

**PARTY AND CLAN POLITICS IN KYRGYZSTAN: IS THE ‘CLAN’ AN  
ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE FOR POLITICAL PARTIES? THE CASE STUDIES OF  
THE THREE PARTIES IN POWER**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis argues that the concept of ‘clan’, which is largely exploited in the literature, is not the most suitable analytical lenses to assess the dynamics of political competition in the Kyrgyz Republic. The thesis draws on the two theories: first, it is clans that hold “real power” as Collins asserts; second, it is “parliamentary practices” and the strengthening of parties which repress any form of informality, as Starr argues. Against the background of all latest political developments in Kyrgyzstan, such as the ousting of authoritarian president, introduction of the parliamentary form of governance, and pluralistic parliamentary elections with the unprecedented number of parties participating, my arguments are numerous: first, clans are not the organizing principle for parties to form and to function; second, informality in politics is present, but is not heavily based on kinship systems, as clans assume. The series of interviews conducted with experts and elites, as well as thorough media and literature search establish that political parties in power stand far from institutionalization and, consequently, overall democratization; and Parliament represents the playfield where regional ‘power brokers’ and financial elites join their forces, if they have common interest.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the *Failed States Index* of 2011<sup>1</sup>, presented by the Foreign Policy Magazine and the Fund for Peace, Kyrgyzstan is ranked 31<sup>st</sup> – an alarming rating position across the post-Soviet space. Specifically, Kyrgyzstan shows the worst scores on indicators such as the *delegitimization of the state* and *factionalized elites* – 9.0 and 8.3 respectively.<sup>2</sup> The second characteristic, *factionalized elites*, will be of special interest within the framework of this research.

With regards to the causes of such poor scores it should be said that on April 7, 2010 Kyrgyzstan experienced the second toppling of the regime<sup>3</sup>, largely known as the “April events” which followed the one that occurred on March 24, 2005. Furthermore, the bloody ethnic conflict that broke out in the southern city of Osh between Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations in June same year and exacerbated the political crisis even more.<sup>4</sup> In general, the second instance of regime change had “devastating effect” on the country’s stability (Matveeva 2011).

Among the consequences this set of turbulent events had on Kyrgyzstan and its governability, scholar Matveeva points out the “mushrooming of parties” (Matveeva 2011), as there were twenty nine parties contesting for power in 2010.<sup>5</sup> Here I assume that such an

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<sup>1</sup> The Failed States Index 2011 – Interactive Map and Ranking. *Foreign Policy Magazine*. [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/17/2011\\_failed\\_states\\_index\\_interactive\\_map\\_and\\_rankings](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/17/2011_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “New Color Revolution in Kyrgyzstan?” Event Summary chaired by Hale, Henry. The George Washington University, April 8, 2010. [http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/SUMMARY-New\\_Color\\_Revolution\\_in\\_Kyrgyzstan.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/SUMMARY-New_Color_Revolution_in_Kyrgyzstan.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Harding, Luke. “Kyrgyzstan Erupts Into Civil War”, *The Guardian*. June 13, 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/13/kyrgyzstan-erupts-into-ethnic-war>

<sup>5</sup> Pannier, Bruce. “Kyrgyzstan Prepares to Hold Parliamentary Elections After Turbulent Events”. RFE/RL. September 10, 2010.

increase in the number of parties enhanced the elite fragmentation and factionalization in Kyrgyz politics. As Giovanni Sartori puts it: “the number of parties immediately indicates, albeit roughly, an important feature of political system: the extent to which political power is fragmented, dispersed or concentrated” (1990: 317). Besides, I suggest that the degree of elite fragmentation defines the dynamics of competition for public office among elites.

As a rule, the contestation for power between parties is culminated in the formation of Parliament. Indeed, this was the case of the parliamentary elections held in Kyrgyzstan in October 2010, which were portrayed as “vibrant and pluralistic”.<sup>6</sup> The elections were preceded by the referendum on June 27 the same year when the population opted for the parliamentary form of governance as a panacea against authoritarianism and super-presidential rule.<sup>7</sup> As a result of the elections, five parties passed the 5 per cent threshold and started playing “cooperative games”<sup>8</sup> among themselves within Parliament.<sup>9</sup> In this regard, Frederick Starr believes that the strengthening of parties and, as follows, of parliamentary practices in Central Asia brings “evolutionary change” to the political systems and ultimately the process of democratization (2006: 4-5).

At the same time, Starr highlights that with regards to the Central Asian parliaments it is ‘invisible’ or informal politics that shapes the electoral processes and composition of the

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[http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyzstan\\_Pre pares\\_To\\_Hold\\_Parliamentary\\_Elections\\_After\\_Turbulent\\_Events/2154527.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyzstan_Pre pares_To_Hold_Parliamentary_Elections_After_Turbulent_Events/2154527.html)

<sup>6</sup> “Kyrgyzstan’s Vibrant and Pluralistic Parliamentary Elections Constitute Further Consolidation of Democracy”. OSCE/ODIHR Press-release. October 11, 2010. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/72409>

<sup>7</sup> Harding, Luke. “Kyrgyzstan Holds Referendum Amid Civil Fears”, The Guardian. June 27, 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/27/kyrgyzstan-referendum-civil-war-fears>

<sup>8</sup> The term derived from Cooperative Game Theory. See Adam Brandenburger “Cooperative game Theory: Characteristic Functions, Allocations, Marginal Contribution”. New York University – Stern Community. January 4, 2007. <http://pages.stern.nyu.edu/~abranden/coop-01-04-07.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> “Kyrgyzstan to Have Five Parties in Parliament – Central Election Committee”, RIA Novosti News Agency. October 11, 2010. <http://en.rian.ru/world/20101011/160916867.html>

legislature (Starr 2006). As he indicates, ‘invisible’ politics is represented by the so-called ‘power brokers’ including clans (2006: 5). Therefore, the main interest of my research is to assess the composition of Parliament, i.e. political parties and the extent of invisibility which supposedly shapes them. What makes the research puzzling is the fact that, as Starr asserts, the attempts to remove authoritarian presidents in Central Asian countries can end up in crises (2006: 5). Eventually, these crises would lead either to the “reaffirmation of the former inter-clan pacts” (Starr 2006: 5) or to the appearance of the new pacts that eradicate ‘invisible’ power brokers including clans, regional groups, and financial magnates (Starr 2006: 5).

The fact that the replacement of super-presidentialism of ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiev by the parliamentary form of governance, as it was stipulated in the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic<sup>10</sup>, preceded the formation of the Parliament poses a set of questions to be answered: is the ‘clan’ an organizing principle for party formation and operation in Kyrgyzstan? Is Parliament a reaffirmation of inter- or intra-clan pacts? What can be other organizing principles for parties in Kyrgyzstan, especially if we assume low party institutionalization? If the ‘clan’ is not the organizing principle for parties, what do they represent?

For this purpose, the concepts of ‘clans’, as well as of ‘clan pacts’ (Collins 2006) will become the main analytical tools by which I plan to investigate the composition of Parliament, i.e. of those parties that form it. Taking into consideration the fact that some of them were created just before the election, I will mostly concentrate my attention on their formative phase to assess the degree of institutionalization. My null hypothesis then is that

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<sup>10</sup> The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, Art. 4, 70-82  
[http://www.shailoo.gov.kg/index.php?module=content&page=Konstituciya\\_Kyrgyzskoy\\_Respubliki\\_prinyata\\_Referendumom\\_27\\_iyunya\\_2010\\_godaKyrgyz\\_Respublikasynyn\\_Konstituciyasy\\_2010jyldyn\\_27iyununda\\_Refrendumda\\_kabyl\\_alynghan&pagelang=ru](http://www.shailoo.gov.kg/index.php?module=content&page=Konstituciya_Kyrgyzskoy_Respubliki_prinyata_Referendumom_27_iyunya_2010_godaKyrgyz_Respublikasynyn_Konstituciyasy_2010jyldyn_27iyununda_Refrendumda_kabyl_alynghan&pagelang=ru)



parties entering Parliament are based on clans. My hypotheses are numerous: first, the concept of ‘clan’ is exaggerated, including in relation to parties, because the political circumstances are much more complex; second, informality is still present and prevents the country from democratization, because Parliament is rather an association of political players who treat it as the main playfield for power contestation, in the pursuance of their own political and economic interests.

I believe that this particular research will be a contribution to scholarship on the region. First, I will show empirically that the concept of ‘clan’ has been exaggerated in the academic circles as applicable to Kyrgyz politics. Second, it will be an in-depth study of party dynamics inside the Parliament of the latest convocation, though the time distance is still small. In fact, small distance in time and the openness of the case in the sense that the analyzed parties are in power impose certain limitations on the scope of my research. In the meantime, I firmly believe that it is already useful to draw some conclusions about parties in order to track the political trajectory of present-day Kyrgyzstan.

The structure of the paper is the following: in Chapter 1 I will explain in detail the methods I use to answer my research questions and to test my hypotheses; in Chapter 2 I construct a theoretical framework to ground my hypotheses in the existing literature on the subject; and in Chapter 3 I present the findings of my qualitative study of ‘clan’ as an explanatory variable and parties as the case studies of my research.

## CHAPTER I: METHODOLOGY

This thesis adopts a qualitative study which represents a ‘within-case’ analysis of the parties in parliament. Specifically, this research combined several methods, namely literature and media search, process-tracing, and interviewing. First, extensive literature search helped me to construct a theoretical framework for doing an analysis. To complement it, media search and process-tracing have become especially useful, because the political events I describe in my work are recent, and the literature on this case is not available. Utilizing them, I obtained information about the latest political developments and key political actors involved in the time period from October 2010 to October 2011 when presidential elections took place in Kyrgyzstan, and, consequently, a new ruling coalition in the Parliament was formed.

Since my study focuses on political elites, in order to generate necessary data I decided to use the interviewing technique. For this purpose in early April 2012 I applied for a short-term research grant and received it. As a result of getting the possibility to make a field trip to the capital of Kyrgyzstan – Bishkek city – I started searching for people who could have become good sources of data. My trip was scheduled for the time period between April 25 and May 7, and prior to the arrival in Bishkek I planned three interviews with political experts. In preparation for the meetings, I made up two semi-structured questionnaires, one – for experts and one – for party elites. The questionnaires were prepared in order to be able to compare the answers and to channel out discussions.

The questionnaires I prepared differed depending on whether these were party elites or political experts. My questions to party elites aimed at assessing their party discipline, formation phase, goals, party members’ recruitment, regional balance, etc. In contrast, my questions to experts included the ones about the concept of ‘clan’, its applicability as an

explanatory variable to the political circumstances, and parties' genesis, etc (see them attached in the Appendix).

First expert I met was political scientist Bakyt Baketaev, who is the staff member of the Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic. In the telephone conversation we agreed to make an appointment on April 27, 2012 at the Ministry. During the conversation, he demonstrated openness and readiness to answer all my questions, and he did not mind me using a voice recorder. For the next day I scheduled a meeting with the Doctor of History Science, President of Kyrgyz History Society Tynchtykbek Chorotegin whom I knew in person. This expert was of special interest and importance for my research purposes because he is the former Director of Kyrgyz Service of RFE/RL, and, in my opinion, could tie up historical and political processes into one logical chain. With Dr. Chorotegin we met at the park on April 28, 2012, that is why the sound quality was low and caused some difficulties for me when transcribing this particular interview.

My third interview was held with the diplomat and businessman Giorgio Fiacconi, whom I knew in person. Fiacconi had rich experience of diplomatic service and doing business in Kyrgyzstan and by that time has lived eighteen years in the country, what allowed him assessing the political processes at some distance. I have reached his agreement to give me an interview by e-mail correspondence, in which I explained him my overall research purposes. The reason why I addressed to Fiacconi was the fact that in the beginning of this year he published the book titled "Kyrgyzstan – Twenty Years of Independence". Prior to the start of my studies at CEU, I worked at the Central Asia Media Institute founded by Giorgio Fiacconi and assisted him in collecting and translating materials for his book. With Fiacconi we met on May 1 at the Consulate, and he also demonstrated openness to the discussion and agreed to the use of a voice recorder.

It should be said that I actually did not plan to hold my last interview with expert Tabyldy Akerov. The thing is that the day before the actual interview, on May 2, I talked to the member of the Ata-Meken (Fatherland) political party, who in turn advised me approaching expert Akerov, noting that he (Akerov) was currently making a database on clan origins of political elites in Kyrgyzstan. With Professor Akerov we met on May 3, after his lecture at the International University of Kyrgyzstan. Actually, it was the longest discussion I had because expert Akerov tried to explain me as many things as possible, and together we drew a map with the geographical clan distribution.

If all political experts demonstrated readiness to discuss clan- and party politics in Kyrgyzstan, party elites in their turn were not so open. However, my first experience of interviewing was conducted with the Head of the Respublica (Republic) political party executive committee Dosaly Esenaliev. Our meeting was held at the Respublica party headquarters in Bishkek, and Esenaliev was also open for a discussion and even showed me how the control of regional branches of the party is held, i.e. showed me the computerized system of the Party Cabinet.

Ideally I planned to hold at least two interviews with members from each party; however, time limitations did not allow me to fulfill this plan. The additional circumstance was that my research trip coincided with a series of national holidays in the country, celebrated on May 1, 5, and 9, plus the weekends. Therefore, in order to conduct interviews with party elites I decided to do them all in one day and in one place. With this schedule, I decided to interview five deputy fractions' members, i.e. those of them, who provide organizational assistance to the MPs – one from each fraction.

After a series of preliminary negotiations with the White House Apparatus, on May 2 I got a pass to the Parliament, which currently resides there. I first went to the Secretariat of

the Ata-Jurt (Fatherland) parliamentary fraction. The Head of the Secretariat, Erkin Bayamanov, readily answered my questions and did not mind that I used a voice recorder. However, at the end of the meeting he expressed hope that this information would be used strictly for research purposes and would not appear in local newspapers. For my part, I assured him that this data would be confidential and would not be misused.

Actually, the lack of trust from the party elites became the main challenge I came across during my stay at the White House. In particular, I felt it when having the next meetings with the Heads of the Ar-Namys (Dignity) and the Ata-Meken (Fatherland) fraction secretariats. In particular, when having an appointment with the Head of the Ar-Namys fraction secretariat, he demonstrated reluctance and answered my questions not fully, preferring to direct the flow of discussion as he wished. Taking into account that our talk in the hall of the party's secretariat was constantly interrupted by other staff members we could speak no more than ten minutes.

In this connection, social scientist Susan Ostrander in *“Studying Elites Using Qualitative Methods”* notes that when a researcher conducts interviews with political elites, he or she can resist their leaning to “just talk”, which, as she highlights, is the part of their “class culture repertoire” (Hertz & Imber, 1995). Despite the questionnaires prepared in advance the real interview situation often took different direction, as my experience shows.

Similarly, when approaching the Head of the Ata-Meken fraction secretariat, I encountered several problems. When I went in accordance with the previously achieved agreement to the cabinet, he was having a meeting with the Head of regional branch office of the party. Therefore, I had limited time to ask my questions. In addition, he was the first person who kindly asked me not to use a voice recorder. My last meeting during that day was with the Head of Social-Democratic Party, who did not object to me using a voice recorder.

The fact that he responded to me with learned, cliché-like phrases about the party's goals, policies, and ideology was nevertheless problematic for me. The problem consisted of being unable to learn something completely new, because I had read all this information previously, from their official online sources.

Despite the fact that I covered all parliamentary fractions in my interviewing, for the research purposes I will narrow down the scope to three of them, namely the Ata-Jurt (Fatherland), the Ar-Namys (Dignity), and the Respublica (Republic) parties. What the Ata-Jurt and the Respublica have in common is the fact that they both were created just before the parliamentary elections of 2010. In this sense, hypothesizing that both parties have not yet achieved institutionalization, it could be useful to assess the concept of 'clans' on these very case studies. In contrast to them, the Ar-Namys is one of the oldest on the political arena, but what makes it distinct is the low party discipline.

In sum, the series of interviews held with the experts and the party elites fulfilled most of my expectations and confirmed my hypotheses. My tactics was to first warm-up the interviewees with some general questions, especially party elites, and then ask them what I was really interested in, including the assessment of their reactions. Besides, 'face-to-face' encounters became a good practical experience for me as a researcher.

## **CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF CLANS IN KYRGYZ SOCIETY/PARTIES AND PARTY INSTITUTIONALIZATION**

### **BACKGROUND**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 the five Central Asian states gained sovereignty and appeared as independent republics on the political map. For most social scientists, as Lowell Dittmer et al. argue, sovereignty means that politics is associated mostly with the concept of state (2000: 4-5). With that, when scholars rationalize the political trajectories which the Central Asian countries show at their post-soviet period they concentrate predominantly on the informal level, using the notions of ‘kinship’, ‘clan’, and ‘tribe’ as explanatory variables (Collins 2006, Schatz 2004).

However, David Gullette claims the following: “the assumption that ‘clan’ and regional elites play a major role in politics simply reproduces the evolutionist notion that kinship societies are incapable of developing the political sophistication of territorially-based states” (2010: 35). In the same vein, Edward Schatz maintains that these informal identities do not fade away when external ‘homogenizing pressures’ are incomplete (Schatz 2004). In other words, as related to Central Asia the state failures are explained by the informal approach utilizing the concepts of ‘clan’ and regionalism.

Two regime collapses of 2005 and 2010 in Kyrgyzstan are mainly explained by the ‘family-clan rules’ of presidents Akaev and Bakiev.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, both ways of ruling are

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<sup>11</sup> “V 2005 Godu Za Sobytiyami v Kyrgyzstane Sledil Ves’ Mir” [In 2005 the Whole World Was Tracking the Events in Kyrgyzstan]. Kyrgyz Teleradio Corporation. March 23, 2012.  
<http://ktrk.kg/rus/index.php?newsid=4321>

characterized by the unprecedented breaches of the rule of law, enormous level of corruption, and manifestations of nepotism when closest relatives were assigned to the high-ranking positions.<sup>12</sup> After the second regime change in April 2010 and as a result of the constitutional change, i.e. the referendum held by the Provisional Government, Kyrgyzstan became the first parliamentary democracy in Central Asia.<sup>13</sup> By reducing the credentials of president, Kyrgyz authorities hoped to get rid of authoritarianism and malpractices of informal ruling in the form of nepotism, tribalism, and clan politics. However, some politicians express doubts in relation to whether the task was fulfilled or not. For instance, MP from the Ata-Meken party, Shirin Aitmatova, recently stated that Kyrgyzstan wanted to “make the jump from nepotism to parliamentarism”, but actually failed this attempt.<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, it is a matter of fact that informality in political decision-making in Kyrgyzstan exists. However, the terms exploited for defining informality and clustering it vary to some degree. The concepts of tribalism, nepotism, clan politics, and even corruption are being used interchangeably as related to the drawbacks of the Kyrgyz ‘traditional’ ways of ruling. For the purpose of this research, I will question the usefulness of the concept of ‘clan’ as either appropriate analytical lenses or not at all. In this regard, I believe Kyrgyzstan is a suitable case study. First of all, constitutional shift to parliamentary form of governance

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<sup>12</sup> Meo, Nick and Orange, Richard. “Kyrgyzstan Bloodshed: Princeling Maxim Bakiyev and the Alleged Telephone Conversation”. The Telegraph. June 20, 2010.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/kyrgyzstan/7840582/Kyrgyzstan-bloodshed-Princeling-Maxim-Bakiyev-and-the-alleged-phone-conversation.html>

<sup>13</sup> “New Constitution to Establish Parliamentary Democracy”. France 24 News Agency. June 28, 2010.

<http://www.france24.com/en/20100627-kyrgyz-adopt-new-constitution-referendum-parliamentary-democracy>

<sup>14</sup> “Shirin Aitmatova: Ot Semeistvennosti do Parlamentarizma ne Doprygnuli” [Shirin Aitmatova: We Failed to Jump From Nepotism to Parliamentarism], Vecherny Bishkek newspaper. January 31, 2012.

[http://www.vb.kg/news/politics/2012/01/31/177347\\_shirin\\_aytmatoa\\_ot\\_semeystvennosti\\_do\\_parlamentarizma\\_ne\\_doprygnuli.html](http://www.vb.kg/news/politics/2012/01/31/177347_shirin_aytmatoa_ot_semeystvennosti_do_parlamentarizma_ne_doprygnuli.html)



is unique for the Central Asian region. Second, following Hale's "regime cycles"<sup>15</sup>, Kazakhstan's President Nazarbaev, Tajikistan's President Rakhmon, and Uzbekistan's President Karimov could sustain their authoritarian regimes, and Turkmenistan even implemented a successful succession of power as a result of which Berdymukhammedov came to rule and enabled to keep control over the country. In contrast, the political trajectory of Kyrgyzstan is marked with significant divergence, with the two regime changes, in 2005 and in 2010.

Dissatisfaction with first President Akaev's rule reached its peak in early 2005 when at the parliamentary elections Akaev's children – daughter Bermet and son Aidar – got deputy mandates within the ranks of Alga (Forward) party.<sup>16</sup> Kurmanbek Bakiev, who replaced Akaev on the wave of the Tulip Revolution, went even further appointing his son Maxim Bakiev to the position of the Director of the Central Agency for Development, Investment, and Innovations (CADII).<sup>17</sup> Beyond that, the overall ruling of Bakiev was accompanied by scandals, political intrigues, and corruption. Bakiev's son Maxim grabbed practically all profitable economic sectors of the country, which were managed jointly with the established MGN Group.<sup>18</sup>

On the surface, Akaev comes from the Northern Chui oblast, Kemin district, whereas Bakiev is from the Southern Jalal-Abad oblast, Suzak area. Akaev has been traditionally

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<sup>15</sup> Hale, Henry. "Regime Cycles: Democracy, Autocracy, and Revolution in Post-soviet Eurasia." *World Politics* 58, 2005: 133-65  
<http://intersci.ss.uci.edu/wiki/eBooks/Articles/Regime%20Cycles%20Postco%20p%20138%20144%20Hale.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> "Leaders of the Post-soviet Countries Actively Promote Careers of Their Children in Big-Time Politics". Ferghana Information Agency. January 19, 2005. <http://enews.ferghananews.com/article.php?id=766&print=1>

<sup>17</sup> "Inevitable Family Rule in Kyrgyzstan". Ferghana Information Agency. November 6, 2009. <http://enews.ferghananews.com/article.php?id=2587>

<sup>18</sup> "Kyrgyzstan: The Government Denies Its Cooperation With Financial Consultant Eugene Gourevich". Ferghana Information Agency. March 10, 2010. <http://enews.ferghananews.com/news.php?id=1609&mode=snews>

associated with the “northern” clans, whereas Bakiev has been associated with the “southern” clans, and the political dynamics is characterized by the competition for power between northern and southern clans. Even after the April events, Bakiev escaped to his native village Teyit, which mass media called the “ancestral village of Bakievs”.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, two regimes are clearly marked by “privileged relationships” as Gullette argues (2010: 2-3), including nepotism.

Popular dissatisfaction with Bakiev’s regime exploded on the night of April 7, 2010 when law enforcement agencies of the Kyrgyz Republic detained prominent Kyrgyz opposition leaders, such as Omurbek Tekebayev, Bolot Sherniyazov, Anvar Artykov, and others.<sup>20</sup> This series of arrests fueled people’s protests in the northern province of Talas and gained momentum in the capital Bishkek. Protests finally led to the toppling of Bakiev’s regime.<sup>21</sup> In order to get away from such super-presidentialism and accusations of informal practices (breakaway from ‘family-clan’ rule), in 2010 the newly-come opposition forces, which had formed the Provisional Government, held the national referendum, as a result of which Kyrgyzstan took a course on the parliamentary form of governance.

The latest version of the Constitution adopted on June 27, 2010 recognizes political pluralism and multi-partism in Kyrgyzstan; it also indicates that parties facilitate the expression of political will of the citizens, as well as participate at the elections of the

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<sup>19</sup> “Specnaz Otsepil Rodovoe Selo Bakieva” [Special Forces Cordoned Off the Ancestral Village of Bakiev], Vzgl'yad newspaper. April 16, 2010. <http://vz.ru/news/2010/4/16/393564.html>

<sup>20</sup> “V Kyrgyzstane Provoditsya Zaderzhanie Oppozitsionnyh Politikov” [Opposition Politicians are being detained in Kyrgyzstan]. Kyrgyz Service of RFE/RL. April 7, 2010. [http://www.azattyk.org/content/Kyrgyzstan\\_Ata\\_Meken\\_opposition/2004398.html](http://www.azattyk.org/content/Kyrgyzstan_Ata_Meken_opposition/2004398.html)

<sup>21</sup> Harding, Luke. “Kyrgyzstan Capital Bloodied, Looted and Chaotic After Overthrow of Bakiyev”. The Guardian. April 8, 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/apr/08/kyrgyzstan-revolt-over-kurmanbek-bakiyev>

legislature, president, and local administrations.<sup>22</sup> According to the Constitution, Jogorku Kenesh<sup>23</sup> is the supreme representative body in Kyrgyzstan, and its credentials are large.<sup>24</sup>

Generally speaking, these constitutional changes gave strong impetus for elites to start the next round of political struggle, in reaching access to state assets. Indeed, focus on Kyrgyzstan, i.e. on the dynamics of parliament's functioning with five parties passing the 5 per cent threshold and formed into parliamentary factions and later into the ruling coalition allows us to test the concept of the 'clan pact' in the wake of the crisis the country faced. On the example of Kyrgyzstan we can clearly see the competition of elites for political and economic power, what is channeled through getting seats in Parliament. As Gullette points out, "politics are not controlled by pacts formed between different 'tribes' or 'clans', but between people who exploit their identities to gain and expand political power" (2010: 48).

## KINSHIP AS A BASIS OF CLAN

Collins in her "Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia" provides the following definition of 'clan':

Clan is an informal organization comprising a network of individuals linked by kin and fictive kin identities. These affective ties comprise the identity and bonds of its organization. Kinship ties are rooted in the extensive family organization that characterizes society in this region and in historically tribal societies (2006: 17).

As for the reasons for the persistence of clans in Central Asia, she enumerates late state formation, late formation of a nation-state identity, and absence of a market economy

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<sup>22</sup> The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, Art. 4 (1, 3)  
[http://shailoo.gov.kg/index.php?module=content&page=Konstituciya\\_Kyrgyzskoy\\_Respubliki\\_prinyata\\_Refere\\_ndumom\\_27\\_iyunya\\_2010\\_godaKyrgyz\\_Respublikasynyn\\_Konstituciyasy\\_2010jyldyn\\_27iyununda\\_Referendu\\_mda\\_kabyl\\_alynghan&pagelang=ru](http://shailoo.gov.kg/index.php?module=content&page=Konstituciya_Kyrgyzskoy_Respubliki_prinyata_Refere_ndumom_27_iyunya_2010_godaKyrgyz_Respublikasynyn_Konstituciyasy_2010jyldyn_27iyununda_Referendu_mda_kabyl_alynghan&pagelang=ru)

<sup>23</sup> Translated as the Supreme Council (name of Parliament)

<sup>24</sup> The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, Art. 70-82  
[http://shailoo.gov.kg/index.php?module=content&page=Konstituciya\\_Kyrgyzskoy\\_Respubliki\\_prinyata\\_Refere\\_ndumom\\_27\\_iyunya\\_2010\\_godaKyrgyz\\_Respublikasynyn\\_Konstituciyasy\\_2010jyldyn\\_27iyununda\\_Referendu\\_mda\\_kabyl\\_alynghan&pagelang=ru](http://shailoo.gov.kg/index.php?module=content&page=Konstituciya_Kyrgyzskoy_Respubliki_prinyata_Refere_ndumom_27_iyunya_2010_godaKyrgyz_Respublikasynyn_Konstituciyasy_2010jyldyn_27iyununda_Referendu_mda_kabyl_alynghan&pagelang=ru)

(2006: 44). Beyond that, Collins emphasizes the in-group reciprocity and loyalty clan members must share to maintain identity (2006: 17). In addition, she mentions the respect for elders and importance of family unity as binding factors for clans' persistence (2006: 224).

With empiric focus on Kazakhstan Schatz, for instance, gives the following definition of 'clan': "clan divisions are those that exist within an ethnic group and in which demonstrable common kinship is understood to underlie membership" (2004: 26). However, he restricts their role to the pure distribution of goods in conditions of goods' shortage. As I believe, this sounds a bit contradictory because Schatz first restricts the role of clans, but then discusses the problems of "meta-conflicts" when it comes to political struggle over these aforementioned goods (2004: 113).

All in all, this overall line of reasoning contains certain incongruity, because one needs to clearly separate the micro- or, as I formulate it, sociological level of family and village, as well as the need for unification from the macro- or political level of elites, and not to fuse them with each other. To the point, this is what Scott Radnitz criticizes Collins for in his review:

One problem arises in using the term "clan" to include family, regional affiliation, and business associates. As if these institutions were not broad enough, later in the book, we learn that clan ties also developed within the KGB (26) and collective farms (216). Incorporating these diverse elements into a single concept creates confusion since it is used to describe both elite networks that compete for state resources and poor families centered on a village elder – actors with widely divergent interests whose actions have different implications for regime transitions (2007: 498-499).

According to Radnitz (2007), the "theoretical advancement" Collins proposes in her solid work on clans is the shifting focus from formal institutional to informal traditional approach. He calls Collins a "pioneer" in setting up the concept of 'clan pact' (2007), largely understood as an agreement between clan elites – that allowed Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, but not Tajikistan smoothly go through the transition period (Collins 2006). Meanwhile, Collins makes it precise that 'clan pact' is not the means to achieve full democracy, but rather

an “informal agreement” that keeps country from crisis and does not depend on the regime type (2006: 10). For me, the key word here is ‘informal’ and in analysis I plan to use this definition as a working assumption. From this it also follows that persistence/collapse of any political regime in Central Asia can be explained by either enabling to conclude such a pact or not.

Gullette points out that the exploration of ‘clan pact’ is the focus of Collins’ “broader argument of regime consolidation and durability” (2010: 32). For Collins, such a pact is required when there is “an external threat, certain balance between clan elites, and a legitimate broker to assist” (Collins 2006). However, Gullette argues that this view suggests that clans behave as “corporate kinship groups” (2010: 29). Further, Gullette claims that although this view exposes many “nuances” about the peculiarities of Central Asian politics, he doubts whether it is a proper way to consider ‘clan’ as a “central organizing principle of society” for granted (2010: 29).

In his review, Radnitz also brings this problem to the fore: namely, he claims that the way Collins advances the concept of ‘clan’ as an “organizing principle of society” (Gullette 2010: 29), both as a source of identity and a network, “suffers from limitations in analytical application” (2007). For instance, positioning ‘clan’ as an informal organization, Collins argues that it is clan that holds “real power” (2006). In this connection, Radnitz reasons that Collins establishes a “false binary choice” (2007: 498) between formal and informal institutions and organizations. In actual fact, social and political circumstances are much more diverse and complex. As Radnitz mentions, the periods of the Tsarist Russian and then the Soviet rule have made the social life in the region much more complex (2010).

Certainly, the contemporary life of Kyrgyzstanis contains many traditional elements. For instance, Gullette distinguishes two genealogical charters – *jeti ata*<sup>25</sup> and *sanjyra*<sup>26</sup> – that dominate in the consciousness of the Kyrgyz as a nation and are referred to the ‘positive values’ (2010: 3). Among others, one can distinguish the traditional councils of elders and respect for them, *kurultais*<sup>27</sup> (congress), mutual help and assistance (especially at the village level), and ‘managing shame’ (Gullette 2010) as a mode of informal sanction in case of breaking informal rules. Thus, the notion of ‘mankurtism’ is one of the brightest forms of expressing this shame: a person is called ‘mankurt’ when he or she does not know the history of his/her nation, family, and native language.

However, the point is that traditionalism is getting politicized. The incorporation of some traditions into the rhetoric of politicians, political practices (gathering *kurultais* to resolve disputes), and the way of ruling (electoral support found in the native village, for example) pave scholars a way to interpret the political trajectory by reference to informality. According to Gullette (2010), when exploiting these social concepts their initial meaning is getting distorted or exaggerated (2010: 177). By the same token, Gullette brings an example of Collins, who contends that it is clans that make political decisions (2010: 177), whereas it can be no more but a false impression (2010: 177).

For the meantime, Gullette and Matveeva concur in the viewpoint that in Kyrgyzstan regionalism matters to some extent (Gullette 2010, Matveeva 2011). In his book Gullette even cites Jones Luong (2002), who describes regional associations as “establishing relations

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<sup>25</sup> Knowledge of seven ancestors, this knowledge was needed at the intra-tribal level in order to avoid incest.

<sup>26</sup> Genealogical tree of the Kyrgyz nation.

<sup>27</sup> “Kurultai refers to a form of council or congress that was held while Kyrgyz were nomadic. This word is Turko-Mongolic in origin and can still be found throughout Central and Inner Asia.” (Gullette 2010: 174)

between people based on their shared, locally specific or broader, territorial backgrounds, shaped by the internal administrative division of a place or region” (Gullette 2010: 29).

Following this logic, taking advantage of these region-based connections those interested can achieve greater political control in order to get control over the state resources (Gullette 2010: 29).

The important point is that these concepts of clans and regionalism are expressed through nepotism and corruption and are becoming highly interchangeable. Gullette represents this chain in the following way: “Such arguments often claim that ‘clans’ find support among other clans from their region, and that they develop into broader, territorial organizations, which resemble patron-client networks. This general model retains political strength by grouping together by region” (2010: 36).

## **ELITE COMPETITION AS A SOURCE OF INSTABILITY**

Describing the nature of politics in Kyrgyzstan, Radnitz rejects ‘democracy’ as related to the country, but calls it a country of “competing pluralism” (Radnitz 2010). This vision is echoed in Gullette’s standpoint, who argues that competition between elites in Kyrgyzstan serves as the main source of instability and fragility of the political order (2010: 18). In general terms, Gullette states that in assessing the transition in Central Asia scholarship has noted “a trend towards factions of elites attempting to gain power in the post-socialist era” (2010: 29). Moreover, the attempts to describe these factions gradually led to the appearance of two explanatory variables: namely, regionalism and ‘clan politics’ (2010: 29).

With that, informality and, as Gullette calls it, “genealogical imagination” (2010: 178) matter especially at the micro-level of family and relatives, for the social purposes (2010: 178). However, the “coping strategies” (Gullette 2010) at the macro-level of politics are different (2010: 178). With that, he recognizes that the theoretical model of ‘clan pact’ us

useful, but its core is not kinship system as Collins claims (2010: 178). Instead, even if concluded this ‘pact’ is rather a “short-lived alliance, exploiting any connections between people to achieve particular goals” (2010: 178).

## THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS AND PARTIES

In “*Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*” Frederick Starr agrees that informal, or as he says, invisible politics takes place in the Central Asian countries and also differentiates between clans, regional networks, and financial magnates that define this ‘invisible politics’ (2007: 6-7). Thus, in Starr’s line of reasoning clans are based on kinship systems, regional networks do not necessarily entail kinship but tie up its members by common economic and political goals, whereas financial magnates are those people who derive the power from the resource control (2007: 7-8). In general terms, these are all ‘power brokers’ whom Starr sets against political institutions, and who occupy the central place in Central Asian states (2007).

In this context, Gullette also mentions Frederick Starr, for whom “political evolutionism can only be achieved through strengthening the role of parliaments” (2010: 35). Agreeing that parliaments are those formal institutions that foster democracy, Gullette nevertheless doubts its applicability to the Central Asian states (2010: 35). In particular, he reminds of the convocation of the year 2007, when whole Parliament was tightly controlled by Bakiev’s Ak Zhol (Light Way) political party (2010: 35). In this context, the formation of the parliament of the latest convocation seems to be puzzling as whether some degree of “evolutionism” (Gullette 2010) has been reached or not.

Both Schatz (2004) and Helmke & Levitsky (2006) stand for the argument that informality, or, as Starr formulates, ‘invisibility’ creates problems for democratization. As I already noted, Starr sets these ‘power brokers’ including clans against political institutions,



such as presidency and parliaments. However, according to Starr, precisely the daily parliamentary practice in Central Asian countries can become a real driving force for “evolutionary change” (2007: 5). Moreover, in his view even “quasi-parliamentary bodies” can successfully adopt the idea that the governments should be responsible and responsive (2007).

Writing in 2007, Starr assumes that the pressure to remove authoritarian leaders is likely to lead to the indefinite prolongation of their rule or to a descent into crises. As he continues, “the most likely outcome of such scenario is either the reaffirmation of the former inter-clan pacts or the creation of new ones, leading to the repression of all those regions, clans, families, and financial magnates” (2007: 5). Starr believes that any outcome can be destabilizing for each country. In this connection, the state of affairs in Kyrgyzstan right after the formation of new Parliament in October 2010 becomes a puzzle: whether it was the reaffirmation of the inter-clan pacts or could indeed break the previous rule of ‘power brokers’ in the power vacuum and the absence of strong authoritarian president or not?

To answer this question, I suggest the case study of Parliament, namely those parties that comprise it. As Dittmer *et al* assert on the empirical evidence from East Asia formal norms can serve “a gate-keeping function” defining who can play (2000: 123). Depending on whether formal institutions are weak or strong, and on the scope of informal institutions, their combinations give us many working cases. Configurations can vary from country to country, and Helmke & Levitsky (2006) define several patterns according to which these interrelationships between formal/informal institutions produce political outcomes.

OUTCOMES/EFFECTIVENESS	EFFECTIVE FORMAL INSTITUTIONS	INEFFECTIVE FORMAL INSTITUTIONS
CONVERGENT	COMPLEMENTARY	SUBSTITUTIVE
DIVERGENT	ACCOMMODATING	COMPETING

**Table 1. Typology of formal-informal institutional relationships (Helmke & Levitsky, 2006)**

As Table 1 shows, depending on whether the outcomes converge or diverge and formal institutions are effective or ineffective, informal institutions can take four forms. First, they can become complementary, and in this case they do not violate formal rules and even foster the formal institutions (Helmke & Levitsky 2006: 13). Second, accommodating informal institutions though de-jure do not contradict formal rules, nonetheless help political players to adjust to formal arrangements (Helmke & Levitsky 2006: 15). Two other options - either substitutive or competing – are of the special interest for further analysis, in conditions of ineffective formal institutions. Thus, substitutive informal institutions in a way replace formal ones and achieve the goals of formal ones (Helmke & Levitsky 2006: 16). Finally, competing informal institutions exceed formal ones and produce the outcomes, which are unexpected (Helmke & Levitsky 2006: 15).

Obviously, formal institutions in Kyrgyzstan demonstrate lack of efficiency, therefore only two options – either substitutive or competing – are left for examination, depending on whether the outcomes converge or diverge. As for informal organizations, I will explore the concept of ‘clan’, whether it is a suitable analytical explanation or not. Then, I will turn to the study of political parties as formal organizations.

## PARTIES AND PARTY INSTITUTIONALIZATION

As such, political party is defined as “an organized group of people with at least roughly similar political aims and opinions that seeks to influence public policy by getting its candidates elected to public office.”<sup>28</sup> As Dittmer et al argue, parties have formal rules and “ideology-tinted platforms”, and these characteristics make them less vulnerable to the will of their “political bosses” (2000: 43-44). Giving a definition, the authors set ‘party’ against ‘faction’, which, in contrast, “is leader-oriented, akin to political machines, is guided by unwritten rules (informal), and is cemented by dyadic relations between a patron and several clients what forms patron-client networks” (Dittmer et al 2000: 43-44). As it comes, the issue is to reveal to what extent in Kyrgyzstan political parties in power are just factions, guided by informal rules.

Thus, in the second part, according to Angelo Panebianco, when analyzing parties it is required to go back to party’s formative phase and consider parties from historical dimension (1988: 163). For him, the best explanation of a party is given when studying the interaction between a party’s genesis, its institutional phase, and the environmental pressures (1988: 163). In the explicit study of the party formation Panebianco claims that at its initial stage parties follow the rational model, in accordance with which they are primarily the tools for the implementation of specific goals (1988: 6-7).

It is worth to mention, as expert Valentin Bogatyrev stresses, 15 out of 29 parties participating at the parliamentary elections of 2010 in Kyrgyzstan, and 2 out of 5 parties passing the threshold, were formed right after the April events.<sup>29</sup> Taking it into account, he

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<sup>28</sup> The Electoral Knowledge Network. <http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/pc/pca/pca01/pca01a>

<sup>29</sup> Donis, Ivan. “*Valentin Bogatyrev: Koalitsionnoe Pravitel'stvo Prosuschestvuet Nedolgo*” [Valentin Bogatyrev: The Coalition Government Would Not Exist Long], Akshumkar political party web-site. October 21, 2010. [http://www.akshumkar.kg/index.php/en/component/fl/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=143&catid=9&lang=en](http://www.akshumkar.kg/index.php/en/component/fl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=143&catid=9&lang=en)

presumes that the local party system cannot pretend to be a fully-fledged legitimate representative of interests of voters.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, as a result Kyrgyzstan has an experimental pilot project, representation not of people, but of political elites, he stressed.<sup>31</sup>

Anyway, as the time goes by, parties in their organizational evolution tend to preserve themselves and expand the goals proclaimed at the initial stage (Panebianco 1988: 8). One of the means for self-preservation and sustaining of the activities, thus, is the possibility to distribute collective and selective incentives (Panebianco 1988: 10). However, it is challenging in the sense that if too many selective incentives such as the posts in public office are distributed, party risks to lose its credibility as a political organization which is able to fulfill specific goals (Panebianco 1988: 10). On the other hand, if too many collective incentives such as group privileges or even the sense of unity are distributed, then “organizational continuity” starts suffering (Panebianco 1988: 10).

Further studying the formation phase of parties, Panebianco suggests three main factors which help us define a party’s genetic model, among which he distinguishes: 1). The organization’s construction and development; 2). The presence or absence of an “external” sponsor institution; and 3). The role of charisma in the party’s formation (1988: 51-52). In this sense, according to Bogatyrev, present-day political parties in Kyrgyzstan are not parties in their full sense representing the interests of different layers of society, but rather clans which promote the interests of their leaders.<sup>32</sup> Bogatyrev stresses that the uniting ground for parties is ideology, while clans unite by personal motives and interests. In parties, decision-

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Donis, Ivan. “Valentin Bogatyrev: Koalitsionnoe Pravitel’stvo Prosuschestvuet Nedolgo” [Valentin Bogatyrev: The Coalition Government Would Not Exist Long], Akshumkar political party web-site. October 21, 2010.  
[http://www.akshumkar.kg/index.php/en/component/fl/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=143&catid=9&lang=en](http://www.akshumkar.kg/index.php/en/component/fl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=143&catid=9&lang=en)

making is occurring on democratic principles, by the majority voting, whereas in clans those decisions are made by their leaders, as he asserts. Thus, Bogatyrev puts an emphasis that clan-based parties are closely attached to their leaders and are associated with them, because parties function on the funds put by all its members, while clan-based parties exist on the money of their leaders.<sup>33</sup>

The second phase, as identified earlier, relates to the process of institutionalization. According to Panebianco, during the institutionalization phase “party founders’ values and aims are being incorporated” (1988: 53). During this process, the rationality goes by the wayside, its instrumental mission slowly dissolves and party becomes valuable itself (Panebianco 1988: 53). The internal party cohesion depends on the level of institutionalization, whether it is low or high (1988: 60). Another dimension from which the degree of institutionalization can be analyzed is whether the elite integration is horizontal or vertical. It is assumed that with high degree of institutionalization there occurs “vertical integration” of elites which encourages gradual political growth of its members, who are born and raised within the organization; whereas with low degree of institutionalization there is a “horizontal integration” when people enter the party from outside (for example, if they are elites already) and thus convert other resources into political ones (1988: 62). By studying the elite composition of parties, as well as examining the internal splits and conflicts inside the political parties it will be possible to illustrate that the degree of institutionalization is presumably low.

Furthermore, Panebianco alleges that party stays stable if it is able to “defend” its own identity, which can be undermined by the presence of competitors (1988: 218). The situation worsens if these competing parties conclude an alliance between each other; in this case, as Panebianco stresses, stability and, consequently, “environmental unpredictability” of parties

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

in the alliance is endangered (1988: 218). Based on these assumptions, it is also possible to move further and to analyze the “cooperative game” the parties played during the coalition formation process, when the coalition was finally formed of the antagonistic parties such as SDPK and the Ata-Jurt (Fatherland), plus the Respublica (Republic) party.

From this perspective, Youngmi Kim writes in *“The Politics of Coalition in Korea”* that three key features can be identified with relation to the coalition formation in South Korea: catch-allism and indifference to ideological cleavages, personalism, and regionalism (2011: 49). The broad argument of Kim consists of acknowledging the role of political culture, to be more precise, the “father-figure” role of elites that prevents the institutionalization of the mechanisms of negotiation and compromise (2011: 176). In the discussion of regional cleavages that shape voters’ preferences and affect the electoral outcomes the author argues that regionalism badly influences party institutionalization. Illustrating this point on the evidence from South Korean party system, Kim presumes that “monopolization” of the region by party undermines free competition (2011: 108). On this basis, the dynamics of coalition formation in South Korea allows us to draw certain parallels with the coalition formation in Kyrgyzstan, conditioned by the same strong influence of political culture.

## CHAPTER III: INFORMALITY IN KYRGYZSTAN AND ITS INTERRELATIONSHIP WITH PARTIES

### REGIONALISM

Wondering whether ‘clan’ is the organizing principle of Kyrgyz society I referred to historians – Professor of the International University of Kyrgyzstan Tabyldy Akerov and President of Kyrgyz History Society, former Director of Kyrgyz Service of RFE/RL, Tynchtykbek Chorotegin. During a conversation held on April 28 this year, Chorotegin claimed that the problem of Kyrgyzstan is that it is suffering from generalizations. As I can understand from my interview with him, regionalism is the manifestation of this tendency towards generalizations.

To illustrate, Chorotegin told me that he had just returned from the southern city of Osh, where he took part in the discussion of the law “*On Kurultais*”<sup>34</sup>. In particular, first Deputy Governor of Osh oblast, Kushbak Tezekbaev, at the meeting advocated for the adoption of this law, claiming that Osh natives fully supported it. However, in her turn MP from the Ar-Namys (Dignity) party, Ainuru Altybaeva, resisted its adoption and furthermore refuted that all Osh natives supported it.<sup>35</sup> All in all, in Chorotegin’s view, it is a clear sign of regionalism that plays a significant role in the Kyrgyz politics. As he believes, politicians just turn the regional cleavages into political tool when necessary.

As he shared with me, regionalism takes its roots in the 1990s, when the ‘legendary Parliament’ of Kyrgyzstan was considering the scandalous issue of gold corruption connected with Kumtor gold mining company and which involved the then President Askar Akaev. Concretely, the Parliament was deciding whether to resign the then governor of Issyk-kul

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<sup>34</sup> Kurultai means ‘council’, usually the political council with active participation of respected elders

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Chorotegin

oblast Tursunbek Chyngyshev. At that moment, the head of the Issyk-Kul regional administration Jumagul Saadanbekov appealed to the deputies of Issyk-Kul oblast to leave the session room in sign of solidarity with the Governor. However, his call did not give any effect, and everyone including members of the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan party preferred to stay on their places.<sup>36</sup>

In his turn, in the interview conducted on May 3 expert Akerov argued that regionalism in Kyrgyzstan comes from the conditional division of Kyrgyz as a nation into *tunduk* (northerners) and *tushtuk* (southerners); following this line, the four oblasts – Chui including the capital Bishkek, Naryn, Talas, and Issyk-Kul – are related to the northern ones, whereas the three other oblasts – Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken – are related to the southern ones. In this connection, the author of “*Kyrgyzstan - Twenty Years of Independence*”, diplomat Giorgio Fiacconi in my interview evidenced that Kyrgyz from Talas would differ from Kyrgyz coming from the Ferghana Valley (southern Kyrgyzstan occupies part of the Ferghana Valley).



Fig 1 Map of Kyrgyzstan: regions<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Chorotegin

<sup>37</sup> Map of Kyrgyzstan. The web-site of the International Committee of the Red Cross.  
<http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/map/map-kyrgyzstan.htm>



## DO CLANS MATTER?

Continuing the theme of how northern and southern Kyrgyz differ, Fiacconi in the interview I conducted with him on May 1 told that Kyrgyz people tend to break into small groups, which he calls ‘clans’. As he said further, ‘clan’ as such is the micro-level, whereas the region/oblast is the macro-level. In his standpoint, this fragmentation was largely exploited during the Soviet époque because for the ruling center it was handy to keep the Kyrgyz society split and atomistic rather than united and, consequently, strong. Furthermore, it is important for each clan to maintain its identity and every clan can associate, but never mix, in Fiacconi’s opinion. In addition, it is important that clan relations represent a ‘two-way traffic’, because clan always looks for what its leader does for its maintenance.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, he says that the story of how the ousted president Kurmanbek Bakiev went back to Suzak in spring 2010, but had to flee from there is exemplary, because Bakiev distributed selective incentives only for some specific people.

Discussions with historian Akerov held at the International University of Kyrgyzstan allowed me to draw certain contours of clans which are not necessarily the same as regions, though the general shape is regional. When we speak about clans, we should put forward three conditional ‘wings’: *On* (right) wing, which includes *Kushchu* (Talas), *Saruu* (Talas and Jalal-Abad); *Sol* (left) wing, which includes *Sary-bagysh* (Naryn and Chui), *Bugu* (Issyk-Kul), *Solto* (Chui), *Sayak* (Naryn), *Sarttar* (Alay); and *Ichkilik*, which covers the southern areas of Kyrgyzstan. As it appears, people from one tribe can reside both in the north and in the south, like *saruu* clan. At the sociological level, as Akerov argues, everyone associates with a certain tribe; in turn, associations of tribes form clan relations, what in Kyrgyz language is known as *uruu*. Therefore, we can conclude that the basis for maintaining clan

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Fiacconi

relations is tribal ones, i.e. having common blood ties. It means being descendants of one father – the person who laid the foundation for the tribe.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 2 Map of Kyrgyzstan: clans<sup>40</sup>

In the meantime, in the interview Chorotegin stated that Western scholarship develops the theme of clans as related to Kyrgyz politics, and it is actually preoccupied with the concept of ‘clan’ as appropriate explanatory concept because of the large amount of similar literature on African and Latin American countries. In his opinion, however, one cannot mechanically transfer clan relations on politics because there is no single and immutable clan structure in Kyrgyzstan. Though, local politicians use the notion of ‘clan’ extensively in order to give certain ‘flavor’ to political struggle, as Chorotegin argued.

This contradiction whether ‘clan’ should be regarded as an explanatory variable or not is what I aim to discover throughout my research. In general, I think that these regional cleavages create a paradoxical situation in the society, because on the one hand, there is a tendency towards generalizations as Chorotegin indicated in the interview with me; on the other hand, Kyrgyz society demonstrates a tendency to fragmentation as Fiacconi reasons. As Matveeva contends, what is observable in present Kyrgyz political reality is the vast elite

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Akerov.

<sup>40</sup> The map was drawn based on the talks with historian, professor Tabyldy Akerov.

fragmentation (Matveeva 2010). As I assume, this fragmentation is captured through the creation and operation of parties, including those that entered the Parliament in October 2010.

## **PARLIAMENT AS A ‘MARKET’**

In the conversation with Fiacconi, he maintained that the clan differentiation does not obligatorily entail the north-south division, but can go ‘east-west’. In other words, the necessary condition is the presence of common interest that serves as a cementing factor for clans to associate. Giving a definition, Fiacconi in the interview made it precise that common interest usually means control over the political and economic resources, what in Kyrgyzstan is almost the same. From this perspective, as he continued, although the formation of the latest parliamentary convocation seemed to look like the true expression of democratic vote, deputies in Parliament simply pursue their own interest.

In his book “Weapons of the Wealthy” Scott Radnitz (2010) once made a point that due to the wealth dispersion in Kyrgyzstan as a result of liberalizing reforms in the beginning of 90s there is a number of rich people in the country who, as comes from my interviews, search for a channel to keep the control over the resources or to earn money (Radnitz 2010). In this connection, Fiacconi, who heads the Trade Chamber in Kyrgyzstan, argues that there is big shadow economy in the country: most of the money comes from the migrants’ remittances, drug trade, other types of trade, and that money made during the privatization period.<sup>41</sup> It is a matter of fact that then these money should be legalized in certain way, what usually occurs through political protection and from this perspective political parties can provide such kind of ‘political protection’.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Fiacconi.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

What then makes Kyrgyzstan distinct is the huge number of registered parties for such a small country. According to political expert Tabyldy Akerov, in the interview held on May 3 he informed that there are around one hundred and sixty eight parties in Kyrgyzstan. Akerov describes Parliament as a ‘market’, in which parties are purchased, especially if they have a promoted brand. For example, a person without money creates his/her political party and develops its program to further sell it. Further, due to the fact that in Kyrgyzstan there are many rich businessmen, they start searching for parties ahead of the elections. Everyone wants to occupy a place in the first top-5 of top-10, because otherwise they have little chance of becoming deputies. That is why they need parties which are ready; therefore parties are being created just to be on the safe side.<sup>43</sup>

To answer whether the ‘clan’ is an organizing principle for parties, and if not, what they represent instead I planned to focus only on those which entered Parliament and, in Fiacconi’s wording, obtained control over the resources. Within the scope of this research I preferred to narrow down to the three of them, namely, the Ata-Jurt (Fatherland), the Ar-Namys (Dignity), and the Respublica (Republic) parties. In my opinion, these three parties represent a great interest by their composition and, in Panebianco’s formulation (1988), ‘genetic model’. Other two parties, Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) and Ata-Meken (Fatherland) were left out of this research, because all experts being interviewed by me agreed that they both are similar to each other and both achieve higher degree of institutionalization due to the internal organization by ideological principles.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, Chorotegin in the interview conducted on April 28 argued that the Ata-Meken (Fatherland) and SDPK parties are built on the socialist traditions, which are strong in the

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Akerov.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Akerov, Baketaev, Chorotegin.

Kyrgyz society due to the long period of the Soviet rule. In the 1990s, the post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan witnessed the appearance of parties such as SDPK, Ata-Meken, Erkin Kyrgyzstan (Free Kyrgyzstan – ErK) with socially oriented programs.<sup>45</sup> In his opinion, Omurbek Tekebaev, leader of the Ata-Meken party, is one of those political figures who actively resist tribal divisions. It is worth mentioning that Tekebaev is the “founding father” of the new version of the Constitution, which, in the words of experts, is called to break these traditional divisions in the society and among elite circles.<sup>46</sup> All in all, Baketaev in his interview agreed that the latest version of the Constitution adopted in 2010 is the great achievement of the political will of the political leadership and the population. Parliamentary democracy as the form of polity smoothes out clan divisions at the end, he asserted.

Besides, the nationwide 5 per cent threshold is a very good uniting factor for all political forces in Kyrgyzstan, because it makes all parties to have regionally balanced composition, as Baketaev alleged. According to Chorotegin, multipartism in Kyrgyzstan gives a chance to compete in accordance with ideas. Thus, the fact that Tekebaev is from Bazar-Korgon does not automatically mean that everyone in Bazar-Korgon supports him; Tekebaev finds his supporters in Talas and in Issyk-Kul oblasts exactly thanks to his socialistic ideals.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Interview with Chorotegin.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Akerov, Baketaev, Chorotegin.

<sup>47</sup> “Ata-Meken”: “Stadiony Osha i Talasa s Trudom Vmestili Vseh Zhelayuschih Vstretit’sya s Omurbekom Tekebaevym” [Stadiums of Osh and Talas Cities Hardly Accommodated All Those Wishing to Meet Omurbek Tekebaev]. AKIPress News Agency. September 16, 2010. <http://www.akipress.org/party/news:4071>

## CASE STUDIES

### THE ATA-JURT (FATHERLAND) POLITICAL PARTY

To see the regional composition of Ata-Jurt party I first checked the party lists composed of one hundred and twenty party members to be elected to Parliament.<sup>48</sup> Then I looked at the place of origin of each party member using several data sources<sup>49</sup>; however, this method contained some difficulties because the biographies of some party members do not indicate their birthplace. Out of one hundred and twenty party members I could track the place of birth of sixty nine of them including famous persons involved either in politics or in business, as well as unemployed people attached to their native regions.

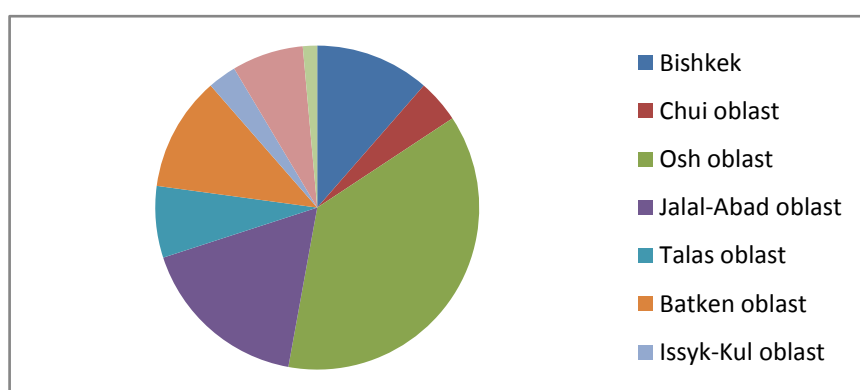


Figure 3 Regional composition of Ata-Jurt party

As Fig. 3 shows, though the party is largely represented by natives from the North, it is still dominated by the southerners: 26 party members are from Osh oblast, 12 – from Jalal-Abad oblast, and 8 – from Batken oblast. Totally, they constitute 46 people in opposition to 23 people from northern oblasts. Further, if we look closer at the spread of southerners, four of them are of Suzak (Jalal-Abad) origin including party leader Kamchybek Tashiev, six – of

<sup>48</sup> The Ata-Jurt Party List of Candidates to Deputies of Jogorku Kenesh. AKIPress News Agency. <http://www.akipress.org/party/news:3701>

<sup>49</sup> Who is Who in Central Asia. Centrasia.ru <http://www.centrasia.ru/person.php>; The Ata-Jurt Party List of Candidates to Deputies of Jogorku Kenesh. AKIPress News Agency. <http://www.akipress.org/party/news:3701>

Alay (Osh) origin including former Speaker of Jogorku Kenesh Akhmatbek Keldibekov (see Fig. 4)

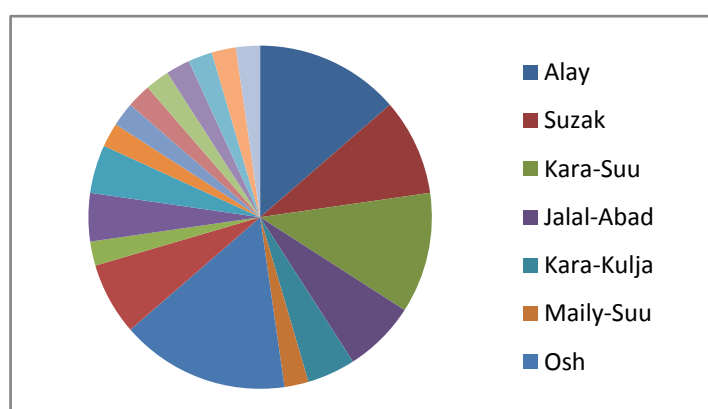


Figure 4 Southern composition of Ata-Jurt party

As we can see from Fig. 1 and 2 the regional domination of southerners is evident. However, if we speak of clans, there is no high concentration of people from one district, say Alay rayon of Osh oblast.

In order to answer these questions, it is useful to analyze the degree of institutionalization of Ata-Jurt party, i.e. its genesis and institutional phase in accordance with Panebianco's formulation (1988). I believe that specific attention should be devoted to the 'genetic' model (Panebianco 1988) of the party, since it was formed ahead of the parliamentary elections of 2010. As Panebianco puts it, there are three ways of political party's genesis: 1). gradual construction and development; 2). presence of external 'sponsor' or institution; 3). role of 'charisma' (1988: 51-52). I will also assess the degree of institutionalization from the perspective of elite recruitment, how developed party program is, and also party's internal cohesion.

Speaking of the genesis of the Ata-Jurt, it was formed on April 14, 2010, right after the outbreak of the notorious ‘April events’ in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>50</sup> However, in the interview I conducted in the Jogorku Kenesh with the Head of Fraction Secretariat, Erkin Bayamanov, he claimed that the history of party counts many more years and starts from the year 2007. In his words, at that time it could not participate at the parliamentary elections because of political persecutions by the then ruling Ak-Jol (Light Way) party. Further, as Bayamanov told me, initially the party consisted of fifteen members, who later had to leave it because of the aforementioned persecutions. Already at that moment the political council of the party was headed by Kamchybek Tashiev, Akhmatbek Keldibekov, and Sadyr Japarov.

As for either vertical/horizontal party members’ recruitment, certainly, Ata-Jurt party practices the horizontal one, without bringing up political leaders inside the party and throughout time. When asking the question of how party recruited people in the regions and in general, Bayamanov said that it strictly depended on the propaganda activities, i.e. who was more active. Thematic analysis of his interview also showed that he often referred to the issue of ‘authority’ the recruited members had to attract as many votes as possible.

During the discussions, expert Akerov explained to me that the Ata-Jurt party intentionally exploits nationalistic rhetoric because Tashiev’s electoral support comes from the place of birth – the south of Kyrgyzstan, where ideology is doomed to failure. As such, the Ata-Jurt is the ‘declarative’ party in the sense of its ideological platform.<sup>51</sup> Because of the process of revival of Kyrgyz as a nation, as Akerov evidences, it is becoming necessary to highlight attachment to culture, traditions and Kyrgyz as a nation; chauvinistic and

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<sup>50</sup> “New Color Revolution in Kyrgyzstan?” Event Summary chaired by Hale, Henry. The George Washington University. April 8, 2010. [http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/SUMMARY-New\\_Color\\_Revolution\\_in\\_Kyrgyzstan.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/SUMMARY-New_Color_Revolution_in_Kyrgyzstan.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Akerov.



nationalistic appeals are becoming a powerful tool because of the neighborhood of the Uzbek population and the existing antagonism between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities.<sup>52</sup>

In this connection, it is worthwhile mentioning that by the year 2011 Kyrgyz constitute 71.7% of total population, whereas two other largest ethnic minorities –Uzbeks and Russians – 14.4 and 7.2% respectively.<sup>53</sup> Against this background, in his statements Tashiev insists on the priority which should be given to Kyrgyz as a titular nation.<sup>54</sup> As he argues, all other minorities must respect the traditions and history of the titular nation, speak its language; otherwise, the inability of Kyrgyz as a titular nation to protect its statehood will lead to other ethnic conflicts.<sup>55</sup> The strategy of playing on nationalistic sentiments, according to Akerov, explains the inability of ideologically stronger parties such as the Ata-Meken and SDPK to secure support in the south.<sup>56</sup> As for ideology, the Ata-Jurt is positioned as ‘idealistic’ and ‘nationalistic’ party, what, in Akerov’s words, is close in meaning to religious party. Despite the fact that Japarov’s father is the religious person, party, however, does not deal with religion.

Chorotegin in the interview with me characterized Ata-Jurt party as a ‘pragmatic’ one, what suits Panebianco’s rational model of political party’s genesis (Panebianco 1988). Even despite the claims that the party was formed in 2007, it got its revival in 2010 receiving a

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<sup>52</sup> Ivaschenko, Ekaterina. “Kamchibek Tashiev: “Esli Russkie, Uzbeki ili Turki Skazhut, Chto Oni – Naravne s Kirgizami Ili Vyshe Ih, - Gosudarstvo Razvlaitysya” [Kamchybek Tashiev: If Russians, Uzbeks or Turks Say that They Are Equal to Kyrgyz or Above Them – State Would Split]. Ferghana Information Agency. September 16, 2010. <http://www.fergananews.com/article.php?id=6728>

<sup>53</sup> The Ethnic Composition of the population of the Kyrgyz Republic by the year 2011. National Statistic Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic. <http://stat.kg/images/stories/docs/Ejegodnik/Population/demo%209.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> Ivaschenko, Ekaterina. “Kamchibek Tashiev: “Esli Russkie, Uzbeki ili Turki Skazhut, Chto Oni – Naravne s Kirgizami Ili Vyshe Ih, - Gosudarstvo Razvlaitysya” [Kamchybek Tashiev: If Russians, Uzbeks or Turks Say that They Are Equal to Kyrgyz or Above Them – State Would Split]. Ferghana Information Agency. September 16, 2010. <http://www.fergananews.com/article.php?id=6728>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Akerov

chance to compete for parliamentary seats. According to the interview with Chorotegin, the party has many supporters in the north and it happens thanks to the influence of Japarov, who is of Issyk-Kul origin (Tyup village).

During the interview, Professor Akerov positioned Keldibekov as ‘the leader of Alay’, who comes from ‘*Sart*’ tribe. Further revealing some nuances, Akerov nevertheless said that this ‘*Sart*’ tribe is close to Uzbeks, and this fact can become a ‘trump card’ for Keldibekov’s opponents once he decides to compete for presidency. In his turn, Tashiev comes from Suzak area of Jalal-Abad oblast and belongs to vast *ichkilik* wing – the same from which ousted president Bakiev comes from. However, the fact that the party is composed of “revanchists” is not because these are people from one clan, but because it is overrepresented by people from Bakiev’s administration.<sup>57</sup> According to media, the south of Kyrgyzstan was regarded as the ‘bastion’ of Bakiev, whereas Ata-Jurt also enjoys electoral support in the south.<sup>58</sup> Even here we can see that the party can be associated with one clan, but does not necessarily entail this type of ties, but have common political interest, as the one they had in one Administration. Therefore, clan certainly becomes a political instrument as in the struggle against the Ata-Jurt.<sup>59</sup>

During the interview, Akerov also claimed that these two people – Tashiev and Keldibekov – represent the so-called ‘centers of gravity’ in the party. One more so-called

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<sup>57</sup> Kutmanov, Kubat. “*Neonatsisty – Kto Oni? Chem Opasen “Tashism” v Kyrgyzstane?*” [Neo-nazis – Who Are They? Why is “Tashism” Dangerous in Kyrgyzstan?] El Sozu online newspaper. March 29, 2011. [http://www.presskg.com/el\\_s/11/0329\\_5.htm](http://www.presskg.com/el_s/11/0329_5.htm)

<sup>58</sup> Lewis, Jonathan and Christie-Miller, Alexander. “*Kyrgyzstan: Ryad Politicheskikh Partiy Razygryvayut Natsionalisticheskuyu Kartu v Hode Predvybornoy Kampanii*” [Kyrgyzstan: A Set of Political Parties Play Nationalistic Card During the Election Campaign], September 15, 2010. <http://russian.eurasianet.org/node/31279>

<sup>59</sup> Akerov, Tabyldy. “V Parlament Kyrgyzstana Mogut Popast’ Vsego Lish’ Chetyre - Pyat’ Partiy” [Only Four-Five Parties Can Enter Parliament in Kyrgyzstan]. Centrasia.ru. September 7, 2010. <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1283806020>

‘center of gravity’ is Sadyr Japarov of Issyk-Kul origin, who balances the electoral support and attracts votes from the Issyk-Kul oblast, as Akerov shared with me in the interview. Together they form one ‘economic clan’, as expert Baketaev told. The thing is that Baketaev defines clans as grouped simply for pursuing political and economic goals, what is consonant with Fiacconi’s line of reasoning according to which common interest comes first. And Baketaev argues that these three persons got united because together they possess vast economic resources: they own joint-stock companies, oil mines, plants, and media.

It seems that the Ata-Jurt party is built around the ‘charisma’ of these three persons – Tashiev, Keldibekov, Japarov; however, as Akerov told me in his interview, the party was created by eight persons including former Governor of Batken oblast Arzybek Burkhanov and another former Governor of Batken oblast Aytibay Tagaev. It can be concluded that this party was created due to the sponsorship of several wealthy persons in the pursuance of their specific goals. Generally speaking, the Ata-Jurt party follows the rational model of formation (Panebianco 1988), with the purpose of making money and benefits. The question is what are the ways by which the founders of the Ata-Jurt make money? As expert Akerov responded to me in his interview, these are party list formation and distribution of seats in the Government after entering the ruling coalition.

Thus, the first ten places in the party list composed of 120 candidates cost between \$300.000-500.000, the next ten places cost between \$100.000-300.000. It is worthwhile recalling how right after the parliamentary elections of 2010 were held, party leader Tashiev refused to receive his mandate until another party member, Dinara Isaeva, who is the wife of one of the wealthiest persons in the country – former Prime Minister Daniyar Usenov – surrenders hers.<sup>60</sup> In response, Isaeva put ‘ultimatum’ to Tashiev, Keldibekov, and Japarov

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<sup>60</sup> Podolskaya, Darya and Kutueva, Aizada. “Mandaty – Kochevniki” [Mandates – Nomads], Centrasia website. November 13, 2010. <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1289644980>

that if she was excluded from the party list they must have returned her the big amount of money she invested in the political campaign, as media outlets report.<sup>61</sup> According to local media, Isaeva needs her seat to protect her family business.<sup>62</sup>

It can be concluded that ‘clan’ is not an organizing principle for the Ata-Jurt, despite the fact that its party members such Keldibekov lead some of them (*Sarttar*). If ‘clan’ would have been an organizing principle, one could observe the high concentration of natives from one geographical unit inside the party. At the same time, examination of the party list allows us to say that it shows the signs of regionalism, with the tendency to the southern dominance by the place of origin of its two leaders – Tashiev and Keldibekov. Because of its age and ideological weakness, the party also does not achieve true institutionalization. According to Panebianco’s formulation (1988), ahead of the parliamentary elections of October 2010 the party strictly followed the rational model of creation, because it was formed for making money, as experts claim. By its genetic model the Ata-Jurt party suits the sponsorship model, because it was established and funded by eight politicians who had a vested interest only in making money.

#### THE RESPUBLICA (REPUBLIC) POLITICAL PARTY

In the same way, in order to see the regional composition of the Respublica party I tracked the birthplace of all one hundred and twenty party members included in the party list. Again, this method contained some difficulties because not all persons included in the party list are identifiable. Out of total one hundred and twenty party members I could check the

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<sup>61</sup> Press Review, KG Inform website. November 13, 2010.  
<http://www.kginform.com/ru/news/20101113/01813.html>

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

birthplace of eighty of them, using the official website of the Respublica party which contains their biographies, as well as other sources.<sup>63</sup>

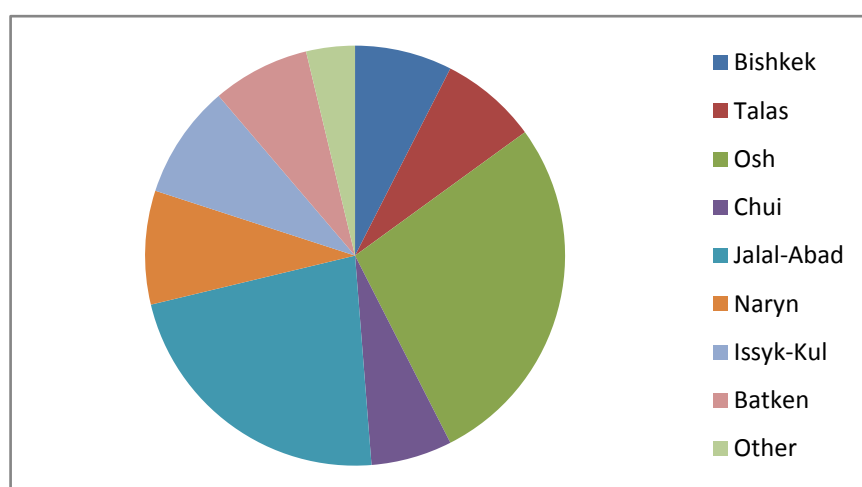


Figure 5 Regional composition of the Respublica party

As Fig. 5 shows, the composition of the Respublica is a bit more balanced in comparison to the Ata-Jurt party, but is also dominated by the southerners: forty six southerners against thirty one northerners. Such a ‘lie of the land’ indeed contradicts my initial expectation that it would consist predominantly of the northerners. Specifically, I suspected that these would be mostly people coming from Talas – the place of origin of party leader Omurbek Babanov. Therefore, it can be assumed that the party is using different ‘coping strategies’.

Similarly to the Ata-Jurt, the Respublica was made up ahead of the parliamentary elections of 2010<sup>64</sup>, though the Head of Party’s Executive Committee Dosaly Esenaliev in the interview I conducted with him in the office of the Respublica party on April 27 informed that it takes its beginning in 2007. As he shared with me, previously the party was named El

<sup>63</sup> “Potentsial’nyh Izbrannikov Nado Znat’ v Lico!” [One Should Know Potential Deputies in Person] Special Project, KG Inform web-site. September 20, 2010. <http://www.kginform.com/ru/news/20100920/01410.html>

<sup>64</sup> “Omurbek Babanov Sozdal v Kirgizii Esche Odnu Politicheskuyu Partiyu” [Omurbek Babanov created one more political party in Kyrgyzstan], Centrasia web-site. June 30, 2010. <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1277905860>

Narky and was headed by Kamchybek Uzakbaev; however, its real institutionalization, according to Dosaliev, started exactly in May 2010. The April events became an impulse to revive the party, because by that time the political system was undermined by the rule of old nomenklatura.<sup>65</sup> From this viewpoint, the Respublica could provide the country with new people, new ideas, and new force, as Dosaliev argued in the interview. Perhaps, this model of creating the party suits what Akerov previously described as a kind of a marketplace, where party is purchased for political purposes.

Again, since the Respublica appeared on the political arena quite recently, the gradual construction and development model of party's genesis put by Panebianco (1988) can be excluded for analytical purposes. Two other scenarios – either external sponsorship or 'charisma' of its leader – are left for examination. Responding to my question about the origins of party, Esenaliev admitted that the party got united around the name of Babanov, its chairman, former Vice-Prime Minister in the Government during Bakiev's rule. However, according to Esenaliev, these were specific political circumstances that required to propose new people under the slogan of "New people – new solutions". Meanwhile, Esenaliev admitted that bringing up political elites is an essential task of highly institutionalized parties; he claimed this is what the Respublica does at present, though under the time pressure.

Esenaliev in his talk also argued that even if the Respublica could not have won the election, it would have continued its party work. Concretely, Esenaliev could demonstrate me the computerized network of party's branches across all the regions in the country saying that it conducts active work with the local populations, including consultations. Esenaliev also said that due to its relatively high degree of institutionalization the Respublica party could participate at the latest municipal elections in Kyrgyzstan and got the same result as SDPK,

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<sup>65</sup> Interview with Dosaliev.

with the victory in Tokmok and Balykchy towns.<sup>66</sup> As he reasoned, municipal elections are of high importance for parties, because party which wins elections at the micro-level would win at the national level as well; therefore, the Respublica party has good prospects for the future.<sup>67</sup>

Fiacconi in his interview claimed that the main disadvantage of each party in the Parliament is the absence of economic programs. However, in his turn Esenaliev in detail told about certain economic points in the party platform that have been already fulfilled including the electric energy consumption by its production cost, low credits for agriculture, and cancellation of technical inspection of the vehicles what closes the corruption channel for the State Automobile Inspection (GAI).<sup>68</sup> Beyond that, the party, i.e. the parliamentary fraction of Respublica, could reach the cancellation of visa fees to make Kyrgyzstan the center of ecological tourism, as Esenaliev explained in the interview.

However, is the program so detailed and concrete due to the higher level of institutionalization? I assume that any party can have elaborated program due to large money investment. As Akerov pointed out, Babanov spent around \$36 million to enter Parliament – three times more than other parties. In the same vein, expert Baketaev, for instance, claimed that each political party has its own ‘financier’, and in the case of the Respublica it is obviously Babanov. Though the party can have certain economic provisions in its platform, it does not necessarily indicate party’s ideological maturity. Thus, as Akerov continued, young businessmen purchased the party and once hearing that another party – Taza Koom – had *republican* ideological stances – decided to give it the name ‘Respublica’. In fact, however, the party has nothing to do with republican ideals, as Akerov concluded.

<sup>66</sup> Podolskaya, Darya and Kutueva, Aizada. “Kyrgyzstan: Parties Belong to Clans” 24.kg News Agency. April 16, 2012. <http://eng.24.kg/politic/2012/04/16/23870.html?print=yes>

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Esenaliev.

<sup>68</sup> The Respublica political party official website. [http://www.republic.kg/ru/why\\_Republic/position\\_party/](http://www.republic.kg/ru/why_Republic/position_party/)

Babanov as the main ‘sponsor’ of Respublica party planned to become a prime-minister.<sup>69</sup> To be more precise, he expected to receive at least forty votes, though his expectations failed.<sup>70</sup> As known, Babanov is of Talas origin and, as Akerov told, belongs to ‘*Saruu*’ clan. Former President Roza Otunbaeva also belongs to the same clan; though because of the western vector of her political orientation she tries to demonstrate that she stands aside from these divisions. During the election campaign, Babanov expected to get at least forty votes due to the large support provided by Otunbaeva.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, this alliance between Babanov and Otunbaeva is of special interest, because it is built upon clan affiliations.

During the rule of Bakiev, both Otunbaeva and Babanov were members of the Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan. Specifically, Otunbaeva occupied the seat of Babanov right after he was accused of the dual Kyrgyz-Kazakh citizenship.<sup>72</sup> However, instead of staying within the ranks of SDPK Babanov created his own party just before the parliamentary elections of 2010. According to Akerov, it was precisely Otunbaeva who advised Babanov to create his own party with the purpose of promoting their clan and advancing its positions on the political arena. Further, as Akerov claimed, representatives of ‘*Saruu*’ clan were members of the Provisional Government: Azimbek Beknazarov, Topchubek Turgunaliyev, Bolot Sher,

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<sup>69</sup> Interview with Akerov.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Akerov.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Tabyldy Akerov.

<sup>72</sup> Temir, Elvira “Kto na Kogo Zapal?” [Who Is With Whom?]. Vecherniy Bishkek newspaper. [http://members.vb.kg/2010/10/27/panorama/3\\_print.html](http://members.vb.kg/2010/10/27/panorama/3_print.html)



Babyrbek Jeenbekov.<sup>73</sup> Exactly during this election campaign, southern and northern ‘*saruu*’ branches joined their forces to ensure more votes for the Respublica party.<sup>74</sup>

Another motive for the creation and development of the Respublica, according to Akerov, is preparing soil for Babanov to become a president in the future. So far, he plays ‘cooperative games’ openly supporting the political course of President Almazbek Atambaev. However, as Akerov said further, these clan affiliations are quite strong in Talas which is represented by ‘*Saruu*’ and ‘*Kushchu*’ tribes, and during one of the latest councils representatives of *Kushchu* openly accused Babanov of nepotism – appointing members of only ‘*saruu*’ clan to the work in public office<sup>75</sup>. This suits the words of Fiacconi, who emphasized that clan relations should remind of a two-way traffic, where the clan members also look at what their representatives does for their good.

In fact, accusations of nepotism became widespread in recent times and are mainly associated with the Respublica. Thus, brother of MP Kanatbek Isaev – Talant – was appointed the Head of State Automobile Inspection, as media report.<sup>76</sup> Brother of another MP Nurbek Alimbekov – Davletbek – was appointed the Deputy Emergency Minister; the relative of MP Bakyt Torobaev – Askarali – became the Deputy Head of State Service of the Fight against Economic Crimes.<sup>77</sup> According to the representatives of civil society, as it comes from the report, these are ‘party-based clans’ that operate in the country.<sup>78</sup> However, I tend to think that despite these are definitely exploitations of blood ties in the pursuit of politico-economic goals, it is still preliminary to speak of ‘party-based clans’ in Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>73</sup> Father of former MP Ravshan Jeenbekov (Ata-Meken political party).

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Tabyldy Akerov

<sup>75</sup> Akmat uulu, Aidanbek. “Partii Vlasti Razdayut Dolzhnosti Svoim Rodstvennikam” [Parties in Power Distribute Posts To Their Relatives]. Azattyk Kyrgyz Service of RFE/RL. March 23, 2012. [http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan\\_respublic/24524924.html](http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan_respublic/24524924.html)

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

Anyway, as for the limited manifestations of clan affiliations, the chain Otunbaeva – Babanov gets a new light in connection with the coalition configuration during its formation process. Despite the fact that it was Ata-Jurt party which received the majority of seats, Otunbaeva granted the right to form the ruling coalition in Parliament to her party fellow Atambaev. The most obvious option was the coalition formed of ideologically close SDPK and the Ata-Meken parties plus the Respublica; however, members of the Respublica party did not allow the Ata-Meken party leader Omurbek Tekebaev to become speaker of the Parliament and Atambaev had to announce that negotiations over coalition formation failed. Despite her previous statement that in case of such failure the right to form a coalition would automatically go to the Ata-Meken chaired by Tekebaev, Otunbaeva granted this right to Babanov.<sup>79</sup>

Chairman Babanov is one of the main local “newsmakers”, because his name and activities are associated with numerous corruption scandals and political intrigues. So, on May 25, 2011 the most popular video-hosting YouTube posted recorded conversation between the then Vice-Prime Minister Babanov and the son of ousted president Bakiev, Maxim.<sup>80</sup> Noteworthy, by that time Maxim Bakiev was declared wanted on ‘fraud charges’ by Interpol.<sup>81</sup> Later the State National Security Committee declared that the recording turned out to be fake; and this compromising material was published by the assistant of Omurbek

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<sup>79</sup> Rasov, Sergey. “Respublica Sozdala Koalitsiyu” [Respublica Formed the Coalition]. International Expert Center for Electoral Systems. December 17, 2010. <http://www.elections-ices.org/russian/publications/textid:8678/>

<sup>80</sup> “Zapis’ Telefonnogo Razgovora Babanova s M.Bakiyevym Priznana Fal’shivkoi – SCNS” [The Record of the Phone Conversation Between Babanov and Maxim Bakiev is Fake – State Committee on National Security]. KyrTag Kyrgyz Telegraph Agency. June 21, 2011. <http://www.kyrtag.kg/?q=news/7394>

<sup>81</sup> Tynan, Deirdre. “Maxim Bakiyev Taken Into Custody in Britain?”. Eurasianet.org. June 14, 2010. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61297>

Abdrakhamanov, deputy from the opposition Ata-Meken (Fatherland) party.<sup>82</sup> Likewise, among the recent criticisms of Babanov is his secret meeting with Kazakh oligarch Bulat Utemuratov on the board of the private jet, which landed in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>83</sup> Despite the official side which insists that it was a formal meeting, the fact that it was not held in the White House makes various rumors circulate. The opposition group of deputies led by MP Tashiev was even going to declare no-confidence vote to PM Babanov.<sup>84</sup>

Babanov is often blamed in power abuse and active involvement in grey corruption schemes. One of them is the issue of nationalization of MegaCom cell-company. Precisely, after the removal of Bakiev's family in April 2010 the stock in MegaCom company was nationalized by the decree of the Provisional Government.<sup>85</sup> According to the ex-Prosecutor General Kubatbek Baibolov, it was Babanov who was standing behind the nationalization, or as he said, raider seizure of the property which belonged to Russian businessmen. Further, as Baibolov claimed, Babanov put his friend Dair Kenekeev to head the newly created Fund of Nationalized Property.<sup>86</sup> Later, the deputies of the Russian Duma accused Babanov of blackmailing \$50 million in exchange for returning their share in business.<sup>88</sup> Because of these accusations Babanov even temporarily resigned, what break the formal rules; however,

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<sup>82</sup> "Zapis' Telefonnogo Razgovora Babanova s M.Bakiyevym Priznana Fal'shivkoi – SCNS" [The Record of the Phone Conversation Between Babanov and Maxim Bakiev is Fake – State Committee on National Security]. KyrTag Kyrgyz Telegraph Agency. June 21, 2011. <http://www.kyrtag.kg/?q=news/7394>

<sup>83</sup> Beishenbek Kyzy, Eleonora. "O Chem Govoril Babanov s Utemuratovym?" [What Was Babanov Discussing with Utemuratov?], Azattyk Kyrgyz Service of RFE/RL. April 13, 2012. [http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan\\_etemuratov/24546702.html](http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan_etemuratov/24546702.html)

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Orozobekova, Cholpon. "Kyrgyzstan: Moscow, Riled over Nationalization, Fires Shot Across Bishkek's Bow". Eurasianet.org. March 14, 2011. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63068>

<sup>86</sup> Yons, Yuri. "Opasnye Svyazi." [Dangerous Connections] April 22, 2011 <http://m.rg.ru/2011/04/22/apk.html>

<sup>87</sup> The Code of corruption schemes in the Kyrgyz Republic. Analytical Report, Part II. February 25, 2011. [http://www.polit.kg/upload/files/corup\\_shemi.pdf](http://www.polit.kg/upload/files/corup_shemi.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> "Criminal Case on Former Top-Managers of MegaCom Closed in Kyrgyzstan", Lenta.ru News Agency. March 14, 2011. <http://lenta.ru/news/2011/03/14/close/> [Printed.htm](#)

deputy commissions did not find anything compromising related to him and his involvement with the case of MegaCom.<sup>89</sup>

In discussions, expert Akerov also claimed that Babanov is one of the richest persons in the country, and his political opponents make benefits from this fact. Due to the fact that Babanov's premiership is associated with various scandals, Babanov fears of losing his post. As Akerov continues, during the parliamentary sessions deputies openly criticize Babanov and threat to leave him out of the Government; this is what Ata-Jurt party practices referring to its ability to mobilize the south of Kyrgyzstan against Babanov.<sup>90</sup> This political game, in the words of Akerov, is done intentionally to get one's share from the PM. As media reports indicate, in one of his interviews Akerov commented that present Parliament reminds him of "bazaar" where everyone sells his/her vote.<sup>91</sup>

In Panebianco's wording (1988), in its formative phase the Respublica was also created by rational model; the party became a tool to enter the Parliament and, simply saying, to get power. With that, the party demonstrates more clan features; to be more precise, its party leader Babanov built his political strategy in the close cooperation with the former President Otunbaeva, who originates from the same clan. However, 'clan' was not the guiding principle to form the Respublica; it served the goals of Babanov. To sustain its activities and preserve itself the party conducts active work in the regions and does have a

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<sup>89</sup> "Deputyaty ne Nakopali Kompromata. Pervyi Vice-Premier Kirgizii Babanov Vernulsya na Svoi Post" [Deputies Did not Find Anything Compromising. First Vice-Prime Minister Babanov Returned to His Post]. Centrasia.ru. May 16, 2011. <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1305548280>

<sup>90</sup> Turusbekova, Jyldyz. "Deputat Tashiev Trebuet Otstavki Premiera i Ugrozhayet Organizatsiey Massovyh Aktsiy v Chuiskoi Oblasti" [MP Tashiev Insists on the Resign of PM and Threatens to Organize Mass Protests in Chui Oblast]. Kyrtag Kyrgyz Telegraph Agency. February 3, 2012. <http://www.kyrtag.kg/?q=news/16013>

<sup>91</sup> Musabekova, Burul. "Deputyaty Prevratili Parlament v Bazar, Gde Delaetsya Biznes po Torgovle Golosami" [Deputies Turned the Parliament into Bazaar Where They Do Business on Trading Votes]. Ayat Newspaper. May 3, 2012. [http://www.gezitter.org/interviews/10938\\_takerov\\_politolog\\_deputaty\\_prevratili\\_parlament\\_v\\_bazar\\_gde\\_delaetsya\\_biznes\\_po\\_torgovle\\_golosami/](http://www.gezitter.org/interviews/10938_takerov_politolog_deputaty_prevratili_parlament_v_bazar_gde_delaetsya_biznes_po_torgovle_golosami/)

more concrete party program. However, as for its genetic model, the party is ‘charisma-oriented’, i.e. it orients on its party leader Babanov and his large financial investment; whereas charisma-orientation in Panebianco’s argumentation (1988) does not allow parties to achieve any degree of institutionalization.

## THE AR-NAMYS (DIGNITY) POLITICAL PARTY

In order to see the regional composition of Ar-Namys (Dignity) party I tracked the birthplace of all one hundred and twenty party members included in the party list. Again, this method contained some difficulties because not all persons included in the party list are identifiable. Out of total one hundred and twenty party members I could check the birthplace of fifty nine of them.<sup>92</sup>

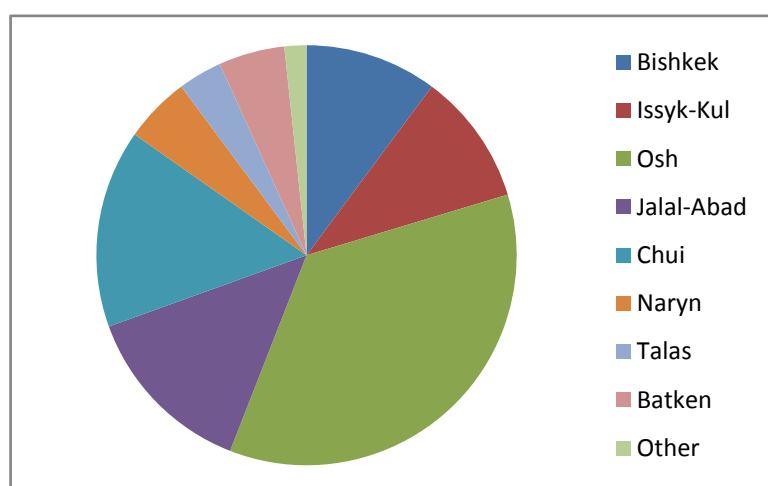


Figure 6 Regional composition of Ar-Namys party

As Fig.6 shows, the party is more or less balanced in terms of its regional composition: twenty six northerners and thirty two southerners. In contrast to both the Ata-Jurt and the Respublica parties, the Ar-Namys (Dignity) is one of the oldest political parties on Kyrgyz political arena.<sup>93</sup> It is strongly associated with its party leader Felix Kulov. Right

<sup>92</sup> “Potentsial’nyh Izbrannikov Nado Znat’ v Lico!” [One Should Know Potential Deputies in Person] Special Project, KG Inform web-site. September 20, 2010. <http://www.kginform.com/ru/news/20100920/01410.html>

<sup>93</sup> The Ar-Namys political party background. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <http://kyrgyzstan.carnegieendowment.org/2010/09/background-on-the-political-party-ar-namys/>

after the imprisonment of Kulov in late 1999 the party had to go underground in its own words, and it once again proves that the party cannot survive without its leader.<sup>94</sup> Later, the Ar-Namys also got a chance to participate at the parliamentary elections of 2010.

In its formative phase Ar-Namys has long time ago passed the rational model of genesis, when the party was established in the year 1999 to participate at the election. Surprisingly for observers, at the election of 2010 the Ar-Namys got twenty five seats in the Parliament, and in particular enjoyed electoral support of the Uzbek population in the South of Kyrgyzstan.<sup>95</sup> However, later the Ar-Namys had to stay in the opposition together with the Ata-Meken (Fatherland), because its demand that party leader, Felix Kulov, gets a post of prime-minister failed.

As for the party members' recruitment, I assumed that at least in the case of the Ar-Namys party it is vertical due to its long history. However, in the interview the Head of Party Secretariat informed me that before the parliamentary election of 2010 the party headquarters held a major reformatting of its ranks, recruiting those people who could have attracted as many votes as possible and to ensure the regionally balanced electoral success. At the same time, he assured that by the next parliamentary elections, the party would pay attention to the fact how many years any person willing to nominate is in the ranks of the party. According to him, it is needed to achieve higher degree of party institutionalization.

As for its internal cohesion, the case of the Ar-Namys is very distinct and requires close examination. It is worthwhile recalling that in April 2011 ten deputies from the Ar-Namys parliamentary fraction proclaimed their intention to join the ruling coalition of SDPK,

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Schenkkah, Nate. "New Coalition Redraws Kyrgyzstan's Political Map." December 17, 2011 <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64729>

the Respublica, and the Ata-Jurt parties.<sup>96</sup> The reason to join the coalition was the intention to develop socio-economic program aimed at improving the well-being of the population, as it was formulated in the statement of ten deputies.<sup>97</sup> However, party and fraction leader Felix Kulov was absent at that moment. Later, commenting on this issue Kulov informed that he understood that ten deputies wanted to show their political support to colleagues in Parliament, however breaking the party discipline; though they could manage this discrepancy, he assured.<sup>98</sup>

In the interview held on May 2, the Head of the Ar-Namys Fraction Secretariat told me that this action signals that parliamentary form of governance in Kyrgyzstan is developing, and that this process is natural. From his viewpoint, this move of ten deputies from the parliamentary fraction indicates some internal conflict, but does not speak of the complete split. In the conversation he referred to the Constitution, which does not lay provisions for deputies to hold imperative mandate; therefore, parties have no right to make pressure on separate deputies. Besides, since it is parliamentary democracy, the Ar-Namys party paved the way for other parties and brought an example of MPs Omurbek Abdrakhmanov and Ravshan Jeenbekov excluded from the Ata-Meken fraction. In his words, the Ar-Namys could show that every deputy is an independent person, and it is true expression of parliamentary democracy.

In his turn, in discussions expert Chorotegin assured that the Ar-Namys party does not build its strategy neither on clans nor on regionalism. Chorotegin notes that the party includes

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<sup>96</sup> “Desyat’ Deputatov Fraktsii ‘Ar-Namys’ Ob’yavili o Reshenii Voiti v Sostav Koalitsii Parlamentskogo Bol’shinstva” [Ten Deputies from Ar-Namys Fraction Announced the Decision to Enter the Ruling Coalition], KyrTag Kyrgyz Telegraph Agency. April 15, 2011. <http://www.kyrtag.kg/?q=news/5414>

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> “Kulov o Zayavlenii Desyati Deputatov ot Ar-Namys: Ne operivshiesya Ptency Popytalis’ Vyletet’ Iz Gnezda, No Podumav, Vozvratilis’” [Kulov about the statement of ten deputies from Ar-Namys], Kant.kg web-site. June 24, 2011. <http://kant.kg/2011-06-24/kulov-o-zayavlenii-10-deputatov-ot-ar-namys-ne-operivshiesya-ptency-popytalis-vyletet-iz-gnezda-no-podumav-vozhvratilis/>

well-known Kyrgyz politician and former Ombudsman Tursunbai Bakir uulu, who comes from Kara-Suu area of Osh oblast. In Chorotegin's opinion, therefore regionalism does not have an effect, because it is exactly Bakir uulu who supplies party with electoral support in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan.

In discussions of regionalism and its complete absence in the Ar-Namys party, the Head of Secretariat told me that everything depends on the personality of party leader, because party leader sets a course for the party. Responding to my question if he admits that the party is organized around its leader Kulov, the Head of Secretariat confirmed it. And here, following Panebianco's line of reasoning (1988), I can say that the Ar-Namys did not achieve high degree of institutionalization. However, in the ranks of the party there is another central figure, namely, the acting Minister of Economic Development and former Finance Minister Akylbek Japarov.

As expert Baketaev said to me in the interview, inside the party Japarov has his own 'clan', or I would say the 'corporate group' which includes brothers Tumanovs, who are also present in the Parliament and the Mayor of Osh city Melis Myrzakmatov.<sup>99</sup> Responding to my question why, if Japarov owns his own 'clan', he did not form his own party to compete for parliamentary seats, Baketaev called Japarov the "servant of efficiency", for whom it was reasonable to enter the Parliament in the ranks of the Ar-Namys party. Moreover, as expert Akerov said in the interview with me, Ar-Namys party enjoyed large funding from Russia, because the official Moscow made a bet on Kulov. According to Baketaev, Japarov can unite forces with someone who has power or resources when needed, and this is what he did in the case of the Ar-Namys.

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with Baketaev.



In this connection, I suggest to consider another split in the Ar-Namys party. On September 12, 2011 fifteen out of twenty five deputies from the Ar-Namys fraction initiated the replacement of fraction leader Kulov by MP Kamila Talieva.<sup>100</sup> However, in his reaction Kulov refuted this fact; later, after revising the protocol of fraction session it was decided to recognize the initiative invalid.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, the fraction amended the law “*On the Ar-Namys Deputy Fraction*”, according to which the decisions are taken by the two-thirds with the necessary participation of the Political Council; fraction members were banned from creating inner groups and alliances to break the unity of the fraction, as media report.<sup>102</sup>

To summarize, the Ar-Namys political party despite its age and long-time presence on the political arena cannot achieve real institutionalization due to its ‘charisma’ orientation towards party leader Kulov. In its organizational continuity, the Ar-Namys follows the natural systems model to preserve its identity. Beyond that, the party is characterized by the lack of internal cohesion what was expressed through the attempts to enter the ruling coalition separately from the party leader Kulov or to replace him in the fraction. The party also does not show any signs of clan-based affiliations, though it tries to maintain sustainable regional balance by the north-south geopolitical line.

## IS COALITION FORMATION A CLAN PACT?

According to Starr, when an authoritarian leader is removed and a country falls into crises, it can finish with the reaffirmation of clan pact (2006: 5). Another scenario is that the invisible level in Parliament – clans, regional networks, and financial groups - will be

<sup>100</sup> Makenov, Adilet. “Feliks Kulov: Moe Smeschenie s Dolzhnosti Lidera Ar-Namysa – Nedeistvitel’no” [Feliks Kulov: My removal from the post of the Ar-Namys Party leader is Invalid]. K-News Agency. September 13, 2011. <http://www.knews.kg/ru/politics/2955/%20>

<sup>101</sup> “Fraktsiya Ar-Namys Priznala Reshenie 15-ti Deputatov o Smene Lidera Nedeistvitel’nym” [Ar-Namys Fraction Recognized the Decision of Fifteen Deputies on the Removal of its Leader Invalid], K-News Agency. September 14, 2011. <http://www.knews.kg/ru/politics/3023/>

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

reduced to the full extent (2006: 5). On this basis, can we say that the coalition formation in late 2010 was in its essence a ‘clan pact’?

Indeed, the coalition formation represented a sophisticated, multi-level ‘cooperative game’ inside the Parliament. First, after the proclamation of the final results of the election the then President Otunbaeva granted the right to form a parliamentary coalition to her party fellow Atambaev. The most obvious party configuration then was an alliance between ideologically close Social-Democratic Party, the Socialistic Party of Ata-Meken, and the Respublica, whose party leader Babanov came out of SDPK.

Abruptly, the coalition between the above-mentioned parties split even not starting to function. As the Respublica party admitted, these were exactly its party members that resisted against the candidacy of Ata-Meken party leader Tekebaev to the post of the Speaker (Toraga).<sup>103</sup> According to the source, this step was a strict result of the pressure of official Moscow.<sup>104</sup> Again, the ability to put a pressure on the political party leaves it far aside from being an institutionalized political force as I believe.

After such a failure President Otunbaeva re-granted the right to form a coalition to the Respublica party leader Babanov. It took nearly a month to form the coalition composed of the Respublica, SDPK, and surprisingly for many, the Ata-Jurt. In his previous statements, the Ata-Jurt party leader Tashiev expressed an opinion that the electoral support of his party

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<sup>103</sup> Trilling, David. “*Kyrgyzstan: Peregovory o Sozdanii Koalitsii Vernulis’ k Iskhodnoi Tochke.*” [Kyrgyzstan: Negotiations Over Coalition Formation Returned to the Starting Point] December 8, 2010 <http://russian.eurasianet.org/node/58466>

<sup>104</sup> Trilling, David. “*Kyrgyzstan: Peregovory o Sozdanii Koalitsii Vernulis’ k Iskhodnoi Tochke.*” [Kyrgyzstan: Negotiations Over Coalition Formation Returned to the Starting Point] December 8, 2010 <http://russian.eurasianet.org/node/58466>

was derived from the southern parts of the country, needed to form a coalition and ensure support of the population in implementing its policies.<sup>105</sup>

The ruling coalition was formed on December 16, 2010. As it can be concluded, the negotiations on its formation took approximately two months. As the Respublica party told later, it conducted negotiations both with the Ar-Namys and the Ata-Meken parties. In the first case, the Ar-Namys demanded the post of prime-minister for its party leader Kulov. In the second case, the Ata-Meken insisted on the post of speaker, however, re-election of Tekebaev as a Speaker would have been the violation of the Constitution.<sup>106</sup> Anyway, the fact that the formation of the coalition took so much time in the wake of the socio-economic crisis in the country, as well as the bargaining over public office, or in other words distribution of selective incentives, allow us to conclude that parties did not unite on the ideological grounds, but simply did not achieve an agreement over the distribution of state assets. This particular statement confirms what Fiacconi asserted in his interview: namely, that the political parties unite only by the presence of common interest, which usually is the control over resources.

Collins reasons that clan pacts are agreements between clans, irrespective of the regime type (Collins 2006). However, the analysis showed that the Ata-Jurt represents a sponsored regional network with the purpose of making money; the Respublica is a commercial project with the vast number of businessmen aimed at fulfilling political ambitions of its party leader Babanov, with some clan affiliations manifested; whereas Social-Democratic Party is more consistent ideologically and has long opposition history. In a combination, these three parties gave what Gullette called a “short-lived alliance” that

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibraev, Zamir. “*V Kyrgyzstane Sformirovana Pravyaschaya Koalitsiya*” [Ruling Coalition formed in Kyrgyzstan], KyrTag Kyrgyz Telegraph Agency. December 16, 2010. <http://www.kyrtag.kg/?q=ru/news/2813>

exploits any connections to achieve the goals. Taking into account that these parties under the coalition divided state resources and even oblasts, as expert Akerov claimed in the interview, and formed the Cabinet of Ministers, they definitely achieved their goals or laid down the foundations for achieving them. Certainly, it was a pact, but not the reaffirmation of clan pact. Based on the fact that the Ata-Jurt and the Respublica are rather projects than parties, one cannot also say that this new form of pact led to the elimination of ‘invisible’ politics due to the strengthening of parliamentary practices.

## CONCLUSION

This study was meant to address the issues of clan politics and political parties in Kyrgyzstan. My intention was to find out whether ‘clan’ is an organizing principle for parties to be formed and to operate. This assumption that it might be was built on the ground that the presence of informal politics in the country is a matter of fact. Indeed, the scholarship on the region asserts that it is clans which shape politics and determine political dynamics (Collins 2006, Starr 2006).

However, discovering that ‘clan’ is not an organizing principle the next step was to find out what parties represent in essence. I concentrated attention on political parties that compose Parliament due to the series of political processes in Kyrgyzstan, such as the elimination of authoritarian presidential system, ethnic violence and the following power vacuum, referendum which adopted parliamentary form of governance, and the fact of holding pluralistic parliamentary elections. That is, my research defined the concepts of ‘clan’ and ‘clan pact’ as analytical tools to assess political parties, including their composition, performance, and institutionalization mostly in the formative phase.

Both literature review and interviews with experts allowed me to establish that ‘clan’ means ‘tribe’ and necessarily entails kinship ties as the binding factor. Secondly, the exploitation of the concept of ‘clan’ is its misuse or rather an intentional tactics in the political competition, a kind of political tool. Besides, I revealed that in order to interpret politics it is useful to separate the sociological notion of clan from the political one, because at the sociological micro-level ‘clan’ is associated with family, village, in-group loyalty and the sense of trust. At the political macro-level, ‘clan’ implies using ‘clan’ as a network for political mobilization and association for the pursuance of political and economic goals. It appears that all interpretation depends on which meaning one can give to ‘clan’. It turned out

from my interviews that at the political level these are regional networks and economic interest groups that play a more prominent role today.

The finding that ‘clan’ obligatorily entails kinship system distinguished between clans and the rest, and further analysis based on this criterion became less problematic for me. Using the fact that ‘clan’ as usual entails micro-level of the village or certain geographical area I checked the composition of party lists of those political parties that enter Parliament. This technique did not show tight concentration of natives from one village or rayon to be able to conclude that the party is clan-based and clan-oriented. Moreover, I have found out that each party contains natives from all the oblasts of the country.

However, I continued assuming that informality plays a significant role. As long as I suspected that the ‘social fabric’ is much more diverse and the political circumstances are much more complex, the task then was to discover what parties represent then in the political trajectory of Kyrgyzstan after the second regime change in April 2010.

With that, examination of three parties, formed or revived just before the parliamentary election of October 2010 – Ata-Jurt, Respublica, and Ar-Namys, allows me to conclude that these parties though are not based on clans, still stand far from institutionalization. By the genetic model of origin, the Ata-Jurt party follows the ‘sponsorship’ model, whereas Respublica and Ar-Namys parties are ‘charisma-oriented’ ones, though in different ways.

The Ata-Jurt is dominated by the southerners, and due to the existence of the two main ‘power brokers’ – Tashiev and Keldibekov – derives its source of support mainly from the southern oblasts of Kyrgyzstan – Jalal-Abad and Osh oblasts respectively. Behind the party there is a group of people, who have a vested interest in the party as a political project to make money, this is why it fits the ‘sponsorship’ model and exploits regional networking.

The Respublica is ‘charisma-oriented’ because it is the project of its chairman Babanov. In its composition, the party tends to be dominated by southerners again, but its leader is of northern Talas origin. This fact made me search for different ‘coping strategies’ inside the party and, consequently, various discussions and thorough media search helped me to establish that the party acts rather as a ‘corporate group’ whose main sponsor is Babanov. It is created to pursue certain politico-economic goals, which becomes evident if we look at the series of corruption scandals Babanov is associated with.

The Ar-Namys is one of the oldest political parties on the arena; however, it is strongly oriented towards its chairman Kulov. The party also does not reveal any tight regional concentrations and is the most balanced in terms of the north-south division. However, the party is the most distinct case in terms of the lack of internal cohesion. It is shaken from the inside by factions and groups created, such as the one created to replace the faction leader Kulov. This happens due to the fact that its party members do not realize themselves as a single core and act independently, referring to the absence of imperative mandate.

Therefore, it is indeed a ‘false binary choice’ (Radnitz 2007) to choose between clans and formal institutions, whereas the political circumstances are much more diverse and complex. And still the great level of informality and under-institutionalization prevents Kyrgyzstan from successful democratization. Using Helmke & Levitsky’s typology (2006), the informal ‘corporate groups’ and regional networks work within the formal ones, i.e. Parliament, and thus turn into substitutive organizations.

The openness of the case in the sense that all parties are in power I considered poses certain restrictions on the accuracy of my conclusions. Thus, at the municipal elections held in the city of Osh in March 2012 none of the ruling parties could win the majority of votes.

This signifies that none of the parties enjoys support of the population at the nationwide level.<sup>107</sup> On the one hand, such a decentralization of power can be interpreted as a positive signal because it was the actual goal of weakening the institution of presidency; on the other hand, it can lead to the “Afghanization”<sup>108</sup> of Kyrgyzstan and even deeper politico-regional cleavages. What makes me speculate this way is also the fact of merging two parties, which are usually positioned as “southern parties” – the Butun Kyrgyzstan (United Kyrgyzstan) with the Ata-Jurt – right after the presidential elections and the victory of ‘northerner’ Atambaev.<sup>109</sup> Eventually, this intensity of the political processes and the overall party dynamics leave room for further studies in this field.

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<sup>107</sup> Ysman, Almas. “Osh: V Liderax – Uluttar Birimdigi” [Osh: Uluttar Birimdigi Party Leads]. Azattyk Kyrgyz Service of RFE/RL. March 4, 2012.  
[http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan\\_osh\\_election\\_2012/24504206.html](http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan_osh_election_2012/24504206.html)

<sup>108</sup> The term was used by Akerov in the interview, to show the deep-rooted tribal divisions in the political society as it is in Afghanistan.

<sup>109</sup> Kasymalieva, Aida and Marat, Erica. “Kyrgyz Opposition Parties Agree to Merge Along Regional Lines”. The Jamestown Foundation. February 16, 2012.  
[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=39019](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39019)



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## APPENDIX

### Semi-structured topic guide

#### Questions to party elites

1. When was your party formed?
2. What was the motivation to form the party?
3. How did the recruitment of party members occur?
4. Do you have specific electorate? How would you describe it?
5. What is the political platform of your party?
6. What is your ideological agenda?
7. What is the size of your party?
8. Does your party work actively in the regions? How?
9. Beyond the activity of parliamentary fractions, how do you assess the activity of party in promoting your political agenda?

#### Questions to historians/political experts

1. What is clan?
2. What is regionalism?
3. To what extent do they overlap?
4. Could you provide me with detailed documented composition of the geographical locations of clans? (strongly needed)
5. Are parliamentary parties based on clan affiliations?
6. If yes, why? If no, why?
7. What do parliamentary parties represent then?
8. To what extent does informality play a role in Parliament?
9. If no changes in the electoral law (deputies are chosen closely attached to small constituencies), do you think clans (or whatever form of informality) could affect the formation and performance of parties to greater extent?
10. How do you think, was there any institutional breakaway, achievement with the introduction of the parliamentary form of governance?
11. If yes, could you please precise it. If not, why, what were the limitations?

#### Respondents

1. Dosaly Esenaliev – Head of the Respublica political party executive committee;
2. Bakyt Baketaev – former Director of the Corruption Prevention Service, political expert;
3. Tynchtykbek Chorotegin – President at Kyrgyz History Society, Professor, Doctor of History, former Director of Azattyk Kyrgyz Service of RFE/RL;
4. Giorgio Fiacconi – Consular Honorary of the Republic of Italy in Kyrgyzstan, founder of the Times of Central Asia, author of “Kyrgyzstan – Twenty Years of Independence”;
5. Tabyldy Akerov – Professor at the International University of Kyrgyzstan, political expert;
6. Erkin Bayamanov – Head of the Ata-Jurt Parliamentary Fraction Secretariat;
7. Head of Ar-Namys Parliamentary Fraction Secretariat;
8. Head of Ata-Meken Parliamentary Fraction Secretariat;
9. Head of Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan Parliamentary Fraction Secretariat.