

DIFFERENT MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS IN KYRGYZ-UZBEK ETHNIC CONFLICT IN 2010

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Abstract

In June 2010, hundreds of Kyrgyz and Uzbek inhabitants in the cities of Osh and Jalalabad in southern Kyrgyzstan were killed in inter-communal violence. Both sides suffered and committed crimes, and according to the Independent International Commission in total 470 people lost their lives and more than 2000 people were wounded during the conflict. However, this thesis is not another attempt to explain what happened in June 2010 in Kyrgyzstan. Instead, it will focus on explaining an interesting related question: What explains different media representations of the violence among the Kyrgyz, Russian and western/international media? This paper aims to explore the role of the different media representations - in the ethnic violence in the Southern cities Osh and Jalalabad in Kyrgyzstan in June 2010. My core argument engages the debate over why and in what ways we see different media representations of the same events. By looking at the Kyrgyz, Russia and western/international media, I demonstrate that these differences are due in part to the different structure of each media environment. Russian and Kyrgyz media are mostly controlled by state, while most of the media in Western countries are private.

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List of Abbreviations

NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	Cable News Network
CPS	The Committee to Protect Journalists

Chapter 1

Introduction

In June 2010, hundreds of Kyrgyz and Uzbek inhabitants in the cities of Osh and Jalalabad in southern Kyrgyzstan were killed in inter-communal violence. Social and political tensions caused ethno-territorial structure of Post-Soviet Central Asia and the absence of economic opportunity resulted in the political instability and overthrow of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in the revolution of April 2010. The cities where conflict appeared have provinces with the largest absolute, 780 583 and relative numbers of ethnic Uzbek inhabitants: the highest - 14, 4 percent Uzbeks in Osh and Jalalabad - is the site of some of the worst violence.¹ Both sides suffered and committed crimes, and according to the Independent International Commission in total 470 people lost their lives and more than 2000 people were wounded during the conflict.² Although dozens of reports and investigations have been published, there is no clear agreement on the reasons for the violence.

This thesis is not another attempt to explain what happened in June 2010 in Kyrgyzstan. Instead, it will focus on explaining an interesting related question – what explains different media representations of the violence among the Kyrgyz in Russian and western/international media? As the Kyrgyz state, together with local authorities and international actors are involved to rebuilding the relationship between the two ethnic groups and bringing tolerance and harmony to the country, the question remains what role the media have had in perpetuating different myths about the conflict. During the violence, there was a strong fight over the internet, and different news media representatives were telling quite one-sided stories about

¹ “National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic,” archive, accessed May 15, 2015, <http://web.archive.org/web/20140706220049/http://www.stat.kg/stat.files/din.files/census/5010003.pdf>.

² Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, “Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry Into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010,” May 3, 2011, accessed May 1, 2015, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_490.pdf

victimization and brutalization in the course of the ethnic conflict. Throughout the conflict, different media often tried to fit different victim/perpetrator from onto the tragic events in the south and in local outlets of the north of the country, with significant knock-on effects for prospects of peace and postwar reconstruction in the country. The different news organizations each asked a key question “who is to blame” and developed unique stories to answer this question, arriving at different “verdicts” in this case.

Most of the foreign NGO and international media sources have portrayed Uzbeks as the main sufferers, reflecting the stories told by Osh Uzbeks while accusing Kyrgyzstan for committing a genocide against the Uzbek minority group.³ The Kyrgyz media has generally reacted by attempting to minimize the victimhood of Uzbeks, while presenting the Kyrgyz as a sufferer. Meanwhile, Russian media agreed with Kyrgyz interim government opinion about the involvement of third force that was organized by Bakiyev in order to destabilize the political situation in the country.⁴ Hence, the problem is that when different interpretations of the same ethnic conflict arise from different media, this may help localize the conflict or add fuel to the fire in ethnic hatred. The central research question derives from this problem, why do we see these different media representations from different media all trying to report on the same ethnic conflict? In other words, why do these news organizations in the different language communities represent different interpretations of the 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan?

My core argument engages the debate over why and in what ways we see different media representations of the same events: looking at the Kyrgyz, Russian and western/international media. I argue that these differences are due in part to the different structure of each media

³ Nick Megoran, “The Background to Osh: Stories of Conflict and Coexistence,” *opendemocracy*, October 10, 2010, accessed May 20, 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/nick-megoran/background-to-osh-stories-of-conflict-and-coexistence>.

⁴ Anna Matveeva, “Violence in Kyrgyzstan, Vacuum in the Region the Case for Russia-Eu Joint Crisis Management,” *LSE Civil Society and Human Security Research Unit* (September, 2010): 4-5., accessed May 18, 2105, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/crisisStates/download/wp/wpSeries2/WP792.pdf>

environment. Russian and Kyrgyz media are mostly controlled by the state, while most of the media in western countries are private. By looking at TV channels and newspapers, which are aligned with particular ideologies in each countries, and by showing how news organizations in each of these three media environments reported on the conflict, my argument contributes to the existing literature, as it reflects the role of the media in ethnic violence, and how different media may manipulate the people. Finally, the importance of this research is that I show the Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic conflict through these different media representations. The significantly different picture portrayed in the three media communities suggests that our understanding of each ethnic conflict might be strongly influenced the organizational and operational features of the news organizations from which we obtain “news” about events effect the conflict itself.

Literature review

A significant literature has already pointed to the fact that the ways in which the media structure news frames about war and peace are significant, because most members of the society depend on the news as their main source of information about conflicts. Wolfsfeld argues that this helps explain why most of political leaders invest huge amount of time and money to shape the state media.⁵ Moreover, the way in which news media represent specific types of conflict are also have a huge influence on any following efforts at conflict resolution. Wolfsfeld, Frosh, and Awabdy explain that the news media use a number of patterns that assist mobilization of the society in wartime. The first pattern is that news tend to be “culturally ethnocentric”.⁶ “The term ethnocentric is used not to exaggerate self-interest but provide culturally tight perspective

⁵ Wolfsfeld, Gadi. *Media and Political Conflict: News from the Middle East*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

⁶ Wolfsfeld, G., P. Frosh, and M. T. Awabdy. "Covering Death in Conflicts: Coverage of the Second Intifada on Israeli and Palestinian Television." *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 45 (2008): 401-17.

on political events and acts”.⁷ Here, ethnocentrism can be defined as “making false assumption about others’ ways based on own limited experience.”⁸ Kinder and Kam explains that ethnocentrism is a widespread and deep-rooted division of human beings into in-groups (us) and out-groups (them): in general it is “us” against “them”. Ethnocentric people think that in-group members tend to be friendly, trustworthy, and virtuous; and common symbols and experiences connect them. In contrast, out-group members are believed to be unfriendly, dangerous, untrustworthy, and their common practices are condemned.⁹ Ledford insists that ethnocentrism shapes the political decision-making process and is dependent on human attention and how issues are framed.¹⁰ These patterns are regular and applied in all forms of news. They guarantee that actually everyone is participating in gathering and spreading information -including local people and allies as well as “reporters, photographers, cameramen/women, and editors.”¹¹ Moreover, the use of native language also guarantees ethnocentric control over the flow of information. This means that whenever there is a use of native language it includes “concepts, myths, symbols, and cultural assumptions which creates a sense of national pride,” argues Ledford.¹² Such things are important because whenever people tell any story, this (ethnocentric) contains narrative stories about conflict.

“The second pattern for the development of writing storylines changes overtime and circumstances as the journalists respond to different of events. There are two modes of reporting: Victims of Mode and Defensive Mode. In the Victims of Mode of reporting, the

⁷ Ibid. p.403

⁸ Ken Barger, “Ethnocentrism What Is It? Why Are People Ethnocentric? What Is the Problem? What Can We Do About It? Recognition and Control of Ethnocentrism as a Basic Methodology for Understanding Ethnic Behavior... Both Our Own and Others.” iupui, July 31, 2014, accessed May 15, 2015, <http://www.iupui.edu/~anthkb/ethnocen.htm>.

⁹ Kinder, Donald R, and Cindy D. Kam. *Us against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009. 1-61.

¹⁰ Ledford, Christopher William “Ethnocentric Frames across Race: The Media’s Role in Activating Ethnocentrism and Public Support for Conflict Abroad.” (Master’s thesis, University of Louisville, 2012), 400-5, accessed June 1, 2015, library. Louisville.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 402.

¹² Ibid. p. 403.

journalists increase the level of emotionalism which is connected to the event. In this situation, the media places a strong emphasis on “to shock, grief, and anger that goes with such experience.”¹³ While reporting emotional news some journalists aim to raise the prominence of the story. The reason for journalists doing that is a hope to be hired in a higher position when reporting these types of the stories. Moreover, when the media provides names, ages and even pictures of the victims it will make the story more emotional. Sometimes journalists create the news structures with public assumptions and sentiments. There are two types of the framing methods that are common in Victims Mode: “ethnic solidarity stories and those that demonize the enemy.”¹⁴ The first is when the stories center on political leaders who publicly when they in publicly demonstrate their sympathy and solidarity with to dead and wounded people. This can be when the leaders are visiting the hospitals, showing their support to people, and organizing ceremonies with the aim of expressing ethnic or national pride. The second, framing method, news stories that demonize the enemy, is also common in such conflicts. When people from one side have been killed, any kind of reports or images will show how their enemy is evil. The weaker side that’s has lost people will talk about massacres and war crimes in their own media. Most of the journalists construct the news using standards that conform to their culture and newsgathering and reporting norms. Creating stories that resonate with widespread cultural mores are due to the journalists’ socialization (they live among their own people) and the values and aims of their news organization (it is good for business or sponsors).¹⁵

The second mode of reporting is Defensive Mode. Scholars such Wolfsfeld, Frosh, and Awabdy argue that journalists use an alternative set of techniques when they struggle with civilian deaths on the other side. When one’s own soldiers are involved in killing the people, journalists attempt to create stories that make less emotional and effort to rationalize the

¹³ Ibid. p. 403

¹⁴ Ibid.p. 403

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 404

situation. The authors argue this is due to the professional reason to implement a patriotic method of reporting.¹⁶ Another method of lowering the emotionalism is when “journalists personalize their own people’s losses and depersonalize those among the enemy”. When the media constantly talk about their own innocent losses and not much about those who are from other side, this can add fuel to the flames of ethnic hatred. Additional method of reporting related to the Defensive Mode is when the media attempt to move the responsibility to the enemy.¹⁷ It is a fact that during such conflicts, there is usually cycle of violence coming from both sides, and it is easy to convince the media is that one side is merely defending itself from the predations of the other side. These above mentioned theoretical principles show the way news portrayals of events are socially constructed, news stories tend to mirror and strengthen existing beliefs about a conflict and an “enemy.”¹⁸

Another theory that talks about the functions of the media is called the 'propaganda model' and was developed by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky in their book 'Manufacturing Consent – The Political Economy of the Mass Media' in 1988. The model focuses on media in the west, and attempts to explain how the society is manipulated by the institutional enforcements that limit and influence news content within a profit-driven system.¹⁹ Chomsky and Herman’s model argues that “the raw material of news” passes through five filters that form the news in the society. These five filters are:

1. “The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass media firms; 2. Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; 3. The reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and experts funded and approved by these primary sources and agent of power; 4. Flak as a means of disciplining the media; and 5. Anticommunism as a national religion and control mechanism.”²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid. p .405

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 405

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 405

¹⁹ Simon Enoch, “Theory: The Propaganda Model,” beautifultrouble, accessed May 29, 2015, <http://beautifultrouble.org/theory/the-propaganda-model/>.

²⁰ Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988. 18-39.

In discussing the first filter, Herman and Chomsky argue that the dominant media are large corporations; therefore, they closely monitor the media content in their own system to ensure that the content supports their financial interest. The information presented to the public will be biased toward the interests of those who own the media; this is a powerful filter that will affect all news choices. The second filter in the propaganda model is advertising. The mass media in western news environments are interested in attracting audiences with advertising in order to cover the costs of production; otherwise, they have to increase the price of their newspapers or TV channels. The theory holds that individuals who buy the newspaper are the product which is sold to businesses that buy advertising space.²¹ The third filter is sourcing mass-media news, Herman and Chomsky stated: “the mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest.”²² Even the largest media corporations cannot afford to have reporters and cameras at all places where important events are happening. Any journalists or editors who may insult powerful news sources can be threatened with the denial of access to favored industrial or governmental sources; such denial of access can threaten the journalists’ ability to get news “scoops” earlier than other news organizations²³ The fourth filter called flak and enforces is described as ‘negative responses to a media statement or TV/radio program’. ²⁴ Herman and Chomsky stated that: “The government is a major producer of flak, regularly assailing, threatening, and correcting the media, trying to contain any deviation from the established line. Flak includes complaints, lawsuits, petitions or government sanctions.”²⁵ The fifth filter that Herman and Chomsky identified was ‘anti-communism’, which for many western countries (notably the United States) evokes external enemies or threats, mainly emanating from communist countries

²¹ Ibid. p. 17-18.

²² Ibid.p.18

²³ Ibid. p.20.

²⁴ Ibid. p.26.

²⁵ Ibid.p.28.

Manufacturing Consent was written at the end of the Cold War; and at the time, this filter effectively gained reader attention, while at the same time mobilizing them against a common enemy by demonizing certain actors as insufficiently patriotic or in league with the enemy.²⁶ This propaganda model suggests that traditional media is an instrument in the hand of elites, challenging the notion of a free press. Although this model was based on the description of United States media, the authors believe that the theory can be applied to any country that has the same basic economic structure and organizing principles, which the model holds are main sources of media biases in western markets. I therefore expect British and most other western media to conform to the predictions of the model, insofar as news organizations in these countries are driven more by market pressures (rather than top-down government control).

Most of the scholars of peace and conflict research are aware of the communications revolution, and the media are often mentioned as a source of internal conflict or as factors that exacerbate existing conflicts. Due to globalization, scholars claim that today's conflicts are fundamentally different and that these changes directly relate to the communications revolutions and media.²⁷ Today states as political institutions do not play as important a role as they used to; instead other political actors including the media, non-governmental organization, transnational companies are replacing states quickly. However, despite the great importance of the media in ethnic conflicts, most academics still complain of the lack of research in this field. Most of this work is focused on international conflict and how it is portrayed in the national media.²⁸ In addition, most of this research is on the Western and International media. With the exception of Gadi Wolfsfeld's research, there is little research which deals with the role of the domestic media in internal conflicts.²⁹ It is a young and burgeoning field. This new research

²⁶ Ibid. p.39.

²⁷ Ylva Isabelle Blondel, "Violent Conflict and Roles of the Media," *UNESCO and Sida* (2003): 10-13.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 10

²⁹ Ibid. p .10

field lacks of systematic empirical material to work with; however, there are several case studies that have been conducted. What is needed is a theoretical framework in order to systematize the findings of individual case studies.

It is a fact that the media is an important element of any conflict. Wolfsfeld argues that actors compete to attempt to control or influence the media in different way in order to secure and gain political influence.³⁰ There are two dimensions, structural and cultural, in order to understand how political conflicts can influence competition over the media. The structural dimension is in competition over access to the media, while the cultural dimension is competition over frames the news. Having access to valuable news sources means that powerful political actors can have greater control over the media representation of conflict; usually political and economic elites have an important advantage. Using access as a tool means that these political actors can strongly influence the media and its message. To what extent this is true also depends on the relationship between the political actor and the media. In democratic and democratizing states, the media has become the primary source of communication among the population. Most actors believe that when they have an access to the media it will be easy to control it.

Nowadays, the media has become more independent – as there is more democratic access to information about events via the internet and social media – so this presents a challenge for actors seeking to manipulate the media message. Sometimes, under certain circumstances, the media can act as an advocate for groups who do not have access to the media. It is becoming more common when the demonstrators from distant countries write slogans with mistakes in English in hopes of being heard or to grab attention in the international media. Whenever external actors are involved in a civil conflicts, it is important to have a knowledge about the local society and contacts.³¹

³⁰ Ibid. p. 11

³¹ Ibid. p .11

When analyzing different media representations, it is important to discuss about the model of media. In 1963 the classic scholars on media, Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm, divided the media into four model: libertarians, socially responsible, authoritarian and Soviet.³² Today, when people analyze media system, they focus on either the libertarian model or the social responsibility model argues Oates.³³ The libertarian or commercial is dependent by the needs of consumers. It means that a main task of the news media in free societies is to provide the people with information about big current events and entertain them. Anything that is important and interesting for the audience should be reported immediately. The libertarian media system increases the resistance of the media to being manipulated by the political elites and making journalistic bias less important. Usually this media system has a high trust in the audience, yet sometimes unfiltered information can lead to serious problems.³⁴

This thesis argues that the media play a central role in transmitting a certain narrative of the conflict, and different news media representations generate different narratives depending in large part on a number of institutional features of the news organization and the culture in which it is embedded. Blondel argues that influence of the media is linked to the conflict dimensions concerning to the communication of attitudes and feelings that influence legitimacy and credibility in any political system. These dimensions are especially important in weak and democratizing transition states where a transfer of power has to pass certain elites groups including the actors in civil society.³⁵ Most of the research focuses on the role of the international media influence in conflicts, however, some scholars argue that most conflicts appear in domestic political settings where the role of the mass communication became an important part of the society, particularly the role of the national media in violent conflict. Explaining the different media structures requires finding out the relationship between the

³² Oates, Sarah. *Television, Democracy and Elections in Russia*. London: Routledge, 2006.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 1280.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 1282.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 32 (Oates).

media and government. I argue that while the media is owned by the government or business elites, it has a capacity to shape the information environment in the country. Effective use of the media can prevent the conflict or vice versa, it can increase the tension between the conflicting groups. In analyzing the three different media representations, it is important to find out how the Kyrgyz, Russian and western/international media is structured.

Research Design

The research strategy for this study involves carrying out an analysis of different media news representation reports with regard to the ethnic violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbek in Kyrgyzstan in 2010. I will analyze three different media representations generated by Kyrgyz, Russian, and western/international media. Sampled media include newspaper, TV channels, and social media about the conflict in the three different media environments.

With regard of media structure, Kyrgyz and Russian media either belong to state or are owned by companies that have a close relationship with the government, western/international media, on the other hand are not controlled by the states and have more freedom in providing the news.

In order to test the premise that the differences media representations depend on the states' particular ideologies and different structure of each media environment, I am going to use qualitative content analysis on events that involved the Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic conflict in Kyrgyzstan and have been covered in the mainstream Kyrgyz, Russian, and international/western media. This will enable me to ascertain the reason of different interpretations of different media representation of Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic conflict in various ways. Moreover, qualitative analysis is helpful for examining the core meaning of physical messages and the conclusions drawn from them in the sources.³⁶

³⁶ "An Introduction to Content Analysis," washington.edu, accessed May 25, 2015, <http://depts.washington.edu/uwmcnair/chapter11.content.analysis.pdf>.

The time period I am going to focus on is events that occurred in 2010 in the cities Osh and Jalalabad. The reason for this period is the fact that conflict violence between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek ethnic groups occurred in June in 2010.

I test my claims using the technique for collecting data: firstly, I choose the most provocative media reports that were broadcasted or published about the conflict violence in June 2010. I am doing this by looking at archives in the Internet websites of each media during that period. From the Kyrgyz media's reporting of the ethnic conflict in June 2010, I use mostly newspapers in Kyrgyz speaking media and internet news agency websites. The Kyrgyz speaking newspapers - Forum, Alibi, and Kyrgyz tuusu; internet news agencies – AKIpress.kg, 24.kg, and kloop.kg. All above mentioned newspapers (Forum, Alibi, Kyrgyz tuusu) and the internet news agencies (AKIpress.kg, 24.kg, and kloop.kg) are owned by private individuals. The reason I choose these outlet is to show how the media can interpret the same conflict violence differently in one country even though they are private. The national TV channels were not chosen because any of them did not report the events in conflict time period.

In analyzing the Russian media in conflict violence in 2010 in the cities Osh and Jalalabad, I choose different Russian media that were reporting the June events in Kyrgyzstan. The following sources were used: First Channel, RIA Novosti, NTV channel, Echo Moscow, Radio Svoboda, newspapers - Komsomolskaya Pravda and Kommersant, and Russia 24. I choose these media because during the Osh ethnic clashes 2010, from each above mentioned media were sent special reporters to Kyrgyzstan in order to inform what was happening in the conflict regions. Some of these media are controlled by state, while other identify themselves as an independent media in Russia. In analysis of these media, specific terms were used while describing the ethnic conflict such as 'Osh Massacre' or 'Mahalla' (is an Uzbek word that refers to a traditional Uzbek neighborhood).

In international/western media were used following media: CNN, BBC, Fergana news international agency, and Euroasianet news agency, because these media were the most active in reporting the event.

In doing so, I compare the three different media representations from Kyrgyz, Russian, and international/western media in order to find out why these different media representations had interpreted in a various way the same conflict violence in June 2010.

The second step is to examine the features of the media. In order to analyze the media, it is important to find out the category of the media: whether it belong to the government or private. Media owners look for economic benefits, they want to sell their programs to the people, who will buy or watch their programs. If the media belongs to the state then the government filters the news with political interests. In this way, I provide news with different media categories in order to the different news. All the analyzed events have been covered in the media are the following:

- Kyrgyz media representation of the 2010 conflict;
- Russian media representation of the 2010 conflict;
- International/western media representation of the 2010 conflict;

In order to generate a clear picture of the different media representations' interpretations concerning the conflict violence, I am going to use the different media - newspapers, TV channels, and internet news agencies due to the fact that in all these three different media representations countries' media are diverse. While was selecting the Kyrgyz, Russian and international/ western media, I looked up the countries profile with the most important news sources for people in these countries. For Kyrgyz citizens' the most popular media are television and radio. However, in violence conflict national TV channels and radio were not active in informing the population with news, therefore according to the survey conducted in 2009, there

were 760,664 internet users in the country.³⁷ In Russia, television and newspapers are the most important news. The highest percentage of Russian trust in national television is (84%), newspaper is (69%), and international media is (9%).³⁸ In international/western media, particularly, for Americans and British, the most important sources are televisions (50% – for Americans; 55% - for British), after goes newspapers, radio, and Internet.³⁹ The most trusted specific news sources – BBC (32%), CNN (11%). This clearly shows the different media trust in these three different media representations.

All selected articles are analyzed different languages (Kyrgyz, Russian, and English) and translated to the best of knowledge. Using the keywords Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic conflict and the role of media, I filtered the articles related to the events mentioned above during a specified time period. In order to find the articles related to the specific event I used additional keywords: Osh riots, massacres, Kyrgyz ethnic violence, media and ethnic conflict;

I have intentionally divided the each countries media representation (Kyrgyz media representation of the 2010 conflict; Russian media representation of the 2010 conflict; International/western media representation of the 2010 conflict ;), because in this way I can test whether the different media representations interpreted the conflict violence in 2010 in a different way, can affect to the further ethnic violation between the two groups (Kyrgyz-Uzbek).

The possible limitation, while analyzing the data, is based on the fact that qualitative content analysis is a quite subjective system that allows to frame disputes according to illustrative techniques. This also indicates that the sample of meaning might be explained in a different way by other academics. Yet, the groups' explanations and samples of what compose them, given above, attempt to contribute as much as possible to the credibility of the findings.

³⁷ Neil, Tolkun Melvin, Umaraliev, "New Social Media and Conflict in Kyrgyzstan," *SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security* neil melvin and tolkun umaraliev (August 2011): 4--15.

³⁸ "BBC Poll: Trust in Media - Countries." BBC Poll: Trust in Media - Countries. Accessed June 1, 2015.

http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/bbcreut_country.html.

³⁹ Ibid (BBC Poll).

Chapter division

The next chapter will briefly explain the historical roots of the ethnic conflict between Kyrgyz-Uzbek in June 2010. Chapter three to five will give a comparative analysis of my argument by making a link between the three different media representation during the Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic violence. Finally, a conclusion and answer to the set of research question will be given.

Chapter 2 Historical background

Between June 10 and 14, 2010, the cities in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan, Osh and Jalalabad, were ruined in four days of terrible violence between the ethnic Kyrgyz majority and Uzbek minority groups, which resulted in over 400 deaths and thousands of Uzbek refugees, who fled to neighboring Uzbekistan.⁴⁰ Before the security forces reestablished order, the regions witnessed cruel killings, sexual abuse, destruction of private homes and shopping centers, marauding, and huge number of refugees from the country. The conflict is connection with the April revolution, which occurred in 2010 and resulted in the overthrow of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and establishment of a new interim government at the head of Roza Otumbaeva.⁴¹ The ethnic clashes between the same groups in the same cities occurred almost exactly 20 years after the first set of clashes in Kyrgyzstan, in June 1990. In the earlier episode of violence, the dispute between the ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek originated from perception of

⁴⁰ Megoran N, Satybaldieva E, Lewis D, Heathershaw J. sipri.org, accessed 28 May 2014 "Interethnic Reconciliation Is the Key to Bringing Stability to Kyrgyzstan," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute* (June 2014): 1-2. <http://www.sipri.org/research/security/afghanistan/central-asia-security/publications/sipri-osf-working-paper-megoran-et-al-june-2014>

⁴¹ Ismailbekova, Aksana. "Coping Strategies: Public Avoidance, Migration, and Marriage in the Aftermath of the Osh Conflict, Fergana Valley." *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 41, no. 1 (2013): 109-27. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00905992.2012.748736>

unfair land redistribution and resulted 200 deaths and about 1000 injured people.⁴² The Uzbek minority living in Kyrgyzstan were not privileged with territorial autonomy or language protection.⁴³ Similarly, in 2010, under the Bakiyev regime, local Uzbek were dissatisfied with local Uzbek discrimination and the low level of political representation of Uzbeks in the Kyrgyz government. Therefore, they supported a new interim government after the revolution.⁴⁴ For their part, many ethnic Kyrgyz in the southern part of the country were having the similar feelings of exclusion from the new interim government as during the Askar Akaev regime, when the country had north-south clan-based politics (explained below).⁴⁵ These people (local Kyrgyz in the south) continued to support the overthrown Bakiyev, who was from Jalalabad Province and its former governor.⁴⁶ After being involved in humanitarian aid during the violent conflict, the United Nations Commissioner of Human Rights inferred that the conflict was not spontaneous, but was planned in a number of organized attacks performed by separate groups of armed men who and seemed to be independent from the Kyrgyz military and security forces who were under the control of the interim government.⁴⁷ While the identity of the separate groups has not been finally investigated, representatives of interim government of the country accused Bakiyev and his followers of organizing the attacks in order to destabilize the new

⁴² Fumagalli, Matteo. "Framing Ethnic Minority Mobilisation in Central Asia: The Cases of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan." *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, no. 4 (2007): 567-90. Accessed June 1, 2015. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451377?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

⁴³ Ibid p. 572 (Fumagalli).

⁴⁴ "Ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan Voice Complaints over Discrimination, Corruption." *EurasiaNet.org*. January 24, 2006. Accessed June 1, 2015. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav012506.shtml>.

⁴⁵ Between the North and South, there has always been differences between culturally and politically. Hvoslov stated, "The Kyrgyz from the North accuse the southerners of acting and behaving like Uzbeks, while the Southerners Kyrgyz on the other side, accuse the northerners of behaving like Russians and dominating in politics." Therefore, every time when a news president come to the power, the first question is: where is he from? For many Kyrgyz people if he/she (president) from north/south then he (president) will economically contribute more to the part where is from. (<http://www.turkishweekly.net/2007/04/24/article/tribal-connections-within-the-political-process-the-case-of-kyrgyzstan/>).

⁴⁶ Bond, Andrew R., and Natalie R. Koch. "Interethnic Tensions in Kyrgyzstan: A Political Geographic Perspective." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 51, no. 4 (2010): 531-62. Accessed June 1, 2015. http://nataliekoch.com/docs/Bond_Koch_2010_EGE.pdf.

⁴⁷ Levy, Clifford J., "As Violence in Kyrgyzstan Eases, Evidence Suggests It Was Planned in Advance," *The New York Times*, June 16, 2010a, A13.

interim government.⁴⁸ Other sources blame Kadyrjan Batyrov, a famous ethnic Uzbek businessman, who aimed to establish political autonomy for Uzbeks in the south.⁴⁹ In the southern Kyrgyzstan, Uzbeks are more successful in trade and services than Kyrgyz, therefore, many local Kyrgyz were afraid that wealthy Uzbeks representatives would require realization of official Uzbek language status in Kyrgyzstan when they will come to the Kyrgyz parliament. In addition, local Kyrgyz were afraid that Uzbek will attempt to destroy Kyrgyz Republic or seek autonomy.⁵⁰

After the ethnic conflict between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek, an International Commission of Inquiry was established in order to study and report on the ethnic clashes between the two groups in the southern cities of Kyrgyzstan. After the investigations The International Commission of Inquiry reported that

“It is the view of the KIC that the violence of June does not qualify as either war crimes or genocide. However, if the evidence of some acts committed during certain attacks against the “*mahallas*” in Osh on 11, 12 and 13 June was proven beyond reasonable doubt in a court of law, those acts would amount to crimes against humanity. These are murder, rape, and other forms of sexual violence, physical violence (as another inhumane act) and persecution against an identifiable group on ethnic grounds.”⁵¹

"The failure of members of the security forces to protect their equipment raises questions of complicity in the events, either directly or indirectly. Further, some

⁴⁸ Levy, Clifford J. "Evidence of Plans for Kyrgyz Violence." The New York Times, June 16, 2010, As Violence in Kyrgyzstan Eases, Evidence Suggests the Attacks Were Organized ed. Accessed May 16, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/16/world/asia/16kyrgyz.html?_r=0.

⁴⁹ Boudreaux, Richard. "Power Rivals Seeded Kyrgyz Ethnic Clashes." WSJ. June 22, 2010. Accessed June 1, 2015. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704256304575320773521204184>.

⁵⁰ Laruelle, Marlène. "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda." Communist and Post-Communist Studies 45 (2012): 39-49.

⁵¹ "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010", the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (KIC), 3 May 2011. http://www.cmi.fi/images/stories/activities/blacksea/kic/kic_report_english_final.pdf

members of the military were involved in some of the attacks on the mahallas."

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However, the finding of the International Commission of Inquiry did not satisfy the Kyrgyz government, therefore they (Kyrgyz government) requested to include several representatives from the Central Asian Committees.

In brief, according to this analysis, the major nationwide factors that influenced Kyrgyz and Uzbek ethnic tensions were:

- *Lack of access of minorities (Uzbeks) to state control;*
- *Economic and social inequality between the ethnic groups (Kyrgyz and Uzbek):*

There is a visible fight over the identity between the ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan. The decline of economy in the country leads to the conflicts that is expressed through the prism of interethnic tension. Each ethnic group in Kyrgyzstan has its own niche. For example, ethnic minorities (Uzbeks) who have been living in the territory of Kyrgyzstan for a long time were, mostly, agricultural producers and farmers, however, with the development of the new technologies, it generated competitions in various fields between the ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan.⁵³

- *Nationalistic public speeches of politics:*
- During the public political meetings which were motivated by social and other problems, local politicians liked to raise the nationalistic questions, indirectly indicating that it is a "healthy patriotism." As a result, the local media quoted the speeches of Kyrgyz politicians which affected specific groups of people who have a poor understanding of the true patriotism from the ethnic intolerance;⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid. Report from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (KIC).

⁵³ Network of Social Mediators. "Hate Speech in the Media and in the Internet." 2013. Accessed June 4, 2015. <http://www.fergananews.com/archive/2015/language2014.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Translated by author

- *A lack of professionalism among the journalists in reporting of sensitive ethnic issues:*

When the journalists were reporting the ethnic violence between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, they followed some specific politician' directions by increasing the image of enemy in the face of the second ethnic groups. It was obvious that the reporters were not always correctly and adequately understood and used terms which were related to the inter-ethnic issues between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Therefore, because of low level of the awareness of the problem related to the process of easing the tensions between the interethnic spheres, the journalists provided one-sided information to the society increased the attention between the people who lived in the multinational Kyrgyzstan.⁵⁵

Several factors had influenced to the Kyrgyz and Uzbek ethnic clashes in 2010 in the cities of Kyrgyzstan. April revolution 2010 which resulted the overthrow of the president Kurmanbek Bakiyev; unstable economy in the country. Furthermore, the Kyrgyz interim government claimed the involvement of the third force organized by Bakiyev's side; Russian media agreed with claims of interim government in term of the involvement of the third force, by adding a blame on Kyrgyz interim government's inability to control the country.

Chapter 3 Kyrgyz media representations of the 2010 conflict

The Kyrgyz media has more freedom comparing to the other neighboring states in Central Asia. When Kyrgyzstan became an independent in 1991, the civil society and international donors appeared. Although the state's constitution guarantees the freedom of press, the government controls the media. The private media belong to business elites who have relationship with the government. According to the Freedom house date, there are almost 50

⁵⁵ Translated by author

newspapers and magazines produce with different level of freedom. State owns approximately 50 – together with television stations, newspapers, and radio.⁵⁶

In one year, the country has experienced one revolution and an ethnic conflict and all these changes have had an impact on the Kyrgyz-language media representation violence in 2010.⁵⁷ When the June 2010 events has started the people demanded from the media a real picture from the media, however some Kyrgyz media instead of taking a neutral position and update the people with the news, took one side position. The national TV channels were not active in reporting the conflict violence; therefore, the social media played an important role in spreading and criticizing reports from international media. When the clashes begun, people who participated in ethnic violence uploaded a huge number of the videos on YouTube. At that time the Uzbek side did not trust the Kyrgyz media, therefore, the most videos that were uploaded on YouTube were from the Uzbek sides who tried to get international media attention. This explains the theory when actors believe that when they have an access to media it will be easier to control it. Today the media is more independent and developed, and more people have an access to the internet and social media, so they can manipulate with the other people emotions. The attempt of Uzbek people to upload the video on YouTube says how it is becoming more common when the demonstrators from distant countries write slogans with mistakes in English in hopes of being heard or to grab attention in the international media. This can be a case for the Uzbeks when the media can act as an advocate for groups who do not have access to the media.

Moreover, the former Osh mayor required to close Uzbek-language newspaper and television during the ethnic violence. Intolerance became major emotional component in Kyrgyz speaking media. According to the Kyrgyz media analyses, the conflict was presented

⁵⁶ Freedom House. 2011. Accessed May 15, 2015. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2011/kyrgyzstan#.VWzL-s-qpHw>.

⁵⁷Ibid (Freedom House).

without any journalistic ethics and human morality by adding fuel to the scandal, provoking and dividing the people into two groups of “us- Kyrgyz” and ‘them - Uzbek’.⁵⁸ Kyrgyz Russian speaking media wrote about the conflict by indicating the nationality of victims and attackers. Nationality became an important and integral part of human being in June event. Titles of the articles that defined people as members of particular groups were found in all editions of the newspapers. These newspapers were accused for being nationalistic by Kyrgyz news analytics. Sultan Zhumagulov, an independent Kyrgyz media, specified several newspapers in Kyrgyz language, particularly, “Alibi”, “Apta” and “Forum” for being bias in favor of Kyrgyz people. He claimed: “After the ethnic clashes in the south of the country, these newspapers began to publish materials under such slogans as “Kyrgyzstan only for Kyrgyz people”, or “Our country is in trouble”. In all these publications shows hatred attitude against some minorities.”

The Kyrgyz speaking newspaper called “Forum” wrote:

The Uzbeks, frankly, sat on the heads of the Kyrgyz people and mocked them”. They do not consider Kyrgyz people as a human beings. K. Batyrov (one of the richest Uzbek businessman and founder of the private university in Jalalabad) gave an interview on the radio Azattyk: “Why are Kyrgyz people always in the first place? Aren’t there other nations besides the Kyrgyz?” Who has the guns, snipers? Uzbeks! Kyrgyz people do not have anything! For a long time, Uzbeks have been deceiving the Kyrgyz people, as they did twenty years ago, when Kyrgyz were as guilty as they are today”.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Nadjibulla, F. "Кыргызстанские СМИ и Ошская резня - кто кого провоцировал? | ЦентрАзия." Кыргызстанские СМИ и Ошская резня - кто кого провоцировал? (Kyrgyz media and Osh massacre – Who did provoke whom? | Centrasia. August 8, 2010. Accessed May 29, 2015. <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1280811120>.

⁵⁹This is a translation, not the original. Please note all translations here on have done by the author. Sidorenko, Alexey. "Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan: Initial Coverage of the “Osh Massacre” · Global Voices." Global Voices Overall RSS 20. June 13, 2010. Accessed June 1, 2015. [https://globalvoicesonline.org/2010/06/13/kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan-initial-coverage-of-the-osh-massacre/.\(translation\)](https://globalvoicesonline.org/2010/06/13/kyrgyzstan-uzbekistan-initial-coverage-of-the-osh-massacre/.(translation))

This article by the newspaper Forum shows how it was bias in favor of the Kyrgyz people during the Kyrgyz-Uzbek clashes.

However, Forum was not only the one who took one-sided position during the conflict. The newspaper ‘Alibi’ wrote:

In order to extract money from the former authority, Uzbek families created discord among the Kyrgyz civilians, hundreds of Kyrgyz people have died. While they were among us, they had rotten thoughts to have revenge on us. Kyrgyz who managed to escape declared that this attack was deliberately prepared. Moreover, all the weapons were Uzbeks’. Kyrgyz who were wounded confirmed this. Now all Uzbek villages are armed and no one is allowed to enter there. In order to avoid any Kyrgyz-Uzbek conflict, it is need to explain to both groups who owns the land, people, and flag, which is already written in the books for fourth grade. Uzbeks made a mistake. They were living in the good life in Kyrgyzstan. They had cafes, restaurants, kindergartens, universities, theaters, radio, newspapers and magazines. Many mosques were built, there were Uzbek officials in local districts and parliament. What else was needed for everyday life? A bright future of Kyrgyzstan should be only for Kyrgyz people. This was proved by the recent April events in 2010 in Bishkek. There were only ethnic Kyrgyz among the protestors in the square. Why members of other ethnic did groups such Russian, Uighur, Dungan not participate? Because Kyrgyzstan is not their historical homeland.⁶⁰

From this article, one can see how some newspapers openly were blaming the Uzbeks in ethnic clashes. In addition, these articles, while trying to explain the behavior of the conflicting groups, the journalists constantly credited participants with some motives such ‘Uzbeks wanted some autonomy’, ‘Kyrgyz wanted to show Uzbeks who is the boss’ etc.⁶¹.

The media framed that Kyrgyz citizens fall into “us (Kyrgyz)” and “them Uzbeks)” categorized repeatedly recurred in the Kyrgyz media; who was victim and who perpetrator in this media narrative - depending on whether the journalist was Kyrgyz or Uzbek. Such kind of behaviors from the Kyrgyz speaking newspapers can be explained with the first pattern of media

⁶⁰ Translated by author

⁶¹ Translated by author.

- ethnocentrism. Scholars, Kinder and Kam, argued that ethnocentrism is a division of people into in-groups (us) and out-groups (them): in general, it is “us” against “them”. In June events 2010, the Kyrgyz media represented Kyrgyz as in (in-group) one member who tend to be friendly, trustworthy, and virtuous; and common symbols such flag or anthem and experiences against Uzbek people connected them.

Many newspapers mentioned about Kadyrjan Batyrov’s involvement in June tragedy, who used to be one of the wealthiest Uzbek businessman in Kyrgyzstan, and a founder of private university in Jalalabad. Furthermore, both national and independent commissions refer to Batyrov as one of the main causer of ethnic violence in the southern of Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyz national commissions stated:⁶²

Taking advantage of unstable situation in Kyrgyzstan after the April 7, 2010 revolution, K. Batyrov, by pretending a hero of Uzbek community and protecting the interests of the Uzbek community aimed to against Kyrgyz and Uzbek to each other. He visited places with the only Uzbek populated regions and agitated Uzbek minority against Kyrgyz people. In his speeches, K. Batyrov set up the Kyrgyz-Uzbek population against each other, aiming to start a conflict between these groups. He uttered provocative words such as “Uzbeks were waiting for the last twenty years, from the 1990 to become independent from Kyrgyzstan.”⁶³

His activities were mentioned in Kyrgyz speaking language media, Kyrgyz tuusu, wrote: “Kadyrjan .Batyrov during the two days was humiliating the Kyrgyz people on TV channels. That is what offended the dignity of Kyrgyz people. In the restaurant called “Jalalabad” the most influential Kyrgyz individuals of the city gathered to decide whether there was no one from the state who could rule the country, and if not, whether they should “deal with the others

⁶² Translated by author

⁶³Abdyldaev, Aibek. "Кадыржан Батыров приговорен к пожизненному лишению свободы по июньским событиям 2010 года." "Общество" (Kadyrjan Batyrov is sent to life imprisonment to due to the June events, 2010 “Society”).Gezitter.org. October 3, 2014. Accessed May 13, 2015.
http://www.gezitter.org/society/34675_kadyrjan_batyrov_prigovoren_k_pojiznennomu_lisheniyu_svobodyi_po_iyunskim_sobyitiyam_2010_goda/.

(Uzbeks).⁶⁴ This means that the existence of ethnic intolerance in the Kyrgyz media, the growth of destructive xenophobic attitudes, and the division of people by gender, territory and language influenced to the further action from both groups.

Since the Uzbeks are one of the biggest minorities in the southern part of the Kyrgyzstan, Uzbek speaking media is developed comparing to the other minorities in Kyrgyzstan. The Uzbek people have TV channels called Osh TV and Mezon TV and newspapers in Uzbek language. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPS) criticized these TV channels' former owners for inciting interethnic hatred.⁶⁵ The CPJ wrote that in spring 2010, these channels showed protests against the former overthrown president Kurmanbek Bakiyev. During the meetings, the leaders of the Uzbek Diasporas urged people to refrain from violence and support the interim government of Roza Otunbaeva. However, the Committee to Protect Journalists declared "The Uzbek speaking media did not orchestrate calls for violence." Yet, the Kyrgyz authorities had their own version of the events – the Kyrgyz court blamed the broadcasting live on Uzbek channels by arguing that Kadyrjan Batyrov called the Uzbek minority for separatism and ethnic hatred that led to the ethnic conflict between the Kyrgyz-Uzbeks in the southern Kyrgyzstan. However, CPJ believed that the Kyrgyz authorities supported the Kyrgyz side journalistic activities.⁶⁶

In ethnic violation, some Uzbek journalists were arrested, particularly, Azimjon Askakov, who was a contributor to the regional news site that called "Voice of Freedom" for documenting the violence of video, and Ulugbek Abdusalomov, who was an editor of weekly

⁶⁴ Translated by author.

⁶⁵ Iskender, Bektur. "КЗЖ: Обвинения против экс-глав ошских ТВ «сфабрикованы» властями Кыргызстана." (CPJ: The charges against the former head of Osh TV "Fabricated" by the Kyrgyz authorities). KLOOPKG. November 18, 2011. Accessed May 29, 2015. <http://kloop.kg/blog/2011/11/18/kzzh-obviniya-protiv-e-ks-glav-oshskih-tv-sfabrikovany-vlastyami-ky-rgy-zstana/>.

⁶⁶ Translated by author.

newspaper called *Diydor*, were “arrested in June on charges of extremism and provocative ethnic hatred.”⁶⁷

One of the famous Kyrgyz speaking language called newspaper “*Alibi*” prints about ten thousand copies across the country every week. On July 13, the newspaper published an article where it accused Uzbeks in inciting violence. The articles wrote: “Those who are from other nationalities, who started this war and killed Kyrgyz who could not defend and escape themselves, will be punished by us (Kyrgyz).”⁶⁸

In addition, just a few days before the start of the Osh tragedy, on June 8, the newspaper “*Alibi*” published an article entitled “Will we (Kyrgyz people) allow Uzbeks to become heirs of *Manas* (is a traditional epic poem of Kyrgyz people)?” The article asserted: “Without any doubt, the current situation with Uzbeks will become even more impudent, if we (Kyrgyz) do not attack them seriously ...So if the (Uzbeks) do not appreciate our hospitality, we (Kyrgyz) along with government should attract the Uzbeks.”⁶⁹ These kind of nationalistic articles increased the tensions between the two groups”⁷⁰ What these show that the use of native language also guarantees ethnocentric control over the flow of information. As Ledford argued that whenever there is a use of native language including “concepts, myths, symbols, and cultural assumptions, it which creates a sense of national pride.” Such things are important because whenever people tell any story, this (ethnocentric) contains news stories about conflict.

On the other hand, private Kyrgyz news agencies such “24kg” and “AKIpress” which publishes articles in three languages (Kyrgyz, Russian and English) did not provoke any violence with their articles during the June events 2010. While the international media were covering the events in Kyrgyzstan, they (international media) immediately used terms such

⁶⁷ Ibid (Freedom House). 2011.

⁶⁸ Translated by author.

⁶⁹ Nadjibulla, Farangiz. "Кыргызскую прессу обвиняют в необъективном освещении межэтнического конфликта." Радио Азаттык. August 3, 2010. Accessed June 1, 2015.

http://rus.azattyq.org/content/kyrgyz_media_osh_jalalabad_conflict/2116556.html

⁷⁰ Translated by author.

“ethnic violence,” however, the journalists from the “24kg” and “AKIpress” took a neutral position and described the situation with terms such “mass unrest” or “June events.” They also tried to avoid references to the ethnicity of the two contending sides.⁷¹ The journalists of “24kg” and “AKIpress” attempted to focus on finding the causes of the unrest and number of victims.

There are different versions of the causes of the conflict violence between the two ethnic groups. Kyrgyz ombudsman Akun stated: "Many international organizations accused Kyrgyzstan, including Kyrgyz, committing genocide against Uzbeks."⁷² There were not enough information from the Kyrgyz government side in the early days of the June violence about the situations of ethnic Uzbeks during and after the violence. Media expert Sultan Zhumagulov said that the main TV channels in Kyrgyzstan, including the first and second national television (НТРК и ЕЛТР) did not reported any messages about how in the past two months, thousands of ethnic Uzbeks were forced to leave their homes.⁷³ Therefore, most of the international media took Uzbek position added Kyrgyz ombudsmen.

In Kyrgyz media representations of the 2010 conflict, the opinions of the different media have mixed. Obviously, the media which are controlled by the government such as the national TV channels or newspapers were supporting the version of the interim government that were indicating involvement of the third force organized by overthrown president Kurmanbek Bakiyev who wished to destabilize the political situation in the country; while the private newspapers were reflecting the positions of their owners who had a nationalistic views concerning to the conflict violence. In that way alone, in Kyrgyz media representations of the 2010 conflict, we saw a strong political process that influenced news media. The reason is, as Wolfsfeld argued, “political culture of a society has a central influence on how the media reports

⁷¹ Ibid (Nadjibulla).

⁷² Translated by author.

⁷³ Ibid (Nadjibulla).

the conflicts, because the news media usually reacts but not initiates them, and political decisions have a main influence on who owns the media and how they function.”⁷⁴

Chapter 4 Russian media representations of the 2010 conflict

The media of Russia is diverse with a mix of state and commercial ownership in all level of print and broadcasting. However, the most popular media is a television. Comparing to the Western countries the central television remains comparatively stronger in Russia, because most of the people cannot afford the Internet and to buy daily news newspapers.⁷⁵ Thus, the central channels such First Channel, Russia 1, and NTV have a political influence on Russian audience. According to the sources, 51 percent of the First Channel controlled by Russian government which demonstrates that the Kremlin has a full right to filter the news.⁷⁶ The media play a stabilizing role in Russian government. This might explain the reason why the Russian audience are still choose the state-run First Channel as their favorite and most trusted news sources.⁷⁷ However, Oates argues that Russians extremely reject the idea of objectivity or even balance in their mass media.⁷⁸ “Majority of the Russian journalists are well aware of the limit of what can be reported and print.” Thus, the Russian media is an instrument for elites rather than a watchdog of the society, claims Oates.⁷⁹

In general, majority Russian media reported similar news as Kyrgyz interim government explained about ethnic conflict and without making any division and blaming nor Kyrgyz or Uzbeks. The news media journalists’ reports started by describe and comparing the events about

⁷⁴ Wolfsfeld, Gadi. "Media and Political Conflict: News from the Middle East Paperback – April 28, 1997." Media and Political Conflict: News from the Middle East: Gadi Wolfsfeld: 9780521589673: Amazon.com: Books. 1997. Accessed May 10, 2015. <http://www.amazon.com/Media-Political-Conflict-News-Middle/dp/0521589673>.

⁷⁵ Oates, Sarah. Television, Democracy and Elections in Russia. London: Routledge, 2006.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.1286

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 1297

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 1296

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 1297

the Osh massacre in 1990 and 2010 by highlighting ‘the most bloody ethnic conflict after the collapse of the Soviet Union repeated’.⁸⁰ Free Russian Press (Svobodnaya Pressa), which is a Russian socio-political online publication, in its article called “The Kyrgyz call for the help Russia,” wrote that one of the memorable moment during the conflict was when the head of Kyrgyz interim government Roza Otunbaeva asked Russia to send peacekeepers (troops) to the southern part of the country. She (Roza Otumbaebva) explained that the Kyrgyz state lost its control under the situation on ethnic conflict. Nevertheless, President Dmitri Medvedev refused to intervene Kyrgyzstan and only promised to provide humanitarian aid.⁸¹ However, there was a hope for Kyrgyz government from Russian authority for help to stabilize the country as in 1990 when Moscow sent its troops to the same places of Kyrgyzstan to stop the tensions between the same two ethnic groups. The situation got worse, Felix Kulov, the former prime minister of Kyrgyzstan, told reporters:

“The people are screaming for someone to help them, they are scared to return home and try to rebuild, because it's impossible to know who will attack them and whether the police will protect them. We need outside peacekeepers, and only the Russians make sense for this crisis. If neighboring Central Asian countries sent in peacekeepers, the troops would likely take sides in the ethnic clashes, while western forces wouldn't be much help because they have no experience in the area and don't know the language.”⁸²

The Ekho Moskva radio station held an online survey where majority of Russians voted against to send Russian troops to Kyrgyzstan. The Russian reaction surprised members of Collective Security Treaty Organization when the Kremlin did not even responded to the Osh violence until the situation got worst.

⁸⁰ Razmahnin, Anton. "Ошская резня-2: Киргизы зовут на помощь российских десантников." Ошская резня-2: Киргизы зовут на помощь российских десантников. (Osh massacre – 2: Kyrgyz call for help Russian paratroopers). June 12, 2010. Accessed May 6, 2015. <http://svpressa.ru/society/article/26333/>.

⁸¹ Ibid.42

⁸² Moscow, Simon. "Why Isn't Russia Intervening in Kyrgyzstan?" Time. June 16, 2010. Accessed May 30, 2015. <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1997055,00.html>.

Some of Russian news media had their own opinion on the June event. For instance, journalists from the newspaper “Kommersant,” Vladimir Solovev and Kabai Karabekov in their article called ‘Massacre on request’ wrote:

Political version of the event in southern Kyrgyzstan, which claims that the third force who belonged to the former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev organized it and joined criminals, are not popular among the people. Most of the victims are Uzbeks. Meanwhile, it is most similar to the truth. Moreover, 20 years ago, there was an enmity between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, and Kyrgyz still have not forgotten nor forgiven Uzbeks demand on creation Uzbek autonomy in the south of the Kyrgyzstan. In addition, the Kyrgyz never hide the fact that they have been always irritated by the success of Uzbek people who have been more successful than Kyrgyz people.⁸³

The Kyrgyz media experts criticized this article for being bias in favor of Uzbek people. According to the commission, the conclusion of the version of the event is given as a fact without any reference to the source.⁸⁴ There is no evidence to support the conviction of the author about the version of the event that is the most similar to the truth. Empty facts without any interpretation do not allow readers to understand the essence of what is happening. This article creates an effect of reliability and forms a harsh picture of the past events with a clear division of roles between the parties, argues the Kyrgyz media experts.⁸⁵

Another fragment from the same article:

Massacre in Osh quickly spreading to Jalalabad region of Kyrgyzstan, already preceded several fights between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz on the same day in different places of the city. Several groups gathered from different parts of the country and actively participated in Osh riots. From Bishkek to the south of the country these groups called black people got by the shuttles”.

⁸³Translated by author

⁸⁴ Solovev, Karabekov, Vladimir, Kabai. "Massacre on Request." Kommersant. June 21, 2010. Accessed June 26, 2015. <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1388225>.

⁸⁵ Translated by author.

The experts argued that in the above-mentioned fragment gives the impression of verified information that should be questioned. The word ‘black’ was not even in quotes, just recorded the existence of such groups among Kyrgyz youth.⁸⁶ Such attitudes of journalists is suitable with the second mode of reporting called Defensive Mode. This method, framing method, says that news stories that demonize the enemy, is also common in such conflicts. When people from one side have been killed, any kind of reports or images will show how their enemy is evil. The weaker side that’s has lost people will talk about massacres and war crimes in their own media. Most of the journalists construct the news using standards that conform to their culture and newsgathering and reporting norms. Creating stories that resonate with widespread cultural mores are due to the journalists’ socialization (they live among their own people) and the values and aims of their news organization (it is good for business or sponsors).

Another Russian media called “Echo Moscow” discussed the situation in Kyrgyzstan. According to the reporters who was on Osh during the conflict violence, Michael Aleshkovskii, explained the situation

I was there. I saw completely destroyed city. The level of killings which happened here, honestly, is terrifying. Of course, there some not destroyed houses, most of them belong to the Kyrgyz. Most of the houses that belong to Kyrgyz, banks, and stores are not destroyed, while all the Uzbek houses are burned to the ground. A huge number of people came from other parts of Kyrgyzstan in order to support the Kyrgyz people. They are all walking on the street and stealing the products from the local shops and pharmacies.

⁸⁶Blondel, Ylva Isabelle “Violent Conflict and Roles of the Media,” *UNESCO and Sida* (2003): 10-13.

In general, the Russian media reported that there was an involvement of the third force that was organized by the former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and his family who aimed to destabilize the Kyrgyzstan, while some private media reporters indicating who suffers the most: Kyrgyz or Uzbeks. Moreover, from the finding one could see that Russia did not want to be involved in the inter-ethnic conflict between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks ethnic clashes by arguing that it is an inside conflict of Kyrgyz Republic.

Chapter 5 International media representations of the 2010 conflict

On the other hand, when we think about international/western media, it is very diverse. Therefore, I choose specific international/western media, particularly, the Cable News Network (CNN), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Fergana news international agency, and Euroasianet news agency. For the most part, these media are private. To get international media attention is difficult, and when this does happen it usually when the conflict has grown to critical levels of violence. Usually, international television media focus on events and actor behavior, most of the time rarely expelling the attitudes, perceptions and socio-economic conditions that cause the conflict. In most situation before the situation has passed the entrance to violence, international media has little interest. Wolfsfeld argues that international media has a negative influence on violent conflict before and after violent conflict because, it is closely related to its preferences for shocking events and it is infotainment.⁸⁷ It can influence in conflict in the violent stage and in decision-making process.

International/western mass media, Herman and Chomsky argued: “are effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function by reliance on market forces, internalized assumptions, and self-censorship, and without overt

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 13 (Blondel).

coercion".⁸⁸ Although, the authors talked about the mass media of the United States, it can be applied to the media that were chosen in this thesis, in order to analyze the situation on June events in 2010, because these media do not belong to the government but owned by private corporations.

Most international/western NGO and media have generally showed Uzbeks as the main sufferers, according to the one sided Osh Uzbek stories. Besides, they (international/western) media blamed Kyrgyzstan for committing the genocide. Within a few weeks, after the initial outbreak of violence, the international media, paid more attention to the Uzbek minority and tried to figure out how many Uzbeks had targeted by police raids, arbitrary arrests, and were tortured. It have had paid much attention to the property of ethnic Uzbeks, showed burned and robbed houses that belonged to the ethnic Uzbeks.⁸⁹

Many articles had published by Fergana news agency; it is one of the most popular news agency in Central Asia, which deals with the daily news from former post Soviet countries. During the Kyrgyz revolution 2005 and the violence in the south between the Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic clash 2010, it was the main and trustworthy news provider in the region. In 2012, the Kyrgyz state authority blocked the web site of Fergana after the publications concerning to the June events in 2110 in the southern part of the Kyrgyzstan.⁹⁰ However, later the issue was solved and Kyrgyz people again had an access to the news. According to the articles that were published by the Fergana news agency, most of the victims were Uzbeks; around 400,000

⁸⁸ Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.

⁸⁹ Megoran, Nick. "The Background to Osh: Stories of Conflict and Coexistence." *OpenDemocracy*. October 11, 2010. Accessed May 26, 2015. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/nick-megoran/background-to-osh-stories-of-conflict-and-coexistence>.

Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.

⁹⁰ HRH Oslo, Based on Norwegian Helsinki Committee Information. "Kyrgyzstan Blocks Main Central Asian News Agency." - Human Rights House Network. February 28, 2012. Accessed June 2, 2015. <http://humanrightshouse.org/Articles/17683.html>.

people lost their houses from the both groups. The journalists from the Fergana also mentioned about the how well armed men in masks were attacking the Uzbeks. They also provided the videos where Kyrgyz security forces failed to defend of Uzbek victims, and sometimes attacking the (Uzbeks).⁹¹

News agency 'Fergana' spoke with a Swiss journalist Andre Lorsch who is member of the International Alliance of Journalists, representing of the organization 'Media4democracy', who came to Kyrgyzstan in May and stayed there until August. Mr. Lorsch said:

On Tuesday, June 14th I received a call from Geneva, the Swiss public broadcaster asked for an interview. I agreed. The first question surprised me: Is there a genocide? We knew that there were clashes in the south, many people were suffering, mainly Uzbeks, but "genocide" – this is different, it involves organization and complete destruction of one nation or groups of people. I was surprised that people who are far from Kyrgyzstan – in Switzerland - speak about the genocide without any evidence.

He added, "The Western media are afraid of missing important things such as "genocide." In several Western, media reported the June event in Kyrgyzstan as 'genocide'. In 1989, when the events started in Romania someone started to talk about the mass killings. It spread was spread in media. But in reality there was not any mass killing of people, it turned out that the news was reported by correspondents who saw some videos on their editorial in Paris and thought that it was a mass killings".

Andre Lorch read translated articles about the June event from Kyrgyz and Uzbek newspapers. He confessed that the materials written in Kyrgyz and Uzbek were more emotional than the material written in Russian. About the impact of the media on June events, A. Lorsch replied:

⁹¹ Ibid. HRH Oslo

We know very little about the impact of the media in such cases, and in Kyrgyzstan this topic has not been researched well. Many spoke about the impact of broadcast performances by Mr. Batyrov on Jalalabad TV channels. I have not seen the footage, but still very difficult to determine who influenced whom. Sometimes it happens when the media generate rumors and these rumors may influence on the public mood.

In addition, Daniil Kislov, the director of the Fergana News agency, stated that Kyrgyz and Uzbek live in the territory of Osh and Jalalabad for centuries together and they consider this territory as a homeland. The Uzbek community blamed the local officials who were involved in the ex-president Bakiev's regime. During the event, police have given the Kyrgyz firearms. When the interim government came to the power, the local government willfully disobeyed the all orders and the police were all ethnic Kyrgyz, so they did not shoot their own but they shot Uzbeks. It seemed for Uzbek people that no one did not want to protect them, therefore why they appealed to Uzbek President Karimov to send the troops to help them. However, Karimov refused to help the Uzbek ethnic group in Osh by saying that it is an inside conflict in Kyrgyzstan. If Karimov would send its troops to Kyrgyzstan then it would be even worse for the situation because ethnic Kyrgyz would perceive Uzbek troops as a threat to national security and there would be a risk of interstate war already. Kislov added that he suspected the former-president's brother, Janysh Bakiev of organizing the riots. His brother had supporters about 1,500 in the region and they have all received weapons and payment. He aimed to thwart the referendum on a new constitution that was scheduled June 27, 2010.

Moreover, Kislov added that during the riots in the southern cities, Osh and Jalalabad, the police were acting on the Kyrgyz sides. Here what he said

Police have given the Kyrgyz firearms. Local power structures have a lot of structures that were created by the ousted authorities, by Kurmanbek Bakiyev, and they willfully disobey all orders from the interim government. The police

are all ethnic Kyrgyz – they do not shoot their own, they also shoot Uzbeks,” the journalist said. “The Uzbeks are crying. They are waiting for Russia to help them. But Russian troops will hardly be of any help in this situation – Bakiyev’s cutthroats can easily slaughter a regiment of Russian paratroopers, and more of our troops in the region would mean a full-scale war.”⁹²

From Kislov’s words, one can understand that during the June events, even the Kyrgyz police were helping to the Kyrgyz people providing them with firearms, so they could protect themselves from the Uzbeks or vice versa, to attack them (the Uzbeks). Kislov also said that he assumed the ex-president’s brother Janysh Bakiyev of organizing the attacks in the southern part of the Kyrgyzstan. He (Kislov) claimed that Janysh Bakiyev had preliminary 1,500 supporters in Osh and Jalalabad, and he (Janysh Bakiyev) aimed to destroy the referendum on a new constitution (was organized by the interim government) which was scheduled for June 27.⁹³

Another journalist from the international/western media who described the June events 2010 is David Trilling from Eurasia.Net.org. It is based in New York City and functioned by Eurasia Program of the Open Society Foundations, provides with information from the former post countries including Turkey, and Southwest Asia.⁹⁴ In one of the article written by David Trilling called “Provisional Government Blames the Media for Southern Kyrgyzstan Violence” was saying how the Kyrgyz provisional government blamed the western media for being bias in favor of Uzbek people in the reporting the violence in southern part of Kyrgyzstan and in spreading a negative image about ethnic Kyrgyz.⁹⁵ Trilling argued that most of the journalists

⁹² Parakkal, Abdul. "Ethnic Clashes in Kyrgyzstan Lead to Humanitarian Disaster." - RT News. October 7, 2010. Accessed June 1, 2015. <http://rt.com/news/kyrgyzstan-clashes-humanitarian-disaster/>.

⁹³ Ibid. (Parakkal).

⁹⁴ EurasiaNet. "About EurasiaNet." About EurasiaNet. Accessed June 2, 2015. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/14733>.

⁹⁵ Trilling, David. "Provisional Government Blames the Media for Southern Kyrgyzstan Violence." EurasiaNet.org. June 21, 2010. Accessed June 2, 2015. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61360>.

from the international/western attempted to visit the most violent places in the southern part of the regions on June 11-14; moreover, the western reporting found clear evidences of murders done by both sides. Moreover, Trilling agreed that the Uzbeks neighborhood appeared to suffer more damage comparing to Kyrgyz areas. One of the western journalist spoke on condition of anonymity because he worried from the reaction of Kyrgyz provisional government; he (western journalist) gave comments on the June events: “It can hardly be put in any doubt that the scale of attacks on Uzbeks was huge and that Uzbeks seem to have suffered overwhelmingly”. This shows that according to the international/western media representations of the 2010 conflict, the Uzbek people were victims of the June events 2010 in Kyrgyzstan.

In addition to that, most of the international/western media did not agree with the statement of the interim government who blamed former president Kurmanbek Bakiev’s family in aiming to destabilize the political situations in Kyrgyzstan. Rights groups offered to the provisional government to make an independent investigation into the June violence, however they refused by saying that they will do their own investigations.⁹⁶ The international/western media were criticizes by most of the Kyrgyz people. For instance, Kasymbek Mambetov, a Deputy Health Minister said that international media has reported the event in one-sides in favor of Uzbeks, saying that the Kyrgyz people prepared a genocide against the Uzbeks.⁹⁷

There were many articles and videos by the BBC and CNN media concerning to the conflict violence between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek. Most of the international reporters visited Kyrgyz-Uzbek borders where more than 400,000 Uzbek people became refuges to Uzbekistan during and after the conflict violence in 2010. One of the BBC reporter, Rayhan Demytrie, in his article called “Charred scars of southern Kyrgyz violence” described both, Kyrgyz-Uzbek,

⁹⁶ Ibid. Trilling.

⁹⁷ Ibid (Trilling).

sides' stories. He wrote that both sides suffered from losses. Both communities still have unpleasant feelings to each other and no one has not understand what happened those days.⁹⁸

In concluding the international/western representations of the 2010, in most of the time they (international/western media) were blamed for being bias in favor of Uzbek people by Kyrgyz authorities. The international journalist were visiting the regions and reporting what they saw. If to apply to the Herman and Chomsky propaganda model, where they argue that the dominant media such BBC and CNN are large corporations; therefore, they closely monitor the media content in their own system to ensure that the content supports their financial interest. What Herman and Chomsky are saying that this propaganda model suggests that traditional media is an instrument in the hand of elites, challenging the notion of a free press. In this case, one can argue that the Western media is popular with the spreading democracy and freedom of speech to the world. Therefore, western journalists were not afraid of visiting the violent regions during the ethnic clashes in order to provide with real pictures from the concrete places, which one cannot say about the Kyrgyz media that could not even provide with the information.

Conclusion

The media play a key role on solving ethnic problems. The mass media can actually help localize the conflict or add fuel to the fire in ethnic hatred. In such cases, the journalists or the media should be based on the question: what kind of reaction might bring on the reported information of the people? However, the media is structured differently in each country, therefore, the journalists are tend to report the news according to their method. For instance, states with authoritarian regimes are tend to have more influence on the media then the states with democratic values. In Kyrgyz and Uzbek ethnic conflict in 2010, different media

⁹⁸ Demytrie, Rayhan. "Charred Scars of Southern Kyrgyz Violence - BBC News." BBC News. September 24, 2010. Accessed April 10, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11403767>.

representations were involved in reporting the news from the regions. Throughout the conflict, different media often tried to fit different victim/perpetrator from onto the tragic events in the south and in local outlets of the north of the country, with significant knock-on effects for prospects of peace and postwar reconstruction in the country.

My core argument engaged the debate over why and in what ways we see different media representations of the same events: looking at the Kyrgyz, Russian and western/international media. I argued that these differences are due in part to the different structure of each media environment. Russian and Kyrgyz media are mostly controlled by the state, while most of the media in western countries are private. The media in Kyrgyzstan and Russia is more state centric, therefore, during the conflict violence between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek the media were influence by the government, while the media in the western countries the media is more private and controlled by big corporations, therefore, they had completely different reporting comparing to the Kyrgyz and Russian media.

Firstly, in Kyrgyz media representations of the 2010 conflict, the opinions of the different media were diverse. Obviously, the media which are controlled by the government such as the national TV channels or newspapers were supporting the version of the interim government who were indicating involvement of the third force organized by overthrown president Kurmanbek Bakiyev who wished to destabilize the political situation in the country; while the private newspapers were reflecting the positions of their owners who had a nationalistic views concerning to the conflict violence. In that way alone, in Kyrgyz media representations of the 2010 conflict, we saw a strong political process that influenced news media.

Based on analysis and findings of the Kyrgyz media monitoring, in order to reduce the hostility, the Kyrgyz media environment needs to encourage diversity on the governance structure by involving the experts' representations from different ethnic groups; it should be

supported and guaranteed by the Constitutions of the Kyrgyz Republic and International Law in terms of the rights of people who belong to other national minorities in their participation in public life and the media should help the government in this – becoming an open platform for a dialogue in the diverse society; Moreover, to encourage the development of ethnic media.

Secondly, the Russian media representations of the 2010 conflict, was similar to the Kyrgyz interim government's beliefs. Most of the reports from Russian media claimed on involvement of the third force that was organized by the former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and his family who aimed to destabilize the country.

Thirdly, the international/western representations of the 2010, in most of the time they (international/western media) were blamed for being bias in favor of Uzbek people by Kyrgyz authorities. The international journalist were visiting the regions and reporting what they saw. According to their reporting's, the Uzbeks were the victims of the conflict violence in June 2010.

My analyzed events showed that the media play a central role in transmitting a certain narrative of the conflict, and different news media representations generate different narratives depending in large part on a number of institutional features of the news organization and the culture in which it is embedded. As Wolfsfeld explained that actors compete to attempt to control or influence the media in different way in order to secure and gain political influence.

⁹⁹ Having access to valuable news sources means that powerful political actors can have greater control over the media representation of conflict; usually political and economic elites have an important advantage. In democratic and democratizing states, the media has become the primary source of communication among the population. Most actors believe that when they have an access to the media it will be easy to control it. The case of the Kyrgyz and Uzbek interethnic

⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 11

conflict in June 2010 confirmed that, in most of the times, the media become marionette on the hand of politics and elites.

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