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## From the Tulip Revolution to the Three-Day Revolution: Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan's Failure to Find Stability

Kyrgyzstan is a small and mountainous country in Central Asia with a population of around 5.3 million. A Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) until 1991, the Kyrgyz parliament declared the country's independence on 31 August 1991. The first president of independent Kyrgyzstan was Askar Akaev, who had only been installed as president of the Kyrgyz SSR in 1990. Akaev wanted to reform the country quickly, and made an immediate transition from a planned to a market economy. He was also responsible for initiating the democratization of the political system. In 1993, the Kyrgyz parliament adopted a new constitution, which was relatively democratic. For a long time, Kyrgyzstan was seen as Central Asia's model of democracy.

However, Akaev's style of government began to change following his re-election in 1995. Over the years, thanks, in particular, to a series of referenda on constitutional amendments, he succeeded in enhancing his powers in all areas of policy, continually rolling back the rights of parliament. He developed into an authoritarian ruler. Corruption and nepotism spread. The tools he used included electoral fraud and the skilled recruitment of local political elites to bring about the desired results.

At the same time, the economic situation in Kyrgyzstan deteriorated rapidly during the 1990s. Among other things, this was a result of Akaev and his favourites exploiting specific economic sectors for their own personal gain. Furthermore, it appeared that the "shock therapy" transition from a socialist to a capitalist economic order had met people completely unprepared and ultimately left them worse off than before. People were suddenly required to look after themselves, as the state support and social security systems that had existed in the Soviet Union disappeared. From 1991 to 2000, GDP per head declined from 421 to 279 US dollars.<sup>1</sup> Satisfaction with Akaev's government fell correspondingly.

### *The Prehistory of the Tulip Revolution*

The prehistory of the revolution, which stretches as far back as Autumn 2001, casts a spotlight on the geostrategic situation of the country, which hosts key US and Russian military bases. Since, however, neither of those countries

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Note: The views contained in this contribution are the authors' own.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. The World Bank Group, *World Development Indicators & Global Development Finance*, at: <http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do>.

was seen as a reliable long-term partner, Kyrgyzstan turned to its eastern neighbour, China. In the course of Kyrgyzstan's efforts to woo China as patron, Bishkek and Peking signed an agreement in August 1999, ending disputes over borders between the two countries. In May 2002, despite energetic opposition protests, the Kyrgyz parliament ratified the relevant legislation. Akaev campaigned hard to secure the passage of this bill in a domestic political situation that was, for several reasons, very tense. Trouble was brewing in the south of the country in particular. The south and the area adjacent to Uzbekistan, which is home to half of Kyrgyzstan's population, is considered a permanent hotbed of unrest. Some 14 per cent of the inhabitants of the region are ethnically Uzbek. There is very little industry. Most of the region's factories failed as thoroughly as the system of Soviet power. The poverty and hopelessness of the population are desperate. When Uzbekistan made crossing the border more difficult by introducing a visa requirement for Kyrgyz citizens, many south Kyrgyz who had relied on cross-border trade to make a living lost their last source of income. The accumulation of destabilizing factors had reached the tipping point.

Taking advantage of the public discontent, Azimbek Beknazarov, a Kyrgyz parliamentarian originally from the south of the country, used the passage of the bill settling border relations with China to initiate proceedings to have President Akaev removed from office. Beknazarov's move attracted overwhelming support. In January 2002, he was arrested on trumped-up charges. The arrest triggered a wave of protests, which the government had not expected and which made clear that it had underestimated the level of social and political dissatisfaction among the population. In Bishkek, demonstrations took place in front of the parliament, government buildings, and the OSCE Centre.

Akaev's regime reacted with repressive means. When Beknazarov's case finally came to court in mid-March, in Aksy District of Jalal-Abad Province, there was a demonstration by thousands of his supporters. In clashes with interior ministry special forces, five demonstrators were shot dead and many others wounded, some seriously. This marked the beginning of a new phase of protests. Demonstrations of solidarity with Beknazarov quickly turned into more general protests, some of them violent. Among the protestors' key demands were calls for the resignation of President Akaev and the introduction of reforms to raise the general standard of living.

Akaev understood that to continue to fight the demonstrators would be to lose and opted instead for de-escalation. Beknazarov was released. Yet the death of the five demonstrators in Aksy threatened to bring down his presidency. The president tried to salvage what he could. Finally, in April 2002, he dismissed the government of his prime minister, Kurmanbek Bakiev, proposing to form a new cabinet that would include members of the opposition.

Yet, contrary to expectations, Akaev did not give ministerial roles to any opposition politicians. Moreover, since those responsible for the blood-

shed at Aksy had still not been held to account, the protests in the country continued. Akaev felt compelled to make new promises, and, in August 2002, he announced his willingness to allow constitutional reform and the calling of a Constitutional Assembly. The opposition's demands were clear: Kyrgyzstan should adopt a parliamentary form of government, in which the executive is more accountable to the parliament.

The new draft constitution was published on 12 January 2003. However, once again, Akaev had not played fairly: With a few exceptions, the document did not take up the opposition's proposals. Not only that, but it reversed a number of democratic developments that had been made in the past twelve years. Akaev apparently felt that his power was now sufficiently consolidated that he no longer needed to concede to the opposition's demands. The regime used state propaganda to place massive pressure on the population and the constitution was approved by a large majority in a referendum. Since then, constitutional experts have described Kyrgyzstan officially as a "presidential-parliamentary republic".

As one would expect, the mood in the country did not improve, since neither did the situation of the population. Increasing numbers of influential politicians switched to the opposition, whose power grew correspondingly. The quite blatantly rigged parliamentary elections of early 2005 were followed by riots. Demonstrations, starting in the south of the country, grew ever larger and more violent, with protestors storming government buildings and attacking security forces. Several dozen people were killed. When the presidential palace in Bishkek was finally occupied, Akaev felt he had no choice but to flee. He withdrew first to Kazakhstan, and then on to Moscow, from where he issued his official resignation in April 2005.

#### *The Bakiev Government*

Akaev was replaced as president by his former prime minister, Kurmanbek Bakiev. The central figure in the protest movement that toppled Akaev, Bakiev won the election with 90 per cent of the vote. The citizens of Kyrgyzstan were hopeful for a new start and a rise in their living standards at long last. The latter did not come to pass. While there were some changes to the system, they generally affected the political and moneyed class rather than the masses. The dissatisfaction was quick to return, as did protests and demonstrations. The mismanagement and corruption under Bakiev were even worse than during Akaev's nepotistic rule, and the former's regime was even more authoritarian. Bakiev, too, used constitutional amendments to strengthen his personal power base and weaken parliament.

Bakiev managed to hold on to power for five years before the Kyrgyz people had also had enough of him. His fall took only three days. With arrests of members of the parliamentary opposition, the appointment of family

members to high positions in the state, and increases in energy prices, he had pushed things too far. The country remained as poor as ever; most people have little to lose. The anger of the Kyrgyz people was unleashed in the country's streets and squares.

The revolution began on 6 April 2010 with an uprising in the provincial town of Talas. On 7 April, there were bloody clashes between insurgents and security forces in other provincial towns (including Naryn and Issyk-Kul) as well as the capital, Bishkek. They left 68 people dead and over 600 injured. The interior minister was assaulted, and the deputy prime minister lost an eye. There was widespread looting, and buildings and cars were set on fire. President Bakiev fled by helicopter to the south of the country. By 8 April 2010, all the key institutions, government ministries, and the television centre, were already in opposition hands. The majority of members of the army and the police changed sides. The parliamentary opposition, led by former foreign minister Roza Otunbaeva (Social Democratic Party) – who had also been involved in Akaev's overthrow in 2005, then on the same side as Bakiev – assumed power literally from the street.

Bakiev fled first to Kazakhstan and finally to Minsk. Though he officially announced his resignation on 15 April, he withdrew it shortly afterwards, and since then has repeatedly asserted that he is the legitimate president of Kyrgyzstan and that the interim government is illegal.

### *The Provisional Government*

On 8 April, the Kyrgyz opposition formed a "Provisional Government of People's Trust", whose stated intention was to stay in power for no longer than six months. The provisional government appealed to the population via television for support. It consists, in the most part, of former leading politicians who once stood alongside Bakiev in the anti-Akaev opposition, but came to reject the former's increasingly authoritarian rule, or were even victims of his persecution. It is led by Roza Otunbaeva. Her deputies are Temir Sariiev (finance minister), Omurbek Tekebaev (responsible for constitutional reform), Almazbek Atambaev (responsible for economic policy), and Azimbek Beknazarov (responsible for justice). Bolot Sherniyazov was appointed interior minister in the interim government.

Russia recognized the new government relatively rapidly, as did most Western countries, at least informally. A number of countries were quick to offer assistance in stabilizing the country. As leader of the opposition that had suffered under Bakiev's repression, Rosa Otunbaeva had previously criticized the anti-Russian initiatives of the Kyrgyz government, referring to Russia as "our strategic partner and ally". Despite the unrest, the US soon resumed flights to supply its troops in Afghanistan, for which purpose Kyr-

gyzstan, as a member of the anti-terror alliance, provides the use of Manas International Airport.

Kazakhstan and especially Uzbekistan reacted with concern to the disturbances, and both closed their borders to Kyrgyzstan for several weeks. Although the general population of both countries is significantly wealthier than that of Kyrgyzstan, a degree of latent dissatisfaction does exist. The governments of Kyrgyzstan's neighbouring states fear that the unrest could spill over the border into their countries, though observers consider this unlikely at the moment.

After the formation of the interim government, the situation in Kyrgyzstan calmed down somewhat. At no point in time, however, can one say that stability was achieved, as small-scale protests and clashes were a continuous occurrence. The government hurried to present a draft of a new constitution, which was intended to re-establish democratic structures, provide the new government with legitimacy, and bring the unrest to an end. On 20 May, the final draft of the constitution was published,<sup>2</sup> and 27 June was confirmed as the date of the referendum that would put it before the people. The new constitution would raise the number of parliamentary seats from 90 to 120. It would entitle the new president to sit for a maximum of one six-year term. There would be complete separation of religion and the state. A five per cent barrier for entry to parliament would be introduced. On the whole, the draft met with the approval of observers. However, the article "On the Transitional Period" was criticized sharply. It had been added at the last minute and declared that the interim government would last until 31 December 2011, the interim president would be Roza Otunbaeva, and the next presidential elections would only be held in the autumn of 2011.

The temporary closure of borders with Kyrgyzstan by a number of neighbouring states seriously reduced trade flows, which did lasting damage to the country's industrial and agricultural sectors, and led to a further decline in living standards. But while the situation remained tense, the population's anger appeared initially to abate, as acceptance seemed to grow that the constitutional referendum was the logical next step in the reform process. However, the activities of Bakiev supporters continued to cause unrest. In early May, for instance, flyers and CDs were distributed in the south of the country, calling for Kyrgyzstan to be split into a northern and a southern state, and for the provisional government to be held to account for the victims of the unrest that had ultimately led to Bakiev's downfall. Demonstrations – sometimes even violent protests – were also held, in which calls were made for Bakiev's return.

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2 A first draft had previously been presented to politicians and representatives of civil society organizations for discussion. The aim of this was to solicit suggestions that could potentially be adopted into the final draft, as appears in some cases to have occurred.

### *Ethnic Disturbances in the South*

On 11 June, disturbances suddenly broke out in Kyrgyzstan's second-largest city, Osh, which rapidly turned into a pogrom against the Uzbek minority, and later extended to other foreigners. Around 14 per cent of the population of Kyrgyzstan consists of ethnic Uzbeks, who, however, comprise nearly half of all residents in Osh Province. Just how such serious disturbances could break out so quickly was and remains incomprehensible. What seems to be clear is that the clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks had been planned long in advance and were triggered quite deliberately. A thorough examination of events has yet to be carried out. Most reports mention unknown snipers, who are said to have opened fire simultaneously on both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks from several positions in Osh, thereby provoking fights between gangs of youths. It is not improbable that deposed president Bakiev or members of his clan were manipulating events behind the scenes. After just one night, the situation resembled a civil war. Kyrgyz were setting out to hunt down ethnic Uzbeks. Fires were started in ethnically Uzbek areas, which were completely devastated, while people fleeing the flames were gunned down. In no time at all, the fighting spread beyond gangs of youths, and women and children were also attacked and killed.

The violence spread rapidly, and boiling point was also reached in the city of Jalal-Abad, another southern city. The police had no chance of regaining control of the situation. Nor did a partial mobilization of the army prove effective. There are also many members of the security forces who remain true to Bakiev, and they will not follow orders from the new government, and sometimes even take the side of the Kyrgyz gangs. Many Uzbek eye witnesses have reported seeing members of the security forces participating in the attacks. Martial law was imposed on Osh and Jalal-Abad, and the police and army were authorized to shoot at rioters without warning.

Many ethnic Uzbeks, particularly women and children, attempted to escape to Uzbekistan. As many as 400,000 people were forced to flee the fighting. Around 100,000 of them eventually made it to the Uzbek section of the Ferghana Valley, where they were put up by relatives or found shelter in public buildings or refugee camps. The Uzbek government, aid agencies, and the local population took good and effective care of the refugees. Among the general population, in particular, there was a strong feeling of solidarity with the refugees, despite the extreme poverty of the people themselves.

When no improvement in the situation was observed after the first few days of unrest, a number of countries began to evacuate their citizens. Pakistan flew its citizens out. The German embassy in Bishkek – the only European diplomatic mission in the country – joined forces with the American embassy to evacuate just under 90 Europeans and Americans from the crisis region to Bishkek. Russia began to reinforce its military presence at its base

near the capital so that it could intervene were violence to be directed against the Russian minority.

Otunbaeva's government had already appealed to Russia for military assistance the day after the unrest had begun. This was rejected by Russia on the grounds that it was a domestic issue for Kyrgyzstan. Russia claimed that it had no authorization for an intervention, and argued that any peacekeeping troops that were dispatched would have to be an international force, under a UN mandate, for instance. When the situation in Osh appeared to improve a little on 15 June, and people once again dared to leave their barricaded homes, the government withdrew its appeal for help. It claimed to have brought the situation under control by itself and that there was no need for military assistance, though aid shipments were welcome. Observers were bemused by this pronouncement. The situation in Osh had calmed down, but only in the city centre. Whether this can really be considered the result of actions of the Kyrgyz security forces is questionable. Moreover, the preceding days had demonstrated that the Kyrgyz police and military had little with which to counter the unrest, and violence could therefore flare up again at any time. In Kyrgyzstan, the government was also accused of concealing the extent of the catastrophe and playing down the seriousness of the situation. The government did in fact continue to insist for a long time that only around 200 people had lost their lives. It later admitted that the number of victims could be as much as ten times this number. Journalists and other observers on the ground reported that ethnic Uzbeks were still too scared to leave their houses several days after the end of the unrest. Several who did were said to have been mishandled by Kyrgyz soldiers manning the checkpoints that had been established throughout Osh and Jalal-Abad.

Aid shipments containing food and medicines began to arrive in Osh from Bishkek and abroad while the clashes were still going on. It was, however, virtually impossible to distribute the goods at all, let alone to reach all those in need. The city districts in which most of them were believed to be residing were barricaded off. Aid workers were attacked and some were seriously injured. Even doctors and paramedics found it hard to go about their work and a number were also attacked. Fire crews are said to have been prevented from extinguishing blazes.

On the Uzbek side of the border, the provision of aid functioned fairly well. Nonetheless, Uzbekistan complained that the bulk of international aid shipments were being sent to Kyrgyzstan and too little was reaching Uzbekistan, where at least a quarter of all those needing assistance were to be found. Nonetheless, relations between Uzbek authorities, the United Nations, the International Red Cross, and the Russian authorities were good. The other Central Asian states maintained a low profile and barely took part in aid activities.

In the five days of unrest, according to the most recent Kyrgyz government estimates, up to 2,000 individuals were killed, and several thousand

injured. The government initially counted only the dead in official mortuaries and hospitals. But since the victims were Muslims, they had to be buried by sunset or within 24 hours at the latest. Many people had therefore laid their relatives to rest themselves, sometimes making use of mass graves. Moreover, many Uzbeks were scared to take injured or dead family members to official institutions. Not only did they hardly dare to use the streets, but there were rumours in circulation that Kyrgyz doctors were giving Uzbek patients inferior care or refusing to treat them at all. The precise number of people who died will probably never be known.

### *The Background to the Disturbances*

Osh Province is located within the Ferghana Valley, a fertile high plateau shared by Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. National borders in the region are convoluted and partially contested. There are numerous enclaves and each country hosts large minorities of each of the other two nationalities. This complex landscape was largely a result of Stalin's policy, which, rather arbitrarily and taking no account of the previous distribution of territory, divided Central Asia, which had formerly been dominated by tribal structures, into five "Soviet Socialist Republics". This resulted in the situation in the Kyrgyz/Uzbek border region whereby Uzbeks, who are traditionally farmers, and Kyrgyz, who are traditionally nomads, suddenly had to live together in towns. Over time it turned out that the traditional sedentary lifestyle of the Uzbeks meant they enjoyed greater economic success than the ethnic Kyrgyz, and therefore a higher average standard of living. There had already been pogroms against the Uzbek minority in Osh in 1990. In the so-called Osh Massacre, which was triggered by disputes over the distribution of land, some 300 people lost their lives and more than 1,000 were injured. The riots were only put down by Soviet troops, dispatched by then Soviet head of state Mikhail Gorbachev.

When the Soviet Union finally broke up in the early 1990s, and the five Central Asian states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, gained their independence, they needed to search for new identities. This led, among other things, to the rise of various strengths of patriotism, as fostered by the respective governments. National languages were strongly encouraged, at the expense of Russian. Minority languages were neglected and granted no official status. As a result, many members of ethnic minorities emigrated to their kin states during the 1990s. However, many remained where they were, particularly in border regions. These included the Uzbeks within the Kyrgyzstani part of the Ferghana Valley. The Ferghana Valley has a reputation as a powder keg. It is home to a deeply impoverished rural population entirely dependent on agriculture. Islam is traditionally very strong in the area, which is also home to the Islamist "Islamic Movement of



Uzbekistan” (IMU), a group no less radical than Al Qaida and the Taliban and currently operating in exile in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The poorer sections of the population are easy prey not only for Islamists, and nationalist ideas are also accepted more easily than elsewhere.

Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan’s minorities were neglected by both Akaev and Bakiev. After the latter’s fall, therefore, many Uzbeks pledged their support to the interim government in the hope that improvements would be made to minorities policy. This angered many Kyrgyz in the south of the country, in particular, where Bakiev’s support remains strongest, and exacerbated tensions between the two ethnic groups. Kyrgyzstan’s north-south divide has also been growing since independence. The worst poverty is to be found in the south, where the population has lost faith in politics and Kyrgyz politicians. The willingness to see violent protest as a legitimate means of expressing opinion and exercising political influence grows with every incident.

Although the troubles were largely ethnic in nature, the interim government is not alone in suspecting Bakiev and his clan of being behind them or at least fanning the flames. In May, a recording was placed online of a telephone conversation between Maksim Bakiev, the ex-president’s son, and Zhanysh Bakiev, his brother, in which they discuss a scenario similar to the events that later occurred. They appeared to be considering how the country could be destabilized in a way that would enable Bakiev to return to power.

It is also likely that Kyrgyzstan’s criminal underworld was involved in the disturbances. The Bakiev family was almost certainly involved in criminal activities, and hence represented the quasi-official link between politics and criminality. Following the president’s overthrow, they could no longer act with impunity, and a power struggle ensued between various criminal groups over their illicit sources of revenue. Drug trafficking was a particularly important income stream. A major smuggling route for Afghan drugs passes through Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Russia, from where the drugs are shipped to Europe. Osh is one of the key marketplaces for drugs in Kyrgyzstan. Various Islamist groups are also suspected of having triggered the troubles. At the very least, they were certainly in a position to benefit from the tense situation in the country.

On 13 June 2010, Maksim Bakiev was arrested in Hampshire, England, while attempting to enter the UK. He had been on international wanted persons lists for some time, and an arrest warrant had been served on him in Kyrgyzstan for charges including tax evasion. In the months prior to his father’s fall, more and more power was placed in Maksim’s hands, and it appeared that he was being groomed as successor. Among the population, however, he was even more detested than his father. Immediately following his arrest, he applied for asylum in the UK. A few days later, he was offered temporary asylum while his case was examined in more detail. While London has no extradition treaty with Bishkek, the Kyrgyz government continues to demand his extradition.

### *The Constitutional Referendum*

Despite the unrest, the interim government kept to the timetable for the constitutional referendum it had planned since May. International observers and diplomats in the country welcomed their stance, calling it the only correct course of action, as only a government with electoral legitimacy can provide lasting stability. The situation remained tense after the end of the disturbances, and minor incidents continued to occur with regularity. Even Deputy Prime Minister Tekebaev warned of the danger of new disturbances. The OSCE refrained from sending additional short-term election observers out of concern for their safety; the task of observation was carried out by a so-called limited referendum observation mission (LROM), consisting of ODIHR long-term observers who had been in the country since May. However, the situation remained calm, and the referendum was carried out as planned. On Sunday 27 June, therefore, the people of Kyrgyzstan were able to vote on the new constitution, the confirmation of Roza Otunbaeva as the interim president until 31 December 2011, and the transformation of the Constitutional Court into a Constitutional Chamber attached to the Supreme Court. Most importantly, the new constitution would transform the country into a parliamentary republic. The referendum did not allow the electorate to vote on each point individually but only to accept or reject all three proposals.

The Uzbek government, which acted with great prudence and did all it could to ensure that the conflict would not escalate, succeeded, in negotiations with Bishkek in the weeks prior to the referendum, in securing an undertaking that ethnically Uzbek citizens of Kyrgyzstan who had fled to Uzbekistan could return safely to Kyrgyzstan. To the amazement of all the relevant international organizations, which had been prepared for a drawn-out refugee crisis at the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border, nearly all the 100,000 refugees did indeed return to their homes in Kyrgyzstan. This also meant that many more of those entitled to vote were able to take part in the referendum. The transitional government also acted quickly to make it possible for votes to be cast at places other than polling stations, so that many voters were able to use mobile ballot boxes. The referendum appeared to take place without violence or other irregularities. According to the official figures published by the Central Election Commission on 2 July, turnout was 72 per cent. Almost 91 per cent of those who voted were in favour of the new constitution.<sup>3</sup>

The new constitution makes several changes to the Kyrgyz political system: Kyrgyzstan is now the first and only parliamentary republic in Central Asia. The number of seats in the parliament has been increased from 90 to 120. The party with the most votes is granted 65 seats; the remaining 55 are shared proportionally by the other parties that manage to clear the five per cent barrier to parliamentary representation. The prime minister will be

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3 Cf. 24.kg news agency, *New Constitution adopted by 90.55 percent of voters in Kyrgyz Referendum*, Bishkek, 2 July 2010, at: <http://eng.24.kg/politic/2010/07/02/12453.html>.

chosen by the parliament. The president may only serve a single six-year term of office and can be recalled by the parliament. There is to be separation between religion and the state; religious and ethnic parties will not be allowed to compete in elections. Overall, the new constitution takes power from the president and gives it back to parliament. It enhances the rights of the opposition, e.g. in the election of the president, and contains mechanisms designed to make it hard for a single party to gather too much power.

Roza Otunbaeva will remain in office as interim president until 31 December 2011. The referendum thus confirmed her as the first female head of state in both Central Asia and the CIS as a whole. The next presidential elections are set for the autumn of 2011, and, according to the new constitution, Otunbaeva is excluded from standing for office. In this way, the transitional government countered the unspoken allegation that the lengthy transitional period was designed to cement its grip on power, enabling it to continue in the best tradition of Akaev and Bakiev. After the disturbances of mid-June, the claim that the transitional period was too long appeared in a different light: As things stand, the state of transition no longer appears unjustified.

Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev was sceptical about Kyrgyzstan's new form of government. While acknowledging that it was an internal matter for Kyrgyzstan, he expressed doubts that a parliamentary system would work in the country. He criticized the fact that both the government and the Kyrgyz state possessed too little authority and that a democratic system could favour the spread of radical Islamic forces. Kyrgyz and foreign observers also expressed concern. While this step in the direction of democracy was welcomed in principle, it was troubling that many voters were apparently not quite sure just what they had voted for. Many appeared to imagine that they had voted for peace and stability, in the expectation that the situation in the country would now improve rapidly. In fact, it is more likely that there will be many further attacks on the democratic system, and that the population as a whole will need to fight to defend the new order. The realization that democracy entails responsibility and co-operation for each and every citizen has not spread throughout the population as one might wish.

From Moscow, ex-President Akaev also criticized the new government and its form, stating that Kyrgyzstan needs "a strong president who can make effective decisions".<sup>4</sup> In his view, a system of government such as there had been under his leadership is best suited to Kyrgyzstan's needs. Bakiev, speaking from exile in Belarus, took a more vigorous line: "Everything that is happening in Kyrgyzstan today is entirely the responsibility of the provisional government. [...] It is not fit to govern the country."<sup>5</sup> Both former presidents believe democracy is the wrong way to govern Kyrgyzstan.

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4 *Spiegel Online*, Interview mit Askar Akajew [Interview with Askar Akaev], 5 July 2010, at: <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,704468,00.html> (author's translation).

5 *Spiegel Online*, Interview mit Kurmanbek Bakijew [Interview with Kurmanbek Bakiev], 27 June 2010, at: <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,702903,00.html>.

After it became clear that the population had accepted the constitution, interim President Otunbaeva spoke, evoking the unity of the Kyrgyz people, whose future, she said, would be glorious. How the situation develops, and whether Kyrgyzstan can achieve stability remains to be seen. Removing the causes of tension between ethnic groups is also a political task, and, in this regard, both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks expect much from their new government. For there can be no talk of unity among Kyrgyzstan's ethnic groups, especially since the bloody disturbances, which Kyrgyz and Uzbeks blame on each other. It is likely to be some time before true forgiveness is possible. Below the surface, the tensions between the two groups continue to simmer.

For instance, in the summer and autumn of 2010, ethnic Uzbeks made a large number of complaints against the Kyrgyz authorities. A report by the international organization Human Rights Watch also detailed numerous incidents in which Kyrgyz officials and security services harassed and discriminated against ethnic Uzbeks.<sup>6</sup>

Confounding the expectations of many, campaigning for the 10 October 2010 parliamentary elections was largely peaceful. A total of 28 parties competed for the favour of voters. Polling day itself also passed without incident. Although complaints were made that a number of parties had entered bogus ballot papers or made use of state resources for campaigning purposes, the head of the OSCE election observation mission gave a favourable overall assessment of the election as a whole, describing it as the first election in Central Asia whose result could not be foreseen.<sup>7</sup>

On 1 November, the Central Election Commission finally announced the official results: Five parties had succeeded in overcoming the national five per cent hurdle and the regional 0.5 per cent hurdle. The Ata-Jurt ("Fatherland") party received 8.7 per cent of the vote (257,100 votes), the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) 7.8 per cent (236,634), Ar-Namys ("Dignity") 7.57 per cent (226,916), Respublika 6.93 per cent (210,594) and Ata-Meken ("Homeland") 5.49 per cent (166,714). Seats in the parliament will be distributed as follows: Ata-Jurt 28, SDPK 26, Ar-Namys 25, Respublika 23, and Ata-Meken 18. Turnout was 55.09 per cent. At the time of writing (December 2010), the parties have so far failed to form a coalition capable of governing, though it currently appears that the SDPK is allying itself with Ata-Meken and Respublika. Whether a – left-leaning – coalition of this kind will come about and whether it will last remains to be seen. The greatest danger for Kyrgyzstan's emerging democracy is currently the coming winter. If the government does not ensure the sufficient supply of food and energy, more riots could be the result.

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6 Cf. Human Rights Watch, *Kyrgyzstan: "Where Is the Justice?" Interethnic Violence in Southern Kyrgyzstan and its Aftermath*, New York 2010, available online at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/08/16/where-justice-0>.

7 Cf. 24.kg news agency, *Morten Hoglund: The Kyrgyz elections are the first in Central Asia, where I could not predict the result*, 11 October 2010, at: <http://eng.24.kg/politic/2010/10/11/14135.html>.