

## APRIL 2010 IN KYRGYZSTAN: AS SEEN FROM KAZAKHSTAN

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### *Introduction*

In April 2010, the political crisis that has been simmering in Kyrgyzstan over the past few years developed into an armed confrontation between the government and the people, as well as among the various clan and regional groups at the very top of the republic's political pyramid.<sup>1</sup>

President Bakiev, deprived of his power (at first in part), legitimacy, and control over the country, tried to regain what he had lost by tapping the political resource of the country's South. The events that occurred in May made it abundantly clear that a large-scale political conflict, a civil war, and a split in the republic were only a step away.

The 2005 events, which toppled Akaev's regime, demonstrated that for its continued political development, the republic must acquire a strong vertical of power and move toward a strong presidential government, which alone could pull the country out of the crisis and set it on the path

of sustainable development.<sup>2</sup> The compromise reached (which, albeit, proved incomplete) gave rise to the hope that the new president would be able to cope with this historic mission.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See: A. Esenbaev, "Revolutsia tiulpanov' v Kyrgyzstane i osobennosti transformatsii politicheskoy sistemy: popytka osmyslenia," *Rossia i musulmanskii mir*, No. 7, 2009, pp. 78-84; S.N. Cummings, "Domestic and International Perspectives on Kyrgyzstan's 'Tulip Revolution': Motives, Mobilization and Meanings. Introduction: 'Revolution' not revolution," *Central Asian Survey* (Oxford), 2008, Vol. 27, Issue 3-4, pp. 223-228; S.N. Cummings, M. Ryabkov, "Situating the 'Tulip Revolution'," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 3-4, 2008, pp. 241-252; Sh. Juraev, "Kyrgyz Democracy? The Tulip Revolution and Beyond," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 3-4, 2008, pp. 253-264; D. Lewis, "The Dynamics of Regime Change: Domestic and International Factors in the 'Tulip Revolution'," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 3-4, 2008, pp. 265-277; E. Marat, "Criminalization of the Kyrgyz State Before and After the Tulip Revolution," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (ISDP, Stockholm), 2008, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 15-22; A. Temirkulov, "Informal Actors and Institutions in Mobilization: The Periphery in the 'Tulip Revolution'," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 3-4, 2008, pp. 317-335.

<sup>3</sup> R. Abduvalieva, "Kyrgyzstan's Security Problems Today," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (56), 2009, pp. 72-81.

<sup>1</sup> See: N. Borisov, "Kyrgyzstan: k chemu privela evolutsia form prvalenia," *Rossia i musulmanskii mir* (Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS), No. 3, 2009, pp. 95-100.

The objective factors and subjective circumstances, however, complicated the republic's political, social, and economic context still more. Most of the political actors (the main parties, the parliament, the business community, and the regional leaders) were dead set against any real reforms of the country's political system.

President Bakiev's political and economic blunders (legitimized corruption and the never-ending property redistribution in favor of his close relatives and supporters) added a subjective dimension to the objective factor.

More than that: some of the regional, mainly northern, clans refused to accept Kurmanbek Bakiev as the head of state (the position he gained and fortified in 2005-2006); this and widespread dis-

affection with his economic policies impaired his legitimacy. Disagreements among the main political forces made the crisis a permanent feature of the republic's political landscape exacerbated by a crisis in the social and economic spheres.

Bakiev's downfall was brought about by his political rivals who disagreed with his policies; the discontent of the wide masses; the acute social and economic crisis; the president's failed attempt to strengthen his power; corruption and nepotism; regionalism and the clan nature of power; the low level of political culture of the ruling elite and the ruled masses; criminalization of political life; and the acute shortage of economic resources. Some of the external players, into the bargain, did not like Bakiev's foreign policies.

## Economy in 2005-2010

The regime change in 2005 triggered property redistribution; a new political elite arrived from the republic's South to install itself in the republic, while the new government busied itself with looking for more resources.

In 2008, the republic hit another stretch of protracted economic and social crisis, the first signs of which were discernable in 2007; its social and economic future looked uncertain. The negative developments stemmed from property redistribution, which acquired gigantic dimensions, and the inconsistent economic policies of the rotating governments. In the last few years, customs duties and taxes (which increased three-to-four-fold) remained the only source of economic growth.

Between 2005 and 2007, the nominal GDP demonstrated relative growth, while its dynamics in comparable prices was much more modest. The inflation component of its growth was fairly large: annual inflation increased from 5 percent in 2006 to 20 percent in December 2007 and to 25 percent in March 2008. The fast economic growth of Russia and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan's main economic partners, had a positive effect at that time. Today, 37 percent of the assets of the republic's banking sector belong to Kazakhstan banks; they account for 50 percent of all loans.

Money which labor migrants (there are 330 thousand of them according to the official figures) send home is very important for the Kyrgyz economy. The EBRD has assessed the volume of these remittances at 25 percent of GDP, or over \$1 billion a year.<sup>4</sup> This money is badly needed: nearly 11 percent of the economically active population (over 270 thousand) is unemployed.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The republic's Ministry for Economic Development and the State Committee for Migration quote the figure of about \$1.2 billion of annual remittances and the share of the migrants' money in the republic's GDP at over 30 percent.

<sup>5</sup> See: A. Rasul, Z. Ergeshov, "Migratsionnye protsessy v Kyrgyzskoy Respublike: vyzovy i riski dlia strany," *Mezhdunarodnye issledovaniya. Obshchestvo, politika, ekonomika* (ISPI, Astana), No. 1, 2009, pp. 186-190; A. Esenbaev, "Sovremennye migratsionnye protsessy v Kyrgyzstane," in: *Postsovetskie migratsii: otrazhenie v migratsiakh*, ed. by Zh.A. Zayonchkovskiy, G.A. Zayonchkovskaia, Adamant Publishers, Moscow, pp. 377-403; A. Doolotkeldieva, "Kyrgyz Migrants in the City of Moscow," *Mezhdunarodnye issledovaniya. Obshchestvo, politika, ekonomika*, No. 1, 2009, pp. 80-93; V. Ruget,

Gold prices can be described as another favorable factor: between October 2006 and March 2008, the world price of one Troy ounce climbed from \$420 to \$1,030; today the price has stabilized at the \$1,100 level. Gold accounts for 8 percent of the republic's GDP (nearly 40 percent of its exports), however the future looks less optimistic. In 2010, the Kumtor goldmine, which produces the bulk of exported gold, will be closed, while the smaller mines will hardly fill in the gap.

The structure of the republic's GDP has registered the fact that Kyrgyzstan is no longer an agrarian-industrial country; it sells services (which account for 44 percent of its GDP). Its trade volume is much larger than that of its production. In the past, agriculture accounted for 25.8 percent of its nominal GDP; industry for 14 percent; construction for 3.1 percent; transport and communication for 8.4 percent; trade and maintenance for 18.6 percent; and hotels and public catering for 8.4 percent. The growth of the trade sector increased the share of services by 1 percent.

Up to 88 percent of industrial products are supplied by five branches: metallurgy (42 percent); food processing (13 percent); textile and tailoring (7 percent); production of construction materials (10 percent); and electric power production (16 percent). Over 35 percent of taxes come from industry, while export accounts for up to 85 percent. Depleted basic assets and shortage of skilled manpower and specialists at the medium level coupled with the shortage of working capital are responsible for the industrial decline (with the exception of Kumtor's production volumes).

Under Bakiev, the people in power made skillful use of the shaky integration processes within the CIS. In 2009, Russia supplied Kyrgyzstan with a package of financial aid totaling nearly 40 percent of the republic's GDP, which consisted of a soft loan of \$300 million (Bakiev used the money to promote political interests) and \$1.7 billion to be spent on the construction of the Kambarata Hydropower Station.

The still very high share of the shadow sector (engaged, among other things, in drug trafficking) in the country's economy is one of the worst problems. According to the WB, the republic has developed into one of the places where Afghan heroin is stored and from which it is moved further to Russian territory. Today, Kyrgyzstan is Asia's second largest country in terms of trafficking and use of opiates (2.3 percent of the population over the age of 15 are drug users).

Bakiev's closest circle prefers to point to certain positive shifts in the country's economy: the budget has increased four-fold, which made it possible to lower the republic's external debt (it remains high at the level of 50 percent of GDP). Large sums have been moved from the shadow to the official sector. In 2009, the amended agreement with the company working at the Kumtor goldmine increased Kyrgyzstan's income several times over. Corruption, however, destroyed the positive effects of the above.

Today, the country is plagued by a shortage of agricultural land (acutely felt in the South) and the lowered efficiency and culture of local agriculture.

The acute economic crisis is accompanied by an energy crisis: the republic obtains electric power from hydropower stations, which accounted for about 76 percent of electric power in 1993 and for nearly 92 percent in 2007.<sup>6</sup>

In 2005, the Toktogul water reservoir contained 19 billion cu m of water to be used by its hydropower station, which generates 60 percent of the electricity used by the republic; in the fall of 2008,

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B. Usmanalieva, "Citizenship, Migration and Loyalty towards the State: A Case Study of the Kyrgyzstani Migrants Working in Russia and Kazakhstan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 2, 2008, pp. 129-141; M. Schmidt, L. Sagynbekova, "Migration Past and Present: Changing Patterns in Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, Issue 2, 2008, pp. 111-127; A. Zhaparov, "The Issue of Chinese Migrants in Kyrgyzstan," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2009, pp. 79-92.

<sup>6</sup> See: L. Baum, "The Energy Industry in the Kyrgyz Republic: Current State, Problems, and Reforms," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (54), 2008, pp. 101-112.

the available volume dropped to 6.5 billion cu m.<sup>7</sup> The expert community points to the possible causes: ineffective management and the high corruption level and lack of transparency in the branch coupled with smuggling of electric power and even water during the irrigation season to neighboring countries.

The government, loyal as ever to its favorite tactics of overtaxing the republic's population, raised the tariffs on electricity and heating. A social outburst became inevitable. The cost of life in Kyrgyzstan directly depends on the interrelated prices for three basic products—bread, fuel and lubricants, and electricity—therefore, an increase in price for any one of them may detonate a social explosion.

In 1995-2009, the volume of the shadow economy in the republic increased almost 20-fold, which is explained by the greater role of the household economy sector (which accounted for 12 percent of GDP) and the shadow economy (including agriculture), which accounted for 30 percent of GDP. The shadow economy is mainly concentrated in trade and the maintenance of domestic appliances, cars, and personal appliances with an annual turnover of about 60 billion soms.

## Domestic Politics: The Crisis is Mounting

There is the opinion in the West that Kyrgyzstan has demonstrated to the world that Western-style democracy (both as an ideology and a political practice), if planted in conditions very different from those in the democratic countries, does more harm than good. "Indirect democracy" might have produced a much better effect; I have in mind the civil rights and human rights standards common for all countries, irrespective of their forms of democracy.

Since 2008, the country's political situation has been exposed to a confrontation of two mutually exclusive and even antagonistic trends. On the one hand, the country obviously depends on its economy, which convinced the people that the republican form of government was unimportant. On the other, the social and economic problems piling up were the best confirmation of the acute disagreements between the government and the opposition over the country's political model. This was largely responsible for the dynamics of domestic politics.<sup>8</sup>

The North and the South are two different sociopolitical entities; the Kyrgyz as former nomads are divided into two large "wings" (*Ongh* and *Sol*); there are about 40 tribes and clans at the lower level with the ties much stronger than among the Kazakhs. This adds instability to the highly variegated political scene.

In 2007-2008, several quasi-elite groups close to the president clashed in their attempts to have an even greater influence on the head of state. They can be described as

- (a) the president's family;
- (b) the so-called group of Southerners which brought Bakiev to power; and
- (c) the "Akaev" bureaucrats resolved to keep their posts.

The family group was far from united: the older and younger generations relied on supporters from the other two groups to monopolize the president. In the course of time, the conflict became even

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<sup>7</sup> A volume of 5.5 billion cu m is the critical point at which the turbines will grind to a standstill.

<sup>8</sup> See: B. Torogeldieva, "The Formation and Nature of Political Culture in Present-Day Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (55), 2009, pp. 126-134.

fiercer; the shuffling at the top gradually pushed the Southerners to the political outskirts, although the regional and clan factor did not lose its importance.

There is a more or less accepted opinion that the Southern clans, the richest in the republic (they have grown rich on drug trafficking supervised by Tashkent organized crime), demonstrate no mean skills in posing as impoverished outcasts.

The Southern protest was promoted, to a great extent, by an alliance of criminal groups in the country's South and the Uzbek part of the Ferghana valley which joined forces to squeeze the local criminal groups and those of Kazakhstan (based primarily in Shymkent) out of the economic expanse of northern Kyrgyzstan. The southern clans are more religious than the others, which explains why Hizb ut-Tahrir showed up first in the South and later in Bishkek.

The way the government responded to the opposition and its activities stirred up political tension even more. While formally acting within the law, the people at the top tried to scare the opposition and set up a police state. Their relentless persecution of individual members of the opposition was combined with a half-hearted struggle against the opposition as a whole. From time to time, the leaders, who, on the whole, tended to disregard the opposition's numerous actions, surprised the country with their violent responses.

The president's health did not add stability to state governance and consolidated the opposition. It was no secret that Bakiev spent much time in German hospitals. His absence added fire to the rivalry in the corridors of power and in the opposition. Unlike the president, the opposition remained active all year round: the contradictions were shelved for the sake of a consolidated stand on the situation in the country.

The domestic policy at that time can be described as contradictory and highly ambiguous. On the one hand, the government's attempts to preserve the authoritarian family-and-clan system of the first president gave rise to political stagnation. While on the other, the opposition and the civil sector were determined to rock the boat. Their highly different ideas about the country's future added a cutting edge to their contradictions.

The court cases against the most prominent opposition figures allowed Bakiev to carry the 2009 elections. Ismail Isakov, former Defense Minister, who had been active in the Tulip Revolution, and former Foreign Affairs Minister Jekshenkulov were brought to court on criminal charges and effectively removed from the political scene. The united opposition began crumbling once Jekshenkulov, its coordinator and "brains" who for many years kept the rivalry and squabbles under the lid, was pushed aside. Some believe that he alone could have tamed the highly wild political movement and channeled it in the right direction.

The parliament dominated by Bakiev's Ak Zhol Party set 23 July, 2009 as the date of the presidential elections. The Social-Democrats and the opposition miscalculated, while Bakiev and his team moved ahead toward victory ensured by several factors: the administrative resource, money, and the domestic political and economic situation. The other candidates either could not or did not tap their own resources.<sup>9</sup>

The post-Akaev political landscape is highly patchy; there are 2.6 million voters in the republic with a total population of 5.8 million. The fairly small electorate has to choose from among 58 registered political parties and an equal number of movements and alliances; 30 structures out of the total 58 of these parties are in opposition to the government and in disagreement among themselves. The

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<sup>9</sup> It was a weekday, something which the Social-Democrats had not expected. They would have preferred the fall when, they believed, public indignation would have become even fiercer. The opposition expected the world crisis to hit the guest workers from Kyrgyzstan who might have voted against Bakiev. Choosing a weekday as election day caused heated debates: the president's administrative resource allowed him to manipulate voters who work in the government service (doctors, teachers, bureaucrats) and students. They needed permission from their superiors to go to the polls. Permission followed.

largest and most influential of them are The Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan and the rivaling Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan; there are three Social-Democratic parties, the most influential of them being Almaz Atambaev's party; there are three large parties—Ata-Meken, Erkin, and Felix Kulov's Ar-Namys.

During the same period, the republic acquired new religious organizations which moved into domestic politics: the Alliance of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan headed by former ombudsman T. Bakirululu and N. Motuev being one of them. This means that a centralized religious opposition is taking shape in the country.

In the north, Islamic fundamentalism is not very popular; the Islamic parties cannot move across ethnic boundaries because of the ethnic minorities. The high level of literacy, fairly widespread Slavic and Western cultures, and the market economy keep the local Kyrgyz away from fundamentalist movements.

Some of the radical Islamist groups managed to register with the Ministry of Justice in the country's south, mainly in the cities (Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken); according to official information, there are over 1,000 mosques in Osh and around it; fundamentalist ideology supported by the local Uzbeks and spread by agitators from Tajikistan has a strong position in the area.

Hizb ut-Tahrir, an illegal religious and political movement, has moved away from ideological propaganda and agitation among the local people to practical action. Its polemics with the government have assumed new forms (audio- and video materials, leaflets, and books intended for the bureaucracy and statesmen of the medium and top levels) and become even more consistent. Its members have stepped up their activities in the capital and its environs; they look far beyond Central Asia. Its leaflets condemn what the United States, Israel, and some of the Western countries are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hizb ut-Tahrir has already tested its powers by mobilizing people for political actions under its banners. Jamaati Tabligh is another unofficial religious organization which has obviously come to stay.

The uncontrolled political squabbles the nation has been watching for a long time have convinced the people that democracy means impunity and permissiveness (which of course has nothing to do with classical democracy and is better described as "ochlocracy"). Disregard for the law coupled with the low political culture of the political class and society at large have fuelled a painful response to the use of force by the state. In these conditions, voluntaristic ideas and trends spread like wildfire far and wide.<sup>10</sup>

## Bakiev's Regime

The family and the clans as the cornerstones of Kurmanbek Bakiev's presidency were the most typical feature of his regime. The opposition which came to power in April 2010 insists that all his numerous brothers were involved in politics.

One of them headed the security service of the Administration and the government, which placed him in command of the National Guard; his elder son controlled state security; his second son had the executive structures under his control, while his younger son headed the newly formed Agency for Development, the de facto executive power in the republic. One of his brothers represented the

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<sup>10</sup> Social anthropologists describe the Kyrgyz' political culture as the command-and-obey tradition; people are indifferent to the country's political culture, they never respond to what the political institutions do; they are not interested in central power and concentrate on local developments. A widespread disregard for law and order is one of the hallmarks of the nation's political culture: people know next to nothing about the laws and government mechanisms; they mistake the person who executes state power for the institutions of state power.

country in Germany; another, appointed special envoy of the president, was a de facto deputy foreign minister. Business, trade, and the economy were brimming with the president's numerous relatives.

It is commonly believed that in 2007 Bakiev set about expanding his power and strengthening the vertical of power. Political technologists from Kazakhstan invited at the suggestion of Medet Sadyrkulov,<sup>11</sup> the then head of the presidential Administration, helped Bakiev set up the Ak Zhol People's Party.

Bakiev was presented to the nation as a "staunch etatist." The team of political technologists suggested that the Constitution of 1993-2003, the most logical and balanced one in the republic's history, should be restored, albeit with wider presidential powers. They suggested that the ineffective Zhogorku Kenesh should be disbanded by the Constitutional Court followed by parliamentary elections. A nationwide referendum on presidential elections was deemed necessary. The old tradition of widespread nepotism should be buried, while professionals should be invited to the civil service in large numbers. The regions and the local administrations, which should be regularly reminded that the center is in control, were expected to concentrate on the social services; and rabid nationalism and religious extremism should be stemmed.

Political discontent was spurred on by the president's widely publicized intention to radically reorganize state management. He shared his ideas about the country's future with the Kurultai of Consent convened in Bishkek on the eve of the fifth anniversary of the 2005 revolution<sup>12</sup> and announced that Western democracy was ill suited to Kyrgyzstan and that its traditions and reality were much better suited to "consultative democracy."<sup>13</sup>

Under Bakiev, the Fundamental Law was amended three times: some of the versions limited presidential powers, others expanded them. The 2007 national referendum approved a version with much wider presidential prerogatives, which remained in effect until December 2009 when the president came forward with new amendments.

They were expected to register what had already been accomplished: the articles on the Presidential Administration, the secretary of state, and the Security Council should be removed; ranks for civil servants were abolished, while the president acquired the power to set up consultative structures, including one called the Presidential Conference.

Bakiev's most important amendment: "any other person" appointed by the Presidential Conference by a simple majority of those present changes the previous constitutional provision which named the Speaker or the Prime Minister as possible acting presidents in the event of the president's disability. The Constitutional Court accepted the amendment, albeit with a recommendation that it be further revised.

The opposition is convinced that this was devised to pass power on to Maxim, Bakiev's younger son and a recent political heavyweight, which would have started a dynasty. Bakiev's powers expired in 2013 with no third term (banned by the Constitution) in sight. The constitutional reform launched early in 2010 transferred the right of the parliament to name a successor, in the event the president

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<sup>11</sup> In March 2009, Sadyrkulov and Director of the International Institute of Strategic Studies at the President of the RK S. Slepchenko met their deaths under mysterious circumstances. A top bureaucrat of the Akaev regime, Sadyrkulov kept his post after the 2005 revolution and remained friendly with A. Toyganbaev, Akaev's son-in-law.

<sup>12</sup> It was expected that this nationwide consultative structure would have 750 members: the local kurultais were to elect one deputy from 441 ayyal districts and 18 settlement administrations; each of 23 district and regional towns and cities were to send 3 delegates; the capital had to elect 10 deputies, the city of Osh, seven. Labor migrants were granted the right to elect 35 members, while religious confessions received 20 seats. One-fifth (150) of the seats were to be appointed according to a quota at a national forum.

<sup>13</sup> The project promoted the idea that "consultative democracy" (Russia between the February and October revolutions of 1917 is one of the pertinent examples) was the best instrument to be applied at the transition stage. Indeed, it is much better than no democracy at all: consultations, that is, discussions, are the first step toward political pluralism.

could or would not serve out his term, to the Presidential Conference, a gathering of the local elites which replaced the presidential administration.

Maxim Bakiev, the key figure in the republic's most profitable economic projects, headed the Central Agency for Development, Investments, and Innovations (TsARII), a de facto shadow government. He controlled a vast financial and industrial empire of sorts ruled through fake offshore firms set up to win privatization tenders of almost all the republic's energy enterprises and Kirgiztelecom, a TV and Telecommunication Company that supervised the Kyrgyzstan Development Foundation intended to "distribute" the \$1.7 billion Russia had loaned for building the Kambarata Hydropower Station.

As the head of the newly created Foundation, Maxim Bakiev hastened to China to discuss bilateral relations and invite China to participate in the republic's most lucrative economic projects, which Moscow had already been invited to join: the Kambarata Hydropower Station-2 and modernization of industrial polycrystalline silicon facilities used for solar energy production; this infringed on Russia's interests. The president's youngest son also spoke of deliveries of Chinese drones, electricity meters and turbines to Kyrgyzstan, as well as China's involvement in a big railway project.

The suggested amendments gave the Presidential Conference—top bureaucrats and members of the president's administration—the right to elect an interim president (if the head of state should be unable to perform his duties). The Constitutional Court, however, declined the amendment and pointed out that this prerogative belonged to the republic's State Council (the members of which include the Prime Minister, Speaker, chairmen of the Constitutional and Supreme courts, Secretary of State, Head of the President's Administration, Public Prosecutor, Defense Minister, Chairman of the National Security Service, and Mayor of Bishkek). It is headed by the president, while his administration functions as the Council's working structure.

According to the expert community, the reform devised by Bakiev's secretariat was discussed at length with the elites. On the eve of the Kurultai, the president traveled to Osh and Jalal-Abad, his strongholds, to speak to the local elders. He promised to open TsARII branches in the region and move the Defense Ministry to Osh to bring more money to the south in the hope of winning the southern elite's favor of his son, who is not entirely accepted by the traditionalist circles since he is half-Russian and does not speak Kyrgyz.

The opposition feared that the president was setting up a dynasty to bring one of his relatives to power if the worst came to the worst, as opposed to the previous alternative that would make either the Speaker or the Prime Minister acting president.

This means that Bakiev was consistently following his election promises to strengthen presidential power. The constitutional reform would have radically changed the vertical of power. Some time later he might even remove the prime minister to combine the functions of head of government and head of state.<sup>14</sup>

Obviously absolutely indifferent to what the nation and the opposition thought about his fairly inadequate policies, he continued pursuing his personal interests on the domestic and foreign scenes. By 2009, the Bakiev clan had tightened its grip on the country and its finances; corruption had escalated out of control.

Foreign policy blunders aggravated the relations between Bishkek and Moscow; the Kremlin chose to "forget" about the previously promised loans. By violating its obligations, Bishkek deprived the budget of Russian money: Moscow hinted that it was refusing to deal with the Bakiev regime on principle.

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<sup>14</sup> See: E. Kabulov, "On the Results of the Presidential Election in Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4-5 (58-59), 2009; A. Doolotkeldieva, "Presidential Elections in Kyrgyzstan: Strategies, Context, and Implications," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 2009, pp. 5-9.



## The Crisis Escalates

After the 2005 Tulip Revolution, Bakiev won the election mainly because former vice-president Felix Kulov, his potential and much more popular rival, dropped out of the race to ally with Bakiev. The tandem died soon thereafter, leaving Bakiev the only ruler. In 2009, Bakiev spent the larger part of Russia's multimillion grant to win the next election.

Between the fall of 2006 and spring of 2010, the country was growing more and more anti-Bakiev and, to a lesser extent, pro-Akaev, the natural outcome of the course pursued by Bakiev and his cronies. By the spring of 2006, people whom the country knew as criminals had become part of the political landscape; the public was indignant, while those members of the Kyrgyz political pro-to-elite who had been left out in the cold while others snatched lucrative posts stepped up their political activities.

At this time, two protest rallies a day were customary; in April 2007, when Felix Kulov headed the opposition for a short time, the protests became even more frequent.

There is a common opinion that the situation was not very much different from the last months of the Akaev regime: corruption in the government had become absolute; the family had appropriated all the resources; the elite was split into warring groups; incomes were pocketed by the chosen few; people lived in dire poverty; tariffs were rising together with public discontent; the media operated under pressure, etc. De facto censorship was nothing out of the ordinary, while journalists were beaten up or even murdered.

The expert community points out that maneuvering and even a retreat, albeit with political sacrifices, was still possible: Bakiev could close the structures set up to feed Maxim's financial and, later, political ambitions; he could abandon the latest reform of state management and the Constitutional amendments that reduced the revolutionary gains of 2005 to naught and which, to all intents and purposes, transformed power into autocratic and inherited, etc.

He probably realized that the activity Maxim and his circle were engaged in was rousing increasing discontent inside the country and doing nothing for his personal image. It was said that Maxim was strongly influenced by American Ambassador to Bishkek Tatiana Gfoeller, who was also his patron and advised him to stand firm when talking to Russia. It is rumored that the influential and most respected heads of the Kyrgyz clans demanded, in a letter to the president, that he should remove his son and his "foreign advisors" from power.

The opposition used privatization of strategic economic facilities conducive to even higher tariffs in the social sphere to start another political crisis.

Rosa Otunbaeva, leader of the parliamentary Social-Democratic faction, demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Daniar Usenov; she sent an official inquiry to the government, in which she insisted that the privatization of Severelektro and Kirgiztelecom, two strategic giants, "contradicted the interests of the nation, undermined the very foundations of its wellbeing" and was, therefore, "plundering and criminal."<sup>15</sup> She pointed to legal violations and to the fact that offshore groups had no legal right to participate in the tenders.

On 17 March, the People's Kurultai formulated its seven demands of the government and set up the Central Executive Committee to implement the Kurultai's decisions with Rosa Otunbaeva as its head.<sup>16</sup>

The newly established structure included: Otunbaeva, Sariev, Kaptagaev, Atambaev, Tekebaev, Sherniazov, Ibraimova, Chotonov, Erkebaev, Diushebaev, Beknazarov, Omurkulov, and Zheenbekov.

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<sup>15</sup> Kirgiztelecom was sold for \$40 million, then, according to Otunbaeva, resold to Fintur, an international company, for \$400 million. Severelektro, evaluated eighteen months previously by an independent structure at \$137 million, was sold for \$3 million.

<sup>16</sup> Rosa Otunbaeva filled the post of Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Kirghiz S.S.R.; she was Soviet Ambassador and member of the Collegium of the U.S.S.R. Foreign Ministry. She was twice appointed as Foreign

The opposition, however, miscalculated: the president's clan turned out to be much closer knit than that of his predecessor; it was resolved to retain power. On 6-7 April, the events that began in Talas and Naryn (two impoverished regions which the new government disregarded to an even greater extent than its predecessors) reached their peak. The seeds of discontent fell on fertile soil: in Talas, the people resented the fact that the most popular figures had been removed from the local power structures.

In the small hours of 7 April, opposition members and civil activists were arrested to prevent them from appearing at the protest rallies scheduled for 7 April. In Talas, the arrest of one of the local opposition leaders ignited the crowd and developed further when the Minister of Internal Affairs arrived to try and pacify the insurgents. However, he was captured and beaten up.

The country's leaders, who arrested Tekebaev, Atambaev, and others to extinguish the fiery protests, badly miscalculated. Left to its own devices, with no one to channel the protest sentiments (which could have been done by moderate opposition leaders), the crowd became unruly. The government was left to deal with a boiling mass of indignant and misguided people.

The events in Talas developed into a drama: once the people recovered from the onslaught of the riot police (they simply lulled them into a sense of false security by their feeble resistance), they reassembled on the square in even greater numbers. Armed with stones, bludgeons, and Molotov cocktails, they attacked the police ranks, which they outnumbered by the dozen.

The riots reached the capital, where the rallies attended mainly by young radicals tried to capture government offices. This made the use of force inevitable, although no one knows who provoked the shooting that claimed 80 lives and left several hundreds wounded.<sup>17</sup> Snipers killed dozens of attackers, while the crowd used Molotov cocktails to disperse the police ranks; fallen policemen were killed by the mob.

Enraged and unruly crowds captured the president's palace; they plundered the parliament, the public prosecutor's office, and the Museum of Arts; the building of the State National Security Service was partly destroyed by fire. Later, the country learned that the president and his brother Zhanysh had flown to Osh in the country's south. The opposition announced that they had four out of the seven regions behind them.

With the opposition leaders either behind bars or out of the capital, the mob acted on its own; eyewitnesses described it as ungovernable. People stormed official buildings in ad hoc assault groups; in some places, however, enterprising people formed small groups for more organized action.

The anti-Semitic slogans that sounded in front of the House of Government (which suggested close ties between Maxim and Jewish businessmen, especially notorious Evgeni Gurevich wanted in Italy for his contacts with the Italian mafia) added an ethnic dimension to the social turbulence. Alex Katz of Sohnut arrived to prevent Jewish pogroms.

An ethnic conflict in the town of Tokmak, 60 km from the capital, began as a conflict between Kyrgyz, on the one hand, and Koreans, Uighurs and Dungans, on the other; there were attempts to fan a similar conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the Jalal-Abad region.

Meanwhile, an Interim Government headed by Rosa Otunbaeva appeared in the capital. On 8 April, she announced that the new electricity and heat tariffs would be annulled and promised that

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Minister of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan; U.N. Special Representative to Georgia; and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Kyrgyzstan to the United States and the U.K. In 2005, she was among the leaders of the March revolution. In December 2007, elected to the parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, she joined the opposition Social-Democratic faction. In October 2009, she became a leader of this faction. At the Kurultai in March 2010, she was elected leader of the opposition. In Europe, she is generally regarded as a good diplomat. Rosa Otunbaeva, a graduate of the Philosophy Department, Moscow State University, is fluent in four foreign languages.

<sup>17</sup> The opposition blames the president's brother Zhanysh Bakiev, who headed the Protection of the State Service. According to unconfirmed information he ordered to open fire at those who, on 7 April, stormed the government building. This means that he should be held responsible for the casualties among the opposition's supporters.

new presidential elections would be held in six months, until which time the Interim Government would fulfill the functions of the parliament, the president, and the government. The people in power pledged to use the six months at their disposal to write a new constitution and a new code of election laws and organize presidential and parliamentary elections.

As head of the Interim Government, Ms. Otunbaeva has five deputies: Almaz Atambaev heads the economic bloc<sup>18</sup>; Timur Sariev,<sup>19</sup> leader of the Ak-Shumkar Party, will look after finances; former Speaker Omurbek Tekebaev<sup>20</sup> will be responsible for constitutional reform; Ismail Isakov will be responsible for the defense and security structures and act as Defense Minister; while the Public Prosecutor's Office and judicial reform were entrusted to Azimbek Beknazarov.<sup>21</sup>

As soon as Prime Minister Usenov resigned, his deputies were dismissed by a decree of the Interim Government. The Ministry of Internal Affairs went to leader of the Talas protests Bolotbek Sherniazov; the National Security Service was entrusted to General of the Militia Keneshbek Duyshebaev; "people's governors" elected by the regional kurultais appeared in Bishkek and the northern regions (which went over to the side of the former opposition). People's Governor Karamat Orazova rules in Batken, in the south.

The Interim Government closed five banks, probably to prevent an outflow of the Bakiev family's capital, and promised to nationalize, as promptly as possible, Kirgiztelecom and Severelectro sold for a song. The new rulers went even further: they promised to nationalize two of the four mobile communication operators.

Significantly, the media and the public toyed with rumors that Askar Akaev might return to politics as a presidential candidate.<sup>22</sup>

The events of March 2005 and April 2010 are very different. In 2005, the opposition wanted stabilization as quickly as possible to be able to present the regime change as another velvet revolution. Today, first, the opposition is different; second, on 6-7 April the discontented people rather than the opposition were in charge. The opposition joined the spontaneous developments at the eleventh hour.

This might negatively affect the course of events and the republic's stabilization.

## The New Leaders

Rosa Otunbaeva and Omurbek Tekebaev are two possible presidential candidates. So far, no details about the new Constitution and distribution of power between the president and the prime minister have become clear. Judging by what has been said about the powers of the parliament, the president will lose many of his present prerogatives, which will shift the center of power to the prime minister, a post which will attract both Otunbaeva and Tekebaev.

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<sup>18</sup> A. Atambaev, one of the republic's first cooperators, was minister of industry and trade. After parting ways with Bakiev, he joined the opposition. A highly ambitious man, he cannot remain part of any team for any length of time.

<sup>19</sup> T. Sariev is head of the Ak-Shumkar Party with the largest parliamentary faction and an experienced financier and successful stock broker who made it rich as a Komsomol functionary during perestroika; he is often described as a crafty manipulator.

<sup>20</sup> O. Tekebaev is deputy for the new Constitution platform (read: ideology), a former schoolteacher who was repeatedly elected to the parliament, and leader of several opposition parties.

<sup>21</sup> A. Beknazarov is deputy for the defense and security structures (with the exception of the army), a lawyer, former prosecutor general, a popular orator, and leader of the Talas rioters; he is another highly ambitious politician in the Interim Government.

<sup>22</sup> Some of the political émigrés who fled the country to avoid persecutions are toying with the idea of coming back: Edil Baysalov, former head of the For Democracy and Civil Society Coalition, plans to return from Sweden; Bakyt Beshimov, former head of the Social-Democratic faction; former Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Malaysia Ravshan Jeenbekov, former deputy Kubatbek Baybolov, and Ruslan Isakov, son of Ismail Isakov, from the United States. Removed from his post in 2005, Askar Akaev has shown no intentions of returning to active politics.

Rosa Otunbaeva is a Western “project,” which appeals to the world community: indeed, a woman at the head of a conservative patriarchal country with authoritarian neighbors will create an inspiring precedent. The voters might be attracted by her fluent English, her record of twice foreign minister, and her image as a progressive and emancipated woman, as well as wise and purposeful individual. Her international prestige might make it easier to get loans and grants from international financial institutions and sponsors.

She is regarded as a person of probity. The same is said about her rival: two previous regimes tried and failed to compromise him. On the other hand, Ms. Otunbaeva’s Kyrgyz is not as fluent as might be desired, and traditional conservative voters will hardly want to see a woman at the helm.<sup>23</sup>

Omurbek Tekebaev, an “eternal presidential candidate” as some people call him, won the 2000 presidential election, the results of which were falsified in favor of Akaev. Nevertheless, he is one of the most vibrant leaders: a profound and well-educated lawyer with perfect knowledge of the Codes of Kyrgyzstan. He cuts a more favorable figure with the electorate because of his perfect knowledge of Kyrgyz; his inadequate Russian, on the other hand, is unlikely to win the hearts of city dwellers and Russian speakers.

The expert community predicts that Rosa Otunbaeva is unlikely to retain control; after the elections she will either be sent out of the country as an ambassador or will be given a post in the foreign ministry.

Some believe that only a strong-willed person of outstanding abilities will be equal to the task of dealing with the corrupt system and clan and regional nepotism. As a person of such dimensions, Felix Kulov stands apart from the crowd of other leaders. The problem is: neither the elites nor the public need a figure like this.

The above suggests that the republic needs “external management.”<sup>24</sup> This can be realized only if the situation gets out of control and political opposition escalates into uncompromising regional confrontation. The resultant “domino effect” is feared by one and all: destabilization of Central Asia should be avoided.

## The Russian Factor

Both regime changes were accompanied by speculations about the external factors behind them.<sup>25</sup> Russia is suspected, with good reason, of being instrumental in removing Bakiev from power:

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<sup>23</sup> Those experts who personally know Rosa Otunbaeva describe her as an “outstanding woman; a super activist, a fiery orator, and a very open and straightforward person who faithfully believes in the democratic demagogy of the early 1990s—free elections, the free press, human rights, etc. She is convinced that Western-style democracy can be established in her country, which will then look like Switzerland. She has absolutely nothing in common with the current realities of a developed tribal society. In short,” these people say, “she is a female alter ego of Askar Akaev.”

<sup>24</sup> Some experts suggest that “external management” should take the form of an international military-political-economic consortium of the interested sides—China, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, the U.S., and Canada (which owns the goldmines). To avoid nepotism, managers should be invited from third countries (India is mentioned as one of them). Young ethnic Kyrgyz now living abroad (in Russia, the United States, and Europe) should be invited to fill, temporarily, the posts of secondary importance.

<sup>25</sup> Here is one of the explanations of the 2005 events. Some experts believe that Kurmanbek Bakiev, a figurehead of the southern clans, played the main role in the regime change. Removed from active politics by the Northerners, the Southerners nursed grudges against the regime. The Americans were even more interested in removing Akaev, generally regarded as a pro-Russian politician. Later, he said in so many words that he had lost his post because he refused to let the U.S. deploy AWACS-vectored weapons (allegedly needed for the Enduring Freedom operation) in his country, since they were absolutely useless against the Taliban, but very useful when it came to monitoring flights over Chinese and Russian territory. The opposition riots began two weeks later.

There are numerous facts pointing to the direct and active involvement not only of American NGOs (the Soros Foundation and the International Institute for Democracy), but also of American diplomats stationed in Bishkek. At the techni-

recently, its grievances against Bishkek have been rapidly piling up.<sup>26</sup> In June 2009, President Bakiev decided that the American airbase in Manas (which the Kremlin has been trying to remove from the country) would remain as the Transit Center in Manas. The Kremlin was infuriated: earlier in Moscow, the Kyrgyz president had publicly promised to remove the base; Russia reciprocated with a grant of \$150 million, a soft loan of \$300 million, and wrote off the republic's debt of \$180 million.

It should be said that inside the country those who objected to America's military presence moved into action; the Aksakal Council, a public organization, demanded that the airbase should be pulled out on the strength, according to its member Academician O. Narbekov, of a statement earlier issued by Abdolmalek Rigi, leader of the Iranian terrorist structure Jundallah, who claimed that the Transit Center was being used as a training camp for those who would be launched into action to depose the Iranian regime.<sup>27</sup>

Bishkek went even further: in 2010, it became known that the U.S. would open another military facility in the republic, a training center in the Batken region.<sup>28</sup>

The irritants were piling up: construction of a military training center in the republic's south (on which the presidents of Russia and Kyrgyzstan had agreed at the CSTO summit in Cholpon-Ata in July 2009) was stalling. It was expected to become Russia's second military facility in the republic and, according to the expert community, a compensation for the eviction of the Americans. Under the Cholpon-Ata memorandum, the sides were to sign an agreement on the conditions and status of this future military facility before 1 November, 2009; no agreement, although all the documents had been drafted in advance, was signed.

Bakiev also promised Moscow other things: he said he would transfer the Dastan Joint Stock Company to Russia. The two presidents discussed the fate of the republic's only military-industrial facility for manufacturing BA-111 Shkval naval torpedoes in February 2009. It was decided that Moscow would write off Kyrgyzstan's debt of \$180 million if Bishkek gave it the controlling share in the enterprise and its testing ground at Issyk Kul Lake. Moscow kept its word, while the Kyrgyz leaders announced that the state owned only 37 percent of the shares, while the rest were privately owned. Later it turned out that Maxim Bakiev had been hastily buying up the shares, which infuriated Moscow still more.

Recently, the Kyrgyz authorities launched an offensive against Russian-language websites, access to which was either limited or blocked altogether. In March 2010, the RF embassy voiced its "concern" without much effect.

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cal level, it was the Southern criminal community that toppled Akaev and his regime. The opposition used Western money to come to terms with criminal "bands;" the law-enforcement structures proved unable to stand up to the concerted actions of the organized crime and Western-backed opposition that poured out into the streets.

<sup>26</sup> See: A. Jekshenkulov, "Rossia-Kyrgyzstan: etapy razvitiia mezghosudarstvennykh otnosheniy i ikh perspektivy," in: *Tsentral'naia Azia: vneshniy vzgliad. Mezhdunarodnaia politika s tsentral'noaziatskoy tochkii zrenia*, F. Ebert Foundation, Berlin, 2008, pp. 277-293; N.M. Omarov, "Vneshniaia politika Kirgizstana posle 24 marta 2005 goda: osnovnye tendentsii i perspektivy," in: *Vneshnopoliticheskaia orientatsia stran Tsentral'noy Azii v svete global'noy transformatsii mirovoy sistemy mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy*, ed. by A.A. Kniazev, A.A. Migranian, OFAK, Bishkek, 2009, pp. 155-161; N.T. Muratalieva, "Voennoe prisutstvie SShA i Rossii kak faktor vliania v otnosheniakh mezhdru Kitaem i Kirgizstanom," in: *Vneshnopoliticheskaia orientatsia stran Tsentral'noy Azii v svete global'noy transformatsii mirovoy sistemy mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy*, pp. 179-186; V. Sokolov, A. Sarygulov, "Sovremennai Kirgizia: mnogovektornost ili bezvektornost razvitiia?" *Voprosy ekonomiki*, No. 2, 2010, pp. 139-149; E. Huskey, "Foreign Policy in a Vulnerable State: Kyrgyzstan as Military Entrepot between the Great Powers," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2008, pp. 5-8.

<sup>27</sup> Tehran, in turn, stated that the arrested terrorist admitted that he had been doubling as an American, British and Israeli agent and that he had been sent to the Transit Center to meet a high American official.

<sup>28</sup> Its cost was quoted as \$5.5 million; earlier, Americans had already allocated several million to be spent on a training center for the Kyrgyz Special Forces.

Russian businessmen with interests in the republic realized that someone was infringing on their business activity. According to the opposition, this was done by Maxim Bakiev's anti-Russian friends. In 2009, for example, Russian investors lost the controlling share in MegaCom, a mobile telephone operator.

On 27 February, Daniar Usenov, still at the head of the Kyrgyz Cabinet, took part in the 11th sitting of the Intergovernmental Russian-Kyrgyz Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical, and Humanitarian Cooperation. It signed an agreement on economic cooperation for 2010-2013, which included about 60 points in the relevant spheres. The two countries agreed to develop their cooperation in the oil and gas sphere in the form of a JV set up by selling some of the shares of Kirgizgaz Joint Stock Company to Gazprom and to revive, before the end of 2011, a geological exploration program of the Kuhart and Vostochnoe Maylisu IV areas.

The meeting, however, failed to agree on the main point: a loan for building Kambarata Hydro-power Station-1. Russia was prepared to fund the project on the strength of feasibility studies and an expert assessment carried out by the World Bank. This was the first time Russia made its funding of any large-scale hydropower projects in Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan dependent on an international expert assessment.

Bishkek, which took Usenov's mission as a failure, intended (according to certain sources) to ask the Kremlin to pull out of Kant. On 1 March, however, the intention boiled down to changing the way the base was staffed: members of the officers' families had to leave, while the military were invited to rotate on an annual basis.

No matter how resolutely Russian officials (President Medvedev, Prime Minister Putin, and Secretary of the RF Security Council Patrushev) denied Russia's involvement in the Kyrgyz developments, the Russian leaders were obviously satisfied. Nor can we exclude secret contacts between Russia and the Kyrgyz opposition, at least in the months that predated the regime change. Russia was the only country to openly support the Interim Government—a fact that speaks for itself. In a phone conversation with Prime Minister Putin, Rosa Otunbaeva was promised material support.

Some think that Russia was hoping the Bakiev regime would be subjected to the adverse effects of a month-long information campaign timed to coincide with the fifth anniversary of the March revolution aimed to bring the president to his senses. The events, however, spiraled out of control.

Whatever the case, Moscow will never let Bakiev return to his post even as part of a political compromise with the opposition. The two paratrooper contingents hastily moved to the Kant airbase speak volumes about Russia's intentions.

The Kremlin is probably prepared to work with the new people in power in Kyrgyzstan. On the one hand, Putin was the first to whom Rosa Otunbaeva turned for support. On the other, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton promised Washington's support in exchange for the Manas base. Rosa Otunbaeva assured the U.S. State Secretary that her Interim Government would adhere to the earlier agreements reached with the United States.

### *In Lieu of a Conclusion: Can Kazakhstan Help?*

Kazakhstan as the rioting republic's closest neighbor and one that shares many of its cultural, historical and mental traits cannot remain indifferent to the current and future developments in this country. More than that: its geographic location, the very specific international position of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, as well as the national security interests of Kazakhstan and the close social and economic contacts between the two countries add urgency to the issue.

By early 2010, Kyrgyzstan found itself in an economic, social, and political trap, created, among other things, by the traditional North-South confrontation. A social upsurge was natural and inevitable.

The opposition convened the People's Kurultai as a lever of political struggle, while President Bakiev, who arrested three of its leaders, shifted it to the non-constitutional field. The drug barons (who appeared in the country when it became part of the route for moving drugs from Afghanistan to Russia) added fuel to the flames. This new clan possesses enormous amounts of money and vast organizational potential and has absolutely no need for a strong central government.

In the mid-term perspective, state power will weaken even more; the social and economic crisis will deepen, while political instability will continue.

The inertia, the combined impact of objective and subjective factors, as well as the de facto political stalemate and social and economic crisis with no way out in view mean that the republic is unlikely to be able to pull out of the impasse on its own. The question is: How can Kazakhstan and its allies help stabilize its neighbor?

Today, Astana must answer the following questions: at what stage of the crisis, in what way, and how deeply should Kazakhstan interfere to stem the crisis? Should Kazakhstan extend its aid to Kyrgyzstan to prevent a repetition of the 2005-2010 developments? A positive answer suggests two other questions: how extensive should this aid be and what are the preferable directions?

An analysis of Kyrgyzstan's previous developments and the current trends in the political transformations suggest that Kazakhstan should be guided by the following: close coordination with Russia, which badly needs stability in Kyrgyzstan. Astana should employ all the foreign policy instruments at its disposal: it should probably rely on the OSCE and diplomatic and political channels to inform all those involved in the political struggle that Astana will not tolerate the use of force and repeated bloodshed in Kyrgyzstan.

Kazakhstan should support all the progressive and moderate forces in Kyrgyzstan to achieve prompt stabilization and normalization of the situation in the republic. It may be necessary to restrict border crossings between the two countries for the citizens of Kyrgyzstan and labor migrants for an indefinite length of time. Regular consultations (which have probably begun) with the Interim Government on immediate and mid-term issues (including holding legitimate parliamentary and presidential elections before the situation gets out of hand again) are badly needed.

Coordination between Kazakh and international law-enforcers should be treated as a priority for neutralizing the Kyrgyz criminal community and its impact on the country's political developments. Kurmanbek Bakiev should be gradually removed from politics; his personal immunity should be exchanged for his promise to refrain from political actions. Astana should insist on acquiring firm guarantees from the new Kyrgyz government for Kazakh businesses and for ensuring Kazakhstan's economic interests in exchange for economic aid.

In the future, a project tentatively called a Leader for Kyrgyzstan (Moscow looks like the most suitable partner) might be launched aimed at identifying and supporting the most suitable political figure for president. This person should be strong and charismatic enough to rally all the healthy political forces and continue the historic mission of building a strong political system and sustainable economic and social sphere in Kyrgyzstan.

At the regional level Kazakhstan should, together with Russia and other CSTO members, strengthen regional security, which has been temporarily weakened by the gap left by Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan's water and energy sphere should be monitored to avoid an infrastructural collapse.

At the height of the crisis, Kazakhstan, as the current OSCE chairman, did a lot to normalize the situation in the neighboring country. It should be said that these efforts relied on another important resource—the personal prestige of the president of Kazakhstan. He discussed the problem in detail with President Medvedev and President Obama during the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington.

The OSCE chaired by Kazakhstan is looking for a way out of the crisis. Astana insisted that the OSCE allocate 200 thousand Euros from its reserve fund to help Kyrgyzstan maintain law and order, security, and the rule of law. Kazakhstan used its own funds to extend humanitarian and economic aid to the republic in distress. It was thanks to Kazakhstan's diplomatic efforts that the U.N. Secretary General, the leaders of the European Union, and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly dispatched their representatives to the republic, which helped normalize, to some extent, the situation there.