Alkan, 2009: 368). In the overall account, as a result of these maneuvers, along with widening his competences, in Alkan’s words, “Bakiev…not only weakened the parliament further, but also terminated the provisional alliance with Kulov that had been in place since 2005” (Alkan, 2009: 368).

From this point on, owing to the breaking off of the Bakiev-Kulov alliance, throughout the first half of 2007, the political confrontation in Kyrgyzstan gained even more of a personalized, regionalized and informal nature (IWPR, 2007). Rosa Otunbaeva, around this time, confirmed this point by stating that such personalization of the contestation in the country led to further politicization of the north-south divide (IWPR, 2007). In her words,

> It reduced them to the level of regional leaders…Kulov became the leader of the north, while Bakiev became the southern leader. And so the south has to defend Bakiev, and a section of the northern electorate went out onto the square in support of Kulov. This does no credit to either of them. They are the ones who are dividing the people (quoted in IWPR, 2007).

There were various fault lines among the 'opposition/anti-Bakiev camp' as well, which became apparent when Almazbek Atambaev became the prime minister of Bakiev, following Azim Isabekov (RFE/RL, 2007b). In justifying this move, in Ababakirov's words, "Atambaev referred to himself as a 'bridge' between the government and the radical opposition"[70] (Ababakirov, 2007a) not only to prevent Kyrgyzstan from falling into further instability, but also to embark on a broad constitutional reform (Ababakirov, 2007a). For this end, he formed a new opposition bloc called upon as "For United Kyrgyzstan" which included figures such as Edil Baisalov, Azimbek Beknazarov, Rosa Otunbaeva, and Dooronbek Sadyrbaev (Ababakirov, 2007a). However, other components of the 'anti-Bakiev camp' did not follow suit Atambaev's lead (Alkan, 2009: 368). Kulov, the leader of the 'United Front', called for the resignation of Bakiev and argued that "any constitutional amendment without the resignation of Bakiev would be of no benefit" (Alkan, 2009: 368). Subsequently, on April 11 2007, the 'United Front' and 'For Reforms' organized a demonstration in Bishkek. In this context, it is hard not to agree with Bekbolotov, who nicely puts into words the political atmosphere in the country as follows: "it has become almost a tradition…for springtime in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek...with mass protests voicing political discontent" (Bekbolotov, 2008).

[70] Atambaev was the Minister of Industry, Trade, and Tourism in 2006 (Ababakirov, 2007d). From this position, he resigned to protest against "the family rule and surge of criminals on the political scene" (Ababakirov, 2007d). Subsequently, he was among the members of the 'opposition camp' and main financial backer of the November 2006 protests which led to a 'compromise constitution'. During these protests, Ababakirov reminds us that he was remembered for "labeling the president as a 'political corpse', for his stubbornness to adopt constitutional reforms" (Ababakirov, 2007d).

To pressure the president to undertake the problem of widespread corruption; to adopt a new constitution, participants of this meeting insisted that Bakiev had to resign (Marat, 2007c). This meeting also called a kurultai and declared that the promises of the 'Tulip Revolution' in Kyrgyzstan have not been fulfilled and many of the 'revolutionaries' has been excluded from politics and economics (RFERL, 2008). In other words, Bakiev's opponents that participated in the kurultai "accuse[d] him of failing to introduce political and economic reforms to make a break with the system he inherited from former president Askar Akaev, ousted by the opposition in the March 2005 'Tulip Revolution'" (Sadybakasova, 2007). For evidence, they pointed out to the ongoing instability in the country. For instance, Beknazarov stated in this context that "Kyrgyzstan is [still] in a grave political, social, and economic situation because of the establishment of an unfair, inhumane, and irresponsible power system in the country" (quoted in RFERL, 2008). Bakiev regime rejected the demands of the anti-Bakiev camp and did not hesitate to use force to suppress their protests (RFERL, 2008). On April 19, 2007, police dispersed the meeting; took down the "nomadic yurt tents" (IWPR, 2007); arrested over a hundred demonstrators (Sershen, 2007g); broke into the offices of the 'United Front' and brought its leaders to the investigation of National Security Committee (IWPR, 2007; Khamidov, 2006a: 42). As a result of this harsh response on part of Bakiev regime, in the aftermath of these protests, 'opposition' entered into a state of inactivity and for a while they could not be very influential on the course of Kyrgyz politics (ICG, 2008: 7). Bakiev on the other hand, by way of a mix of formal and informal dynamics strengthened his hold on power.

5.2.2. Referendum and Parliamentary Elections in 2007

In the second half of 2007, a constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections were held in Kyrgyzstan. In late September 2007, Bakiev gave the first signs of his new maneuvers for the years to follow. The Constitutional Court invalidated the changes that have been made to the constitution since the adoption of the 2003 constitution (Alkan, 2009: 368). Not surprisingly, shortly after this verdict, Bakiev called for a new series of constitutional amendments via a referendum to be held in October 2007 (Alkan, 2009: 368; Ababakirov, 2007b).[71]

The referendum in October 2007 passed with 76 per cent of approval (Marat, 2008a: 232). The constitution it brought about, although at first glance, seemed to strengthen the position of the parliament vis-à-vis the president,[72] it actually carried out potentials for introducing a new understanding of politics in the country (Ababakirov, 2007b). Soon, it became clear that it was a decisive maneuver towards establishing a stronger presidentialism depending on one-party rule in Kyrgyzstan (Ababakirov, 2007b). Around this time, various analysts were warning about the potentials carried out with the new constitution. Daniyar

[71] At around this time, the investigations concerning Aksy events came about (Pannier, 2007a) and called for Kurmanbek Bakiev, Askar Akaev and Kurmanbek Osmonov to be "brought to justice" (RFE/RL, 2007a). In face of these accusations, Bakiev denied any relation to the shootings of Aksy, though "his signature appear[ed] on documents decreeing the special operations there" (RFE/RL, 2007a). Nonetheless, as Kyrgyzstan was on its way to the referendum, these investigations fell out of agenda pretty soon without any convictions (Pannier, 2007a).

[72] According to the new constitution, the party managing to get the majority of the seats would nominate the prime minister; if no party gets the majority, then the president would get to choose the prime minister (Kutmanaliev, 2007). Furthermore, "the council of ministers," appointed by the parliament, would be "responsible both to the president and to the parliament" (Alkan, 2009:369). Moreover, the new constitution established a 90-seat legislature elected by party lists along with a new election law that set a new threshold which dictates that a party cannot win seats in the parliament though it gets the 5 per cent of the voters unless it also gets 0.5 per cent of the votes in each region of the country (Kutmanaliev, 2007; Ababakirov, 2007c).

Tokobaev, for instance, argued that "this constitution is a facade. Having a party-based parliament in a presidential republic is a road leading straight to authoritarianism" (quoted in Kutmanaliev, 2007). Indeed, his projections had merit with respect to the developments that followed suit.

To have a better understanding of these potentials that further fueled informal dynamics to shape the course of events in the country, it will suffice to remind ourselves two of the maneuvers of Bakiev on the way to the referendum: first his speech on October 10 and then his introduction of a new political party on October 15 (Ababakirov, 2007b). Indeed, in his speech on October 10, Bakiev had given the first hints. Here, he suggested building a stronger power structure to help the country out of political instability and economic hardships (Ababakirov, 2007b). In his account, such a power structure necessitated an "executive branch [that] should work from the bottom to the top as a single entity" (quoted in Ababakirov, 2007b). Soon, what he meant by this 'single entity' became more visible on October 15, when he announced the creation of a new, pro-presidential party, namely the Ak Zhol Party (Ak Jol / Bright Path) (Sershen, 2007f; Ababakirov, 2007b). In his introduction of this pro-presidential party, Bakiev stated the followings:

> [A]lthough Kyrgyzstan ha[s] some 100 parties already; many of them [are] so small as to be insignificant. Very few of them take on any responsibility – at best, they just criticize the authorities…As yet there hasn't been any party that sets about doing actual work. I have taken a decision myself to create a new political force, a party of construction, responsibility and action (quoted in Kutmanaliev, 2007).

Given these hints, many critics, indeed, sensed what Bakiev was planning by these arrangements: a one-party parliament that would only "rubber stamp" his decisions (ICG, 2008: 6). Not only statements of Bakiev's strategists,[73] but also the following moves of Bakiev confirmed these intentions. The next day after the referendum, Bakiev dissolved the parliament and set new elections for December 2007 (Marat, 2008a: 232). Bakiev's intention became clearer. He aimed, in Kutmanaliev's words, "Ak Zhol [to] swallow up many of the political parties that favor him, and rapidly grow into a force capable of winning an outright majority in the election" (Kutmanaliev, 2007). By doing so, he was planning on getting all of his decisions through the parliament without any resistance (ICG, 2008: 6).

For this end, Bakiev made use of several strategies to get the 'right' results in the upcoming elections, reminding us of Akaev's similar strategies on both formal and informal grounds. Among these tactics came first the 0.5 per cent threshold.[74] The use of administrative resources and media in favor of Ak Zhol followed suit; various opposition candidates were excluded from the contest with the help of "threats to their businesses" or on minor "technicalities" (ICG, 2008: 3); key government posts were rearranged and expectedly Prime Minister Almazbek Atambaev was discharged (Ababakirov, 2007d). Within these confines, in the elections, Ak Zhol won the majority of the seats. Not surprisingly, before and during the vote, there were widespread irregularities (OSCE, 2007;

[73] Indeed, Bakiev's advisors stated at around this time that "the liberal democratic model has failed …the Russian model of limited democracy, a marginalized opposition and strong presidential power is far better for the country at this stage" (ICG, 2008:1). See, also: Saralaeva, 2010.

[74] 0.5 per cent threshold meant that every party has to get "at least obtain 13,500 votes" in each region (Ababakirov, 2007c). Hence, this arrangement made it hard for small and regional parties to pass through this threshold, reducing their chances of getting into the parliament (Alkan, 2009: 371).

RiaNovosti, 2007) especially the use of "techniques that included pressuring government employees and demanding that regional and local leaders ensure the ruling party's victory in their area" drew attention (ICG, 2008: 2). Along with Ak Zhol, the Communists of Kyrgyzstan and the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) got into the parliament, yet their entrance into the parliament was more of a result of a concession (ICG, 2008: 5). According to the ICG Report, "a compromise was reached where the two smaller parties would be allowed 'for show' and more dynamic parties, like Omurbek Tekebaev's Ata Meken and several others, would be excluded"[75] (ICG, 2010a: fn10). The reason behind the selection of the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party, according to ICG Report, was related with a perception among the Bakiev circle that they would not "get underfoot" compared to Tekebaev's Ata Meken (ICG, 2010a: 3).

In the following days, the government has been formed.[76] All the members of the new government were well known for their loyalty to Bakiev (Marat, 2008a: 232). In Marat's words, "Bakiev surrounded himself with loyal supporters primarily interested in the continuity of the current political regime and their public offices" (Marat, 2008a: 232). He was apparently in pursuit of figures that would not change their loyalty rapidly (Marat, 2008c). The opposition could not resist much at the time in face of these developments. This was partly due to

[75] Despite the fact that Ata Meken passed the general 5 per cent threshold, it could not gain 0.5 per cent in Osh (Lillis, 2008). Though the representatives of Ata Meken appealed to the Supreme Court, they lost the case (Lillis, 2008).

[76] In the government, figures such as Igor Chudinov (Prime Minister); Tazhikhan Kalimbetova (Finance Minister); Akylbek Zhaparov, (the Economic Development and Trade Ministry); Arstanbek Nogoyev (Agriculture Minister); Marat Mambetov (Health Minister) and Saparbek Balkibekov (Industry and Energy Minister) have taken their place (Lillis, 2008).

Bakiev's strategies to reduce the influence of the 'opposition' figures by appointing some of them to government positions or diplomatic services and partly owing to the close relations of the so-called 'opposition' with the leadership (Marat, 2008a: 232; ICG, 2008: 7).[77] ICG indeed makes these intimate relations between the leadership and the 'opposition figures that weaken the impact of 'opposition' on the course of Kyrgyz politics clear as follows:

> The opposition denounces the government in the day and goes to the same weddings in the evening. Many have grown rich on their access to power and are now afraid to lose everything by being too energetic in opposition. Disorganization and disunity continued to mark their behavior in the months following the polls. A few demonstrations were announced, produced a half-hearted turnout and were quickly dispersed by the police (ICG, 2008: 7).

Within this context, there was an ongoing political instability in the country almost two years after the 'Tulip Revolution' which did not clearly bring about any change into the main parameters of Kyrgyz politics and indeed paved the grounds for the worsening of the situation in the country, further fostered informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics.

[77] This was evidently not the only strategy Bakievs made use of. ICG Report states that in January 2008, Medet Sadyrkulov received a package in which there was "a human ear and fingers" as a warning regarding his cadre politics which challenge those of Bakievs (ICG, 2008:8).

5.2.3. Developments from December 2007 Parliamentary Elections to April 2010 Events

After the December 2007 Parliamentary Elections, in Marat's words, "the shadow parliament", started to hold the majority of the seats in the parliament, and the president's family and close circle began to control almost all the decision-making processes in the country (Marat, 2008d). Hence, as Juraev points out, the political system in Kyrgyzstan looked more like those in Russia and Kazakhstan (Juraev, 2008: 262) "where one man is in absolute control, backed by a compliant legislature" (Kutmanaliev, 2007). This picture indicated to the fact that one circle has been replaced by another, while the patterns of politics have not changed much, if it is not for the worse in the aftermath of the so-called 'revolution'. According to ICG Report, Bakiev was clearly inspired by Vladimir Putin's model of the "power vertical" (ICG, 2008: 6) where the president had the prominent areas of the governance system under his direct control (ICG, 2008: 6). Such subordination, not only had a direct effect on politics, but also captured economics to its full extent and reshaped the relations between formal posts and the criminal world (ICG, 2008: 6). The intimate relation between political and economical power and their close interactions with the criminal world in Kyrgyzstan has been well captured by the ICG Report as follows:

> Political office or membership of parliament allows a politician – or businessman turned politician – to promote his interests and those of his allies. It provides an inside track to contracts, acquisitions of valuable real estate and businesses…in a term borrowed from the criminal world, as a…shelter against the predations of

> the tax authorities and competitors…This whole process has been aptly characterized by a leading Kyrgyz political scientist as the conversion of power into money(ICG, 2008: 3).

The above-mentioned pattern, namely the 'conversion of power into money' seems to have two main ways closely interrelated with each other (ICG, 2008: 3). On the one hand, one needs to hold a position on formal grounds; on the other hand, one needs to have criminal affiliations. To remind the definition of informal politics presented by Dittmer, the informal dynamics rests in-between these two realms (Dittmer, 2000: 292). In this context, it is hard not to agree with Bekbolotov and Juraev, when they indicate to the fact that "it is hard to draw a clear line between politicians, businessmen and criminals in this country" (Bekbolotov & Juraev, 2006). There are fluctuating boundaries between these figures, changing in accordance with the interests at hand in a given situation, revealing once again the pragmatic nature of informal dynamics (Dittmer, 2000: 302).

Actually, this pattern was apparent before the 'Tulip Revolution' as implied in the previous chapters. However, according to various analysts, it has increasingly gained ground in Bakiev era (Kupadatze, 2008; Marat, 2008b).[78] Put differently, "before the Tulip Revolution, some political and criminal leaders interacted whenever their interests met and often conflicted over ownership of businesses" (Marat, 2008a: 234). However, under Bakiev, especially after the December 2007 Parliamentary Elections, such interactions extremely increased

[78] The murder of Rysbek Akmatbaev in May 2006 is often considered as a breaking point for the first assertion of the dominance of Bakiev circle over criminal groups (Kupadatze, 2008: 291; Marat 2006c).

(Kupadatze, 2008: 292). In Kupatadze's words, "it is widely accepted that the volume and extent of bribery, that is the money, goods or services given quid pro quo for an illicit advantage, is greater than before the Tulip Revolution" (Kupadatze, 2008: 287). Marat confirms this point as well. According to her, a bunch of prominent officials, who decide on Kyrgyzstan's whole economic policies and political atmosphere, got increasingly involved in criminal activities (Marat, 2008a: 235). Among these activities she cites the "extortion of businesses, smuggling of drugs and weapons, and intimidation of political opponents" (Marat, 2008a: 235)[79]. Among the main beneficiaries of this narrowing of the tip of the iceberg for capture, Maxim Bakiev, Bakiev's son and Janysh Bakiev, Bakiev's brother were pointed out with respect to their hold on all legal and illegal business activity in Kyrgyzstan (ICG, 2010a: 7-8; Ababakirov, 2008).

Kupadatze, in this regard, refers to the works of Charles Tilly. He argues that Charles Tilly would have described these figures, Bakiev loyalists, as "the holders of governmental power [who] use the information, resources and coercive means to their own personal profit" (Tilly, 2006: 8 in Kupadatze, 2008: 292). This is to suggest that these figures capture the state within the webs of criminal activities and dominated the "state-crime nexus" (Kupadatze, 2008: 293).

The dominance of the Bakiev's close circle over the criminal world was paralleled by their capture of economics. This was most visible in the privatization policies that the Bakiev regime has enforced. Among these, the privatizations of Manas international airport; the main phone provider, Kyrgyz

[79] For an analysis of the impact of drug trafficking and organized crime on the functioning of the state in Kyrgyzstan, See: Marat, 2006a; 2006b.

Telecom; hydro-energy sites, Kyrgyz Gaz and a series of other public utilities have taken the lead (Marat, 2008b). These assets had been rapidly privatized without even being announced or put to public or parliamentary inspection (ICG, 2008:10). According to ICG Report, during these privatizations, "in the absence of real reform of governance and rule of law, the patronage system play[ed] a clear role" (ICG, 2008: 10). In other words, the swift and secret manner in which these privatizations have been handled, in Marat's words, indicated to "an informal division of ownership or control within the ruling elite" (Marat, 2008b) once again revealing the decisive roles of informal dynamics.

Given the extent of the corruption concerning especially the hydro-energy sites, but also the general economy, it was only a matter of time that the country would be thrown into an economic crisis (Marat, 2008b, 2008f). However, Bakiev regime turned a blind eye to the approaching crisis and continued with his "short-sighted" policies, whose consequences would be endured by the general populace soon (Marat, 2008f). These consequences came in the shape of new taxes and fees, electricity cuts, a growing inflation (Marat, 2008e; 2008f) along with "spiraling food and fuel prices...and drastically declining public services" (ICG, 2008:2). Within these confines, it started to be more frequently voiced that the crisis was a result of not only the mismanagement of the general economy by the Bakiev regime, but also a more conscious act on part of the "corrupt members of the Bakiev administration themselves"[80] (ICG, 2008: 2) who exported water more

[80] Mamatov (2008) mentions the results of an online poll conducted by AKIpress around this time. According to this poll, 60 per cent of the respondents considered the energy crisis as a result of corruption; 30 per cent blame it on the mismanagement of Bakiev regime, "while less than 4 percent deem Mother Nature" (Mamatov, 2008).

than required to neighbors such as Kazakhstan in the previous summer (ICG, 2008:14). In this respect, a growing "popular anger" has started to emerge in the country (ICG, 2008: 2).

In face of the alarming crisis, instead of endeavoring to resolve the problem, Bakiev was busy with making the necessary arrangements for preparing himself to put down any possible discontent in advance along with paying lip service for improvement in the conditions of the country (Marat, 2008e). Marat summarizes his maneuvers as follows:

> After electricity tariffs were raised…on June 1, Bakiev appointed his brother, Janysh Bakiev, to head the National Guard. He thus secured his personal bodyguard in the face of an armed state structure. Furthermore, he increased the salaries of the internal troops, making sure that they remain loyal in case of any mass protests unravel later this year…Bakiev…announced his 'Kyrgyzstan-2020' development plan in the beginning of fall 2008 that is poignantly reminiscent of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's program 'Russia-2020' program…By creating a development program, he tried to calm public worries about the deteriorating economy, mismanagement of the energy sector and suspicions that the government is incapable of producing effective policies (Marat, 2008e).

It was clear that the above-mentioned strategies would not resolve the energy deficit and the winter was approaching. They were mere arrangements of Bakiev for protecting his office in face of a possible uprising. Therefore, Bakiev, well aware of the fact that these tactics would not be enough to prevent discontent in face of the upcoming winter, started looking for assistance from neighbors

(Ferghana.ru, 2008b). In the meanwhile, anti-Bakiev camp was busy with turning this crisis for their own advantage for challenging Bakiev circle by mobilizing the population, already devastated under economic hardship (Ferghana.ru, 2008b; Pannier, 2008a). Indeed, as ICG Report notes "inflation and the energy crisis are tests not of political technology but of governance. They threaten to lay bare the profound weaknesses of the administrative and political structures, as well as their top-to-bottom corruption" (ICG, 2008: 15). In this context, it was not surprising to see that anti-Bakiev camp endeavored to make use of the crisis. They used it "as a stick to beat the current leadership hoping to mount support for a stronger call for presidential resignation" (Ferghana.ru, 2008b). In this regard, they arranged various protests. One comes across several protests that broke out near Bishkek in late 2008, protesting gradually deteriorating living conditions in the country (Pannier, 2008a). Pannier notes an early protest where "a group of some 1,500 people demonstrated in the northern city of Talas to demand that [Bakiev] and his government start doing a better job and do it quickly" and several other protests followed suit in surrounding regions (Pannier, 2008a).

In face of increasing criticism and later, calls for his resignation, Bakiev, made use of a very different strategy than the ones we are familiar with in order to deal with the situation. According to Marat "he saw bargaining for higher returns from international partners as a new means to strengthen his regime" (Marat, 2009b). This calculation became clearer in the beginning of February 2009, when he announced his intentions to close down the Manas airbase during his visit to

Moscow[81] (ICG, 2010a: 5; Tynan, 2009a). This decision of terminating the agreement with the USA for the use of the Manas airbase (Ntvmsnbc, 2009e) was indeed welcomed enthusiastically by the Russian Federation, which awarded such decision with financial assistance: "$150 million in grants, $300 million in loans" along with promises to Kyrgyzstan to delete some of its debts and to invest in its energy sector (ICG, 2010a: 5). As a result, the Russian loans helped Kyrgyzstan get through the energy and financial crisis, strengthening Bakiev's hand vis-à-vis the 'oppositional' forces (Marat, 2009b).

Although Russian loans helped Kyrgyzstan to get out of the looming energy and financial crisis, Bakiev must have calculated that to prepare for approaching presidential elections more rigorously and to secure the continuity of his regime, he needed more loans. For this end, he made a "u-turn" regarding the U.S.A Manas airbase in June 2009 (Marat, 2009b). After guaranteeing an increase in the U.S.A's rent,[82] he renewed the agreement between Kyrgyzstan and the U.S.A regarding the base (Tynan, 2009b; Ntvmsnbc, 2009c). On June 25, the parliament, loyal to Bakiev approved it into law (Tynan, 2009b, Ntvmsnbc, 2009d). In Bohr's words, "Russia's relations with Kyrgyzstan had begun to sour" after such treatment from Bakiev (Bohr, 2010: 4) as Bakiev "simply did not return the Russian money" (ICG, 2010a: 6). Russian leadership, indeed, was surprised and disappointed by the u-turn the Kyrgyz authorities made, given its

[81] In the aftermath of September 11 attacks, Kyrgyzstan approved U.S.A's request to use Kyrgyz airspace and the Manas airbase for its operations in Afghanistan (Nichol, 2010a: i). The Russian leadership has never welcomed this base and complained about it frequently to Kyrgyz authorities (ICG, 2010a: 5).

[82] The yearly rent has been increased to $60 million (Tynan, 2009b; Namatbayeva, 2009). Kyrgyzstan also received "36.6 million dollars for reconstruction works" (Marat, 2009b).

commitments on the platforms of the CSTO, SCO and the CIS (Marat, 2009b; Muzalevsky, 2010b).

In the overall account, Bakiev's u-turn clearly signaled to his vast opportunism. In Marat's words, "Bakiev has shown his readiness to jeopardize international partnerships in return for higher financial inflows and the stability of his regime" (Marat, 2009b). Both funds clearly helped Bakiev, not only bringing the country out of the energy crisis, but also in increasing his chances of winning another term in the upcoming presidential elections (Marat, 2009b).

Bakiev did not face much opposition or resistance on the way to the Presidential Elections that would be held on June 23, 2009. According to various analysts, the opposition could not mount much challenge to him due to its fragmented nature (Eurasia Insight, 2009). Though anti-Bakiev camp endeavored to select a compromise candidate to compete with Bakiev, who appeared as the leader of the Social Democratic Party, Almazbek Atambaev (Pannier, 2009a), he was soon challenged by his own colleagues: firstly, Ismail Isakov and Temir Sariev, which "has weakened the ability of the opposition movements to challenge Bakiev" (Marat, 2009a). Not surprisingly, Bakiev received 76 per cent of the votes in the Presidential Elections, followed by Atambaev with 8 per cent (Ababakirov, 2009; Ntvmsnbc, 2009b).

According to Ababakirov, Bakiev's victory was an expected outcome due to a mix of formal and informal tactics (Ababakirov, 2009). He gives examples of these tactics as follows: "many budget workers including university and school teachers, formed a 'cheap, obedient army' of pro-Bakiev activists…Pro-governmental media outlets…provided extensive coverage of Bakiev both as a

candidate and the incumbent, while often running contentious video materials degrading the image of Almazbek Atambaev" (Ababakirov, 2009). On a parallel ground, the OSCE stated that the elections "failed to meet key OSCE commitments for democratic elections, including the commitment to maintain a clear separation between party and state. Election day was marred by many problems and irregularities, including evidence of ballot box stuffing, inaccuracies in the voter lists and some evidence of multiple voting" (OSCE, 2009:1). On the other hand, in contrast to the criticisms of OSCE observers, as ICG Report notes, "Russian President Dmitry Medvedev congratulated Bakiev on his re-election: 'the results of the elections that have just taken placed testify to the high level of trust placed in you by the people of Kirgizia'" (ICG, 2010a: f37). Similarly, SCO mission declared that it did not observe general violations during the elections (Ferghana.ru, 2009).

Needless to say, the presidential elections were followed by structural changes concerning various aspects of the governance system in the country that would widen the scope of the capture of politics and economics in the country by Bakiev circle (Toktanaliev, 2009). The already existing presidential office was replaced with a presidential institution in order to by-pass the need for wider discussion (Abdrakhmanova, 2009) by subordinating key areas of the system of governance to a small group loyal to the president which clearly strengthened the hold of Bakiev circle over all prominent assets of the country (ICG, 2010a:7; Toktanaliev, 2009).

These changes, for many, were apparent signs of Bakiev's intentions to prepare the way for Maxim (ICG, 2010a: 8). Indeed, in late October 2009,

Maxim's appointment as the head of the new Central Agency for Development, Investment and Innovation (CADII) that supervised investment policy and funds of the country strengthened such convictions (Shepherd, 2010c). This position endowed him with "strong leverage over the national economy and political life" (Marat, 2009c). Along with Maxim, Bakiev's brothers also strengthened their positions. Bohr makes this point clear enough: "while one of the President's brothers chaired the State Protection Service, another served as the ambassador to Germany and Norway, and yet a third as the State Trade Representative to China. A fourth brother headed a village administration and a fifth was a successful businessman in…Jalal-Abad" (Bohr, 2010: 2). These appointments, made in accordance with kinship relations, rather than merit, giving hints about the extent of the informal dynamics at play and reminding us of similar arrangements during Akaev regime as well.

After these arrangements in place, Bakiev circle went on with further privatizations. The privatization of Severelektro and later Kyrgyz Telekom came on the agenda in early February 2010 (ICG, 2010a: 8). Given the very low prices of these privatizations, various analysts speculated that "Maxim Bakiev had in essence sold the companies to himself at knockdown prices" (ICG, 2010a: 8). Rosa Otunbaeva also confirmed this point in her following statement:

> Since January 1, 2009, President Bakiev started to raise the price for utilities [and] taxes on real estate. Then they started to sell strategic companies. A very big electricity company, which supplied electricity to Bishkek…was sold for $3 million, which is nothing. And they were corrupt - in fact, the utility company was sold to the son of Bakiev (quoted in Weymouth, 2010).

While these privatizations were making a few influential figures richer, the living conditions of the general population were on the decline (Alkan, 2010: 25). Among the new rises, the one concerning the heating was the most drastic one with 400 per cent and devastated the society that was already struggling under the poverty line (Alkan, 2010: 25).

Bakiev circle also enforced significant changes regarding the security structures to be used in face of any possible uprisings (RFE/RL, 2010a). In February 2010, the State Security Service under the control of Janysh Bakiev and the National Guard had been combined to constitute a new presidential guard known as 'The Lion'" (The Times of Central Asia, 2010g: 5; RFE/RL, 2010a). This arrangement has been widely evaluated as a further sign for Bakiev circle's firmness on using force in face of any uprisings, widespread protests in order to avoid "Akaev's mistake" that led to his fall (ICG, 2010a: 8, 15). It was predicted that Bakiev would not be indecisive regarding the use force in the case of a mass uprising (Marat, 2010a).

Indeed, further evidence in this respect was the increasing intolerance of the Bakiev regime to any form of opposition in the country (Marat, 2009e). The number of violent attacks on the critics of the regime has been radically increased (Pannier, 2010b). Opposition leaders, human rights activists, journalists and media, which criticized his rule, came under attack (Pannier, 2010b; Beshimov, 2010). Marat points out to violent attacks in 2009 against journalists and political activists such as Syrgak Abdyldaev, Amaz Tashiev, Aleksander Knyazev, Aleksander Evgrafov and Genady Pavlyuk (Marat, 2009c). Behind these attacks and assassinations, Janysh Bakiev was assumed to stand (Marat, 2010a). Within

these confines, the message of Bakiev regime was clear: 'any criticism of the regime will be suppressed by coercion'.

Given the above-mentioned developments, it is often argued that since the December 2007 Parliamentary Elections, Bakiev regime showed signs to shift from a weak to strong presidentialism with more authoritarian tones to suppress any 'opposition' which is considered as "'decentralizing tendencies'" in the country (ICG, 2008: 5). Alkan as well considers Bakiev's endeavors to establish his power as a manifestation of "a process of the transition from a weak presidentialism to a super presidentialism" (Alkan, 2009: 372). Despite the fact that Bakiev seemingly achieved his ends with respect to the above-mentioned coercive tactics for almost two years in the aftermath of the December 2007 elections, April 2010 events once again revealed the persistence of the dispersed nature of power in the country. This was mainly because the main parameter of politics in the country remained intact. Bakiev circle's centralizing efforts mainly depended on informal dynamics as well. In other words, despite the fact that, Bakiev circle enforced several centralizing attempts, these efforts mainly ended up contributing to the decisive role of informal dynamics as they continued to remain within the same political game and depended on "a narrow group of relatives and trusted aides" (ICG, 2008: 7). Instead of centralizing on formal grounds, power has been narrowed down on informal grounds. Hence not only the informal nature of politics, but also the personalized and dispersed nature of power was preserved and continued to provide the grounds for persistence of instability, which clearly came into view in the mass uprisings that surfaced in April 2010.

5.3. April 2010 Events

Considered on the grounds of the socio-political context covered in the previous sections of this study, the dramatic increase of prices for electricity and natural gas triggered social unrest in the beginning of 2010 (Kang & Turner, 2010; The Times of Central Asia, 2010e: 1). If one takes into account the fact that the monthly "average income in Kyrgyzstan is US$ 60" the additional extent of the economic hardship brought about by these increases on the general population becomes apparent (Mursunkulova, 2010). Emir Kulov, during my interview, confirmed this point as well. He stated that "people could not afford 3000-4000 soms to pay for electricity given their low income. They had nothing left to lose at this point, struggling way below the poverty line" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). Indeed, in my interview, Gulnova Ibraeva pointed out that "these people were living below the poverty line and were people who had nothing to lose. This was the main drive for joining protests" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). Hence, economic hardship was among the most effective factors in triggering protests.

The first demonstration to protest price increases took place in February in Naryn, followed by demonstrations and kurultai organized by 'opposition' leaders in Bishkek, Talas, Naryn in March (Eurasia Insight, 2010b; Shepherd, 2010c; ICG, 2010a: 9). The eighth anniversary of the Aksy-events was the day when 'opposition' forces held a kurultai in Bishkek; chose Rosa Otunbaeva as the leader of the bloc; put forth a list of demands for the president to abide by (Mursunkulova, 2010; Nichol, 2010b:1-2). All of these were strategies that we are

familiar with from the previous mass demonstrations, namely Aksy events and February - March 2005 events.

The demands put forward mainly revolved around the intended succession of Maxim Bakiev; the corrupt privatizations; the rising taxes and utility prices; and political repression of the Bakiev regime (Shepherd, 2010c; Mursunkulova, 2010). The 'opposition' camp also declared that Bakiev regime had time to embark on these demands until 24 March, 2010, which coincided with the fifth anniversary of the 'Tulip Revolution' and if not taken seriously, threaten to arrange a huge protest in Bishkek (Alkan, 2010: 26). Not surprisingly, Bakiev did not give any response to these demands (Eurasia Insight, 2010a; Alkan, 2010: 26; Shepherd, 2010a).

At this point, it is worth noting that these developments revealed not only that the 'opposition' was making use of the same strategies it made use of during Akaev era – such as mobilizing supporters to hold demonstrations, holding kurultai, declaring demands list, choosing a leader to the opposition bloc etc., but also Bakiev circle was referring to the same tactics Akaev used in face of discontent, namely ignorance and coercion. This signal to the fact that main parameters of Kyrgyz politics pretty much stayed the same in the following five years after Akaev's fall back in 2005.

Bakiev's irresponsive attitude to the demands of the 'opposition' triggered further confrontations. In response, on April 6, protesters stormed government offices in Talas (The Times of Central Asia, 2010f). According to ICG Report "Interior Minister Modomusa Kongantiyev was sent to restore order, a sign of the government's growing concern. He was taken hostage by the demonstrators and

according to some versions, savagely beaten – part as a warning to other senior regime figures, part as demonstrating their determination" (ICG, 2010a: 9). Responding to the demonstrations in Talas, government accused Almazbek Atambaev and Omurbek Tekebaev along with others (such as Isa Omurkulov and Temir Sariev) of provoking the unrest in Talas and detained them (Eurasia Insight, 2010c; Nichol, 2010b: 2). On April 7, turbulence spread to Naryn, Chuy and Issyk-Kul regions, where government buildings were also seized by the protesters (Nichol, 2010b: 2). According to Nichol, "even some district administrations in southwestern Jalal-Abad, president Bakiev's home region, were occupied by protesters" (Nichol, 2010b: 2).

However, in Bishkek, there was another story. The nature of the events in the capital on April 7, 2010, according to my interviews and various reports was more of a spontaneous nature. In my interview, Temirkulov underlined that in the morning of April 7 in Bishkek, protests started out with at most 300 protestors who were called upon by their informal leaders to the protests. The protests were initially passing by calmly until snipers started to shoot at these protestors (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010). According to Marat, these snipers, "dispatched on the rooftop of a government building" were engaged by Janysh Bakiev (Marat, 2010a). In the events, 86 people were killed and over 1,000 were injured[83] (Muzalevsky, 2010a; Marat, 2010a).

Temirkulov stated that the killings constituted the decisive turning point and led to thousands of protestors to join spontaneously to the first hundreds of

[83] Later, Bakiev said that "I did not order troops to shoot at civilians," blaming it on his guards. He argued that his guards "retaliated by themselves" (quoted in The Times of Central Asia, 2010f: 2).

protestors. In his words, “those snipers killing people drew the attention of the general populace to the events and made many to join in spontaneously in face of this injustice; government killing its own citizens” (Author’s Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010). ICG Report also underlines the spontaneous nature of the events in Bishkek as follows: “thousands of people who converged on the presidential offices notably lacked banners, slogans or megaphones and were more likely to be equipped with sticks and later on shields and weapons taken from the police. They were male, mostly young and resembled a loose fighting force” (ICG, 2010a: 9), from Bishkek and its suburbs (Marat, 2010a). Indeed, Ibraeva also added in my interview that “these events were very spontaneous, nobody led them actually. Any attempt to get the ownership of this uprising was really interpreted negatively among the people” (Author’s Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010). These remarks make the spontaneous nature of the events in the capital on April 7, 2010 clear.

Subsequently, despite the declaration of a nationwide state of emergency, protesters overpowered the security forces (Nichol, 2010b: 2). They occupied the presidential office and later various other governmental buildings, the state television and radio buildings and they burned the Attorney General’s office down (Nichol, 2010b: 3). In face of the uprising, the president escaped from the presidential office and ran away to Jalal-Abad (Shepherd, 2010a).

‘Opposition’ forces declared an interim/provisional government immediately on April 8, 2010 as the anti-Akaev camp did five years ago (Nichol, 2010b: 3). As mentioned above, this provisional government emerged out of the kurultai formed on 17 March 2010 to bring together growing anti-Bakiev

demonstrations. Rosa Otunbaeva, who was elected as the leader of this 'opposition' bloc (as was the case with Bakiev five years ago as the leader of PMK), was declared acting prime minister (Bohr, 2010: 3). She pronounced the obedience of the interim government with all international agreements of Kyrgyzstan[84] and that "the existing constitution would remain in place until a new one was drafted and approved by the citizenry" (Nichol, 2010b:3). She signaled to the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections within six months of time (Bohr, 2010:3). Otunbaeva also announced the members of the interim government that would be serving until a parliamentary election was held.[85] After these appointments, the interim government embarked on to take the decisions of Bakiev administration back especially concerning the privatization of hydropower sites; the prices for water, electricity and heat were decreased (Ntvmsnbc, 2010b); the broadcast of Radio Free Europe and others were allowed (Marat, 2010a).

However, Bakiev appeared more insistent in holding on to power, compared to Akaev, which led to a confrontation between Bakiev and the interim government in the following days (Bohr, 2010: 6). Initially, the provisional government proposed that Bakiev could leave the country securely in return of his resignation; however, this offer was soon of the table (Shepherd, 2010b). Actually, Bakiev was not eager to comply as well, as he continued to insist that he was Kyrgyzstan's legitimate president and refused to recognize the provisional

[84] On the same day, Otunbaeva stated that "the status of the Manas Transit Center would not be immediately affected" though she gave the signs for corruption investigations regarding the base (Nichol, 2010b:3).

[85] The interim government included Almazbek Atambaev as the First Deputy Prime Minister, in charge of economic issues; Temir Sariev, as Deputy Minister in charge of finances; Omurbek Tekebaev, as Deputy Minister in charge of constitutional reform; and Azimbek Beknazarov, as Deputy Minister in charge of public prosecution; Ismail Isakov as Defense Minister; Edil Baisalov as Chief of Staff (ICG, 2010a:10; The Times of Central Asia, 2010f: 2; Bohr, 2010:3).

government (Alkan, 2010: 27; Shepherd, 2010b). Hence, "the new leadership stripped him of his presidential immunity" (Shepherd, 2010b). Along with him, the arrest of Bakiev's Prime Minister Usenov, Bakiev's sons Maxim and Marat along with his brother Janysh on charges of corruption and involvement in the killings of April 7 were also called upon by the interim government (Shepherd, 2010b).

Consequently, the supporters of Bakiev began protests in Jalal-Abad (Shepherd, 2010b). The confrontation between Bakiev supporters and interim government escalated, indicating to the high potential for further conflict as long as Bakiev resided in Kyrgyzstan (Siegel, 2010; Kuebler, 2010; The Times of Central Asia, 2010a; Shepherd, 2010b). In this respect, as a result of the negotiations supervised by the OSCE between the interim government and the presidents of Russian Federation, the U.S.A and Kazakhstan, Bakiev changed his strategy and stated that he would resign and leave the country if his and his family's security is guaranteed (BBCNews, 2010b; Shepherd, 2010b; Ntvmsnbc, 2010c). On April 15th, "he and his wife were being flown to the southern Kazakh city of Taraz via military cargo plane, having left behind a signed resignation letter" (Shepherd 2010b). From there, they moved on to Belarus on April 19, where President Alexander Lukashenko sincerely welcomed them by offering asylum (Houlton, 2010). By defining the overthrow of Bakiev as "an anti-constitutional coup d'état", Lukashenko refused to hand Kurmanbek Bakiev over to the interim government[86] (The Times of Central Asia, 2010b: 3).

[86] Later, on September 6, 2010, Otunbaeva issued an amnesty to the officials under Bakiev's regime to be valid until October 1, 2010 (Osmonov, 2010e). This amnesty gave these figures a chance to pay their debts for the funds they have gained illegitimately when they were in office in

In the overall account, just five years after the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' there emerged another mass uprising in Kyrgyzstan that led to the overthrow of the President once again (Muzalevsky, 2010a). The uprisings of April 2010 which led to the fall of Bakiev confirmed that 2005 events did not conclude an era, but what followed suit continued with the same parameters shaping Kyrgyz politics. Indeed, two mass uprisings leading to the overthrows of the presidents in such a short period of time raised doubts about prospects for stability in the country. In Engvall's words, "the upheaval in Kyrgyzstan – the second in five years – raises the question whether Kyrgyzstan has any serious prospects of developing into a stable, sovereign state, let alone one with a pluralistic political system" (Engvall, 2010).

Within this context, one can draw attention to several parallels and differences between the events in 2005 and in 2010 that led to the ouster of the presidents in Kyrgyzstan. In general, one can argue that almost all of the key elements of informal dynamics were at play in both cases. Even a brief examination of the general context and triggers along with the primary actors and factors provides supporting evidence for this conviction.

To start, in both cases, as analyzed throughout this chapter, the contexts of the protests were similar. They both took place in a socio-political context whose main parameters were shaped by the decisive role of informal dynamics at all levels of the governance system. In this system, a mix of formal and informal

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exchange of "refraining from state services and politics for the following five years" (Osmonov, 2010e). According to Osmonov, "while some claim this is a desperate attempt to relieve the state budget deficit, others see it as a way of neutralizing political opponents in advance of the October [2010] Parliamentary Elections" (Osmonov, 2010e).

strategies nurtured the family rules of the presidents, which excluded various figures from the captures of economics and politics and turning them into 'opposition' and threw the general population into the hardship of widespread poverty (Khamidov, 2010). In Bakiev era, especially the intimate relations between underworld and politics and his efforts at narrowing his power vertical, created great concern in comparison with Akaev period (Kupadatze, 2008: 287). However, neither Akaev, nor Bakiev regimes could consolidate power in the country: power remained dispersed among various informal networks. This is evident in the fact that the excluded figures, local/regional political entrepreneurs, managed to mobilize their supporters, relatives, families, and constituencies, better-said "human resources" (Juraev, 2008: 260) to protests in order to put an end to their exclusion by furthering informal dynamics. In the overall account, formal grounds of politics could not take root in the country; general population, devastated under economic hardship, has been manipulated and the country has been trapped in a vicious circle of persistent instability.

Situated within the above mentioned context, the immediate triggers of 2005 and 2010 events seem different at first glance. While in 2005, as analyzed in detail in the previous chapter, the tense political atmosphere due to the deregistration of candidates on the way to parliamentary elections and later the fraudulent elections in a context of widespread poverty triggered the protests; in 2010, the main trigger appeared as the dramatic increase in the utility prices again in a context of widespread poverty (Alkan, 2010: 25; Muzalevsky, 2010a). Hence, one can argue that widespread poverty was a common denominator in both uprisings, which facilitated the mobilization of people.

Khamidov (2010) also underlines the differing "level of violence" in each of the mass uprisings. While in March 2005 events, security forces did not open fire on the demonstrators; in April 2010, as expected due to the prior course of events, Bakievs did not think twice regarding the use of force against the protestors. This is why the events in 2005 generally passed peacefully, while in 2010, almost a hundred people died and a thousand got injured (Muzalevsky, 2010a; Marat, 2010a). Bakiev's violent response is also what gave the protests in Bishkek a more spontaneous, in Khamidov's words, "sporadic and chaotic" nature in comparison to the one in the capital back in 2005 (Khamidov, 2010). Hence, as Temirkulov indicates, on organizational grounds, while in 2005 the protests in the capital on March 24 were the most organized; in 2010, protests in the capital after the killings on April 7, 2010 were the most spontaneous ones (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010; Temirkulov, 2010).

Moreover, both events had a regional character. While in 2005 events, southerners were in the front line, this time northerners have taken the lead. Protests were mainly organized by northerners, northern informal leaders from Talas, Naryn and Chuy (Shepherd, 2010c), calling upon their power bases, "human resources" (Juraev, 2008: 260) to protests starting from March 2010 (Alkan, 2010: 25-27). However, as in 2005, there was a cross cutting element of anti-Bakiev sentiment both in the north and the south. Dukanbaev confirmed this point in my interview as well; "although in 2005, there were some northerners who opposed Akaev's regime and in 2010, there were some southerners (such as Tekebaev, leader of the Ata-Meken Party) mainly northern politicians appeared in the front line of the events in 2010" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14,

2010). And many of these northerners were actually the ones who were among the 'revolutionaries' of the 'Tulip Revolution', namely the anti-Akaev camp with Bakiev back then (ICG, 2010a: 2; Khamidov, 2010).

Another similar feature of April 2010 events to the ones in February-March 2005 was the speculations that followed suit concerning an external power that could have set these events up and led to the overthrow of Bakiev so quickly (Kramer, 2010; Pan, 2010; Nichol, 2010b:7). To remind, various Western analysts and some officials in Russian Federation and Central Asia, February-March 2005 events were laid at the door of Western forces with respect to its democracy assistance to NGOs. This time, the favorite candidate appeared as the Russian Federation in Western media with a special regard on Bakiev's u-turn regarding the status of Manas base (Nichol, 2010b:7; Pan, 2010; Leonard, 2010). However, despite the souring of the relations between Kyrgyzstan and Russian Federation (Bohr, 2010: 4), Russian Federation did not seem to conspire into these events and in its aftermath, she kept her distance (Trilling, 2010). According to ICG Report, tensions between Russian leadership and the Bakiev administration possibly played a "secondary psychological role" given that the Russian media covered the accusations of the 'opposition' forces against Bakiev regime on the way to April events (ICG, 2010a: 12). ICG Report, indeed, notes that "on 23 March, Russia's First TV Channel launched an… attack on the Bakiev regime, describing it as 'enmeshed in family ties and corruption' – echoing the demonstrators' accusations" (ICG, 2010a: 12). Besides this minor support on the level of Russian media during the events, the officials from Russian Federation acted prudently and considered the situation in Kyrgyzstan as Kyrgyzstan's internal issue. In the

overall account, “Moscow’s undoubted anger at its treatment by the Bakiev regime was not accompanied by a consistent plan of action” (ICG, 2010a: 12). Accordingly, in the aftermath of the events, Prime Minister Putin stated that Russia did not have any role in April 2010 events (Leonard, 2010) and that “the only thing I can say is that neither Russia, nor your humble servant, nor Russian officials have anything to do with these events” (quoted in Muzalevsky, 2010a). Then he recognized the interim government and offered humanitarian aid (Nichol, 2010b:6-7). Otunbaeva also claimed that the belief that Bakiev's overthrow was arranged by Russian support was misplaced. She said that “I do not agree with that. Bakiev closed Russian TV channels in Kyrgyzstan; he closed Internet sites where the situation was described. Then the Russian press started to show what the face of the authorities was. So that was probably counted as Russian support- but [it] was a correct reflection of the situation in Kyrgyzstan” (quoted in Weymouth, 2010).

While this was the case regarding the reactions of the Russian Federation, on the other hand, in Central Asian states, media repeated what it had done back in 2005 and did not pay much attention to the events in Kyrgyzstan, revealing once again the fear of Central Asian presidents from a spillover effect (Nichol, 2010b: 8; Najibullah, 2010b). It was mainly stressed that “other Central Asian presidents were particularly alarmed that their common practices of nepotism and the designation of children as successors were apparent factors in the popular uprising against Bakiev” (Nichol, 2010b: 8). In this context, it is not surprising to see the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) on May 8 summit, “called the regime change in Kyrgyzstan unconstitutional and urged the new

Kyrgyz administration to restore constitutional legality to the country" (Weitz, 2010). In the overall account, Central Asian neighbors did not want to get involved in these events which they considered the internal affairs of Kyrgyzstan. They kept their distance even during the violent conflicts that followed suit in June 2010.

5.4. Provisional Government

Standing on the ruins left by the Bakiev regime, the provisional government initially announced that it would remain in power for six months, until a new constitution is prepared and parliamentary and presidential elections are carried on (Bohr, 2010:3; Nichol, 2010b:3). Later the presidential elections were delayed to the end of 2011, with Rosa Otunbaeva[87] remaining as 'caretaker president' in office until then (Pravda.ru, 2010; ICG, 2010b: fn21).

The new government contained various figures from Kyrgyzstan's wide-ranging 'opposition' that worked together previously with Bakiev, in the overthrow of President Askar Akaev in the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' and then took place in various Bakiev administrations[88] (Shepherd, 2010c). When Bakiev

[87] Born in 1950, in Osh, Otunbaeva served in various positions during post-Soviet era (Nichol, 2010a:1). She was Kyrgyzstan's Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister (1992); Ambassador to the U.S.A and Canada (1992-1994); Foreign Minister (1994-1997); Ambassador to the United Kingdom (1998-2001); deputy head of the U.N. special mission to Georgia (2002-2004) (Nichol, 2010a:1). "In late 2004, she co-founded the Ata-Jurt (Fatherland) Party" (Nichol, 2010a:1). She was among the opposition forces during the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' in 2005 (Nichol, 2010a: 1).

[88] To remind, Rosa Otunbaeva was the Foreign Minister after the 2005 events; Almazbek Atambaev, was Bakiev's Prime Minister and Minister of Finance; Temir Sariev a parliamentarian; Azimbek Beknazarov was Bakiev's Attorney General; and Ismail Isakov, was his Defense Minister from 2005-2008 (ICG, 2010a: 10).

started to exclude them from his narrow circle of supporters, they turned into 'opposition' (Shepherd, 2010c). As the members of the provisional government served in Bakiev administrations; as there have always been internal conflicts between the prominent figures of the 'opposition camp' owing to their lack of an unifying agenda, expectations were not high among the population at the time of their taking of power (ICG, 2010b: 4).

5.4.1. Violent Conflicts

In the aftermath of the overthrow of Bakiev, the provisional government initially could not establish stability especially in the southern parts of Kyrgyzstan. As mentioned above, just after the April 2010 events, supporters of Bakiev caused unrest in Kyrgyzstan's south (Weir, 2010). These events were followed by further unrest in May and June of this year.

To start, the unrest first broke out on April 19, when a crowd composed of mainly ethnic Kyrgyz occupied land near "Maevka village that belonged to mostly Mekshetian Turks" (Osmonov, 2010a). As they did during every political vacuum in the country - to remind property redistribution was a worrying concern in the immediate aftermath of the February-March 2005 events as well- looters insisted that the interim government reallocate land among ethnic Kyrgyz claiming that "Kyrgyz land should belong to the Kyrgyz people" (Osmonov, 2010a). As a result of these attacks, five people died and over forty people were hurt (Osmonov, 2010a; Ntvmsnbc, 2010a). Although the attacks were seen as

inter-ethnic clashes, authorities concluded that they were organized by criminal networks and land mafia (Osmonov, 2010a).

These events were followed suit by more intense ones. In May, Bakiev supporters occupied the regional government buildings in Batken along with those in Osh and Jalal-Abad, with the aim of bringing Bakiev back to the country and power (Osmonov, 2010b). Kadircan Batyrov, the leader of Uzbek community in Kyrgyzstan grasped the chance to prove his support for the interim government in face of such incidence[89] by forcing out Bakiev supporters from the buildings they have occupied in the south with the support of the protesters from Rodina (party of Kyrgyzstan's Uzbek citizens) and Ata-Meken Party (ICG, 2010b: 8). Bakiev supporters and these forces clashed, triggering a new source of unrest that would lead to unpleasant consequences in the following days (ICG, 2010b: 8). According to the ICG Report, "that night an event took place that, in the view of many observers, galvanized Kyrgyz suspicions of a resurgent Uzbek menace. A mob burned houses belonging to former President Bakiev and his relatives in Teyit. Most accounts hold Batyrov responsible" (ICG, 2010b: 9). The burning down of the houses of Bakievs led to further demonstrations in Jalal-Abad, where a demand for Batyrov's arrest was voiced (Radnitz, 2010). What's more, on 19 May, supporters of Bakiev attacked the University of People's Friendship founded by Batyrov; two people were killed and many others were injured (Radnitz, 2010). The interim government sent security forces to establish stability in the region and

[89] According to ICG Report, in a speech to the Uzbek community on April 8, Batyrov emphasized that "Uzbeks wanted to play a role in this new phase of the country's history" and claimed that "Kyrgyzstan's Uzbek citizens would 'no longer be observers' of events," while "denying any interest in an autonomous Uzbek region in the south" (ICG, 2010b:8).

appeased the events only to a very limited extent by imposing a curfew (Osmonov, 2010b).

According to ICG Report, May in Jalal-Abad gave the first signs of the forthcoming clashes in June in Osh. "Had these issues been addressed firmly in May by the central government and had the international community, Crisis Group included paid enough attention to press the government to do so events in Osh might have been mitigated or prevented" (ICG, 2010b:7). Yet, at the time, such attention was not paid and events escalated to further conflicts and violence in the following days.

On June 10, a minor conflict between young Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Osh stroked the match in the already tense atmosphere in the south (Osmonov, 2010c), leading to violence between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities[90] (ICG, 2010b:11; Pannier, 2010c). Within days, unrest and attacks stretched from Osh to Jalal-Abad where ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks clashed (Pannier, 2010c). After the conflict gained impetus and spread to surrounding regions, Otunbaeva asked for peacekeeping forces from the Russian Federation in order to settle down the clashes, but Russian authorities declined this request by considering these events as an internal issue of Kyrgyzstan (The Times of Central Asia, 2010b: 2; Osmonov, 2010c; Pannier, 2010c). In other words, Russian Federation along with other members of the CSTO, in line with their usual geopolitical calculations, did not want to risk becoming part of the violent events in Kyrgyzstan (ICG, 2010b:

[90] Uzbek citizens of Kyrgyzstan reside mainly in Jalal-Abad and Osh as mentioned in Chapter 3. Depending on the data of 2009 census, ICG Report states that "there are 768,000 Uzbeks, many employed in agriculture and commerce…They constitute the majority in a number of major districts, including Karasuu and Uzgen, just outside Osh city, and make up over 40%of that city's population" (ICG, 2010b:1).

21-22; Radnitz, 2010). On the other hand, in my interview, Martha Brill Olcott stated that "actually OSCE offered to provide police force for peace-keeping to Otunbaeva, but she rejected this proposal" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 12, 2010). When I asked about this decision of the interim government to Dukanbaev, he said that "Otunbaeva was concerned with the reaction of pro-Bakiev forces and Kyrgyz nationalists, who did not want any international assistance whatsoever and who threatened to disintegrate Kyrgyz society further. Otunbaeva could not ignore these factors at such a tense atmosphere" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010). In the end, the interim government took back its request of any peace keeping forces from external powers. Indeed, "on June 17, the defense minister of the interim government Ismail Isakov declared that the Kyrgyz provisional authorities are capable of stabilizing the situation with their own measures and do not need international peacekeeping forces" (The Times of Central Asia, 2010b).

However, this did not reflect the true course of events; the situation could not be taken under control by the interim government right away and led to grave consequences: deaths and violence. In the overall account, ICG Report asserts that "an explosion of violence, destruction and looting in southern Kyrgyzstan on 11-14 June 2010 killed many hundreds of people, mostly Uzbeks, destroyed over 2000 buildings, mostly homes, and deepened the gulf between the country's ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks" (ICG, 2010b: i). The number of deaths differs according to various estimates, yet, it is almost accepted that more than 300 people died and more than 2,000 were injured (Osmonov, 2010c; Demirtepe, 2010a; The Times of Central Asia, 2010b: 2). Moreover, the violence created a

humanitarian crisis and compelled hundreds of thousands of Uzbeks to escape as refugees to Uzbekistan (Radnitz, 2010) where they were located in refugee camps near Andijan (ICG, 2010b: 19; Osmonov, 2010c). According to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, June events in the south of Kyrgyzstan led to the displacement of more than 400000 people (The Times of Central Asia, 2010c: 2) and "destroyed Kyrgyzstan's second big city" (Radnitz, 2010). According to ICG Report, "by early August 75,000 people were still displaced, half without homes to return to" (ICG, 2010b: 18).

Regarding the causes of this humanitarian crisis, most of the observers, journalists and international organizations have underlined the role of ethnic drives. For example, "Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said killings have been taking place on the basis of ethnicity and that the violence appears to be orchestrated, targeted and well-planned" (The Times of Central Asia, 2010b: 1). The interim government, on the other hand, claimed that the conflict was fueled by Bakievs and their supporters (James, 2010; Osmonov, 2010c) in order to destabilize the country before the upcoming Constitutional Referendum scheduled for June 27 that would provide legitimacy to the interim government (Osmonov, 2010c). Deputy Head of the interim government Almazbek Atambaev along with the deputy head of the National Security Service, Kubatbek Baibolov put the blame on Maxim Bakiev and Janysh Bakiev for flaming the tensions as well (The Times of Central Asia, 2010b:2). In their account, these figures provoked conflicts between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in the south by "using foreign armed militants and local criminals" (Osmonov, 2010c). Indeed, there appeared phone conversations between Maxim

Bakiev and Janysh Bakiev on YouTube that provided supporting evidence for these accusations (ICG, 2010b: 17). In these conversations, Maxim Bakiev and Janysh Bakiev appear as planning to take power back by disturbing already fragile state of relations between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities[91] (ICG, 2010b: 17; Demirtepe, 2010a). Nonetheless, former President Bakiev rejected all these blames. He claimed that "in light of their incapability to control the situation in the country, it is easy for them to lay the blame at my door" (quoted in Osmonov, 2010c).

In the end of June, the official explanations of the humanitarian crisis have been declared, which blamed three groups for the June 2010 events in the south of the country (ICG, 2010b:14). As cited in ICG report, these groups included "the Bakiev family; representatives of 'national cultural centers' – ["a clear reference to Batyrov and his supporters" (ICG, 2010b:15)] – and a broad alliance of Islamic terrorists, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Islamic Jihad Union, the Taliban and the United Tajik Opposition" (ICG, 2010b:14). This declaration portrayed the violent conflicts mainly as manipulations of external forces, fueling the already delicate state of relations between the two communities residing in the south. ICG Group did not find this declaration convincing and implied that various Kyrgyz authorities might have been involved in the events as well (ICG: 2010b: 16, 27). Indeed, soon it came out that their statement has merit; on August 5, 2010, Otunbaeva admitted in an interview that "Kyrgyz security

[91] The conversation can be found on YouTube: (ICG, 2010b: fn 129) www.youtube.com/watch?v=6KB8GAnNM78&feature=related;www.youtube.com/watchv=UTeKQRMYmSA&feature=related;www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZolZJUA8B80&NR=1;www.youtube.com/watch?v=biR2qlMqc88&feature=related

forces abused the rights of Uzbeks in the wake of deadly ethnic riots in June" (quoted in RFERL, 2010b).

During my interview, Dukanbaev signaled to the fact that there was an ongoing tension between the two communities and both Akaev and Bakiev did nothing to find a balancing compromise between them (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010). Hence, the delicate balance between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities, which was a well known fact, but has not been tackled responsibly since independence led to violence in the context of power and security vacuum in the aftermath of the overthrow of Bakiev regime. However, besides this ripe ground for unrest, he also pointed out to the involvement of criminal factors in the events. Dukanbaev claimed that in these events "few criminals who had no nationality but only interests, without any concern for the detriment of the ordinary people in the region" played a significant role (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010).

Kulov, similarly, mentioned that the second leader of Uzbek community who was affiliated with drug trafficking and criminal world and in conflict with Batyrov was killed actually two weeks before June events (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010), signaling to a local context to the events along with social and political background discussed above. Likewise, Aida Alymbaeva also stressed the influence of the criminal world, especially drug-trafficking and claimed that "these figures did not want the new government to gain legitimacy and spoil their business in the south" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010; Madi, 2004). Indeed, according to ICG Report, narcotics made use of the chaos that broke out in the region for the smuggling of drugs through Kyrgyzstan

to a significant extent and supported the attackers by providing weapons (ICG, 2010b: 25). These remarks underlined the role of criminal networks in the events, which has been a growing concern especially since the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' fostered further by Bakiev circle as discussed in the previous section.

Giorgio Fiacconi, on the other hand, pointed out to a mixture of causes in triggering these events as follows:

> Kyrgyz and Uzbeks of the Ferghana Valley have lived together in peace for centuries and to explain today's unrest and violence only by interethnic reasons is certainly not correct if external provocation is not considered. Whether this provocation comes from the Bakiev clan or criminal groups or some other interested parties is not clear – probably there is a combination of factors" (Fiacconi, 2010:5).

In the overall account, the forces behind the violence of June 2010 events are not yet known to a full extent and ICG Report seems right that "without…[a] convincing investigation into the violence, its causes and perpetrators, reconciliation will be impossible" (ICG, 2010b: 27). Yet, in order to do so first of all, an established authority has to be formed in Kyrgyzstan, which is expected to be constituted in the aftermath of the October 2010 parliamentary elections.

Many traits of June 2010 events indeed reminded us of the Osh uprising back in 1990, which was covered in Chapter 3. Back then, on the way to the collapse of the Union and in the context of emerging power vacuum, "the general economic depression of the region…created a fertile climate for blaming the 'other' group for limiting economic opportunities" (Dave, 2004, 145). Similarly, after twenty years, this humanitarian crisis came about. There was once again "a

weak and tentative provisional government [which] was struggling to present a semblance of leadership and steer the country through to elections in October" (ICG, 2010b:1) in a widespread context of poverty. In both cases the involvement of criminal networks has been underlined as well.

However, there also appeared differences between the Osh events in 1990 and 2010. This time, there were no external powers to put an end to the crisis. While back in 1990, as Radnitz indicated, "Moscow imposed a curfew and sent tanks into the city [Osh]" to settle the conflict; in 2010, there has not been any "equivalent external source of stability" (Radnitz, 2010). Indeed, Kyrgyzstan was left on its own during these hard times of turbulence. According to Radnitz, this was not surprising because "the U.S. sees Kyrgyzstan as strategically unimportant – with the exception of its military base at Manas - and Russia seeks to maintain influence but does not want to involve itself in a messy…conflict" (Radnitz, 2010). In this regard, it is also telling to see Beknazarov pointing out to the unwillingness of the SCO and the CSTO, which both, according to him, "ignored" Kyrgyzstan when Kyrgyz authorities requested help from them (RFE/RL, 2010d).

In the overall account, the major implication of the June 2010 events in Kyrgyzstan was the fact that the relations between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the south has been destroyed (Abazov, 2010). As Abazov puts into words: "the political turbulence…shook the very foundation of the Kyrgyz state and society… especially in a country divided by many lines of conflicts – not only political but also inter-ethnic, regional and clan – as well as a deep urban - rural divide" (Abazov, 2010). These events once again displayed the dangerous potentials of

existing fault lines in the country, prone to manipulation by various sorts of informal dynamics.

Furthermore, these events revealed not only the extent of power vacuum, but also that of the security vacuum prevailing in Kyrgyzstan and their grave consequences for the general population (Radnitz, 2010). In Radnitz's words, "it was now apparent that law enforcement agencies did not have control in the southern regions, implying that further organized violence could not be prevented and perpetrators would have little fear of being caught and punished" (Radnitz, 2010). This problem, which gave its signs since the immediate aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution' – as discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, is still a prevailing concern in the country, which - but nothing has been done to tackle this problem since then.

Moreover, these events further made clear the decisiveness of the informal dynamics at play. I have already mentioned the role of criminal networks among these dynamics above. To give supporting evidence for the decisiveness of the informal dynamics on political grounds, one can refer to the emergence of new influential local/regional political entrepreneurs. Among these figures, one can cite the mayor of Osh, namely Melis Myrzakmatov (RFE/RL, 2010g). According to ICG Report, he appeared as "the main political winner to emerge from the crisis" (ICG, 2010b: 25). The mayor of Osh has come out from the June 2010 events "with political strength…as the south's pivotal political figure" (ICG, 2010b: i). While he rejected connections to the organization of the June events, the following statement of the mayor is telling: "I know just one thing. The Uzbeks were encroaching on Kirgiziya's sovereignty. We repulsed them" (quoted

in ICG, 2010b:16). After the crisis, he further stated that "the directives of the temporary government have no judicial force in the south of the country" (RFE/RL, 2010e). He even asserted that "we will transfer the capital to Osh" (ICG, 2010b: 27). In face of such provocations, Rosa Otunbaeva endeavored to appease and replace him; yet, the fragmented nature of the interim government prevented her from doing so as several members of the interim government opposed her attempt in this direction (ICG, 2010b: 26). This instance once again reveals the dispersed nature of power in the country and the fact that informal dynamics still play significant roles in shaping the course of events in Kyrgyz politics.

5.4.2. Referendum 2010: From Presidential to Parliamentary System

One of the major promises of the interim government when they took power on April 8, 2010 was to pass on a new constitution through a referendum (Marat, 2010b). For this end, on May 21, 2010, interim government make public the new draft constitution on which a constitutional commission has been working since the beginning of May (Nichol, 2010b: 5). This draft "reflect[ed] the changes made based on an informal public debate that followed the publication of an earlier version on April 26, 2010" (Carnegie Endowment, 2010). In this draft on the way to parliamentary system from presidential system, there were various changes to the constitution of Kyrgyzstan (Carnegie Endowment, 2010). Among the most important changes, the transfer of many presidential powers to the prime minister has taken the lead. Otunbaeva made the reasons that lay behind such an

arrangement clear in her special interview to TRT as early as April 23, 2010. She said that "family rule brought nothing to Kyrgyzstan; parliamentary system will bring about equality" (TRTHaber, 2010). Atambaev also said that "every president, in five years turns into a khan; in order to prevent this, Kyrgyzstan needs to turn into a parliamentary system such as Turkey, Germany. The president will work for the people; president will be in the service of the people" (Stratejik Düşünce Enstitüsü, 2010). Other changes included were an increase in the number of seats in the parliament from 90 to 120; strengthening of the role of political parties in Kyrgyz politics, and a limit of 65 seats for any single party (Osmonov, 2010d; RFE/RL, 2010c) in order to make sure that no party would attempt to dominate the parliament and endeavor to change the constitution to its own liking (RFE/RL, 2010c). This was arranged to pave the way for coalitions as well (RFE/RL, 2010c).

The interim government was very eager to put these changes into effect as soon as possible. While Kyrgyzstan was disturbed by the violent conflicts in Osh and Jalal-Abad throughout June, the interim government was working on the constitution drafts simultaneously (ICG, 2010b:19). In other words, despite the conflicts that broke out in the beginning of the June, the provisional government continued to pursue its plans with a referendum on a new constitution to be held on 27 June in order to validate its legitimacy as quickly as possible (ICG, 2010b:19; Marat, 2010b). This was considered as a necessity as apparent in the words of Tekebaev, Deputy Minister in charge of constitutional reform (ICG, 2010a:10) who stated that "before the election could take place, a referendum on a

new constitution would have to be held" (Penfold, 2010). In this respect, the country has been urged to the constitutional referendum.

In the referendum, Kyrgyz people would be asked to say yes or no to a shift to a parliamentary republic, where the competences of the president would be reduced along with the appointment of the acting Prime Minister Rosa Otunbaeva as acting President until December 2011 - without any other candidate contesting for the position (Osmonov, 2010d). In other words, the approval of the draft constitution in the referendum would mean the approval of Otunbaeva's presidency as well (Osmonov, 2010d).

Given the turbulence in the south of the country, the interim government took various measures in order to ensure participation in the referendum (Osmonov, 2010d); however, despite these efforts, according to the official results, 72.2 per cent of the registered voters participated in the referendum, of which 90.5 per cent voted confirmative (RFE/RL, 2010f). The OSCE declared that Kyrgyz authorities "established the necessary conditions for the conduct of a peaceful constitutional referendum" (OSCE, 2010:1) while noting that "an atmosphere of fear and the prevailing security conditions in the Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts hampered possibilities for campaigning in the last two weeks before the referendum" (OSCE, 2010:13). Hence, despite the inconvenient atmosphere in the country, the referendum passed on and approved the new constitution along with the presidency of Rosa Otunbaeva until the end of 2011 (Osmonov, 2010d).

In face of the favorable results of the referendum, members of the interim government made statements that underlined optimistic prospects for Kyrgyz politics. For instance, the newly-elected President Otunbaeva stated that "the

people of Kyrgyzstan put behind them the authoritarian family-based regimes of the previous two Presidents" (quoted in Osmonov, 2010d). Soon, she announced the date for the parliamentary elections as October 10, 2010[92] (Osmonov, 2010f). As a result, the new constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, in Osmonov's words, "transformed Kyrgyzstan into the first parliamentary state in Central Asia" (Osmonov, 2010d). In other words, the Kyrgyz Republic opened up a new page in its history at least on theoretical grounds.

However, even after the referendum was over, debates about the appropriateness of the parliamentary system in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan has continued. In this study, thus far I have covered what Kyrgyzstan has experienced under presidential system since independence, where both presidents became increasingly corrupt by manipulating informal dynamics for establishing the hegemony of their own circles on politics and economics of the country. Will the parliamentary system be able to bring an end to the decisiveness of the informal dynamics in shaping the course of Kyrgyz politics which provide the grounds for persistent instability in the country? How will it be helpful in resolving the fragmented nature of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan into an operating governing system? Most of the respondents of my interviews were optimistic and evaluated the parliamentary system as a necessary condition for Kyrgyzstan and a possible end to the continuing instability following the 'Tulip Revolution'.[93] It will be

[92] Since the referendum, members of the provisional government have resigned one by one in order to embark on their own election campaigns for the upcoming parliamentary elections in October 2010 (ICG, 2010b: 20; The Times of Central Asia, 2010h:1).

[93] For an early discussion and comparison of the presidential system and parliamentary system with respect to the socio-political context of Kyrgyzstan; See: Kurmanov, 2006: 57-61.

beneficial to dwell upon these remarks in order to have a grasp of the viability of the parliamentary system in the country.

According to Aida Alymbaeva, parliamentary system is really needed for Kyrgyzstan. She told that "contrary to the presidential system, in the parliamentary system, each party will be responsible for their actions. In that account, leaders will learn how to be accountable and at the same time come to the consensus on major issues through dialog. A notion of citizenship among Kyrgyz people may arise on these grounds" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010). In this respect, she mainly underlined the personalized nature of power in the country and the need for the components of responsibility and accountability on part of the parties under parliamentary system. She also indicated to the fact that these components may pave the ground for the emergence of a sense of citizenship among the general population, which is hitherto lacking in the country (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010).

In a similar vain, Edil Baisalov stressed the need of finding a way to come to consensus on major issues of the country which could be provided better under the parliamentary system in comparison to the presidential system. In this respect, he asserted that "we are expecting to see all kinds of coalitions in the aftermath of the parliamentary elections. This will be good experience for Kyrgyz politics, definitely better than what we have experienced during Akaev and Bakiev eras" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010).

On a different yet parallel ground, Emir Kulov and Azamat Temirkulov argued that the parliamentary system indeed match better with the social organization of Kyrgyz society in comparison with the presidential system. They

reminded the fact that kurultai played a significant role in Kyrgyzstan all throughout of its history. By recalling the past, for instance, the nature of the relations between batyrs and khans in early history of Kyrgyzstan, Kulov suggested that "it is actually the presidential system that is not appropriate for the socio-political organization of Kyrgyzstan" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). He said also that "even if we had a perfect president, he would also be challenged by different regional/local leaders because we have so many people who compete for power owing to the scarcity of resources" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). In this context, Kulov mainly implied that various actors in the country may better be contained in the parliamentary system and better share already limited resources of the country.

Temirkulov stated that the reason why presidential system did not work in Kyrgyzstan during Akaev and Bakiev eras was because power was concentrated in one personality and this person easily manipulated already weak laws, norms and state institutions while manipulated by many actors and factors, informal networks and international influence as well (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). In his words, "different social fractions directly oppose this figure. But if we have parliamentary system, all these fractions could be reflected in the parliament through political parties, instead of personalities" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 13, 2010). Indeed, he earlier argued for the possible weakening impact of the parliamentary system on the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics as follows:

> In the given social realities…the balanced distribution of powers will lead to reductions in abuse as the government will depend not on one person representing one group of interests (in this case a region) but on parliament, which consists of representatives from various groupings…It will enhance the responsibility of the government before all groups of interests that are there in the parliament. The increase of political party influences can then, in the long-term, move the basic struggle in parliament from a regional plane onto the ideological one. Parliament, being a joint body representing (as an ideal) all social groupings, is the institute most protected from possible slips towards authoritarianism and family-clan rule (Temirkulov, 2007: 12-13).

Dukanbaev considered the shift to the parliamentary system in a very optimistic fashion as well. He theoretically located Kyrgyzstan on the eve of a third republic. In his words, "the first one was Soviet Republic, the second one consisting of Akaev and Bakiev eras: Presidential Republic and now we are at the beginning of the Third Republic which begin on the 10th of October with the first parliamentary elections"[94] (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 14, 2010). On the other hand, Umut Asanova emphasized that it is not the name of the system that is important. In her words, "systems are made by people and people need to take the needs of the general populace, not their egoistic interests as a priority. The future of the parliamentary system will be determined by this delicate balance which could systematize the prevailing chaos of Kyrgyzstan, hopefully into stability" (Author's Interview, Bishkek, October 12, 2010).

Given the above-mentioned remarks, parliamentary system is considered to better suit the socio-political context of Kyrgyzstan in comparison to the

[94] On October 10, 2010, 29 parties, every single one of them with 120 candidates will compete for 120 seats. For the list of the parties and candidates, See: The Times of Central Asia, 2010d: 2.

presidential system. Among the reasons put forth for such conviction, in summary, one comes across the responsibility and accountability it is assumed to bring about along with various coalitions that is presumed to pave the way for a culture of dialogue and consensus. Moreover, historically, it is stressed to better suit the nomadic traditions and dispersed nature of power among Kyrgyz people that nurtures contestation vis-à-vis one man rule within the context of the presidential system. However, despite these positive attributes of the parliamentary system, in a country where informal dynamics play a very decisive role in shaping the nature of Kyrgyz politics, there is high prospects that this formal attempt may also be instrumentalized by the informal dynamics.

5.5. Conclusions

Given the developments that have been covered in this chapter, the decisive role of informal dynamics remained intact in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution' and they accounted for the continuing and aggravating instability in Kyrgyzstan. Instead of an 'impetus for democratization', what was renewed in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution' was the decisive role of the informal dynamics to an unprecedented extent. In place of change, instability has reigned.

Bakiev era, like its precedent, indicated to a system whose main traits appeared to be shaped by the informal dynamics. Family rule, widespread corruption, state-crime alliances and capture over economics and politics along with various demonstrations and protests via informal ties againt this rule can be cited among its attributes. These features proved the continuing role of informal

dynamics in shaping the course of events in Kyrgyzstan; therefore, once again revealed the still active vicious circle in the country. As discussed in Chapter 2, this vicious circle stemmed from the interactions between the informal dimensions of politics that holds the real power in shaping the political scene in Kyrgyzstan and the formal dimensions that have constituted only the gates of access for the resources manipulated by the informal dynamics.

In this context, it was not surprising that the persistence of the decisive role of informal dynamics that generate an irresponsible, personalized and dispersed power system in the country led to a vicious circle of grave political, social, and economic instability, another mass uprising that overthrew President Bakiev along with violent conflicts and a humanitarian crisis only five years after the so-called 'Tulip Revolution'. Hence, in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution' Kyrgyzstan was faced with various problems that paved the way for social unrest; five years later, it remains to provide fertile ground for protests and violent conflicts. This raises doubts about the prospects for stability in the country. Indeed, as Engvall puts it "the upheaval in Kyrgyzstan – the second in five years - raises the question whether Kyrgyzstan has any serious prospects of developing into a stable, sovereign state, let alone one with a pluralistic political system" (Engvall, 2010).

In order to overcome the persistent instability in the country owing to the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics, the provisional government seems to come up with the framework of the parliamentary system for channeling the informal dynamics - that feeds the vicious circle of instability- into formal grounds. Despite, this may provide at least an impetus for the

establishment of a conflict resolution mechanism in the country, it would be too optimistic to anticipate that it would easily bring about significant changes regarding the socio-political context, given the historical and transitional contexts of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan that has been analyzed in Chapter 3. Given these contexts that paved the grounds for informal dynamics, "these mechanisms and patterns of political development are not likely to disappear with ease" (Collins, 2006: 12). In this respect, given thus far has been discussed, there are more prospects for continuity in the main parameters of Kyrgyz politics than change owing to still fertile grounds for the instrumentalization of this formal arrangement by the informal dynamics.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

This study endeavored to uncover the main parameters, the decisive dynamics of Kyrgyz politics through an examination of not only the socio-political context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan since independence, but also through an analysis of the events that came to be known as the 'Tulip Revolution'. I complemented such research with a review of the developments that followed suit the 'Tulip Revolution' as well in order to understand what accounts for the continuing instability in Kyrgyzstan. For doing so, this study drew upon the insights provided by the studies that stressed the role of informal dynamics in Central Asian politics in general and in Kyrgyz politics in particular. It argued that taking the persistence of informal dynamics and their consequences for the political order in Kyrgyzstan is critical to the study of Kyrgyz politics in comparison to a focus mainly on formal dynamics (Collins, 2006:10-11). Taking into account the role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics enables us to understand how things really work in the country, rather than how they should be working.

In this context, this study drew upon studies that have taken into account the role of informal politics during the 'Tulip Revolution'. They are advantageous for several reasons. They take into account the multi-layered composition of

political contestation in Kyrgyzstan (Juraev, 2008: 262), whose bases have been shaped around social, political, cultural divides, clans, tribes, regionalism, traditional solidarity, illegal business connections, criminal networks (Temirkulov, 2004; 2007; 2008; Khamidov, 2006; Bogatyrev, 2008; Kupatadze, 2008). By examining the role of informal actors and institutions during February-March 2005 events, instead of a 'democratic revolution,' these studies depicted "not even a regime change", at most a "transfer of power" (Radnitz, 2006:133). Moreover, while studies that mainly focus on formal dynamics could not account for the continuing instability adequately in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution', studies that stressed the significance of informal dynamics during these events, not only pave the way for a better understanding of the complexities of these events, but also provide a convenient stretching board in addressing the continuing instability that followed suit.

After providing the theoretical framework in Chapter 2 by dwelling upon the key elements, features and implications of informal dynamics along with a review of the main perspectives on the 'Tulip Revolution', in Chapter 3, I basically endeavored to indicate to the decisive role of informal dynamics which make use of the divisions in the social structure of Kyrgyz society that are embedded in the historical context of Kyrgyzstan and strengthened by the transitional context of the country in the first decade of independence. In Chapter 4, I provided further evidence for the decisive role of informal dynamics via a close examination of the immediate context, dynamics and implications of the 'Tulip Revolution'. Chapter 5, on the other hand, in order to build upon these analyses, underlined the continuity in the significance of the roles played by

informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics in the aftermath of the February-March 2005 events, by providing evidences from various developments in Bakiev era along with those led to the end of it.

Regarding the general context of the 'Tulip Revolution', in Chapter 3, I started out with presenting a brief account of the main features of Kyrgyzstan's historical context, better said examined the historical influences that have left their traces on the social, economic and political life in Kyrgyzstan. In this regard, the impacts of pre-Soviet history along with those of Soviet history on the socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural features of Kyrgyzstan have been traced. Concerning the elements of the early history, the nomadic nature of Kyrgyz society has been stressed as the main parameter that have shaped the lifestyles of Kyrgyz people, and amounted on political grounds to a loose confederation of tribes, divided between northern and southern wings, busy with internal conflicts in the absence of any supervising or central authority over them (Abazov, 2004: 9). Regarding the impact of Tsarist rule on Kyrgyzstan, following Collins, I stressed its indirect nature, motivated in its interest regarding the region mainly by economic concerns and calculations within the framework of the Great Game (Collins, 2006: 79). Among the main features of the historical context of Kyrgyzstan, I especially emphasized the impact of the Soviet rule mostly because Soviet rule managed to reorganize Kyrgyz society along multiple dimensions; political, economic, and socio-cultural. Due to its systematic influence, via a number of policies - stretching from national delimitation, indigenization along with purges, industrialization, collectivization, Sovietization (Glenn, 1999; Roy, 2000; Collins, 2006) - expectedly, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Union,

various features of the newly independent Kyrgyz Republic appeared as "the creations of the Soviet administration" (Gullette, 2006: 183). Nonetheless, Soviet rule was "at once devastatingly strong and surprisingly weak" (Collins, 2006: 63). Its tough part was the deep impact of its above mentioned policies; its weakness, however, revealed itself in the fact that Kyrgyz society held on to a significant level of informal self-governance all throughout Soviet rule (Collins, 2006: 84). Soviets ended up fostering local ties by rendering them "important mechanisms of advancement at the local, regional, and central levels of the republics" by "giving them institutions within which to flourish" (Collins, 2006: 101).

I have also dwelled upon the socio-political atmosphere of Kyrgyz SSR on the road to its sudden independence. For this end, I have stressed the impact of Gorbachev's policies on Kyrgyz SSR only a couple of years away from the collapse of the Union (Abazov, 2004; Spector, 2004; Huskey, 1997b, 2002). It is underlined that these policies not only set opportunities for new actors, sawing the seeds of a power struggle between conservatives and reformists in each republic (Spector, 2004: 6; Huskey, 1997b: 250), but also worsened already challenging socio-economic situation (Dave, 2004: 145). Within the context of political instability and economic hardship, in Kyrgyz SSR, just before the collapse, tensions made the scene in Osh between Kyrgyz and Uzbek cummunities. "The conflict had essentially socio-economic causes along with political ones, but it manifested itself along ethnic lines" (Fumagalli, 2007: 218). These events provided us with some convenient tools not only to have an understanding of the tense socio-political atmosphere just before the collapse of the Union, but also to

comprehend the context of the crisis between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks repeated itself after twenty years of independence in June 2010.

Despite the tense atmosphere in Kyrgyz SSR on its way to the collapse of the Union, and despite the fact that Akaev was from the start on the side of the reformists, independence was still sudden for the republic. This is evident in the various problems it faced as a newly independent state without the necessary framework in place to deal with them (Akçalı, 2005b: 96). The newly independent Kyrgyz Republic was in need of financial resources to launch multi-dimensional transformation processes in order to face up the challenges sudden independence brought about. In condition of its lack of comparative advantage with respect to other Central Asian states in the eyes of international donors, in Huskey's words, Akaev pragmatically "sold Kyrgyzstan to the world as a model of democratizing and market oriented politics" (Huskey, 2002: 75). This required embarking on the prescribed economic and political reforms coined by liberal advisers (Juraev, 2008: 255) as a "'window dressing' for the international community" (Kulikova, 2007: 22). These prescriptions brought about a vast array of challenges for the newly independent Kyrgyzstan. It needed to transform its economy and political arena along with constructing a national belonging (Akiner, 2005: 131). In this context, I focused on the interactions between economic liberalization, nation building, institutionalization and democratization.

On socio-economic grounds, the main elements of the chaotically implemented policies of economic liberalization through shock therapy along with its consequences for the society have been opened to investigation. Here, it is argued that economic liberalization via IMF's big-bang strategy has ended up

with various hardships on social grounds (Baimyrzaeva, 2005: 29). Reforms mainly prepared the grounds for massive unemployment and poverty (Elebaeva & Margarita, 2007) weakening of the public services (Chenoy, 2007), corruption (Abazov, 2006) and "an 'unholy alliance' between state, market and crime" (Kupadatze, 2008: 280).

On socio-cultural aspects, it is stressed that Kyrgyzstan's struggle to construct a sense of national belonging among its general populace was mainly challenged by the fragmented nature of the society (Dave, 2004). Society was fragmented not only due to the multi-ethnic composition of the country inherited from the past, namely the settlement programs enforced by Tsarist and Soviet rules (Dave, 2004; Huskey, 1997b), but also it was mainly organized around sub-ethnic affiliations based on traditional solidarity. As Juraev puts it: "it is the traditionally competitive character of the relationship between various sub-ethnic groups at many levels that at least partially explains the existence of active contestation at all levels, be it at the village or in local or even national" (Juraev, 2008: 262). Among the main axis of these affiliations, I indicated to kinship based and region based fault lines along with traditional solidarity institutions.

On socio-political grounds, it is argued that politics, economics, and social conditions in Kyrgyzstan are shaped to a large extent by the mobilization of the fault lines apparent in various divisions prevailing in the country. Appointments, business connections, elections, referenda, mobilizations have revealed that sub-ethnic loyalties are very decisive in shaping the nature and course of Kyrgyz politics (Juraev, 2008: 260). Within this context, I drew attention to various examples that displayed the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz

politics during the first decade of independence. Among these, following Collins (2006) and Huskey (1997b, 2002), I indicated to Akaev's family rule based on nepotism and favouritism; the capturing of already limited political and economic assets of the country by Akaev's close circle and widespread corruption they generate; weakening and manipulation of in-the-making formal institutions such as the Constitutional Court before elections on the grounds of traditional solidarity groupings; making use of traditional solidarity insitutions such as aksakal to mobilize people during elections and constitutional amendments by referendums; various tactics such as the cooperation of the president and regional governors to by-pass the parliament on major issues etc. In each of these strategies, in every element of this blend of formal and informal instruments, it is mainly intended to underline the pivotal role of informal ties and dynamics that undermined institutionalization on formal grounds, which became especially apparent since the end of 1994. Towards the end of 1990s, it was clear that due to the main pattern of politics shaped by the decisive role of informal dynamics, where "public assets were informally treated as private" (Collins, 2006: 243); largely ignoring the needs of the general population, namely the public interests. Given the harsh socio-economic conditions, this further directed the general populace into the arms of informal networks, nurturing a vicious circle of instability in the country.

Each of these policy areas that shaped the main features of the socio-political context of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan provided the general context of the 'Tulip Revolution'. The interactions between these policy areas indicate to the fact that politics in Kyrgyzstan is not only informal, but also personalized. Power

is dispersed between various forces (Melyskova, 2008: 21) signaling to a multi-layered political contestation in Kyrgyzstan (Juraev, 2008) without any supervising authority over them (despite a seemingly strong president) (Melyskova, 2008: 21) and the system of governance is weakly institutionalized on formal grounds (Temirkulov, 2007; Melyskova, 2008: 21). Such a political atmosphere was conducive to socio-political unrest and protests. The 'Tulip Revolution' is actually one of the outcomes of this unsystematized political system and the crucial roles played by the informal dynamics in shaping the nature of Kyrgyz politics. Hence, informal dynamics are not only effective during routine politics at all levels of governance, but also effective during mobilizations(Juraev, 2008: 260), feeding on from the various fault lines existing in the social organization of Kyrgyzstan, in pursuit of private interests through illegitimate means and strengthened by economic hardship in the absence of formal channels to seek public interests.

Chapter 4 not only dwelled upon the immediate context of the 'Tulip Revolution', but also examined the course of events, minor and major roles played by the formal and informal dynamics along with its implications for Kyrgyz politics. This chapter enabled me not only to grasp the singularity of these events, but also to situate this singularity within the general coordinates of politics in Kyrgyzstan that has been portrayed in Chapter 3.

In this regard, after examining the Aksy events (2002) as the "domestic example" of the 'Tulip Revolution' (Tursunkulova, 2008), the course of February-March 2005 events has been studied drawing upon the empirical insights provided by studies that stressed the significant role played by informal dimensions of

politics during these events (Jones, 2007; Radnitz, 2005, 2006; Temirkulov, 2007, 2008; Kupatadze, 2008). The examination of the course of events indicated to the fact that the forces that intensified the mobilizations were in the south (Jones, 2007: 70-71); the major roles were played by local/regional political entrepreneurs who were disqualified or lost in the parliamentary elections of 2005 - some of them with criminal affiliations as well (Jones, 2007: 153; Kupadatze, 2008: 90; the protestors – relatives, regional affiliates, villagers etc - were mobilized usually upon the call of their local/regional leader on local grounds that provided and is assumed to provide support for his followers if endowed with a formal post (Jones, 2007: 97-122; Radnitz, 2006:137). In order to mobilize their supporters, according to Temirkulov, these figures, informal leaders made use of elements of traditional solidarity, such as aksakal (elders), kurultai, palvan for the legitimization and authorization of mobilization (Temirkulov, 2008). Among various axes of the informal dynamics, regionalism also played a decisive role along with criminal figures (Kupatadze, 2008: 290; Cornell 2006: 64). The 'opposition' which was actually an anti-Akaev camp, remained fragmented throughout the events, yet gave the impression of a united group just on the last day of these events (Jones, 2007:157). In the immediate aftermath of the overthrow of Akaev, different groups within this anti-Akaev camp, the so-called 'opposition' started to compete with each other, giving the signs for further political instability in the country as they did not have a unifying agenda (Lewis, 2008: 275).

In this chapter, in order to indicate to the weak grounds of the initial euphoria that emphasized the significant role played by Western-backed NGOs,

party-based and united opposition and media or youth groups during these events, drawing upon the studies that stressed the decisive role of informal dynamics (Radnitz, 2006; Lewis, 2008), I also underlined the minor roles of these elements, therefore the inadequacy of mainly focusing on formal dynamics and sidelining the informal ones. These factors were not the driving forces behind the February/March 2005 events. In Lewis' words, "this virtual political world was remote from the real political dynamics" (Lewis, 2008: 275). Put differently, the main factors that played the leading role in the overthrow of president Akaev were situated in domestic, local and informal levels. In a nutshell, March 2005 events once again revealed that informal dynamics in Kyrgyzstan has been playing an important role in shaping the political scene of the country.

Despite the fact that main elements of informal dynamics changes according to the situation and interest at hand, family clans, local and regional informal leaders, businessmen that control financial resources due to Akaev's chaotic economic restructuring, criminal groups appear among the key, yet fluctuating elements (Bogatyrev, 2008). These elements mainly come together via traditional solidarity and personal loyalty and also include friends, colleagues, neighbors and business connections. In Bogatyrev's words, "each of these groups vary according to the way and extent of inclusion into power relations, technologies it uses, formats of political activities and type of relations with formal political institutes" (Bogatyrev, 2008). Not only the leadership, but also the 'opposition' get involved in informal networks and pursue their interests through and within informal channels. Indeed, the words of Alikbek Jekshenkulov, former Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan shed light on the extent of their decisive role:

"politicians in Kyrgyzstan often confuse public and informal politics…Informal politics...is present in all countries, but there is no country where it has so much influence as in Kyrgyzstan..." (quoted in Safin, 2008).

The decisive role of the informal dynamics during the 'Tulip Revolution' indicates to the fact that it would be misleading to mainly remain on formal grounds and consider these events as an 'impetus for democratization'. As Lewis points out "the democratic and reform narrative of the revolution…was disconnected from the discourse of the mass of protestors and their leaders" (Lewis, 2008: 276). These events point out to the pivotal role of informal dynamics in shaping the nature of Kyrgyz politics; rendering Kyrgyz politics personalized and informal. In this context, it is not surprising to see that the so-called 'Tulip Revolution' did not better the conditions of the general population (Berg, 2006a. 138), but brought about more instability into the country. A mere "transfer of power" at the central level of the governance system did not affect the vicious circle of Kyrgyz politics; indeed it even further fostered it (Radnitz, 2006: 133).

While discussing the major roles played by informal dynamics during the 'Tulip Revolution', I indicated to similar dynamics regarding the 'Orange Revolution' as well, mainly in the footnotes. Here, I intended to underline that Kyrgyzstan was not sui generis with respect to the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping its politics. In Ukraine, the 'Orange revolution' was also a scene for informal dynamics (Melyskova, 2008:11). In this case as well, while the informal nature of the regime established in the first decade of independence under President Kuchma provided the general context of these protests;

Kuchmagate provided its immediate context (Kuzio, 2007: 42-44). In addition, regional business clans (oligarchs) played significant roles by supporting the 'orange camp' during the events (Melyskova, 2008: 9). Moreover, the supposedly 'democratic revolution' in Ukraine proved to be little more than a limited rotation of ruling elites for a very limited period of time (Melyskova, 2008:5).

To provide supporting evidence to the argument that 'what accounts for the continuing instability in the aftermath of the 'Tulip Revolution' in Kyrgyzstan is the continuity in the decisive role of the informal dynamics in shaping Kyrgyz politics', in Chapter 5, I mainly examined the developments that followed suit the 'Tulip Revolution', namely the Bakiev era. Here, I asserted that the regime in Kyrgyzstan during Bakiev era strongly reminded us of that in Akaev era (ICG, 2008:1; ICG, 2010a:1). It amounted to a system in which President Bakiev and his family, better-said Bakiev's close circle captured and controlled most aspects of the economy and politics via a mix of formal instruments and informal dynamics. This tendency became most apparent in the aftermath of 2007 Parliamentary Elections, after which Bakiev and his family strengthened their hands considerably. In the aftermath of these elections, the political entrepreneurs of Bakiev era controlled the key state institutions, in Marat's words, "often being interwoven with illegal activities such as extortion of businesses, smuggling of drugs and weapons, and intimidation of political opponents" (Marat, 2008a: 235). This signaled to the pattern of the "conversion of power into money" (ICG, 2008: 3) with the help of criminal connections (Kupatadze, 2008).

Put differently, Bakiev era as well indicated to a system whose main traits appeared to be shaped by the informal dynamics: family rule, capture of economic

and political resources by a narrow circle, widespread corruption, state-crime alliances (ICG, 2008; 2010a). The 'oppositional' forces remained on informal level as well and relied upon their informal ties when staging demonstrations and protests to challenge the leadership (Khamidov, 2006: 40-41). All of these provided supporting evidence for the continuing role of informal dynamics in shaping the course of events in Kyrgyzstan; therefore, once again revealed the still active vicious circle in Kyrgyzstan stemming from the interactions between the informal dimensions of politics that holds the upper hand in shaping the political scene in Kyrgyzstan and the formal dimensions that have constituted only the gates to the manipulation of resources by the informal dynamics.

Given this socio-political atmosphere, it was not unexpected that another mass uprising would come around and lead to the overthrow of President Bakiev. Indeed, this is what happened only after five years on from the 'Tulip Revolution'. The triggers of these events indeed gave its various signs since the early 2006 in various conflicts, protests, demonstrations in the country, however, these events culminated with the hydro energy crisis alarming in the winter of 2008 (Marat, 2008b, 2008f). This crisis led a significant rise of the prices for electricity and heating in the beginning of 2010 and given the widespread poverty in the country (The Times of Central Asia, 2010f:1), it increased the chances of various anti-Bakiev forces to mobilize their supporters into protests via their informal ties to challenge the Bakiev circle's hold on power (ICG, 2008: 15; Pannier, 2008a).

Protests started to take place in Talas and Naryn since February 2010, voicing criticism towards the mismanagement of Bakiev administration and

towards the end of March, there were calls upon his resignation (Pannier, 2008a). The dynamics and mechanism of these protests reminded us of the peripheral protests that took place in the south of the country back in 2005. However, the protests in Bishkek on April 7, 2010, were more of a spontaneous nature; primarily appeared as a reaction to the killings of protestors by snipers, which led to the storming of the White House, ironically just five years after the 'Tulip Revolution'. It was ironic that the 'Tulip Revolution' which was initially assumed to bring about a change towards further democratization, an impetus for political pluralism on formal grounds - as April 2010 events once again revealed – indeed brought about an impetus for the weakening of stability in the country. Indeed, as Engvall puts it "the upheaval in Kyrgyzstan – the second in five years – raises the question whether Kyrgyzstan has any serious prospects of developing into a stable, sovereign state, let alone one with a pluralistic political system" (Engvall, 2010).

Various parallels and differences between the events in 2005 and in 2010 attracted scholarly attention (Temirkulov, 2010). The general contexts were similar in the peripheral protests in both events and both events had a regional tone. While, in the former, protests started to bloom in the south of the country (Osh and Jalal-Abad), in the latter, northerners (Talas, Naryn, Chuy) were in the front lines (Alkan, 2010: 25), though there was a cross-cutting anti-Bakiev sentiment in both regions as it did back in 2005 as well. On organizational level, the last days of the protests displayed differing features. While the protests on March 24, 2005 in Bishkek appeared as the most organized one compared to the prior peripheral protests; the protests on April 7, 2010, in contrast, was

spontaneous; a reaction to the killings of people by the snipers (Temirkulov, 2010). This brings us to another difference in between the events in 2005 and 2010: while in March 2005 events, security forces did not open fire on demonstrators; in April 2010, Bakievs did not hesitate to do so. Thus, while in March 2005, transfer of power was peacefully achieved; in April 2010, 86 people were killed (IWPR, 2007).

The triggers of these events seemed different at first glance. While for the former, it is often cited the atmosphere prior and during the parliamentary elections; for the latter the drastic rises in the utility prices were underlined. Yet, one should not neglect the fact that in both cases, there was already a mounting discontent among the general population regarding socio-economic hardship, corruption and the alliance between the legal with the illegal world. These sources of discontent has been once again mobilized by the 'opposition' - once colleagues in the anti-Akaev camp arm in arm with Bakiev, now prominent members of anti-Bakiev camp against Bakiev (Shepherd, 2010c).

Another similar feature of February-March 2005 events and April 2010 events was that immediately after the overthrow of the presidents, many speculated that an external power must have helped the 'opposition', given the rapidity with which presidents were overthrown. Russian Federation was the favorite candidate for this role in April 2010 events; while back in March 2005, this candidate was the U.S.A or in general Western forces via democracy assistance (Nichol, 2010b:7). On this matter, it is argued that the relations between the Russian Federation and Kyrgyzstan were not in their best state owing

to Bakiev's u-turn on the Manas base (ICG, 2010a: 6). However, "this was not accompanied by a plan of action" (ICG, 2010a: 12).

In this chapter, I also examined the vast array of problems that faced the provisional government headed by Rosa Otunbaeva established in the immediate aftermath of the overthrow of President Bakiev. Among these problems, I dwelled upon the unfortunate consequences of the conflicts that took place especially in the south of Kyrgyzstan in the immediate aftermath of April 2010 events. These conflicts took three shapes: (a) unlike what followed suit in the immediate aftermath of the overthrow of Akaev, in the immediate aftermath of the overthrow of Bakiev, supporters of Bakiev held various demonstrations in Bakiev's consistency, trying to hold onto power; (b) the land occupations of Kyrgyz nationalists in detriment of minorities (c) and last but not least, the humanitarian crisis in Osh and Jalal-Abad in June 2010 between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities. I analyzed not only the course of these events, but also the triggers and implications of these violent conflicts. These events strengthened the conviction regarding the persistence of the decisive role of informal dynamics in shaping the course of events and politics in Kyrgyzstan.

Last but not least, regarding another stressing problem of the provisional government in the aftermath of its taking over of power, I focused on the referendum process on June 27, 2010; the socio-political atmosphere it was hold within and especially its unique arrangement for Kyrgyzstan to transform from presidential to parliamentary system (Osmonov, 2010d). Here, by pointing out to various remarks presented by the respondents of my interviews in Kyrgyzstan, it is implied that switching Kyrgyzstan's political system into the parliamentary

system might present a more convincing step compared to the presidential system. However, it still seems hard to expect long-lasting coalitions and an end to the personalized and informal nature of Kyrgyz politics. Channeling informal dynamics into formal grounds cannot be easily done given the historical and transitional contexts of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. Informal dynamics, "these mechanisms and patterns of political development are not likely to disappear with ease" (Collins, 2006: 12).

Within this context, as it would be partial to focus mainly on the formal dynamics of Kyrgyz politics to understand its main parameters; it would also be too optimistic to raise expectations concerning the extent of the impact of formal frameworks, such as the parliamentary system, on the socio-political context in Kyrgyzstan, where the roles of the informal dynamics in shaping politics remains to be decisive. One can only hope that parliamentary system will provide a platform for dialogue in order to establish a mechanism of conflict resolution between various forces, actors and institutions in the country. Indeed, unless such a mechanism is established and the informal dynamics remain decisive in shaping the nature of Kyrgyz politics, Kyrgyzstan seems to be remaining within a vicious circle of instability in the short and mid-terms.

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TURKISH SUMMARY

Bu çalışma, Kırgız siyasetinin temel parametrelerini, belirleyici dinamiklerini ortaya çıkarmak ve böylelikle Kırgızistan'da süregelen istikrarsızlığın ardında neyin yattığını anlamak üzere, post-Sovyet Kırgızistan'ın sosyo-politik bağlamı yanında, 'Lale Devrimi' olarak adlandırılan olayları ve bu olayları takip eden gelişmeleri inceler. 'Lale Devrimi'nin zeminini hazırlayan genel ve özel koşullar, olayların seyrini, dinamiklerini ve açılımlarını analiz eder. 'Lale Devrimi'ni hem tikelliği hem de genelliği içersinde kavramak üzere, bir yandan bu olayların gelişim sürecine, katılımcılarına, enformel ve formel dinamiklerin olaylarda oynadıkları rollere ve bunların Kırgız siyasetine dair imalarına odaklanır; diğer yandan, bu tikelliği, post-Sovyet Kırgızistan'ın sosyo-politik bağlamının genelliği içersine yerleştirmeye çalışır. Böylelikle, Kırgız siyasetinde belirleyici olan dinamikleri, temel parametreleri, Kırgızistan'da süregelen istikrarsızlığın ardında yatan sebepleri kavramak üzere ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlar.

Beş bölümden oluşan bu çalışma kronolojik olarak ilerler. İlk bölüm tezi ve geri kalan bölümleri tanıtır. İkinci Bölüm çalışmanın kuramsal çerçevesini sunar. Bu bölümde, "bir yandan 'Lale Devrimi'nin dinamikleri, diğer yandan bu olayları takiben ülkede süregelen istikrarsızlık nasıl açıklanabilir? Devlet ya da toplum düzeyinde, formel aktörler ve kurumlara odaklanan çalışmalar, 'Lale Devrimi'nin dinamiklerini ve bu olayları takip eden istikrarsızlığı kavramak

açısından yeterli midir?" soruları akılda tutularak, konu üzerine ortaya konulmuş analitik perspektifler incelenir.

2005 yılının Şubat ayının başından itibaren, Kırgızistan'da protestolar başgösterir. Özellikle 2005 Parlamento Seçimlerinin ikinci turunun ardından, bahsi geçen protestolar ülkenin güneyinde yoğunlaşır ve 24 Mart 2005'te, Kırgızistan devlet başkanı Askar Akaev'in başkanlığının sonlanmasına sebep olur. Akaev ve ailesi ülkeyi terk eder ve Rusya Federasyonu'na sığınır (Kulikova, 2007: 2). Başlangıçta bir 'devrim' olarak yorumlanan bu olayların ardında uluslararası faktörlerin ve uluslararası demokratikleşme yardımlarının, Kırgızistan'da gelişmesine ön ayak oldukları ileri sürülen sivil toplumun elemanlarının yattığı ileri sürülür (Cummings, 2008: 223-224; Cummings & Ryabkov, 2008: 242). Olayların başlangıçtaki bu yorumlanışı iki biçim alır; 'Lale Devrimi' olarak adlandırılan bu olaylar, ya muhalefetin ardında birleşen halkın otoriter liderlerini seçim döneminde alaşağı ettiği diğer benzer olaylar, 'renkli devrimler' zincirinde yeni bir halka olarak heyecanla karşılanır (Cummings, 2008: 223), ya da Batı-destekli bir darbe olarak eleştirilir (Heathershaw, 2007). Bu değerlendirmeleri çok geçmeden daha ayrıntılı analizler takip eder ve bahsi geçen olayların ardında ya formel domestik faktörlerin, ya da enformel domestik faktörlerin yer aldığına dikkat çekilir (Cummings & Ryabkov, 2008: 245). Bu ayrıntılı analizler olayların 'devrimci doğası'na daha eleştirel bir mesafe ile yaklaşır (Cummings, 2008:224).

Sally Cummings ve Maxim Ryabkov, Kırgızistan'daki enformel dinamiklere dair yapılan araştırmaları dört patikaya ayırır: "enformel dinamiklerin kaynakları; demokratikleşme ve devlet inşa süreçlerindeki rolü; formel ve

enformel kurumlararasındaki ilişkiler ve son olarak, yatay ve dikey enformel iktidar ilişkileri"ne odaklanan çalışmalara dikkat çeker (Cummings & Ryabkov, 2008: 245). Bu tez, bu araştırma patikalarından hareketle, 'Lale Devrimi'nde enformel dinamiklerin rolünü vurgulayan çalışmaları kendi yönelimleri için bir sıçrama tahtası olarak değerlendirir. Bu çalışma, 'Lale Devrimi' olarak anılagelen olayların seyrini şekillendirmekte enformel dinamiklerin oynadığı rolü vurgulayan araştırmalardan beslenir.[95]

Bu tezin kaygıları açısından, Kırgızistan'da Şubat-Mart 2005'te meydana gelen olaylarda enformel dinamiklerin rolünü vurgulayan çalışmalar (Radnitz, 2005, 2006; Jones, 2007; Temirkulov, 2007, 2008; Kupatadze, 2008) formel dinamikleri vurgulayan diğer yaklaşımlara (Bunce &Wolchik, 2006a; Beissinger, 2007, 2009) kıyasla daha avantajlıdır. İlk elde, Kırgızistan'daki siyasal mücadelenin çok-katmanlı kompozisyonunu dikkate alan bu çalışmalar (Juraev, 2008: 262), 'Lale Devrimi'nde öne çıkan aktörlerin, bu olayların bağlamlarının, dinamiklerinin ve imalarının, formel dinamiklere odaklanan genel literatürde portresi çizilenden daha karmaşık olduğunu ileri sürer: sosyal, siyasal, kültürel bölünmeleri, klan, bölgeselcilik, geleneksel dayanışma, yasadışı iş ilişkileri, suç ağlarına dikkat çeker (Temirkulov, 2004; 2007; 2008; Khamidov, 2006; Bogatyrev, 2008; Kupatadze, 2008). Bunun sebebi, bu çalışmaların post-Sovyet Kırgızistan'daki siyasal mücadeleleri farklı bir biçimde değerlendirmeleridir. Buna göre, siyasal mücadele, otoriter bir lider ve muhalefetin ardından birleşmiş bulunan halkın arasında değil (ki bu devlet ve toplum arasında net bir ayrım

[95] Renkli devrimler ve bu olaylara atfedilen devrimci anlama dair çekincelerimi, metin boyunca belirgin kılmak üzere, 'Lale Devrimi' terimini tırnak işareti içersinde ve bazı durumlarda, Şubat-Mart 2005 olayları ile, bu terimi birbirinin yerine kullandım.

öngörmek anlamına gelecektir), çok çeşitli aktörler, ülkedeki enformel güçler arasındadır. Bu çalışmalar, Kırgızistan'daki siyasal mücadelenin çoklu düzeylerini dikkate alarak, devlet ve toplum arasında konumlanan enformel siyaset düzlemini analiz etme imkanı yakalar (Juraev, 2008: 262). Bu çalışmanın enformel dinamikler olarak adlandırdığı çeşitli güçler, Kırgız siyasetini rutin olarak şekillendirmekle kalmaz, kalkışmalar, protestolar, ayaklanmalar, çatışmalar esnasında da şekillendirmeye devam eder (Juraev, 2008: 260).

Enformel dinamiklerin rolüne odaklanan çalışmalar, sadece bu dinamiklerin Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte oynadıkları rolün ipuçlarını sunmazlar, aynı zamanda 'Lale Devrimi'ni takip eden sürecin istikrarsızlığa son vermemesinin ardında neyin yattığına dair elverişli bir sıçrama tahtası sunarlar. 'Lale Devrimi'nin hemen ardından yapılan 'demokratik ivme' değerlendirmesi, takip eden gelişmelerle, 1990larda Kırgızistan'a atfedilen 'bir demokrasi adası' imajı gibi hayal kırıklığına mahkum olurken (Radnitz, 2006:133; Beachain, 2009: 213; Cummings, 2008: 224), enformel dinamikleri gözden kaçırmayan çalışmalar, 'Lale Devrimi'nin gerçekleştirdiği "iktidar transferi"ninin bir demokratikleşme ivmesine dönüşmekten çok uzak sonuçları olduğuna, beklentilerin aksine ülkede siyasal istikrarsızlığın sürmesi ve pekişmesine katkıda bulunduğuna dikkat çeker (Radnitz, 2006:133). Bir başka deyişle, baştaki isimler değişse de, Kırgız siyasetinin doğasını, parametrelerini ve seyrini şekillendiren dinamikler değişmemiştir (Radnitz, 2006: fn1). Bu bağlamda, Bakiev döneminin, Akaev dönemine oldukça benzemesi şaşırtıcı değildir (ICG, 2008:1; ICG, 2010a: 1; Joldoshov, 2010: fn14; Kurmanov, 2006: 53). 'Lale Devrimi'ni takip eden beş yıl içersinde, Bekbolotov'un deyişi ile, "her bahar, Kırgız başkenti Bişkek'te, siyasal

hoşnutsuzlukları dile getirmek üzere kitlesel protestolar düzenlemek bir geleneğe dönüşür" (Bekbolotov, 2008). 2006'dan bu yana süregelen bu protestolar arasında öne çıkan Nisan 2010 olayları, Bakiev döneminin de sonlanmasına sebep olmuştur (ICG, 2010a). Bu bağlamda, Kırgız siyasetinin doğasını ve seyrini şekillendiren oyunun kuralları, bir başka deyişle, enformel dinamiklerin belirleyiciliği değişmeyip, pekişmiş, ülkede siyasal istikrarsızlığın hüküm sürmesine yol açmıştır (Radnitz, 2006: 133).

Bu çalışma, Kırgızistan'da süregelen istikrarsızlığa dair pek çok faktör ileri sürülebilecek olsa da, enformel dinamiklerin Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte oynadığı belirleyici roldeki sürekliliğe dikkat çeker. Kırgızistan'ın bir istikrarsızlık sarmalının içersine fırlatılmış olmasının ardında, 'Lale Devrimi'nin ardından Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekteki belirleyici rolleri güçlenen enformel dinamikler yatmaktadır. Kırgızistan'daki enformel dinamikleri dikkate almak, Kırgız siyasetinin temel parametrelerini kavramak açısındna önemli açılımlar sunması yanında, süregelen istikrarsızlığın ardında yatan süreçlere dair bir sıçrama tahtası sunar.

Bu çerçevede, enformel dinamiklerin zeminlerinin, Kırgızistan'ın tarihsel bağlamında gizli olduğu ve bu dinamiklerin, Kırgızistan'ın geçiş süreci çerçevesinde güçlendiğine dikkat çekilmiştir. Üçüncü Bölümde, Kırgızistan'ın tarihsel bağlamına içkin olan, bağımsızlığı takip eden ilk on yıldaki geçiş bağlamı ile güçlenen ve Kırgız toplumunun toplumsal yapısı içersinde yer alan bölünmelerden faydalanan enformel dinamiklerin belirleyici rolüne işaret edilmiştir. Kırgızistan'ın tarihsel bağlamının temel elemanları arasında, erken dönem yanında Çarlık ve Sovyet dönemlerine değinilmiş; Kırgız toplumunun,

sosyo-politik dokusu üzerinde etkisi olan bu deneyimlere rağmen, toplumsal yapıda mevcut bulunan bölünme hatlarının ve kendini yönetme stratejilerinin canlı kaldığına işaret edilmiştir (Collins, 2006). Bu bağlamda, Kırgızistan'ın sosyo-ekonomik, sosyo-politik ve sosyo-kültürel nitelikleri üzerinde Sovyet öncesi ve Sovyetler döneminin etkileri izlenmiştir.

Erken dönemin elemanlarına dair, Kırgızların hayat tarzlarını şekillendiren temel parametre olarak Kırgız toplumunun nomadik/göçer doğası vurgulanır. Bu niteliğin, siyasal zemindeki yansıması üzerlerinde herhangi bir merkezi otoritenin bulunmadığı, sürekli mücadele halinde bulunan, sağ ve sol kanatlara ayrılmış gevşek bir kabileler konfederasyonudur (Abazov, 2004: 9). Çarlık yönetiminin Kırgızistan üzerindeki etkisinin dolaylı oluşuna, bu dolaylılığın ardında ise, Büyük Oyun'un sunduğu çerçevenin, bölgeye dair ekonomik kaygı ve hesaplamaların yer aldığına işaret edilir (Collins, 2006: 79). Kırgızistan'ın Sovyetler öncesi tarihsel bağlamının dış hatları bu biçimde özetlenebilirken, Sovyet dönemi, ulusal sınırlardan sürgünlere uzanan politikaları doğrultusunda, Kırgız toplumunu çok çeşitli boyutlarda – siyasal, ekonomik ve sosyo-kültürel - yeniden düzenlemesi ile vurgulanır (Glenn, 1999; Roy, 2000; Collins, 2006). Sovyetlerin bu sistematik etkisi, beklendiği gibi, Birliğin dağılmasının ardından doğan yeni ulus devletlerin pek çok niteliğinde belirleyici olmuştur (Gullette, 2006: 183). Ne var ki, Sovyet yönetimi, Collins'in deyişi ile, "aynı anda büyük ölçüde kuvvetli ve şaşırtıcı biçimde zayıf"tır (Collins, 2006: 63). Buradaki zayıflık, Sovyetlerin, yerel bağları "yerel, bölgesel ve merkezi düzlemlerde önemli mekanizmalar haline getirerek", bu bağlara, "içersinde serpilebilecekleri kurumlar sunarak" teşvik etmesinde karşımıza çıkar (Collins, 2006: 101).

Kırgızistan'ın bağımsızlığına giden yolda içersinde bulunduğu sosyo-politik atmosfere de değinilir. Birliğin dağılmasına bir kaç yıl kala Gorbaçhev'in politikalarının etkilerinden bahsedilir (Abazov, 2004; Spector, 2004; Huskey, 1997b, 2002). Bu politikaların, sadece yeni aktörler için birtakım imkanlar yaratmakla kalmadığına, aynı zamanda muhafazakarlar ve reformistler arasında bir güç mücadelesinin de tohumlarını attığına (Spector, 2004: 6; Huskey, 1997b: 250) ve halihazırda zorlayıcı olan sosyo-ekonomik koşulları kötüleştirdiğine dikkat çekilir (Dave, 2004: 145). Siyasal istikrarsızlık ve ekonomik zorlukların sunduğu bağlamda, Kırgız ve Özbek topluluklar arasında Oş'da meydana gelen çatışmanın dinamiklerinden kısaca bahsedilir. Çatışmanın, her ne kadar sosyo-ekonomik ve siyasal sebepleri olsa da, kendisini etnik bir çizgide dışa vurduğu ileri sürülür (Fumagalli, 2007: 218). Oş Olayları, Birliğin dağılmasına çok az bir süre kala, Kırgızistan'daki sosyo-politik atmosfere dair elverişli bir analiz aracı sunmasının yanında, bu olaylardan yirmi yıl sonra Haziran 2010'da Kırgız ve Özbek topluluklar arasında meydana gelecek olan krizin bağlamını kavramak açısından da ipuçları sunar.

Birliğin dağılmasının hemen öncesindeki bu gergin atmosfere ve Kırgızistan'ın ilk başkanı Askar Akaev'in reformistlerin tarafında yer almasına rağmen, bağımsızlığın, Kırgızistan için yine de çok ani olduğuna dikkat çekilir. Yeni bağımsızlığını kazanmış olan Kırgızistan çok çeşitli sorunlarla, bu sorunlarla başedecek gerekli çerçeveye sahip olmadan başetmeye çalışmak durumunda kalır (Akçalı, 2005b: 96). Ani bağımsızlığın getirdiği zorluklarla yüzleşmek, çok-boyutlu dönüşüm süreçlerine girişmek üzere finansal kaynaklara ihtiyaç duyan Kırgız yönetimi, diğer Orta Asya devletlerine kıyasla karşılaştırmalı avantajı

uluslararası donörlerin gözünde düşük olan Kırgızistan'ın ilk başkanı Akaev, Huskey'nin deyişi ile, "Kırgızistan'ı dünyaya demokratikleşen ve piyasa yönelimli siyasetin modeli olarak sunar" (Huskey, 2002: 75). Uluslararası topluma sunulan bu imaj (Kulikova, 2007: 22), liberal danışmanların reçetelendirdiği ekonomik ve siyasal reformların hayata geçirilmesi ile pekiştirilir (Juraev, 2008: 255). Bahsi geçen reçeteler, yeni bağımsızlığını kazanmış Kırgızistan'ı yeni bir takım zorluklarla yüzleştirir: Kırgızistan ekonomi ve siyasetini dönüştürmek yanında bir ulusal aidiyet de kurgulamak zorundadır (Akiner, 2005: 131). Bu bağlamda, çalışma, Kırgızistan'ın ekonomik liberalleşme, ulus inşası, kurumsallaşma ve demokratikleşme süreçleri arasında ne gibi etkileşimler deneyimlediğine dikkat çeker.

Kırgızistan'ın bağımsızlık sonrası geçiş sürecinin temel nitelikleri arasında çok-boyutlu dönüşüm süreçlerinin etkisi vurgulanır (Akçalı, 2005b: 96). Bu süreçler, ekonomik ve siyasal liberalleşme üzerinden işlemiş (Chenoy, 2007: 62) ve Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte enformel dinamiklerin belirleyici rolünü kuvvetlendirmiştir (Khamidov, 2006a: 41). Kaotik ve kontrolsüz biçimde, şok terapi üzerinden yürütülen ekonomik liberalleşme süreci toplumsal bir travmaya yol açmış (Abazov, 2004; Joldoshov, 2010); devlet kurumlarının nominal mevcudiyetleri dışında işlevsel olmadığı bir atmosferde, insanları sosyal güvenlik ihtiyaçları için geleneksel dayanışmanın çeşitli biçimlerini manipüle eden enformel dinamiklerin kollarına atmıştır (Temirkulov, 2007: 7). Siyasal liberalleşme de, devlet kaynaklarını tüm yönetim düzeylerinde dar çıkarları için manipüle eden enformel dinamiklerin oyun sahasını sunan nominal bir devletin

belirmesine yol açarak enformel dinamiklerin elini güçlendirmiştir (Temirkulov, 2007: 8; Collins, 2006: 245).

Sosyo-ekonomik zeminde, şok terapi ile kaotik biçimde hayata geçirilen ekonomik liberalleşme politikaları ve bu politikaların Kırgız toplumu üzerindeki etkileri araştırıldığında, IMF'in reçetelendirdiği stratejiye istinaden uygulanan ekonomik liberalleşme atılımlarının toplumsal zeminde önemli zorluklar yarattığına dikkat çekilir (Baimyrzaeva, 2005: 29). Reformların, kitlesel düzeyde işssizlik ve yoksulluk (Elebaeva & Margarita, 2007), kamu hizmetlerinin büyük ölçüde zayıflaması (Chenoy, 2007), rüşvet (Abazov, 2006) ve "devlet, piyasa ve suç arasında kötücül bir ittifak"ın belirmesine yol açtığına işaret edilir (Kupadatze, 2008: 280).

Sosyo-kültürel boyutta, Kırgızistan'ın ulusal bir aidiyet hissi kurgulamaktaki mücadelesinin, Kırgız toplumunun parçalı doğası sebebiyle çetrefil bir mücadele olduğuna dikkat çekilir (Dave, 2004). Kırgızistan nüfusunun, Çarlık Rusyası ve Sovyet yönetiminin yerleşim programlarından miras kalan çok-uluslu kompozisyonu yanında (Dave, 2004; Huskey, 1997b), geleneksel dayanışma üzerine kurulu ulus-altı aidiyetler etrafında örgütlenmesinin bu parçalılıkta önemli rolü olduğu vurgulanır. Bahsi geçen aidiyetlerin temel eksenleri arasında, akrabalık yanında bölge temelli aidiyetlere ve geleneksel dayanışma kurumlarına da dikkat çekilir.

Sosyo-politik düzlemde, Kırgızistan'da siyaset, ekonomi ve sosyal koşulların, büyük ölçüde, ülkede mevcut bulunan çeşitli bölünmelerin harekete geçirilmesi ile şekillendiği ileri sürülür. Atamalar, iş bağlantıları, seçimler, referendumlar ve ayaklanmaların, ulus-altı sadakatlerin Kırgız siyasetinin doğası

ve seyrini şekillendirmekte belirleyici olduğuna işaret ettiği iddia edilir (Juraev, 2008: 260). Bu bağlamda, bağımsızlığın ilk on yılında, enformel dinamiklerin Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte belirleyici rol oynadığına işaret eden çeşitli örneklere yer verilir. Bunlar arasında, Collins (2006) ve Huskey'nin (1997b, 2002) çalışmaları ışığında, Akaev'in kayırmacılık üzerine bina edilmiş aile yönetimi; ülkenin halihazırda sınırlı siyasal ve ekonomik değerlerinin Akaev'e yakın bir çevre ve bu çevrenin hayata geçirdiği geniş ölçekli yolsuzluklar ile ele geçirilmesi; oluş-sürecinde bulunan Anayasa Mahkemesi gibi formal kurumların zayıflatılması ve manipülasyonu, geleneksel dayanışma kurumlarından, seçimler ve referendumlarda halkı belirli bir yönde harekete geçirmek üzere faydalanılması vs. sayılabilir. Örnek olarak sunulan her bir stratejide, enformel bağlar ve dinamiklerin önemli rolü söz konusudur ve bu rol, formal zeminde kurumsallaşmanın altını oyar. Enformel ve formal zeminler arasındaki bu ilişki, 1994'in sonlarında açık ve seçik hale gelir. 1990ların sonuna gelindiğinde ise, "kamu değerlerinin enformel olarak özel kılındığı" aşikar hale gelerek, enformel dinamiklerin belirleyici rolünün altı bir kere daha çizilir (Collins, 2006: 243). Bu tabloda, nüfusun genelinin çıkarları, kamu çıkarları görmezden gelinir. Zorlu sosyo-ekonomik koşullar da bu bağlama eklendiğinde enformel ağlar güçlenir ve ülkede bir istikrarsızlık sarmalı oluşur.

Sovyet-sonrası Kırgızistan'ın sosyo-politik bağlamının temel niteliklerini şekillendiren bu alanlar arasındaki etkileşimler, 'Lale Devrimi'nin genel bağlamını oluşturur ve Kırgızistan siyasetinin sadece enformel değil, aynı zamanda kişiselleştirilmiş olduğunu da gözler önüne serer. Burada, iktidar, görünüşte güçlü bir başkana rağmen (Melyskova, 2008: 21), merkezi bir otorite

altında bulunmayan çeşitli kuvvetler arasında dağılmıştır (Melyskova, 2008: 21); ülkede çok-katmanlı bir siyasal mücadele söz konusudur (Juraev, 2008) ve ülkedeki yönetim sistemi formal zeminlerde oldukça zayıf biçimde kurumsallaşabilmiştir (Temirkulov, 2007; Melyskova, 2008: 21). Böyle bir siyasal atmosfer, sosyo-politik huzursuzluk ve protestolara gebedir. 'Lale Devrimi' aslında bu sistematikleştirilememiş siyasal sistemin dışa vurumlarından birisi olarak değerlendirilebileceği gibi, Kırgız siyasetinin doğasını şekillendirmekte enformel dinamiklerin oynadığı kritik rolün dışavurumu olarak da değerlendirilebilir.

Bu çerçevede, enformel dinamiklerin Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekteki belirleyici rolünün bağımsızlığın daha ilk yıllarından beri belirgin olduğu ileri sürülür. Kırgızistan'da, enformel bağların, seçimler, referendumlar, atamalar gibi olaylar esnasında popüler desteği harekete geçirmek açısından önemli olduğu görülmektedir ve 2000'lerin başından itibaren, enformel bağlar, popüler desteği protestolara kanalize etmekte de işlevsellik kazanmıştır (Juraev, 2008: 260). Bu bağlamda, enformel dinamikler, sadece rutin siyasettin her yönetim düzeyinde etkin değildir, aynı zamanda ayaklanmalar, protestolar esnasında da etkilidir (Juraev, 2008: 260). 'Lale Devrimi' bu kalkışmalardan birisi olmakla beraber ilki değildir.

2002 yılında meydana gelen Aksı Olayları, enformel bağların kitleleri harekete geçirmek açısından taşıdığı potansiyelleri gözler önüne sermiştir (Juraev, 2008: 258; Radnitz, 2005). Aksı Olayları, ülkedeki kişiselleştirilmiş ve enformel nitelikteki iktidar ilişkilerini, 'Lale Devrimi'nden üç yıl önce serimlemiş, enformel dinamiklerin Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekteki güçlerini ortaya

koymuştur (Tursunkulova, 2008). 'Lale Devrimi'nin dinamikleri ile benzerlikler taşıyan Aksı Olayları, bu bağlamda, Lewis'in deyişi ile, Lale Devrimi'ne "Belgrad, Kiev ya da Tiblis'ten daha fazla ilham" (Lewis, 2008: 275).; Tursunkulova'ya göre ise, "domestik örneği"ni sunar (Tursunkulova, 2008: 349). Buna göre, Akaev'in alaşağı edilmesinde rol oynayan faktörler, dış kaynaklar yerine, yerel ve domestiktir.

'Lale Devrimi'nin "iç örneği" olarak değerlendirilebilecek 2002 Aksı Olaylarının incelenmesinin ardından (Radnitz, 2005; Tursunkulova, 2008), Şubat-Mart 2005 olaylarının seyri, bu olaylar esnasında siyasetin enformel boyutlarının oynadığı rolün altını çizen çalışmaların sunduğu empirik açılımlardan beslenerek takip edilir (Jones, 2007; Radnitz, 2005, 2006; Temirkulov, 2007, 2008; Kupatadze, 2008). Dördüncü Bölüm, sadece 'Lale Devrimi'nin yakın bağlamından bahsetmez, aynı zamanda bu olayların gelişim sürecini, formal ve enformel dinamikler tarafından oynanan minor ve major rolleri ve bu rollerin Kırgız siyasetine dair ortaya koyduğu imalara değinir. Bu bölüm, 'Lale Devrimi'ni tikelliği içersinde kavramamızı ve bu tikelliği, Üçüncü Bölümde portresi çizilen Kırgızistan siyasetinin genel koordinatları içersine yerleştirmemizi mümkün kılar.

Bahsi geçen olayların gelişiminin incelenmesi, protestoların güneyde yoğunlaştığına (Jones, 2007: 70-71); temel rollerin – kimi zaman kriminal aidiyetleri de bulunan - seçim sürecinden dışlanmış ya da 2005 Parlamento Seçimlerinde parlamentoya girememiş yerel/bölgesel 'siyasal girişimciler'[96]

[96] Jones (2007: 153)'un ortaya attığı bu terim, "kendi kişisel, siyasal ya da iş çıkarları adına protestolardan yararlanan…liderler"e göndermede bulunur.

tarafından oynandığı (Jones, 2007: 153; Kupadatze, 2008: 90); bu siyasal girişimcilerin akrabalarını, köylülerini, aynı bölgeden tanıdıklarını, iş bağlantılarını, kriminal bağlantılarını vs seferber ederek oluşturdukları destekçilerini protestolara çağırarak harekete geçirdiğini ortaya çıkarmıştır (Jones, 2007: 97-122; Radnitz, 2006:137). Temirkulov'a göre, bahsi geçen siyasal girişimciler, bu çağrılarında geleneksel dayanışmanın çeşitli veçhelerinin meşrulaştırıcı gücünden, örneğin aksakallardan (yaşlılar), kurultay geleneğinden, pehlivanlardan faydalanmışlardır (Temirkulov, 2008). Enformel dinamiklerin çeşitli eksenleri arasında, bölgeselcilik ve suç ağları belirleyici roller oynamıştır (Kupatadze, 2008: 290; Cornell 2006: 64). Akaev-karşıtı olmaktan ibaret olan 'muhalefet', olaylar sırasında parçalı bir yapı segilemiş, ancak olayların son gününde birlikli bir grup imajı çizmeye çalışmıştır (Jones, 2007:157). Akaev'in ülkeyi terketmesinin hemen ardından, bahsi geçen Akaev-karşıtı grup içersinde, ortak ve birleştirici bir gündeme sahip olmayan çeşitli kuvvetler birbirleri ile mücadeleye başlamakta gecikmemiş, ülkede siyasal istikrarsızlığın devam edeceğinin işaretlerini erkenden gözler önüne sermişlerdir (Lewis, 2008: 275).

Bu bölümde, bahsi geçen olaylarda enformellerin dinamiklerin belirleyici rolünü vurgulayan çalışmalara yaslanarak, Batı tarafından desteklenen sivil toplum kuruluşlarının, parti-temelli ya da birlikli bir muhalefetin, medya ve gençlik örgütlerinin oynadığı ileri sürülen önemli rolün zayıf temellerine işaret edilir (Radnitz, 2006; Lewis, 2008). Bu elemanların ikincil rollerine değinilerek, sadece formel dinamiklere odaklanmanın ve enformel dinamiklerin rolünü bir kenara itmenin yetersizliğinin altı çizilir. Bu faktörler Şubat-Mart 2005 olaylarında itici kuvvetleri oluşturmamaktadır. Lewis'in deyişi ile, "bu sanal

siyasal dünya, reel siyasal dinamiklerden kopuktur" (Lewis, 2008: 275). Başka türlü söylersek, başkan Akaev'in indirilmesinde önde gelen rolü oynayan faktörler domestik, yerel ve enformel düzeylerde yer alır. Kısaca, Şubat-Mart 2005 olayları enformel dinamiklerin, Kırgızistan'daki siyasal sahnesini biçimlendirmekte oynadıkları önemli rolü bir kez daha gözler önüne serer.

Enformel dinamiklerin temel elemanları, eldeki durum ve çıkara göre değişkenlik göstermekle beraber, aile klanları, yerel ve bölgesel liderler, Akaev'in kaotik ekonomik yeniden yapılanma sürecinde zenginleşmiş ve büyük finansal kaynakların kontrolünü elinde bulunduran işadamları, suç grupları, enformel dinamiklerin anahtar ancak değişkenlik gösteren elemanları arasında belirir (Bogatyrev, 2008). Bu elemanlar genellikle geleneksel dayanışma kanalları ya da kişisel sadakat üzerinden bir araya gelir ve arkadaşlar, sınıf arkadaşları, komşular, ve iş bağlantıları gibi ağları da içerir. Bogatyrev'in deyişi ile "bu grupların her biri, iktidar ilişkilerine ne yolla ve ne ölçüde eklemlendiği, kullandığı teknolojiler, siyasal eylem formatları ve formel siyasal kurumlarla kurdukları ilişkilerin tipine göre çeşitlilik gösterir" (Bogatyrev, 2008). Sadece lider kadro değil, aynı zamanda 'muhalefet' de enformel ağlarla ilişki içindedir ve çıkarlarını enformel kanallar üzerinden takip eder. Kırgızistan'ın eski dış işleri bakanlarından Alikbek Jekshenkulov, tam da bu noktada, enformel dinamiklerin belirleyici rolüne şu sözleri ile ışık tutmaktadır: "Kırgızistan'daki siyasetçiler kamu siyaseti ile enformel siyaseti birbirine karıştırıyor…Enformel siyaset…tüm ülkelerde mevcuttur, ancak hiç bir ülkede Kırgızistan'da olduğu kadar etkili değildir..." (quoted in Safin, 2008). Bogatyrev'in deyişi ile, "siyasal kurumların gelişkin olduğu bir toplumda, önemli kararlar formal alanda verilir. Ancak, her durumda

bir kısım karar enformel olmayı sürdürür. Kırgızistan'da, siyasal kurumların mevcut bulunmadığı Kırgızistan'da, kararların çoğu neredeyse yüzde doksanı enformel olarak alınır" (Bogatyrev quoted in Safin, 2008). Bu çerçevede, Kırgız siyasetininin temel parametreleri ortaya çıkarılmak istendiğinde, sadece formel dinamiklere ve bu dinamiklerin mevcut bulunmayışını tekrarlanmaya odaklanmak, tıpkı Kırgızistan'ın 1990ların başında aldığı 'demokrasi adası' lakabını bir kaç yıl içersinde kaybetmesi gibi yetersiz, yanıltıcı ve hızlı varılan sonuçlara götürecektir. Mevcut literatür, çoğu durumda enformel dinamiklerin rolünü bir kenara bırakarak (Conrad, 2006: 257) ya da bu dinamikleri sivil toplum kavramsallaştırması bağlamında ele alarak (Dittmer, 2000: 290), Kırgız siyasetinde neler olup bittiğine teğet geçen analizler sunabilmektedir. Enformel dinamiklerin 'Lale Devrimi'nde oynadığı belirleyici roller, bu olayları formel zeminde analiz ederek, bir 'demokratikleşme ivmesi' olarak değerlendirmenin yanıltıcı olabileceğine işaret eder. Lewis'in ileri sürdüğü üzere "devrimin demokratik ve reform anlatısı…protestocuların ve onların liderlerinin söyleminden kopuktur" (Lewis, 2008: 276). Bu olaylar Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte enformel dinamiklerin, Kırgız siyasetini kişiselleştirilmiş ve enformel kılarak oynadığı önemli role işaret eder. Bu çalışma, Kırgız siyasetinin, formel dinamiklere odaklanmaya alışmış analistlerin çoğu zaman bakmadıkları ya da görmezden geldikleri alanda cereyan ettiğine işaret eder.

Bu bağlamda, 'Lale Devrimi'nin genel nüfusun koşullarında bir düzelmeye yol açmaması (Berg, 2006a. 138) ancak, ülkeye daha fazla istikrarsız getirmesi şaşırtıcı değildir. Yönetim sisteminin merkezi düzeyinde meydana gelen bu 'iktidar transferi', Kırgız siyasetinin içersinde yer aldığı istikrarsızlık

çemberini kırmaya yetmemiş, hatta bu çemberi pekiştirmiştir (Radnitz, 2006: 133).[97]

Bu çalışma, enformel dinamiklerin Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte oynadıkları roldeki sürekliliğin siyasal istikrarsızlıktan sorumlu olduğunu ileri sürer. Bu rol, post-Sovyet kırgızistan'ın bağımsızlığını kazanmasının ardından deneyimlediği ilk on yılda aşikar olmakla birlikte, 'Lale Devrimi'nin ardından da sürmüş, üstelik kuvvetlenmiştir. 'Lale Devrimi' bu çerçevede, bir 'demokratikleşme ivmesi' sunmak yerine, ülkede süren istikrarsızlığa zemin hazırlayan enformel dinamiklerin, Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte oynadıkları önemli role ivme kazandırmıştır. Bakiev dönemindeki pek çok gelişme yanında, bu dönemin sona ermesine sebep olan gelişmeler de bu sürekliliğe dair destekleyici kanıtlar sunmuştur.

Beşinci Bölüm, bu analizlere dayanarak, enformel dinamiklerin Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte oynadıkları önemli roldeki sürekliliği, hem Bakiev döneminde karşımıza çıkan, hem de bu dönemin bitmesine sebep olan gelişmelere istinaden serimler. ''Lale Devrimi'nin ardından süren istikrarsızlığın ardında, enformel dinamiklerin Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte oynadıkları belirleyici rol yatmaktadır' argümanını destekleyici kanıtlar sunmak üzere, Beşinci Bölümde,

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[97] 'Lale Devrimi' esnasında enformel dinamikler tarafından oynanan başlıca rollerden bahsederken, bu çalışma, genellikle altbilgilerde sunulmakla birlikte, 'Turuncu Devrim' olarak adlandırılan olaylarda da benzer dinamiklerin önemli rol oynadığına dikkat çekmiştir. Burada, Kırgızistan'ın, enformel dinamiklerin ülke siyasetini şekillendirmekte oynadığı role istinaden sui generis olmadığı vurgulanmıştır. Ukrayna'da meydana gelen 'Turuncu Devrim' in de enformel dinamikler için bir sahne sunduğuna dikkat çekilmiştir (Melyskova, 2008:11). Bu olaylarda da, bağımsızlığın ilk on yılında başkan Kuchma tarafından kurulan rejimin enformel doğası, protestoların genel bağlamını oluşturmuş, Kuchmagate skandalı, protestoların yakın bağlamını sunmuştur (Kuzio, 2007: 42-44). Buna ilave olarak, bölgesel iş klanları (oligarklar) 'turuncu kamp'ı önemli ölçüde desteklemiştir (Melyskova, 2008: 9). Üstelik, Ukrayna'da da sözde 'demokratik olan devrim' "yönetici elitlerin sınırlı bir zaman dilimi için sınırlı bir rotasyonu"ndan öteye gidememiştir (Melyskova, 2008:5).

‘Lale Devrimi’ni takip eden gelişmeler, bir başka deyişle, Bakiev döneminin geişmeler incelenirr. Burada, Bakiev döneminde Kırgızistan’da ortaya çıkan rejimin, Akaev dönemini büyük ölçüde hatırlattığı ileri sürülür (ICG, 2008:1; ICG, 2010a:1). Bakiev döneminde karşımıza çıkan sistemde, başkan Bakiev ve ailesi, bir başka deyişle, Bakiev’in yakın çevresi, formel ve enformel enstrumanlar ve dinamiklerden yararlanarak, ülke ekonomisi ve siyasetinin büyük bir kısmını ele geçirmiş ve kontrolü altına almıştır. Bu eğilim, özellikle, 2007 Parlamento Seçimlerinin ardından giderek belirgin hale gelmiştir. Bu seçimlerin ardından, Bakiev döneminin siyasal girişimcileri, kilit konumda bulunan devlet kurumlarının kontrolünü ele geçirmiş, Marat’ın deyişi ile, bu kontrol çoğu durumda yasadışı aktiviteler ile el ele gitmiştir (Marat, 2008a: 235). Bir başka deyişle, kriminal bağlantıların yardımı ile (Kupatadze, 2008) “iktidarın paraya çevrilmesi” şablonu Kırgız siyasetinde belirleyici olmuştur (ICG, 2008: 3).

Başka türlü söylersek, Bakiev dönemi, temel nitelikleri enformel dinamikler olarak beliren bir sisteme işaret eder: aile yönetimi, ülke ekonomisi ve siyasetinin dar bir çevre tarafından ele geçirilmesi/kapılması, geniş ölçekli yolsuzluk, devlet-suç ağları arasındaki ittifaklar bu temel nitelikler arasında öne çıkar (ICG, 2008; 2010a). ‘Muhalif güçler’ de enformel düzlemde yer alır ve ülke kaynaklarının kontrolünü elinde bulunduran dar çevreyi eleştirirken, gösteriler, protestolar düzenlerken, enformel bağlara yaslanır (Khamidov, 2006: 40-41). Bütün bu örnekler, enformel dinamiklerin Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte, ‘Lale Devrimi’ sonrasında da etkili olduğuna dair destekleyici kanıtlar oluşturur. Bu kanıtlar, Kırgızistan’daki siyasal sahnenin şekillendirilmesinde enformel boyutun belirleyici olduğunu ve formel boyutların, sadece enformel dinamiklerin

ülke kaynaklarını manipüle etmek üzere geçmeleri gereken giriş kapısını sunduğunu bir kere daha ortaya çıkarır.

Bu sosyo-politik atmosferde, başkan Bakiev'in indirilmesine yol açabilecek bir başka ayaklanmanın olması beklenmedik bir durum değildir ki, 'Lale Devrimi'nden sadece beş yıl sonra gerçekleşen de bu olur. Bakiev'in indirilmesine giden süreç, 2006 başından bu yana Kırgızistan'da meydana gelen protestolar, gösterilerde ipuçlarını vermektedir, ancak, bu işaretlerin zirvesine ulaşması 2008 kışında alarm zillerinin çalmasına sebep olan hidro enerji krizi ve takip eden finansal krizle mümkün olur (Marat, 2008b, 2008f). Hidro enerji krizi, 2010 yılı başında elektirik ve ısınma fiyatlarında dikkat çekici bir artışa sebep olup, ülkedeki geniş ölçekli yoksulluk göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, Bakiev karşıtı muhalif kampta öne çıkan siyasal girişimcilerin destekleyicilerini protestolara çağırmakta gecikmemesine yol açar (ICG, 2008: 15; Pannier, 2008a). Bu bağlamda, protestolar Şubat 2010'dan itibaren Talas ve Naryn'de belirmeye başlar. Bu ilk protestolarda Bakiev yönetiminin başarısızlığı eleştirilirken, Mart ayına gelindiğinde, Bakiev'in istifası dile getirilmeye başlanır (Pannier, 2008a). Bu protestoların dinamikleri ve mekanizmaları 2005 yılında ülkenin güneyinde yoğunlaşan çevresel protestoları hatırlatır. Ancak, 7 Nisan 2010'da Bişkek'teki protestolar daha spontan bir doğa içersinde cereyan eder. Bu protestolar, keskin nişancıların protesto edenlerin üzerine ateş açması ile tepkisel bir biçimde gelişmiş ve Beyaz Saray'a protestocuların zorla girmesine yol açmıştır. Bu olaylar, 'Lale Devrimi'nden sadece beş yıl sonra meydana gelmiştir. 'Lale Devrimi'nin hemen ardından, formel düzlemde siyasal çoğulculuğa ivme kazandıracak bir demokratikleşme rüzgarından bahsedilirken, Nisan 2010

olaylarının bir kere daha ortaya serdiği üzere, aslında bu olayların ülkeye getirdiği ülkedeki istikrarın giderek daha da zayıflaması olmuştur. Engvall'in deyişi ile, "Kırgızistan'daki kalkışma – beş yıl içersinde ikinci kalkışma – Kırgızistan'ın, bırakınız çoğulcu bir siyasal sisteme sahip olmasını, istikrarlı, egemen bir devlet olmasına ilişkin beklentileri kuşkuda bırakır" (Engvall, 2010).

2005 ve 2010 yıllarında Kırgızistan'da meydana gelen ve ülkenin devlet başkanının görevinden ayrılması ile son bulan olaylar arasında çeşitli benzerlik ve farklılıklar dikkat çeker (Temirkulov, 2010). Her iki olayda da, protestoların içinde geliştiği genel bağlam benzerlik gösterir ve her iki olayda da, bölgesel bağlantılar etkili olmuştur. 2005 olaylarında, protestolar Oş ve Celalabad bölgesinde gelişip yoğunlaşmışken; 2010 olaylarında Talas, Narin ve Çuy bölgeleri mücadelenin ön cephesinde yer almıştır (Alkan, 2010: 25). Ancak, hem güney, hem de kuzeyde, Bakiev-karşıtı görüşlerin mevcut olduğu gözden kaçırılmamalıdır ki aynı şeyi 2005 olayları esnasında hem güney hem de kuzeyde mevcut olan Akaev-karşıtı görüşler için de söylenebilir. Organizasyonel düzeyde, 2005 ve 2010 olaylarının başkentte geçen son günleri farklı nitelikler sergiler. 24 Mart 2005'te Bişkek'te, öncesindeki çevresel protestolara göre en organize gösteri düzenlenmişken; 7 Nisan 2010'da Bişkek'te çıkan olaylar, protestoculara ateş eden keskin nişancılara tepki olarak gelişen en spontan niteliktekiler olarak karşımıza çıkar (Temirkulov, 2010). Bu bizi, 2005 ve 2010 olayları arasındaki bir diğer farklılığa götürür: Mart 2005 olaylarında, güvenlik güçleri göstericilere ateş açmamışken, Nisan 2010'da göstericilere ateş etmekten çekinilmemiştir. Bu sebeple, Mart 2005'te iktidar transferi görece sorunsuz sağlanmışken, Nisan 2010'da seksen altı kişi öldürülmüştür (IWPR, 2007).

2005 ve 2010 Olaylarını tetikleyen faktörler ilk bakışta birbirinden farklı görünür. Şubat-Mart 2005'te, parlamento seçimleri öncesi ve esnasındaki gergin atmosfere işaret edilirken, Şubat-Nisan 2010 Olayları, temel ihtiyaç fiyatlarındaki çok yüksek orandaki artışa bağlanır. Her iki durumda da, nüfusun genelinin sosyo-ekonomik zorluklar, yolsuzluk ve yasal ve yasadışı dünyalar arasındaki ittifaklara istinaden bir huzursuzluk içersinde olduğu gözden kaçırılmamalıdır. Bu huzursuzluğun kaynakları, bir zamanlar Akaev-karşıtı kampta kol kola olan 'muhalif' figürlerin, şimdi de Bakiev-karşıtı kampta yer alarak destekleyicilerini harekete geçirmesinin imkanını oluşturur (Shepherd, 2010c).

Şubat-Mart 2005 olayları ile Şubat-Nisan 2010 olayları arasında göze çarpan bir diğer benzerlik, devlet başkanlarının indirilmesinin ardından, bir dış gücün bu operasyonda Kırgızistan'daki 'muhalif' güçlere yapmış olabileceği yardım konusunda spekülasyonların ortaya çıkmasıdır. Şubat-Mart 2005'te, bu role, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ya da genel olarak Batılı güçlerin demokrasi yardımları layık görülmüşken, Nisan 2010'da Rusya Federasyonu'na işaret edilmiştir (Nichol, 2010b:7). Bu konuda, Bakiev'in Manas üssü konusunda yaptığı u-dönüşü dolayısıyla Rusya Federasyonu ile Kırgızistan arasındaki ilişkilerin en iyi düzeylerinde olmadığına dikkat çekilmekle beraber (ICG, 2010a: 6), Rusya'nın olaylara doğrudan bir müdahalesine işaret edecek yeter kanıt olmadığı ileri sürülmüştür (ICG, 2010a: 12).

Bu bölümde, başkan Bakiev'in Beyaz Saray'ı terk etmesini takiben kurulan ve Rosa Otunbaeva'nın başkanlık ettiği geçici hükümetin karşılaştığı çok çeşitli sorunlara da kısaca değinilmiştir. Bu sorunlar arasında, Nisan 2010 Olaylarının hemen ardından Kırgızistan'ın güneyinde meydana gelen çatışmaların

talihsiz sonuçlarından bahsedilmiştir. Bu çatışmalar üç biçim almıştır: (a) Akaev'in indirilmesinin ardından yaşanan gelişmelerden farklı olarak, Bakiev'in indirilmesinin ardından, Bakiev'in destekçileri iktidara tutunmaya devam etmişler ve Bakiev'in güçlü olduğu bölge olan Celalabad'da çeşitli gösteriler düzenlemişlerdir (b) ülkedeki azınlıkların zararına olan toprak işgalleri başgöstermiştir (c) Haziran 2010'da Oş ve Celalabad'da Kırgız ve Özbek toplulukları arasında şiddetli çatışmalar yaşanmıştır. Bu olaylar, Kırgızistan siyasetini şekillendirmekte enformel dinamiklerin oynadığı belirleyici rolde sürekliliğe bir kez daha işaret etmiştir.

Son olarak, 27 Haziran 2010'da gerçekleşen referendum sürecine değinilir. Kırgızistan'ın başkanlık sisteminden parlamenter sisteme geçişine dair düzenlemeler getiren referendum sürecinin içinde gerçekleştiği sosyo-politik atmosfer tasvir edilir (Osmonov, 2010d). Kırgızistan'da yaptığım röportajlardan elde ettiğim görüşlere istinaden, Kırgızistan'ın siyasal sisteminin parlamenter sisteme dönüştürülmesinin, başkanlık sistemine kıyasla daha ikna edici bir hamle olduğu ileri sürülür. Ne var ki, bu hamlenin karşılığında, uzun-soluklu koalisyonlar ya da Kırgız siyasetinin kişiselleştirilmiş ve enformel doğasında ani bir değişim beklemenin oldukça zor olduğuna da dikkat çekilir. Enformel dinamikleri formel zeminlere kanalize etmenin, Sovyet-sonrası Kırgızistan'ın tarihsel ve geçiş süreci bağlamları dikkate alındığında kolaylıkla halledilebilir bir mesele olmadığı vurgulanır (Collins, 2006: 12).

Son tahlilde, nasıl ki Kırgız siyasetinin temel parametrelerini kavramak üzere sadece formel dinamiklere odaklanmak kısmi açılımlar sunabilecekse, parlamenter sistem gibi formel çerçevelerin, enformel dinamiklerin siyaseti

şekillendirmekte belirleyici olduğu Kırgızistan'ın sosyo-politik bağlamı üzerindeki etkisinin boyutu hakkında beklentilerimizi yükseltmek de benzer bir kısmiliğe karşılık gelecektir. Parlamenter sistemin ülkedeki çeşitli güçler arasında bir sorun çözme mekanizması tesis etmek açısından, bir diyalog platformu sunmak açısından önemli açılımlar sunması umut vaad etmekle beraber, böyle bir mekanizma kurulamadığı ve enformel dinamikler Kırgız siyasetini şekillendirmekte etkili olmayı sürdürdükleri takdirde, Kırgızistan'ın kısa ve orta vadede bir istikrarsızlık sarmalı içersinde kalmayı sürdüreceğini öngörmek mümkündür.