

**Loving Your Neighbor as Your Self-Identity:
Women's Leading Role in the Interethnic Sheltering During
the Osh Conflict of 2010**

By

Madina Akhmetshina

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Supervisor: Professor Andrea Peto

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Abstract

Apart from magnetic abundance and diversity of fruit, culture, and nature, Central Asian region has also become known for continuous unrests ever since the break of the Soviet Union. One of the recent cases of mass violence took place in Osh, Kyrgyzstan in June, 2010. This thesis aims to analyze two areas of the event: interethnic sheltering during the conflict through the prism of women's traditional roles; and the retraditionalisation of these roles in the aftermath due to increased violence in public domain. I conducted interviews with the witnesses of the conflict in an attempt to understand the rationale behind sheltering ethnic "other" despite of the associated risks, and the narrated meaning they ascribe to interethnic sheltering during a conflict and violence in the aftermath. The central hypothesis of the thesis is that politics of motherhood has provided space for favorable preconditions for inter-ethnic rescuing, but after the conflict has pushed women further into private domain. My major preference is given to the cognitive-perceptual theory for building my analysis and arguments. This thesis will be of value to gender studies scholars by providing a critical view on the role of maternal thinking in the situation of a conflict. It can also benefit the researchers in various fields of political science, as it questions the premises of the classical ethnic conflict theories, most of which omit gender differences in political behavior during a conflict, and, as a rule, omit the understudied sheltering phenomena.

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... as a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.

Virginia Woolf (1938)¹

I Introduction

Almost two years have passed after the most tragic event in the history of my newly born country – Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzstan), which will soon celebrate its 21st year of independence. I grew up in the city of Osh (the southern capital) until the age of 16 and kept coming back to visit my parents and relatives while studying in Bishkek – Kyrgyzstan's capital. Osh became an undividable part of my past and even though I was not present during the riots of 2010, the grief of the witnesses strongly resonated to my heart. Sharing my compassion with my colleagues in Bishkek, we could do no more than call our friends and family in the South and support them emotionally during the days of the war: June 10-17². According to many sources (Schwartz, 2010; Besten, 2010; Stenin, 2011; Sholk, 2011, etc.); it was a clash between groups of titular nation Kyrgyz and ethnic minority – Uzbek; the latter constituting 30 percent of the southern population. I visited my hometown one month later and could not recognize some of the streets: houses, shops, hotels, municipal buildings, and even schools³ were destroyed by fire. The June events, as they are often called by local population, have undoubtedly left both psychological and physical devastations. Local hospitals and mental institutions were over-occupied with patients, the graves have been promptly filled with

¹ Woolf, V. (1938) *Three Guineas*. In Wilford, R, and Miller, R (1998) *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism. The Politics of Transition*. London: Routledge: 1.

² The duration of the conflict varies, but usually is reported to be June 10-17, according to Fryer, Satybaldieva, etc. (2011). *Indirect Fall-out from the June 2010 Events in Kyrgyzstan: the Case of Kara-Suu*. EUCAM Commentary. No 14. Retrieved on May, 1 from <http://www.ceps.eu/book/indirect-fall-out-june-2010-events-kyrgyzstan-case-kara-suu>

³ The burnt schools were unfortunately not a rumor, according to photo report of William Daniels (2010). *Burnt and Looted*. Panos Pictures Photo Agency. Retrieved on May 13, 2012 from: <http://www.panos.co.uk/bin/panos2.dll/go?a=disp&t=gl->

hundreds of bodies⁴, and some neighborhoods burned to the ground⁵ amounting in a total number of 2000 houses destroyed, according to BBC news (2010). Perhaps the aftermath is even more saddening, as it forced around 400,000 Uzbeks and Kyrgyz leave their homes in the Southern Kyrgyzstan, according to Recknagel (2010) with some never coming back or residing temporarily.

In as much as the potential reasons for the conflict and its estimated damage are important and have been studied, little literature and news coverage is devoted to the phenomena of inter-ethnic cooperation, such as sheltering. In fact, as a former resident of a mixed ethnic group neighborhood (later referred to as mixed neighborhoods), with ethnic Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Russian, and Tatars living together for decades and celebrating national holidays together, I was not surprised that my neighbors were acting in a team spirit during those tragic days. For example, a Kyrgyz family would hide an Uzbek one against “other” Kyrgyz, creating an interesting “us” and “them” loyalty cognition. Only later did I realize that cooperation like this was not necessarily undertaken by all neighborhoods in the region. Moreover, the phenomenon of rescuing contradicts the majority of the theories on ethnic conflicts, which usually silence such occasions.

First of all, the definition of an ethnic conflict is contestable depending on a theory. For instance, in their book, *Ethnic Conflict in the Post-Soviet World: Case Studies and Analysis* (1998: 3-13), Drobizheva, Gottemoeller, etc. cite Crawford Young, who categorized all theories of ethnic conflict: primordial, instrumentalist, and constructivist. While the former theory emphasizes the ethnicity as an “inherent attribute” of a society, the instrumental one focuses

loader.html&_storyState=1&_tId=2&groupid=13&galleryid=1155&glbid=1661&si=FA6A4ACA93DF46B0B0D9FB98237627&rnd=2835.30

⁴ More than 400 people, according to BBC News (2010). *Fear and Shock as Ethnic Uzbeks Flee Kyrgyz Clashes*. Retrieved on February 29, 2012 from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10303838>

⁵ Cheremushki is the neighborhood in Osh, badly damaged by fire during the conflict, according to Human Rights House Foundation (2010). *Satellite Images Reveal Violence in Kyrgyzstan*. Retrieved from on May 7, 2012 <http://humanrightshouse.org/noop/page.php?p=Articles/14545.html&print=1>

on the role of “elites’ claims on behalf of collectivity”, and the latter theory puts forward ethnicity as an “ongoing social process of construction and deconstruction”. Each of these schools could perhaps explain the ethnic conflict in Osh to a certain degree, and yet they all fail to answer several important questions: why is it that some people choose belonging to the “imagined community” other than his/her ethnicity/nationality? Also, why not everybody acts the same during a conflict? Are there gender differences in the behavior during a war and if yes, why? How were they constructed and is femininity essentially peaceful? Who and why chose to stay “passive” (“not to take an active” role in violence, as would be expected of them) during a war, and event to take a step further – despite of all the risks, to save the people of “opposing” ethnicity?

In a critical response to the above classical theories of ethnic conflicts, I therefore, aim with this thesis to learn about the possible reasons of behavioral “deviation”, such as sheltering, among men and women during the Osh conflict of 2010; to find out how they reflected on their acts retrospectively in the light of continued violence among two opposing groups; and finally to demonstrate the impact that the ethnic conflict on women of certain age, ethnic group, and class. One of the difficulties studying this “deviation” is that it usually does not fit into general ethnic hatred context of the post-war situation and that is why people tend to silence it for many years. As for example my friend from Azerbaijan told me, which shows hindering factor in the similar researches of other ethnic clashes, “I highly doubt that there were any cases of rescuing between Azeris and Armenians. But even if there were, of course nobody would ever admit it. For the war still goes on.” Despite the proclamation of an open conflict in Osh, it continues in hidden spheres, over numbers, bodies, and terminology, all of which I will discuss in the historical and political background chapter.

My first hypothesis is that people from mixed neighborhoods were more likely to rescue each other than those of mono-ethnic ones. It is my strong conviction that it can best be understood and proved through looking at women’s roles in these neighborhoods, namely

their traditional roles. Thus, this thesis provides a new perspective on motherhood, which has an “uneasy relationship with feminism” (Taylor, 1997: 349). I further argue for a hypothesis that traditional women's roles such as cooking, mothering, and even praying outside of mosque together provided space for life-saving sheltering during the Osh riots of 2010.

First of all, cooking sumalak⁶ is traditionally an activity that women of a neighborhood would do during the night before the Persian New Year, or “Nowruz”, as it is called locally and celebrated pompously all over the country leaving no classes, genders, or ethnic groups aside.

During my childhood, I remember our neighbors inviting us to cook it together and even if we could not participate, some of them would bring a bowl filled with sumalak as a sign of respect and congratulation with a global holiday. Some of my interviewees referred to Sumalak cooking as an incontestable rationale for cooperating during the conflict. Other uniting activities shared by women will be discussed in the Analysis chapter. It is the tradition of cooking and mothering (giving care) of the sheltered peoples that has enabled women to take leading role in the rescuing. According to the stories told by my interviewees, while men were outside patrolling the area and saving their relatives, women were reuniting in cooking for/together with the sheltered people, nurturing each other as mothers would do.

This chapter is followed by the general historical and political background of the region to familiarize the reader with a context, in which sheltering was done. Then, in the theoretical framework chapter, I attempt to explain the rescuing behavior through outlining three theories: cognitive-perceptual theory suggested by Monroe (1994), political theory of “wounded attachments” by Brown (1993), and performativity. Monroe’s standpoints are derived from the studies of rescuing Jews by Poles during World War II, which I found to be

⁶ According to Jaclyn Michael of the Harvard University Outreach Center and Center for Middle Eastern Studies (2010), sumalak, or “samanu” as it is originally called in Persian, is a meal prepared during the celebration of Nowruz – a Persian New Year. It is a “wheat pudding”, which is prepared to attract fertility and the sweetness of life.

applicable to Kyrgyzstan's case. On the other hand, even though Brown's ideas refer to politicized identities in general, some of her insights may as well be used for bringing up the paradoxes in people's behavior in Osh. Finally, despite Butler's general reference of performativity in the context of gender and sex, it is valuable for elucidating ethnic hatred performances in the region.

My major hypothesis is that the politics of motherhood, supported by the pro-family feminists (Dietz, 1985: 19) has laid the foundation for the reconstruction of the traditional female roles in the aftermath of the conflict, by bringing women deeper in the private domain. I will discuss it in the aftermath section of the Analysis chapter. In conclusion, I will look at the limitations of my studies and potential further research areas.

II Cultural, Historical, and Political Background of the Osh Conflict of 2010

This chapter will give an introductory level familiarity of the conflict to the reader who has little knowledge about the area and the event.

Cultural Context: The Religion of Sweeping the Front Yard

Before drawing the political and historical map of the region, I am presenting my personal experience as a tool for showing how small traditional practices have contributed to serious political behavior during the conflict of 2010. Traditional neighborhoods in Osh consist of large houses for extended family members' cohabitation, and the area outside of it depending on the size of the house. This exterior spot is usually not covered with grass and has no fence. So it is basically a front yard without borders, partially or fully situated on the public area, where people and cars are able to pass. Keeping this area clean has a special meaning in mahallas. All of my childhood I remember seeing young girls or elder women who did not have daughters cleaning the street near their houses starting as early as at 6 am and as often as every day in the warm season time (April-November). My mother would very often present them to me as a standard of cleanness to follow and expressed her deepest discontent with my occasional disregarding the unwritten rules of a neighborhood. This is why I named it *religion*: at times it seemed to me that the whole life is revolving around a belief in maintaining the front yard clean and having a good public account as a "respectable clean woman living in the house" is a matter of vital importance, so that others "don't think that some kind of handicapped or alcoholics live here", as my and many other mothers would convey. In the mornings, when I would clean it or when jog with my father, I would see other girls virtually near every house either watering the streets or sweeping them all along my 4 kilometer distance. I always took it as given, but only

now did I realize that such activities opened space for short but consistent interactions among the sweepers, especially those closely located to each other. During particularly hot, dusty and dry days of summer (mid-June till mid-August), some girls would sweep or water the front yards in the evenings as well. I would like to pay attention to the fact that I am not defending extensive house labor laid on girls' shoulders, but rather to my attempt to illustrate its effects on the relationships among members of a neighborhood.

Furthermore, as my observations allow me to conclude, sweeping the land outside the household is a default obligation of girls ever since the age of 6-7. They are continuously conveyed, "What will the neighbors think and talk of us, if we don't keep it clean!? What a shame!" Without realizing it, the parents of these girls are accustoming young women to the inter-ethnic communication (in the mixed neighborhoods) on the level of habit, or as something given since childhood, apart from usual children activities such as playing outside the houses or riding winter sleighs in the winter time⁷. Hence, I argue that it is rather a prevailing trend of mixed ethnicities neighborhood members to cooperate with each other during the conflict. Perhaps, after the riots of 1990 in Osh, some people re-established peaceful coexistence because of inevitable frequent interactions on a daily basis during such cleaning activities. The frequency of contact was also emphasized by Shaw (2005: 509) as a determinant of anticipated support from neighbors, especially among older adults due to their residential stability. People in Osh tend to permanently stay in large houses because of the culture of extended families, which UNICEF (2007) states to be a long tradition. Therefore, a certain residential stability can be assumed in mahallas and thus a high rate of interactions with neighbors is common.

Hence, along with collective cooking sumalak, and delivering plov during Kurban Bairam, women have established far more reaching relationships with their neighbors by every

⁷ Even though Osh is situated in the valley, it is not flat. This fact in combination with continental climate presents its inhabitants many spots and time for riding sleighs during winter season, which usually lasts for 3-4 months.

morning/evening chats during sweeping/watering the area outside the household. It even empowers me to conclude that had it not been for such gendered activity, there would be no sheltering and thus, the whole course of history could have been different, with much more casualties and irreconcilable sides.

Historical Background

According to Sajjadpour in Smith (1996), the greatest threats to Central Asian security are internal: “The painstaking process of nation building, the legitimacy crisis, rapid social and economic transformation, decolonization, ethnic diversity, border disputes, and a catalogue of other issues are all sources of instability in the post-Soviet republics.” At the heart of the matter is the ethnic composition of each state, none of which existed in such form as it was before the Russian conquest. Consequently, some ethnic minorities have migrated to the countries outside of the titular nation, both voluntarily in a search for “better life” and forcibly by Stalin's repression regime. As Smith (1996) explains, the titular nationality of Uzbekistan is Uzbek, of Kazakhstani is Kazakh, etc. He states that ethnic populations are also split by international boundaries: “for example, there are more ethnic Tajiks in Afghanistan than in Tajikistan itself.” In Kyrgyzstan, on the other hand, the majority of the population is ethnic Kyrgyz, which made the nationalist politics easier, alas only in the North, which has historically the territory of Kyrgyzstan, while Osh and other Southern cities – Uzbek.⁸ According to Menon (1995: 153), the tendency towards instability in the region started to manifest particularly after 1985, with riots occurring in Turkmenistan's capital in 1988; a fighting between Uzbeks and Meshketian Turks in the Fergana Valley the following year, and finally in the violence of 1990 in Osh, “between Uzbeks (resented by Kyrgyz for their perceived economic advantages) and Kyrgyz (seen by the Uzbeks as dominating the political apparatus)”.

The twenty years of relatively restored peace after the ethnic riots of 1990 between the

⁸ Please see map of the region at the appendix section on p.58.

two groups were challenged by the economic downs in the country and what Roza Otunbaeva, former Kyrgyzstan president, called “the absence of a unified nation” and “the crisis of sovereignty” (Otunbaeva, 2011).⁹ The country has experienced two revolutions in 5 years: one in March, 2005 and second – in April of 2010, both in the capital city of Bishkek, followed by massive lootings on the streets (Tkachenko, 2010). The latter resulted in 75-100 people dead and hundreds injured (Tkachenko, 2010; Baev, 2011), overthrowing the President Kurmanbek Bakiev, and replacing him by the interim government president Roza Otumbaeva. Since I rented an apartment right next to the central square Ala-Too, I could hear shootings and crowds screaming, see the burning building of Defense Department and attorney general’s offices, and observe the looters breaking the nearby cars and the windows of the governmental building across the street in 10 meters from my apartment house. While we (people who lived in Bishkek) were recovering from the shock of this revolution, we heard even more disturbing news from Osh and Jalal-Abad, which left several hundreds of thousands misplaced and several thousand people killed, according to polit.ru news agency (2010); 470 dead according to Melvin and Umuraliev (2011). The tensions between these two groups existed ever since the division by Joseph Stalin in the mid-1930s of the region, which was historically inhabited by various ethnicities. According to Khamidov (2007), before Soviet rule, perhaps because of the belonging to one religion – Sunni Muslim, these ethnic groups cooperated against external invaders. Later, in 1924 the territory of the Southern Kyrgyzstan was bordered according to the dominant in percentage group, which has been followed by on-going arguments, but usually in the private sphere because Soviet

Regime was promoting a united, Soviet identity by suppressing ethnic belonging of the people,

⁹ Otumbaeva, R. (2011). *President Otunbaeva on Kyrgyzstan Economic Challenges and Political Achievements*. Carnegie Empowerment for International Peace. Transcript. Retrieved on May 5, 2012 from: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/0307_transcript_kyrgyz.pdf

according to Grillo (2003)¹⁰. As Smith (1996) and Brubaker (1994, 1996) in Mogaran (2007: 253-277) have concluded, “the USSR institutionalised ethnicity in a federal structure that enshrined the paradoxical combination of ethnic and civic nationalism, in a manner that determined access to scarce resources and life chances.” Therefore, Mogaran (2007: 255) argues that the concept of ethnicity in Kyrgyzstan and many other post-Soviet republics is far more complex than usually described by Western scholars. It is important to consider it when comparing and contrasting this conflict to any other ethnic war world wide. It will be reflected in the interviews that the concept of ethnicity is rather vague, especially in the mixed neighborhoods. Mogaran (2007: 256) further argues that “on the scale of union republics, the USSR codified and institutionalised nationality through the organisation of republics based on single, dominant ethnic groups,” which made this paradox even more complicated. I argue that similar to the USSR model, the neighborhoods in Osh were formed – united by the city ideology, but territorially divided according to an ethnic group, which in itself carries a permanent seed of tensions among groups. It is reflected in claims of many scholars, such as (Fane 1996: 275 in Mogaran 2007: 256), who claims that 'ethnic conflict' (whatever definition it might have) tends to reach the level of a new tradition of Central Asia. For example, Clem (1997:172-173) in Mogaran, (2007: 257), justifies the above view by stating that the newly forming ethnic identities in Central Asian countries will be manifested in similar to Osh riots of 2010 continuously.

According to Marat (2007), on the top of the overall turbulence of identity formation it was particularly due to the rise of the nationalism policies actively initiated by first president Askar Akaev, some of which turned into ethnocentric and thus constructed more explicit ethnic boundaries among citizens, according to Marat (2007).¹¹ Before analyzing how these policies have shaped people’s ethnic identities, it is necessary to look at the history of the region and

¹⁰ Grillo, R.D. (2003). *Cultural Essentialism and Cultural Anxiety*. Anthropological Theory. 3(2): 157–173.

¹¹ Marat, E.(2007). *State-Propagated Narratives about a National Defender in Central Asian States*. The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies. Issue 6(7). Retrieved on May, 14 from: <http://pipss.revues.org/545>

what could have led to the continuation of the inter-ethnic violence. One of the landmarks in the history of Kyrgyz Republic in this regard is the case of Interethnic riots of 1990, which took place in Osh and its neighboring town of Uzgen (Tishkov, 1999: 581).

In his research on ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Fumagalli (2007: 567-569), investigates the tools employed by elites and the conditions conducting ethnic minority mobilisation. For example, he states that the memory of the events of 1990, according to the literature on ethnic mobilisation, “would be used as resources from which nationalist leaders draw to build support for their organisations” (2007: 578). Since it was precisely the case with the Osh conflict of 2010, it is even more important to see what happened or was narrated to happen in 1990. However, even more than that, I am interested in how this event will be reflected in the speeches of the interviewees who have lived through both conflicts and whether they would rationalize ethnic violence by the preceding conflict, which happened exactly 20 years ago. It can be concluded then that memory was one of the main mobiliser, in addition to the rumor of rape, which will be discussed later. According to Fumagalli’s (2007: 578) interviews with local activists and members of Uzbek community conducted in Osh and Jalalabad in 2003, the grievance towards injustice “resonated widely across the Uzbek community”. It makes it even more appealing to find out the answer to the main question of my thesis: why some people chose to “forget” 1990 and not be mobilized for interethnic violence?

When studying the riots of 1990, it is significant to take informal politics of the region into account. For instance, Collins (2004: 240) emphasizes the role of clans in Central Asian region. According to her, by 1989-90, “as the Soviet regime weakened under perestroika, clans reasserted themselves, regaining power from Moscow and stabilizing the political crises in their republics. Kyrgyz and Uzbek clan elites, each representing powerful clan networks, thus informally selected new leaders who could manage these informal pacts, continue to balance clan interests, and stabilize the republics.” She supports it by citing key government adviser, who

claims that in Kyrgyzstan, the northern clans were united under the leadership of Chingitz Aitmatov in an attempt to “take power back from Moscow” and decided to overthrow then-president Masaliev and even pressured Askar Akayev to run for president, with the latter consequently winning the elections. According to this information as well as the rest in the Collins' article, it can be inferred that a conflict of 1990 was an attempt to block southern clans from taking highest authority positions by engaging the potential candidates in the process of the war.

If accepting the above statement, then one should also notice that such tactics by northern clans was effective in a way that the conflict did not last for too long and that northern president won. Later, he managed to maintain relative interethnic peace and even be, according to Carney and Moran (2000), “initial Central Asian political favorite of many in the West” until 1996. It was the time, when Akaev would bring forward the notion of “Asian values”, which according to Greenwald 1996 in Carney and Moran (2000), implied chameleon character, with adjusting to the values of each region the former president visited. Pryde (1992) also claimed that such excessively flexible politics has created inconsistencies, but at the same time were a matter of necessity after the conflict of 1990. Despite his and cited by him intellectuals' fears, the country did not engage in the inter-state disputes, nor did any of the neighboring ones. However, the instances of manifestation of fundamentalism that he warned about did occur in the following years in the south of the country, namely in Batken further destabilizing the region.

Surprisingly, when Bakiev came to power in 2005, after the tulip revolution in Bishkek, it was expected that he would counter-balance the power between the North and the South of Kyrgyzstan, which is sharply divided by the mountains and thus by cultural heritage, with North considered a pro-Russian and South – pro-traditionalist or pro-Asian. The balance could be held only for 5 years, and was followed by the revolution in 2010, as mentioned above.

To conclude, the Osh riots of 2010 were rather a predictable event. Unfortunately, if all

the three main conditions are maintained – memory of grievance, weakened state, and scarce economic resources, it was only a matter of time, when a new similar conflict will arise. It can also evident from the statistics of the US Institute of Peace (2012), which states that out of 39 conflicts in the past 10 years, only 8 are new, while other 31 remain unresolved and reoccurring historically.

Outbreak of Violence

The initial rumor about Uzbek men raping Kyrgyz girls in the dormitory on the night of June 10th, 2010 became a central story of reference, according ToIsmailbekova and Roche (2010)¹², when asked about the beginning of the war. As Kislov, the founder and editor-in-chief of the FerganaNews.com information agency (2010)¹³ confirms the statement of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that inter-ethnic clashes were provoked by five simultaneous attacks of people covered with masks. Kislov conveys that he has reliable information about one particular case, according to the findings of his news agency¹⁴:

It took place in Osh, where in the evening of June 10 the unknown people of expensive Jeep cars (who Kislov believes to be Bakiev's people) brought dead bodies of several Kyrgyz girls to the neighborhoods predominantly occupied with Kyrgyz. It was evident that these women were raped. They threw the bodies of the girls at the feet of the Kyrgyz youth, and said, "Here, look at what Uzbeks do with our sisters." They have accused of ethnic Uzbeks of committing rape and murder of these girls. According to the testimony of the other girls from the dormitory, what happened in reality was that some unknown people took the girls, who were later killed. This provocation has caused the anger among the Kyrgyz youth, who attacked the Uzbeks. They fought street battles but without any weapons, because they have no weapons; these were civilians and they were not prepared for a massive war.

¹² Ismailbekova, R. and Roche, S. (2010). *The Glimmer of Hope in Bloody Kyrgyzstan*. Ferghana News Information Agency. Retrieved on May, 1 2012 from: <http://enews.ferghananews.com/article.php?id=2654>

¹³ Besten, O. (2010). *Daniil Kislov: "The Kirghiz and Uzbeks Would Never Have Opened Fire against Each Other, Unless a Provocation"* ("Radio France Internationale ", France). (*Daniil Kislov: Kirgizy i Uzbeki nikogda ne Otkryli by Drug oi Drugu Ogon', Esli by ni Provokaciya*). Retrieved on May 2, 2012 from: http://rus.ruvr.ru/_print/9891480.html

¹⁴ Original text in Russian, translated to English by myself

The above described finding illustrates Tambiah's (1996: 236-239) statement that spreading of rumors is also a widely used technique of ethnic framing. As Wimmer and Schetter (in Heitmeyer and Hagan (eds.), 2003.) claim, fear and mistrust give credibility to rumors and consequently turn to credible rumors (Horowitz, 1985: 175-184). The greater the fear and mistrust, "the sooner relations will be broken off and the greater is the likelihood of misinterpretation." (Waldmann, 1995: 350 in Heitmeyer and Hagan, 2003: 255). Apparently, in case of Osh such misinterpretation in combination with 5 other provocations turned into ethnic violence over night; after which the rumors were building up of course further fueling the antagonism.

Quasi-Peaceful Outcome: Continued War over Bodies, Numbers, and Terminology

The official war was proclaimed to be over on June 15, according to BBC news (2010). Following the events, however, politicians and journalists seemed to have trouble giving an internationally accepted definition. Some report it to be an ethnic war, while others – an ethnic conflict/clashes, riots, genocide of Uzbeks, or pogrom.

As Kaufman (2001: 17) defines it, an ethnic war or an ethnic conflict is an "organized armed combat between at least two belligerent sides in which at least one thousand people killed". As I have mentioned earlier, the numbers of the casualties vary from 470 (Melvin and Umuraliev (2011) to several thousand according to unofficial sources (polit.ru, 2010). Thus, it is usually referred to as ethnic riots, which is defined by Tishkov (1995:134)¹⁵ in his article about Osh Riots of 1990's, "riot- or pogrom-type conflict as those with no structured armed forces and organized long-term fighting with explicit front-lines". It seems to fit well with the duration of the open conflict – 5 days and the absence of open front-lines because as will be later discussed

¹⁵ Tishkov, V. (1995). 'Don't Kill Me, I'm a Kyrgyz!': *An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict*. Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 32, No. 2: 133-149.

throughout the whole thesis, many of the members of the mixed neighborhoods were cooperating together by building barricades against external invaders of any ethnicity. However, at least the beginning of the war was a well-organized plan for forces mobilization, as has been presented by Kislov (2010). The fact that many civilians later became involved in the war does not mean that there were no organized forces behind it. According to Schwirtz (2010), several people were killed by snipers.¹⁶

Finally, some parts of the Uzbek population refer to it as “Genocide of Uzbeks”. This definition has been well-established through internet video channels, such as Youtube.com and Namba.kg and partially through the Russian social network with videos posted – V Kontakte.ru. The role of media has been emphasized by many scholars (Melvin and Umuraley, 2011; Taylor 1997; Carruthers, 2000). According to Staub (2000), genocide is an attempt to eliminate, directly by killing them or indirectly by creating conditions (e.g., starvation) that lead to their death, a whole group of people. The U.N. Genocide Convention, which defines genocide as “acts committed with the intent to destroy in part or in whole a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group as such.” Below in the Appendix section, there are videos I have found on Youtube internet channel, some of which were recorded on CDs and distributed among civilians after June 15, 2010.¹⁷ These amateur mini-films make an attempt to continue the war in three spheres – bodies, numbers, and definitions in a following way: in some of them there is an emphasis on the continued violence against women, with tapes of alleged rapists confessing in their acts; on others there is repeated claim that the number of deaths is much higher than officials report; and finally some try to convince the viewer that the conflict was a deliberate act of genocide by using various images and rhetoric. These contradictions are still found among

¹⁶ Schwirtz, M. (2010). *Ethnic Rioting Ravages Kyrgyzstan*. New York Times Asia Pacific. Retrieved on May 5, 2012 from: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/14/world/asia/14kyrgyz.html?_r=2

¹⁷ Stenin, A. (2011). *The Author of the Book “The Hour of Jackal” about the tragedy on the south of the country is Wanted in Kyrgyzstan (V Kirgizii Isbut Avtora Knigi “Chas Shakala” o Tragedii na Yuge Strany)*. Ria News. Retrieved on April 15, 2012 from: <http://ria.ru/world/20110503/370403755.html>

the public in Kyrgyzstan perhaps causing further disagreement among people of different ethnic groups.

To conclude, there has been a substantial investment in the rebirth of ethnocentrism through such videos and the following provocative comments written by internet users under these videos. Thus, the confusion over the number of dead people, over whose pride has been destroyed using women's bodies as the battle field, and finally over the correct definition of the event and its recognition by the international community.

III Theoretical Framework

In an attempt to understand people's behavior during and after the war according to their narrated stories, I will be using three theories: cognitive-perceptual theory suggested by Monroe (1994), political theory of "wounded attachments" by Brown (1993), and Butler's (1993) perspective on performativity. As mentioned in the introduction, because classical ethnic conflict theories barely encompass the individual deviations from the major explanations of chosen framework, there is another level worth of studying for understanding political behavior of citizens during the war, and that of intersectional analysis, which would look at gender, age, and class differences among the groups, and another strata, which is the focus of this thesis – neighborhood belonging. I am expecting that such differences in actions are the consequence of the identity that people chose, following the cognitive-perceptual theory, suggested by Monroe (1994: 201-226). When studying the phenomena of sheltering Jews in Poland, she found that the decisions that people undertook were based on their relations to others. If the shelterers perceived the Jews as "they are just like us", then they would rescue them without a question. On the contrary, when people saw Jews as different, not part of their community, they tended to ignore the atrocities and not shelter. This theory can also explain the way people are narrating their stories told and silenced during an interview, for it helps to look at the coherent identity that people were constructing and making their choices based on it.

However, a more complimentary theory towards understanding the reasons for shifting identity throughout the interview ("I" as a "friend" to my neighbor during the war and "I" as a "remote acquaintance" of my neighbor afterwards) is political theory of wounded attachments suggested by Wendy Brown. I am citing Kaufman's definition of ethnic group for the purposes of clarity and connectedness of the arguments. It is a group that shares a common group name, a believed common descent, common historical memories, elements of shared culture such as

language or religion, and attachment (even if only historical or sentimental) to a specific territory. All these elements create the universal “we” that is present in the peaceful time. An ethnic group in a country therefore either belongs to the universal “we” – the titular nation, or the particularistic “T”s, maintaining the basic paradox of liberalism, presented by Brown.

Ethnic “T”s either chose to count difference as no difference so that to become part of the “we” and thus never receive recognition, or they create their particularity, but are excluded from the “we”, thus again without a possibility of being recognized. It is the irreconcilable tandem of particularistic “T”s and universal “we” in the liberalism discourse. It is liberalism's failure to fulfill individual desires along without sacrificing the “common good”; failure to recognize that the differences among members of a group (nation, ethnicity, gender, sex, etc.) can go far beyond standardized agendas; that interpretations of freedom can vary among people within a group; that alas musketeers' principle “one for all and all for one” works for maximum of four persons, especially when it comes to establishing political identity. The initial enlightening message of liberalism of enriching every individual's life with inborn rights and freedoms was broken against the rocks of the individual differences; and though allegedly egalitarian, it proclaimed and established the imposed norms of a certain group, which made these socially constructed norms as naturally normal, “as if their existence were intrinsic and factual rather than effects of discursive and institutional power”. Consequently, to use Brown's terms, to maintain subordination to the “normal” group, the latter decided to “count every difference as no difference”, thus conveying that the difference is too insignificant to change initial structure or institution.

Brown is elaborating on desire for freedom, with the latter being in itself problematic. In the liberal context, it is close in meaning to the freedom from exclusion from a universal ideal, i.e. desire for the inclusion. Yet this desire “to have” or “to be” is transformed into but little

constructive action. The desire stays on the level of idea because it is investing its force into its own wounded history, without which yet it cannot claim its political rights and be a separate identity. Thus, it is facing another paradox of necessity of giving up from the history of its pain in order to get included on one hand, and at the same time of facing the impossibility of being included because of its history of subjugation. Thus, “history becomes that which has weight but no trajectory”, a burden that is like a suitcase without a holder – too heavy to carry forward and too dear to leave on the street and move forward without it, so to speak. Likewise, ethnic identities are keeping this history, which prevents them to have “freedom to” [them] and instead of being overly concerned by the “freedom from” the dominant or seemingly opposing ethnic group, speaking Grosz's (2010) language.

Finally, in order to understand the contrast of the behavior towards the ethnic “other” during and after the war, I suggest using performativity concept, which “places emphasis on the manners in which identity is passed or brought to life through discourse.” (Hall in Gay, Evans, and Redman, 2000: 15). Certain performance requires repetition, which is usually reinforced by a society. In the analysis chapter, I will elaborate in the different performance expected from the people in the course of and after the conflict was over. My main argument is that ethnic hatred performativity is created through the reinforcement in the public domain, such as public transports, central market, and mosques.

IV Methodology

The article that I am basing my interview and its analysis on is Monro's (1994) "But What Else Could I Do?" Choice, Identity and a Cognitive-Perceptual Theory of Ethical Political Behavior". Her findings strongly reflect mine – when it came to decision-making of sheltering or not, people perceived for having no choice. While her respondents answered "But what else could I do?", most of mine said "I had no time to think of his ethnicity".

My major aspirations for selecting this topic is to enrich the academic research on women's role in the war and the phenomena of inter-ethnic sheltering as a potential for the further reconciliation process in the region and beyond. By focusing on marginalized group – women in the post-conflict situation, I also aim to empower them making their voices heard, which corresponds to one of the major roles of feminist research. I see it through an interviewee's dialogue with him/herself that has most likely barely taken place before, as Abram (2010: 157-159) discusses in her article. I see further potentially enlightening conversation of the interviewee with his/her culture and with me, as a young, educated, liberated Tatar woman, who was not present at the events. My ethnic and educational "otherness" to these people was perhaps viewed as an outsider authority, who will make their voices heard "in the right way", and "not one-sided as it was shown in the media".¹⁸

I argue that these interviews enriched broader understanding of the causes of war as well as peaceful cooperation during a war, which can assist in understanding further peace-building processes. Furthermore, as presented in Culbertson's (1995: 190-191) article, by giving voices to the victims of the war, the desire for revenge decreases, i.e. this desire sublimates into story-telling. Furthermore, by finding out the processes behind individual sheltering, the insights towards creating institutional sheltering will be formed, similar to what happened during World War II, when Poles formed institutional shelters, such as Żegota, according to

¹⁸ Aziza's quote from an interview

Slawinski (2002). However, what is important to keep in mind is the difference between the lived and the narrated experience, because I had access only to the latter, which means I cannot state that what people reported in the interview happened in reality in the same sequence and in all details. Yet, what I am capable of tracking is the difference between male and female stories of the same events during the war and see how gender influences the construction of such stories. Through the construction of the stories, I aim to see how gender is constructed in this culture. Taking it further, I aim to see how gender stereotypes are reproduced in these communities during a conflict and how they change, if they do after the events.

Reasons for Choosing Interview as a Method

As mentioned in the above paragraphs, currently academia fails to pay sufficient attention to the sheltering phenomena during Osh riots. Thus, for example literature and media analysis could be a foundation for description of the cooperation, but in and out of itself incomplete. By conducting interviews, I aim to get insights not only to how it happened, but why and what it meant for the people of the region. The purpose of my study is to find the narrated meanings that people ascribe to the events and their actions. From the other hand, as Portelli (1998: 68) writes, "Oral sources are credible, but with a different credibility", i.e. I will not be able to generalize from my findings about all instances of sheltering in Osh, but what I was be able to do is to set the ground for further similar research, for the validity of the facts is not as important as people's reliving the events. It is rather more accurately expressed by Portelli (1998: 69) that an important thing to bear in mind, while conducting interview is that "memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process if creation of meanings". These meanings are available through interviews and possibly blog entries. Therefore, I have also launched the project on Kyrgyzstan's major news and blog portal www.KLOOP.kg, where I have asked people to share the stories of sheltering in person with me or through blog entry. 4

people have replied to it, out of which 3 agreed to give an interview via skype videocalling program, for they reside outside the country.

Finally, why I have chosen oral history despite of its inevitable "taking sides", is because it only brings the "confrontation of historians and sources", as emphasized by Portelli (1998:72-73), "confrontation as a "conflict" and confrontation as "search for unity" – is one of the things which make oral history interesting" and I would add, valuable.

Semi-structured Interview as a Way of Collection

Among the structured, unstructured, and focused/unstructured type of interview I have chosen the latter because it best fits to the goals of my research that is to find out why people engaged in certain type of behavior during the war. It would be different, unstructured if I would merely be interested in knowing what it was like to be a woman or a man during the events, or to be a certain ethnicity. Yet, because I have definite research question, which is based on limited literature available on this particular subject, I cannot make it fully structured because I do not have similar research conducted in the area. I am basing my questions according to a time-line: relationships with neighbors and co-workers of other ethnicities before the conflict, during, and afterwards. Therefore, it was be an in-depth interview with 9 people, more information about whom can be found in the appendix chapter. Out of these 9 people, 7 were women, 7 Uzbek, all of them either sheltered or being sheltered by people of other ethnic group, 4 from the same neighborhood. I have conducted 2 Skype interviews, which could have had a different effect on flow of the interview than live ones. Except for a Russian woman, none of the respondents spoke their native language to me, which could have created further distance.

Before asking any questions, I have informed the respondents about the topic of my research, its potential use and advantages and guaranteed their confidentiality. After presentation, I asked a prepared first question, which is "Please describe the types of interactions

you have with the neighbors of your and other ethnicities. Has it changed, and if yes, how?" I spent in general 1-1.5 hours with each of the interviewees. To conclude, I argue that the answers generated from this semi-structured interviewee provided a firmer ground for forming hypothesis and implications.

Theoretical and Methodological Issues

According to Grele (1998: 49), one of the goals of oral history is "providing a systematic view of the creative activities of mankind. That systematic view can be developed by oral historian because the past as it has existed had never asked the pertinent questions about its own systematic view of the world – i.e. its own ideology and its own myth". This is rather theoretical challenge for my research because I come from this area and it is a matter of additional attention and reflexivity that I should develop in order to distinguish the ideologies, with which I personally grew up with ever since kinder garden. The concept of myth and symbols is emphasized in the article by Kaufman (2001), who attempts to explain ethnic conflicts through the symbolic politics theory. The latter theory encompasses both the broad politic and economic influences, as well as psychological ones. Precisely because of the latter, interviewing is the best way available to test this theory on practice. However, as many other authors of his kind, Kaufman (2001) fails to discuss why some people do not act in "accordance" with their ethnical identity and seem to ignore the carefully constructed manipulative symbols and myths around them. It is also brought to attention by Grele (1998: 47), that "both theory and rigorous practice are necessary" for the "development of an understanding of what people really did in the past". Theoretical background in this research has been complicated by the conflicting media coverage – the Kyrgyz and Uzbek, because these were the opposing sides. Even when information was presented by presumably third parties – BBC news and other Russian sources, it was still questioned locally and even created further small-scale clashes.

Another methodological complication for my research is choosing the place for the interview: since I am not part of an organization, I cannot invite them to an office or to other "neutral" place, which means I went to their houses, none of which I have been before. That might influence the process, because I might be crossing their space in this regard. However, that provided more material for interpretation of the so-called "mute evidence" as Hodder (2003: 114) names it by presenting his theory, through which "material culture always has to be interpreted in relation to a situated context of production, use, discard and reuse." By analyzing their decorations and the traditional ethnic attributes of their houses might suggest about their identification with their ethnicity. For example, some of the Kyrgyz houses in my neighborhood have distinctive Uzbek decorations at the entrance, which are not found in the North of the country, and is the product of assimilation of two cultures. I looked at the pictures that they have and how the precise words "Uzbek" and "Kyrgyz" are pronounced – directly or through the word "other ethnicities".

Ethical and Legal Issues

One of the major implications, which I have taken from the Borland's (1998: 310-321) article is that I needed to double-confirm with my respondents if I am interpreting their words correctly. Making a parallel with Borland, who had a conflict with her grandmother over calling her a feminist, I presented my interpretations with possible new terms right on the spot with detailed explanation if required. However, that might be not always possible due to the language barrier. Even though the majority of the people speak Russian, they do not necessarily know it on the advanced level and thus cannot express them fully. For this reason, my selection is already limited, because I chose only people who know my native language. Furthermore, the fact that I am Russian-speaking might have created a barrier and at the same time trust that I am neutral. What is important is that I keep track of my own reflexivity during the research because my immediate neighbors were Uzbeks and I tend to sympathize with them and identify them only as

victims. Because it was a semi-structured interview, sometimes I had to redirect their narratives towards discussing sheltering, which gave them less freedom to express what they really felt about the war.

Another relevant for me material was found in K'Meyer's etc. (2007: 71-93), article which discusses pushing the ethical limits during conducting oral history with a mulatto woman. I also interviewed 1 man who is of mixed ethnicity. I had to be additionally careful with trying to find out what their experience was, because most likely, just like in the article, it was a taboo topic to talk in their family. However, it is very interesting in terms of research, because the marriages between these particular ethnicities were rather uncommon as oppose to Russian-Uzbek, Russian-Kyrgyz ones.

Reflecting on Shopes (2007:125-159) article, I made sure to maintain respect for the persons interviewed through providing written and oral informed consent, in where I presented terms and conditions. No translation to their native language was necessary as they all spoke Russian. Because oral history is an archival practice, I told them their copy rights and that they would be guaranteed with confidentiality. However, as I expected, despite of guaranteed anonymity, very few people replied on the internet blog post. The reason for a low turn out is general people reluctance to reflect on helping those during the war, who are now constructed as “enemy”. I will elaborate on it in the analysis chapter, where I claim that this silencing of sheltering is very similar to the case of Pole's rescuing Jews during WWII, with the latter being ashamed of telling such stories for 40 some years, based on the information collected by Gross (2006).

V Interview Analysis

Overview

Before proceeding to the quotes and their interpretation through the prism of certain theories, I am restating one of the central hypotheses of my thesis: the politics of motherhood, which isolated women into the traditional roles in the private sphere, have created space for inter-ethnic sheltering during the Osh riots of 2010. The premise on which this hypothesis is based is Sara Ruddick's quote in Taylor (1997: 351): “Maternal thinking, derives from the “work” traditionally associated with mothers: conflict resolution, care taking and so forth,” in the combination with my personal and collective experience perspective on the traditional practices of women in a neighborhood.

One the first observations about the narrations is that people were reluctantly answering the questions about being sheltered or sheltering. They either spent little time recollecting it or would be skeptical about the intentions of the rescuing party. I received an impression that during the conflict many people cooperated without questioning it, but later, as the ethnocentrism was reconstructed, people interacted and collaborated much less. It could be due to the fact that the violence persisted after the conflict (June 10-17, 2010) was proclaimed over by the government¹⁹. This and other reasons for giving sheltering an insignificant meaning are discussed below. As mentioned in the theoretical framework chapter, the behavior that people chose to undertake and the meanings they put into their actions and events of that times can be most relevantly explained and understood through the cognitive perceptual theory of Kristen Renwick Monroe, performativity theory of Judith Butler, and the insights of Wendy Brown's reference to politicized identities' “investment” in its own “wounded attachments”. The dynamics

¹⁹ The duration of the conflict varies, but usually is reported to be June 10-17, according to Fryer, Satybaldieva, etc. (2011). *Indirect Fall-out from the June 2010 Events in Kyrgyzstan: the Case of Kara-Suu*. EUCAM Commentary. No 14. Retrieved on May, 1 2012 from: <http://www.ceps.eu/book/indirect-fall-out-june-2010-events-kyrgyzstan-case-kara-suu>

of the identities formation is also presented from different perspectives. I will back up these theory interpretations by the cultural context of Osh and the southern region in general.

I have observed people's reluctance to recall sheltering in two patterns: they either canceled interviews, or would spend little time describing it, or would refuse to talk about it. For example, Svetlana, a Russian woman, gave me only a 10 minute interview, but only after 5 minutes of persuasion:

My neighbor, Kyrgyz female, on the forth floor, also sheltered people, but she is not going to talk to you. People are afraid to admit it. What if you tell someone? People are cautious about such matters nowadays.

Potential reasons for the choice of behavior will be discussed below.

“Golden Age” Before the Conflict

The common denominator of all the narrations except one (Sevdiya) is that they never mentioned a smaller armed conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbek in 1990. They did not consider it as a continuum of violence between the two (or more for that matter) ethnic groups. Applying cognitive-perceptual theory, I argue that this construction of a narrative as an unexpected war opens the space for a sheltering logic: since one did not foresee this situation to happen and had “excellent relationships with my neighbors” (Gulbahar), one constructs an identity of a “friend with all ethnicities”, which leaves very little choice, but cooperating with each other during difficulties. Even when Sevdiya refers to earlier riots, she illustrated them as something very minor in comparison to the events of 2010.

The conflict in 1990 was indeed violent and could have spread quickly, the city was blockaded and many people were killed with weapons or burned with their houses, according to onwar.com (2000)²⁰. Yet probably because it was 20 years ago or because this recent event was too shocking, people rather silence it, illustrating an example of memory rupture, discussed in

²⁰ OnWar.com (2000). *The Osh Riots in Kyrgyzstan, USSR 1990*. Armed Conflict Events Data. Retrieved on April 23, 2012 from: <http://www.onwar.com/aced/chrono/c1900s/yr90/fkyrgyzstan1990.htm>

Green (2004).²¹ I say “shocking” because it was several times reflected with the remark that it all felt unreal, as Altynai expressed it “as if I was sitting in the front row of a movie theater.”

Silencing previous tensions, to which I was many times witness, made it possible to explain away the ethnic hatred vacuum in the mixed neighborhoods during the 5-day acute atrocities. Another explanation of silencing ethnic tensions could be the specificity of memory construction outlined by Abylkhozhin et al. (2001: 356)²², who stated that despite the shortage and other evident difficulties during Soviet period in Central Asia, people tend to recall it with what first seems to be paradoxical warmth and nostalgia. However, it is rather a natural tendency of middle-aged people to recall their youth years as something bright and optimistic and diminish the scale of severely challenging outer circumstances. Most of my respondents were people of middle age, who were 20 years younger at the time of conflict, and perhaps retrospectively that event was outscored by remembrance of “youth optimism”. Also, noteworthy, they silenced their shared Soviet past.

Later using cognitive-perceptual theory I will demonstrate how the identity of a cooperating agent was constructed and then re-negotiated throughout the interview into an opposite one and in some cases continued to swing back and forth to rationalize contradicting behavior during and after the conflict, when the ethnic confrontation was rebuilt to a very high level, which perhaps made it challenging for people to admit that they were sheltering or being sheltered by their “enemies”.

The reflection of the claimed above statements can be traced Altynai's words as well:

I grew up in a mixed ethnicity neighborhood, so [as if it follows by default] there was never a question on ethnicity. More importantly before the war, me and my two other sisters got married to Uzbeks. Even though my parents were against it in the beginning, later they “succumbed”. I was also working in a multi-ethnic company. Everybody was friendly to each other.

²¹ Green, A. (2004) *Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates*. Oral History, 32 (2): 35-44.

²² Abylkhozhin, Zh., Abuseitova, M., Klyashtorny, S., Masanov, N., Sultanov, T., Khazanov, A. (2001). *The Krushev's Turn: The History of Kazakhstan and Central Asia. (Kruschenskii Povorot: Istoriia Kazakhstana I Tsentralnoi Azii)*. Almaty: Bilim: 356.

The fact that her parents were resisting the inter-ethnic marriage of their daughters does indicate at least differentiation on an ethnic level, but again, it is narrated rather as a foundation that would further serve as a rationale for going beyond risks.

What I argue to be strongest factual and rhetoric reasoning of sheltering is the uniting traditional practices of a neighborhood and a special status that a neighbor is usually entitled to. What I have noticed long time ago is the level of a neighbor being equated almost to a relative, during a big family event, such as wedding, funeral, circumcision, or a birth of a boy after several daughters in a row, etc. For such occasions, the doors of the hosts are widely open for many. I would like to pay a special attention to the phenomenon mentioned by several interviewees the culture of *sumalak* cooking. As stated in the introduction, it is usually prepared by women of a neighborhood collectively and then given to virtually all (despite of ethnic group) members of a neighborhood or extended family members across the city and its outskirts.

Another similar practice that women share is cooking *plov* – a Central Asian rice dish with lamb – for the *Kurban Bairam* (an Islamic holiday) in their private households, and then giving it out by knocking to the neighbors' doors and exchanging it for their *plov*. The latter delivery is usually performed by children or young women. Non-Islamic members of a neighborhood like us, or Russians, in turn prepare their ethnic meal and there is an almost unquestioned exchange of some sort of freshly made food. It resembles “*komsiluk*” (good-neighborliness) in the context of Bosniac women in the process of reconciliation, described in Helms' (2010) article. Similarly to women's coffee visits tradition in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the custom of preparing *sumalak* for the Persian New Year and *plov* for *Kurban Bairam* in Osh could serve as strong contributing factors towards constructing a “good neighbor” identity and thus an almost unquestioned sheltering behavior. *Nowruz* is usually (before the conflict as well) celebrated in the city center with parades and mass performances of dances and national games with the emphasis on the friendship of all nations. Thus, it is reinforced on the national level.

Further uniting practice that women conducted together, according to Gulbahar, was women praying outside the mosques in the days of significant religious holidays. Even though, as will be later discussed, mosques are predominantly male space for prayers and potentially for unification, the areas surrounding it were to some extent connect women as well before the conflict. It is no surprise then that similar to Monroe's (1994) findings about Jews' rescuers, helping was a given, emanating from shelterers' sense of connectedness of themselves in relation to others.

Also, I argue in the pre-conflict of 2010 period, the leading role in the acts of good neighborliness were undertaken by women in a way that they were usually the ones who cooked for neighbors/relatives on special occasions; who tied stronger connections with them through communicating because traditionally these women are either housewives or part-time workers; who took care of them, if they were guests inside the household. By no means am I disregarding men's role in the inter-ethnic tolerance building, but rather I am emphasizing that men's activities in a mixed neighborhood were less distinctive. For example, men were strengthening their relations with the neighbors in the mosques, as been reported by Alisher, who claimed that people attend a mosque closest to their place of residence. The vast majority of the population of Kyrgyzstan is Sunni Muslim, but because Islam came late, it is practiced rather superficially, according to Glenn (1996)²³. Nevertheless, it has a socializing significance for the attendants, which could potentially serve as a uniting factor.

According to the findings of Fox, Fox and Marans (1980), the formation of friendly relationships among neighbors are not as much dependent on the density as on the presence of public spaces in a neighborhood, such as for example a public park. Similarly, in Osh neighborhoods, generally a mosque was the predominant public space, which contributed to forming ties beyond ethnic belonging. Another public space, which is usually present in multi-storied buildings districts, is a children playground, where people (usually women with children)

²³ Glenn E. C. (1996) *Kyrgyzstan: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1996. Retrieved on May 2, 2012 from <http://countrystudies.us/kyrgyzstan/14.htm>

socialize. Even though women stay in private sphere – out of politics and industry, they operate in semi-private space because by performing traditional women's roles as mothers, cooks, and cleaners, they still interact within the alternative public sphere with their neighbors, similar to what Peto and Szapor (2004) described was happening in East Central Europe. One of the culture-specific ways of creating a semi-public space for women will be discussed below. Such traditional women's activities have created a special microcosm in these mahallas, for its members even seem to perceive themselves not in relation to their ethnic group, as can be seen from a dialogue with Aziza:

- Did they [your neighbors] express their anger directly to you or about Uzbeks in general?
- I would say Uzbeks in general, not directly us. I can see that mostly Uzbeks were affected by the war, even though they have started it.

The Paradox of Rape Rumor in the Context of Sheltering

In this section I argue that rhetoric used to describe perpetrators shows that respondents constructed sub-category of ethnic “other” into “us” and “them” dichotomy. As discussed earlier, the major contributing rumor to the outbreak of the conflict served the story that after the fight of young men of two ethnic groups, Uzbek (or Kyrgyz, if narrated by Uzbeks) men raped Kyrgyz (or Uzbek, if narrated by Kyrgyz) women in the dormitory. It served as a powerful tool to mobilize forces on both sides and more importantly, to maintain hatred even after the war. However, what then creates a paradox is the fact that such rumors did not stop some people of various ethnicities to cooperate with each other. How did the “knowledge” or commonly held belief for that matter that “opposing” side has assaulted “our women” did not reproduce the violence in some neighborhoods? Did they detach ethnicity from “their” perpetrators or from “our” victims?

One of the insightful interpretations of the brutality was suggested by Mahmuda:

People were hired and they were given drugs to act inhuman; I am sure it is true because I have watched videos that contain a lot of violence that normal humans could not do.

This way, using cognitive-perceptual theory it can be stated that the image of a perpetrator as someone barely related to the “opposing” ethnicity is constructed; as someone who undertook certain actions only under drug influence, and not because of who they are. Thus, a narrator perceives self in relation to his/her neighbor who has “nothing to do” with perpetrators, creating them as a separate category; for in none of the narrations did the respondents anyhow relate perpetrators to neighbors.

Another interpretation several times mentioned in the speeches was that the perpetrators were not local, not from Osh, but from a village, which I believe was another attempt of denying the ethnic character of their origin and again to include them in the “just like us” category, as depicted in Kanykei's words:

I could observe the dynamics of the events from my window. On the second day I could see that a group of Uzbeks did not let the cars pass. I also saw Kyrgyz with rather village outlook; I do not think they were local.

Osh is the Southern capital of Kyrgyzstan, which kept attracting people from smaller towns for settlement. On the outside, it is a vibrant mixture of religious traditionalists dressed in a conservative Muslim manner– as well as Westernized, who are dressed up rather like Europeans or Northerners. There is no single image of an Osher, because it is possible that a person who has rather a village outlook is but an Osher of first generation, who moved from the outskirts of the city or the region. Moreover, Osh is not distinguished for particular homogeneous fashion or facial appearance. Even though in comparison to smaller towns Oshers tend to act and look more “liberated” in Western terms, the difference is less immediate than reported.

As a result, the majority of the participants described their acts during the war as defensive against not an ethnic group, but territorial other, as Babur claims, “There were no clashes between neighbors, rather between the residents of Osh and villagers from outside. I don't think the Oshers would do it. But people could have acted out of instinct.” The so-called

instinct again demonstrates the attempt to reconnect to the ethnic others, which is perhaps strengthened by the fact that Babur has Kyrgyz relatives from his mother's side. I argue it is also due to a rather collectivist culture of Central Asia, which stimulates a constant need to follow the tradition of having good relationships with neighbors and especially relatives. As Kolpakov (2001) quotes a famous Kyrgyz saying in his article, “Any Kirghiz at a large table will inevitably meet a relative among unknown people” and “If a Kyrgyz starts asking another Kyrgyz about relatives, they finally will find common one,” which demonstrates the high priority of having relatives and belonging to them.

For instance, the following narration of Altynai demonstrates the scheme of equating neighbors to relatives, which presupposed undifferentiated rescuing:

My father came on his car and drove us to his place – at the outskirts of the city. On our way we were talking to my sister on the phone... She²⁴ was speaking in a terrified voice as her house was on fire, while she was hiding in the bathhouse with 10 other Uzbek women and children – her neighbors... They were choking with smoke. By the time our father managed to reach her and these 10 people, they were barely alive.

According to Altynai, these people as well as Uzbek relatives of her and her sister's husband stayed at various time periods in her parents' house together with her and her sister. Thus, in this case, as perhaps in many others, men would save women from certain hot spots, and later stay outside for further rescuing or protection of a neighborhood, while the saved ones were mothered by women of the household. It was a big risk for Altynai and her family to shelter Uzbeks because they were surrounded by Kyrgyz neighbors who knew about the shelter and were warning him, on which he replied “I am the owner of his house and I will decide whom to keep. This is my business.” With this rhetoric he managed to stay in the “universal we” - the Kyrgyz and yet to perform his individual action of rescuing, which was meant to go against the “we” logic. Altynai mentioned that he is a lawyer, and has

the “talent of persuading people”. However, I am more interested in why these arguments were perceived as mobilizing for other members of his community.

First of all, the statement about the property is quite gendered. I can speculate that if his wife would claim it, it would have a different effect, precisely a weaker one. Also, the fact that the act of sheltering was made in the private sphere, increased its chances to happen. As I will discuss in the aftermath section, public sphere made it less possible to rescue other ethnic groups because the presence of others in the public sphere required performing one's ethnic “true belonging”, or manhood for that matter, by hostility towards the other. Also, I argue that his age was also a contributing factor towards a successful persuasion, as there is a rigid age hierarchy in the country²⁵, especially in more traditional societies, like that on the South. The older the person, the more his decisions are unquestioned. Finally, I again want to point out the importance of social status that could have played its role. According to Altynai, her parents live in a district, the name of which I keep confidential, but will only indicate that it is known for its financially prosperous inhabitants. Finally, it could be that his (or his wife's) relationships with neighbors were formed earlier to the level of relatives, and thus he was entitled to more trust from their side. Fortunately, their neighborhood was not entered by perpetrators.

Also, it is noteworthy that when asked to describe the outbreak of the conflict, the majority of them have cognitively chosen to construct an image of fighters as someone not belonging to their ethnic/relative group. They present them not as “our Uzbek guys”, but simply “a group of young Uzbeks and Kyrgyz”, thus distancing themselves from the initial violence and at the same time rationalizing cooperation during the conflict. Thus, according to cognitive-perceptual theory, they ensure that the above befriending was not dangerous for their group's

²⁴ Noteworthy to remind, she is Kyrgyz married to an Uzbek

²⁵ Asian Development Bank (2005) *The Kyrgyz Republic. A Gendered Transition: Soviet Legacies and New Risks. Country Gender Assessment*. East and Central Asia Regional Department and Regional and Sustainable Development Department, Asian Development Bank, Manila: 9

actors during a conflict. For example, Aziza claimed:

Earlier that day I was passing the central mosque and saw how a group of young Uzbeks and Kyrgyz guys had a fight, but it ended in half an hour and everybody went home. I don't know why it started again. When we came out of the house, we heard the shootings down the hill on the night of June 10.

A very narrative strategy of not mentioning “our boys”, or “our Uzbeks”.i.e. “they” had a fight, but “we” do not belong to the group of perpetrators nor their victims – was done by Gulbahar. The same strategy of depicting Kyrgyz was selected by Kanykei, when she identified “them” as criminals, a separate group with no indication of ethnicity:

I watched the news, in which it was said that a group of young Uzbeks have provoked the fight, which led to the war. I have heard about the rumor on the dormitory, but it was just a rumor. I have heard that the fight was actually between the criminals from both ethnic groups. A lot of local Kyrgyz have left to the outskirts of the city, especially women.

However, when mentioning rape of women, she reconnected to her ethnic identity and rationalized their violence, “I have heard that the Kyrgyz men revenged and raped back the Uzbek women.”

I argue that such a verbal shifting of identity externalizes an inner conflict visible – a conflict between keeping resentment for violence and rationalizing helping interactions during and before the conflict. However, even when presenting the victims from their ethnic group, some narrators still refrained from identifying themselves with the latter, just calling them Uzbeks, and not “our people”, as Babur said,

It has started with Kyrgyz attacking Uzbek women and children, according to an independent European journalist; I do not remember his name. First I was told that some Kyrgyz men were raping Uzbek girls in the dormitory near the hotel “Alai” and then the Uzbeks came out of their houses to defend themselves.

Thus, interviewees perceived themselves as rescuers/being rescued by an innocent ethnic “other”, who was detached from the violence. Perhaps such a cognitive division into those who needed it and those did not served as a basis for the decision of Altynai's father to save his Uzbek son-in-law and his Uzbek relative from the life-threatening attacks of “those who needed the

war”. It could also be a basis for collective family decision to shelter 15 Uzbeks in their house, because once a person perceives him or herself in relation to the people who “did not need the war”, he or she has a small range of options, not between sheltering or not, but perhaps merely between various ways of rescuing: “For three days, while men were patrolling the territory, we were calming each other and cooking food. On the forth day, humanitarian aid appeared.”

Hence, from a cognitive-perceptual theory perspective, traditions of “good neighborliness” and close relations with relatives backed up with the perception of self as part of the group of people who did not want the war made the sheltering possible. The variations of the second precondition were, as mentioned above, villagers (as oppose to Oshers), or as Alisher named it, “those who believed in provocations and those who did not”.

Rescuing During the Events: “I Had No Time to Think of His Ethnicity”

In this section I argue that from the narrated stories and the research on similar topics, it becomes apparent that the perceived “Golden Age” before the conflict and the sheltering were logically linked, whereas sheltering and aftermath were not. Thus, interviewees were shaping their identities in a reference to a variety groups, as a search for empowerment. Generally, people did not describe their individual ways of protection (or attack in some potentially unreported cases), but rather in the reference to one or the other group, as for example Gulbahar stated, “*We* [the members of her neighborhood] had no weapons – just the sticks and stones to protect ourselves” Interestingly, later she claimed how the men who were patrolling the mahalla²⁶ with self-made petrol weapons, did not use them. This was another way to convince me and possibly herself that they (as well as other members of her ethnic group) were victims. Following cognitive-perceptual theory basis, once a person forms such an identity, he or she can rationalize virtually any attack performed by her group members to the opposite party and interpret it as a way to protect

²⁶ Usually referred to as an Uzbek neighborhood or mixed neighborhood with Uzbeks residing in some houses.

themselves. It well reflects a paradox presented by Wendy Brown (1993: 398): politicized identities, which are formed by the exclusion from the universal ideal “require that universal ideal as well as their exclusion from it for their own perpetuity as identities”. In other words, by emphasizing its marginal status, an ethnic group believes to get recognition, but will barely receive it because it bases its claims to the opposition of the titular ethnic group as a universal ideal. However, as mentioned in the Theoretical Framework chapter, this paradox is not necessarily maintained during an ethnic conflict, which can open up the space for more than one “universal ideal” (titular nation) and the “particularistic I” (ethnic minority). In this case, Gulbahar attempts to resolve the “seething with resentment” by forming an attachment to the titular nation of Uzbekistan:

Our government has betrayed us – they did not do anything for 3 days; they could have easily stopped it... Uzbekistan could have easily stand up for us... What happened was that Karimov²⁷ called to Roza Otumbaeva²⁸ and told her to stop the war, for he warned “I cannot hold my people at the border, too many of them want to enter your country and fight for Uzbeks. I don't want a civil war.”

Obviously one cannot know whether this call happened in reality, at least not from the news coverage. However, what is important is the way a member of an ethnic minority was constructing its identity in reference to a larger group in a search for empowerment. The population of Uzbekistan is roughly 28 million, with 80 percent of ethnic Uzbek²⁹, thus comprising an “army” of 23 million people “willing to protect” their “brothers and sisters” against around 4 million³⁰ of “perpetrators”. Yet, such an identity sooner rather than later realizes the utopian nature of such attachment because of the territorial boundaries and because of

²⁷ President of Uzbekistan

²⁸ President of Kyrgyzstan at that period

²⁹ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (2011). *Background Note: Uzbekistan*. U.S. Department of State – Diplomacy in Action. Retrieved on May 15, 2012 from: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2924.htm>

³⁰ The population of Kyrgyzstan is 4.5 million with 72 percent ethnic Kyrgyz, according to Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (2011). *Background Note: Kyrgyzstan*. U.S. Department of State – Diplomacy in Action. Retrieved on May 15, 2012 from: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

uselessness of the attachment to Uzbekistan to resolve their situation in Kyrgyzstan, where they currently reside. Thus, the come back to the initial marginalized group is re-formed:

I did not see our Kyrgyz neighbors during the day. Probably they were hiding somewhere else or standing by the barricade and when other Kyrgyz came, they said “All the sarts³¹ have left, so you can go away”. And they probably left without entering our mahalla.

The coherent picture of division is seen even in the above small comment – she was certain that the rescuers had called her a “sart”, presupposing the hatred from “the other side”. Moreover, when asked about the possible reasons of her neighbors' deciding to shelter her and her daughter she replied:

But of course they helped! We are neighbors after all. We were sitting there for several hours during the day and that's it. But you can never know what is inside their souls. They probably did for some political purpose, so that they can claim financial rewards for that from their government.

This was another attempt of restoring the coherent picture of “them” as perpetrators, “them” as not trustworthy, and “them” as politically privileged. Once this identity is re-established, it simplifies the dilemma of which behavior to undertake towards ethnic other after the war. The perception of an enemy leaves but little choice of actions – avoidance or hostility: “I see them every day and we greet each other, but in my heart... I feel a lot of resentment. It is extremely hard for Uzbeks now.”(Gulbahar).

However, from the other hand, what she told me later I argue is ethnic hatred performance. According to her, she and her neighbors very often gather on the streets to chat and whenever a Kyrgyz approaches, they say to each other “Silence, a Kyrgyz is coming, change the topic” and she was thus projecting this behavior on them, saying that they have similar ritual of talking behind their back, “A sart is coming, watch out”. It occurred to me that because of the presence of other people of one's ethnicity, it is expected to perform disgust to prove your

³¹ “Sart” is an extremely rude way of calling Uzbeks. It was commonly used before the war to refer to Uzbeks, but not openly, as oppose to during and after the war – the ethnic hatred performance that will be further discussed.

belonging-ness to “your” group. It could be that one has resentment towards perpetrators in general, but the social norms reinforce such a performance. For example, Altynai, is rather hesitant to name specific responsible ethnic group because she lives now in Russia among people of various ethnic belongings and thus does not have to perform hatred: “I have hatred towards... I don’t know whom... towards whoever needed this war.”

Another important finding from the interviews was the pattern of women mothering sheltered peoples that was reported by both men and women. It thus indicates their leading role not only as a precondition for sheltering, but also in the process, because most of the men were out to patrol their neighborhoods or saving other relatives or constructing barricades (reportedly, also collectively with neighbors of other ethnic groups), women stayed at home and thus provided food and other attributes of sheltering. Thus, a traditional women's role of staying in private in this situation had a potentially life-saving significance, as seen from Aziza's narration:

We were gathering together to cook food. Because of the war we could not buy anything in the stores, so we took out our reserved provisions. Everybody brought what they had. We were sharing all our food and cooking it together. If something was missing for the meal, women would go to other neighbors and ask.

Many of the women mentioned praying together as a common practice during the war, to further point unifying feature, thus cognitively constructing “us” as religious women in a difficult period, rather than women of different ethnicities, as Gulbahar describes:

We were praying all day long, while we were hiding in the attic. But what else could we do? There were times we were so scared because of close noise of shootings, bombing, people screaming, and slate of the burning houses popping, that we [without ethnic differentiation] could not even speak the words of prayer...

Another possible yet a smaller contributing factor of decision to shelter was the established hierarchy of gender, age, and working position that was created a given expectation, which was fulfilled, as Babur stated:

At this moment, it just didn’t even occur for us to think of a person’s ethnicity, there was no time to think. It was risky, but she couldn’t just say, “He is an

Uzbek, go ahead and kill him.” After all she is my father's employee. Of course she sheltered him. Later we had to call to our Kyrgyz relative who came on an emergency car to pick us up from that district, but he was also afraid because another Kyrgyz general was killed. But he still came for us.

The latter statement shows that even though their relative was Kyrgyz, meaning not a “direct blood” one, he was viewed as such. Perhaps he was a direct relative of Babur's mother. As mentioned earlier, attributing extensive meaning to maintaining good relative ties comprises another motivation for sheltering, proving again Kolpakov's (2001) statement about the importance of relative ties in Kyrgyzstan.

However, somewhat contradictory to the allegedly unquestioned desire to help was the statement “I had no time to think of his ethnicity”, which was claimed by several respondents. Would that imply that if (s)he had time to think, (s)he would not help? Could that be means to illustrate it as not a conscious decision, so that to preserve his/her ethnic identity, to stay in the ethnic “we” and at the same time rationalize helping “evil” ethnic “them”? For it was clearly not the outer circumstances, as Monroe (1994) claims, but the inner decision-making processes because people acted differently in the same situation: some people did take the risk of sheltering their neighbors, friends, colleagues, or distant relatives, while others did not.

As for the people who were sheltered, they also had inner doubts, which were resolved by accepting an offer to be sheltered or asking for a rescue, as Mahmuda pointed: “When our neighbor invited us, first I was afraid, I thought this is a trap; but then I recalled that we have known each other for a long time; we celebrated Nowruz together.”

She contradicts her mother who claimed that they staid in their neighbor's house only for several hours by claiming that it was during the day and night. If Mahmuda is remembering the timing more correctly, than it shows how her mother was consistently constructing a victim identity throughout her interview. In both cases, women were identifying themselves in different ways and therefore, had different expectations and behavior towards Kyrgyz.

A similar construction of self could be in Aziza's story, who described the sheltering decision-making process in her (my) neighborhood in neutral and friendly manner:

- We all agreed to protect each other. If Uzbeks will come to our neighborhood, then Uzbeks will shelter/protect Kyrgyz and vice versa.
- Who took such decision and where?

We all did. We gathered near Shahlo's [an Uzbek woman from the neighborhood] house and made a mutual agreement that we will protect each other. I and my children went to my Kyrgyz neighbor Jibek [woman] and asked for a shelter. She agreed and so we stayed at her place for 1 day. The fighting Kyrgyz never came that close, but we still stayed there just in case.

There are other two important observations derived from this narration: the fact that she named women's names when talking about sheltering and that she differentiated between peaceful and fighting Kyrgyz. What first appears to be contradicting to the outsider – identifying women as leaders of household instead of their husbands – is rather a natural consequence of the frequent interactions of women the semi-public spheres discussed above. It can also mean that women were more expected to cooperate in such force majeure situations or that they actually initiated such an agreement. The latter could not be retrieved from the interviews and can be barely verified by the interviews with the witnesses. What is more important however, is the interpretation of women's role that sheltered peoples and shelterers are sharing. Apparently, there were also cases of women sheltering women, which in my view stresses the importance of self-identity as a neighbor/friend as a primary one, because women shelterers took higher risk than men – they had less chances to protect themselves. Kanykei reported that her mother helped two Uzbek women to quickly bypass the soldiers to the cars [with other Kyrgyz], which were taking them to the border or to the refugee camp. She said that these women called her mother and reported to be safe.

For example, as Altynai described, there was no clear hierarchy of ethnicity in their family, “We were afraid of everyone – of Uzbek perpetrators because we were Kyrgyz and of Kyrgyz perpetrators because we were sheltering 15 Uzbeks.”

Even if there was a superiority order, it was rather a parental one, as Altynai recollected it.

Her father went to the mahalla of Cheremushki to find and rescue his daughter's Uzbek husband and the latter's Uzbek male relative. Unfortunately they were stopped by Kyrgyz criminals on his way back. According to the story that she has heard from them,

When blamed for “marrying off his daughters to sarts”, my dad said that “these boys are like my own sons, I will not let you do anything to them,” and with his body covered his son-in-law, whose relative was already severely beaten by then. During the negotiation process his car was taken away and all three of them almost surrendered to the attackers who outscored them in number and weaponry, until... Kyrgyz strangers who were watching it from their house came out and persuaded the perpetrators that they allegedly know my father and that he is a respectable known man who should not be touched, nor his relatives. And by absolute miracle chance it worked! The criminals released my father and our Uzbek relatives, who were later delivered to us all in blood and bruises.

First of all, Altynai's father perception of himself as a parent made it unquestionable for him, but alas not for perpetrators that he should shelter them. Furthermore, the story that absolute strangers interfered in the process is indicative that division was rescuing was not only done by the ethnic we/they principle, but by criminals/civilians one. Also the rhetoric “respectable known man”, as an indication of social status, was reportedly effective in stopping violence. The importance of a social ranking in this society is reflected in Babur's recollections, who stated, “Not surprisingly, Melis³² lives near “Atabek” restaurant, which was a border for the riots, the riots stop there... Nobody went that far. His house is of course untouched.”

Thus, using Brown's terms, the definition of the universal “we” became especially vague during the conflict, leaving space for creation of many other identities. In some narrations, it was “I's” as “common Kyrgyz/Uzbek people” against “wealthy Kyrgyz/Uzbeks, whose houses were safe”, “I's” as Oshers against “villagers/criminals/people on drugs from the outside”, etc. Not only the hierarchy was shifting, it was also negotiated among the participants, as can be seen from Svetlana's words, “The house committee of this apartment house, a Kyrgyz man, who was

³² According to International Crisis Group (2012), Mayor Melis Myrzakmatov is the standard-bearer of an ethnic Kyrgyz-first policy and the most successful radical nationalist leader to emerge after the killings. Retrieved on May 5, 2012 from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/222-kyrgyzstan-widening-ethnic-divisions-in-the-south.aspx>

sheltering several Uzbeks said, “I myself don’t know which ethnicity I belong to. Get out of here!” In this case, apparently, such rhetoric as being outside the hierarchy, i.e. having no identity was also a tactic of constructing a neutral identity that was not perpetrated. For example, Russians residing in Osh, who together with Tajiks, Tartars, Kazakhs, and Koreans comprise 12 percent of the Osh population³³, were neutral in a peculiar way: they did not take sides in the attacks, but did so in sheltering activities. They were mostly not attacked by any sides’ perpetrators, which enabled them to shelter ethnic minorities – Uzbeks or Tajiks³⁴, according to the stories told by many people, including my parents. A strikingly insightful case happened to Svetlana:

I also sheltered an Uzbek woman with a baby. Somebody told the Kyrgyz perpetrators, who were mostly men from villages, that I have an Uzbek. The group of about 12 people got in my apartment, pushed me away, and wanted to beat the Uzbek woman. But one of the elder person from this gang said “Wait a minute, are you crazy? Why did you touch a Russian? Going against them? You want Russia later to destroy us?! Don’t touch Russians!” So another younger man just broke all the windows in my apartment and they ran away.

I can speculate that the words of the perpetrators illustrate quasi-justification of their violence. While ethnic or nationalist Russians can allegedly be backed up by Russia – strong colonialist country in the past, Uzbeks can not. This was evident when Uzbekistan’s president refused to interfere in the conflict and closed the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border. “Even their government did not want them”, was one of the common comments heard then and even now among people of other ethnic groups. While the topic of an ethnic group being attached to a certain territory is an interesting phenomenon in international relations theories and political science, I will not further elaborate on that because my purpose is to find the meaning that people put into their actions and events happening to them. Perhaps the above described occasion, points out the

³³ Barataliev, S. (2010). *The Osh that Was*. Neweurasia.net Citizen Media. Retrieved on May 3, 2012 from <http://www.neweurasia.net/culture-and-history/the-osh-that-was/>

³⁴ Tajiks have a similar to Uzbeks outlook.

hierarchy of colonized countries, which is transferred into people's cognitive schemes.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize it is not clear who was initiating discussions on sheltering more – men or women. However, undoubtedly, it was a mutual decision, undertaken in two different ways – men physically protecting the houses outside, and women providing emotional and provisional help to the sheltered peoples. Furthermore, their self-identities as members of one community, be that a neighborhood or a tribe's members married to ethnic other, stood above the ethnic identity. The latter very often sub-categorized into “good” and “evil” in order to rationalize cooperation for themselves. The next section will analyze how these sub-categorizations merged back into one – ethnic other and how it was performed by Osh citizens after the conflict was officially proclaimed to be over. I will also discuss how it impacted women by reestablishing their traditional roles.

The Aftermath: Sheltering Got out of Context?

On June 10 it will be exactly 2 years since the outbreak of the Osh conflict of 2010. The digits of financial estimates of the damage to the city and to the country cannot grasp the psychological price paid for the war. While some people are still struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder, possibly with such syndromes as survivor guilt³⁵, as Altynai described, “I felt immense feeling of shame in front of Uzbeks...”, others try to leave the country permanently or temporarily, or to find new ways to cope with the post-war situation, as Gulbahar repeated several times, “But what else to do? Where else to go? We've got no other place to live but here. We have to.”

One of the dialogues that I had with my friend, who later canceled the interview, illustrates the

³⁵ As stated by Miller (1981), “disaster researchers (Dynes & Quarentelli, Note 1; Erikson, 1976; Lifton & Olson, 1976) point out the phenomenon of “survivor guilt,” which seems to be a natural reaction of disaster victims when they begin to compare their losses with other's losses. They ask themselves “Why am I alive and my husband killed?” or “Why was my neighbor's home destroyed and mine left untouched?”

depth of the meaning people put into it. I told him "...was when I graduated from the university," on which he replied, "Wait, was it before or after the war? My whole life is now divided by "before" and "after the events" principle."

As stated in the earlier chapters, the striking evidence derived from the narrations shows that at the time of the conflict people almost did not question the need to cooperate with ethnic others, while afterwards most of them seemed to reconstruct the ethnic polarization in public and semi-public spheres. To frame it in the cognitive-perceptual theory terms, if before they rather identified themselves with the "peaceful/innocuous" part of the ethnic other, then after war they started seeing themselves more as victims of the unified ethnic group violence. Thus, the choice of behavior has little options but hostility. The triumph of nationalism has allowed creating what Brown would call cultural homogeneity, or the universal "we", if she applied her theory to the aftermath of the Osh conflict; the universal "we" as Kyrgyz ethnic group who needs to maintain its heritage by excluding others. Taking Brown's concepts further, individual liberty of then-existent "I"s to conduct sheltering has been suppressed by the currently constructed "social egalitarianism" or preserving "what is rightfully ours"³⁶ from those who "are trying to take it away" and therefore "deserve violence". Liberal subjects within Kyrgyz population are now faced with a dilemma: whether to preserve individual freedom to act in a manner of cooperation with ethnic others and thus be excluded from the universal "we" or to get included into it by performing ethnic hatred, at least in public spheres. Whatever a choice might be, it produces different effects on different gender, ethnic group members, age, and class. If before and during the conflict the politics of motherhood has "prepared" and enabled women to take leading role in rescuing ethnic others in semi-public spheres mentioned earlier, now, it works against them. The current reconstruction of the ethnic identity in the aftermath and the perceived necessity to preserve it by violence has pushed women further to the private domain, so that to

³⁶ Kaufman's (2001) term in the theory of symbolic politics

protect themselves from the attacks, as women are most vulnerable in this situation. The cross-sectional (age, gender, ethnicity, social status) analysis will be discussed below along with the meanings that people put into this situation.

“Anti-Sheltering” Performativity in Public Divide

By “anti-sheltering” I mean hostility performed in verbal or physical violence, or not standing up for someone who has been abused merely for belonging to a certain ethnic group. The most illustrative example that I have heard from many people and that I have personally gone through was the situation in the public transport. In my case, when I was riding in a minibus in Bishkek in June 2010, a Kyrgyz boy has touched my hand, on which I replied him in Russian that he should stop. He replied me in Kyrgyz that “You Russian should go back to Russia, there is no place for you in Kyrgyzstan” - the phrase which I heard for the first and the last time in my life. Shortly after I replied him in his native language that he'd better calm down, all the passengers of the bus got involved. While some women were having a verbal fight with him arguing that “because of people like you we had a terrible war in the South”, a man on his back hit him in his shoulder. In several seconds, the male part of the minibus was divided into supporters and opponents of this “nationalist” physically fighting with each other. As soon as the transport stopped, they all rolled out and I could see from a window they were hitting each other even more. Noteworthy, I was the only non-Kyrgyz in the bus.

This event in my opinion has illustrated the echo of the Osh conflict in the North: the majority of the Bishkek residents were against nationalist policies because they were much more under Russia's control during Soviet and Post-Soviet times. Most of them have very elementary knowledge of Kyrgyz language and consider Russian as their native one. Thus, there was very little space for constructing strong ethnic identity. They have rather developed a regional, perceived to be superior to the south – Northern one. Probably that is why the inter-ethnic riots

in April of 2010 in the village of Maevka³⁷ has not led to the massive ethnic clashes. According to Osmonov (2010), “Bishkek residents have re-mobilized into volunteer citizen groups to protect the city and its suburbs, including Maevka, from looting and attacks”, and reportedly the volunteers were comprised of various ethnic belongings. This is an illustration how similar inter-ethnic provocations have produced completely different results.

Performance of a “Northerner” after the clashes presupposed ethnic tolerance perhaps also because of the extremely vibrant ethnic composition of the North. According to Population and Housing Census (2009), Chui oblast (the Northern administrative division which includes Bishkek) is composed of Kyrgyz (~60%), Russians (~21%), Dungans (6.2%), and 15 other groups, whose percentage ranges from 0.2 to 1.9³⁸. Osh oblast, on the other hand, consists of Kyrgyz (~70%), Uzbeks (28%), and only 7 other ethnic groups, whose percentage ranges from 0.1 to 1%.³⁹ Therefore, as stated in the introduction, the more mixed a neighborhood, or an oblast for that matter, is and as a result, more interactions with ethnic others are likely to happen on a daily basis, the less there was a probability for the outbreak of violence among its members. Perhaps, this tendency is strengthened in the North by use of common language – Russian.

Therefore, I speculated that if the instances of inter-ethnic arguments were present even in Bishkek, than their scale must have been much greater in Osh with a recent open inter-ethnic conflict. This is how an intuitive idea to ask about it appeared, and it showed to be worth of inquiring for it has shown how the conflict was consistently reproduced in especially minibuses –

³⁷ For more information please look at Osmonov, J. (2010). *Maevka Unrest Threatens Inter-ethnic Stability in Kyrgyzstan*. Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst Journal. Retrieved on April 2, 2012 from: <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5319>

³⁸ National Statistics committee of Kyrgyz Republic (2009). *Population and Housing Census of Chui Oblast*. Retrieved on May 22, 2012 from <http://212.42.101.100:8088/nacstat/sites/default/files/%D0%A7%D1%83%D0%B9%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%8F%20%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C.pdf>

³⁹ National Statistics committee of Kyrgyz Republic (2009). *Population and Housing Census of Osh Oblast*. Retrieved on May 22, 2012 from <http://212.42.101.100:8088/nacstat/sites/default/files/%D0%9E%D1%88%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%8F%20%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8C.pdf>

or what people call “marshrutka”. It usually has 12-15 seats, but because of the transport shortages in the city, it is usually over-occupied with as many as 30, bringing people extremely physically close to each other. In this context, exposure to ethnic others is tension-producing:

Aziza: What I have noticed as well, the passengers in mini-buses tend to give seats to both Kyrgyz and Uzbek, which was not the case right after the war – youngsters would do this only to the elders of their ethnicity⁴⁰ or it would be a reason to start a fight.

Gulbahar: in the beginning even small girls were saying “You sart give a place to an elder one”

Mahmuda: we tried to avoid public transport on the way to school [a distance of about 5 km one way] because it was unbearable to hear all the humiliations.

I argue that such behavior is rather performative because it is exposed to direct public evaluation. In the instances of sheltering, it was not necessarily observed by the outsiders of a community or a neighborhood, which allowed to make individual “deviating” decisions to take place and later be rationalized by “I didn't have time to think of his ethnicity” argument whoever might question the rescuers' belonging-ness to the universal ethnic “we”.

As a way to deal with such situation, Mahmuda has reported to find three ways: to avoid public painful experience by walking to the school, avoid going to the school by staying at home, or to get less comments by dressing like Kyrgyz, speaking in Kyrgyz language with them and in Russian with other Uzbeks, when in public.

I argue that it has created an obstacle for middle-class women to reach their working or educational destinations. Those of higher income could hypothetically resolve the problem by riding in private transportation, which however entails its own frightening consequences and therefore perhaps avoided as well, which can happen according to Gulbahar, “The road police officers stopped my nephew and took money for nothing, they said “If you were Kyrgyz, we wouldn't do anything to you, but since you are Uzbek, give us 1000 som.” Or as Aziza narrates,

⁴⁰ It is one of the unwritten laws in Kyrgyzstan, especially in the rural areas – to give seats to elderly in the public transport, but not only to elderly – to young women wearing high heels and women with children.

The only thing I am resentful for is the behavior of militia. They were extremely cruel and were treating Uzbeks very rudely. They beat up my son for no reason, just because he came out to work one week after the events.

As a way to revenge to the above described violence at least verbally, some of the Uzbek narrators have constructed a financially superior identity. For example, Alisher stated, "...the difference is that when we spend a lot of money for funerals and weddings, we are left with money, but they don't. Our situation was very similar to the one with Jews during WWII, it's all about the politics though."

I have observed the construction of self as economically powerful in Aziza's narration, who told me that during shortly after the war, the Uzbeks were called "dollars" because they were "idiots and gave any price militia officers would ask in return for releasing our boys."

Perhaps, the resentment, in Nietzsche's words, for being deprived in the aftermath of something they felt they were better at has caused their unwillingness to reflect upon sheltering or diminish its meaning. However, what is more important to understand is why the same people (earlier acquaintances, neighbors) who were perceived as "sub-category" of ethnic others during the war were equated to perpetrators of ethnic others; why Uzbeks have gained one image "of deserving what it got" and Kyrgyz "unjustly taken away everything". One of the rationalizations of drawing such a thick ethnic border was given by Kanykei:

- In the school and near it I have seen many of the Uzbek girls having hard times after the war. Our boys were mocking on them, beating them sometimes or calling them "sart".
- Did you feel sorry for them?
- After what I have seen in the video – no!
- Were these particular girls involved in killing?
- They [without distinguishing between men and women] were killing. And even women are not that innocent as they look like. I don't feel sorry for them at all.

Obviously such attitudes, as well as rumors about ongoing rape of Uzbek girls keeps women away not only from public but even semi-public spaces, as Mahmuda describes, "I have heard that a girl was sweeping an area outside her house and was taken by perpetrators, raped,

killed and cut into pieces. I am sometimes afraid to go outside.”

What has been mentioned by several women, is that because of the danger that Uzbek girls were exposed to, they “had to be married off” to a “man who can protect them and take them out of the county”, as for example Gulbahar conveys: I said to my daughter, “Go with husband wherever you want in one year, when I will marry you.” I don't want to send my girl to Moscow when she is single. Girls should not go alone.”

Of course, the degree of protection of women in their household is highly contestable, for as Thompson (2007) states, still “women face high levels of gender-based violence during conflict (Anfossi Gomez 2006; Helie-Lucas 2006; Sajor 1998; UNIFEM no date; United Nations 2002), both as a direct result of the conflict itself, and because domestic violence is shown to increase during wartime and post-conflict periods (OSAGI 2004)”. The recent trial case is only one of such examples, when a National Security Committee officer, who was suspected of collective raping his wife, was acquitted by the military court of Kyrgyzstan.⁴¹

However, some interviewees did see potential for restoration of the inter-ethnic tolerance in public spheres and thus for finding alternative ways of sheltering than by getting deeper in the private sphere, as seen from Aziza's words,

Also, as you know I work on the central open market and we had and still have good relations now. There everybody was affected – the booths of Kyrgyz and Uzbek alike were completely destroyed. Probably this is the only place where there was no ethnic differentiation.

To conclude, the respondents were in the constant search of uniting factors even during the times of interethnic violence in the aftermath.

⁴¹ More information about the trial and the video of it can be found on news release post by Sultanbekova, Z. (2012). *Video: The Military Court Acquits SCNS Officer, Who was Suspected of Raping his Wife. (Video: Voennyi Sud Opravdal Sotrudnika KGNB, Kotoryi Podozrevalsia v Iznasilovanii Svoei Sobstvennoi Zheny)*. Retrieved on May 20, 2012 from: <http://kloop.kg/blog/2012/05/24/video-voenny-j-sud-opravdal-sotrudnika-gknb-kotory-j-podozrevalsya-v-iznasilovanii-sobstvennoj-zheny/>

VI Conclusion

I expect this thesis to have shed the light on the gender perspective of the Osh riots of 2010, for unfortunately gender blindness is a common phenomena in the academic research of an ethnic conflict. Therefore, I intended to show that the behavior before, during, and after a conflict differs not only among genders, but among neighborhoods. In particular, I was arguing that mahallas with mixed ones were more likely to cooperate, with women sheltering their neighbors at home and performing traditional women's work for/with them, and men constructing barricades and patrolling the neighborhoods during day and night in shifts. Along with typical women's activities around the globe – cooking and mothering, I have highlighted regionally specific one – sweeping the area outside a household as necessary preconditions for sheltering. Particularly, I have shown how frequency of interactions through cleaning front yard created space for friendly ties, which equated the status of a neighbor to that of a relative before and during the conflict and thus left people “with no choice”, but to cooperate. Meanwhile, men were exposed to such small, but consistent interactions through attending a mosque, for religion in the South is not ethnicity-specific among Kyrgyz and Uzbek. When asked, most of the interviewees have rationalized rescuing with a perception of self as a parent, a neighbor, a relative, a human “just like them” with “no time to think of his ethnicity”. Moreover, the majority have referred to the pre-conflict era as a “golden age”, in which all of them lived in inter-ethnic friendship. Such rhetoric perhaps assisted them in diminishing the socially expected guilt for sheltering an “enemy”, which was constructed shortly after the official end of the conflict. Mass media, CDs, rumors, and on-line videos have contributed to drawing a thick border between ethnic groups. Through such examples I have offered a critique to Brown's theory of politicized identity: the model of particularistic “I” and a universal “we” works only in a relatively peaceful period of a country, for during an ethnic conflict, there is an

especially sharp lack of homogenous culture within “we”, which opens up space for creating various identities. Also I argued that sheltering was possible as it was an action in a semi-public sphere, but had altered in the public one after the war because it was a reinforced performance of ethnic hatred expected from the Oshers.

My major limitation was perhaps homogeneity of the respondents. Except for a Russian woman, none of the respondents spoke their native language to me, which could have created further distance. Due to my topic, I had to concentrate on sheltering even though I have found other interesting topics for discussion. Thus the suggestions for further studies would be concentrating on the aftermath and its impact on early marriages, the meaning of public transport in the aftermath, reconciliation techniques, and the behavior of non-sheltering (atrocities). Also, I could not find a person who was in a camp, an official sheltering institution. The situation there and its similarities and differences with private sheltering could be researched as well.

Thus, politics of motherhood have empowered women to take leading role in constructing preconditions for rescuing, as well as in conducting it in the process of a conflict. However, it had a negative effect in the aftermath, as it pushed women further to the private sphere as means of protection from the possible attacks of ethnic other.

VII Appendix

The map of the Region⁴²

Picture 1. Country Map



Picture 2. Regional Map



⁴² The pictures taken from World Atlas (2012). *Kyrgyzstan*. Retrieved on May 14, 2012 from: <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/kg.htm>

List of Interviewees

All names changed according to their ethnicity:

1. Aziza – Uzbek woman, middle-aged, has 2 children, shop assistant at the central market, married to an Uzbek man, was sheltered by a Kyrgyz neighbor, current location – Osh;
2. Gulbahar – an Uzbek woman, 47, has 1 child, housewife, married to an Uzbek man, neighbor of Aziza; current location – Osh, has a rather Kyrgyz outlook;⁴³
3. Mahmuda – Uzbek woman, 18, single, student of an Kyrgyz-Uzbek college, daughter of Gulbahar, was sheltered by a Kyrgyz neighbor, current location – Osh;
4. Svetlana – Russian woman, 82, pensioner, single, sheltered an Uzbek woman with a baby, lives with her daughter, current location – Osh;
5. Kanykei – Kyrgyz woman, 16, high school student, single, daughter of a single mother, sheltered an Uzbek woman with a baby for 2 hours, current location – Osh;
6. Altynai – Kyrgyz woman, 24, housewife, has higher education, married to an Uzbek man, sheltered 15 Uzbeks, current location – Russia;
7. Sevdiya – Uzbek woman, 28, housewife, has higher education, married to an American, sheltered several Uzbek women at her house and was helped by people of other ethnicities – mostly neighbors and colleagues, current location – the USA;
8. Alisher – Uzbek man, 50, partially handicapped, has higher education, taxi driver, ex-teacher of military preparation at high school, married to Gulbahar is the father of Mahmuda, was not sheltered because he was paralyzed back then, current location – Osh;
9. Babur – Uzbek man, 25, waiter in a restaurant, obtaining his higher education, married to

⁴³ People of the Kyrgyz ethnic group have a rather Mongolian outlook, while the Uzbek – rather resemble Iranians, according to Joshua project (1999). *Tajik, Afghani of Afghanistan*. Retrieved on May 1, 2012 from <http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile.php>.

Local people can usually easily distinguish between the two just by appearance. The next distinctive feature is language. Although Kyrgyz and Uzbek languages belong to the Turkic group, local people can easily differentiate between the two.

an Uzbek woman, has two children, his father is an Uzbek, and mother – half-Uzbek and half-Kyrgyz, was sheltered by a Kyrgyz employee of his father, he and his whole family received political refuge in the USA, current location – the USA.

The List of the Videos on Inter-Ethnic Violence

The Genocide of Uzbeks – Kyrgyzstan Ethnic Violence (30 minutes):⁴⁴ Before the actual scenes of the war, it is written on the screen “... Kyrgyz are worse than apes...” and other similar in content statements directed to identify a Kyrgyz as a violent perpetrator. Throughout the movie, the same set of violent pictures is shown with some videos, and there is the sound of a voice of a crying woman on the background, saying that they did not have any weapons at all. Some pictures are clearly from Kyrgyzstan because there are Uzbek hats or other national attributes, while others could be taken from any other war, especially the pictures of dead bodies. In the middle of the movie there is a written statement with capital letters: “June 11, 2010 – this day will be remembered by each one of us!!!” This is followed by the slides of the pictures from Osh with burned cars and buildings, Kyrgyz soldiers with guns. Later there are scenes from hospital, in which it is rather difficult to identify ethnicity of the wounded patients. Very symbolic moment is shown several times – the torn apart dopa⁴⁵ or dopa in blood. This video has below 8 violent comments, with derogatory language and threats in forms of dialogues between two ethnicities.

The next video that I watched for the purpose of researching the construction of polarization of two ethnic groups was called “*The Execution of Uzbeks in Osh*”

⁴⁴ Can be found on the most popular Russian Social Network vkontakte.ru, which offers various films and audio records

⁴⁵ National Uzbek hat worn by men on every day basis

(“*Unichtojeniye Uzzbekov v Oshe*”).⁴⁶ It is a short film with the scene of a crowd watching the burning of several men in a pile. One of whom gets up because he is still alive while on fire, but he is beaten by a man from a crowd. Kyrgyz speech among the watching crowd is distinguished.

„*Uzbecks in Osh*“ consists of 4 parts, the second of which is not available.

In part 1,⁴⁷ there are violent pictures, which are followed by a statement that “Violence remains unpunished“. Then there is a scene of women crying and asking to give them weapons to kill the Kyrgyz; people are talking about snipers, it has 11 comments with violent derogatory content against Kyrgyz and Uzbek

In part 3,⁴⁸ there is a woman crying and saying they don't have weapons followed by scenes of Uzbeks speaking in front of buried and dead people. Then an affirmative male narrator says that it was a purposeful killing of civilian Uzbeks. He further conveys that unless a house has a written sign on it “kyrgyz”, they were put on fire. He goes on with “According to witnesses, military forces of Kyrgyzstan received a confidential order to kill everyone.” After that crying women and children at the border are shown along with the narrator saying, “While men stayed at home to protect the houses, women were forced to leave to the border.” The video has 228 comments, again with derogatory, blaming, and threatening content against Kyrgyz and Uzbek

And in part 4,⁴⁹ the operators are showing refugees at the border, stating that Uzbekistan and

⁴⁶ The video is no longer available online. Last time I retrieved it was May 2, 2012

⁴⁷ Available from:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUehp_jspRQ&oref=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fresults%3Fsearch_query%3D%25D1%2583%25D0%25B7%25D0%25B1%25D0%25B5%25D0%25BA%25D0%25B8%2B%25D0%25B2%2B%25D0%25BE%25D1%2588%25D0%25B5%2B%25D1%2587%25D0%25B0%25D1%2581%25D1%2582%25D1%258C%2B1%26oq%3D%25D1%2583%25D0%25B7%25D0%25B1%25D0%25B5%25D0%25BA%25D0%25B8%2B%25D0%25B2%2B%25D0%25BE%25D1%2588%25D0%25B5%2B%25D1%2587%25D0%25B0%25D1%2581%25D1%2582%25D1%258C%2B1%26aq%3D%26aqi%3D%26aqi%3D%26gs_l%3Dyoutube-reduced.3...19526.27159.0.27688.3.2.0.1.1.0.53.106.2.2.0...0.0.9t1AjWVoFUA

⁴⁸ Available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKF0XzRLYzg&feature=relmfu>

⁴⁹ Available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQJIVCoYudg&feature=relmfu>

other UN organs have helped women and children, which are shown with barely alive children. The scenes of hospitals are illustrated along with the narrator saying that Uzbekistan hospitals were accepting wounded people throughout the whole day. It was claimed towards the end, “European mass media do not show much interest to the war and its violence, just calling it an inter-ethnic conflict, while in reality it was genocide.” Also, it is claimed that humanitarian aid is not delivered fully in Kyrgyzstan by being stolen on the way. At the very end, female witnesses are saying that their relatives are killed.

Finally, the video that at the moment has surprisingly no comments at all is “*The Hour of Jackal*”,⁵⁰ which lasts for 1 hour and 10 minutes. At the very beginning it is written “The Facts of the Genocide of Uzbeks”. Out of the discussed above, it is the most violent with witnesses telling their stories. Towards the ending, the picture of Roza Otumbaeva is shown at the background of burning houses and looted streets, and the male affirmative voice proclaims that Otumbaeva is a weak president who could not stop the war. It written again at the end that it was a genocide and it must be revenged. The video has 48,924 views.

Finally, there is also an influential video of Yulduz Usmanova (Uzbek pop Diva, People's Artist of Uzbekistan), who has written a song “To Kyrgyz”,⁵¹ which was released after the outbreak of war on June 21, 2010. Some of the lines of the song include “Don’t you Kyrgyz have faith?” “Oh, my Kyrgyz you have sold your soul cheaply” “If an Uzbek starts revenge, you will disappear” “If you will kill every ethnicity, who will stay with you, Kyrgyz?” The pictures of burnt houses, crying women and children, people at the border, hospitals are shown at the background.

⁵⁰ Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JugH3SzoIp4>

⁵¹ Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1yN0eFgpSE&feature=related>

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