

**THE IMPACT OF REVOLUTIONS ON MEDIA FREEDOM IN
THE TRANSITION COUNTRIES: ON THE EXAMPLE OF
GEORGIA AND KYRGYZSTAN**

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to examine the major changes in the area of media following such contemporary events as *Rose Revolution* in Georgia and *Tulip Revolution* in Kyrgyzstan. The present empirical research traces and systematizes what changes these countries saw in the area of media after the revolutions and discusses what exactly revolutions have brought for media freedom and media development in both countries. It offers the analysis of the post-revolutionary tendencies according to the six criteria crucial for media democratization. The research is based on the review of the wide variety of the secondary sources as well as on the in-depth interviews conducted with journalists and media experts.

The overall conclusion of the present analysis is that, despite the popular expectations, neither for Georgia not for Kyrgyzstan recent ‘color’ revolutions brought positive tendencies towards media democratization in the short run (1,5-3 years). Certain improvements in Georgian legislation are counterbalanced by either lack of changes or predominantly negative trends according to five other criteria. In Kyrgyzstan, minor improvements in the scope of independent media have no substantial influence on the overall picture given that according to the four criteria there are no positive changes, and that according to the last criteria of journalistic culture - the situation has deteriorated.

The thesis also looks at the explanatory factors for such tendencies in both countries. Elite continuity, lack of regime change, domestic insecurity and post-revolutionary tension are suggested to be among the possible explanations. Thesis also discusses whether or not based on the revolutionary dynamics and trajectory any major changes could have been reasonably expected.

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I dedicate this work to my mother Tatiana Parfenova and to all my fiends whose never-ending love and support during this unforgettable year in Budapest were central for my ultimate completion of this work.

Table of Content

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Political context and background of the Rose Revolution in Georgia and Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan	8
1.1 Theoretical framework for comparison of the revolutionary uprisings.....	8
1.2 Triggers of the two ‘color’ revolutions.....	11
1.3 Rose Revolution in Georgia.....	13
1.4. Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan.....	17
Chapter 2: Elaboration of theoretical framework and criteria	24
2.1 Theoretical frameworks applied for comparing media systems.....	25
2.2. International organizations and media watchdogs approaches and scores	39
2.3. Outline of the methodology for the current research.....	44
Chapter 3: Analysis of the tendencies in the post-revolutionary media in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan.....	50
3.1. Analysis of the Georgian Media	51
3.1.1. Media in Georgia prior November 2003.....	51
3.1.2. Developments and trends in Georgian media after the Rose Revolution	54
3.2. Analysis of the Kyrgyz Media	71
3.2.1. Media in Kyrgyzstan prior March 2005.....	71
3.2.2. Developments and trends in Kyrgyz media after Tulip Revolution.....	73
3.3. Conclusion on the post-revolutionary media changes in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan ...	86
Chapter 4: Explanations for the current state of the post-revolutionary media.....	92
4.1. Elites continuity and lack of regime change	94
4.2. Fragility of the current post-revolutionary governments and domestic instability ..	101
Conclusion	106
Bibliography	110
APPENDIX A: List of interviewees	116
APPENDIX B: List of main questions for journalists	117

Introduction

The causes, dynamics and outcomes of revolutionary uprisings have always been a fascinating area of study that has occupied minds of sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists for centuries.¹ The question that contemporary political scientists may puzzle about is whether a revolutionary uprising the purpose of which is ousting authoritarian regime and corrupted rulers would bring positive developments in a country and promote democracy. Many practitioners and regional experts believed that it could be a reasonable and well-grounded expectation. Others remain more skeptical about such results of revolutions. Revolutionary theorist John Goldstone argues that “the association of revolutions and democracy is no more than an ‘illusion’”².

The last three years and half have seen three major events in the post-Soviet territory: so-called ‘color’ revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. They represent a good ground for testing various theoretical questions related to revolutions and their outcome. As Monroe Price, Beata Rozumilowicz, and Stefaan G. Verhulst write “transitions are, by definition, not easy to capture”³ and there are many factors that influence the performance of the new governing elite. However, by looking at reforms that are taking place or new prohibitions and violations that occur, we can see which direction the new leadership rule is taking. The same applies to the development in the area of media after revolutions. The question that is the prior focus of this research is *whether recent ‘color’ revolutions⁴ brought positive changes for the media freedom in Central Eurasia*. I will consider this question on the example of two out of three instances of the recent ‘color’ revolutions: *Rose Revolution* in Georgia and *Tulip Revolution* in Kyrgyzstan.

¹ Michael Kimmel S., *Revolution: a Sociological Interpretation*, (Polity Press, 1990), 3.

² Jeremy D. Popkin, *Media and Revolution: Comparative Perspectives* (University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 10.

³ Monroe E. Price, Beata Rozumilowicz, and Stefaan G. Verhulst, *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, democratizing the state* (Routledge, 2003), xii.

After we have the main changes analyzed and post-revolutionary trends in the area of media in both countries identified, the next question that follows is *why the situation remains or unfolds the way it does, how could we explain the current situation in media in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan*. Therefore, this will be the second focal question of this thesis.

Media is one of the areas via which we can trace post-revolutionary progress, the trajectory of changes, and test the commitment of a new government. As Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan write “media liberalization is a necessary prerequisite for successful democratization”⁵. Color Revolutions in two countries of Central Eurasia were viewed as the first step towards democratization in these societies. However, there is currently no systematic work been done on the impact of the color revolutions on the media freedom. Therefore, I hope that my work will fill in the existing gap by offering a comparative research of the post-revolutionary media development trends and identifying the likely key drivers for the current media situation. Both countries under investigation represent two important regions in the current international affairs – South Caucasus and Central Asia. Both of these countries have seen the changes in the government during last three years. They represent good ground for testing the impact of revolutions.

I believe what is happening in the media can also be seen as an important socio-political index⁶ and as a reflection of the complicated political situation in the countries. By looking at the ‘fight for media’ we can also trace what trends the new government politics is taking. The attitude

⁴ By ‘color’ revolutions here I understand recent mass uprisings in Georgia in November 2003 (Rose Revolution), in Ukraine in November 2004 (Orange Revolution), and in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 (Tulip Revolution).

⁵ Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan, *Democracy and the Media. A Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge University Press), 402.

towards and treatment of the independent media may be seen as “a barometer of broader adherence to democratic principles and human rights standards”⁷ as well as of the political stability in country in general. I, therefore, think that looking at the issue of media development in the new ‘establishing democracies’ is important not only in order to see what is going on in the media there (understanding of this is, of course, crucial in itself) but also to be able to analyze via its prism the situation in the country overall. I believe it is important to thoroughly study the trends that follow such major events in the region as recent revolutions in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan.

The main reason why I focus on these two countries out of three that experienced so-called ‘color’ revolutions is that the interest of this research is aimed not on the whole post-Soviet space but rather on the changes taking place in its Central Eurasian part (Caucasus and Central Asia). Even though it is useful to also look at Ukraine for its media development after revolution, I purposefully exclude it from my current analysis as I chose to focus on the countries that are rather more understudied in the current political discourse. The trends in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan are still to be understood and described. Other factors such as Georgia’s and Kyrgyzstan’s relative similarity in the socio-politic and historical background also influenced my decision to limit case selection for comparison. Another factor due to which I focus on Georgia and Kyrgyzstan is their relevant similarity of the trajectory of media development prior to the revolutions. Therefore, both cases represent good examples for the analysis and comparison of the post-revolutionary media development trends.

⁶ I would like to acknowledge that this view on media was first expressed by my colleague Adam Smith Albion, via phone conversation, November 2006.

⁷ Jennifer Windsor and Christopher Walker, “Press Freedom's Grim Turn in the Former Soviet Union”, accessed at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=72&release=432> on 25 December 2006.

In order to be able to talk about the outcome of the recent color revolutions and what they brought for the media during last 2-3 years, we first need to understand these revolutions and their dynamics. Therefore, before proceeding to the analysis of the media and post-revolutionary changes, the *first chapter* of this thesis will look at what has happened in Georgia in November 2003 and in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005. In this chapter I analyze and identify the main factors that have led to the revolutionary uprisings in both countries. I also compare the role of these factors in the development of Georgian and Kyrgyz events and conclude whether or not these events had completely different dynamics and thus our expectations of the results from both revolutions and subsequent change of the leadership should not be the same. Despite the importance of the political changes that have happened in both countries, *Rose Revolution*⁸ in Georgia and especially *Tulip Revolution*⁹ in Kyrgyzstan are largely understudied. First chapter, thus, aims to fill in the existing gap in this area and present background information for the following thesis research.

In order to effectively analyze trends in the media systems in two different countries after the revolutions, a systematic theoretical framework must be elaborated and main criteria according to which we can identify, and compare and contrast changes in both countries over time must be specified. This is the central goal of the *second chapter*. Based on the existing literature and checklist of questions used by two international media watchdogs I identified six main criteria that should allow us to assess revolutionary outcomes in the area of media and to see what the two revolutions under scrutiny have actually brought. These criteria can also be used for further

⁸ 'Vardebis Revolucia' in Georgian means the Revolution of Roses, or Rose Revolution. This name was given to the mass uprising and a subsequent peaceful change in the government in Georgia on November 2003. During the demonstrations the protestors were holding roses as symbols of non-violence. (Tsitsishvili, David. 2006/13: 1).

research aiming at comparison of media systems in between two or even more countries. The following six criteria I find the most useful, applicable and realistic for analysis of post-revolutionary media developments in the cases of Georgia and Kyrgyzstan and that could also be extended to studying media systems in other countries: 1) media legislation and implementation of the laws; 2) government control of state media; 3) scope of independent media; 4) accessibility of information, including freedom of information regulation and its implementation; 5) journalistic culture and professionalism; 6) violence against journalists. The second chapter discusses and justifies the applicability of these criteria for identifying and comparing changes in the media systems in the post-revolutionary context.

In the next part of the second chapter I will briefly discuss the methodology of international media watchdogs (*Freedom House* and *Reporters Without Borders*) and the applicability of their data for my research. In the last section of the second chapter I will introduce the major empirical sources I used for the analysis and will present the justification of the interview objects selection and the approach to conducting the in-depth interviews with journalists and media experts, which represent the major part of the original research for this thesis.

The central focus of the research is to examine and describe the impact and changes the color revolution brought for the media freedom in two countries of Central Eurasia. This will be the aim of the *third chapter* of the thesis. In this chapter, using the criteria identified above, I will analyze the main tendencies that are taking place in the media development few years after the revolutions and will compare the changes between two countries. The research I conducted

⁹ Tulip Revolution (or also People's Revolution) is a name given to the mass uprising in Kyrgyzstan. There was no agreement on the flower or color during the revolution at all. People were wearing pink, yellow and red bands.

shows that even though we can name some minor positive developments, overall looking at all the tendencies related to media, we can report that the situation has not improved and in certain areas is getting even worse. I will analyze the specific changes by looking at a number of criteria essential for media freedom developed in the second chapter.¹⁰ I will also look at scores by the international organizations and watchdogs monitoring the media situation in both countries. The time limit set for this research included the period from the moment a revolution occurred until the end of last year. Thus I look at the changes in Georgian media from November 2003 till December 2006, and in Kyrgyz – from March 2005 till December 2006 as well.

After having answered my first question on what exactly trends of development in media freedom can be traced and what direction they take in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan and whether the situation is improving or getting worse within the short-term period after the revolutions in chapter three, I will continue investigation by focusing on the next important question in the *fourth chapter* of this work. Thus my second main question is: *what are the possible explanatory factors for the current state of media freedom in these post-revolutionary countries?* My initial assumption, which is to be elaborated in the last *fourth chapter*, is that elite continuity, "path-dependence", security threats and post-revolutionary domestic instability contribute to the way media situation in the post-revolutionary countries is been shaped. Also by looking back at the information provided at the first chapter, I shall discuss to which extent our expectations of such revolutions were well-grounded and justified.

"Tulip" was a name already assigned to the events after it has happened.

¹⁰ For the purpose of this research, **media freedom** is characterized by the liberal legislation, level of journalistic independency and professionalism, equal and unconstrained access to information, and the absence of pressure and

In the following first chapter, I shall start by introducing the Rose and Tulip Revolutions and by discussing their triggers, main causes and dynamics.

Chapter 1: Political context and background of the Rose Revolution in Georgia and Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan ¹¹

1.1 Theoretical framework for comparison of the revolutionary uprisings

Writing his works on classical revolutions during the time of mass uprisings all over the world (from the Iran and Nicaragua to Northern Ireland and eastern bloc countries), Michael Kimmel rightly observed that living in such an age “presents us with special ethical imperative to attempt to understand it”¹². Three major events in the post-Soviet territory took place during last three years: revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. The importance of understanding of their triggers, dynamics and especially outcomes may now present a challenge and unique opportunity for investigation as well as a “special ethical imperative” for a contemporary political scientist.

According to Tocqueville “(w)hoever studies and looks only at France will never understand anything...of the French Revolution”.¹³ And Otto Hintze correctly writes that comparison helps us in two ways - to identify the general aspects that underline both things and to see more clearly the singularity of each thing that is being compared.¹⁴ I believe that looking at both Georgian and Kyrgyzstan revolutions in comparative perspective will not only help us see the similarities and differences of both uprisings and of their causes, but will also allow us understand each of the particular revolutions even deeper.

Classical as well as contemporary studies of such phenomena as revolution offer a broad range of various definitions as well as theoretical frameworks that we can apply for the analysis and

¹¹ This chapter is based on the final paper and research conducted for “Revolution and the State” class. I am grateful to Pr.Andras Bozoki for his feedback and comments on this paper.

¹² Michael Kimmel S., *Revolution a Sociological Interpretation*, viii.

¹³ Tocqueville (1970: 111) in Kimmel S. Michael, *Revolution a Sociological Interpretation*, 13.

evaluation of revolutions and revolutionary processes. In this paper for the purpose of comparison of the revolutionary processes in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan I will apply the synthesis of several ideas expressed by different authors. Due to the size limitations of this work I will choose one theoretical framework as my main point of departure for this comparative research. I will apply three criteria described by Jack A. Goldstone for evaluating the two ‘color’ revolutions. However, in order to have a more complete and comprehensive analysis than the one allowed within Goldstone’s model alone¹⁵, I will also integrate some suggestions of Eric Selbin, Theda Skocpol, Michael Kimmel and Nikkie Keddie on what factors should be considered for such an analysis.

Goldstone’s major claim is that the states which move toward a revolutionary situation share three basic trends: 1) the state loses effectiveness and it is no longer able to control resources and demand obedience; 2) elites become alienated from the state and there is an increased tension over the redistribution of power; 3) masses of populations can be mobilized for demonstrations. According to Goldstone, when all three conditions are met we can say that a society is on the way towards a revolutionary process. Goldstone’s main suggestion is to use this model to predict the possible revolutions or to see whether they could have been predicted.¹⁶ The argument whether or not revolutions could have been anticipated is not the purpose of this research. I will only use these factors to evaluate revolutions that have already taken place and will test whether these factors contributed to the development of revolutions and to what extent they differed in two cases.

¹⁴ Otto Hintze (1975: 23) in Kimmel S. Michael, *Revolution a Sociological Interpretation*, 13.

¹⁵ In more detail I have discussed the approach of Goldstone in my Position Paper #5 for the class “Revolution and the State”. I see these three factors as insufficient for predicting revolutions, nonetheless they can be used for the evaluations of the revolutions that already took place.

Kimmel correctly writes that it is important not to overlook the role of “conscious human activity in the process of revolution”¹⁷. Eric Selbin is also one of the supporters of more emotional, individualistic, agent-based approach towards studies of revolutions.¹⁸ Therefore, drawing upon their ideas, I will look at what role in the ‘color’ revolutions can be assigned to particular *individuals and especially opposition leaders* and their aspirations and how their role differed in two uprisings under investigation.

The importance of the *international factor* in the revolutionary process is underlined by both Theda Skocpol and Nikkie Keddie. Keddie is also right saying that in the Goldstone’s model the role of international actors is largely downplayed.¹⁹ In this analysis, I believe it is necessary to consider what role international organizations and other actors played in revolutions in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. My assumption is that their role was substantially different in these two countries.

Therefore, based on the discussed above works and combinations of approaches, I propose the following framework and aspects for comparison of the *Rose Revolution* in Georgia and *Tulip Revolution* in Kyrgyzstan:

¹⁶ Nikki R. Keddie, “Response to Goldstone”, in Nikkie R. Keddie (ed.): *Debating Revolutions* (New York: NYU Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Michael Kimmel S., *Révolution a Sociological Interpretation*, 218.

¹⁸ Eric Selbin, “Revolution and the Real World: Bringing Agency Back In” in John Foran ed., *Theorizing Revolutions* (London: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁹ Nikki R. Keddie, “Response to Goldstone”, in Nikkie R. Keddie (ed.): *Debating Revolutions* (New York: NYU Press, 1995).

Table 1: Comparative framework for the analysis of the ‘color’ revolutions

1.	Ineffectiveness of the state
2.	Alienation of the elites
3.	Easily Mobilized population
4.	Role of the individuals and strength of the opposition leaders
5.	Influence of international actors

I shall start by looking at what was the *trigger* of both revolutions and then will move on to more detailed examination of these five factors.

1.2 Triggers of the two ‘color’ revolutions

The *trigger* for both revolutions was fraudulent parliamentary elections. Ironically enough in Kyrgyzstan, like in Georgia, even though according to OSCE these elections failed to be completely “free and fair”, they were more open and democratic than the previous parliamentary elections. However, this time with the combination of other factors in place they served as a spark from a match that caused a huge fire²⁰.

Rose Revolution

According to Phillip Fluri and Eden Cole “the rejection of the politics of manipulation and deceit, steeped in the corrupt practices, was the reason for the *Rose Revolution*”²¹. When it became clear that November 2 elections were falsified and popular *National Movement* was in third place while a pro-Shevardnadze bloc *For a New Georgia* received the majority of the seats,

²⁰ Kimmel is comparing trigger of the revolution to the spark from a match in his book Michael Kimmel S., *Révolution a Sociological Interpretation*, 10.

²¹ Philipp H. Fluri and Eden Cole, “From Revolution to Reform: Georgia’s Struggle with Democratic Institution Building and Security Sector Reform”, Vienna and Geneva, July 2005: 9.

opposition protests began to grow. Twenty days later on November 23 2003 Eduard Shevardnadze was ousted from power and forced to sign his resignation.²²

Tulip Revolution

As Martha Olcott writes about Kyrgyzstan “poverty, corruption, and the fear that the president would sabotage the succession struggle during the last months of his presidential term, made the opposition and masses take to the street in now familiar fashion”²³. Prior to the parliamentary elections many believed that Akaev decided to elect his ‘pocket parliament’ so that he could change the constitution and run for president again in planned October 2005 presidential elections. And the fact that Akaev and his allies tried to affect the parliamentary election in February 27 and March 13 “fed these rumors as well as squandering most of Akaev’s remaining political good-will.”²⁴

It is obvious that the trigger for both revolutions was the same. However, the contribution of main factors defining the revolutionary process as well as revolutionary outcome may differ in both countries. The factors that played a role in the development of ‘revolutionary trajectory’ that led to the change of countries’ leadership are the main focus of my research. I will start the evaluation and comparison of the two revolutions by looking at *Rose Revolution* and the first

²² Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union* (Burlington, USA, 2005), 184-185.

²³ Martha Brill Olcott, “Lessons of the Tulip Revolution”, *Carnegie Endowment*, Testimony before Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 7 April 2005. Accessed at www.carnegieendowment.org, 12 December 2006: 1.

²⁴ Martha Brill Olcott, “Lessons of the Tulip Revolution”: 3.

‘condition’ and assessing whether we can say that prior to the revolution the state was losing effectiveness in “its ability to command resources and obedience”²⁵.

1.3 Rose Revolution in Georgia

Ineffectiveness of the state

Ousted from power in November 2003 president Eduard Shevardnadze though popular during his first term (1992-1997) had seen a substantial decline not only in his popularity and ability to control the country in the second term (1998-2003), but also his touch with reality and political strength to face the problems of what then became a “failing state”²⁶. His government was seen as extremely unsuccessful as it did not manage to provide anything in regard to the public goods for population. Corruption was widespread²⁷ both on the top level and the everyday situations. One of the main problems of Georgia - its administrative-territorial structure inherited from the times of Soviet Union resulted in the war conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As Jonathan Wheatley writes “the wars in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and the ‘frozen conflicts’ that followed them undermined the authority of the Georgian state and, by opening up lucrative possibilities for smuggling, increased incentives for state capture”²⁸. The Pankisi Crisis of 2002 also showed the fragility of peace in Georgia. Thus Georgia prior to the elections in November 2003 was obviously facing a number of serious problems, problems that the ruling elite was unable to solve.

²⁵ Nikki R. Keddie, “Response to Goldstone”, in Nikkie R. Keddie (ed.): *Debating Revolutions* (New York: NYU Press, 1999), 71.

²⁶ This reference in fact was often applied to characterizing Kyrgyzstan as well.

Alienation of the elites

One of the main factors defining successful outcome of the Rose Revolution was the “skillful and well-motivated opposition elite with previous experience in the government”.²⁹ Starting in 2001, when the main party CUG (Citizen’s Union of Georgia) broke into ‘reformist’ and ‘conservative’ camps, the struggle between political elites for the distribution of resources became apparent. At that time Saakashvili resigned as a Justice Minister. Zurab Zhvania who later became one of the leading figures during the revolution resigned as Chairman of Parliament. These events marked the beginning of the irreversible split between Shevardnadze and his opponents.³⁰

Mobilization of Population

Charles Tilly in his work ‘From Mobilization to Revolution’³¹ claimed that the ability to mobilize and organize large groups of population was the prerequisite for the revolutionary process.³² On November 21, 2003 between fifty and hundred thousand people gathered in Freedom Square in the capital Tbilisi.³³ It is possible to distinguish among the main factors that have allowed for such fast and efficient mobilization of population in the Georgian case. The ability of Mikheil Saakashvili and his close allies to use their network of contacts around the

²⁷ “Nations in Transit 2006. Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia”, edited by Jeannette Goehring, *Freedom House*, Budapest, 2006: 258.

²⁸ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 221.

²⁹ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 191.

³⁰ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 172.

³¹ Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Addison-Wesley, 1978).

³² Jack A Goldstone, “Why We Could (and Should) Have Foreseen the Revolutions of 1989-1991 in the USSA and Eastern Europe”, in Nikkie R. Keddie (ed.): *Debating Revolutions* (New York: NYU Press, 1995), 51.

³³ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 184.

country played significant role. Saakashvili has also spent substantial amount of time prior to the parliamentary elections traveling to the regions and addressing people there.³⁴

A number of different factors played a role during the revolution in Georgia. Role of the student movement “Kmara” (“Enough!”) was, though not a primary one, but rather substantial. They were also responsible for making sure that people whom they brought on the streets did not engage in violence. Role of media in mobilizing popular groups can hardly be downplayed either. One of the main channels Rustavi-2 and pro-opposition radio during the days following November 2 elections actively supported Saakashvili-Burjanadze-Zhvania ‘triumvirate’ and showed the advertisement of “Kmara” movement. Rustavi-2 had also twice during those days played a movie ‘Bringing down a Dictator’ on the role of OTPOR during the overthrow of Milosevic. Most importantly Rustavi-2 and pro-opposition radio helped to organize protestors by announcing exactly where and at what time demonstrations would take place. People demonstrating on the streets and Freedom Square were mainly middle-aged members of intelligentsia and this gave the demonstrations certain air of respectability.³⁵

Role of the individuals

The role of three individuals on the revolutionary process was enormous. Mikheil Saakashvili, Zurab Zhvania and Nino Burjanadze formed a very strong and dynamic triumvirate under the leadership of which the results of the fraudulent elections were contested and subsequent revolution took place. During the elections they were competitors, however after the elections they united their forces to oppose the results and National Movement was therefore joined with

³⁴ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 184

³⁵ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 184 and 187.

United Democrats. All of the leaders combined different qualities, which together helped them to achieve the planned results. Young, charismatic and well-educated leader of the National Movement Mikheil Saakashvili contributed most to the successful outcome of the revolution. Without him the whole revolution might never have happened. From the very first days after the elections, when he understood that the results were manipulated, Saakashvili's goal became making Shevardnadze to leave office, and he never deviated from this goal bringing people on the streets, traveling to all the regions, and addressing Georgians all over the country.³⁶ The case of Georgia shows that actors play an important role in shaping the revolutionary process.

Influence of international actors

Georgia also serves as an example where an international community, Western NGOs and experience of other countries was decisive in making the Rose Revolution happen and in insuring its peaceful process. Communication and training of young Georgian activists in Serbia is one of the examples. Liberty Institute played a pivotal role in establishing the students' movement "Kmara", the predecessor of the Serbian OTPOR. Another NGO that also contributed a lot was International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), whose parallel vote counting helped to persuade population that elections results were falsified by the authorities. The influence of Open Society Institute Georgia Foundation (OSI) was substantial as well. OSI had not only funded Georgian activists and their trips to Serbia but also helped to establish Rustavi-2 channel and 24 Saati (24 Hours) newspaper in 2002. Another US-based organization whose impact was enormous was the National Democratic Institute, affiliated to the US Democratic Party.³⁷

³⁶ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 185.

³⁷ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 186 and 187.

I believe that in the case of Georgia all five of the above mentioned factors had very important role in the revolutionary process and in determining its outcome. I will now continue by looking in more detail at the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan to determine whether or not Kyrgyz revolution followed similar trajectory and whether the same factors were influential there.

1.4. Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan

Ineffectiveness of the state

In March 2005 popular revolt brought to an end President Askar Akaev's "increasingly authoritarian fourteen-year rule"³⁸. Following controversial 2000 elections, once popular and committed Akaev was losing popularity and his rule was taking a more authoritarian direction. And once called 'Central Asian Island of Democracy' Kyrgyzstan prior to the revolution was facing enormous economic and political problems. There are a number of evident signs that state was getting weaker starting in 1999-2000 and Akaev was losing grasp of the situation and ability to manage the state effectively.

According to the International Crises Group report Akaev above all "failed to stem corruption or develop the rule of law. Instead the political system was increasingly dominated by his family and a small group of supporters"³⁹. In light of his family deep involvement in the politics and control of main businesses in the country, Akaev was unable to provide the economic growth and public goods for the population. In fact, by the early 2000s Kyrgyzstan found itself among the poorest countries in the world and together with Tajikistan (the country that unlike Kyrgyzstan suffered civil war) was among least developed in the post-Soviet space.

³⁸ "Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution", *International Crisis Group*, Asia Report #97, 4 May 2005: 1.

³⁹ "Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution", *ICG*, 2005: 1.

The notorious example of the situation in Ak-Sui district in 2002 (south of the country), when six people were shot dead by the police leading to the months of protests, showed Akaev's inability to manage such problems. Akaev's position was always weaker in the South than in the North, but after this event his popularity declined even among his northern supporters. The border war conflicts in Batken also weakened the country, and Akaev was criticized for celebrating an Independence Day on August 1999 when the country's soldiers were killed in the southern borders. During the years of his rule Akaev also "failed to develop key state institutions"⁴⁰, judicial system credibility was undermined, and the criminalization of the situation in the country was growing. Signs of the tendencies towards democracy seen in early 1990th were vanishing by 2000th.

Alienation of the elites

In comparison to Georgia (and Ukraine), Akaev did not have any strong opposition prior to the parliamentary elections. Despite an NDK (People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan) party formed in 2004, opposition was still relatively fractious and weak. There was no clear open fight for power between his and any other well-defined elite group. His main opponent, Felix Kulov, was serving his term in the prison at the time of elections. However, along with losing trust and support of his population, Akaev was facing the lost of the backing of key regional and national elites. There were also increasing grievances that southern elites are not represented in the North dominated politics and distribution of resources. This has undoubtedly contributed to the escalation of events in spring 2005.

Mobilization of Population

In comparison to Georgia, in Kyrgyzstan the number of protestors was noticeably small - about five thousand demonstrators⁴¹ and a couple more thousands of bystanders were in front of 'White House' on March 24, 2005 when Askar Akaev was ousted from power. Unlike in Georgia, the protests in Kyrgyzstan did not start in the capital at all; the main stage for action through February and March were the southern cities Jalalabad and Osh and then later the demonstrators were partially transported to the capital Bishkek. Most of the protestors were rural people from the impoverished southern provinces. And unlike in Georgia, there were hardly any students or NGOs workers among the protestors neither in the provinces nor later in the capital.

Student movement 'KelKel' that some observers rush to compare with 'Kmara' in Georgia or 'Pora' in Ukraine in fact never had as its purpose the mobilization of the protestors and was not actively involved into the demonstrations. It was a small group of students whose activities were limited to the discussion of politics and organization of small forums. At the end some of these students took part in the protests but mainly in order to explain to leaders of the opposition their rights to hold demonstrations and instructions on how to avoid violence. The number of students among demonstrators was only about 50 to 100 maximum.

As Scott Radnitz correctly observed "while Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan all saw mass mobilizations that led to peaceful transfer of power, the engines of change in the former two – a large urban population, a strong civil society, and a national-level student movement – were

⁴⁰ "Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution", *ICG*, 2005: 1.

weak in Kyrgyzstan, as they are in other Central Asian republics”⁴². According to him, while Georgian mobilization was arranged through a top-down structure where NGOs’ and party’s networks were used to recruit the activists, in Kyrgyzstan local elites in provinces were gathering protestors locally, without any involvement of NGOs. The candidates who did not pass through the first round of elections or were not even allowed to register were sporadically using their relatives, employees, business partners and friends to mobilize protestors in their support in the provinces and villages. Allegedly many protestors were also paid a small amount of money to engage in the protests or were promised protection of the candidate whom they would support in case if he would win elections, police was easily bribed as well. As Borut Grgic writes “clan loyalties and opportunities to make that extra dollar on the side were too strong”⁴³ during the Kyrgyz protests. Therefore, the connections on the local village level and clan-kinship ties but not student movement and NGOs proved to be decisive network for mobilization of popular masses in Kyrgyzstan. The most important point is that in Kyrgyzstan the protests were ‘scattered events’, expressing local concerns and overall dissatisfaction, but they were “not part of any overall opposition strategy”⁴⁴ as such.

Media was hardly used by the opposition to mobilize population. Even though due to a relatively free circulation of newspapers across the country people could find out about the wave of protests and some of the journalists were critical of Akaev and his politics, the media was not the main revolutionary tool in hands of opposition in the case of Kyrgyzstan. There is no equivalent to Rustavi-2 channel, and one of the main Kyrgyz channels KTR (that could reach to both

⁴¹ Jean-Christophe Peuch, “Kyrgyzstan: Eyewitness to the Revolution”, 25 March 2005, accessed at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/03/00ccc086-6a7d-48f1-9b1b-1d3cb9105b73.html> on 1 April 2007.

⁴² Scott Radnitz, “What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?”, *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 17, Number 2, April 2006: 133.

Northern and Southern part of the country) is a state-owned broadcaster and on the day of revolution, it was showing nature documentaries⁴⁵ and many citizens learned about what was happening on the main square first from foreign media than from the local media sources.

Role of the individuals

What happened on March 24 came as a surprise not only to Askar Akaev and his close surrounding but also to the opposition leaders themselves. Many analysts agree that “unlike in Ukraine and Georgia, no one in the Kyrgyz opposition planned to have a revolution. Their goals were much more modest”⁴⁶. Unlike in Georgia where people could envision Mikheil Saakashvili as a successor to Shevardnadze, in Kyrgyzstan during the days prior to the revolution no strong candidate for the potential replacement of president could have been predicted. There were however, two most visible figures behind the antigovernmental March events. One of them was Kurmanbek Bakiev, head of the People’s Movement of Kyrgyzstan and a former prime minister.⁴⁷ Second one was Roza Otunbaeva, head of Kyrgyzstan’s Ata-Jurt (Fatherland) movement⁴⁸ and former foreign minister. Feliks Kulov, former internal minister, who was released from the prison the same day Akaev left the country, became one of the main leaders at the post revolutionary process, however, he played no substantial role during the revolution itself.

⁴³ Borut Grgic, “Revolution, Kyrgyz Style”, *IP-Transatlantic Edition*, Fall 2005: 49.

⁴⁴ Scott Radnitz, “What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?”: 135.

⁴⁵ “Freedom of the Press 2006: a global survey of media independence”: 148. I also refer to this role of KTR during revolution in my paper “Kyrgyz and Georgian Media after the Revolutions: review of the changes and current trends”, 8 January 2007.

⁴⁶ Jeremy Bransten, “Kyrgyzstan: Was ‘Revolution’ a Worthy Successor to Rose and Orange?”, 8 April 2005, accessed at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/04/ce2bcfdb-6ed6-4f2c-b63e-b66dde862248.html> on 1 April 2007.

⁴⁷ Gulnoza Saidazimova, “Kyrgyzstan: Will Opposition Leader Bakiev be Kyrgyzstan’s Next President?”, 24 March 2005, accessed at www.rferl.org on 9 March 2007.

⁴⁸ Liz Fuller, “Profile: Roza Otunbaeva”, 25 March 2005, accessed on www.rferl.org on 9 March 2007.

Even though Bakiev became the president of Kyrgyzstan following a March revolution, his role during the revolutionary process was not as important as Saakashvili's in Georgia. The main difference is that except for organizing protestors against fraudulent parliamentary elections where Bakiev did not win a seat, he did not have any plan to overthrow Akaev. Neither did he have any strong alternative ideology and vision for the country. Therefore, I believe that in Kyrgyzstan role of individuals and their ideologies played much smaller role than in Georgia. No single charismatic "romanticized" figure that the majority of population identify themselves with was present during the unfolding of Kyrgyz events. Rather there was a number of relatively weak leaders of the fragmented opposition groups who faced the fact of government overthrow happening without their control on March 24 and a whole country left without leadership in chaos, rather than deliberately leading masses to this very culmination.

Influence of international actors

Like in Georgia OSCE and US Embassy in Bishkek condemned the elections fraud and highlighted violations. Kyrgyzstan, like Georgia, had a large number of NGOs spread in a country and the activities of international organizations were predominantly unrestricted there. Many local NGOs enjoyed Western support and funding, in addition Freedom House funded the single independent print house in Bishkek. However, international organizations and donors played a minor (if any at all) role during the March protests. The change in Kyrgyzstan had its own dynamics and one of the main differences between Georgian and Kyrgyz cases is that there was no involvement from the side of international organizations. "Independent business interests, informal networks, and patronage ties"⁴⁹ – these are the key driving forces behind Tulip Revolution. Perhaps what has happened in Georgia and Ukraine might have inspired some people to speak out and demand their rights, but except for such possible inspiration there was no

transfer of experience between student organizations or opposition leaders like in the case between Georgia and Ukraine, or Serbia and Georgia. Kyrgyzstan therefore is an interesting case that in the dimension of the significance of outside influences stands apart from the case of Georgia.

Conclusion of Chapter One

Via the prism of five factors applied for evaluating revolutions, this chapter has examined recent ‘color’ revolutions in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. My main goal was to see whether the factors that influenced these revolutions were the same in both countries. In Kyrgyzstan as well as in Georgia we can see that the state was increasingly weak prior to the revolutions and elites were alienated. Population was also quickly mobilized in both countries, however completely different networks and tools were used for this purpose in two cases. And as in regard to the influence of international actors and strength of individual opposition leaders and their ideology, *Rose* and *Tulip Revolutions* differ substantially. Therefore, though both situations unfolded in the same post-Soviet space and the trigger of the revolutions was the same – fraudulent parliamentary elections, it is still insufficient to talk about the ‘domino effect’ in these countries. Kyrgyz situation stands apart and many argue that what has happened there was not a revolution but just a process of ‘state collapse’⁵⁰. These differences may be crucial later in explaining the revolutionary outcome and the reasons for a particular state of media in both countries. However, despite these differences in the revolutionary processes, the expectations were high of both revolutions. After having specified the main criteria for analyzing and comparing changes in the media systems in the next chapter, I will look in the third chapter of the thesis at whether or not the expectations were met and whether we can trace any positive dynamics in the area of media.

⁴⁹ Scott Radnitz, “What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?”: 132.

⁵⁰ “Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution”, *ICG*: 9.

Chapter 2: Elaboration of theoretical framework and criteria according to which media before and after the revolutions can be compared⁵¹

The main goal of this chapter is to elaborate a systematic analytical framework that would allow evaluation of the democratic performance of media and the level of changes in the media freedom after the revolution. In the first part of this chapter I will review and discuss various criteria used by a number of political and communication scientists for comparing media systems both across time and between countries. The framework by Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini in “Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics”⁵² will serve as the main background for the discussion that I will extend by using a number of works by other authors. I will also present my own arguments on applicability of their criteria to the case of countries that have recently experienced revolutionary transitions of power in a post-communist region. Out of the elaborated criteria discussed in this part I will specify those which I recommend to use for analysis of the changes and tendencies in the media system after change of the government or regime type occurred in a given country. In this case ‘the media’ can be “conceptualized as an institutional problem area and the factors pro and against democratic change can be highlighted”⁵³.

The variations of approaches can be found not only in the academic literature and debates. International organization and media watchdogs also monitor the situation and changes related to media offering their conclusions as well as recommendations. But what methodology do they

⁵¹ This chapter 2 is based on the final paper and research conducted for “Global Media, Power and Resistance” class taught by Catherine Coyer.

⁵² Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁵³ Miklos Sukosd, “Media democratization, hegemony and social movements: views from East/Central Europe and Eurasia”, second draft presented at the SSRC workshop in Warsaw, 14 April 2007: 4.

use? Which exactly aspects of the media performance and media freedom do they consider to be important in order to evaluate the democratic performance of a given government? In the second part of the paper I will look to answer these questions by briefly reviewing the methodological framework used by *Freedom House* (Washington-headquartered non-for-profit organization) and *Reporters without Borders* (Paris-based NGO advocating freedom of the press).

As the special focus of the research is to specify criteria that would allow us to assess revolutionary outcomes in the area of media and to see whether or not ‘color’ revolutions brought any positive changes, I will conclude by outlining criteria that I find most useful and applicable for comparing post-revolutionary media in the cases of Georgia and Kyrgyzstan and that allow us to see whether the democratization of media system is taking place in both countries.

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks applied for comparing media systems

The importance of the systematic frameworks for comparison

A review of the literature on media systems in different countries shows that many authors even within one book focus on different aspects of media development emphasizing some of them while leaving aside the others. This may perfectly be justified by the variations in countries, their historical and political peculiarities. However, some of the scholars when presenting media in a particular region still continue looking at different areas of media performance inside each country of this region rather than following an established model for comparison. This makes the process of identifying similar trends and causal factors somewhat elusive. One of the examples

of such works is “Media and Politics in Latin America: the Struggle for Democracy”⁵⁴ by Elizabeth Fox. While it offers an enriching historical overview of the media development tendencies in each of the Latin American countries attempting to show major trends for the whole region, it lacks the systematic framework for comparison that could also allow us to see similarities and differences in between particular countries.

Often, for a different region we need a completely new or adjusted framework to be developed, rather than transferring model that works in one part of the world to another. As Hallin and Mancini rightly observed “in countries with less developed traditions of media research, another pattern often emerges: a tendency to borrow the literature of other countries – usually the Anglo-American or the French literature – and to treat that borrowed literature as though it could be applied unproblematically anywhere”⁵⁵. And according to Duncan McCargo “many arguments advanced about media and politics have limited value for developing countries, especially perhaps Asian ones”.⁵⁶

Thus I believe one of the challenges of the comparative scientist is not only to identify and develop the working theoretical frameworks for analysis but to be able to justify its application to the region of the world he or she focuses on. Some criteria of comparison useful for analysis of the media in Western democracies may lose their validity when we look at less developed countries within a region or country specific aspects of development. Therefore, in establishing theoretical framework for comparing post-revolutionary media, I will go beyond frameworks

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Fox, *Media and Politics in Latin America: the Struggle for Democracy* (Bristol, London, 1988).

⁵⁵ Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

⁵⁶ Duncan McCargo, *Media and Politics in Pacific Asia* (London, 2003) 1.

already established for the democratic regimes and will specify those criteria which are especially important during the transitional phases in order to be able to trace the changes in the democratic performance of media and increase or decrease of the media freedom.

Review of the existing approaches and development of the theoretical framework

One of the recent comprehensive works on the theoretical framework for comparison of the media systems is presented by Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini in “Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics”. In this book they study media institutions in eighteen West European and North American democracies building on the previous works such as by Blumer and Gurevitch. They apply their framework exclusively for the consolidated democracies. In the next few paragraphs I will look at the framework they used for the comparative analysis in their target countries and will argue which of them could be adopted for the analysis of media in such countries as Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, post-Soviet developing republics that have recently experienced a wave of revolutions. Hallin and Mancini offer four main criteria, according to which media systems in consolidated democracies are analyzed and compared: 1) media market development; 2) political parallelism; 3) journalistic professionalism; and 4) the level of the state intervention in the media system.⁵⁷ I will argue that out of these four dimensions the degree of state intervention and level of journalistic professionalism can be used for the post-revolutionary media analysis. The first two criteria (media market development and political parallelism) I believe can be omitted as they are either not important for the purpose of tracing main changes in the area of media in transition countries or are hard to objectively measure within short period of time after the revolutions.

Media Market Development

In the first criteria applied by Hallin and Mancini the special emphasis is put upon *the strength or weakness of the mass circulation press development*. Within this criteria the authors suggest to look at the quantity of the press per number of adults, at the specific aims, nature and target audience of these newspapers, and their role in the political and social communication. Other aspects they included into comparison are whether or not gender differences in the readership of newspapers exist, what is the quality of the papers (whether it is just ‘yellow press’ or ‘elite readership’), whether newspaper markets have a balanced presence of local, regional, and national newspapers; and whether language factors divide media market into the separate segments.⁵⁸

I absolutely agree with the authors that “the presence or absence of a mass circulation press has deep implications for the development of the media as political institutions”⁵⁹ and that this criteria shows one of the main differences among media systems. However, I believe that this criteria, though very relevant for consolidated democracies, cannot be applied for comparing changes in the media system within short period of time after revolutions. More time is obviously needed for changes in the number of newspapers, their quality and readership to occur. Also the most important reason for me to omit Hallin and Mancini’s first criteria is that it is not the prior change that we would expect to take place after the regime change in the economically underdeveloped countries. In analyzing Georgian and Kyrgyz media after recent revolutions, our effort, I believe should be directed at such aspects as changes in the legislation, journalistic

⁵⁷ Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems*, 21.

⁵⁸ Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems*, 22-26.

⁵⁹ Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems*, 24.

culture, willingness of the new authorities to ease the control of the media, and intimidation and harassment of journalists as ways of ‘censorships’ in comparison to previous regime.

Political Parallelism

The second criteria highlighted by Hallin and Mancini is ‘*political parallelism*’. The main argument is that we can hardly state that journalism can be absolutely neutral anywhere in the world. And in order to assess the level of ‘political parallelism’ and its strength in a particular country authors recommend to look at a number of indicators⁶⁰:

Table 2: Indicators of the strength of the presence of ‘political parallelism’

1.	Media content; the extent to which media reflects their political orientation.
2.	Organizational connections between media and political parties
3.	Tendency of media personnel to be active in political life.
4.	Tendency for the careers of media personnel to be shaped by pol. affiliations.
5.	Partisanship of media audiences
6.	Journalistic role, orientations and practices.

Source: Adopted from: Daniel C. Hallin, Paolo Mancini, “Comparing Media Systems”: 28.

I believe it is necessary to see how political loyalties changed after the revolutionary change in the country’s leadership. However, changes in some of these indicators are impossible to trace over the limited period of time. And rather than applying this criteria with all six indicators for the analysis of Georgian and Kyrgyz media, I think it would be useful to adopt some of these indicators, such as ‘journalistic role, orientation and practices’ for reviewing the changes of journalistic culture after revolutions overall. Another very important criteria that, in fact, could be considered as one of the aspects of the journalistic culture is the level of journalistic professionalism. This is the next, third criteria that Hallin and Mancini discuss.

Journalistic Professionalism

In comparison to many classical occupations, training and education are not the only defining factors of the journalistic professionalism. Other dimensions are important here as well, such as level of autonomy, defined professional norms and orientation toward public service.⁶¹ Their definition of journalistic professionalism goes in line with that of several other experts in the area. According to Weaver, journalistic roles include accurate and quick reporting, providing of the possibility for the public to voice out their concerns and serving as the watchdog of the government.⁶² Therefore, I believe any change in the role of journalists as a government's 'watchdog' reflects the changes in the media independence.

Laura Ruusunoksa writes that the basic dimensions of professionalism include "autonomy of the journalists from the *market* and *administration* and the *position of the public*"⁶³. Not only pressure from the side of authorities influences their performance but also the economic pressure, the necessity to receive profit and survive financial difficulties. The 'autonomy' of journalists is been continuously challenged by the logic of the market.⁶⁴ Also as Miklos Sukosd writes "the limited resources of publishers (low salaries and lack of time for working on a story)"⁶⁵ contribute to the weakness of the investigative journalism. I believe that this criteria introduced by Hallin and Mancini and widely used by other authors as well can be applied for the analysis

⁶⁰ Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems*, 27-28.

⁶¹ Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems*, 36-38.

⁶² Weaver, 1998 in Laura Ruusunoksa, "Public Journalism and Professional Culture. Local, Regional and National Public Spheres as Contexts of Professionalism", *Javnost: the Public*, Slovenia, 2006: 2.

⁶³ Laura Ruusunoksa, "Public Journalism and Professional Culture. Local, Regional and National Public Spheres as Contexts of Professionalism", *Javnost: the Public*, Slovenia, 2006: 4.

⁶⁴ Laura Ruusunoksa, "Public Journalism and Professional Culture": 12-13.

⁶⁵ Miklos Sukosd, "Media democratization, hegemony and social movements: views from East/Central Europe and Eurasia", second draft presented at the SSRC workshop in Warsaw, 14 April 2007: 8.

of the post-revolutionary media trends. And as part of this criteria it is important to look at what changes in the level of journalistic autonomy the revolutions have brought.

Thus, in order to compare journalistic professionalism in the post-revolutionary Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, the main focus will be on the ‘*autonomy*’ of journalists from all the forces identified above and whether or not revolutions brought any changes for it in the short run. At a minimum the expectations are that revolutions would bring more independence from the side of authorities. Financial conditions in both Georgia and Kyrgyzstan may however contribute significantly to the journalists’ dependence as weak economies may continue to “force media to see support from political or other actors with narrow interests and away from independence”⁶⁶ thus also limiting the possibilities for thorough investigative journalism and growth of professional standards.

I will also borrow the second aspect from the on-going debate and see whether and how journalists themselves perceive the *changes in their professional norms and working environment*. I also think it is useful to see what was done in those countries to facilitate the networking and training for journalists, and will identify whether new journalistic councils and unions were established after the revolutions. Other examples that could be done in that direction are also outlined by Beata Rozumilowicz and include not only training schemes for journalists, but also the elaboration of the code of ethics as well as seminars that could instruct politicians on the work with media and tolerance of viewpoints⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ Monroe E. Price, Beata Rozumilowicz, and Stefaan G. Vernulst, *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State* (Routledge, London and New York, 2002), 19.

⁶⁷ Beata Rozumilowicz, “Democratic Change: a Theoretical Perspective”, in Monroe Price and others, *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State* (Routledge, London and New York, 2002), 17.

Role of the State

The last by Hallin and Mancini, and as I believe, the most important criteria for comparing media systems is *the role of the state*. In these criteria they suggest to look at the public state broadcasting and other ways of state ownership of media as well as legal aspects.⁶⁸ Even though both aspects are closely interconnected, I think they should be viewed as two separate criteria especially in this research. I would therefore split it and look in more detail into: 1) changes in the media legislation and their implementation; and 2) government control of state service media.

Media legislation and its implementation

Media legislation is the fundamental basis for securing democratic performance of media and adequate legal structure is imperative in order to establish effective guarantees of the media freedom⁶⁹. Legislation reform is expected to be the first one to come after the change of regime has taken place. As Beata Rozumilowicz writes “the enactment of various media legislation (such as statutes on access to information, defamation, ownership, content and so on) and the establishment of a legislative framework for all media sectors” often mark the period of what she calls ‘ruptured transitions’ that “occur through revolutionary overthrow of the previous regime”⁷⁰. Both Kyrgyzstan and Georgia are now undergoing the process of ‘ruptured transitions’ and the fact whether or not new governments were willing to introduce more liberal media legislation would say a lot about their democratic commitment and illustrate the major changes since the collapse of old authoritarian rule. I think that media legislation should be the very first aspect of analysis when we look at the changes in the post-revolutionary media.

⁶⁸ Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems*, 40-41.

⁶⁹ Beata Rozumilowicz, “Democratic Change: a Theoretical Perspective”: 14.

At the same time, as Marina Kokashvili observes “in Georgia, as in other former socialist countries, there has been the letter of the law and there has been reality”⁷¹. Therefore, within this criteria it is also important to look what was done towards the actual implementation of the new laws and whether there factors that hinder the process. Institutional structure that administers these laws (courts, culture of censorship etc) is imperative as well.⁷²

Government control of state service media

Government control of state service media is also one of the most important dimensions to look at after the revolutionary or any other transition of power occurred in a country. As Sandra Hrvatin and Brankica Petkovic note “by answering the question of who owns media we also answer the question of who holds the reins of power”⁷³. Within this criteria we shall look at whether new government maintains ownership of broadcasting stations and main outlets, and whether the authorities exercise any other type of pressure. We shall also see whether there is a plurality of ownership or whether it is rather concentrated in the hands of few⁷⁴.

Based on the reviewed literature with the focus on the latest work by Hallin and Mancini on “Comparing Media Systems”, I identified the following three criteria that I consider to be of utmost importance for the analysis and identification of the changes in the post-revolutionary media: 1) media legislation and its implementation, 2) state control of media; 3) journalistic

⁷⁰ Beata Rozumilowicz, “Democratic Change: a Theoretical Perspective”: 19.

⁷¹ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”. Chapter 10 in Philipp H. Fluri and Eden Cole, *From Revolution to Reform: Georgia’s Struggle with Democratic Institution Building and Security Sector Reform*. Vienna and Geneva, July 2005: 1

⁷² Beata Rozumilowicz, “Democratic Change: a Theoretical Perspective”: 19.

⁷³ Brankica Petkovic, *Media Ownership and its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism* (Peace Institute, SEENPM, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2004), 10.

⁷⁴ Brankica Petkovic, *Media Ownership and its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism*, 10.

culture/professionalism. However, I believe for a more complete analysis several more criteria should be added.

One more recent work on which we can build upon in identifying the main criteria for the comparing media in the post-revolutionary context was presented by Miklos Sukosd at the workshop devoted to the issues of ‘Justice, Hegemony and Social Movements: Views from East/Central Europe and Eurasia’. The developed detailed factors classified in this work are applied for the analysis of media trends in the post-communist countries.⁷⁵ As Sukosd writes “by identifying these key factors, one may define comparative dimensions and derive measurable indicators of the democratic performance of the media”⁷⁶. Sukosd in this work presented twelve main factors related to the democratization of the media institutions as such⁷⁷:

Table 3: Main problems related to the democratization of the media institutions

1	Censorship by killing: violence against journalists
2	Structural censorship: limitations on human rights
3	Government control of state/public service media
4	Media laws and their implementation
5	Independent media structures
6	Freedom of information regulation and its implementation
7	Access to media by minorities and ethnic minority media
8	Nationalist hegemony
9	Journalism cultures
10	Media ownership
11	Commercialization of media
12	Internet control

Source: Adopted from Miklos Sukosd, “Media democratization, hegemony and social movements: views from East/Central Europe and Eurasia”, second draft presented at the SSRC workshop in Warsaw. April 14, 2007: 5-10.

⁷⁵ I would like to acknowledge that this work by Pr. Sukosd served as a main initial stimulus for further development of my interest in this area and as a background for the elaboration of the framework for comparing media in the countries after revolutions based on his findings.

⁷⁶ Miklos Sukosd, “Media democratization, hegemony and social movements: views from East/Central Europe and Eurasia”, second draft presented at the SSRC workshop in Warsaw. 14 April 2007: 5.

⁷⁷ Miklos Sukosd, “Media democratization, hegemony and social movements: views from East/Central Europe and Eurasia”, second draft presented at the SSRC workshop in Warsaw, 14 April 2007: 5-10.

Out of the twelve criteria identified by Sukosd and that are not sufficiently elaborated in other literature that I have encountered I will apply for my comparative research three more aspects: 1) access to information; 2) violence against journalists; 3) scope of the independent media. In addition to the three factors identified in the preceding section, these aspects can effectively demonstrate the tendencies that the new leadership takes and how it changed in comparison to the ousted authoritarian regimes that used intimidation of journalists and barriers towards the access of information as the means of ‘censorship’ and control.

Access to Information

Accessibility of information criteria is closely connected with legislation, but what is also important is the new government’s willingness to provide access to information on timely basis. As James Goldstone from the Open Society Justice Initiative rightly stated "the ability of citizens to request and receive information on the workings of their government is one of the hallmarks of an open society".⁷⁸ Bozoki and other authors rightly say that information in the contemporary societies became an “increasingly valuable commodity and a fundamental instrument of power”⁷⁹ and access to it may significantly influence the process of democratization. Manipulation of information and barriers to its access set by authorities for media representatives and journalists not only reflect undemocratic tendencies inside a country but also present serious impediments to its democratization. Therefore, it is important to examine the changes in the area of the access to government-held information by journalists if we are to fully understand the tendencies in post-revolutionary media democratization.

⁷⁸ Open Society Justice Initiative, press release/e-mail on “New study on access to information finds young democracies outperform established ones” kindly forwarded to me by Miklos Sukosd on 11 May 2007.

This criteria will be evaluated based on the secondary sources related to this issue available via articles and Internet publications. Most importantly while interviewing journalists in both countries this will be one of the main questions to be included into my survey. Under this criteria I am to examine what changes after the revolution journalists experience in their everyday professional life and communication with new authorities.

Violence against Journalists

Violence against journalists, attacks on their life and media outlets property, harassment of journalists are the cruel forms of pressure often applied to silence and threaten journalists and media employees in the non-democratic countries. Therefore, by looking at the change over the frequency and nature of such type of pressure, we can report on the tendencies taking place not only in the media freedom and its democratization but also in the human right in general.

Regarding this criteria, it is useful to look at how international organizations and media watchdogs address and measure this factor. In most of the Freedom House (FH) reports a number of questions are directed at whether or not journalists are targets of victimization. In “Nations in Transit” they ask: “are journalists, especially investigative reporters, protected from victimization by powerful state or non-state actors”⁸⁰? And in “Freedom in the World Survey” they ask “are journalists threatened, arrested, imprisoned, beaten, or killed by government or nongovernmental actors for their legitimate journalistic activities, and if such occur, are they

⁷⁹ Andras Bozoki and others, coordinated by Philippe C. Schmitter, and Alexander H. Trechsel, *The Future of Democracy in Europe: trends, analyses and reforms* (Council of Europe Publishing, Belgium, 2004), 108-109.

⁸⁰ “Nations in Transit 2006”, *Freedom House*: 14.

investigated and prosecuted fairly and expeditiously?”⁸¹. I will therefore, build on these questions in my fifth criteria for assessing situation that took place two-three years prior to revolution in comparison with three years after it: and will describe the finding in *violence against journalists, limitations on human rights* section. Another main source where reliable information on this issue can be found is the resources by *Reporters without Borders*, whose main mission is to trace violations against journalists all over the world.

Scope of Independent Media

Such criteria as independence of media (though it is also closely connected with the criteria on government control of state media) is also very important in terms of identifying freedom and independence of journalists⁸². The fact whether and to what extent independent media exists can illustrate the substantial differences over time. The level of the new governments’ tolerance towards criticism expressed through pressure on media also plays a role in defining changes within this criteria. Under this criteria I will discuss whether the control of and pressure towards private stations and newspapers increased or decreased after the revolution, and what is the connection between new economic and cultural elites controlling media with the new leadership of the country.

Based on the various existing criteria developed in the works of Sukosd, Hallin and Mancini, Price, Rozumilowicz and other media scholars and experts I have elaborated six factors that I consider to be of the utmost importance in the short run after the revolutions and that can show us as complete as possible picture of the situation that the change of the ruling elite brought in

⁸¹ “Freedom of the World Survey”, Freedom House, Methodology, 2006 Edition, accessed at www.freedomhouse.org on 29 November 2006: 13.

the area of media democratization. These issues reflect the concept of media freedom and are its essential elements.

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5.	Accessibility of information, including freedom of information regulation and its implementation
6.	Violence against journalists, limitations on human rights

There are a number of other works in the current discourse on evaluation of media performance and changes within media system that should be mentioned. For example, Joseph Man Chan and Jack Linchuan Qiu, analyzing media liberalization under authoritarianism, look at the following factors in China: commercialization, internationalization and technologization of media.⁸³ Karol Jakubowics states that for the evolution of the media system the following processes must take place “demonopolization of the media, autonomization, decentralization, and professionalization of journalists”⁸⁴.

Daniel C. Hallin and Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, in their article “Political Clientelism and the Media: Southern Europe and Latin America in Comparative Perspective”, compare media

⁸² Kate Coyer, e-mail notes on 16 April 2007.

⁸³ Joseph Man Chan, and Jack Linchuan Qiu, *China: Media Liberalization under Authoritarianism*, in Monroe Price and others, *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State* (Routledge, London and New York, 2002), 27-46.

systems in two regions: Southern Europe (4 countries case studies) and Latin America (three countries). Since both regions have historical connection and share similarities in political development, the authors aim to examine the similarities of both regions by using the theoretical concept of political clientilism.⁸⁵ They claim that mass media in Latin American and South European countries share common characteristics such as: low level of newspaper circulation, a tradition of advocacy reporting, instrumentalization of privately owned media, politicization of public broadcasting and broadcast regulation, and limited development of journalism as an autonomous profession.⁸⁶

Thus these works also give us a good example of the possible criteria to look at when we compare changes across media systems, and a number of them go in line with those that I have identified above for the concrete cases of the analysis of the media democratization after the revolutionary change of the government over time.

2.2. International organizations and media watchdogs approaches and scores

*Freedom House*⁸⁷ and *Reporters Without Borders*⁸⁸ are two non-for-profit organizations that are the most well-known in the area of monitoring violations in civil liberties including media and freedom of speech. In this section I shall briefly describe the main aspects targeted by FH and RWB in their surveys, emphasize the important aspects of their methodology and point out at

⁸⁴ Karol Jakubowics, "Media in Transition: The Case of Poland", in Monroe Price and others, *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State* (Routledge, London and New York, 2002), 203.

⁸⁵ In more detail I have discussed this work by Daniel C. Hallin, Stylianos Papathanassopoulos in my Position Paper #7 for the class *Global Media, Power and Resistance*.

⁸⁶ Daniel C. Hallin, Stylianos Papathanassopoulos. "Political Clientelism and the Media: Southern Europe and Latin America in Comparative Perspective".

⁸⁷ Website of the Freedom House: www.freedomhouse.org

⁸⁸ Website of the Reporters Without Borders: http://www.rsfs.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=280

certain adjustment that I have made in reflecting and tabulating their scores that I apply in the next chapter analysis.

Freedom House publications

Freedom House's regular annual publications where the assessment and analysis of media can be found include: "Countries at Crossroads", "Nations in Transit", "Freedom in the World Survey", and "Freedom of the Press". In my research I will mostly look at data provided overtime by the Independent Media section of the "Nations in Transit" report on Georgia and Kyrgyzstan as well as by the "Freedom of the Press" publication.

The section on *Independent Media* of the Freedom House's publication 'Nations in Transit' addresses, though to the different extent, "the current state of press freedom, including libel laws, harassment of journalist, editorial independence, the emergence of a financially viable private press, and Internet access for private citizens"⁸⁹. The score under the certain year evaluates media independence of the year preceding it, for example the score put under year 2005 in fact reflects the situation of the year 2004 in the FH tables. However, in my analysis and tables of the scores overtime, in order to avoid confusion and to be consistent with other indexes, the scores under each year represent the situation in media of exactly that particular year (but not of the previous one). The increase in the score reflects the deterioration of the situation as for media independence.

⁸⁹ "Nations in Transit 2006. Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia", edited by Jeannette Goehring, *Freedom House*, Budapest, 2006: 10.

The “Freedom of the Press” report, which is issued annually on the World Press Freedom day, seeks to provide “a picture of the entire ‘enabling environment’ in which the media in each country operate”⁹⁰. The three main categories that are measured here include legal environment, political environment, and economic environment for the media.⁹¹ In this survey countries are assigned a score ranging from 0 (best) to 100 (worst). The countries are classified as ‘Free’ (F), ‘Partly Free’ (PF), and ‘Not Free’ (NF) based on “the degree to which each country permits the free flow of news and information”⁹².

While the Freedom House publications offer a comprehensive review of the situation in a number of countries, their methodology throughout their publications is not consistent and each of them has a different set of the questions in the checklist. This lack of internal logical connection between the components is perhaps one of the many points of criticism raised about FH methodology as such⁹³. While in the section of independent media in the “Nations in Transit” the questions on the checklist focus around the following issues: ownership, legal aspects and law implementation, plurality of view points, violence against journalists, and freedom to form associations;⁹⁴ in the “Freedom in the World Survey” such issues as censorship, prohibitions and laws, funding, and assessment of violence against journalists tend to be emphasized.⁹⁵ As we see, some of the questions thought publications are closely correlated, while others differ across two

⁹⁰ “Freedom of the Press 2006: a global survey of media independence”, edited by Karin Deutsch Karlekar, *Freedom House*, New York, 2006: xxi.

⁹¹ “Freedom of the Press 2006: a global survey of media independence”: xxi.

⁹² “Freedom of the Press 2006: a global survey of media independence”: xix.

⁹³ The other points of detailed criticism of Freedom House methodology were offered by Jozsef Matyasi and Yuriy Onyshkiv in their presentation “Data Aggregation and Measuring Democracy” on the *Comparative Political Research* class, January 2007.

⁹⁴ “Nations in Transit 2006”, *Freedom House*: 14.

⁹⁵ “Freedom of the World Survey”, Freedom House, Methodology, 2006 Edition, accessed at www.freedomhouse.org on 29 November 2006: 13.

publications reflections on the media freedom; which could be though due to their somewhat different objectives.

Another point of concern when working with FH data and scores over a number of years was highlighted by Larry Diamond in his paper “Is the Third Wave of Democratization over?”.⁹⁶ He warns that with time the criteria for FH’s scores become stricter (especially in 1990th) thus complicating the process of interpreting the changes in scores over time.⁹⁷ Despite the existing criticism about FH methodology and some concerns over the occasional inaccuracy of their data, it still remains one of the most useful sources of tracing the *overall* democratic development inside a country over a number of years.

Reporters Without Borders⁹⁸ survey

The main mission of the *Reporters Without Borders* (RWB) organization is to monitor violations against journalists and to protect journalists and media employees. The annual World Press Index compiled by the RWB during the last four years measures the state of press freedom in the countries around the globe. The questionnaire used by RWB for composing Index for the year 2006 include 50 questions directed at finding out different ways of pressure and intimidation against journalists.⁹⁹ In year 2006 RWB analyzed press freedom conditions in 168 countries, in 2005 – in 167 countries of the world.

⁹⁶ Larry Diamond, “Is the third wave of democratization over? An empirical assessment”, working paper #236, University of Notre Dame, March 1997.

⁹⁷ Larry Diamond, “Is the third wave of democratization over? An empirical assessment”: 7 and 13.

⁹⁸ Name of this organization in French: *Reporters Sans Frontiers*

⁹⁹ RWB, Questionnaire for Compiling World Press Index, accessed at http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=19390, 7 April 2007.

According to the RWB website, this index “reflects the degree of freedom journalists and news organizations enjoy in each country, and the efforts made by the state to respect and ensure respect for this freedom”¹⁰⁰. Each of the fifty questions is assigned a rank and a score that in sum reflect the overall state of press freedom in a country. A rank of a country can be changed from year to year even if its score remains the same, and vice-versa.¹⁰¹ The calculation of the year starts and ends with September. For example for the year 2006, the ratings and scores are based only on events between September 2005 and September 2006. Comparing the results of their World Press Index overtime (before and after a revolution) can also help to uncover the tendencies taking place in the area of media and human rights abuses after the new leadership stepped in.

In the analysis presented in the third chapter I will use some of the FH as well as RWB data when assessing media freedom by country. However, the data provided by the media watchdogs should not be the only source that we would rely on in our conclusions. In the current analysis I use a number of other secondary sources based on a more detailed research and examination, I also contrast and compare the results of my research with the local journalists’ and media experts’ opinions in order to have maximally objective analysis of post-revolutionary media trends. The tables reflecting the changes in the scores and media freedom developments before and after the revolutions in Kyrgyzstan and Georgia by both FH and RWB will be presented in the last part of the third chapter in order to see whether their evaluation over time supports the final results of the current comparative research.

¹⁰⁰ Reporters without Borders, accessed at http://www.rsf.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=639, 9 May 2007

¹⁰¹ Reporters without Borders, accessed at http://www.rsf.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=639, 9 May 2007

2.3. Outline of the methodology for the current research

Theoretical Framework

Recent ‘color’ revolutions present a new challenge on how to assess their outcome and main changes in the country during the post-revolutionary period. One of the areas where changes could be expected is that of media freedom. The main goal of the second chapter was to elaborate and main criteria according to which we compare and contrast changes in both countries overtime in order to trace main tendencies. Based on the existing literature and checklist of questions used by two international media watchdogs I identified six main criteria that should allow us to assess revolutionary outcomes in the area of media democratization and to see what ‘color’ revolutions actually brought. The following criteria I find the most useful, applicable and realistic for comparing post revolutionary media in the cases of Georgia and Kyrgyzstan and that could also be extended to other post-revolutionary media systems:

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As Monroe Price et al correctly put it “a comparative framework assists in developing a reasonable assessment of the conditions that represent reform and how these reform processes promote or hinder the development and stabilization of democratic practices”¹⁰². Different

¹⁰² Monroe Price and others, *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State*, 1.

countries may thrive to implement different aspects of media reform. For example while one country may aim at implementing new liberal media legislation, another one may give priority to establishing journalistic councils to promote journalistic standards, level of professionalism and network among them. However, by looking at a broader set of issues taking a place in a particular country and comparing it with those in a second country and inside each of them over time (before and after a revolution) we can talk about the main tendencies taking place in both of them. It is also a task of any comparatives to clearly define what each criteria actually means and how we can measure it. This was one of the subgoals of this chapter. Along with defining the main criteria for comparing media systems in the post-revolutionary countries in the short run, I have elaborated what each criteria that I will use implies and what kind of information we need in order to measure it. I will use these criteria in the third chapter, in order to evaluate the post-revolutionary changes in the area of media in both Georgia and Kyrgyzstan.

Sources for the empirical data and analysis

The thoroughly designed theoretical framework is the main base of each research; it is a skeleton that makes a body hold. Reliable and objective empirical data is what brings life to it. In this part I shall present what sources have served as a base of the empirical information for the present analysis and explain which approached were used for its obtaining and verification. I will also acknowledge a number of unpublished sources and surveys applied here, and will present a justification of the interviews' objects selection.

As I have argued in the introduction, there is no single comprehensive research done in the area of post-revolutionary media in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. Especially there is a lack of

systematized information related to Kyrgyzstan. Existing publications deal only with separate aspects, but there is no comprehensive and thorough assessment conducted so far. As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, Freedom House (FH) and Reporters Without Borders (RWB) are the most standing out and reliable in this regard sources. However, Freedom House's reports, though giving good overview of the situation in the country on the annual basis, in some cases do not provide sufficient enough details on why they consider that media independence either decreased or increased in a particular country. While they do provide a very useful descriptive overview of the situation in general, they do not allow to trace changes in all multiple areas of media democratization systematically, which though is not due to any lack of expertise of the FH authors (which undoubtedly is incredibly high), but rather to the fact that this might not be put as their main objective and that such specific surveys are within the smaller size limits of their publications. Therefore, much deeper and systematized research shall be done if we set a goal to see what exactly changes are taking place in the area of media after the revolutions.

In this part, I would also very much like to express deep gratitude to the Freedom House staff for their support in conducting this research. I am especially grateful to the Editor of the FH's 'Nations in Transit' publication Jeannette Goehring for her help in collecting information and historical data for this research, and for her kind permission to access their internal sources in the FH library as well as to use FH's still draft unpublished 2007 reports on Georgia and Kyrgyzstan for the purpose of this thesis.

In this research I also rely on a number of publications by other international organizations and media watchdogs (such as OSCE, International Crisis Group, IREX, etc). In addition to the

published sources, in the process of this research I got familiar with internal assessments conducted by the local actors. For example, I am very grateful to the “Internews-Kyrgyzstan” director in Bishkek for sharing with me their internal survey on media situation in Kyrgyzstan prior 2002. Radio programs on the related subjects were also reviewed as sources for this analysis (for example a recent April 2007 program on *Financing Media in Caucasus*, a full copy of it was kindly provided by RFERL-Georgian Service Director). A large number of internet articles, publications, as well as both local and international news reports were also studied and compared with the reports and statements by the international organizations and other surveys.

Most importantly, in order to make up for the lack of sources on the most recent changes and to verify their sometimes low reliability, I have conducted a number of in-depth interviews. I have approached journalists and media experts, working in the field of media in both Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, for additional information and their vision on the post-revolutionary media situation and trends. The questions during the interviews followed the established theoretical framework in order to uncover the detailed information necessary for evaluation of each individual criteria. The questions also focused on how journalists perceive the changes in their work and media overall after the revolution, what are the new challenges they face, and what are the main reasons according to them for the current state of media situation few years after the revolutions.¹⁰³

All together fifteen interviews were conducted, 7-8 for each country. The balanced number of interviews per country was observed in order to have equal amount of information for both case studies. Reliability, trustworthiness, and local expertise were the three main criteria for selecting the objects of interviews. In the case of Kyrgyzstan four interviewees and in the case of Georgia

two – were the journalists and national services directors of the *Radio For Europe/ Radio Liberty* (RFERL) based in Prague. All of these journalists are originally from Georgia and Kyrgyzstan currently working for RFERL covering events on their country. The fact that they work for such broadcaster as RFERL served as a guarantor of their maximum independency from the local forces as well as trust into their knowledge and professionalism. The fact that both Kyrgyz and Georgian department are located in one place and relatively close to the place of the current research (Budapest) was an advantage as it has allowed for face to face, tape recorded interviews and communication.

In addition to this, local journalists based in Tbilisi and Bishkek were interviewed via phone or e-mails; due to this more detailed information and prospective of those journalists who work directly in these countries was obtained. It allowed to more deeply observe how recent changes influenced their everyday work and view on the democratic developments in the media; and brought valuable local expertise to the current research. The majority of the local journalists interviewed I had an honor to meet and get to know before in person due to my previous professional obligations; I can therefore attest on the maximum openness and professional reflection on the questions asked. Finally, in addition to interviewing journalists, media experts located in the region were approached in order to gather and confirm information on the recent programs in promoting journalistic professionalism or on the issues related to the media law implementations.

During the interview process, there were some cases when information was contradictory. In such cases I tried to verify it based on other sources. In one very specific contradictory case

¹⁰³ Please, see Appendix 1 for the list of interviewees and Appendix 2 for the list of questions for the interviews.

encountered during two interviews and when it was not possible to verify the correctness of one side over the other, the fact was not used in the analysis in order not to risk misrepresentation of the data. Ninety percent of all the interviews were tape-recorded; all of them were conducted in Russian. The results of the interviews are largely applied and integrated into the third and fourth chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 3: Analysis of the tendencies in the post-revolutionary media in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan

The last three years and half have seen two revolutions in Central Eurasia¹⁰⁴: November 2003 *Rose Revolution* in Georgia and March 2005 *Tulip Revolution* in Kyrgyzstan. In both countries people exhausted by the corrupt governmental practices and poverty, and rejecting the current ‘politics of manipulation and deceit’ went out on the streets. In both countries people believed and hoped that changes will bring better prospects and reforms for their countries and better future for them and their families.

Three years and half have passed since the revolution in Georgia and two years since the revolution in Kyrgyzstan. New governments in both countries have taken over the power trying to overcome the old regimes’ legacies, making new promises and introducing new reforms, some successful while some – less. International community with great interest and tension has been following the latest developments, and a lot has been written about the progress as well as mistakes been made so far during the current rule of Mikheil Saakashvili and Kurmanbek Bakiev. In this chapter my aim is to trace and systematize what changes these counties saw in the area of media after their respective revolutions and what exactly revolutions have brought for media freedom and media development in both Georgia and Kyrgyzstan.

In this chapter I will first of all give a brief overview of the media situation in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan prior to the revolutions. Then I will focus on tracing the changes taking place after the revolutions and will examine what the new governments’ stance towards media freedom is,

and whether the current situation is improving or getting worse. Finally, I will compare the direction of the post-revolutionary changes in the area of media in both Georgia and Kyrgyzstan using the six criteria elaborated in the previous chapter.

3.1. Analysis of the Georgian Media

3.1.1. Media in Georgia prior November 2003

Since the fall of the Soviet Regime in 1991, media in Georgia had no longer been considered to be under government control. At least according to the law it was free and according to article 24 of the 1991 Constitution “censorship is impermissible”.¹⁰⁵ Philipp Fluri and Eden Cole write, “as was the case of Georgia’s old Soviet political structure, the *media structure* – uniform, Communist Party controlled, state funded – also disintegrated and then re-emerged from the rubble”.¹⁰⁶ Media was facing many new problems including financing (as were all post-Soviet republics) but it had received the new opportunity of freedom that it had never seen before. State held in its hands the biggest part of the media, especially television, but it was not anymore the ‘outlet of overt propaganda’.¹⁰⁷ In fact, during Shevardnadze years media was gaining influence in the society and was viewed as a getting-strength “fourth power” in the country. As Marina Kokashvili writes “some state broadcasting continued but for the most part Georgia’s journalists, in newspapers, on the radio and on TV, were able to write freely and say what they wanted. Just as importantly, they were given the possibility to carry out journalistic investigations”.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Central Eurasia consists of three republics of South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia), five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) and Afghanistan.

¹⁰⁵ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”, chapter 10 in Philipp H. Fluri and Eden Cole, *From Revolution to Reform: Georgia’s Struggle with Democratic Institution Building and Security Sector Reform*, Vienna and Geneva, July 2005: 1.

¹⁰⁶ Philipp H. Fluri and Eden Cole, “From Revolution to Reform: Georgia’s Struggle with Democratic Institution Building and Security Sector Reform”, Vienna and Geneva, July 2005: 14-15.

¹⁰⁷ Philipp H. Fluri and Eden Cole, “From Revolution to Reform”: 15.

¹⁰⁸ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 2.

At the same time (during the period of 1991-2003) there were definitely problems as well. According to Marina Kokashvili's study on Georgian media, journalistic professionalism in the newly emerged republic was quite low, with journalists often unable to distinguish between analysis and personal opinion in their reporting. The quality of publications was decreasing with the demand of readers and thus supply of journalists focusing on sensations in politics and yellow press. Another problem was the more repressive responses towards journalists' sometimes aggressive criticism especially prior to the 2003 elections. Also, as I have mentioned above, sources of income for media were quite scarce and the advertisement market was undeveloped at that time. Strong financial problems lead many channels and publications under the umbrella of certain political and financial groupings. Media corruption was also not uncommon.¹⁰⁹

Despite these problems, the media, by the end of Shevardnadze's rule in year 2003, was characterized by liberal legislation, dominance of independent newspapers, and TV and radio companies and increasing media pluralism.¹¹⁰ Some authors argue that in fact, the peaceful revolution and subsequent removal of the old authorities can be a sign of the power of media and civil society that has developed over the previous years.¹¹¹ Okropir Rukhadze confirms that opposition, during Shevardnadze, had ample opportunities to express their opinion via media.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Marina Kokashvili, "The Role of Media in Georgia's Transition to Democracy": 3, 7 and 8.

¹¹⁰ Marina Kokashvili, "The Role of Media in Georgia's Transition to Democracy": 9.

¹¹¹ Philipp H. Fluri and Eden Cole, "From Revolution to Reform": 15.

¹¹² Okropir Rukhadze, Broadcaster of the Georgian Service in RFERL, interview by author, 27 April 2007, RFERL, Prague, tape recording, translation from Russian, Prague.

As could be expected, in 2003 prior to the November elections the government had been becoming more hostile towards the media. There were more attacks on journalists and the government tried to apply legislative measures to restrict the media freedom.¹¹³ Few months before 2003 elections Parliaments amended the Criminal Code and introduced more strict penalties for libel, and “the legal category of ‘insult’ was also introduced, which effectively moved defamation cases from civil to criminal law”.¹¹⁴

However, the main criticism was that the media became highly politicized serving the role not of an impartial observer but rather of a “partisan participant”¹¹⁵. During 2003, three new broadcasters were created by financial groups: *TV Imedi*, *TV Mze*, and *TV 202*.¹¹⁶ As Marina Kokashvili points out “these stations were ostensibly created to shape the public discourse prior to the elections. It has been observed in Georgia that media outlets materialize before the elections, and often disappear after the end of the polling”.¹¹⁷ According to her “an increasing political militancy of Georgia’s television channels was clearly obvious on the eve of the elections”¹¹⁸. Thus during the elections, the political connections of Georgian media became obvious.

The period prior to and during the Rose Revolution has shown that media in Georgia holds real power. At the same time many people lost their trust in media and its ability to report events objectively without been a mere tool in the hands of external manipulation. As Zaza Abdzianidze, the editor of the “Liberty Georgia” newspaper said “Investigations of journalists

¹¹³ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 10.

¹¹⁴ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 4.

¹¹⁵ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 10.

¹¹⁶ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 9 and 10.

resemble a voice in the wilderness. The economic situation in Georgia destroyed the non-commercial journalism”.¹¹⁹ Thus after the revolution, one of the major challenges for Georgian media was to win back its credibility¹²⁰ (at least to the level that it had before the Rose Revolution) and trust that was going down after the revolutionary events, and to struggle towards the economic independence in order to be able to maintain its own voice.

The Revolution has therefore started a new development stage of Georgian mass media. Many were full of hopes and enthusiasm at that time. Marina Kokashvili writes “the news media had hopes that Georgia would open a road for a greater press after the journalists played a key role in the Rose Revolution”¹²¹. Now, more than three years after November 2003, we can see what democratic changes, if any, new government brought for Georgian media and what the major developments in media during this time were. This will be the main focus of the next part of the chapter.

3.1.2. Developments and trends in Georgian media after the Rose Revolution

The Rose Revolution in Georgia was looked at with great enthusiasm and hope at home, and the West was rather quick to praise it as a “democratic success story”¹²². However, not everything is going that smoothly in Georgia. Lots of disappointed have been voiced recently. Regarding the media, we can trace certain improvement especially in the area of legislation. Nonetheless, overall, the situation in media is perceived to be getting worse despite Saakashvili’s promise to

¹¹⁷ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 10. v

¹¹⁸ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 11.

¹¹⁹ Zaza Abdzianidze, the editor of the “Liberty Georgia” quoted in “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy” by Marina Kokashvili: 12.

¹²⁰ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 11.

¹²¹ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 12.

defend the media freedom in Georgia. As Irakly Areshidze writes “an independent press was one factor that made the Rose Revolution possible, but since then this freedom has steadily eroded”¹²³.

The Freedom House rating reflect the fact that closer to the year of elections (2003) media independence was declining. Prior to the Revolution Georgian media received worse rating than in previous year: 4.00 in 2003 and 2002 compared to 3.75 in 2001 and 3.50 in year 2000. The years 2004 and 2005 – right after the revolution - show even worse score than in 2003: 4.25. According to this rating, situation regarding the independence of media declined during the first years after the revolution, moving the countries labeling from ‘transitional government or hybrid regime’ to ‘semiconsolidated authoritarian regime’.¹²⁴ Another report by the Freedom House, “Freedom of the Press” places Georgia as 118, labeled as ‘partly free’ in 2005 out of 194 countries¹²⁵ in comparison to 2004 when Georgia was still slightly better – on the 116th place¹²⁶.

As part of the research for the present thesis, six Georgian journalists and media experts were interviewed. Five of them stated that the situation in the area of media after the revolution has steadily deteriorated, one restrained from the clear answer.¹²⁷ As David Kakabadze, Director of RFERL Georgia Service confirms “in regard to the situation in media, no matter how paradoxical it is, after the *Rose Revolution* the situation became worse. Despite the fact that the

¹²² Devi Khechinashvili, “Georgia After the Rose Revolution: An Opportunity Lost?”, *Center for International Private Enterprise*, 31 October 2005: 1.

¹²³ Irakly Areshidze, “Bush and Georgia’s Faded ‘Rose’”, 9 May 2005, accessed at www.csmonitor.com on 4 December 2006.

¹²⁴ “Nations in Transit 2006: 18 and 268.

¹²⁵ “Freedom of the Press 2006: a global survey of media independence”: 13.

¹²⁶ “Freedom of the Press”, *Freedom House*, accessed at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/Chart31File145.pdf> on 10 May 2007.

¹²⁷ Please, see the list of interviewees in the Appendix 1.

revolution itself, in my opinion, was a positive event, the situation for our colleagues-journalists in Georgia now became more complicated than during the rule of Shevardnadze.”¹²⁸ As Tbilisi-based economic commentator of the independent Imedi TV channel, Revaz Sakevarishvili expressed it during the interview “unfortunately, I have to state the fact that after the revolution the situation in the Georgian media have not improved. Even more, we can now talk about the sharp degradation of the climate in the media and it has started already in the first days right after the revolution in Georgia.”¹²⁹ According to Maka Antidze, senior correspondent of the Reuters News Agency in Tbilisi, “one more the West got mistaken time with their expectations of such revolutions”¹³⁰. In the next pages of this chapter I will look at each of the previously defined criteria independently to define what exactly changes are taking place in the area of media after the revolution and what tendencies we can trace there.

Media Legislation and its Implementation

The changes in legislation that removed several strict provisions introduced prior to the revolution are among the positive trends in the Georgian media since the revolution. For example, as I have mentioned above, several months before the revolution, in June 2003, the Parliament introduced amendments to the Criminal Code that in fact presented more severe penalties for libel. At the same time, the legal category of ‘insult’ was added as well, moving the defamation cases from civil to criminal law. Also during Shevardnadze’s rule, the Law on State

¹²⁸ David Kakabadze, Director of the Georgian Service RFERL, interview by author, 26 April 2007, RFERL, Prague, tape recording, translation from Russian, Prague.

¹²⁹ Revaz Sakevarishvili, Economic Commentator of *Imedi* TV, interview by author via phone, 28 April 2007, Prague, tape recording, translation from Russian, Prague.

¹³⁰ Margarita Antidze, Senior Correspondent of Reuters News Agency in Tbilisi, interview by author via skype, 11 April 2007, translation from Russian, Budapest.

Secrets allowed to held responsible not only public officials who disclosed the state secrets, but also journalists for disseminating them.¹³¹

After the revolution, in June 2004, a new media law - *Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression* was approved by the Parliament providing for more media freedom. The law had come into effect in 2005. According to the “Countries in Crossroads Report on Georgia” the new law “widely praised as one of the most progressive laws in the region, formalized the right to free political speech and debate, editorial independence, and freedom to expose official wrongdoing”¹³². Libel was taken off the criminal code according to this law, and journalists were also relieved of legal criminal responsibility for disclosing state secrets. In the new law, only the person revealing the state secret, not the journalist, is held responsible.¹³³ Now journalists are also guaranteed the right to protect the confidentiality of their sources. The law also enables journalists to tape using hidden microphones.¹³⁴

The new *Law on Broadcasting* was issued in December 2004 and put into effect in early 2005. This law deals with the transformation of the state television and radio into the public broadcasting stations. According to the Independent Association of Georgian Journalists (IADJ), the new reforms “have been regarded as marked improvements over the existing legislation”.¹³⁵ However, as the Freedom House reports, regarding the legislation, there are still concerns related

¹³¹ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 4.

¹³² Sanja Tatic, “Countries at the Crossroads 2006”, Country Report – Georgia, *Freedom House*, accessed at www.freedomhouse.org on 12 December 2006: 3-4.

¹³³ “Nations in Transit 2006”, *Freedom House*: 260.

¹³⁴ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, released by the *Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the State Department*, 8 March 2006, accessed at <http://georgia.usembassy.gov> on 30 November 2006.

¹³⁵ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 4.

to the absence of regulations for arrests and media property searches.¹³⁶ There were already examples when lengthy investigations led to the interruption of the media function, such as with the case of Omega business group that owned the Iberia TV company, "Akhali epokha" newspaper, and a news agency.¹³⁷

As Marina Kokashvili writes this case with Iberia drew a lot of attention. When by the order of the Prosecutor General the tax-evasion inspection was started against Omega, the facilities of the Iberia station were also taken over by the police and its broadcasting was stopped for four months.¹³⁸ After the station was finally able to resume its broadcasting, "its format had been fundamentally changed, from a predominantly news to entertainment programs"¹³⁹, what "rose serious concerns" about freedom of expression according to the Georgian Ombudsman.

There was some other criticism of the new laws as well. For example, as RFERL journalist writes, the new public broadcaster transformed from the first state television channel, according to the provisions of the new law receives funds from the tax revenues. "That provision of the law is one of several protested by the opposition *New Rightists*¹⁴⁰ parliament faction, which argued that the receipt of state funding would automatically render the new broadcaster vulnerable to government pressure, and that it should be self-financing".¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ "Nations in Transit 2006", *Freedom House*: 269.

¹³⁷ Liz Fuller, "Some Georgian Journalists still feel less equal than others", 3 January 2005, accessed at <http://www.rferl.org/reports/mm/2005/01/1-030105.asp> on 1 January 2007.

¹³⁸ Marina Kokashvili, "The Role of Media in Georgia's Transition to Democracy": 13.

¹³⁹ Marina Kokashvili, "The Role of Media in Georgia's Transition to Democracy": 13.

¹⁴⁰ New Rights-Industrialists (or New Rightists) is an opposition block. Together with two other opposition fractions in Georgian Parliament it has 35 seats (out of 235) and these fractions "do not have any significant influence on the work of the Parliament" (draft Nations in Transit, 2007: 7) as UNM (United National Movement) is single dominant party in Georgia after the Rose Revolution (Nations in Transit, 2006: 265).

Even though new legislation brought some positive improvements, some of them (as in the case with the libel) merely corrected those negative amendments which were introduced during the last year of Shevardnadze prior to November 2003 elections. There is still room for further changes that are necessary in order to guarantee freedom of the Georgian media. In addition, as Marina Kokashvili writes “in Georgia, as in other former socialist countries, there has been the letter of the law and there has been reality”¹⁴². The Georgian judiciary is still lacking independence from political pressure¹⁴³ and this makes many people doubt whether the courts are able to implement the laws fairly. Another issue is that many journalists do not see changes in the legislation as the actual changes that could count for a substantial positive change. This could mainly be because of the fact that the legislation in Georgia was already progressive in times of Shevardnadze but then saw certain setbacks prior to the revolutions some of which were now corrected and revised by the new leadership. For example, Revaz Sakevarishvili states that as for the legislation there were no special changes. According to him “the problems now bare non-legislative nature; this is the problem of the relationship with media, the problem of ignoring the journalists, the problem of taking everything into one’s own hands”¹⁴⁴.

In 2006 there was also a very controversial situation regarding the draft broadcasting law that was proposed by the Georgian National Communications Commission and the Liberty Institute. This proposed draft “in its original form would have made ethical standards, including a dress code and use of language, legally binding on journalists”¹⁴⁵. According to this draft TV journalists would be obliged to obtain official permission before live broadcasts and it would

¹⁴¹ Liz Fuller, “Some Georgian Journalists still feel less equal than others”.

¹⁴² Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 1.

¹⁴³ “Nations in Transit 2006”, *Freedom House*: 260.

¹⁴⁴ Sakevarishvili, interview by author via phone, 28 April 2007, Prague.

also restrict their ability in using anonymous sources.¹⁴⁶ David Kakabadze from RFERL, Georgian Service says that accepting the code of ethics in the Parliament would show negative tendencies. He confirms that this was the reason why opposition was protesting “since it is an absurd to accept an ethical code in the Parliament. What does the Parliament have in common with codex? The code must be accepted by the media itself”.¹⁴⁷

Except for a few changes in the legislation, hardly any other positive changes can be traced in the Georgian media since the new leadership stepped in. Some reports mention that now there are more independent broadcasters; however, both new stations (*Imedi-TV* and *Mze*) were established by financial groups prior to the 2003 elections in order to influence them¹⁴⁸ and thus cannot be considered as part of the post-revolutionary reforms. Next part of the chapter will examine whether there were any changes in the state control of media in Georgia after the revolution.

State Media

According to the draft Freedom House report for 2007 “almost no state supported media remain in Georgia”¹⁴⁹ by the end of 2006. After the new *Law on Broadcasting* was issued in December 2004 and put into effect in early 2005, the transformation of the State TV and Radio Corporation (channel number one) into Georgian Public Broadcaster followed in summer 2005. A nine-

¹⁴⁵ “Freedom of the Press 2007”, report on Georgia, *Freedom House*, accessed on www.freedomhouse.org on 7 May 2007

¹⁴⁶ “Freedom of the Press 2007”, accessed on www.freedomhouse.org on May 7, 2007

¹⁴⁷ Kakabadze, interview by author, 26 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁴⁸ Marina Kokashvili, “The Role of Media in Georgia’s Transition to Democracy”: 5.

¹⁴⁹ “Nations in Transit 2007”, on Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission). Kindly provided for the purpose of this thesis by Editor Jeannette Goehring, *Freedom House*, 7 May 2007, Budapest.

member board of governors appointed by the Parliament supervises it now.¹⁵⁰ However, as Shain Abassov writes, it is still possible to claim that a new leadership of Georgia keeps control over the channel as the appointed head is from a Saakashvili's close circle and since the budget of this Public TV is controlled by the Parliament, majority of which consists of pro-presidential party. The overall rating of the channel and its popularity are still relatively low.¹⁵¹

There were also a number of controversial issues reported during the process of the transformation. The *New Rightists* opposed the decision of the interim commission monitoring the process of transformation that those journalists who used to work for state television and radio under Shevardnadze “should be declared ineligible for employment by the new station”.¹⁵² The condition put by the commission is arguable. On the one hand, it may be interpreted as having an aim to bring new journalists with fresh ideas and approaches to work for the broadcaster. On the other hand it may be viewed as an attempt to eliminate from this area those journalists who could still be loyal to the old regime. And since, as Liz Fuller reports, after the revolution individual journalists perceived as supporting the previous regime were targeted on several occasions¹⁵³, the second option remains the most likely explanation.

The positive fact of the transformation of the State TV into the Public one is balanced back by the opposite move of the government – more strict control of previously opposition channels such as of the independent TV station Rustavi-2, the role of which in the revolution was massive. According to David Kakabadze “the most popular channel Rustavi-2, which during

¹⁵⁰ “Nations in Transit 2007” on Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission).

¹⁵¹ Shain Abassov, Deputy Chief of party of *IREX-USAID* project in Baku, interview by author via phone and e-mail, 12 April 2007, translation into Russian, Budapest.

¹⁵² Liz Fuller, “Some Georgian Journalists still feel less equal than others”.

Shevardnadze broadcasted from very critical points of view and was a vivid opponent of the government, after the revolution became the mouthpiece of the government. It did not stay objective and critical observer but stayed faithful to those people whom it supported before the revolution.”¹⁵⁴ This has also resulted in the drop of this channel’s popularity during the last two years.¹⁵⁵

The ownership of Rustavi-2 was also changed twice since the revolution and according to Freedom House, changes of its management reflect the changes within the government. In addition, the new holding created in November 2006 that now includes Rustavi-2, Mze, and First Stereo TV is believed to belong to the business groups closely connected to the current government.¹⁵⁶ Rustavi-2 staff went on strike in August 2006 protesting the replacement of the general director of the channel by the governmental ally, and as a result of this change in the leadership a number of Rustavi-2 journalists resigned in September.¹⁵⁷

The Imedi channel has now taken the role of Rustavi-2. It is owned by the famous tycoon associated with strongly opposition party *New Rightists*, and a friend of Berezovsky, Badri Patarkatsishvili. As David Kakabadze says “still we shall point that if there are any critical voices heard, they are heard from Imedi”¹⁵⁸.

Since the revolution two channels, Iberia and Channel-9, were closed, but there are different interpretations of situations ranging from the internal financial problems of these companies to

¹⁵³ Liz Fuller, “Some Georgian Journalists still feel less equal than others”.

¹⁵⁴ Kakabadze, interview by author, 26 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁵⁵ Abassov, interview by author via phone and e-mail, 12 April 2007, Budapest.

¹⁵⁶ “Nations in Transit 2007” on Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission).

their possible disagreement with the government.¹⁵⁹ As Freedom House reports, the closure of Channel 9 was the owner's decision, while Iveria was closed after its parent company Omega had huge losses because of the tax evasion charges.¹⁶⁰ Also in 2005 Kutaisi and Kartli, local TV channels were shut down and "hidden government pressure were alleged in all of these cases".¹⁶¹ According to the economic commentator from the Imedi TV channel "at the end we received a situation when most of the electronic media belongs to those commercial structures or the interest groups who more or less connected with, and loyal the new government"¹⁶².

In regard to this criteria, while the new post-revolutionary leadership was willing to go for the formal reform of the State Channel (which was still of the low popularity in the country), it much increased pressure and control over the more popular independent stations (such as Rustavi-2, Mze and a number of others).

Scope of Independent Media

There are many other problems that Georgian media continues to face now - three years since the Rose Revolution and since the new government took the leadership in the country. In addition to the issues raised above related to the government control of state media, among the current problems is the government's pressure on the journalists, editors and media owners (a notorious example here are several cancellations of the political talk shows critical of the government). Journalists also warn about authorities' attempts to take control over the editorial policies in the

¹⁵⁷ "Freedom of the Press 2007", accessed on www.freedomhouse.org on 7 May 2007.

¹⁵⁸ Kakabadze, interview by author, 26 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁵⁹ Antidze, interview by author via skype, 11 April 2007, Budapest.

¹⁶⁰ "Nations in Transit 2006", *Freedom House*: 270.

¹⁶¹ "Nations in Transit 2006", *Freedom House*: 270.

¹⁶² Sakevarishvili, interview by author via phone, 28 April 2007, Prague.

private television stations (such as *Mze*)¹⁶³ as well as of news media coverage¹⁶⁴. Media owners also largely depend on their relationships with the government.

As ‘Freedom of the Press 2007’ report for Georgia states the new government “remains particularly critical and intolerant of the media, leading to the overall decrease in media independence since the 2003 Rose Revolution”¹⁶⁵. During the time of Shevardnadze, media was not seen as a threat, and many journalists agree that there was maximum possible freedom. In fact, as Okropir Rukhadze says, media had much wider opportunity to constructively criticize government and the population had trust in media. With the arrival of new leadership independent “media lost its function”¹⁶⁶. One of the disappointments is that in fact “this media was not performing on the name of the values before the so-called revolution, but it just wanted this particular force to win”¹⁶⁷.

In regard to the printed press, it has an increasingly limited influence in Georgia. The circulation is small and despite the fact that there are some newspapers that remained critical towards the government of Saakashvili, they do not possess any substantial influence on public opinion formation.¹⁶⁸ According to the information provided by David Kakabadze, a recent public opinion poll showed that the population in Georgia receives 87% of the information via television.¹⁶⁹ The new government has also been criticized for cutting the tax privileges (VAT)

¹⁶³ Zaal Anjaparidze, “Freedom of Media in Georgia Declines Even Further”, published by *Jamestown Foundation*, Washington, DC, 31 October 2005, accessed at www.jamestown.org

¹⁶⁴ Jaba Devdariani, “Georgia’s Rose Revolution Grapples with Dilemma: Do Ends Justify Means”, 26 October 2004, accessed at www.eurasianet.org, under Georgian Headlines on 21 December 2006.

¹⁶⁵ “Freedom of the Press 2007”, accessed on www.freedomhouse.org on 7 May 2007

¹⁶⁶ Rukhadze, interview by author, 27 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁶⁷ Rukhadze, interview by author, 27 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁶⁸ Kakabadze, interview by author, 26 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁶⁹ Kakabadze, interview by author, 26 April 2007, Prague.

for the newspapers thus making them even more expensive and less accessible for the population especially outside the capital.¹⁷⁰ Okropir Rukhadze, while talking about the high prices of the newspapers in Georgia, has noted “one thing is to give freedom, and quite another is to open all the ways to this freedom”¹⁷¹. The criticism during the interviews was also expressed towards government’s boycotting the oppositional outlets and TV channels when asked to express their opinion or participate in the debates.¹⁷² Many look very pessimistic about the trends of the media development in Georgia expressing bitter disappointment. As Revaz Sakevarishvili concluded, despite all the expectation before the revolution “the fact is that today the situation in Georgian media is much worse than it was before or during the revolution. And this is very worrisome”¹⁷³.

Violence against Journalists

Attacks and violence against journalists continued even after the Rose Revolution. *Reporters without Borders* are calling for the thorough investigation of several journalists attacked and beaten, such as after investigative journalist Saba Tsitsikashvili, of local daily *Saxalxo Gazeti* (*The People’s newspaper*) and Gela Mtiulishvili, editor of the weekly *Imedi*. Also the human rights watchdogs registered physical abuses of journalists reporting on the July 2005 Tbilisi protests as well as confiscation of their cameras and equipment by the local police. In 2006, there were cases, predominantly outside the capital, when local authorities abused journalists. One of the examples is when TV journalists from two Azerbaijani channels were attacked while covering a protest meeting of the ethnic Azerbaijanis in Georgia.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Kakabadze, interview by author, 26 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁷¹ Rukhadze, interview by author, 27 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁷² Michael Vagnanski, *EFE* and *Vremya Novostei* Correspondent in Georgia, interview by author via skype, 11 April 2007, translation from Russian, Budapest.

There was also an attack on local journalists in Signaghi district in June 2006. Following it, Georgian Regional Media Association issued a statement saying that "the local authorities are threatening and insulting journalists, human rights are violated, besides, the journalists are often unable to get public information from the governmental agencies".¹⁷⁵ Reportedly the Association is "concerned with the fact that such events have become very frequent in Georgian regions recently"¹⁷⁶. And according to Tina Khidasheli, Head of Republican Party, violence and hindering journalists' activities became systematic after the Rose Revolution.¹⁷⁷

Local journalists also continue to report either no change in this area in comparison with the time of Shevardnadze, or a decline. According to Revaz Sakevarishvili, the situation in Georgia in regard to the harassment and attacks towards journalists remained unchanged.¹⁷⁸ However, according to correspondent Michael Vagnanski the situation in this area is worse than it was before with journalists being more afraid of attacks, having thus to practice more often self-censorship. As he states "the syndrome of fear is reflected on the example and ways of behavior of journalists"¹⁷⁹.

When we measure either increase or decrease in violent attacks and pressure towards journalists over time, one of the indicators should be the number of attacks and cases of violence compared before and after the revolution. Given the lack of available statistical data on this, I have to rely

¹⁷³ Sakevarishvili, interview by author via phone, 28 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁷⁴ "Nations in Transit 2007" on Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission).

¹⁷⁵ "Georgian Regional Media Associations are concerned by assault on local journalists", 17 June 2006, accessed at http://www.caucas.com/home_eng/depeches.php?idp=1160&PHPSESSID=0e4b29b8255e5c6bef9f7dfafd45274c on 22 May 2007

¹⁷⁶ "Georgian Regional Media Associations are concerned by assault on local journalists".

¹⁷⁷ "Republican Party Complains about Media Censorship", 20 April 2007, accessed at www.media.ge on 24 May 2007

¹⁷⁸ Sakevarishvili, interview by author via phone, 28 April 2007, Prague.

on the secondary sources as well as on local journalists' opinions on this issue. Given the above-mentioned positions of the journalists in Georgia and the facts that periodic attacks and violence against journalists continue, the conclusion is that there is obviously no visible positive changes in that area in comparison with the period preceding the revolution. However, the fact that such forms of pressure continue combined with the overall unstable situation after the revolution, has, in turn, negative repercussions towards journalistic autonomy which will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Journalistic Culture and Professionalism

Journalists' professional standards are still weak and there is basically lack of investigative reporting. Media analyst for the OSCE mission to Georgia, Zurab Khrikadze, argues that "enemy number one for professionalism is the lack of independence...If they (Georgian journalists) do not become more independent, they cannot increase their professional skills. A lot of journalists understand they are not working for the public, but for the (media outlets) owners."¹⁸⁰ To improve the existing situation the Media Council was established in 2005. It is supported by the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) and its main goal is to create a network of Georgian journalists, raise their professional level and promote independence of media.¹⁸¹ However, the results of this Council's work as well as of other newly established media organizations are yet to be seen in Georgia and most of the interviewed journalists are quite skeptical about their progress and activities. This goes in line with the statement by Freedom House that a number of

¹⁷⁹ Vagnanski, interview by author via skype, 11 April 2007, Budapest.

¹⁸⁰ Zurab Khrikadze quoted at "Pressure to Report: Georgian Media Struggles for an Independent Voice" by Molly Corso on 23 February 2006. Accessed at www.eurasianet.org, under Georgian Headlines on 21 December 2006.

¹⁸¹ Elene Doborjginidze, "Freedom of Speech Threatened in Georgia", 29 July 2005. Accessed at www.georgiatoday.ge on 19 December 2006.

the media associations exist in Georgia, but “none of them became strong enough to unite media community around issues of journalistic freedom or professional standards”¹⁸².

According to the representative of the Liberty Institute in Georgia, Levan Ramishvili, “new political situation significantly decreased media's role”¹⁸³. In his interview to "Akhali Taoba" newspaper he states that "in post-Revolution Georgia all institutions are undergoing radical changes. Media is practically stagnating in that regard and it's developing only in entertainment direction. Serious journalism, which covers public-political issues, is in serious crisis".¹⁸⁴ Also according to Freedom House, low *professional standards* within media remain to be a problem.¹⁸⁵

The interviewed during the process of thesis research journalists notice the negative tendencies regarding journalistic professionalism. For example, Vremya Novostei-Tbilisi Correspondent Michael Vagnanski states that except for some technical issues the journalistic professionalism has not improved since the revolution; and that while teaching at the journalistic faculty of the Tbilisi State University he noticed with regret the growing tendency that young people prefer to go into the yellow press.¹⁸⁶

During the interview Revaz Sakevarishvili identified the main issues contributing to the current degradation of the professional standards in Georgia. First of all there is a problem of the financial origin; media does not possess sufficient economic resources to attract and keep

¹⁸² “Nations in Transit 2007” on Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission).

¹⁸³ “The New Authorities have Weakened Media: Interview with Levan Ramishvili”, 16 September 2005, accessed on www.media.ge on 12 May 2007

¹⁸⁴ “The New Authorities have Weakened Media: Interview with Levan Ramishvili”.

professionals. Weak financial basis results in higher vulnerability of editors and journalists towards pressure, who are reportedly more often to practice self-censorship during the last two-three years. The second issue is that those journalists that were more or less influential before and during the revolution, and who were from good schools have moved to other areas now – either to the press centers or joined the new government, or simply left active journalism.¹⁸⁷

Journalists autonomy is more restricted now with the President becoming less tolerant towards criticism. According to the latest ‘Freedom of the Press publication’ even though there is still a diversity in Georgian media outlets, media owners continue putting pressure on journalists in their effort to stay in good stance with the new government. This also leads to the frequent practice of self-censorship by the journalists themselves.¹⁸⁸

Overall, since the Rose Revolution we can observe a number of negative tendencies in regard to journalistic culture in Georgia. In the area of journalistic autonomy, where the positive tendencies could have been expected within these recent years, the situation has only reversed to worse.

Access to Information

The new authorities are still very slow or unwilling to make information available.¹⁸⁹ Journalists report on the existing difficulties and barriers to get access to public officials in order to obtain the information, confirm and verify the facts or to receive the comments on certain issues. Some

¹⁸⁵ “Nations in Transit 2007” on Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission).

¹⁸⁶ Vagnanski, interview by author via skype, 11 April 2007, Budapest.

¹⁸⁷ Sakevarishvili, interview by author via phone, 28 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁸⁸ “Freedom of the Press 2007”, accessed on www.freedomhouse.org on 7 May 2007

of the journalists complain that press-centers work only in order to hide information and that personal contacts play a substantial role in obtaining it ¹⁹⁰; preferential treatment is an issue as well¹⁹¹.

The broadcasters and correspondents of the RFERL Georgian Service report that now it is especially hard to obtain information from the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Internal Affairs and from the Office of the General Procurator.¹⁹² An example was a recent case when a war expert and RFERL correspondent in Georgia, Koba Liklikadze, after having criticized the Minister of Defence Okruashvili was declared persona non-grata and was denied all interviews and invitations to press-conferences.¹⁹³ In choosing the channel to cover their events, the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Internal Affairs prefer the pro-governmental channel Rusatavi-2 over the opposition-leaning Imedi.¹⁹⁴ Out of six interviewed journalists four noted increasing difficulties in accessing information held by the governmental structures, and two stated that the situation remained relatively the same.

Based on the detailed analysis of the changes in the media system according to six criteria, the overall conclusion is that, despite some positive changes in the legislation, the media freedom in Georgia experiences a ‘slight setback’ in comparison with the years preceding the Rose Revolution.

¹⁸⁹ “Freedom of the Press 2006: a global survey of media independence”: 109.

¹⁹⁰ Vagnanski, interview by author via skype, 11 April 2007, Budapest.

¹⁹¹ Rukhadze, interview by author, 27 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁹² Okropir Rukhadze, David Kakabadze, interview by author, April 2007, Prague.

¹⁹³ Kakabadze, interview by author, 26 April 2007, Prague.

¹⁹⁴ “Nations in Transit 2007” on Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission).

3.2. Analysis of the Kyrgyz Media

3.2.1. Media in Kyrgyzstan prior March 2005

During the first years of its independence, Kyrgyzstan was applauded as “the most democratic, progressive country in Central Asia thanks to Akaev’s comparative tolerance of opposition parties and free media, and his openness to market reforms”¹⁹⁵. In 1990s, Kyrgyzstan was often referred to as “an Island of Democracy” in Central Asia. With years passing from independence, the situation, however, has sharply changed.

According to the Freedom House, during 1996-2000, the rating of the independent media in Kyrgyzstan was relatively stable and fixed at the 5.00 score throughout these years.¹⁹⁶ Starting 2001 situation began to change. According to Adam Albion, the developments after September 11, 2001, when both USA and Russian airbases were moved to Kyrgyzstan, influenced President Akaev’s position on the international arena and have raised his profile. Albion writes this allowed Akaev to “clamp down on his domestic opponents still further”.¹⁹⁷ The situation related to media independence also got worse. In 2002, the year marked by the violent suppression of demonstrations in the southern Aksy region, the score given by Freedom House declined to 6.00. And in 2003 and 2004 – it reflects the continuation of the sharp harassment of media freedom in the country and the score Kyrgyzstan receives is 6.00 and 5.75 respectively. As the latest 2007 FH’s report confirms “Akaev gradually reduced the boundaries in which opposition groups and independent media were allowed to maneuver”¹⁹⁸.

¹⁹⁵ Adam Smith Albion, “Countries at the Crossroads 2006”. Country Report – Kyrgyzstan. Freedom House, accessed at: www.freedomhouse.org on 19 December 2006: page 1.

¹⁹⁶ “Nations in Transit 2006”, *Freedom House*: 329.

¹⁹⁷ Adam Smith Albion, “Countries at the Crossroads 2006”: 1.

As the “Internews-Kyrgyzstan” internal report for 2002 confirms, the state was controlling governmental mass media and enjoying monopoly over strategic media sources (printing house, non-transparent allocation of frequencies for electronic media).¹⁹⁹

An indirect way to control media is done through purchase of shares of existing strong media outlets of the country, which becomes evident through coverage accents of the media. State authorities use various methods of pressure over media activity in the Kyrgyz Republic: criminal punishments for slander, court cases, tax inspections, and fines.²⁰⁰

There were a number of cases when state-owned printing house *Uchkun* refused to print independent newspapers (for example: *Moya Stolitca*, *Agym*, *Zholtiken*, *Techenie* and others). Like in the late 1990s, in the years prior to the revolution private broadcasters continued to struggle with financial difficulties leading to their dependence from the authorities or from financing organizations loyal to the authorities.²⁰¹

In terms of legislation, despite certain shortcoming of the media laws, according to the *Internews-Kyrgyzstan* report there was a consensus among journalists, experts and parliamentarians that rather progressive legislation in the area of media was on place. The 1992 Law on Mass Media “was considered to be one of the most progressive in this sphere in the whole post-Soviet territory”²⁰². Among the points in the legislation where the change was necessary, was related to the criminal punishment of journalists related to the disclosure of state secrets. There are a number of other laws that serve as a barrier for journalistic investigations and

¹⁹⁸ “Nations in Transit 2007” on Kyrgyzstan (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission), kindly provided for the purpose of this thesis by editor Jeannette Goehring, *Freedom House*, 7 May 2007, Budapest.

¹⁹⁹ Media Report, May 2001-2002, prepared by the *Internews-Kyrgyzstan* (translation from Russian). I am grateful to Elmira Saryeva, Managing Director of the *Internews Kyrgyzstan* in Bishkek for sending this report to me via e-mail.

²⁰⁰ Media Report, May 2001-2002, prepared by the *Internews-Kyrgyzstan*. I am grateful to Elmira Saryeva, Managing Director of the *Internews Kyrgyzstan* in Bishkek for sending this report to me via e-mail.

²⁰¹ Yasha Lange, *Media in CIS. A study of the political, legislative and socio-economic framework* (The European Institute for the Media, Brussels, May 1997), 134.

²⁰² Media Report, May 2001-2002, prepared by the *Internews-Kyrgyzstan*: 6.

that are still been manipulated by the state officials. For example, according to the Article 127 criminal punishment for slander can lead up to three years of imprisonment.²⁰³ These issues of the Kyrgyz legislation related to media, as many journalists hoped, would be among those that would be changed with the new leadership of the country under Bakiev replacing the old, corrupt and increasingly authoritarian rule of Akaev.

3.2.2. Developments and trends in Kyrgyz Media after Tulip Revolution

Like in Georgia, flawed parliamentary election in Kyrgyzstan in February 2005 led to a popular uprising in March, known as *Tulip Revolution* that brought a change in power with a new president taking over the post after the elections in July 2005. Unlike Georgia though, it was not a transfer of power from one generation to another and the worldview of the new leadership doesn't differ much from the incumbents.²⁰⁴ However, the new President of Kyrgyzstan, like the President of Georgia, made promises, and for many people this change brought big hopes for new reforms. Among the other planed reforms, the new leadership confirmed the need to eliminate "any state practice that could curb freedom of expression",²⁰⁵.

Whether the media played a really major role during the revolution is arguable. Of course, we should not underestimate its role; media had its influence on the events and helped to spread information that may have brought more demonstrators on the streets of Bishkek. However, I believe, the scale of its influence cannot be compared with the one in Georgia. Media in Georgia

²⁰³ Media Report, May 2001-2002, prepared by the *Internews-Kyrgyzstan*: 6-9.

²⁰⁴ Martha Brill Olcott, "Kyrgyzstan's Revolution: Causes and Consequences", testimony prepared for the *Commission of Security and Cooperation in Europe*, 7 April 2005: 5.

²⁰⁵ "Kyrgyzstan: Revolution Revisited". Accessed at <http://www.eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan/mystory/person1.html> on 31 December 2006.

was taking an active part in the revolutionary events²⁰⁶, and the independence of media in Georgia prior to the revolution contributed to this a lot. In Kyrgyzstan the situation was quite different. On the day of Revolution, state-owned TV channel KTR²⁰⁷ was showing nature documentaries²⁰⁸ and many citizens learned about what was happening on the main square first from foreign media rather than from the local media sources.

Prior to the March Revolution the only independent printing house in Kyrgyzstan run by the Freedom House had its electricity cut on 22 February 2005 just five days before the second round of elections. On February 24 RPO RMTR²⁰⁹ cut the translation of the Kyrgyz Reduction of the Radio Liberty (Azattyk) on medium waves.²¹⁰ Some experts say that in particular governmental propaganda and their misrepresentation and attempts to hide true nature of events in the state outlets and channels during the mass protests led to even bigger irritation among the population.²¹¹ Despite the messier character of the Kyrgyz revolution in comparison with Ukrainian and Georgian ones, and given the complicated situation in the area of media prior to the revolution, many were waiting with anticipation that the new government would bring positive changes for the media democratization.

²⁰⁶ For more information on the role of media during Georgian revolution see Chapter 1 of this thesis, page 15.

²⁰⁷ KTR is the Kyrgyz State TV and Radio Company. It was recently renamed into MTRK or NTRK (in the first case the abbreviation of the Kyrgyz name is used, in the second – of its English translation), but for the purpose of consistency I will keep the abbreviation KTR in this thesis.

²⁰⁸ “Freedom of the Press 2006: a global survey of media independence”: 148.

²⁰⁹ Translation from Russian of the abbreviation RPO RMTR: Republican Industrial Corporation on Radio Magistratation and Television Broadcasting

²¹⁰ AkiPress News, 24.02.2005. Sent by e-mail to author by Narynbek Idinov, May 2007, Budapest.

Media Legislation and its Implementation

According to the ‘Nations in Transit 2007’ report “the biggest question in 2006 was at what point the reforms promised in 2005 would actually begin”²¹². As Elvira Sarieva, managing director of the *Internews-Kyrgyzstan* writes, Kurmanbek Bakiev, at that time the acting President of Kyrgyzstan prior to the elections in July made three main promises related to media. The first promise was to provide transparent distribution of the frequency waves among television and radio stations, since more that 30 companies were struggling for two years to obtain frequency.²¹³ This has not yet been solved and government is delaying issues of giving radio and TV frequencies to potential mass media outlets. Rustam Koshmuratov of *Radio Almaz* told *Radio Azattyk* that such a delay is due to the new leadership’s concern that the new TV and Radio channels will become a part of the opposition mass media in Kyrgyzstan.²¹⁴

The second promise of Bakiev was related to decriminalizing libel. However, this was not yet implemented. As Saida Yusuphanova writes, due to the fact that methods of pressure on Kyrgyz journalists became stronger, a new National campaign called “Decriminalizing Responsibility of Media for Libel” was launched. The initiative came from the “Voice of Freedom”, Institute of Media-Representation and from a number of media outlets. The goal of the campaign is to

²¹¹ Narynbek Idinov, Editor, Broadcaster of RFERL, interview by author, 25 April 2007, RFERL, Prague, tape recording, translation from Russian, Prague.

²¹² “Nations in Transit 2007” on Kyrgyzstan (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 2.

²¹³ Elvira Sarieva, interview, accessed at <http://www.eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan/voices/index.html>, 30 November 2006.

²¹⁴ I am grateful to Tyntchtykbek Tchorojev Director of Radio Azattyk (RFE/RL Kyrgyz Service) in Prague for sending me these comments as well as additional information regarding the changes in Kyrgyz media after the revolution via e-mail on 6 January 2007.

achieve exclusion from the Criminal Code of Kyrgyzstan the articles punishing journalists for libel.²¹⁵

The third promise by Bakiev concerned the transfer of the government channel KTR into the public service broadcaster. By December 2006 this was not achieved either. In more details I will discuss this aspect in the next section “State Media”. Overall, I agree with Elvira Sarieva that when we talk about a system since the Revolution “then there are no practical steps, only some promises”²¹⁶. None of these goals set right after the revolution was achieved by December 2006, and there were no any positive direction in regard to liberalizing media legislation in the country.

State Media

The possible transformation of KTR (Kyrgyz State TV and Radio Company) was the major issue related to media in Kyrgyzstan in the period covered by this research (March 2005 – December 2006). As one Kyrgyz journalist put it “if we want to build real democratic state, we have to have public channel, which will not be dependent upon the changes of the leadership”.²¹⁷ Civil society and journalists largely supported the demand for the KTR transformation and its independence from pressure by political and commercial forces.

As Narynbek Idinov reports, KTR due to its pro-governmental propaganda lost the trust of the population to such extent, that after the revolution its reform was the step that was considered to be the prior one. However, since there would still be no other possibilities to finance it except as

²¹⁵ Saida Yusuphanova, “Press about Us: Kyrgyz Campaign to Protect Journalists” (in Russian), *Voice of Freedom – Kyrgyzstan*, 24 November 2006. Accessed at www.vof.kg on 1 January 2006.

²¹⁶ Interview with Elvira Sarieva can be accessed on <http://www.eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan/voices/index.html>

from the state budget, the reform would primarily lead to the creation of the Independent Public Observation Committee; and according to this reform the head of the transformed KTR would be appointed by the Parliament rather than by the President himself.²¹⁸

However, the authorities kept postponing their decision regarding KTR transformation. Under huge pressure from public, on 8 June 2006 Kyrgyz Parliament finally issued the law on the State TV and Radio Broadcaster reform, according to which the Observation Committee would be established with one third of members appointed by the President, one third by the Parliament, and one third by the civil society.²¹⁹ However, in September 2006 this law was rejected by the President with an explanation that “the country could not afford the cost”²²⁰.

Regarding the TV and radio broadcasters, the example on KTR transformation illustrates the new leadership unwillingness to let control out of its hands as this TV channel covers the whole country. The following situation confirms such a tendency as well. According to Narynbek Idinov, in April 20 2006 it was announced that “local TV and Radio companies will be included into KTR ‘so that they could be freed from the dependence from the local administrations’. Thus the government started again to concentrate the major media in its hands, while many independent outlets and companies were also getting the new owners”²²¹.

In May 2006, NTS’s (independent telestation) transmission was interrupted in several region of Kyrgyzstan, the offered explanation referred to the necessity to make this frequency available for

²¹⁷ Jyldyz Myslimova, “KTR must become a public broadcaster” (*translated from Russian*). This news item was accessed on www.monitoring.kg on 7 January 2007.

²¹⁸ Idinov, interview by author, 25 April 2007, Prague.

²¹⁹ Idinov, interview by author, 25 April 2007, Prague.

E1 TV, the new state channel. E1 TV, though claimed to be a public broadcaster, it is in reality controlled by the government.²²² There are also complex discussions taking place around Piramida's and KOORT's (Kyrgyz Public Educational Radio and TV channel) ownership schemes.

The new government's stance on media is not the only issue leading to the restrictions of the media independence and plurality of ownership in the country. Huge financial problems that Kyrgyzstan is facing now are also reflected in the processes inside the media. For example, new leadership made a certain attempt to free several pro-governmental outlets from the financial and political dependence. Bakiev even signed a decree about the transformation of *Kyrgyz Tuusu* and *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* on the corporate method of management. The *Erkin Too* was supposed to become the only outlet of the government.²²³ However, as Narynbek Idinov states, termination of the financing of local newspapers caused shock for the local journalists, since it could be very hard to find investors for such newspapers, and they would not survive without the state donations, therefore the process was stopped.²²⁴ Overall, there are about 40-50 outlets in Kyrgyzstan, the majority of them being public though not independent.²²⁵

By the end of December 2006, KTR reform was not implemented. State owned newspapers still remained under either the central or local authorities' control and no democratic transformation

²²⁰ "Nations in Transit 2007", Kyrgyzstan (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 13.

²²¹ Idinov, interview by author, 25 April 2007, Prague.

²²² "Freedom of the Press 2007", report on Kyrgyzstan, Freedom House, accessed at www.freedomhouse.org on 7 May 2007

²²³ Idinov, interview by author, 25 April 2007, Prague.

²²⁴ Idinov, interview by author, 25 April 2007, Prague.

²²⁵ "Freedom of the Press 2007", report on Kyrgyzstan.

has taken place in that area despite the promises of the new leaders and pressure from the side of civil society.

Scope of Independent Media

In comparison to Georgia where three years have passed since the Rose Revolution, Kyrgyzstan saw only slightly more than one year and half of the new government's rule, therefore I agree with the statement that "by the end of 2006, it was still too early to say whether there had been a crackdown on independent media, but there were suspicions that some outlets were being targeted"²²⁶. Even though little time has passed since Tulip Revolution, we can still analyze this period and trace the initial steps of the new government and their attitude towards the independent media.

Similar to the situation in Georgia, an interesting situation was taking place in Kyrgyzstan when the state-owned and independent media were working on the same side right after March 2005 revolution. Pro-governmental media (such as *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, and *Vecernyi Bishkek*) continued to emphasize the achievements of the state and its administration, and independent formerly oppositional newspapers (such as *MSN*, or *ResPublica*), continued to present the promises and plans of President Bakiev and his surrounding after, from the government opponents, they became new government officials.²²⁷ However, later the sharper tendencies started taking place reflecting the growing instability inside the government as well as inside the whole country basically splitting into the Southern and Northern provinces.

²²⁶ "Nations in Transit 2007", Kyrgyzstan (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 3.

²²⁷ "Nations in Transit 2007", Kyrgyzstan (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 13.

Though Bakiev is increasingly irritated by the criticism, the opposition still has access to media. Despite the fact that President Bakiev's record is quite mixed and most of the promises he made are still left unfulfilled, and though there are still significant problems remaining, there are also some improvements since the Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. If we compare the situation regarding the independence of media with the last early years of Akaev, there will not be improvements, but in comparison with the last years of Akaev a number of positive changes should still be noted.

Akaev's family members and relatives controlled major sections of the country's media. Akaev's rule also saw "politically motivated tax inspections, defamation lawsuits (manipulating the courts to award penalties), or sudden power outages at the printing press".²²⁸ In this respect, the situation may be considered to be better; though it is mainly due to Bakiev unstable position and the pressure put on him to follow the rules due to which he came to this power. However, journalists observe that pressure did not decrease rather it takes a different form now. As Venera Djumataeva observes before authorities were using 'taxes charges' or switching lights off in order to put the critical newspapers out of game, "and now some people in masks either beat up journalists or break into the buildings and crash everything, and nobody knows who does it".²²⁹

When Kyrgyzstan is compared with other Central Asian countries it, of course, remains relatively more advanced in terms of press freedom. For example, Kyrgyzstan is the only Central Asian country where international radio stations such as Radio Azattyk (RFE/RL Kyrgyz Service) and BBC Kyrgyz Service are working freely and airing their programs on FM, UKW

²²⁸ Adam Smith Albion, "Countries at the Crossroads 2006": 3.

and Medium waves. Radio Azattyk also has two weekly TV shows aired by KTR (MTRK). The TV shows were launched only after the Tulip revolution (*Inconvenient Questions* - in May 2005; *Azattyk Plus* TV show for youth – in January 2006).²³⁰

Overall, in regard to the media independence there are some slight improvements since Bakiev is not able to exercise such strict measures of control and harassment as Akaev did during the last years of his rule (2002-2005). However, the scope of such liberation should not be overestimated as Bakiev during the year 2006 was becoming increasingly less tolerant to the criticism from the side of independent media and the signs of the new forms of pressure could be observed.

Violence toward journalists

Throughout 2006, the following problems were hampering media development in Kyrgyzstan: forced self-censorship, attacks and vandalism of the oldest independent TV station Piramida, and high levels of politically motivated crimes in the country. Attacks and threats towards journalists continued as well. At the end of September, Piramida's center was vandalized by the attackers causing the station USD200,000 of lose and making it go out of air. Two of its employees were beaten up.²³¹ As 'Nations in Transit 2007' report states another notable case with Piramida was also when a group of men broken into the building of the station declaring themselves to be the

²²⁹ Venera Djumataeva, Broadcaster of the Kyrgyz Service in RFERL, interview by author, 25 April 2007, RFERL, Prague, tape recording, translation from Russian, Prague.

²³⁰ I am grateful to Tyntchtykbek Tchoroev, Director of Radio Azattyk (RFE/RL Kyrgyz Service) in Prague for sending me these comments as well as additional information regarding the changes in Kyrgyz media after the revolution via e-mail on 6 January 2007.

²³¹ "Bishkek Protests Target Obstacles to Press Freedom", 11 October 2006. Accessed at www.rferl.org on 7 January 2007

new management. A number of times, the station's electricity was also switched off, and the editor and director of Piramida, Elena Cherniyavskaya, was receiving threatening phone calls.²³²

As Tynchtbek Tchoroev writes, attacks and violence against journalists continued but there is no evidence who was behind them; he notes that their number did not decrease in comparison with the years of Akaev, and that there are some suspicions that state officials are connected to these attacks.²³³ Kubat Otorbaev, a journalist working in Kyrgyzstan, states that the situation changed even in the negative direction bringing out a number of the examples of attacks on the journalists' lives.²³⁴ According to Reporters Without Borders during the November demonstrations "journalists with the 24.kg news agency were attacked by the unidentified assailants while covering a pro-government demonstration in the capital, Bishkek, on November 7. TV Piramida reporter Turat Bektenov was attacked as he was returning home the same day"²³⁵. In November 2006 there were also series of hacker attacks on independent media websites (*AKIpress*, *24.kg*, *tazar.kg*) during the opposition demonstrations.²³⁶

Overall the situation in this area was the same during the period of March 2005 – December 2006 in comparison to the years of Akaev; however the latest events of April 2007 (which is though a period out of the time scope of the current research) illustrate that it is getting worse now.

²³² "Nations in Transit 2007" on Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission).

²³³ Tynchtbek Tchoroev, Director of the Kyrgyz Service of the RFERL, e-mail correspondence, 11 April 2007.

²³⁴ Kubat Otorbaev, Director of Azattyk (Liberty) Media Institute in Kyrgyzstan, interview by author via phone in RFERL studio, 26 April 2007, tape recording, translation from Russian, Prague.

²³⁵ Reported Without Borders quoted at draft report for the "Nations in Transit 2007", Kyrgyzstan: 14.

²³⁶ "Kyrgyz Independent Media Report troubles". 8 November 2006. Accessed at www.rferl.org on 2 January 2007.

Journalistic Culture and Professionalism

The tendencies in Kyrgyzstan during the last year and half have shown that immediately after the revolution the autonomy of journalists increased while the level of professionalism went down. According to the interviewed journalists the fact of revolution itself and of the old government being ousted brought some feeling of liberation, freedom and self-confidence, though some called it a ‘surface freedom’. As Narynbek Idinov puts it, before the revolution there was no hope, the power of Akaev was seen as lasting forever and many were afraid to write against him, “and now the relationship to the president is different, they do not consider him eternal. As soon as he makes mistake they write about it”²³⁷.

However, more writing and criticism does not mean it is all objective and conducted at the professional level. As Venera Djumataeva confirmed there is no balance now, no investigative reporting, and the writing of journalists rather resembles the quarrels in a bazaar. Most of the professional journalists have left the country or were appointed for the posts of Ambassadors abroad.²³⁸ She says that “the point is that there are no professional journalists now who could write well enough and thus to be afraid” and public, consumers simply lose trust and interest to read.²³⁹ This was also confirmed by Cholpon Nogoibaeva from the Soros Foundation who states that after the revolution “media started to write more- yes, more interesting and more professional – no”²⁴⁰.

²³⁷ Idinov, interview by author, 25 April 2007, Prague.

²³⁸ Such best journalist of Kyrgyzstan as Prizhivoit, Sadykova, Mambetaliev or Chinairbekova.

²³⁹ Djumataeva, interview by author, 25 April 2007, Prague.

²⁴⁰ Cholpon Nogoibaeva, Program Director of Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan, interview by author, 28 April 2007, tape recording, translation from Russian, Prague.

Another noteworthy tendency in Kyrgyzstan is that division in media now reflects the current, sharper than ever, North versus South division of the whole country. The battle in the media shows not only the contradictions between South-supported current President Bakiev and a Northerner former Prime-Minister (and now opposition leader) Kulov; it also mirrors the split in the society, and the growing discontent in the South about the fact that all power was held by the Northerners. Venera Djumataeva says about this new very negative tendency that

In all pro-Bakiev's newspapers there are journalists from the South working, and in pro-Kulov, pro-opposition, there are journalists from the North working. And if we read them, there is such a war. Even when Kulov was Prime-Minister and there were some frames of behavior in their relationship with Bakiev, the newspapers were already reflecting such a war between them.²⁴¹

She said that it is a very worrisome fact that can potentially escalate the conflict inside the country.²⁴² Increasingly low professional standards could even contribute to this.

The revolution did not bring improvements in the journalistic culture. From one side, the autonomy of journalists (rather on the level of perception) has slightly increased due to the fragility of the current position of the new leadership. However, professional standards have dropped substantially thus possibly increasing tension inside the country during this already quite an unstable period.

Access to Information

The new law adopted by the Parliament during the period after the revolution was the Law on the Access to Information of November 14, 2006. However, as Cholpon Nogoibaeva, Program Director dealing with media projects in Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan says, the introduction of

²⁴¹ Djumataeva, interview by author, 25 April 2007, Prague.

²⁴² Djumataeva, interview by author, 25 April 2007, Prague.

this law did not bring any change in regard to the bureaucrats' and state officials' attitude and approach to the issue. According to her, the analysis and review was done after this law had come into action, and as she says

What is interesting is that, in principle, no body forbids but if you need to get any information – then they find different reasons not to give you this information. They say that they do not have such information, send you to other state structures. For example, tax inspections, they say: “you know, until it will be published in the quarterly report, we do not have a right to give you this information”. Although in reality such a forbidding rule does not exist.²⁴³

Therefore, even though we can say that the fact of the law introduction serves as a positive step as such, there are still barriers to the implementation of this law. Journalists continue facing the same challenges in obtaining information as during the rule of Akaev. Out of six journalists asked this question, five confirmed that the last two years after the revolution have not brought any visible change in regard to the access of information.

On one side a new leadership is reluctant to keep its promises, it is increasingly sensitive towards criticism and overall Kyrgyz media is facing a number of complex problems today. On the other side there are minor improvements that Bakiev's rule brought in comparison with Akaev's (such as a feeling of liberation and increased autonomy) basically due to the fragility of Bakiev's current position. A number of negative tendencies (such as a drop in professional norms and standards) should not be ignored as well. Taking all this multifaceted aspects into consideration, I would agree with those journalists who conclude that little has changed towards media democratization by the end of 2006.

²⁴³ Nogoibaeva, interview by author, 28 April 2007, Prague.

3.3. Conclusion on the Post-revolutionary Media Changes in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan

In this part of the chapter I will conclude on the main tendencies in the post-revolutionary situation in media in both Georgia and Kyrgyzstan by presenting the data and summarizing the results of the research analysis conducted in the preceding part of the chapter. I will also complete and support the finding described above by the comparative tables and scores based on the international media watchdogs surveys.

According to this thesis research findings (based on both original and secondary sources research) that followed the six elaborated criteria and took into consideration the multiple, often complex aspects of the areas in media liberalization and development, we can conclude that the revolutionary uprising and subsequent change of the leadership in Kyrgyzstan did not lead to any substantial democratic tendencies within the period between March 2005 and December 2006. In Georgia, overall within November 2003 and December 2006 we can observe a number of negative trends. Table number 5 summarizes the results of the findings.

Table 5: Summary of the findings based on the conducted research

Criteria/Country	Kyrgyzstan	Georgia
Media laws and their implementation	no positive change	slight improvements
State Control of Media	no positive change	no positive change
Journalistic culture/professionalism	slight setback	slight setback
Access to Information	no positive change	slight setback
Violence against journalists	no positive change	no positive change
Scope of the independent media	slight improvements	vivid setback
Overall trends	no positive change	slight setback

Both Georgia and Kyrgyzstan after the revolutions saw the decline of the *journalistic culture and professionalism*. In both countries, the situation with the *state control* of media and *violence towards journalists* remained almost unchanged. Regarding the reforms in *media legislation*, nothing have changed in Kyrgyzstan while in Georgia a number of new more liberal laws have been introduced.

It is interesting to note, though that in respect to the *access to information*, the situation in Kyrgyzstan remain unchanged, while in Georgia slightly deteriorated. And while Kyrgyzstan saw minor improvements as for the *media independence*, Georgia had to face a more vivid setback. The variation of the changes in between the countries could be partially explained by the difference in their initial condition in the area of media. The situation in Georgian media prior to revolution was much more liberal than that in Kyrgyzstan along all six main criteria. Not only media legislation in Georgia was more progressive, but also the level of independence Georgian media was enjoying was definitely higher than in Kyrgyzstan. As one of the interviewed journalists put it “in regard to media there was such a freedom during Shevardnadze, that we could hardly imagine it could have been more free”²⁴⁴.

However, the overall conclusion is that neither for Georgia not for Kyrgyzstan recent ‘color’ revolutions brought tendencies towards media democratization at least in the short run. Certain improvements in Georgian legislation are absolutely counterbalanced by either lack of changes or even negative trends according to five other criteria. In Kyrgyzstan, minor improvements in the scope of independent media have no substantial influence on the overall picture given that

²⁴⁴ Rukhadze, interview by author, 27 April 2007, Prague.

according to the four other criteria there are no main changes, and that according to the last criteria of journalistic culture the situation has deteriorated.

One of the main goals of this chapter was to trace specific changes according to the identified main criteria essential for media democratization in both countries. I also measured whether the overall tendencies (after summing up the results of all six criteria) take either negative or positive direction in each of the two post-revolutionary states. The overall conclusion (as we call it on the macro level) can be compared with the scores assigned by international media watchdogs.

The results of this research go in line with the surveys and scores on media freedom conducted by the international organizations and media watchdogs. According to the *Reporters Without Borders'* World Press Freedom Index, after the revolution both the score and overall rating of Kyrgyzstan dropped – from 111th place in 2005 to 123rd in 2006, and from 32.00 score to 34.00 respectively. In Georgia the sharp decrease of the rating and worsening of the score can be observed during the first two years after the revolution, the last year (2006) shows slight improvements in comparison with the first two years after the revolution, but still it has a substantially worse score in comparison with the situation before the Rose Revolution. Table 6 below reflects these scores.

Table 6: Rating of Georgia and Kyrgyzstan in the World Press Freedom Index

Year/country	Kyrgyzstan	Georgia
2003 (out of 166 countries)	104 place (32.00 score)	73 place (17.33 score)
2004 (out of 167 countries)	107 (35.25)	94 (27.50)
2005 (out of 168 countries)	111 (32.00)	99 (25.17)
2006 (out of 168 countries)	123 (34.00)	89 (21.00)

Source: Adopted from: Reporters without Borders, World Press Freedom Index. Accessed on http://www.rsf.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=639, 9 May 2007

According to Freedom House's "Nations in Transit" survey, the level of the media independence stayed the same in Kyrgyzstan within the first year after the Tulip Revolution (5.75 both before and right after the revolution, 2004 and 2005). In Georgia, during the first two years after the Rose Revolution, the score shows negative tendencies in comparison with the last two-three years before the revolution (score - 4.25 in 2004 and 2005, while it was 4.00 in 2003 and 2002), and a substantial degradation of the media freedom in comparison with years 2000-2001. Table 7 illustrated the results and tendencies in both countries in comparative perspective.

Table 7: Rating of Georgia and Kyrgyzstan on the Independence of Media

Year/country	Kyrgyzstan	Georgia
1996	5.00	4.50
1997	5.00	4.25
1998	5.00	3.75
1999	5.00	3.75
2000	5.00	3.50
2001	5.75	3.75
2002	6.00	4.00
2003	6.00	4.00
2004	5.75	4.25
2005	5.75 (9 month after a revolution)	4.25 (2 years after a revolution)

Source: Adopted from: "Nations in Transit 2006. Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia". Edited by Jeannette Goehring. *Freedom House*. Budapest, 2006

According to the ‘Freedom of the Press’ survey also conducted by the Freedom House, reflected in the table 8, “the degree to which each country permits the free flow of news and information”²⁴⁵ in Kyrgyzstan nine months right after the revolution increased in comparison with the last years of Akaev, however then dropped again during 2006 marking the second year of Bakiev’s rule. In Georgia we see the deterioration of this score during the new leadership of Saakashvili after the revolution in comparison with the last years of Shevardnadze.

Table 8: Freedom of the Press score

Year/country	Kyrgyzstan	Georgia
1993	49 (PF)	73 (NF)
1994	52 (PF)	70 (NF)
1995	60 (PF)	68 (NF)
1996	61 (NF)	55 (PF)
1997	64 (NF)	56 (PF)
1998	64 (NF)	57 (PF)
1999	61 (NF)	47 (PF)
2000	61 (NF)	53 (PF)
2001	68 (NF)	53 (PF)
2002	71 (NF)	54 (PF)
2003	71 (NF)	54 (PF)
2004	71 (NF)	56 (PF)
2005	64 (NF)	57 (PF)
2006	67 (NF)	57 (PF)

Source: Adopted from: “Freedom of the Press 2006: a global survey of media independence”. Freedom House. Accessed on <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fop/historical/DDSCEEFSU.xls> on 9 May 2007

Overall, the findings and scores by the Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders support the conclusion of the detailed analysis conducted in this chapter: the revolutionary uprising and subsequent change of the government in Kyrgyzstan and Georgia did not result in the much anticipated democratic changes in the area of media within a short period of time (1,5-3 years).

²⁴⁵ “Freedom of the Press 2006: a global survey of media independence”: xix.

Rather we can trace a number of the worrisome negative tendencies in both countries under investigation (though more in Georgia than in Kyrgyzstan).

As I have discussed above, level of media freedom before the revolution in both countries differed, with Georgian media been more liberal according to all criteria. Thus, even provided certain setback in Georgia and given lack of changes in Kyrgyzstan, Georgian media still stays on the more advanced level of development and freedom than in Kyrgyzstan after the revolution due to this difference in the ‘point of departure’. My main goal though was not to compare specifically the static situation in between the two countries, but rather to identify the commonality of the post-revolutionary changes and their dynamics. Having arrived to the conclusion that revolutions in both countries did not lead to any democratic changes and progress, the next step would be to look for the possible explanatory factors of such negative tendencies in the area of post-revolutionary media in both republics. This should be the main focus of the next fourth chapter of the thesis.

Chapter 4: Explanations for the Current State of the Post-Revolutionary Media

The analysis of the post revolutionary media presented in the previous chapter has demonstrated that a number of negative trends are taking place in Georgia with media freedom largely deteriorating. In Kyrgyzstan, even after the revolution, it still stays on the same level as during the last and most authoritarian years of Akaev's rule. However, my main concern is that until now the revolutions in both countries have not brought any substantial improvements in the media democratization (in comparison to the preceding revolutions years) despite many hopes and expectations. Rather, there are fears that the situation may continue to worsen. Therefore, it is also essential to be able to understand why the situation is evolving this way, and what the main reasons for such media developments in post-revolutionary countries are.

Every change, including a revolutionary one, brings new hopes and expectations, but the extent to which such hopes are justifiable can largely differ. Could we have really expected a steady move to the democratic values from the messy arrival to power in Kyrgyzstan by Bakiev? Did the revolution in Georgia lead to the regime change and alteration of the political culture, or was it rather a 'change of faces'? Can we talk about elite continuation in both countries? To what extent previous regime heritage and path-dependency can keep a restrictive hand on media democratization in the short run? These will also be among the questions that I shall consider in this chapter by looking back at the trajectory of both revolutions analyzed in the first chapter of this thesis.

Larry Diamond claims that “democratic consolidation confronts a number of characteristic challenges in new and insecure democracies”²⁴⁶. On the example of cases of Latin American, East Asian and other countries he looks at such possible, either facilitating or obstructing for democratic consolidation, factors as economic performance and financial stability, political performance of the regime, strength of the state, institutional frameworks, ethnic conflicts, civil society and international influence.²⁴⁷

A combination of a number of these factors can also be influencing the situation in both Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. For example, an unstable economic situation and financial problems can “force media to seek support from political or other actors with narrow interests and away from independence”²⁴⁸. The low level of international pressure, or rather the willingness of Western states to close their eyes at the violation of human right and media freedoms in exchange for the cooperation in the war on terrorism can be considered among other possible factors influencing recent developments. The question on the strength of civil society may also be considered as an influential factor: why civil society did not put up a more robust fight against these tendencies, especially where the media are concerned. A number of things are definitely interconnected here, such as lack of organization, lack of money, poor advertising market, absence of private sponsors and thus continued reliance on state handouts (and thus state control), and divided stances within civil society itself. All of those could be among the factors influencing the dynamics of changes in the area of media democratization.

²⁴⁶ Larry Diamond, “Is the Third Wave of Democratization Over? The Imperative of Consolidation”, working paper # 237, University of Notre Dame, March 1997: 7.

²⁴⁷ Larry Diamond, “Is the Third Wave of Democratization Over? The Imperative of Consolidation”: 7-23.

²⁴⁸ Monroe Price and others, *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State* (2002), 7.

Our attention in this chapter, though, should be focused on exactly the changes that escalated after the uprisings in both countries. According to the theorists on the study of revolutions, a revolutionary situation may result either in a release of the tension ('tension release model' advocated by Brinton, Marx, Johnson) or in the escalation and continuation of the tension and conflicts ('contention model'; Charles Tilly).²⁴⁹ I shall therefore examine whether the possible fragility of the current regimes and a post-revolutionary escalation of tension could be a possible explanatory reason for the governments' stricter hold on media. I shall then conclude by specifying whether, based on the revolutionary process, expectations from the side of population or Western observers were on place and realistic. I will also suggest what could be the likely reasons behind current decline of media freedom and democratic deconsolidation in this area in both countries.

4.1. Elites Continuity and lack of regime change

The literature on democratic transition and consolidation points out that "political leadership, regime factionalism and elite settlement" are among the main elements leading to the democratic transitions.²⁵⁰ According to studies conducted in developing countries, Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymond Martin claim that values, preferences and goals of the leaders of the country and political elites make a difference in "the fate of democracy".²⁵¹ There can be many factors influencing democratization, and media development in particular, such as social

²⁴⁹ In-class discussions and lecture notes, 'Revolution and the State' class by Pr. Bozoki, 5 March 2007

²⁵⁰ This is stated in Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymond Martin Lipset *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy* (USA: second edition, 1995), 53, based on the extensive research of the development transition literature conducted by the authors.

²⁵¹ Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymond Martin Lipset, *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy* (USA: second edition 1995), 19.

circumstances²⁵², technological development, economic progress and others. However instead of examining all possible aspects effecting media system in detail, I suggest that when we look specifically at the changes (or lack of those) in the post-revolutionary media we ought to first of all see to what extent the revolutions brought a change of the political elites and to what extent the goals, ambitions and style of rule of the new leaders differ from that of the previous ones, and to what extent our own expectations (rather than that of the West) were correct as such.

Georgia

David Tsitsishvili, in his work “Changing Elites: Post-Soviet Georgia and the Rose Revolution”, argues that the new elite who came to power after the Rose Revolution does not substantially differ from the ‘overthrown elites’²⁵³. He suggests that it can be the factor explaining why the policy priorities do not bring any vivid changes. He claims that “as for the development after the Rose Revolution, we still face numerous problems with new governing elites, which in a big extent consists of the old elite members as well, rising of authoritarian regime again and establishing new clannish networks. In many ways actions of new elites remind us the old ones.”²⁵⁴

In fact, in the case of Georgia there were a number of young pro-Western leaders appointed to the leading positions in the government and, as I have described in chapter one of this thesis, Saakashvili himself was seen as the leader of the new generation, young and Western-educated,

²⁵² On the influence of social circumstances upon media development and independence, see Monroe Price and others, *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State* (Routledge, London and New York, 2002), 255-268.

²⁵³ David Tsitsishvili, “Changing Elites: Post-Soviet Georgia and the Rose Revolution”. CEU Master Thesis collection 2006/13: 3.

²⁵⁴ David Tsitsishvili, “Changing Elites: Post-Soviet Georgia and the Rose Revolution”. CEU Master Thesis collection 2006/13: 51-52.

bringing high hopes for the country's democratic development. Jonathan Wheatley described the personnel policy of the new President in detail in his book "Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution". He suggests that "at the top level of the state administration most of the new appointees were young and had not held top positions in Shevardnadze's administration"²⁵⁵. However, they are still very few and the professional level of those surrounding them is often still relatively low, especially in the regions. What David Tsitsishvili might also be right about is that the style and action of the new elites with time repeat that of the old ones.²⁵⁶

According to Wheatley, despite these shifts in the government, the president still remained the main source of power. Wheatley writes that "in many ways the new Parliament was even more timid than its predecessor", pro-government loyalists dominate there and without special approval by the President would not even start any meaningful initiative.²⁵⁷ In the case of Georgia, we see new people entering the government with a mission to build a modern democratic state including Saakashvili himself. Nonetheless, I fully agree with Wheatley that Saakashvili "attempted to introduce liberal measures by means of autocratic methods and illiberal discourse"²⁵⁸. Despite the fact that a number of new people took the main positions in the government, we can still talk about elite continuity in Georgia largely because these young Western-oriented people are still very few, they are mostly surrounded by the members of the old nomenclature, especially in the regions and they largely lean toward harsher illiberal means in the promoting their often necessary for the country reforms. They are very unwilling to accept any criticism, being

²⁵⁵ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 200.

²⁵⁶ David Tsitsishvili, "Changing Elites: Post-Soviet Georgia and the Rose Revolution". CEU Master Thesis collection 2006/13: 51-52.

²⁵⁷ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 208.

²⁵⁸ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 208.

completely sure that all they do is the only right way for the country.²⁵⁹ Given the limited time the new leaders of Georgia have to implement promised reforms in the inherited complicated political environment, high pressure and post-revolutionary expectations put on them, their temptation and inclination to put stronger hold on media and neutralize criticism may be increasingly high, offering one of the possible explanations on their tougher control of mass media.

The interviewed Georgian journalist currently working for RFERL in Prague, Okropir Rukhadze, suggests looking at the difference in the post-revolutionary elite change in the Central and Eastern Europe. He says that in the case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia change of generation and values could be observed in the aftermath of 1989 Velvet Revolution when many emigrants were coming back home bringing in new ideas and knowledge. According to him, short exposure to foreign education of some of the new leaders could not have changed much in Georgia elite's values and style of behavior²⁶⁰ and the new President assumes even bigger political power. The latest developments confirm this: according to the Freedom House 2007 report:

No comparable success had been achieved in the area of advancing democratic institutions: February 2004 Constitutional amendments strengthened presidency at the expense of Parliament, the trend towards electoral fraud has been largely overcome but elections have become less competitive in practice, energetic measures to reform the court system led to lower trust in its political independence.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Rukhadze, interview by author, 27 April 2007, Prague.

²⁶⁰ Rukhadze, interview by author, 27 April 2007, Prague.

²⁶¹ "Nations in Transit 2007", Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 1.

The fact that executive branch continues to prevail over all other state agencies creates a substantial barrier for Georgia's possibility to become a consolidated democracy.²⁶² Another aspect is that the single dominant party UNM (United National Movement) faces no serious political competition.

Kyrgyzstan

In Kyrgyzstan, the so-called Tulip or People's Revolution brought even less changes regarding the change in the elite or regime type. The members of opposition, who could hardly claim a revolution was their purpose, obviously lacked any new vision for the country when unexpectedly for everyone, including themselves, Akaev was ousted from power by a crowd. They were also the former supporters of Akaev from his close circle, who in fact later confronted his tightening grasp of power and elections manipulation, but were not able to offer an alternative plan for the country's development. This was also obvious during the two years of his rule, March 2005 till December 2006. Unlike in Georgia, the post-revolutionary leaders did not even represent a new generation and hardly held any new values as such. Scott Radnitz confirms that "a former member of the Soviet-era elite and an Akaev loyalist until 2002, Bakiev was unable to signal a break with the past"²⁶³. International Crises Group also confirms that the government lacked new faces and that with the return of old officials to the power all initial euphoria of the revolution has disappeared.²⁶⁴ One of the problems of the government, as the ICG report on post –revolutionary Kyrgyzstan says, is that after having worked with the existing system, state officials facing new challenges were forced to apply the old measures.²⁶⁵ And it

²⁶² "Nations in Transit 2007", Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 2.

²⁶³ Scott Radnitz, "What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?": 140.

²⁶⁴ "Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution". *ICG*: 10.

²⁶⁵ "Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution". *ICG*: 12.

might also take time before “trajectory correction”²⁶⁶ among new actors can take place, thus the argument may be especially applicable in the short run.

During the first year and half of his presidency, Bakiev was unable to manage the country’s problems. He was also unwilling to conduct promised constitutional reform, but in November 2006 the largest demonstration in Bishkek forced him to sign overnight a constitution reducing the power of the president. However, according to ‘Nations in Transit 2007’ report “in the last week of December 2006, pro-Bakiev deputies in parliament pushed through a package of amendments that restored some of the lost powers to the executive branch”²⁶⁷.

As for the Parliament, the deputies whose controversial election served as a main trigger for the revolution remained there and were allowed to keep their seats after March 2005.²⁶⁸ As International Crises Group (ICG) reports, Bakiev has chosen not to dissolve the Parliament, because doing so and calling for the new elections would threaten “even more turmoil and, potentially, serious opposition to the new authorities”²⁶⁹. According to Radnitz, Kyrgyz Parliament “comprises mostly businessmen and members of local elites, many with criminal charges pending against them, who benefit from immunity while they serve”²⁷⁰. If Bakiev were to make any step to take their seats away, it could have provoked more severe clashes of demonstrators leading to violence, and as some have feared, risking a civil war.

²⁶⁶ The terms of ‘trajectory adjustment’ and ‘trajectory correction’ are introduced in Gil Eyal, Ivan Szelenyi, and Eleanor Townsley, *Making Capitalism without Capitalists. Class Formation and Elite Struggles in Post-Communist Central Europe* (Verso: London, New York, 1998), 39.

²⁶⁷ “Nations in Transit 2007”, Kyrgyzstan (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 2.

²⁶⁸ “Nations in Transit 2007”, Kyrgyzstan (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 2.

²⁶⁹ “Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution”, ICG: 10.

²⁷⁰ Scott Radnitz, “What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?”: 140.

In Kyrgyzstan, during the very first months after the revolution, there were positive changes in the media freedom. However, one year later, the picture was already looking different, with the presidency acting in a much more authoritarian (and illiberal) way than anyone might have hoped in spring 2005. As Adam Albion writes “a deeper observer may have seen deeper, darker areas of Kyrgyz politics which were much less amenable to change -- and thus concluded that neither democracy, nor liberal media, was going to last as the do-gooder westerners hoped”²⁷¹. According to Albion “the disappointments concerning the liberalization of media are a function of the continued authoritarian instincts of the executive power -- the president's grasping need to control information and media, and not trust the marketplace of ideas -- so it becomes a discussion of why Bakiev and especially Saakashvili have seemingly betrayed many of the democratic hopes invested in them”²⁷². I agree that we should not have been expecting much from Bakiev -- an old communist-Akaev era politician, but Saakashvili, who was still viewed as a representative of new generation with liberal ideas, is genuinely disappointing in his centralizing, autocratic tendencies.

Georgia has seen more visible decline in media freedom than Kyrgyzstan. I, however, maintain that media freedom decline in Georgia is more disappointing than the current trends in Kyrgyzstan for two other main reasons as well. First of all, much more could be and was expected from a young and charismatic Saakashvili with his vision of the new direction of the country, with his Western education and connections. The second reason is that the whole dynamics of the revolution in Georgia was allowing to expect positive changes. Expecting much

²⁷¹ I am grateful for this and other ideas and insights offered by my colleague Adam Albion, one of the best experts on Central Asian politics, Director of Critical Areas Research for World Monitors, Inc., and Director of the Central Eurasia Leadership Academy (CELA), via our e-mail correspondence with him.

²⁷² Ideas expressed by Adam Albion via our e-mail correspondence.

from Bakiev, or from the messy events of March 2005, though legitimate was quite naïve. What has happened in Kyrgyzstan was hardly a revolution in its true meaning, thus the expectations and the possibility for the serious changes should have not been overestimated. As Scott Radnitz writes “Kyrgyzstan did not have a true revolution (meaning the transformation or overthrow of a whole sociopolitical order) or even a regime change. What the country had, by all appearances, was something decidedly more limited, namely, a transfer of power”²⁷³. As I have argued in the first chapter, Kyrgyzstan lacked real leader with a new vision for the country during the March popular uprisings²⁷⁴, and expecting much from those who took over the top posts after Akaev flew from the country to Moscow, was not, unfortunately, especially realistic.

As it was argued above, we can observe a continuation of elites and regime type in both countries (though to different extent). Nonetheless, the fact that the new leaders are following the old style of rule and political culture cannot alone explain the reason why the situation in Georgia regarding media democratization is “severely curtailed”²⁷⁵ after the revolution and in Kyrgyzstan it is at minimum not improving. We shall consider other reasons why new government is holding an increasingly firmer grip on the countries’ mass media.

4.2. Fragility of the current post-revolutionary governments and domestic instability

Linz and Stepan argued that “the previous regime type has a determinative influence both on the path open for a transition country and on the tasks that need to be addressed in order to reach

²⁷³ Scott Radnitz, “What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?”: 133.

²⁷⁴ Please, see chapter 1, page 17-20 of this thesis.

²⁷⁵ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 207.

democratic consolidation”²⁷⁶. According to several authors, it is therefore possible to assume, that “the tasks and paths open for the establishment of free and independent media could also be highly dependent upon the previous regime of a country in transition”. I would add here that it can also depend on a way the new leaders came to power and on their fear of possible repetition of past revolutionary events, on the situation and problems they have inherited, and on the post-revolutionary tensions and domestic instability that they have to deal with. Decline of media freedoms in the short run might point out the tendencies of ‘democratic deconsolidation’; it might also point out at some other difficulties that a country’s leadership is facing at the moment.

New leaders of both countries, Kyrgyzstan and Georgia, have inherited “immature, ineffective and inflexible state institutions”²⁷⁷ but they also have had to face the instability of the immediate post-revolutionary situation, escalating domestic conflicts and regional cleavages, and drastically increasing criminal rates (especially in Kyrgyzstan). Such tendencies may result not only on the tougher control of mass media during such a period from the side of the state, but also on media’s sense of instability provoked by the criminalization of the country and their subsequent dependency from the side of the criminal bosses and business magnates attempting to influence political decisions of the new government. Fear of such criminal structures and of their connection with the authorities can also put pressure on journalists and lead them to practice self-censorship and not to cover certain issues as well.

²⁷⁶ Linz and Stepan 1996, summarized in Monroe Price and others, *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State* (Routledge, London and New York, 2002), 3.

²⁷⁷ This is written on Georgia in Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*: 208, but it is also absolutely true for the situation in Kyrgyzstan.

As the authors of the book “The Future of Democracy in Europe” write, governments may find it “increasingly difficult to extract sufficient resources, to regulate behavior and, hence, to satisfy effectively and efficiently the expectations of their citizens – and this causes a decline in the prestige and legitimacy of rulers”²⁷⁸. Fear of such decline of their prestige for the leaders of post-revolutionary countries where the expectations are especially very high, is even sharper.

After he had come to power, Saakashvili implemented a number of progressive reforms, including the fight against corruption and police transformation. He also managed to successfully bring Adjara under the central control²⁷⁹ and set the goal for the country to join NATO and the European Union²⁸⁰. However, he had to face increasing domestic and international tension over the issues of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, territories of which are still controlled by unrecognized governments. Saakashvili’s struggle to get South Ossetia back turned out to be largely unsuccessful and his “insistence on reintegrating the breakaway regions risked unleashing a dangerous conflict that could easily involve Russia”²⁸¹. Such a tendency was already seen by the end of 2006 when this conflict led to Russia imposing an economic blockade of Georgia, bringing new security threats for Georgia and presenting the challenges for its economic development.²⁸² In the light of high expectations from the side of population, multiplied by the country’s domestic instability and external security threats, the new leadership might take a harsher measure towards media and attempt to maintain control over the spread of information, looking for the justification of such steps in the current security priorities as well as in the necessity to keep the nation united.

²⁷⁸ Andras Bozoki and others, coordinated by Philippe C. Schmitter, and Alexander H. Trechsel, *The Future of Democracy in Europe: trends, analyses and reforms* (Council of Europe Publishing, Belgium, 2004), 18.

²⁷⁹ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 208.

²⁸⁰ “Nations in Transit 2007”, Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 1.

Kyrgyzstan

As Scott Radnitz writes “sadly, instead of breathing a new and more democratic spirit into the polity, the March events appear, at least in the short term, mostly to have worsened Kyrgyzstan’s political instability, with rising numbers of assassinations and unruly crowd actions”²⁸³. Such growing tension inside the country, rising numbers of the murders of Members of Parliaments (three deputies allegedly connected with criminal groups were killed in Bishkek), sharpening divide between Northern and Southern parts of the country may not only prompt new leaders to keep harsh measures but can also in themselves hinder any prospects and attempts of the new government to normalize political situation and to start (still potentially possible) implementation of reforms.

The post-revolutionary government has inherited a number of serious problems such as “a stagnant economy with little potential for change, difficulty in imposing order throughout the country, and growing security problems tied to politics in neighboring states”²⁸⁴. The internal post-revolutionary tensions add to this list significantly. The demonstrations that ousted Akaev from power basically never stopped since March 2005, and it took new groups of protestors a couple of days after Akaev was gone to reappear on the streets of Bishkek with new requests.²⁸⁵

From one side they are urging Bakiev to implement some of the promised reforms, but from another side they are contributing to the growing instability inside the country and pointing out to the weakness of the state.²⁸⁶ I agree with Scott Radnitz who says that “this new phase of “hyperdemocracy”, a result of localism, loyalty to particular leaders, and a weak central state,

²⁸¹ Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, 209.

²⁸² “Nations in Transit 2007”, Georgia (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 1.

²⁸³ Scott Radnitz, “What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?”: 133.

²⁸⁴ “Nations in Transit 2007”, Kyrgyzstan (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 3.

has threatened the stability of Kyrgyzstan and weakened the prospects for sustainable change in the direction of greater democracy”.²⁸⁷ This new source of instability, combined with existing external (palpable conflicts in the Fergana valley, religious extremist groups stemming from the neighboring Uzbekistan) and internal security threats (such as intensifying after the revolution cleavages between South and North oblasts of country, growing public discontent, increasing rates of serious crimes) may prompt Bakiev to resist planned reforms directed at liberalization of media (such as transformation of State Channel KTR). Current unprofessionalism and corruption among some of journalists, contributing to the escalation of regional and local tensions may explain (though never justify) a government’s recent attempts to restrict independent mass media. As ICG reports “at times it appeared the most pressing need was simply to ensure that the state, with all its ills, did not collapse”²⁸⁸.

I absolutely agree with Monroe E. Price, Beata Rozumilowicz, and Stefaan G. Verhulst who consider ‘politically vulnerable governments’ to be one of the barriers to achieving the goal of independent media.²⁸⁹ I believe that vulnerability of the acting governments offer a possible explanation for the current negative tendencies in Georgia and for continuation of almost the same situation (as during Akaev rule) in Kyrgyzstan in the area of media. Saakashvili’s growing intolerance towards criticism and the lack of the new leadership incentives to allow for more media freedom plays substantial role in Georgia. The continuation of internal tension, non-stop protests, and regional cleavages contribute substantially to Bakiev’s and his government

²⁸⁵ Scott Radnitz, “What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?”: 139.

²⁸⁶ “Nations in Transit 2007”, Kyrgyzstan (draft, unpublished at the moment of thesis submission): 3.

²⁸⁷ Scott Radnitz, “What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?”: 139.

²⁸⁸ “Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution”, ICG: 12.

²⁸⁹ Monroe Price and others, *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State* (2002), 7.

vulnerability; this in turn is reflected in the lack of progress and restrictive measures towards media independence in Kyrgyzstan.

Conclusion

The dynamics and outcome of such important contemporary events as recent ‘color’ revolution in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan are largely understudied in the current political discourse. In order to partially contribute to filling in the existing gap, this thesis presented the first systematic analysis of the post-revolutionary situation and changes in the area of media in both countries. More specifically, the main objective of the thesis was to conduct an analysis on whether Rose Revolution in Georgia and Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan have brought anticipated and much hoped for changes in the area of media democratization.

In order to be able to conduct such a research and estimate the direction of changes, six major criteria were elaborated. By looking at these criteria we can trace the specific changes that took place in the area of media during the short term after the revolutions. Such criteria were elaborated in chapter two and included: 1) media legislation and implementation of the laws; 2) government control of state media; 3) scope of independent media; 4) accessibility of information; 5) journalistic culture and professionalism; and 6) violence against journalists. These criteria were used for the subsequent analysis of the post-revolutionary media situation and trends in the chapter three of the thesis.

It should be noted that the initial situation, the so-called ‘point of departure’ in regard to the pre-revolutionary media situation in both countries varied substantially with Kyrgyz media being

much less free than that in Georgia even during the times of Akaev and Shevardnadze. According to Freedom House Georgia was classified as ‘partially free’ and Kyrgyzstan as ‘not free’.²⁹⁰ The goal of the thesis was to see whether, given the initial situations in both countries as they were, the respective ‘color’ revolution in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan brought any expected improvements, reforms, or changes. Throughout the third chapter, I discussed whether in respect to the six criteria we can trace any signs towards media democratization in both countries.

According to the present thesis research findings (based on the secondary sources as well as original research) that followed the six elaborated criteria and took into consideration the multiple, often complex aspects of the areas in media liberalization and development, we can conclude that the revolutionary uprising and subsequent change of the leadership in Kyrgyzstan did not lead to any substantial democratic tendencies within the period between March 2005 and December 2006. In Georgia, overall within November 2003 and December 2006 despite some improvements in the area of legislation, we can observe predominantly negative trends.

The next main question of this thesis was *why the situation remains or unfolds the way it does, and what could be the possible explanatory factors for the lack of positive changes and for the appearance of the negative tendencies*. According to the literature on democratic consolidation, there can be a number of reasons that are either obstructing or promoting democratization processes and thus influencing democratic development inside media as well. Among them are

²⁹⁰ “Freedom of the Press 2006: a global survey of media independence”: 13.

political institutions, strength of civil society, international influence, economic reforms, and others²⁹¹. All of them can form the direction that media develops in a given country.

I absolutely agree with the importance of these factors. However, in the last fourth chapter of the thesis I have given a priority to see what could possibly lead to such trends in media specifically in post-revolutionary countries that have just seen their authoritarian rulers been ousted. First of all, I have discussed whether what has happened in Kyrgyzstan and Georgia during the respective revolutions could possibly give a strong ground for the realistic expectations in the area of media. Any change brings a hope, in Georgia such hopes were backed by the presence of the promising Western-oriented leader Mikheil Saakashvili and by the whole process of mass uprising as such. What has happened in Kyrgyzstan though rather resembled ‘the process of state collapse’. As ICG write:

At the end, the Akaev regime consisted of less than ten people. When they left the country, their place was taken by a confused collection of opposition activists and former government officials, trying to restore some order in a dangerously unstable situation.²⁹²

The way the new leaders came to power and the fact who came to power in Kyrgyzstan gave little realistic backing to expecting serious positive changes.

I have looked at the elite continuity and lack of the regime change argument as a possible explanation for the current trends. I argued that the argument tends to hold true for both countries, though to a different extent (much more visible in the case of Kyrgyzstan). I believe that continuation of elites may help us understand lack of changes especially in the short run, but

²⁹¹ These are listed among ‘facilitating and obstructing factors for democratic development’ by Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset in *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy* (second edition, 1995), 19-56.

²⁹² “Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution”, *ICG*: 9.

the argument itself is insufficient for the explanation of the negative changes in the area of media democratization. Therefore, I have argued that such factors as escalation of post revolutionary tensions and shaken security situation may be among those that have negative repercussions for media democratization.

Thus, this thesis analyzed and reflected upon both questions set at the beginning. Using the wide collection of secondary sources as well as the valuable information obtained during the conducted interviews, I have evaluated the major changes taking place in the area of media after the Rose Revolution in Georgia and Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. I have also presented possible explanatory factors for the current tendencies that media in both countries face. In addition, based on the existing literature in the communications and media studies I have also elaborated a theoretical framework, which could be applied not only for tracing changes after the revolutionary uprising, but also for comparing situation in the area of media over time and between countries in other regions of the world. The goal of this thesis was focused indeed -- to see what exactly changes are taking place in the area of media in both countries after the revolutions. However, a more detailed comparison of pre and post- revolutionary media in between two countries could be a possible continuation of the present study. I also hope that my thesis will serve as an initial step and an invitation for further studies on the impact of the revolutionary uprisings in Central Eurasia.

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APPENDIX A: List of interviewees

Kyrgyzstan	Georgia
<p><i>Tynchtykbek Tchoroev</i> Director, Kyrgyz Service RFERL, Prague</p> <p><i>Narynbek Idinov</i> Editor, Broadcaster Kyrgyz Service RFERL, Prague</p> <p><i>Venera Djumataeva</i> Broadcaster, Kyrgyz Service RFERL, Prague</p> <p><i>Ainura Asankojoeva</i> Broadcaster, Kyrgyz Service RFERL, Prague</p> <p><i>Kubat Otorbaev</i> Director, and journalist Azzatyk (Liberty) Media Institute Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan</p> <p><i>Cholpon Nogoibaeva</i> Programs Director Soros Foundation Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan</p> <p><i>Elvira Sarieva</i> Managing Director Internews-Kyrgyzstan Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan</p> <p><i>Shamaral Maychiev</i> Media Representatives Institute Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan</p>	<p><i>David Kakabadze</i> Director, Georgian Service RFERL, Prague</p> <p><i>Okropir Rukhadze</i> Broadcaster Georgian Service RFERL, Prague</p> <p><i>Revaz Sakevarishvili</i> Economic Commentator <i>Imedi TV</i> Tbilisi, Georgia</p> <p><i>Shahin Abassov</i> Deputy chief of party <i>IREX-USAID</i> project "Working to Help Azerbaijani Media", Baku, Azerbaijan. Journalist on Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.</p> <p><i>Margarita Antidze</i> Senior Correspondent <i>Reuters News Agency</i> Tbilisi, Georgia</p> <p><i>Madina Serebryakova</i> Former Editor-in-chief of the Georgian edition of <i>Cosmopolitan</i> magazine. Former journalist, "24 Hours" newspaper</p> <p><i>Michail Vignansky</i> <i>EFE</i> Correspondent <i>Vremya Novostei</i> Correspondent Tbilisi, Georgia</p>

APPENDIX B: List of main questions for journalists

- 1) In your opinion have revolution brought any changes in the area of media in Kyrgyzstan?
If so, in which exactly aspects do you see the changes? Are the overall trends negative or positive?
- 2) Do you think based on what was happening in February-March 2005 we could have been expecting any major changes? Have you been expecting changes in the area of media?
- 3) Did these changes meet your expectations after the revolution and of a new government?
- 4) Do you see any visible positive/negative changes in the following areas?
 - Media legislation reform and implementation of the laws
 - Government control of state media
 - Journalistic culture/professionalism (autonomy, working environment, ethics/norms, corruption among journalist)
 - Accessibility of information
 - Violence against journalists, limitations on human rights (freedom of speech, press freedom)
 - Scope of independent media
- 5) Do journalists exercise their profession freely or are they subject to intervention?
- 6) What do you think can explain the current state of media (the particular changes we discussed or lack of such changes)?
- 7) What do you think are the current trends there? Are there signs that situation is getting worse or you think it might improve?
- 8) If you could compare the post-revolutionary situation in our country with what is happening in the media area in Georgia, where do you see the major differences?