REGIONAL POLITICS

REVOLUTIONARY AND POST-REVOLUTIONARY PROCESSES ACROSS THE POST-SOVIET EXPANSE: CAN THEY BE COMPARED? (*Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan*)

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Recently the academic and political communities have been showing great interest in the so-called Color Revolutions in the CIS. There are doubts, however, whether the revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan can be placed in the same class of political phenomena and whether a comparative analysis can produce any significant results. Anyone willing to compare them should decide, first, whether these events belong to the same class, were caused by similar factors, and produced similar impacts and, second, whether they can be described as revolutions at all.

I would like to discuss this in my article and compare the so-called revolutionary events, their causes, and their consequences in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan—enough time has elapsed since the regime change in both countries to permit a more or less objective analysis.

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To understand which factors set the so-called revolutionary processes in motion, we should first compare the two countries' political and socioeconomic development in the Soviet Union and after its disintegration.

Haunted by the fear of Ukrainian nationalism and wishing to ease the task of governing the republic, the Bolsheviks added several, predominantly Russian, regions to the Ukrainian territory proper. The Donetsk Basin, Novorossia (the Black Sea coast of Russia), and later, in 1954, the Crimea, which never belonged to Ukraine before, became part of it. Today this territory is described as Eastern, or Southeastern Ukraine.

Under Soviet power, these areas lost much of their previously Russian makeup thanks to mandatory teaching of the Ukrainian language and literature at secondary schools and Ukrainian TV. Huge numbers of people from western Ukraine moved, or were forced to move to the republic's east, etc. This, however, did not create a single Ukrainian nation; people in the east never thought of themselves as Ukrainians and continued using the Russian tongue. After moving to the east, western Ukrainians quickly blended into the predominant mass of people, started using Russian or a dialect commonly known as "surzhik," a mixture of Russian and Ukrainian. In Soviet times, the titular nation accounted for 75 percent of the total population, but a large number of them used Russian as the native tongue and, on the whole, belonged to Russian culture, their Ukrainian affiliation being purely token. This means that the obvious split between the Western and Eastern Ukrainians (if the latter can be described as such at all) became obvious under Soviet power. Their national and linguistic affiliation was not a big problem under the common Soviet roof, but it created many stumbling blocks in the political development of independent Ukraine.

In Kyrgyzstan, Soviet power addressed a more or less similar problem—that of uniting the Kyrgyz into a single nation and of settling the local nomadic tribes. It did not totally succeed: the split survived and spread to the political sphere, in which there were the Southern and Northern groups of the political elite. However, in a country that was part of a large single state, the political rivalry, even if potentially dangerous for the political system as a whole, was not obvious. In the republic inundated by Russian speakers, consolidation of the local people developed slowly. As a result, under Soviet power the share of the titular nation dropped to 42 percent. What is more, the Russian speakers who continued coming to the republic's north and large cities made the North-South gap even more obvious and created another dividing line—between cities and the countryside. This means that a single ethnos could not be formed in Kyrgyzstan either—this is where the present political split is rooted.

Social, economic, cultural and axiological splits added tension to the obviously contradictory state and national relationships in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Under Soviet power, Ukraine's east developed into a huge fuel and industrial complex based on metallurgy, coal mining, and the military-industrial complex, while the west remained largely agrarian and much less urbanized.[1] This had its impact on the living standards in the republic's west and east, which means that economic disproportions were widening the gap.

Similar processes were underway in Kyrgyzstan: under Soviet power the republic's north was the seat of local industries (machine-building and metalworking), which produced two-thirds of the republic's industrial production.[2] This speaks of economic and, consequently, social disproportions (the standard of living and urbanization).

Cultural and axiological values, religion and political culture in particular, were no less important. Official atheism of the Soviet period notwithstanding, a latent religious split in Ukraine was always present. Western Ukraine mainly belonged to the Uniat (Greco-Catholic) and Roman Catholic churches. Ignoring the official bans, people remained loyal to their church, which under Soviet power

[1] To better grasp the scale of Eastern Ukraine's industrialization we should bear in mind that the Donetsk Region of the Ukrainian S.S.R. alone came third in the Soviet Union in terms of total industrial production volume.

[2] See: "Kirgizskaia Sovetskaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika," *Bolshaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia,* editorial board: A.M. Prokhorov, editor*, et al*., 3rd edition, Vol. 12, Moscow, 1973, p. 166.

was seen as opposition to the official authorities, which could not control it. The position of Christian Orthodoxy in Western Ukraine was weak at all times. The east was much less religious; those who attended church were mainly Orthodox Christians much more loyal to power. Under Soviet power, the Christian Orthodox Church was in fact used to meet the interests of the state. In independent Ukraine, part of the Christian Orthodox Ukrainian Church (the Kiev Patriarchate) refused to recognize the Patriach of Moscow as the head of the local church. Political culture in the country's two parts differed substantially, which stemmed from the local political and religious foundations: the west demonstrated strong dissident feelings and opposition to power, such feelings being practically absent in the east.

In Kyrgyzstan, the north was much less religious than the south. The northern Kyrgyz first embraced Islam in its simpler (nomadic) version fairly late, which means that they mainly concentrated on rites and customs. Nineteenth-century eyewitnesses testified that most of the local people knew nothing about the Pillars of Islam and were ignorant of the Prophet's name; they remained pagans. The southern Kyrgyz, who settled much earlier and became assimilated with the Uzbeks, were much more religious and knew more about Islam and its Sufi variant.

It can be said that the structural (objective) factors of the political process in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan were similar in many ways: the actual absence of a single nation, subethnic regional groups (in Kyrgyzstan there is also clan division), and socioeconomic and cultural-axiological gaps. This means that independence exacerbated the problems in both republics, thus greatly affecting the transformations of political regimes with negative results in both cases. An analysis of structural factors suggests that in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan alike there were considerable prerequisites for political polycentrism, that is, for actors and institutions preventing one center from monopolizing power.

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Let's have a look at the key political stages that predated the so-called revolutions in these republics.

When the Soviet regime was nearing its end, a powerful opposition (anticommunist) movement represented in particular by V. Chornovil's Narodny Rukh came into being on the basis of the dissident movement and informal culture. The Communist Party and its elite led by Leonid Kravchuk, Secretary of the C.C. Communist Party of Ukraine, managed to snatch up the slogans of democratization and independence and stay in power. They contributed to the Soviet Union's disbandment, the 1991 independence referendum, and the presidential election that made Kravchuk the first Ukrainian president. The first and all other presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine were genuinely competitive. They deepened the split into West and East and moved the traditional dividing lines onto the political plane: in 1991, Leonid Kravchuk, who represented the East, triumphed over pro-Western Chornovil; in 1994, pro-Russian Leonid Kuchma competed with Leonid Kravchuk, who by that time was seen as a pro-Western figure and defeated him. In 1999, the East, represented by Communist Petr Simonenko, lost the race to Leonid Kuchma, who was now seen from the East as a pro-Western figure. The election scripts, rivals, and slogans were different, but confrontation remained regional. There was no rotation in the upper echelons of power—the opposition stood no chance at this election. It should be said that even the "communist vs. democrat" (Simonenko-Kuchma) opposition left the eastern electorate indifferent—what was important was Petr Simonenko's pro-Russian stand. The split affected the party system as well: the Communist Party was seen as the party of the East, a fact best illustrated by the election returns.

At the 2004 presidential election, Petr Simonenko came third after Viktor Ianukovich and Viktor Iushchenko in the southern and eastern regions; in the west, leader of the Socialist Party Alexander

Moroz came third. This means that the candidates' party affiliation was of secondary importance for the voters after their regional East/West affiliation and, broader still, Russia/Europe choice.

The opposition stood no chance of coming to power, but it won enough seats in the Rada to deprive the ruling elite and Leonid Kuchma of control over the parliament. The opposition was too disunited to score a victory, while the ruling circles deliberately restricted its access to the media, manipulated candidate registration, and went as far as falsifying the election results. The polycentric nature of the political regime described above and a series of splits made the opposition indestructible and impossible to abolish. Unable to gain power through elections, the opposition sought other, including informal, ways: mass actions under the slogan "Ukraine without Kuchma!", numerous protest rallies, as well as several attempts of the parliament at impeaching the president. Those elite members who Kuchma excluded from his closest circle became a counter-elite, the two parts of which were headed by former premier Viktor Iushchenko and former vice-premier Iulia Timoshenko, who saw their aim as rallying the opposition and coming to power. They succeeded in setting up a large parliamentary faction called Nasha Ukraina (Our Ukraine). It failed, however, to win the absolute majority. On the other hand, the leaders of the counter-elite, aware that a rivalry with the ruling elite within the formal institutions had no future, followed a different scheme for coming to power. Using falsification of the presidential election issue as a pretext, they by-passed the existing institutions. The same device was employed at least six months earlier. The public received a clear message: a fair election should bring Iushchenko to power; a different outcome could be achieved only through the criminal manipulations of the authorities. Frequent repetitions produced the desired effect. What is more, by the beginning of the 2004 presidential election, the opposition was already functioning in favorable conditions. First, it relied on a powerful public, including youth, movement: too many people were dissatisfied with the Kuchma regime, the level of the country's economic development and lack of rotation in the upper echelons. Second, the ruling elite and President Kuchma, with the help of Russian President Vladimir Putin, provoked a regional spilt unprecedented in the country's history. They placed their stakes on Premier Viktor Ianukovich, who represented the Russian-speaking Donbass, could hardly speak or write Ukrainian, had two criminal convictions, and was closely connected with the Donetsk Clan (the Donetsk mafia to borrow the opposition's favorite term), which united the business elite in control of the larger part of the Ukrainian economy. This choice created the West-East confrontation and supplied the opposition with an object of severe criticism. The fact that Vladimir Putin openly supported Ianukovich, while the candidate himself never tired of repeating that strategic partnership with Russia was one of his priorities. This added fuel to the fire and deepened the political polarization. Russia was accused of putting pressure on the Ukrainian electorate and imposing one candidate on them (in some places the pressure produced a different effect: nothing else can explain the fact that a meager 15 percent supported the opposition candidate in the Russian-speaking Crimea). Finally, Ukrainian big business played its part: its members feared that the Donbass Group would concentrate economic power in its hands; if their candidate won, they might even monopolize all of Ukrainian business. Several members of big business closed ranks around Iushchenko; the opposition skillfully used its contacts abroad; it spoke a lot about the need to "defeat Kuchma's authoritarianism" and "protect human rights." Any objective observer would have never called the republic's political regime mono-centric or authoritarian—the opposition was legally operating in the country and improved the financing of the opposition activity through different channels. A unique combination of these factors led to the so-called Orange Revolution. I am absolutely convinced that it was a product of the deep-cutting split in the elite and a situation in which the counter-elite had no choice but to seize power virtually by force and legalize the results through a general election. In other words, the ruling elite, which made it impossible for the opposition to come to power through legal channels, was finally forced to cede power in the context of a political split and as a result of mass actions.

I would like to say that the split inside the elite was not a regional one: the opposition leaders did not represent the Western regions (Viktor Iushchenko was born in the Sumy Region bordering on Russia, and Iulia Timoshenko comes from the Russian-speaking Dniepropetrovsk Region). The opposition posed itself as pro-Western and anti-Russian to a certain extent—this alone was enough for the Western Ukrainian regions to view it as "their own" political force, and by the same token it became unacceptable to the East (this was convincingly confirmed by the "mirror" election results in the west and the east).

The Ukrainian crisis can be described as a crisis of "political involvement" caused by the ruling elite itself: it looked at the demands and actions of the political forces wishing to gain power, that is, gain access to political decision-making, as illegitimate. This crisis, as all other similar crises, offered two solutions to the ruling elite: institutional adaptation (setting up new institutions and establishing new procedures as a result of an agreement between the elite and counter-elite), or the authoritarian method (repressions that would limit political involvement by force).

The ruling elite and Leonid Kuchma himself were obviously not ready to use authoritarian methods: the use of force might have only worsened the situation even if the army and militia had obeyed the order to use force (which was highly doubtful). The time for institutional adaptation was lost. When Viktor Ianukovich and his circle started discussing the possibility of sharing power with the opposition after the repeated elections, a package agreement was no longer possible. Aware of its victory and acting under the strong pressure of the masses, the opposition could not talk to the government about dividing the spoils. Such talks, which were possible on the eve of the second round, were doomed after it. It was obvious that the winner (the opposition) would take all and would not share the power thus gained with the former elite. The old rulers and the Russian leaders showed once more that political foresightedness was not one of their virtues: they shortsightedly spoiled relations with the future Ukrainian president.

To what extent can the political pattern described above be applied to Kyrgyzstan? The republic lacked strong dissident and human rights traditions, yet during Soviet times part of the national intelligentsia, writers in particular, was in opposition to power. Late in the 1980s, discussion clubs and somewhat later proto-parties appeared in the republic; there was an attempt to set up the National Front of Kyrgyzstan (to emulate the popular fronts in the Baltic republics and Narodny Rukh in Ukraine) cut short by the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan (C.P.K.). Later the Kyrgyzstan Democratic Movement (KDM) appeared, an umbrella structure for 24 informal democratic alliances and a group of KDM supporters in the republican Supreme Soviet. By 1990, the communist leadership split into the reformers, who supported perestroika and were themselves encouraged by the Moscow "democrats," and the conservatives headed by the First Secretary of the C.C. C.P.K. A. Masaliev, who wanted to keep Soviet order intact. This split followed the North-South dividing line: the northern elite had been removed from power earlier. The October 1990 presidential election in the Kirghiz S.S.R. made the split obvious: neither A. Masaliev, nor his main rival M. Sherimkulov won in the first round. As a result "democrat" Askar Akaev supported by Moscow reformers appeared out of nowhere to carry the election. During the very short period (1990-1991) when the newly elected president and the C.P.K. conservatives existed side by side, Askar Akaev consolidated his position, while the C.P.K., after supporting the failed coup of the State Committee for the Emergency Situation in August 1991, lost its political dividends. History demonstrated that in those Union republics where the communists borrowed the slogans of the local opposition they managed to remain in power. They declared themselves to be "genuine" democrats and nationalists and disbanded the Communist Party by banning it or transforming it into a "democratic" one. L. Kravchuk in Ukraine, I. Karimov in Uzbekistan, S. Niyazov in Turkmenistan, N. Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan, and B. Yeltsin in Russia followed this road, while in Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan the communists lost power. New actors squeezed the orthodox-minded elites from the political process. Potentially there was another (East European)

way—an agreement between the elite and the opposition. None of the CIS countries followed this road for various reasons.

Askar Akaev identified himself as a democratic president wishing to build up effective democratic institutions in his republic described as an "island of democracy" in Central Asia to attract Western money. During the first period of his rule (approximately up to 1995), the president strove in earnest to set up a polycentric system and to achieve a balance between the elites by entering an informal pact with Speaker M. Sherimkulov and dividing formal constitutional powers between the executive and legislative branches. Later, however, under the impact of confrontation with the conservative-dominated parliament, economic recession, and corruption scandals, the president opted for a more effective authoritarian method of political troubleshooting. He started with closing down two opposition newspapers, in 1994 he disbanded the parliament in violation of the constitution, in 1996 he extended the president's powers through a referendum, and finally in 2000 he ran for a third term and was elected. He launched criminal proceedings against some of his political opponents, Felix Kulov being the most prominent of them.

In Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, the presidential elections made obvious the regional split, with clan overtones in the latter case. In 1995, Akaev ran against A. Masaliev who received 24.4 percent of the votes and Sherimkulov who received 1.7 percent. Masaliev's considerable support in the south suggested that the voters rallied around a member of the southern clans who stood opposed to northerner Akaev rather than the communist leader. In 2000, Akaev ran against Socialist Party leader O. Tekebaev, who received 10 percent of the votes, the dividing line running along the South-North border, rather than in the political sphere (Felix Kulov, the president's most dangerous opponent had been removed from the race long before the election day).

There, as in Ukraine, the regional splits affected the party system and made it much harder to build it up; the task was even more difficult in a country divided into regions as well as clans. Throughout the post-Soviet period, the regime in Kyrgyzstan remained polycentric with obvious biases toward authoritarianism as well as potential alternative power centers. The elections were not completely free, but the political opposition was operating legally; the president and the parliament remained opposed to each other, while the country was divided into the Center and regions. For this reason political monocentrism did not strike root. In Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, the alternative power centers refused to obey the president and remained a political irritant.

After the 2000 presidential election when Akaev's family (in the political and direct sense), in pursuit of total monopoly of power, stepped up its pressure in the political and economic spheres, the so far muted displeasure of the better-organized part of the opposition represented by the leaders of the regional elites burst to the surface.[3] Like in Ukraine, the opposition united into the Popular Congress convened mass rallies in 2002-2003, long before the Color Revolution; the Kyrgyz opposition also needed strong leaders able to create a counter-elite and found them among the former top officials who Akaev had removed from their posts. They were former premier Kurmanbek Bakiev and former foreign minister Roza Otunbaeva (Kyrgyz Timoshenko). Like in Ukraine, they headed the opposition movement together made up of "first wave democrats" and members of rivaling clan elites Askar Akaev had pushed to the political fringes. Felix Kulov, who served a term in prison, was their martyr. The constitutional reform designed to redistribute the powers of the president and the parliament was seen as a cure for the "political involvement" crisis. Its implementation, however, dragged on and on until in 2003 President Akaev announced that the republic would shift to the presidential-parliamentary form of government no earlier than 2005.

[3] See: N. Omarov, "Evolutsia politicheskoy sistemy Kyrgyzstana v 90-e gody XX—nachale XXI vekov: Itogi i perspektivy demokraticheskogo stroitel'stva," *Politicheskiy klass,* No. 6, 2005.

The 2005 parliamentary election confirmed that the president was resolved to tighten his grip on power even more and push the opposition further away from power. His numerous relatives and members of his clan, who had already established control over a larger part of the country's economy, decided that they needed deputy mandates to strengthen their positions. This, as well as the widely shared suspicion that Akaev was intent on running for president in December 2005 for the fourth time or transferring power by right of succession, forced the counter-elite to employ the falsification of election results device to weaken power (later the opposition leaders admitted that they had no intention of removing Akaev, particularly so quickly).[4] The counter-elite, which mainly represented the southern clans, made use of the protest sentiments of the masses heated by the election results and which developed into popular riots that swept the country's south to come to power.

As distinct from Ukraine, the regime change was much more cruel and violent; it was not completely legal either (Akaev resigned and a new election was held after the counter-elite had already seized power, not before as happened in Ukraine). The new election, too, threatened to develop into another round of South-North confrontation represented by candidates Bakiev and Kulov (released from prison), respectively. (A similar situation could be earlier observed in Ukraine.) Unlike in Ukraine, none of the candidates expected to win the election on his own because none had the majority on his side. If they remained rivals, the elections could have created an even wider gap at best and led to a civil war at worst. The two main candidates preferred to join forces for the sake of a sure victory and distribution of power between the Northern and Eastern clans. In Ukraine, Viktor Iushchenko, assured of his victory in the third round, did not need a pact with Ianukovich. In Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev proved unable to apply the authoritarian method of crisis settlement: it turned out that control over the army and the police had been lost. Like in Ukraine, the time for institutional adaptation (an agreement on power redistribution) had been missed, therefore it was for the opposition members who represented the two main parts of the counter-elite to come to an agreement.

No matter what Askar Akaev said later, there was no confrontation according to the pro-Russian/pro-Western candidate pattern. An analysis of facts does not corroborate his statement. The former president tried to present the events as a coup accomplished "on foreign money and guided by those who had been coached abroad" and obviously anti-Russian.[5] The opposition leaders, however, confirmed the republic's course aimed at establishing close relations with the Russian Federation and never provoked anti-Russian sentiments in the republic (this time Russia refrained from putting pressure on the electorate, as happened in Ukraine). The West's role in the Kyrgyz events was much less pronounced: the leading Western states were caught unawares—nobody expected the regime to collapse so fast.

The above shows that the causes and factors of the so-called revolutionary events in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan were similar: the socioeconomic and cultural-axiological division spread to the political class; the opposition was deprived of legal means of coming to power (it consisted mainly of politicians the presidents of both countries removed from power and, in the case of Kyrgyzstan, a clan conflict combined with a regional conflict), as well as the desire of the ruling elite to retain power at all costs. The regime change was accomplished by unconstitutional means when an opportune moment (elections) presented itself. On the other hand, the polycentric nature of Ukrainian and Kyrgyz society (rooted in the structural factors described above) was responsible for the very presence of opposition actors and a counter-elite. This polycentrism cannot be removed by a decision from above: it was a structural phenomenon rooted in the societies' historical development.

[4] See, for example, V. Panfilova,"V Kirgizii slozhilos dvoevlastie: Posle delezha dolzhnostey sleduet zhdat peredela sobstvennosti," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 28 March, 2005, p. 6.

[5] See: A. Akaev, "Ob urokakh martovskikh sobytiy v Kyrgyzstane," *Politicheskiy klass,* No. 4, 2005.

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The revolutionary events in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan ended with the "winner takes all" scenario. The new opposition was prevented from distributing the key posts. Even in Kyrgyzstan, where the Bakiev-Kulov pact was entered, the first post-revolutionary cabinet consisted of members of the southern clans (the Osh and Jalalabad regions). The new rulers were obviously not willing to restore the regional-clan balance.

Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine had another important feature in common: during the course of their so-called revolution, there was a demand to change the form of government into parliamentarian-presidential to be able to form a coalition government from the election victors. (In Ukraine, the authorities agreed to hold a third round of the presidential election, that is, accepted the opposition's victory provided constitutional reform was carried out). Certain politicians went as far as talking about a changed political-territorial pattern under which the regions would enjoy more autonomy, or even about a federation. After winning the election, the former opposition no longer needed the reform and tried to delay it. More likely than not, there was no enthusiasm about it from the very beginning.[6] The reform was a means of consoling the losers, who hoped to use it to regain power some time in the future. This explains several statements Viktor Iushchenko and Kurmanbek Bakiev made during the first "post-revolutionary" year to the effect that the reform was premature, that some time was needed to put the finishing touches on it, etc. In Ukraine, the decision on the reform was made before the presidential election in the form of constitutional amendments, which could not be annulled in haste. In Kyrgyzstan, it took much longer: quite recently the country learned that President Bakiev had received three versions of constitutional reform with different patterns of power-sharing between the executive and legislative powers.[7] Still, it seems that such reform is the only possible way to avoid deeper rifts in both countries and exclude further possible "revolutionary" developments that bring to power one part of the elite representing, at best, half of the nation. So far, the elites in both countries are not insisting on federalization; in Ukraine, however, there is a lot of talk about regional autonomy, regional tongues, etc. In the context of continued confrontation these plans might endanger the state's integrity.

The alliance between Bakiev and Kulov in Kyrgyzstan proved more durable than between Iushchenko and Timoshenko in Ukraine. The latter fell apart in September 2005 under the burden of never ending scandals and dissent. (At all times Iulia Timoshenko was much more radically minded on all the key political issues than her coalition partner.) The Bakiev-Kulov alliance survived a number of durability tests and managed several times to retreat from the brink of disintegration.

In both countries the new elite became involved in a serious conflict with the parliament, which did much to make its victory possible; a new opposition made up of former allies was another pain in the neck in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. The first Kyrgyz cabinet virtually fell apart, while the parliament insisted on the constitutional reform the president kept postponing. This might have ended with the disbandment of the parliament and another bout of street riots: it seems that the "mob" is developing once more into a political instrument. In January 2006, the Ukrainian parliament passed a vote of no confidence against the Ekhanurov cabinet because of the "gas agreements" with Russia.[8] This is a more or less common "post-revolutionary" feature: the allies driven by the shared

[6] Iulia Timoshenko says that Viktor Iushchenko, still a presidential candidate, dismissed her warnings about possible loss of power if the reform was carried out by saying that it was important to vote for it because later it should and could be annulled.

[7] See: V. Panfilova, "Vybirat pridetsia prezidentu Bakievu: V Kyrgyzstane razrabotany tri predvaritel'nykh proekta novoy Konstitutsii respubliki," *Nezavisimaia gazeta,* 22 June, 2006, p. 8.

[8] Significantly, because of certain contradictions in the current legislation, the cabinet ignored the vote of no confidence and continued working.

desire to bring down the common enemy (people in power) cannot agree on the key post-revolutionary issues. In the fall of 2005, the Ukrainian opposition led by Ianukovich entered a non-aggression pact of sorts with President Iushchenko, thus gaining access to the media and a chance of running for parliament.

Since Viktor Ianukovich's Party of the Regions emerged victorious in the latest parliamentary election, logic suggested that the victors should be invited to participate in political decision-making. A coalition government thus formed would represent the entire country rather than just half of it. The election showed that the country remained divided and the gap had become even wider. There was the impression that the president would let this unique chance slip by: the election had created an unstable parliamentary coalition of three Orange forces (Our Ukraine, the Timoshenko Bloc, and the Socialist Party), which outnumbered the Party of the Regions faction. It did not prove easy, however, to build up an Orange coalition—this and the widely differing ideas of the Orange leaders suggested that the alliance would not survive long and that either a new coalition would appear, or the parliament would be disbanded. The first alternative was finally realized: a new coalition of the parliamentary majority was hastily knocked together out of factions of the Socialist party, the Party the Regions, and the Communist Party.

The president had either to recommend that parliament appoint Viktor Ianukovich prime minister or disband the Supreme Rada (the alternative Iulia Timoshenko was actively supporting). In August 2006, the president finally opted for the first genuinely coalition cabinet in Ukrainian history. It included representatives of the majority (the Party of the Regions, Socialist and Communist parties) as well as of the pro-presidential Our Ukraine Party. The security structure ministers the new cabinet inherited from the previous one were the president's personal choice. President Iushchenko was obviously more apprehensive about Timoshenko than Ianukovich and his party. For the first time the cabinet represented the entire country, not part of it, and this was why it looked more stable and more efficient than the Orange structure. Time ran back to the lost chance of "constitutional adaptation." The elite achieved an agreement between its parts, thus realizing the opportunity that presented itself between the second and third rounds of the November-December 2004 presidential election and later, after Timoshenko's cabinet resignation in September 2005. The elite finally realized that power and responsibility for the collective decisions should be shared not only inside the ruling group, but also between the government and the opposition. What is more, the opposition was allowed, through an agreement with the government rather than through the use of threats and violence, to take part in decision-making for the first time.

Redistribution of property followed the elections in Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine—an inevitable stage in countries where power and property are intimately connected (this can be said about almost all post-Soviet states). The process was also triggered by the plummeting standard of living, which reduced the confidence level and caused doubts about the legitimacy of those who ruled the country. There were two other reasons for this: people learned to expect much of the "revolutions," while the new leaders proved unable to go to the root of their countries' socioeconomic evils and limited themselves to populist promises of larger allowances, benefits, and pensions. The new Kyrgyz and Ukrainian elites revealed their inability to unite the disunited countries either by speeding up economic growth and achieving higher living standards or by tapping the common axiological potential.

This raises the question: Can these events be described as revolutions? If a revolution presupposes a change in political regime, neither event can be described as such. They should be interpreted as "political involvement" crises caused by the society's political polycentrism, on the one hand, and the ruling elites' obvious reluctance to share power with the counter-elite, on the other. Those who ruled the country refused to admit that the counter-elite's claims to power were legitimate—they were resolved to hold on to power at any price and as long as possible. This might bring success in systems free from structural polycentrism and independent political actors (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are

two relevant examples). In polycentric systems polycentrism is bound to become a pressing problem and pressure and bans are not effective: the counter-elites merely tap the nation's protest potential to achieve their aims without introducing radical changes (there are still no free media, the new rulers are obviously unwilling to share power with the opposition, and no one is in a rush to carry out constitutional reforms). The events in Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine did not resolve the conflicts—they stirred up the old ones and made them even worse. The conflicts rooted in regional and clan division merely widened the gap and made the confrontation much fiercer. On top of this, the upper echelon in Kyrgyzstan is involved in the criminalization of government: criminals are seeking parliamentary seats, assassinations have become a frequent feature, while the rulers are accused of contacts with organized crime. Under these conditions, no one can expect the political system to become democratized or political conflicts to be institutionalized. The recent Ukrainian developments demonstrated, however, that the new rulers were willing to share power with the opposition to minimize the threat of more crises to which a polycentric society is prone. Time will show to what extent this will stabilize the political system and help institutionalize the conflicts.

The time has come to decide whether the two models of political development in the context of the "political involvement" crises can be compared at all. The course and results of both "revolutions" were obviously different: there was no clan confrontation in Ukraine; unlike Askar Akaev, who had no official "successor," Leonid Kuchma did nothing to cling to his post. In Kyrgyzstan, the presidential candidate had no rivals thanks to an agreement with the most serious of the contenders. In Ukraine, bitter rivalry extended to the third round. The coup in Ukraine used no violence and shed no blood, while in Kyrgyzstan the use of force and violence was obvious. The pattern, however, was similar, and the similarities were no chance coincidence. There were similar structural arrangements in both countries and more or less similar strategies the old elite employed, thus dooming itself to defeat and depriving itself of the opportunity for political resurrection.

The general pattern can be described as follows: a polycentric society with overlapping splits; a gradual concentration of power by the ruling elite that blocks the road to power to all other forces; a counter-elite relying on former top people and the mass protest movement; the old elite's inability to reach a compromise with the counter-elite, on the one hand, and its reluctance to use power to end the crisis, on the other; the counter-elite's illegitimate victory secured by mass actions and its consequent legalization through elections; emergence of a new elite that represents one political force (clan) according to the "winner takes all" principle; instability and impotence of the newly formed governments; a conflict inside the elite between the president and the government, and between the president and the parliament; postponement of unwanted constitutional reforms; no democratization of the political system and a deeper regional rift created by the fact that the opposition is still left outside the political decision-making structure; lower standards of living and the resultant rejection of the government as a legitimate force, which makes its victory at the next election questionable.

The above suggests that these processes can be compared in principle. It seems that the ruling elites of both countries have to address similar tasks: they have to find means and methods of sharing power between the ruling elite and the opposition and between the Center and the regions to bridge the regional and social gaps and create a stable political system. It looks as if Ukraine has already found the right formula; it remains to be seen whether it survives the durability and efficiency tests. Kyrgyzstan is still seeking such a formula, therefore more political crises can be expected at the top and grassroots levels. The local specifics of political culture suggest that these crises might be much more violent than in Ukraine and might even destroy the still shaky political system.