

**THE SHIFT IN KYRGYSTAN' S NATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION:  
FROM CIVIC INCLUSION TO KYRGYZ-CENTERED NARRATIVES**

By Daria Kondrateva

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Supervisor: Professor Szabolcs Pogonyi

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## **Abstract**

The shift in national identity discourses, which took place in Kyrgyzstan after its first Tulip revolution, provides the context for analysis of the national identity discourses popularized by the two president of Kyrgyzstan in the period of 1991-2010. The initial reason of the national identity shift remains unknown and the discourses, contributing to this shift, are widely discussed academically and politically. These discussions bear descriptive character, pointing to the difference between the presidents' national identity discourses, not identifying the possible reasons of this shift. The present study provides analysis of the presidents' national identity narratives, introduced in the political speeches, placing them in the context of Kyrgyzstan's historical past and political present.

Fundamentally, the paper argues that the shift in national identity formation was conditioned by political ambitions of the two leaders and their struggle for power in the tensely emerging parliamentary democracy. The national identity was used by the presidents as a political tool of manipulation and people's mobilization. The argument is theoretically framed by constructivist approach to identity, nationalizing states model, and the nationalism in democratizing states argument. By employing these frameworks to explore Soviet nationalities policy, nationalizing state's identity narratives, the two regimes' rhetoric, and Kyrgyzstan's democratic transition, the shift in national identity is explained. Despite the country's multiethnic composition and the occurrence of small- and large-scale interethnic conflicts, the shift in national identity in Kyrgyzstan cannot be assumed to be a predestined occurrence.

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## INTRODUCTION

A former member country of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan gained its status of an independent republic in August 1991, shortly after it had suffered the first massive Kyrgyz-Uzbek violence in the south in June 1990. After the conflict and the proclaimed independence, new president of the country Askar Akaev was faced with a challenging task: to construct national identity of the Kyrgyzstani people not stimulating further interethnic strife<sup>1</sup>. Akaev has partly succeeded in implementing this task; however, his follower Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who came to the power as a result of the so-called Tulip revolution in March 2005, only managed to escalate interethnic relations in the country partly due to the pure nationalistic public discourse and Kyrgyz-centered formation of identity<sup>2</sup>, which resulted in another 2010 conflict between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz cohabitating in the southern part of the country.

Thus, the way national identity was constructed in Kyrgyzstan was different from the identity narratives in most of the post-Soviet countries, where the authorities elected right after the collapse of the Soviet Union started promoting strong nationalism right after the countries gained independence. Kyrgyzstan's first president Askar Akaev was promoting multiculturalism and interethnic accord right after the collapse of the Soviet Union, while the second leader of the state started enlarging Kyrgyzstan's core nation, redefining its values and strengthening the titular nation after 15 years of independence. Therefore, it is necessary to see in what way the national identity was constructed under the two regimes and analyze why the multicultural discourse dominant under Akaev's regime has shifted to a more nationalistic

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<sup>1</sup> Marlène Laruelle, "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, In Search of Legitimacy: Post-Soviet De Facto States Between Institutional Stabilization and Political Transformation, 45, no. 1–2 (March 2012): 39–49, doi:10.1016/j.postcomstud.2012.02.002.

<sup>2</sup> "Kyrgyzstan's Second Tulip Revolution," *The Guardian*, April 8, 2010, sec. Comment is free, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/apr/08/kyrgyzstan-second-tulip-revolution>.

narratives after Bakiyev came to the power. Therefore, this research is going to answer two research questions. First, how has the construction of national identity changed under the regimes of the two presidents? Second, why did Kyrgyz-centered discourses evolve only 15 years after Kyrgyzstan had gained independence but not right after the collapse of the Soviet Union?

The first chapter of the paper provides theoretical framework to be used in this research, specifically, examining the constructivist approach to identity formation, nationalizing states model, and the nationalism in democratizing states argument. The second chapter provides historical background relevant to the paper's subject of investigation to contextualize the analysis. The third chapter is an analysis of the two presidents' discourses placed in contextual background, while the final chapter of the thesis is an attempt to explain the reasons of national identity shift in Kyrgyzstan.

## CHAPTER I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The first part of this chapter provides a look at the theoretical framework, summarizing main theories helping to answer the research questions of the study. First, it looks at the nationalizing states model; second, it presents an overview of the constructivist approach to identity formation; and, finally, it demonstrates the correlation between the democratic transition and the emergence of nationalism with a particular focus on the post-communist societies. The following second part of the literature review looks at the empirical evidence in the field of national identity formation in Kyrgyzstan and other Post-Soviet countries. First, it provides some general context on the continued perspective of processes of the identity formation in Kyrgyzstan. Then, it presents the sources which explain potential reasons of national identity shift from the civic nationalism discourses under the regime of President Akaev to the more ethno-centered narratives during the Bakiyev's regime.

### **Nationalizing states in the Post-Soviet space**

There is a question whether the nations exist and if the notion of the 'nation' can be treated as a category of practice. Brubaker claimed that the nations are being reified, which makes them to be not simply categories of analysis, but the real entities<sup>3</sup>. The reification of the nations is not only an intellectual, but also a social practice, which includes involvement of some political forces in the national discourse. Seeing nation as a practical category is the only way to "capture the reality of nationhood and the real power of nationalism"<sup>4</sup>. The example of the Soviet Union's successor states does demonstrate the power of nationalism, Brubaker claims. The Soviet authorities aimed to suppress the nations of its member republics; that is

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<sup>3</sup> Rogers Brubaker, "Rethinking Nationhood: Nation as Institutionalized Form, Practical Category, Contingent Event," *Contention* 4, no. 1 (1994): 3–14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.



why, the newly independent states' aim to develop an ethno-centered perspective is understandable<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, nationalism and nationhood continue to flourish today in some of the former Soviet states due to the regime's policies; as the Soviet regime has institutionalized the nationhood; this policy affected all of its successor states.

Territorial nationhood and ethnicity were the institutionalized social forms, which have been indicated in the identification documents and have been important for the categorization purposes<sup>6</sup>. When the Western part of the world was moving beyond the nation state, the former Soviet bloc was moving towards the nation state, entering the post-multinational era<sup>7</sup>. Brubaker offered to analyze the Soviet Union successor states not as national, but as nationalizing ones – the states of and for particular ethnic groups<sup>8</sup>; and this nationalization can be noticed in the way national identity is being formed as well. However, this may be problematic, as these nationalizing states are national only in form, but not in practice. For example, Kyrgyzstan had large Russian and Uzbek minorities, which rather could make this state multiethnic than national. The fact that during the Soviet times, representatives of the “titular” nations were receiving more privileges, has also affected the post-Soviet discourse with its marginalization and discrimination of the minority groups<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism,” accessed February 29, 2016, [https://www.academia.edu/5100037/Myths\\_and\\_Misconceptions\\_in\\_the\\_Study\\_of\\_Nationalism](https://www.academia.edu/5100037/Myths_and_Misconceptions_in_the_Study_of_Nationalism).

<sup>7</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe,” *Daedalus* 124, no. 2 (1995): 107–32.

<sup>8</sup> Brubaker, ““Rethinking Nationhood.”

<sup>9</sup> Brubaker, “Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia.”

Brubaker claims that the first years of independence “furnished abundant examples of nationalizing discourse and policies” in the post-Soviet states<sup>10</sup>. The “us and them” distinction, introduction of the new language policies, diagnosing the titular nations with a weakened status were common in all of the Soviet successor states. In the countries, where ethnic and linguistic lines were strong, nationalization was mainly aimed at strengthening the titular nation at the expense of the national minorities, while in the states where these indicators have been weak and blurred, the nationalization worked to redefine national values and enlarge the “core nation”<sup>11</sup>. These processes have been affecting the way national identity was formed in these states as well.

### **Constructivist approach to identity formation**

Fearon and Laitin introduced a constructivist approach to identity formation, according to which structural and historical developments along with the actions of political actors may play an important role in the processes of identity formation<sup>12</sup>. Identity can be seen as a dynamic and a constantly changing phenomena; thus, political actors, civil organizations, as well as social, historical, and economic events may affect the way national identity is formed. Fearon and Laitin believe that the formation of identity may be closely related to the violent religious or ethnic conflicts, as participation in these conflicts on one of the sides makes participant’s identity even more solid.

The authors of the theory argue that the construction of identity enhance individuals’ sense of belonging to a certain group and think of their ethnicities as of essential components

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<sup>10</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “Nationalizing States Revisited: Projects and Processes of Nationalization in Post-Soviet States,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 11 (November 1, 2011): 1785–1814, doi:10.1080/01419870.2011.579137, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity,” *International Organization* 54, no. 04 (September 2000): 845–77, doi:10.1162/002081800551398.

of their identities. These processes can further entail changing the content of social category or boundary rules between different ethnic groups<sup>13</sup>. In attempts to enhance their uniqueness, assert self-identification, and preserve their identity, individuals belonging to a certain group might use aggression and violence against the outgroup members<sup>14</sup>. Engaging in severe conflicts with other ethnic groups may appear to be a sign of loyalty to the given group<sup>15</sup>.

In general, violence can be seen as a “striking symbol of the world’s new disorder”<sup>16</sup>. Actual instances of ethnic violence remain extremely rare, according to Fearon and Laitin. The third world states, which emerge in a result of some notable changes, are the countries threatened by their weaknesses. They are less capable of repressing violence; moreover, sometimes the authorities of these states commit violence of all kinds<sup>17</sup>. In doing so, they mobilize all their resources and it becomes not profitable to frame violence in non-ethnic terms. In these cases, ethnicity is not “an ultimate, irreducible source of a violent conflict”<sup>18</sup>, but the conflicts driven by competition for power are getting ethnicized and newly framed in the ethnic terms.

Horowitz argues that there are four factors independent from each other, each necessary for production of the deadly ethnic riots: a hostile relationship between two groups, staged events that provoke anger, a basis to justify the killing, and a perception of low risk for engaging in violence<sup>19</sup>. To put it simply, there are three main variables constituting ethnic violence: intergroup hostility, an event which puts the hostile groups on the opposite sides, and a sense of justification for killing. Often, the threatening actions of the target group become the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Rogers Brubaker and David D. Laitin, “Ethnic and Nationalist Violence,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 423–52, p. 424.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 425.

<sup>19</sup> Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*.

justification for killing, as members of a given group have to save themselves and kill the “enemies”. The second and the third variables are not always independent from each other, as often, this event (which may be staged) justifies the killing. In addition to the three variables listed above, there is the fourth one, which is the perception of reduced risk. When combined together, these variables may lead to a deadly ethnic conflict, according to Horowitz. For him, the divided societies of the third world define ethnicity in terms of differences, including color, religion, language, or some other indicators of common origin. Yet, these indicators of ethnicity may be a myth rather than a reality<sup>20</sup>.

### **Problems of democratic transition and emergence of nationalism**

Democracy cannot survive in the face of serious ethnic divisions, as Horowitz writes in his book<sup>21</sup>. The democracy is almost impossible in a country made up of different nationalities<sup>22</sup>, and democratic arrangements tend to get destroyed almost inevitably in the societies divided along ethnic lines<sup>23</sup>. It is hard to escape division of the society; that is why, “the avoidance of bifurcation along ethnic lines becomes the critical task in the maintenance of democracy”<sup>24</sup>, which in turn leads to the limitation of ethnic conflict. Indeed, processes of democratization increase the risk of nationalist conflict, Snyder claimed<sup>25</sup>. The “elite persuasion” argument explains the correlation between democratization and nationalist conflict: before the process of democratization starts, nationalism is normally weak or absent among the population. Later popular nationalism emerges when elites start using nationalist appeals to compete for popular support. In this situation, the elites do not want to surrender the political authority to average

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<sup>20</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (University of California Press, 1985).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (Parker, son, and Bourn, 1861).

<sup>23</sup> Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p 682.

<sup>25</sup> Jack Snyder, Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000).

citizens. Nationalism becomes a “convenient doctrine” that justifies a partial form of democracy, in which elites can rule in “the name of their nation”<sup>26</sup>. Nationalist conflicts arise as a product of elites’ attempts to popularize nationalist views in their societies.

These riots normally do not occur in the states with consolidated democracy, but take place in the “democratizing states”, according to Snyder. He defines states as “democratizing” if they retain important non-democratic features and if they have adopted at least one of the democratic characteristics, such as freedom of speech, freedom to organize groups to contest elections, equal opportunities for adult population to vote, fair elections, etc.<sup>27</sup> According to Snyder, democratic consolidation reduces the risk of a violent conflict, but the initial steps in the “rocky transition to democracy” increase it, especially in new states<sup>28</sup>. These new states have to generate state nation-building processes and eventually, with democratization, a “nation-building process”<sup>29</sup>. Democratization may give rise to nationalism because it serves interests of powerful groups within the nation. These nationalist elites often argue that ethnic minorities or other political opponents should be excluded from the nation because they act inappropriately and against the interests of the majority group, seeing these individuals as internal enemies<sup>30</sup>. This tactic is defined as exclusionary nationalism, which is more likely to prevail when the democratizing country is poor and institutions are weak<sup>31</sup>.

This exclusion will emerge under the conditions of revolutionary nationalism, which takes place when the old state institutions have collapsed and the new political elites want to establish a new basis for restoring order and power in their state. The civic nationalism is a form

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (JHU Press, 1996).

<sup>30</sup> Anthony W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), <http://ebooks.cambridge.org/ref/id/CBO9780511810480>.

<sup>31</sup> Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence*.

totally different from the exclusionary revolutionary nationalism, as it is more moderate and inclusive. The civic nationalism emerges when elites are not threatened by democratization and when representative institutions and media are established well. Under these conditions, there is no need for political elites to popularize the divisive doctrines, according to Snyder<sup>32</sup>. Thus, the civic form of nationalism is less exclusionary than others and it is less likely to provoke a violent ethnic or nationalist conflict.

Exclusionary nationalism did not play a central role in late developing societies of Central Asia, in which mass participation did not become an important feature of political life in the post-communist transition<sup>33</sup>. Nationalist violence was only taking place in those post-communist countries, whose leaders were facing strong opposition. In other countries, nationalism was taking more inclusive, civic forms. Those states could have been included in the category of “collectivistic civic”<sup>34</sup> countries, meaning that the ruling elites there were promoting national language and national identity not discriminating ethnic minorities in the country. These states were seeking to establish the post-communist national identity on an inclusive territorial basis, rather than on the exclusive ethnic one<sup>35</sup>.

### **National identity formation in the post-communist space**

#### *Different processes of post-communist transition: the Baltic States*

After the fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, new national identity narratives started emerging in several countries of the region. A prominent example of this was Estonia, where the identity narratives centered mainly on the preservation of the Estonian national identity simultaneously with Estonia’s rapid integration into supranational

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

institutions, such as the European Union<sup>36</sup>. These discourses of national identity stress nation-building and the sovereignty of the nation state, employing the image of a multicultural Estonian identity. Right after Estonia became an independent state, the image of this country as of a reconstituted society became dominant in the public sphere. The post-socialist identity construction contains a key narrative that urges the reification of the Estonian nation and culture, which existed before the Soviet annexation<sup>37</sup>. This narrative which emerged right after the fall of the communist regime in Estonia became the major strategy of national identity formation in this country.

The narrative of the reconstituted society is based on several principles, namely, on the model of linguistic nationalism: after the fall of the communist regime, Estonian language became the main tool for communication in this country, rapidly removing Russian from everyday use. Besides introducing new language policies, the Estonian authorities tried to foster new image of the reconstituted new Estonia by developing the country's small-scale economic structures during the first time of the independence period. Thus, Estonia implemented farm reform by dividing large entities into small family farms. Heavy industry, initially designed to strengthen the Russian navy, was transformed into smaller projects oriented to support domestic needs, such as transportation, construction, and fisheries<sup>38</sup>. Thus, having become a sovereign country, Estonia has implemented the policies completely different from those existing in the state during the communist regime, which helped to foster the image of the new reconstituted Estonian society aiming to preserve their own culture and language, which was threatened by the Soviet annexation.

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<sup>36</sup> Eiki Berg and Saima Oras, "Writing Post-Soviet Estonia on to the World Map," *Political Geography* 19, no. 5 (June 2000): 601–25, doi:10.1016/S0962-6298(00)00005-6.

<sup>37</sup> Gregory Feldman, "Shifting the Perspective on Identity Discourse in Estonia," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 31, no. 4 (December 1, 2000): 406–28, doi:10.1080/016297700000000171.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Lane et al., *The Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania* (Routledge, 2013).

Lithuania has also introduced new identity narratives in the 1990s after the independence. Having become independent from the Soviet Union, Lithuania had attached great importance to Europe. The most important meaning the Lithuanians attached to Europe was its cultural, religious and historical separateness from Russia and Post-Soviet space<sup>39</sup>. Almost everyone was agreeing that having regained independence, Lithuania would come back to Europe, joining the European Union – the most prominent symbol of becoming a European nation<sup>40</sup>. For many politicians, orienting towards Europe was equivalent to separating from Russia. Thus, Russia's exclusion was central to the Lithuanian identity narratives back in the 1990s. Undoubtedly, this understanding of the Lithuanian national identity centered on Russia's marginalization and orientation towards Europe, has affected many policies in the state, specifically, the government's approach to external economic relations. Trade with EU was welcomed, while economic relations with Russia have been seen as a threat to the state security and political autonomy<sup>41</sup>. The government sought to join the European monetary zone, while refusing to join the ruble area. Integration into the major supranational organizations has become the priority of the Lithuanian government, which was rejecting all Post-Soviet institutions. Therefore, the concept of the Lithuanian national identity was based on the idea of creation a European nation without losing its Lithuanian origins and culture. The Soviet annexation seemed to Lithuanians, who, in contrast with the majority of other Post-Soviet countries, remembered their independence, to be the invasion and an attempt to seize Lithuania's political autonomy. That is why, having reversed its independence, Lithuania became an anti-Russian and anti-Soviet space, which was central to the Lithuanian national identity.

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<sup>39</sup> Rawi Abdelal, *National Purpose in the World Economy: Post-Soviet States in Comparative Perspective* (Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Lane et al., *The Baltic States*.



The example of Latvia is similar to those of Lithuania and Estonia. Just as Lithuania, Latvia used to be an independent state before the Soviet annexation. This explains the fact that nationalism was flourishing under the communist regime in this country: nationalists were mobilizing the masses in an attempt to strengthen the Latvian national identity which was for a long time suppressed by the Soviet rule<sup>42</sup>. That is why, the Latvian society could be characterized as homogeneous and mobilized around nationalists, who fought for the country's independence, in the post-communist transition. The changes have actually come with the national elections through which the society, mobilized by the nationalist movement, has gained an access to decision making. As a result of the nationalists' victory in the 1990 elections, Latvia pursued even more aggressive control over its domestic and foreign affairs and terminated the leading role of the communist party<sup>43</sup>. The annexation of Latvia by the Soviet Union in 1940 was declared illegal by the Latvian parliament; the 1922 constitution was reinstated, and the new name of the county was declared – the Republic of Latvia. As in other Baltic states, the Soviet Union was perceived as a threat to the national independence and political autonomy in Latvia; therefore, the new language policies were introduced and the orientation to European integration was taken<sup>44</sup>.

*Similar transition of Kyrgyzstan's neighbors: Kazakhstan's national identity discourses*

The Central Asian countries were different from the Baltic States in their transition to independence. Unlike Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, these states were not willing to become independent and lose the support of the Soviet Union. Most of the Central Asian states have never been independent and have formed their states only under the Soviet rule; therefore, their

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<sup>42</sup> Andrei P. Tsygankov, "Defining State Interests after Empire: National Identity, Domestic Structures and Foreign Trade Policies of Latvia and Belarus," *Review of International Political Economy* 7, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 101–37, doi:10.1080/096922900347063.

<sup>43</sup> Dace Dzenovska, "Remaking the Nation of Latvia: Anthropological Perspectives on Nation Branding," *Place Branding* 1, no. 2 (March 1, 2005): 173–86.

<sup>44</sup> Tsygankov, "Defining State Interests after Empire."

leaders did not possess skills of managing independent republics. That is why, leaders of the Central Asian states have been challenged with a complicated task upon the collapse of the Soviet Union: they had to run independent states taking into account all possible consequences of this newly gained independence.

Kazakhstan was one of those newly independent countries, faced with the task to create the new nation and build the national identity of the Kazakh people. At the beginning of independence, the Kazakhstani government introduced a dual definition of the “nation” into the legal infrastructure of the new state<sup>45</sup>. The idea was to establish a “Kazakhstani” nation, at the same time recognizing the poly-ethnic composition of the state and reviving the Kazakh national culture, history, and language as the principal ingredients of the new territorial identity. Before the political crisis of 1994-1995, Kazakh government tried to design a framework in which two dominant elite orientations of the country could co-exist peacefully. Those were ethnic Kazakh intellectuals supporting remedial Kazakh nationalism and ethnic Russians, who were opposing efforts of the former to restore Kazakh culture and language. The political crisis became a culmination of the deepening fragmentation of the political elites, involving the new language policies, economic breakdown, and the massive migration of the minorities to their kin-states<sup>46</sup>. At this time, Russia came up with a program of assistance to the Russian minorities in the near abroad.

Then Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev went to a Central Asian tour in 1994, demanding to introduce the possibility of dual citizenship for the Russian-speaking minorities, including those living in Kazakhstan. The pro-Russian elite responded to the demands of the Russian minister and initiated a campaign for a union with Russia. In April 1994, when the

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<sup>45</sup> William Fierman, “Language and Identity in Kazakhstan: Formulations in Policy Documents 1987–1997,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 31, no. 2 (June 1998): 171–86, doi:10.1016/S0967-067X(98)00005-1.

<sup>46</sup> Cengiz Surucu, “Modernity, Nationalism, Resistance: Identity Politics in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan,” *Central Asian Survey* 21, no. 4 (December 2002): 385.

Russian official arrived to Almaty, President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed the creating of the Eurasian Union. This action of the country's leader was interpreted as a victory of the pro-Russian opposition; however, the president's aim was to deprive the opposition of the opportunity to receive a dual citizenship. The idea of the Eurasian Union envisioned introduction of a common Eurasian citizenship for all members of the union<sup>47</sup>. The project allowed to maintain good relationships with Russia, at the same time depriving the Kazakh opposition of its main external ally. The suppression of the opposition was continuing in course of several institutional changes in the country – the abolition of the parliament, adoption of the new constitution, extension of the president's power<sup>48</sup>. At the same, the main actors of the opposition were eliminated from the political arena in different ways, and a new prime minister was appointed. Once the Russian-speaking elites were removed from the decision making processes, the more nationalistic course was taken by the Kazakh authorities. Since 1996-1997, the government of Kazakhstan started introducing more aggressive "kazakhization" policies<sup>49</sup>.

### **Identity in Kyrgyzstan**

Unequal at birth, the Soviet Union successor states entered the scene with low chances to construct their ethnic identities quickly and effectively. The task to construct national identity was even more problematic to implement in Kyrgyzstan, with its poor economic and social conditions<sup>50</sup>. The country does not have access to the sea, has limited water resources, and it does not have large diasporas in foreign countries. However, the state still works to construct

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<sup>47</sup> Christopher A. Hartwell, "A Eurasian (or a Soviet) Union? Consequences of Further Economic Integration in the Commonwealth of Independent States," *Business Horizons* 56, no. 4 (July 2013): 411–20, doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2013.03.003.

<sup>48</sup> Surucu, "Modernity, Nationalism, Resistance."

<sup>49</sup> Bhavna Dave, "National Revival in Kazakhstan: Language Shift and Identity Change," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 12, no. 1 (January 1, 1996): 51–72, doi:10.1080/1060586X.1996.10641415.

<sup>50</sup> Eugene Huskey, "National Identity from Scratch: Defining Kyrgyzstan's Role in World Affairs," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2003): 111–38, doi:10.1080/13523270300660020.

the national identity of Kyrgyz people despite its poor resources and a need to cooperate with other states. Everett-Heath claims that these are the reasons why the identity of the whole Central Asian region has been hardly influenced by other actors, such as Iran, China, and Russia<sup>51</sup>. The five central Asian States of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan stand at the crossroads of the world civilization. This region has its own distinct identity; however, it is ready to take part in the global politics.

There are many other factors influencing formation of national identity in Kyrgyzstan, which may be conditioned by the complex history of the Kyrgyz nation, its culture, as well as traditions of the Kyrgyz people<sup>52</sup>. Particularly, it is important to look at the political and socio-economic developments of Kyrgyzstan as a state. The lack of social unity as well as the failed attempts of the former Kyrgyz presidents to construct the sense of national identity among Kyrgyz citizens are the main reasons why the Kyrgyz society constantly experiences the divisions along regional, tribal and clan lines. These divisions often become the causes of many socio-economic and political problems experienced by the country; the ongoing ethnic tensions could also be considered as partially conditioned by those divisions, Berdikeeva states<sup>53</sup>.

In turn, the socio-economic and political challenges experienced by the country could be the causes of the 2010 interethnic conflict in the south of Kyrgyzstan. It is hard to solve these problems, yet it is even more difficult to work on the processes of national identity construction due to the multiethnic composition of the country and the continuity of its Soviet past<sup>54</sup>. The identity construction in Kyrgyzstan is going to be a long and painful process, Hanks said<sup>55</sup>. The double-identity narratives used by the first president, Askar Akayev, and more nationalistic

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<sup>51</sup> Tom Everett-Heath, *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition* (Psychology Press, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Berdikeeva, Saltanat, "National Identity in Kyrgyzstan: The Case of Clan Politics."

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Hanks, "Crisis in Kyrgyzstan," June 1, 2011.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

discourses introduced by the second country's leader, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, made the situation even worse, provoking some interethnic tensions and conflicts.

In addition to these unsolved problems, Kyrgyzstan experiences the strong division between north and south. This complicated relationship between the two distant regions of the country often becomes a source of many problems Kyrgyzstan experiences<sup>56</sup>. The country's uneasy economic relationship with its western neighbor Uzbekistan as well as its policies on diaspora also affect the situation in the conflict-prone region of the country. The role Kyrgyzstan plays in international arena is also important in terms of national identity formation processes. Although Kyrgyzstan is a small country, it is involved in some of the major international processes, such as the perceived threats from international terrorism/Islamist fundamentalism, the potential for the export of a "color revolution" to Uzbekistan, the presence of U.S. and Russian military forces in Central Asia, and many other factors, according to Bond and Koch<sup>57</sup>. The relationship of Kyrgyzstan with other countries, particularly, Russia and Uzbekistan, which are the kin-states to the two largest minorities living in the country, is central to the processes of identity formation, as these two states may have a great influence on the internal politics of Kyrgyzstan, the authors claim.

In Kyrgyzstan, nationalism combines a narrative on the importance of the titular nation and its relation to a civic, state-based identity and feelings of sovereignty<sup>58</sup>. Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan serves to help explain the state's failures and is used for explanation of the perceived threats to the Kyrgyz nation from outside. In her research, Laruelle Marlene looks at the processes of identity formation and nationalism under the regime of President Akayev and

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<sup>56</sup> Andrew R. Bond and Natalie R. Koch, "Interethnic Tensions in Kyrgyzstan: A Political Geographic Perspective," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 51, no. 4 (July 1, 2010): 531–62, doi:10.2747/1539-7216.51.4.531.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Laruelle, "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda," March 2012.

then examines the more ethno-centered Kyrgyz patriotism which emerged under the Bakiyev's regime. Thus, Akaev tended to present Kyrgyzstan as a country experiencing a cultural and economic renaissance<sup>59</sup>. The first president of the country was promoting a statement of a forward looking, multicultural Kyrgyzstan, getting benefits from involving into the processes of economic, cultural, scientific and geopolitical globalization<sup>60</sup>. As Anderson mentions, Akaev's attempts to preserve religious and interethnic piece have worked well to reconcile the violent conflict in the south<sup>61</sup>. Bakiyev was acting differently in his discourses; and Laruelle connects his ethno-centered narratives to the violence in the south<sup>62</sup>.

There are a number of reasons normally used to explain the conflict between the two ethnic groups and the explosion of nationalism in the south of Kyrgyzstan in June 2010, such as the alleged rape of Uzbek women by Kyrgyz men, a fight in the casino between the representatives of the two ethnic groups, and others. McGlinchey supposes that the interethnic conflict actually had structural causes, which are the political elites' fragmentation and civil society in Kyrgyzstan, which could be easily mobilized to take part in the organization of instability<sup>63</sup>, not mentioning particular policies or discourses of president Bakiyev. Meanwhile, Laruelle states that nationalism is becoming a main political tool in Kyrgyzstan nowadays<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> Nick Megoran, "The Critical Geopolitics of the Uzbekistan–Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley Boundary Dispute, 1999–2000," *Political Geography* 23, no. 6 (August 2004): 731–64, doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2004.03.004.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan*, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Laruelle, "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda," March 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Eric McGlinchey, "Exploring Regime Instability and Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan," *Asia Policy* 12, no. 1 (2011): 79–98, doi:10.1353/asp.2011.0030.

<sup>64</sup> Laruelle, "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda," March 2012.

## CHAPTER II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### Ethnicity and nationality in the Soviet Kyrgyz Republic

Drawing borders in the Soviet Union was important for the national identity formation in the Soviet Central Asian republics. At the time of the process of border drawing, the ethnicity became highly politicized and became one of the essential factors while making decisions about the borders. The Soviet ideology was based on Marxist and Leninist thinking, the main idea of which was consolidation of classless society, in which ethnicity did not play any roles<sup>65</sup>. However, the reality appeared to be slightly different: what actually constituted the territory of the former Soviet Union were national territories – the Soviet republics, formed on the basis of ethnic identity or nationality (*natsionalnost*) and given the names of the dominant ethnic groups<sup>66</sup>. These dominant ethnic groups have been considered the titular nations of the given states and have been prioritized by the state social and economic policies<sup>67</sup>. The fact that the ethnic belonging became one of the most important factors for the processes of border drawing in the Soviet Union built on the Marxist and Leninist ideology was quite surprising, in fact, the territorial delimitation of the Soviet states remained one the major historical debates<sup>68</sup>.

Following the logic of territorial delimitation described above, the Central Asian region was divided into several parts according to the ethnic-based principle. Before that, most of the Central Asian region was organized into the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Social Republic

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<sup>65</sup> David Dinsmore Comey, “Marxist-Leninist Ideology and Soviet Policy,” *Studies in Soviet Thought* 2, no. 4 (December 1962): 301–20, doi:10.1007/BF00832199.

<sup>66</sup> Arne Haugen, “Drawing Borders,” in *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2003), 180–210, [http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230502840\\_9](http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780230502840_9).

<sup>67</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “Nationalizing States Revisited: Projects and Processes of Nationalization in Post-Soviet States,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 11 (November 1, 2011): 1785–1814, doi:10.1080/01419870.2011.579137.

<sup>68</sup> Francine Hirsch, “Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities,” *The Russian Review* 59, no. 2 (April 1, 2000): 201–26, doi:10.1111/0036-0341.00117.

under the rule of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. However, when the territorial delimitation took place in the period of 1924-1936, Central Asia was divided into five parts: the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), the Tajik SSR, the Kazakh SSR, the Karakalpak SSR, and the Kyrgyz SSR. The titles of the newly formed republics were bearing the names of the dominant ethnic groups populating the territories of those states, which was proving that the division was made along the ethnic lines. The division of Central Asia into smaller territories was important not only in the geographical terms, but also in terms of the national identity formation. Most of the Central Asian states before the territorial delimitation implemented by the Soviet authorities did not have their own states based on the national principle. Some peoples living in these territories have been organized in groups on the basis of clan or tribalism politics, but they have never been united into a separate entity according to their ethnic belonging.

In fact, this was the point at which the notion of nationhood emerged in the Central Asian states and when the national identity could start its formation. Importantly, these processes have been influenced by external authority, which supports Brubaker's point that the nation is an event, which emerges under certain political or economic influence<sup>69</sup>. The Soviet authorities have drawn the borders along the ethnic lines to make it easier to control the whole Central Asian region. Being aware of the fragmentation of the people of Central Asia, the authorities thought it would be impossible to govern this region as a whole entity; that is why, separation of the territory along ethnic lines was done by the Soviet authorities on purpose to ensure better administration of the region<sup>70</sup>. As a result of this delimitation, the titular nations have found themselves to be in a prioritized position in their own states. They had a better

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<sup>69</sup> Rogers Brubaker, "Rethinking Nationhood: Nation as Institutionalized Form, Practical Category, Contingent Event," in *Nationalism Reframed* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511558764.002>.

<sup>70</sup> Haugen, "Drawing Borders."



access to the distribution of goods and resources, such as jobs, education, administrative positions<sup>71</sup>.

Kyrgyzstan became a part of the Soviet Union in 1920. Consisting of present day Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, it was known as the Kyrgyz Autonomous Republic. In five years, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan were separated, but the both countries still remained autonomous republics of the Soviet Union. In 1936, the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was given the status of an independent republic within the Soviet Union. The Central Asian Soviet republics, including the Kyrgyz SSR, have quickly adopted the idea of nationality, imposed by the Soviet authorities and started cherishing the ideas of national culture and language. Thus, following the nationality policies, the newly formed republics became in the total possession of the titular nations, which was used to privilege these groups in their autonomous states<sup>72</sup>. The predominantly Uzbek-populated areas, such as the cities of Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Uzgen became the parts of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic (Kyrgyz SSR) instead of becoming the areas of the Uzbek SSR. There were many reasons for that, including the purposeful divide-and-rule principle of the Soviet authorities, poor ethnographic data collection<sup>73</sup>, and provision of nomadic republics with settled urban centers<sup>74</sup>.

Meanwhile, allocation of territory to the Uzbek SSR was not similar to the one accepted by the regular policy of the Soviet authorities<sup>75</sup>. In the majority of cases, the Soviet authorities

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<sup>71</sup> Brubaker, "Nationalizing States Revisited," November 1, 2011.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Nicholas Winston Megoran, "The Borders of Eternal Friendship? : The Politics and Pain of Nationalism and Identity along the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley Boundary, 1999-2000" (Ph.D., University of Cambridge, 2003), <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.619736>.

<sup>74</sup> Rahimov, Mirzohid, and Galina Urazaeva. Central Asian Nations & Border Issues. Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies Research Centre, 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Babak Rezvani, "Understanding and Explaining the Kyrgyz–Uzbek Interethnic Conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan," *Anthropology of the Middle East* 8, no. 2 (December 1, 2013): 60–81, doi:10.3167/ame.2013.080205.

were first identifying an ethnic “nation” of a perspective state and then granting this “nation” with a homeland. In case of Uzbekistan, it was different: the authorities roughly defined the prospective territory of the republic, which was the lands previously populated by Sarts, and then they formed the Uzbek nation out of the diverse population inhabiting the region<sup>76</sup>. The Uzbek nation became a mixture of various Iranic- and Turkic-speaking groups<sup>77</sup>.

The national territorial delimitation of Central Asia was completed in 1936. During this process, the Soviet power intended to provide ethnic groups with their territorial autonomies; however, many of these “ethnic homelands” appeared not to be homogeneous, and, as a result, many ethnic groups found themselves living in the homelands designed for some other groups, as it happened to the ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan. The situation was also complicated by the fact that the titular ethnic groups had privileged positions within the republics, whose names they were bearing (i.e. Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbeks in Uzbekistan, etc.)<sup>78</sup>. Therefore, ethnic Uzbeks have found themselves to be strangers in a stranger republic.

A bright example of this was Fergana Valley, an area, densely populated by representatives of Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tajik ethnic groups. A part of Fergana Valley, located in the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic, was also populated by Uzbeks and Tajiks, who in a result of territorial delimitation became national minorities in Kyrgyzstan<sup>79</sup>. Moreover, Russians also constituted the national minority in this Soviet country. Thus, Uzbeks and Russians became one of the largest minority groups in the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic. However, even despite such multiethnic composition of this state, the country managed to escape the occurrence of interethnic conflicts while being a part of the Soviet Union. Generally,

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007).

<sup>78</sup> “Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism.”

<sup>79</sup> Ajay Patnaik, *Nations, Minorities, and States in Central Asia* (Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, 2003).

being one of the first multinational states in the world, the Soviet Union was doing a good job in managing interethnic affairs in its republics.

To avoid eruption of ethnic nationalism, the Soviet authorities institutionalized nationality. The notion of nationality was used as ethnicity, while ethnicity was rarely used by the authorities, being understood as a biological aspect of one's identity<sup>80</sup>. Nationality/ethnicity was given to individuals at birth; this view of nationality was contradictory to the constructivist approach to identity formation, according to which, identity could be developed under the pressure of some social and political processes<sup>81</sup>. The notion of nationality was used as the main categorization principle among individuals living in the Soviet countries, and, importantly, the same categorization principle is applied in modern Kyrgyzstan. Even though it is paradoxical, the institutionalization of nationality was helping Soviet authorities to control distant parts of the country and avoid escalation of interethnic affairs in its member republics<sup>82</sup>. However, the situation has changed slightly before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union<sup>83</sup>.

### **The ninetieths: *perestroika*, interethnic violence, and collapse of the union**

Ethnic situation in Kyrgyzstan started aggravating in the 1980s after the newly introduced policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. The processes occurring in the collapsing Soviet Union could be among the reasons of afflicting interethnic strife in Kyrgyzstan<sup>84</sup>. The politics of *perestroika* and the rules of Gorbachev were not favorable for Kyrgyzstan, as well

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<sup>80</sup> Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and After the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame* (SAGE, 1997).

<sup>81</sup> Fearon and Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity."

<sup>82</sup> Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and After the Soviet Union*.

<sup>83</sup> Lubomyr Hajda, "ETHNIC POLITICS AND ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THE USSR AND THE POST-SOVIET STATES," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 19, no. 2 (1993): 193–278.

<sup>84</sup> Valery Tishkov, "'Don't Kill Me, I'm a Kyrgyz!': An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 32, no. 2 (May 1, 1995): 133–49, doi:10.1177/0022343395032002002.

as for many other countries. *Perestroika* was a period of change, reform, and, eventually, demise in the Soviet Union. This policy was introduced by last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who led the Soviet Union during the period of 1985-1991, in an attempt to fix the flagging economy and re-energize the party doctrine. The *perestroika* allowed more freedoms in various spheres of social, political, and economic life of the state. This policy has ruined the old social order, but did not give enough time for the new one to emerge<sup>85</sup>. Fail of the old system also created problems in the area of interethnic relations, which used to be controlled by the Soviet authorities. Shortly before and after Kyrgyzstan gained independence in 1991, the authorities of Kyrgyzstan were no longer able to control interethnic affairs in the country<sup>86</sup>.

The helplessness of the Soviet authorities in terms of maintenance of interethnic relations became apparent in 1989, when nationalistic ethnic Kyrgyz organization *Osh Aimagy* was established in Osh region. The organization's representatives started demanding land for the housing of Kyrgyz in a predominantly Uzbek area. As a result, the Kyrgyz regional authorities allocated 32 hectares of land belonging to the Uzbek collective farms for construction of housing for ethnic Kyrgyz. In response to that, ethnic Uzbeks have established their own organization called Adolat (Justice), aimed at the protection of Uzbek language, culture, and claiming for separatism. In addition to the Adolat organization's activities, groups of ethnic Uzbeks led by elderly people directed claims for local autonomy to Moscow; the declarations of autonomy also appeared in Uzbekistan, even among the scholars<sup>87</sup>. The Kyrgyz authorities never responded to the needs and demands of ethnic Uzbeks, letting the strong

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<sup>85</sup> Peter J. Boettke, *Why Perestroika Failed. The Politics and Economics of Socialist Transition* (London: Routledge, n.d.).

<sup>86</sup> Hajda, "ETHNIC POLITICS AND ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THE USSR AND THE POST-SOVIET STATES."

<sup>87</sup> Asankanov, Azamat. 1996. 'Ethnic Conflict in the Osh Region in Summer 1990: Reasons and Lessons', in *Ethnicity and Power in the Contemporary World*. New York: United Nations University Press.

nationalism among the Kyrgyz population to prosper and discriminating against the Uzbeks. Hence, the interethnic conflict started on June 4, 1990.

At that time, the ethnic Uzbeks have been marginalized from the ethnic Kyrgyz. There was a clear distinction between these two ethnic groups, despite the fact that the both shared a common religion, which was Islam, were speaking similar language (as both Kyrgyz and Uzbek languages belong to the Turkic group), and were sharing similar culture due to the long history of joint co-habitation. That is why it is likely that the Soviet regime and its policies have rooted the clear distinction between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, as the Soviet authorities have institutionalized the territorial nationhood and ethnic identity. Thus, the ethnicity of Uzbeks have been registered in their identity documents and representatives of the both groups actually knew that Uzbeks should have belonged to Uzbekistan due to the institutionalized image of territorial nationhood, applicable to the Soviet territorial delimitation policy. Therefore, the appearance of ethnic Uzbeks and the marks in their passports were the main characters, which were making them different from the titular ethnic group.

The conflict was carefully organized by ethnic Uzbeks: according to KGB reports, Uzbeks started getting ready for the conflict in February 1990, that is, four months before the violence occurred<sup>88</sup>. Ethnic Kyrgyz violently reacted to the assaults by Uzbeks, burning down their houses, killing their children, and raping Uzbek women. Even though the conflict lasted for six days, it claimed many lives. The number of victims varies from 200<sup>89</sup> to 300<sup>90</sup>. About 5,000 criminal acts were committed; many of them had extremely brutal character, according to Tishkov<sup>91</sup>. It is important to mention that not all ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz were involved in organization of this conflict. Clearly, there were some certain activists, who had their own

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Tishkov, “‘Don’t Kill Me, I’m a Kyrgyz!’.”

<sup>90</sup> Asankanov, ‘Ethnic Conflict in the Osh Region in Summer 1990: Reasons and Lessons’.

<sup>91</sup> Tishkov, “‘Don’t Kill Me, I’m a Kyrgyz!’.”

interests in organization of violence, while the others simply became the victims of it. This conflict was recognized as one of the most brutal acts of violence in the territory of the former Soviet Union and it was one of the few cases when the rebelling minority did not get the autonomous status, which they were fighting for.

### **Askar Akaev, democratic transition, double identity narratives**

The interethnic conflict in the south of the country discredited then head of the Communist Party in Kyrgyzstan Absamat Masaliev for failing to address the country's socioeconomic needs and resolve interethnic tensions. The mistakes of Masaliev provided Akaev with political opening to rise to the republic's top leadership position<sup>92</sup>. Akaev used this opportunity to disagree with Masaliev and other conservatives on economic and land reform policy and openly criticize current government for failing to meet the needs of the country's population.

In April 1990, prior to the events in the south, Masaliev developed a reform plan that would help him win the elections for the republic's president for the first time. He run for the elections in October, assuming that he would win; however, he failed to obtain the majority of votes against two opponents; moreover, all three candidates were disqualified. In a few days, a new slate of nominees was presented. Akaev with his proposal for democratic transition and civic harmony soon won the elections, being supported by a group of deputies. When Akaev came to the power at the end of 1990, the country was coming through great political and economic tensions: the processes of the Soviet Union's disintegration as well economic and social challenges experienced by the republic itself were weakening this small state. Akaev did not have a significant political experience, nor did he have much political support in the

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<sup>92</sup> Regine A. Spector, "The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan," *Berkeley Program in Eurasian and East European Studies*, March 1, 2004, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0dn0s80v>.

republic. Unlike the presidents of most Central Asian countries, who have previously served as the first secretaries of the Communist Parties of their republics, Akaev was new to the system.

Having become a president of the country, Akaev tried to accommodate the needs of the democratically leaned opposition and members of the Communist Party who yet were in the office at that time. Akaev was meeting with hunger strikers who were demanding the change and was incorporating representatives of different ethnic groups into his government. First of all, Akaev introduced the idea of economic reform and transition to market relations. While Akaev was promoting his idea about the economic reform, he still maintained loyalty towards to Soviet Union, seeing Kyrgyzstan as a part of renewed Soviet Union, thus, pleasing the Communist authority of the republic. Thus, in the first years of presidency, Akaev managed to ease the tense situation in the country by including various groups in the political process.

However, the situation has changed few months later. In August 1991, Akaev has faced a crisis. The coup against Gorbachev, which took place at that time Moscow, has provoked another smaller “putsch” in Bishkek against Askar Akaev. The event was led by the activists aiming to support the Soviet rule and the Communist Party. After the coup, Akaev spoke out against it and made a statement saying that he would vote for the rule of the Kyrgyz Republic over that of the Soviet Union. The split has increased between the President and the Communist Party members, who organized the coup in an attempt to retain the power. To oppose the Party, Akaev declared his full support for reform-minded Russia’s President Boris Yeltsin and Kazakhstan’s leader Nursultan Nazarbayev<sup>93</sup>. Just in a few days, the country declared independence on August 31, 1991. First presidential elections have been held in the country few months later – in October. Akaev has been considered a consensus candidate for the

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<sup>93</sup> Joint Committee on Slavic Studies (U.S.) et al., “The Current Digest of the Soviet Press.,” *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press.*, 1949.

majority of political and ethnic groups in the country; that is why he ran unopposed in these political elections.

Akaev became a new symbol of the Kyrgyz nation: he symbolized its rebirth<sup>94</sup>. The problem was that unlike many other post-Soviet states, Kyrgyzstan did not have its history as a nation. The collective memory of the people of Kyrgyzstan was based on pastoral-nomadic culture, not that of a nation-state<sup>95</sup>. Akaev thus was responsible for building the policies, which would meet needs and interests of the diverse population, including large minorities of Uzbeks and Russians<sup>96</sup>. Not only the population varied ethnically; the ethnic Kyrgyz population of the country was also diverse among the regional lines<sup>97</sup>. The Kyrgyz living in the south were different from those residing in northern regions of the country; in addition to it, the northern population of the country was sub-divided into smaller categories based on the residents' belonging to certain areas. Akaev, thus, had to create national consciousness not alienating any residents of the country, building national identity on the ideas of common citizenship incorporating traditional Kyrgyz symbols and stories<sup>98</sup>.

Akaev was working to build the unity among Kyrgyzstani citizens. Besides establishing the People's Assembly of Kyrgyzstan, uniting representatives of different ethnic groups, and placing representatives of various ethnic communities in the government, Akaev created metaphors to reinforce this unity. The new identity was built around the idea of nation-state. The president often referred to Kyrgyzstan as to "the second Switzerland" or the "Switzerland

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<sup>94</sup> "Project MUSE - Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia," accessed May 2, 2016, <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/17211>.

<sup>95</sup> Spector, "The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan," March 1, 2004.

<sup>96</sup> Marlène Laruelle, "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45, no. 1–2 (March 2012): 39–49, doi:10.1016/j.postcomstud.2012.02.002.

<sup>97</sup> Shairbek Juraev, "Kyrgyz Democracy? The Tulip Revolution and beyond," *Central Asian Survey* 27, no. 3–4 (December 1, 2008): 253–64, doi:10.1080/02634930802536464.

<sup>98</sup> Spector, "The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan," March 1, 2004.



of Central Asia”. This metaphor was rejecting the communist and authoritarian past in a way, placing the country in a relation to a more successful and wealthier model<sup>99</sup>. Moreover, Akaev was comparing Kyrgyzstan with Switzerland due to its landlocked position, surrounded by mountains, as well as its policy of neutrality surrounded by strong regional neighbors<sup>100</sup>. The metaphor of the Silk Road was used by Akaev to represent Kyrgyzstan as a bridge, uniting East and West. This metaphor describes Akaev’s vision on Kyrgyzstan’s relationship to the neighboring countries, as well as other states, assisting to the republic – Russia and the USA. Moreover, in most of the speeches Akaev was underlining that the mixture of different cultures and its diversity was making Kyrgyzstan unique. Maintaining ethnic harmony and improving interethnic relations were main priorities of the president, and he had been extensively underlining it in his speeches. However, his second priority was to ensure economic growth by total reformation of the country’s economic system.

It was hard to revive the country economically. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and having lost its support, Kyrgyzstan became weaker in economic terms. Already in 1990, this small landlocked country with few natural resources was in crisis, with rising prices and lack of goods in the market. One of the country’s main resources, its hydroelectric potential, was significantly underdeveloped, making Kyrgyzstan heavily dependent on other countries’ assistance. Akaev believed that a new program of economic liberalization would put an end to the poor economic conditions in the country. His policies included price liberalization, halting subsidies to most of the state enterprises, introducing a convertible currency, and privatization<sup>101</sup>. To implement his policies and the program of economic revival, president largely relied on the support of the regional elites and consensus among regional leaders.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Huskey, “National Identity from Scratch.”

<sup>101</sup> Spector, “The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan,” March 1, 2004.

The component of the economic policy that received most attention was the amount of economic assistance received by Kyrgyzstan from international grants<sup>102</sup>. Only by the end of 1993, Western donors have allocated almost half a billion dollars to Kyrgyzstan. Such assistance is often portrayed as a support for indigenous democratization efforts. There is a view that liberal policies of the 1990s were only a compromise between the Kyrgyz authorities and international donors, whose strict conditions were liberalization of economy and government<sup>103</sup>. The financial assistance has, thus, contributed to the evolvement of various NGOs in the country. While Akaev was maintaining ties with the Western world, he was still cooperating with Russia due to high economic dependence on this country and given the fact that the large group of Russians was living in this state. Although Russia has been considered a country opposing the civil society and NGOs, the president kept reassuring the Russian media in his interviews that Moscow and Bishkek will always maintain friendly relations and that friendship with Russia will always be among Kyrgyzstan's priorities. Besides this, maintaining good relations with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan was important for Akaev for implementing the cross-border trade.

However, the cross-border trade has stopped with the introduction of the new national currency – *som*. Kyrgyzstan was among the first Central Asian states to introduce its own currency; it has been one of the many progressive steps, undertaken by President Akaev. However, introducing the new currency, Akaev forgot to consult with neighbors, which has become a significant diplomatic misstep. While introducing the *som* was done in order to become more independent from the dramatic Russian inflation for Akaev, the neighboring states have perceived this step as the introduction of the Western-oriented policies. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have, thus, closed the borders with Kyrgyzstan. Although the Kyrgyz leader

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<sup>102</sup> John Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?* (Routledge, 2013).

<sup>103</sup> Juraev, "Kyrgyz Democracy?"

has apologized to the presidents of the neighboring countries, the consequences of the national currency introduction have significantly hurt the Kyrgyz economy. However, despite some failures and opposition, Akaev managed to implement his economic reform.

During the two years of his presidency, Akaev managed to prevent ethnic conflict, minimize tensions with Russia and Uzbekistan, as well as start dramatic economic reforms<sup>104</sup>. Besides this, Kyrgyzstan represented a “rare case of seemingly successful democratic changes” in the Central Asian region, where it was hard to expect such kind of transition<sup>105</sup>. Decisive steps in economic liberalization were one of policies introduced for the country’s democratization strategy implementation. The major achievements included freedom of speech, freedom of press, as well as existence of civil society and active political opposition. This was in a sharp contrast with other Central Asian states, which have generally demonstrated strong presidential rule and intolerance to oppositional organizations. Land reform and privatization policies in Kyrgyzstan secured significant amount of international financial assistance. A vibrant civil society, including independent media outlets and various non-governmental organizations, has flourished in the country despite the 70 years of the Soviet rule<sup>106</sup>.

Such rapid democratization of the country has been explained from several perspectives. First, there is a view that Akaev’s personality played an important role in determining Kyrgyzstan’s liberal and political reform paths. Akaev’s liberal views were known before he became the president, and after 1990, they have influenced reform choices<sup>107</sup>. Moreover,

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<sup>104</sup> Spector, “The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan,” March 1, 2004.

<sup>105</sup> Juraev, “Kyrgyz Democracy?”, p. 256.

<sup>106</sup> Regine A. Spector, “Securing Property in Contemporary Kyrgyzstan,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 24, no. 2 (April 1, 2008): 149–76, doi:10.2747/1060-586X.24.2.149.

<sup>107</sup> Spector, “The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan,” March 1, 2004.

Akaev's personality was the reason why many Western donors and development economists became eager to allocate resources for Kyrgyzstan's development projects<sup>108</sup>.

However, a contrary view was suggesting that the weakness of Akaev as a leader in early 1990s were explaining the initial democratization processes taking place in the country. According to this view, Akaev's regime was weak economically; to compensate the lack of resources, the president had to "sell Kyrgyzstan to the world as a model of democratizing and market-oriented politics with consumers being Western government and international financial institutions"<sup>109</sup>. Since Akaev was also weak politically, coming to power in opposition to then dominant communist power, it was not his purpose that he initiated the liberal reform. He was rather unable to control the political opposition that enabled the start of the democratic campaign<sup>110</sup>.

Although these two explanations of the country's initial democratization have been very diverse in their meaning, they both come to one point: the process of liberalization in Kyrgyzstan has not been an indigenous, self-sustainable process. The democratization in this country has been heavily dependent on the contingency and external factors; thus, it was impossible to anticipate for the emergence of stable and continuant democratic institutions and norms<sup>111</sup>. In addition, certain democratic leaders perceived to be democrats at the beginning of their service, often appear to be not so democratic as the time passes<sup>112</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> "Central Asia's Catapult to Independence," *Foreign Affairs*, January 28, 2009, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/kazakhstan/1992-06-01/central-asias-catapult-independence>.

<sup>109</sup> Huskey, Eugene. "An economy of authoritarianism? Askar Akaev and presidential leadership in Kyrgyzstan." *Power and change in Central Asia*, (2002): 74-96, p. 75.

<sup>110</sup> *Paying for Patronage: Regime Change in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (UMI, 2003).

<sup>111</sup> Juraev, "Kyrgyz Democracy?"

<sup>112</sup> Huskey, "An economy of authoritarianism? Askar Akaev and presidential leadership in Kyrgyzstan."

Indeed, in 1994, the change in Akaev's leadership became visible. Having entered the political arena as an outsider looking forward for political change and implementing reforms, he soon turned into "insider", having been quickly incorporated into the political elite struggling for power at the age of flagging economy<sup>113</sup>. Moreover, in 1992-1993, Akaev and a number of other high ranked officials have been involved in a corruption scandal, which has spoilt his reputation of an intelligent leader and casted a shadow of doubt on his intentions to transform the country<sup>114</sup>. Moreover, disillusioned by the state's economy, Akaev's former supporters stopped trusting him, thus, joining the camp of the former communists, opposing the regime. To keep the power, Akaev had to shift his democratic regime into a more authoritarian one.

Freedom of press, which has been a remarkable achievement of Kyrgyzstan, soon stopped its existence, starting with the shutdown of influential parliamentary newspaper *Erkin Too* in 1993<sup>115</sup>. Since then, the authorities have been using various means in order to shut down various media outlets; while in the early 2000s, a new system for media control has emerged: the political leaders started buying media outlets sometimes using illegal or semi-legal means<sup>116</sup>. The existence of civil society in Kyrgyzstan (another feature remarkable for its democratization processes) was also questioned. The fact that the majority of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan was dependent on the Western grants, while their mission in country was not completely clear, put in question sustainability of these organizations<sup>117</sup>. Regular elections had been taking place in Kyrgyzstan, and some of them have been positively characterized by international observers; however, these elections could not be considered a sign of true democracy. Few governments want to be seen as undemocratic and even autocratic leader of

<sup>113</sup> Spector, "The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan," March 1, 2004.

<sup>114</sup> *Paying for Patronage*.

<sup>115</sup> Karagulova and Megoran, "Discourses of Danger and the 'war on Terror.'"

<sup>116</sup> Juraev, "Kyrgyz Democracy?"

<sup>117</sup> Jailoobaeva, K., n.d. NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. Bishkek: Social Research Center, <http://src.auca.kg/index.php?id¼307&option¼content&task¼view&lang¼ru>

Uzbekistan Islam Karimov bothers to hold elections<sup>118</sup>. A general public distrust can be viewed in Kyrgyzstan towards elections as well as the cynical attitudes towards them among the citizens due to the fact that elections are not being held fairly in this country. Thus, constant manipulation and disregarding the electoral legislation allowed Akaev to stay in the office for 15 years, although the constitution never allowed a president to rule for more than two terms of five years<sup>119</sup>.

### **Kurmanbek Bakiyev: collapse of the common home, April 7, and violence in the south**

By 2000, Kyrgyzstan has gone from electoral democracy to competitive authoritarianism<sup>120</sup>. Beginning in 2004, Akaev tried to consolidate his power through the parliament dominated by his new hegemonic party. Many individuals have been anticipating for further exacerbation of the situation, expecting that he would change constitution and stay in office for longer or transfer his power to his son. The opposition in Kyrgyzstan was not happy with Akaev's regime, poor state of economy, and flourishing corruption in the state structures. It has chosen the 2005 parliamentary elections as an opportunity to challenge regime of the president. Inspired by the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the opposition members launched a campaign to mobilize anti-Akaev voters.

First, protests began in the south of the country. This region has always be considered to be not controlled effectively by the president. The regional protests have soon spread into the streets of the capital, where the opposition leaders have brought young people and other residents of Bishkek. The first months of 2005 were the months of continued protests across the republic; and in the middle of March, a popular assembly in Jalal-Abad formed a

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<sup>118</sup> Kenneth Roth, "Despots Masquerading as Democrats. Human Rights World Report 2008," 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k8/introduction/index.htm>.

<sup>119</sup> Juraev, "Kyrgyz Democracy?"

<sup>120</sup> Kathleen Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," *Journal of Democracy* 22, no. 3 (2011): 150–64, doi:10.1353/jod.2011.0040.

coordinated body for a large anti-Akaev campaign. Following violence and mass disorder, the regime has fallen quickly on March 24. Despite this chaos, opposition member Kurmanbek Bakiyev and political activist Felix Kulov appeared on the political stage as interim leaders. Despite Kulov was more popular among the general public while Bakiyev was not famous in the political scene until 2005, the latter became the interim president of the country, while the former was appointed as a prime minister. At the beginning, the cooperation of Bakiyev and Kulov was successful; introducing the democratic principles, the duo worked to fight corruption and stabilize the economic situation. However, everything has changed with Bakiyev's election to the presidency in July 2005.

The new models of democracy have started disintegrating quickly, labelling the March events a "stolen revolution"<sup>121</sup>. Bakiyev has started the course towards seizure of power and wealth; moreover, opposition members Roza Otunbayeva and Almazbek Atambayev got quickly marginalized and parted the ways with the president<sup>122</sup>. Bakiyev was building his government policies based on the models of Nazarbayev's Kazakhstan and Putin's Russia, while gathering political and economic influence placing his family members into the governing positions. In 2007, Bakiyev held a referendum to change the constitution and electoral code; meanwhile, the referendum has been considered largely falsified by the members of OSCE commission. In a few months, he held the parliamentary elections, the fairness of which was also questioned by international observers. In these elections, the president's party Ak Jol claimed the majority of seats. The party was functioning somewhat similar to the Communist Party, with all the state control over the state institutions<sup>123</sup>. In

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Erica Marat, "March and after: What Has Changed? What Has Stayed the Same?," *Central Asian Survey* 27, no. 3–4 (December 1, 2008): 229–40, doi:10.1080/02634930802536506.

<sup>123</sup> Juraev, "Kyrgyz Democracy?"

presidential elections, which have been held few years later in 2009, Bakiyev won 76 percent of votes, after preventing serious competition<sup>124</sup>.

Bakiyev appeared to be even more non-democratic than his predecessor Akaev. Bakiyev has personalized the security forces of the country by placing his brother and a son in charge of the Presidential Guard and the National Security Service, thus, building allies in the defense and interior ministries<sup>125</sup>. Shutdowns on independent media outlets have grown even worse than in the times of Akaev: in 2008, the government has started more than 50 lawsuits against journalists. Bakiyev's regime appeared to be stronger than the one of Akaev: the new president of the country had a hegemonic party and powerful security structures. Bakiyev was avoiding pluralism in the governmental structures, marginalizing rival clans and other powerful interests in order to favor his own family. State institutions became tools for corruption, rather than vehicles of effective governance<sup>126</sup>.

By the year of 2010, the political situation in Kyrgyzstan was escalating. One fifth of Kyrgyzstan's population was working abroad either in Kazakhstan or Russia, while 30-40 percent of the population has lived below the poverty line<sup>127</sup>. Small protests have been frequently held in the country due to the inflations, electricity shortages, and the arrest of kin<sup>128</sup>. Yet, the opposition leaders have been experiencing hard times to organize significant protests to oppose Bakiyev's regime due to his stronghold on power.

After Bakiyev's victory at the 2009 elections, the repressions have continued. However, in March 2010, the democratic opposition has formed another Popular Assembly to oppose the

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<sup>124</sup> Joshua A. Tucker, "Enough! Electoral Fraud, Collective Action Problems, and Post-Communist Colored Revolutions," *Perspectives on Politics* null, no. 03 (September 2007): 535–51, doi:10.1017/S1537592707071538.

<sup>125</sup> Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," 2011.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Laruelle, "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda," March 2012.

<sup>128</sup> Collins, "Kyrgyzstan's Latest Revolution," 2011.



regime. This time, the opposition, headed by Roza Otunbayeva and Almazbek Atambayev, have chosen the power of *kurultai* – a method of bringing people together with deeper cultural rules and more weight – to demolish Bakiyev’s authoritarian regime. The opposition has seen a revolution as the only way to fight Bakiyev’s corruption, nepotism, and human rights abuses. In March 2010, the opposition has joined in a major kurultai to demand freeing of political prisoners, to put an end to nepotism and human rights abuses, reduce energy and gas tariffs. In response, Bakiyev has organized his own kurultai, where he questioned Western democratic principles and their applicability to Kyrgyzstan. After holding his kurultai, Bakiyev ordered to arrest the protesters.

The media had no power to fight the regime, either. In March 2010, no free media existed in Kyrgyzstan. The opposition members had thus to seek for other means to fight Bakiyev. The activists thus had to travel to Moscow to ask for the Kremlin support in the promotion of democratic values. Although Kremlin was not interested in democracy, it was not happy with Bakiyev, who had taken a loan in 2009 from Russia, defying its agenda of evicting the U.S. Manas Airbase from Kyrgyzstan. Soon, Russian media began publishing many stories about Bakiyev’s nepotism and corruption<sup>129</sup>. After that, the opposition has chosen to implement the strategy similar to the one used in 2005: the first protests have outburst in the regions of the country, particularly, in Talas, spreading to Bishkek. On April 7, thousands gathered in Bishkek’s central square demanding the president’s resignation. There were clashes with police, and the Presidential Guard started a fire killing 86 and wounding 1651. After the revolution, Roza Otunbayev became an interim leader for six months. Bakiyev fled to his hometown in Jalal-Abad region looking for the support of regional elites. Given his wealth and influential

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

power in the south of the country, his potential for stirring the further violence and civil war should not be underestimated<sup>130</sup>.

### **The 2010 conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the south and Bakiyev**

The conflict, which claimed lives of at least 350 people and made about 100,000 ethnic Uzbeks to flee, started in Osh on June 10, 2010 with a clash of Uzbek and Kyrgyz criminal gangs in a casino<sup>131</sup>. Fueled by rumors, the conflict soon acquired the mass character and spread to the city of Jalal-Abad, where a large population of ethnic Uzbeks lives. Some sources claim that not only Uzbek population, but also ethnic Kyrgyz residents of the area suffered significant losses in terms of lives and property. Moreover, interim president Roza Otunbayeva claimed that the number of victims was much higher than the official data supposed, and the number of those killed in the violence reached 2,000<sup>132</sup>. The reasons, which could cause this ethnic violence, are still not clear.

Many explanations of the conflict focus on the events, which shortly preceded the ethnic clash: the afore-mentioned clash in a casino, the alleged rape of Kyrgyz women in a university dormitory, and the constant tension between organized criminal groups dominating the southern region<sup>133 134</sup>. Yet, some explanations focus rather on the political situation, which dominated in Kyrgyzstan shortly after the violent overthrow of the government in April 2010<sup>135</sup>. Namely,

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Melvin, Neil and Omuraliev, Talant. 2011. New social media and conflict in Kyrgyzstan. *Sipri Insights of Peace and Security*, 1: 1-23.

<sup>132</sup> BBC, "Q&A: Kyrgyzstan's Ethnic Violence," *BBC News*, accessed November 19, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/10313948>.

<sup>133</sup> Andrew E. Kramer, "After Kyrgyz Unrest, a Question Lingers: Why?," *The New York Times*, June 26, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/27/world/asia/27kyrgyz.html>.

<sup>134</sup> "Promoting a Stable and Multiethnic Kyrgyzstan: Overcoming the Causes and Legacies of Violence," *Open Society Foundations*, accessed November 29, 2015, <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/promoting-stable-and-multiethnic-kyrgyzstan-overcoming-causes-and-legacies-violence>.

<sup>135</sup> Eric McGlinchey, "Exploring Regime Instability and Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan," *Asia Policy* 12, no. 1 (2011): 79–98, doi:10.1353/asp.2011.0030.

political fragmentation and civil society, which can be mobilized for both liberal and illiberal ends, can be listed among the reasons for the 2010 conflict.

The overthrown president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, managed to maintain good relationship with the southern political leaders and control the region. Originally from the city of Jalal-Abad, he had many contacts with local authorities and leaders of organized criminal groups, which often enjoy popular support in the areas of their origin<sup>136</sup>. Based on the ideas of nepotism, Bakiyev managed to build his own network in which he, his family members, and other people close to him took privileged positions. This fact was had a well-based evidential support.

The south of Kyrgyzstan hardly experienced any tensions during Bakiyev's presidency, while the northern regions of the country have faced several troubles during this period of time. For example, in 2005, supporters of opposing politicians Ravshan Jeenbekov and Jusup Imanaliev clashed in Talas. A few months later, a criminal boss Ryspek Akmatbayev staged a meeting near the Kyrgyz Parliament in Bishkek where the participants were demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Felix Kulov. Akmatbayev was later shot down with a gun by unknown persons while leaving a mosque in Bishkek<sup>137</sup>. While the north of the country remained an arena for political clashes and various campaigns, the south, which is the region prone to ethnic conflicts, remained quiet. With Bakiyev being a president and his strong familial networks in the south, Uzbek activists were understanding that this was not the time to press ethnic identity claims and start the violence<sup>138</sup>.

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<sup>136</sup> Alexander Kupatadze, "'Transitions after Transitions' : Coloured Revolutions and Organized Crime in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan" (Thesis, University of St Andrews, 2010), <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/1320>.

<sup>137</sup> "Kyrgyzstan: Alleged Crime Boss Killed As Political Tensions Soar," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, May 10, 2006, sec. Kyrgyzstan, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1068300.html>.

<sup>138</sup> McGlinchey, "Exploring Regime Instability and Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan," 2011.

Unlike Bakiyev, Otunbayeva failed to construct these regional networks. Although born in the city of Osh, the former interim president has lived most of the time in Kyrgyzstan's capital and spent much time abroad serving on diplomatic positions. The disarray prevailing in the south of the country conditioned by the regime of political uncertainty allowed Uzbek activist based in the south to revive their positions<sup>139</sup>. Thus, Kadyrjan Batyrov, an acknowledged Uzbek leader in the south has established his own "police" to oppose the regional security service, which remained loyal to Bakiyev. With no support from Batyrov, it would not be possible for the interim government to free the south from Bakiyev<sup>140</sup>. And even though Batyrov supported and helped the new government, there were many pitfalls in the establishment of this new de-facto police. Most importantly, it let the local political elites, loyal to Bakiyev, know about Otunbayeva's inability to control the region. Moreover, it made pro-Bakiyev elements see Batyrov's rise as a threat not only to the current situation but to all ethnic Kyrgyz living in the south<sup>141</sup>, which could rather aggravate ethnic tensions than stabilize the ethnic situation in south.

That is why political origins are the most popular explanation of the 2010 violence. The revolution, which took place in Bishkek in April 2010, has proved that mobilizations of masses may serve to achieve someone's goals. Eventually, violence became a tool for fulfilling someone's political aims and ambitions. Ironically, in June 2010, the interim government had to fight the same power of destruction, which had helped them achieve their goals in April. The success of the 2010 revolution proved the fact that Kyrgyzstan became an arena for civic mobilizations and political flash mobs; but, more seriously, it showed that attacking institutional buildings and starting the street violence could be an effective tool to reach

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<sup>139</sup> Andrew R. Bond and Natalie R. Koch, "Interethnic Tensions in Kyrgyzstan: A Political Geographic Perspective," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 51, no. 4 (July 1, 2010): 531–62, doi:10.2747/1539-7216.51.4.531.

<sup>140</sup> Hanks, "Crisis in Kyrgyzstan," June 1, 2011.

<sup>141</sup> McGlinchey, "Exploring Regime Instability and Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan," 2011.

someone's political ends. Paradoxically, the learned behavior of the 2010 revolution that brought Otunbayeva and her supporters to power few months earlier has produced violent ethnic clashes in Osh and Jalal-Abad<sup>142</sup>.

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<sup>142</sup> McGlinchey, "Exploring Regime Instability and Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan," 2011.

## **CHAPTER III. DATA ANALYSIS**

### **Introductory remarks**

The data consists of 24 speeches of two presidents of Kyrgyzstan: 11 speeches were performed by first president of the country Askar Akaev in the period of 1991-2004, and 13 speeches were made by second president of the republic Kurmanbek Bakiyev during the years of 2006-2009. These are commemorative speeches, major policy addresses, congratulating messages addressed by the presidents on national holidays, as well as the speeches tied to some cultural events, such as openings of the new monuments in the capital or jubilees of national writers.

The analysis mainly focuses on the content of the speeches. Therefore, individual speeches were not analyzed separately, as this would extend the scope of the study. Moreover, not all parts of the speech were relevant to the following study; consequently, the analysis is thematic, focusing on specific quotations extracted from the two politicians' speeches, and comparing the contrasts in statements of the presidents talking on the same topics. This approach will allow identifying the most important aspects and the main strategies of the presidents' speeches, as well as the overall strategic profile of Bakiyev and Akaev in terms of the identity narratives performed by them.

The study builds on the idea that there are three genres of oratory in the classical rhetoric. The judicial oratory centers on the past and its function to accuse or defend just or unjust behavior. The deliberative genre of rhetoric is associated with future and perceived threats and dangers it may bring. The epideictic rhetoric is linked to the present and deals with the current events and blaming or praising someone for them. That is why the two major frames analyzed in this study are (1) construction of common historical past and (2) creation of the common future in the presidents' narratives. However, it is first important to briefly examine how the speakers, i.e. presidents, were presenting the concept of nation. This will be done by

identifying the small number of references in their speech to a common culture and language, the unity of the Kyrgyz people, and the Kyrgyz nations's relation to the outside world.

## **Methodology**

As the research is focusing on the national identity narratives introduced by the two former presidents of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev and Kurmanbek Bakiyev, the critical discourse analysis of political speeches of the two presidents was employed to answer the study's research questions. The public speeches of the both presidents became the objects of analysis in this research. These speeches have been performed by the country's leaders during the national holidays, celebrated in the country on particular days. It was also important to look at the inauguration speeches of the both presidents, which also were found in the national newspapers. The speeches selected by this study were important for this research due to a number of reasons. First, they were published in the national newspapers and broadcasted on TV; thus, reaching a large segment of public. Second, they were tied to major events taking place in the country, essential for the identity formation, such as national holidays, jubilees of the Kyrgyz writers, or meetings of the government officials. Some of the speeches were important policy addresses, pointing out the plan for the country's further development and reflecting the presidents' views on the nation's present and future.

The study analyzed available speeches of President Akaev, which were performed in the period of 1991 until 2005, and the speeches of President Bakiyev in the period of 2005 until 2010. This time frame was selected for the analysis as it allowed to analyze the presidents' narratives during the whole terms of their service, thus, fully monitoring the identity discourses performed by the state's leaders. The discourse analysis allowed seeing what narratives have been used by the both presidents in process of the national identity formation, as well as it allowed to identify the main differences in the identity discourses of the two presidents.

The textual data containing the presidents' speeches, which was published in the newspapers or saved in the archives of the presidential administration, were analyzed for this thesis, as it allowed thorough analysis of national identity discourses of the two presidents. The data were collected through a thorough search of the speeches in the national newspapers and contacting the presidential administration office. As the speeches were analyzed in textual format, they did not require transcribing. As this is discursive analysis, consideration was given to the construction, function, variation, rhetorical strategies, and discursive features of the discourse. The data were read thoroughly to identify important rhetorical features. The speeches of each president then were considered together to identify common patterns; these patterns were then analyzed in order to identify strategies of the national identity construction for each president. Exemplary quotes of the presidents were included in this analysis to represent eventual findings and illustrate the strategies that were identified. After this, the data were analyzed in the context of the political developments taking place at that time as well as actions of the dominant political actors.

Since the 1970, the discourse analysis has been widely used for the research in humanities and social sciences, and a variety of meanings have been attributed to the term<sup>143</sup>. The discourses have been studied in terms of linguistics as well as within the cognitive-oriented approach. The critical discourse analysis situates itself within traditions of the critical theory and proposes two ways of looking at the discourses. Firstly, it is necessary to integrate historical background into the discursive events, which are actually embedded in this background. Secondly, this approach proposes to trace the particular types of discourses and their change in different periods of time<sup>144</sup>. Critical discourse analysis focuses on the authentic regular

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<sup>143</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

<sup>144</sup> Norman Fairclough, "RUTH WODAK, Disorders of Discourse. (Real Language Series.) London: Longman, 1996. Pp. Xi, 200. Pb £15.99.," *Language in Society* 28, no. 04 (October 1999): 605–9, doi:null.



communication in institutional, media, or political locations, rather than looking on sample sentences constructed in linguists' minds. It analyzes both textual and spoken discourses as categories of social practice<sup>145</sup>. Critical discourse analysis assumes that there is a strong connection between the discourses and the events, in which those discourses are embedded. Certain historical events shape discourses, but in turn, these discourses affect social and political reality of a community.

The discourses help individuals to constitute the objects of knowledge, social roles, as well as identities and interpersonal relations of actors involved in these discourses<sup>146</sup>. The main aim of the critical discourse analysis is to identify the obscured structures of power, political control, and dominance, as well as to unmask the strategies of inclusion or exclusion in the language use<sup>147</sup>. It is important to intervene into the given social and political practices and contextualize given discourses within these practices. The critical discourse analysis is faced with a difficult task to transcend the reciprocal ties between the discourses dominating the public sphere and political or institutional structures as well as to identify certain linguistic patterns in the text, serving as indicators of those ties.

To implement this task, the critical discourse analysis often employs the principle of triangulation, which means that the discursive phenomena are approached from several methodological and theoretical perspectives<sup>148</sup>. The following thesis is going to combine historical, socio-political, and linguistic perspectives exploring the formation of the national identity. The principle of triangulation implies putting available data into historical and socio-political context, which allows providing a detailed picture on the formation of national identity

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<sup>145</sup> Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis* (SAGE, 2009).

<sup>146</sup> Wodak, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> "Method and Measurement in Sociology by Cicourel, Aaron V., 1928-: New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1969 - Steven Wolfe Books," accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.abebooks.com/Method-measurement-sociology-Cicourel-Aaron-1928-/9195608666/bd>.

in Kyrgyzstan. The choice of the triangulation principle is based on the understanding of the “context”<sup>149</sup>. The first aspect of the context is the immediate linguistic text, the second is a specific institutional setting in which discourses take place, and the third aspect deals with intertextual and interdiscursive references in the text<sup>150</sup>. The research will examine the extent to which certain positive or negative connotations in the text may be associated with certain concepts or practices which can in turn serve as indicators of the Kyrgyz national feeling or national consciousness. Besides this, the analysis will look at the conditions, which could possibly affect the discourses: the locality where the speech was performed and the occasion.

There are three genres of oratory in the classical rhetoric<sup>151</sup>. The judicial oratory centers on the past and its function to accuse or defend just or unjust behavior. The deliberative genre of rhetoric is associated with future and perceived threats and dangers it may bring. The epideictic rhetoric is linked to the present and deals with the current events and blaming or praising someone for them. The majority of the political speeches analyzed for this research were linked to the Kyrgyz national holidays, and the messages delivered by presidents were mainly addressing the past achievements and failures of the country and its people, which were attributed to the present situation. Therefore, these speeches may be attributed to the epideictic rhetoric; however, it did not occur in a pure form, as the state’s leaders were also referring to the future.

The speeches delivered by the presidents on national holidays primarily served to retrieve the past for the present. The presidents were often selecting affirmative elements for the past to justify the present situation and predict future developments. These speeches served not only to promote the past achievement of the leaders, but also had an educational purpose, seeking to convey certain socio-political beliefs, create a spirit of community, and to construct

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<sup>149</sup> Wodak, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

common identities<sup>152</sup>. However, the speeches contained elements of different types of rhetoric. They sometimes exhibited characteristics of judicial rhetoric, justifying the past problems; or were addressing the future, thus incorporating elements of deliberative genre. The analysis in rhetorical terms seems to be the most adequate method for this study, as the selected speeches contained a wide range of rhetorical elements.

It is worth noting that the occasion of speech, the locality where it is delivered, and the audience being addressed are also important factors highly influencing the way discourses are formulated. The speeches delivered by the presidents on national holidays are normally addressed not only to the immediate audience, but also to those people who will receive the information through the media channels. Therefore, these speeches are broadcasted both on the national and international levels, so that even people living abroad can find them. That is why, one of the study's limitation may be that the authors of the speeches, as well as the speakers, may be adapting their messages for this large audience; and sometimes the discourses in the speeches will not be able to reflect on the real socio-economic conditions in the country.

Another possible limitation of the study is the fact that the analysis of the presidential speeches has been criticized<sup>153 154</sup>, as it may not be representative of the country's leaders' actual behavior. These speeches are normally written by the president's assistants and only slightly edited by the leaders themselves. However, it may not be so important who wrote the speech, as the person delivering the statement is the only individual responsible for it<sup>155</sup>. In other words, the politicians are the "principals" of their messages<sup>156</sup>. That is why, the study will no longer distinguish between the authors and the speakers, who are the presidents. The production of the

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Jeffrey Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton University Press, 1987).

<sup>154</sup> Michael Schudson, "Why Conversation Is Not the Soul of Democracy," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 14, no. 4 (December 1, 1997): 297–309, doi:10.1080/15295039709367020.

<sup>155</sup> Wodak, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*.

<sup>156</sup> Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

political speeches consists of certain stages, such as selection of topics, arrangement of topic, linguistic development of the topic, memorizing, and delivery<sup>157</sup>. The authors of the speech are primarily involved in the third stage, which is developing of the topic, and partially they deal with arrangement of the topic<sup>158</sup>. However, memorizing and delivery is a pure responsibility of the speaker; therefore, he or she is responsible for its content.

The third limitation might be the language of the speeches used for the analysis. As Kyrgyzstan uses two languages, all speeches are performed by presidents both in Kyrgyz and Russian. Although the speeches in Russian are normally translated directly from Kyrgyz, there still might be a slight difference between the messages addressed to the Kyrgyz-speaking audience and the text presented in front of the Russian-speaking people. The fourth problem might be the fact that the research is going to analyze the speeches performed by Akaev more than 15 years ago. Full text of some of them is not any longer available in the archives; therefore, the research will have to analyze the extracts of these speeches, which sometimes will not allow to conduct a full-fledged analysis of the discourses.

### **Nation, national consciousness, independence, and identity**

In the speeches, analyzed for this study, the term “nation” seldom occurred; however, there is no doubt that the both speakers believed in the existence of a unified Kyrgyz nation. The identity of the Kyrgyz people as well as the sovereignty of their country were portrayed by both speakers as already well-established phenomena. Both speakers mostly used the word “*kyrgyzstantsy*” (the *kyrgyzstanis*) when referring to the people living in the country, not specifying their ethnic or religious identity in most of the cases. The word “*narod*” (the *people*) was also used quite often by both presidents, which was designed to strengthen the sense of the unity of the Kyrgyz people and underline the authenticity of this nation. Whenever politicians

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<sup>157</sup> Wodak, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

referred to regional consciousness in a particular region of the country, it mostly served to reinforce the Kyrgyz national self-perception and the image of independent Kyrgyzstan. However, even though both presidents often used the same rhetorical techniques to reinforce the national consciousness of the people they addressed to, their messages and identity narratives were different in many ways.

### **Askar Akaev: “common home” and “international accord” rhetoric**

*Approaches to identity: politics, international relations, citizenship, multiculturalism*

Having become a president of a newly independent country, Askar Akaev have developed the ideas for civic inclusion, approaching the nation-building processes as dynamic, changing processes reflecting the current situation in the country<sup>159</sup>. As a president of a Post-Soviet country, Akaev had to build national identity of the newly formed nation in a way that would not foster new ethnic conflict, but would also reinforce the idea of Kyrgyzstan’s statehood<sup>160</sup>. That is why Akaev had to recognize difference between the concepts of citizenship, nationality, and ethnicity, shifting away from the Soviet traditions, as demonstrated by the speeches, in which the President addressed the “citizens of Kyrgyzstan” as well as “people of different ethnic groups”, living in the country<sup>161</sup>. By acknowledging the fact that different ethnic minorities lived in the country, the president urged them to think of themselves as of the Kyrgyzstani citizens, having equal rights and opportunities. Besides this, Akaev was following the model established by first Russian President Boris Yeltsin, based on the idea of citizenship rather than ethnic identity – Kyrgyzstani (*kyrgyzstanskii*) instead of the Kyrgyz

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<sup>159</sup> Erica Marat, “‘We Disputed Every Word’: How Kyrgyzstan’s Moderates Tame Ethnic Nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism*, January 1, 2016, n/a – n/a, doi:10.1111/nana.12156.

<sup>160</sup> Laruelle, “The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda,” March 2012.

<sup>161</sup> Marat, “‘We Disputed Every Word,’” January 1, 2016.

(*kyrgyzskii*). In most of his speeches, Akaev was calling the citizens of Kyrgyzstan the Kyrgyzstanis, the term, which does not exclude any residents of the country.

In his speeches, the first president of independent Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev, was often referring to the ideas of international accord (*mezhnatsionalnoe soglasie*) and the common home rhetoric. The leader of the country was referring to those living in the country as to the “kyrgyzstanis” and the people of Kyrgyzstan. He often specified that by saying this, he meant people belonging to different ethnic groups, who live in the country, which is a common home for everyone:

Our people are multiethnic. That is why there is nothing more important for the republic’s citizens than stability and accord. I would like to mention the tragic events, which took place in Kerben village of Aksy area. People have understood how fragile the peace is. A bunch of provocateurs have brought chaos into life of the kyrgyzstanis. Unfortunately, blood has shed. Of course, in such moments we sharply feel how important stability is in our common home, called Kyrgyzstan.

In this passage, the president has drawn a clear distinction between those who try to destabilize the peaceful situation in the country and by the citizens of Kyrgyzstan, also referred as “kyrgyzstanis”. Those dismissively called by the president “a bunch of provocateurs” were representatives of the local population, who in 2002 were requiring canceling the ratification of the Kyrgyz-Chinese border agreement, which in turn, escalated the interethnic relations in the village.

The president has clearly presented the organizers of the riot as “others”, not those belonging to the citizens of Kyrgyzstan, for whom the stability and accord are the most important things. This reinforces the image of the multicultural and peaceful Kyrgyzstan, and strengthens national identity and unity of those people, who were not involved in the Aksy riot. It also prevents Kyrgyz citizens from organizing other revolts, as in his speech the president clearly marginalized those who are having ethnicity-based claims as those “provocateurs” from Aksy. It should be noted that the president does not use any words specifying the ethnic

belonging of those, to whom he refers as citizens of Kyrgyzstan or kyrgyzstanis, which means that these notions include representatives of different ethnic groups. Therefore, this passage reinforces the image of Kyrgyzstan as a common home for representatives of different ethnic groups willing to co-exist peacefully with each other, which was so widely promoted under the rule of President Akaev.

In other speeches, the president continued reinforcing the image of multicultural and friendly Kyrgyzstan, by mentioning a need for and the importance of the external assistance. Interestingly, the president was enhancing the national consciousness of the Kyrgyz citizens in his speech tied to the opening of an independence monument by dwelling on the idea of independence, at the same time saying that Kyrgyzstan would not be able to do on its own, as it would definitely need assistance from the other states:

The monument we are opening today is a symbol of the freedom of our people and it is dedicated to those who have fought and sacrificed their lives for our independence. Currently, some military actions are taking place in the south of Kyrgyzstan. Alone, we will not be able to fight this trouble. We badly need military and technical assistance.

In this passage, the president continued to develop the idea of international friendship, which is relevant not only to the good relations between representatives of different ethnic groups co-habituating in Kyrgyzstan, but also with other countries in the world, specifically, Russia. Mentioning the independence of Kyrgyzstan in the first part of his address, the president tried to bring a balance to his speech: on the one hand, Kyrgyzstan is an independent state with its sovereign economy and politics, but on the other, it can take an assistance from other “brother people”, with whom Kyrgyzstan shares common history and past. Therefore, the double identity narrative is present in Akaev’s speeches: on the one hand, he dwelled on the idea of the sovereignty and independency of the Kyrgyz nation, at the same time, requiring a “friendly assistance” from the other states, which, according to him, is a sign of international accord and friendship.

The motto “Kyrgyzstan is our common home” was quite often used by President Akaev along with his policies to marginalize all ethnicity-based political groups, which could potentially insist on the development of the Kyrgyz-centered nationalism. The term “international accord” was used to underline the unity of the “Kyrgyzstani” people, despite their diversity and multicultural character. To reinforce the effect of his words, the president has established the People’s Assembly, the organization, which, as Akaev noted in his speeches, represented different cultures and was enriching the Kyrgyz traditions. The president welcomed Russian culture in his speeches specifically, in addition to opening the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University and the monument of Russian poet Alexander Pushkin in front of it. In his speech, dedicated to this event, the Kyrgyz president was continuously underlining the importance of the Russian culture for the people of Kyrgyzstan, in order to include the Russian minority into the Kyrgyz society.

Besides this, citizenship was also playing an important role for President Akaev. The desire of Akaev to establish a civic identity among the citizens of the country was followed by unwillingness to erase the Soviet symbols from the public arena. The statue of Lenin was remaining in the central square of Kyrgyzstan’s capital until 2003, after that, it was moved behind the Kyrgyz Historical Museum, also located in the center of Bishkek. The collection in the museum was also composed of many symbols of the Soviet historical past, supplemented by the symbols of the sovereignty and independence of the new country. This fact is also representative of the double identity narratives of the president, in which, on the one hand, the president tends to include representatives of different cultures and ethnicities in the Kyrgyz society, and on the other, reinforces the image of the ancient Kyrgyz people with their rich historical culture and traditions, owners of their own sovereign state. Following his speeches, the president was perceiving individuals as part of the Kyrgyz nation independently from their



ethnic belonging, but rather based on their residential status and citizenship. Granting Kyrgyz national passport to Tajik civil war refugees in 2002, the president said:

Despite the fact that a part of those arrived to Kyrgyzstan decided to return to Tajikistan, many individuals chose to live in our country. And I am glad. Together with you, we will continue reforms and build a democratic state.

Having granted the Kyrgyz citizenship to the Tajik refugees who preferred to stay in their hosting country, the president stressed that they have become a part of the Kyrgyz society. He emphasized that they have become equal citizens of their hosting country, who *together* with its other members are now eligible to continue working on the construction of a new democratic state. In this passage, the president dwells on the idea of the common political present to reinforce the national identity and the national consciousness of the newly accepted members of the Kyrgyz society. Again, in his speech he does not mention the ethnic belonging of the new citizens, but emphasizes the fact that the refugees chose to live in Kyrgyzstan; therefore, they are welcome there.

The Post-Soviet historiography of Kyrgyzstan was built on a teleological basis: it was narrated as a history of the nation moving towards its independence<sup>162</sup>. However, very importantly, Akaev was always mentioning that this march towards sovereignty has been attracting representatives of many ethnic groups, who eventually, made this independence possible by enriching ethnic Kyrgyz people with their languages, cultures, and traditions, making minorities feel welcomed in the country, which became a “common home” for all people living there. However, as political competition was intensifying, the president started responding with ethno-centric ideological projects to mobilize the state apparatus to secure his continued hold on power<sup>163</sup>. The president was reinforcing the national consciousness of the citizens by often mentioning in his speeches the idea of sovereignty and independency of the

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<sup>162</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, “Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations,” *The Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 4 (2001): 862–96, doi:10.1086/340148.

<sup>163</sup> Marat, “We Disputed Every Word,” January 1, 2016.

Kyrgyz nation and its importance for the establishment of a strong state. In one of the policy addresses, the president noted:

I would like to note one important thing: without strengthening the idea of sovereignty, any our efforts in the sphere of economy and social policy would never work out, they would never have any legal guarantees and mechanisms for effective realization.

In his speeches, the president often emphasized the sovereignty of Kyrgyzstan and its independence, as well as efforts of the government to build a democratic Kyrgyzstan. This has been done to highlight and emphasize integrity of the newly formed Kyrgyz nation after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as it was the main aim of the president upon independence of the Kyrgyz Republic.

*Approaches to identity: culture as a tool for national consciousness formation*

In another speech dedicated to a national holiday, the president kept emphasizing the idea of the common home. This time, he referred to the Kyrgyz culture in relation to the holiday, which became common for all residents of the country:

One of the traditions of the Kyrgyz people is the annual celebration of the national holiday Nooruz – the holiday of kindness, tolerance, benevolence, mutual understanding, joy, and hopes – a beautiful and bright symbol of the New Year. The fact that this holiday took an important place in the lives of our compatriots, independently of their ethnic belonging or religious beliefs, is pleasing me.

Meanwhile, Nooruz is one of the most important holidays for the Kyrgyz people and some other Central Asian nations; the celebration of this holiday is a bright example of following the traditions of the Kyrgyz people and honoring the Kyrgyz culture. However, in his speech, Akaev emphasized that celebrating Nooruz is not Kyrgyz in the ethnic sense, but, on the contrary, celebration of this holiday unites representatives of different ethnic group in the one nation, who despite the ethnic difference, share the same cultural values.

Another tool used by President Akaev for strengthening the sense of national identity among the Kyrgyzstani people was the promotion of the ideas set in the Manas national epic.

This epic also represents the double identity narrative on the one hand encouraging patriotism among the Kyrgyz people, and on another making the unity and integrity of the nation as well as interethnic accord, friendship and cooperation two of the main commandments of Manas. This epic was fitting the identity narratives introduced by the president, so the 1000 jubilee of the Manas epic was celebrated in the republic and the state's leader delivered a speech on this occasion. It was the only speech performed by Akaev among those, analyzed in this study, in which the president mentioned the ethnic belonging of the Kyrgyz citizens; moreover, referring to them as to "our people", the president for a long time was not specifying who these people were:

The Kyrgyz people are one of the most ancient people in Central Asia. What our people had to go through during their long way! But even then our people did not lose their distinctive character and was defending honor and independence of their motherland. We can compare the meaning of the Manas epic for the Kyrgyz people with the meaning of the holy Bible for the Christian world and Western civilization.

In this passage, the president for the first time draw a difference between the Kyrgyz people and others, presenting the Kyrgyz in a way superior to other people of the world. Emphasizing on the ancient history and originality of the Kyrgyz nation, the president was reinforcing the sense of patriotism among the Kyrgyz; however, this does not refer to representatives of the other ethnic groups living in the country, as in several fragments of his speech he was clearly talking only about Kyrgyz people. In the second part of the passage, the president compares the significance of Manas with that of the Bible for the Christian world and the Western civilization. Importantly, a large Russian minority living in Kyrgyzstan is also Christian. Meanwhile this minority does not belong to the Western civilization, to which Akaev referred. If Akaev did not bring up the Western part of the world, it would mean that he marginalized the Russian minority predicating the Christianity; however, the way he formulated the sentence means that he mainly associated the Christianity with the Western part of the world, not marginalizing Russians.

Moreover, in the second part of the speech, the president provided a definition of the “Kyrgyz people”, who turn out to be not only Kyrgyz, but also consisting of representatives of different ethnic groups:

For peace and stability of his people, Manas was trying to broaden the circle of his friends and well-wishers, organizing a long-sighted policy. Among the knights, praised by Manas, were representatives of different ethnic groups; moreover, relatives of his enemies. Finally, they have become a part of the Kyrgyz nation. Our ancestors have never refused the culture of other people; on the contrary, by contact with them, the Kyrgyz people have been enriching their own culture.

Thus, the second part of Akaev’s monologue was bringing balance to the whole speech, which started with praising the originality of the Kyrgyz people, specifically mentioning their ethnicity. Introducing the rhetoric of friendship, Akaev continued emphasizing the “kind traditions of friendship of the Kyrgyz nation” and the idea of the “common home” by underlining that the knights of Manas were belonging to different ethnic groups. In the second part of the speech the president also explicitly mentioned the role of the Russian and Kazakh researchers, who contributed to the development of the epic and its promotion to the world scene:

The genius of the Kazakh people, Chokan Valikhanov, was the first researcher to notice that the whole spiritual capital of the Kyrgyz people was stored in the Manas epic (...) The collection and recording of the various epic’s versions and their research was started by the Russian scholars in the middle of the last century. It is impossible to deny the fact that the thorough research of the epic has been started after the October revolution, in the Soviet period.

In this passage, the president emphasized the importance of the foreign researchers’ contribution, as well as underlined the fact that most of the developments in the relation to the Manas epic took place during the Soviet era. Given that in the first part of his speech the president was referring to the importance of the epic for the Kyrgyz nation and representativeness of its characters for the Kyrgyz people, it is quite symbolic that the foreign researchers contributed to studying this epic. The president might have deliberately mentioned

the Russian and the Kazakh researchers in his speech to underline one more time the friendly relations of the Kyrgyz people with representatives of other ethnic groups.

The president resorted to Manas ideals that treat Kyrgyz people as an entity with rich historically formed culture and unique heritage, although implicitly praising interethnic harmony. He also focused his attention on the seven lessons of Manas, among which were the unity of the nation and interethnic accord. Manas represented the values, cherished by the teleological rhetoric of the Kyrgyz president: a defender of the motherland, standing for its independency and sovereignty. On the other hand, it reinforces the multiethnic image of Kyrgyzstan as a state with a long history and culturally rich people<sup>164</sup>. That is why Manas-based ideology became very important under the Akaev's regime, even penetrating the school and higher educational institutions' curriculums.

The speech performed by the president at the solemn ceremony dedicated to the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Kyrgyz national writer, Chyngyz Aitmatov, was similar to the one Akaev performed in relation to the jubilee of the Manas epic. He started again with praising the contribution of Aitmatov to the representation of the Kyrgyz nation in the world, gradually moving to discussing the originality and the ancient roots of the Kyrgyz people, making several references to the Manas epic. This was done to raise the patriotic senses among the listener and to reinforce the image of rich Kyrgyz culture. However, from this the president again gradually moved to promoting the ideas of multiculturalism, which have been prompted by the historical past:

Our motherland is situated in the heart of Central Asia, where in the ancient times the great Eastern cultures were meeting: the Arab, the Persian, the Indian, the Chinese, and the Byzantine ones. Through centuries, our ancestors have been

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<sup>164</sup> David Cameron Gullette, "Kinship, State, and 'Tribalism' : The Genealogical Construction of the Kyrgyz Republic" (Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2007), <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/252029>.

absorbing the best values and traditions of other cultures and have been developing their own ones.

In another speech performed by President Akaev, he again referred to the culture, which is shared by both the Kyrgyz and the Russian people. At the ceremony of the solemn opening of a monument to Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, the president emphasized the good relations of the Russian and Kyrgyz people:

Today we together with the Russian people and the whole progressive and enlightened humanity continue to strengthen the 200-years jubilee since the birth of one of the greatest creators of all times and all peoples – the great Russian poet, Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin (...) Today we open the monument to Pushkin in the center of our capital – at the entrance to the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic university. It became not only one of the best educational institutions, but, first and foremost, the center of the Russian and Slavic cultures in Kyrgyzstan, a symbol of the eternal friendship between the new democratic Russia and the new democratic Kyrgyzstan. The monument of Pushkin is our tribute to the memory of the great poet, the priority culture and benevolence in the development of the new Kyrgyzstan. Secondly, by doing so, we, the Kyrgyzstanis, one more time want to express our attitude to Russian language, and its official status in the Kyrgyz Republic. Thirdly, this is another symbol of the eternal not destructible friendship between the peoples of Russia and Kyrgyzstan.

This fragment of the speech was full of the metaphors, which served to express the good attitude to the Russian people among Kyrgyz people. On the one hand, in the first sentence the president emphasized the fact that the holiday was celebrated specifically with the Russian people, and only after that he mentioned the “progressive and enlightened humanity”. Through his speech, the president several times mentioned the “eternality” of the friendship between the two countries. It is also important that Akaev mentioned the official status of the Russian language, talking about it in a praising tone, specifying the significance of the “great Pushkin’s language” to the Kyrgyz nation. This way, the president again underlined the multicultural characters of the Kyrgyz nation and its openness and willingness to integrate the elements of other cultures.

Akaev’s national identity narratives combined the civic reference of being the “home for all citizens” and some ethnic-based characteristics related to the ancient origins of the

Kyrgyz people and their cultural wealth. However, these ethnic-based references have always been compensated by Askar Akaev in his speeches by other narratives, which were underlining the importance of ethnic minorities, making them feel welcomed in the country. These narratives as well as the policies, introduced by Akaev, have earned the country a reputation of the most welcoming state for the Russian minorities and provided the president with the support from the Uzbek and Russian elites<sup>165</sup>.

### **Bakiyev: independency and territorial integrity – main characteristics of a successful nation**

*Territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty: components of a nation*

The political power, which evolved after the Tulip Revolution was built on the legitimacy, different from Akaev's one<sup>166 167</sup>. Bakiyev, originally being a politician from the south of Kyrgyzstan, sought to establish his power in all regions of the country and emphasize the divisions between northern and southern elites. The latter supported by Bakiyev aimed to promote their interests, which contradicted the interests of the Uzbek minority concentrated in the south<sup>168</sup>. Moreover, the transformation of the political power in the country has led to criminalization of political elites<sup>169</sup> and marginalization of ethnic minorities from the public arena. Therefore, the political change in Bishkek has accelerated the development of conflicts of interest in the south and interethnic situation in the country<sup>170</sup>. Moreover, Bakiyev's personality as well as his background were different from those of Akaev: Bakiyev was born in

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<sup>165</sup> Marat, "Imagined Past, Uncertain Future."

<sup>166</sup> Scott Radnitz, "Project MUSE - What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?," accessed April 25, 2016, <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/196964>.

<sup>167</sup> Henry E. Hale, "Regime Cycles: Democracy, Autocracy, and Revolution in Post-Soviet Eurasia," *World Politics* 58, no. 01 (October 2005): 133–65, doi:10.1353/wp.2006.0019.

<sup>168</sup> Laruelle, "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda," March 2012.

<sup>169</sup> Spector, "Securing Property in Contemporary Kyrgyzstan."

<sup>170</sup> Alexander Kupatadze, "Organized Crime before and after the Tulip Revolution: The Changing Dynamics of Upperworld-Underworld Networks," *Central Asian Survey* 27, no. 3–4 (December 1, 2008): 279–99, doi:10.1080/02634930802560449.

the street, while Akaev benefitted from the intellectual image of a university academic, as well as from the international prestige Bakiyev had to do without<sup>171</sup>. Therefore, Bakiyev had to rely on the style of political mobilization, different from that of Akaev, creating the narratives and establishing consensus among the political elites. This political mobilization was based on a more affirmed Kyrgyz nationalism<sup>172</sup>.

Kurmbanbek Bakiyev put less emphasis on the need to produce top-down ideas about the nation, and his own position on the significance of interethnic relations was not clear from his speeches. However, addressing the nation, Bakiyev clearly stated what he thought about the Kyrgyz people. First, in most of his speeches, the president was addressing those living in Kyrgyzstan as the “Kyrgyz people”, which was no longer following the model established on the idea of citizenship rather than ethnic identity. In Russian language, the word “Kyrgyz” is used to symbolize the ethnicity, but not the citizenship, and the president’s speeches addressed to the “Kyrgyz people” could be perceived as messages directed to the ethnic Kyrgyz only. Second, in most of his speeches, Bakiyev used the notion of “nation”. Although the nation could be considered a term inclusionary for all citizens, it has a slightly different meaning in Russian, as the Soviet meaning of the word “natsionalnost” (nation) referred to the ethnic identity, but not to one’s citizenship. This term is still widely used and perceived by most of the people in Kyrgyzstan in the old, Soviet sense; that is why, addressing the “Kyrgyz nation”, the president was addressing the ethnic Kyrgyz.

Besides of the use of the terms “nation”, “national” and addressing the “Kyrgyz people”, the president was stressing a need to preserve the national language as well as the unique

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<sup>171</sup> Laruelle, “The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda,” March 2012.

<sup>172</sup> Anna Matveeva, “Legitimising Central Asian Authoritarianism: Political Manipulation and Symbolic Power,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 7 (September 1, 2009): 1095–1121, doi:10.1080/09668130903068624.



cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz people from the external influence. In some of the speeches, the president referred to the idea of ancestry of the Kyrgyz people, which was marginalizing ethnic minorities. This was reinforced by citing some proverbs in Kyrgyz, raising the national consciousness. Therefore, the president's narratives presented in his speeches were mainly focusing on the importance of the Kyrgyz culture with hidden ethnic references. However, even if the narratives of the president and his view on the Kyrgyz nation were not clear at times, it is important to place these narratives in the general context of policies developed during Bakiyev's regime as well as the actions of the dominant political actors, assigned by the president.

Kurmanbek Bakiyev delegated ideological deliberations to a State Secretary, a position that was created to deal with the creation of ideology<sup>173</sup>. Dastan Sarygulov and Adakhan Madumarov were the actors assigned for this position at different times. They both sought to popularize their visions of pan-Kyrgyz ideology<sup>174</sup>. Sarygulov was an active supporter of Tengrism, a modern interpretation of the ancient Central Asian religious practices<sup>175</sup>. Although Tengrism was promoting tolerance towards other ethnicities, cultures, and religions, it also incorporated and favored strong ethno-centric tendencies and favored pan-Kyrgyz and pan-Turkic views<sup>176</sup>. Madumarov, who was a successor of Sarygulov, went even further transforming the Akaev's notion of a "common home" by stating that "Kyrgyzstan actually is our common home, but other nations in this country are its tenants"<sup>177</sup>. He was also emphasizing that the minorities are welcome in this rented home, demonstrating that he was accepting guests

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<sup>173</sup> Marat, "We Disputed Every Word," January 1, 2016.

<sup>174</sup> Marat, "Imagined Past, Uncertain Future."

<sup>175</sup> Marlène Laruelle, "Religious Revival, Nationalism and the 'invention of Tradition': Political Tengrism in Central Asia and Tatarstan," *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 2 (June 1, 2007): 203–16, doi:10.1080/02634930701517433.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> "Omut ideologii , MSN - news of Kyrgyzstan," accessed April 25, 2016, <http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/19401>.

thanks to his own good will. The metaphor of the house for the nation implied that the “guest” had to recognize and accept the dominant cultural norms and traditions. This metaphor was reinforced by the extensive references of Bakiyev to the authentic Kyrgyz culture and traditions and the need to preserve them. These Kyrgyz-centered historical references both of the president and other officials supposed that the titular nation had superior rights within its own state and the minorities were only guests there, especially given the fact the minorities did not participate in these cultural transformations of the nation and have only joined it during the Soviet time.

In his speeches, Bakiyev used the term “nation” quite often, he referred to the citizens of Kyrgyzstan as to “Kyrgyz people” and “our people” – notions similar to those, used by Akaev in his speech. However, this president was not specifying who those “people” were, whether they included representatives of different ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan or not. Moreover, Bakiyev was putting emphasis on the political and economic independence of the Kyrgyz nation, which was perceived by the leader as a main component of the nation’s success:

We took a track of the country’s renewal, its reconstruction. Many things have happened during this short time, much has changed in the country. Even though the prices have risen naturally, people’s lives have improved. Anxiety, fear of the future have disappeared. The confidence has risen among the people. National consciousness, the feeling of national pride are rising.

The president connected the sense of national identity with the economic well-being of the country in this passage. Making a short introduction on the improvements achieved by the country’s authorities, the president started talking about the raised national consciousness of the people living in Kyrgyzstan. However, in this speech Bakiyev never mentioned the multiethnic composition of the Kyrgyz nation, but was often talking about “national unity:

In order to achieve the stated objectives, today we badly need to achieve the national unity, the capital of the national accord and creativeness. It is time to transform the political passions and ambitions into an energetic work to improve the country’s economy and ensure effective administration (...) We need to objectively evaluate our national wealth and start capitalization of the country.

In this short passage, the president used the word “national” several times, thus, trying to raise the national consciousness of the people. Together with the word “national”, he used the words with the positive staining, such as “wealth” and “unity”. This way, the president was adding the positive meaning to the notion of the “nation” as well, thus raising the sense of national identity among the Kyrgyz people. The unity and the wealth of the nation have been presented in a political sense, as distinct from Akaev, who was mainly seeing the unity as part of the integrity of Kyrgyzstan’s multiethnic population and wealth – as richness of Kyrgyzstan’s diverse culture. Bakiyev was mainly dwelling on the idea of economic and political well-being, as well as independency of Kyrgyzstan:

During the first 15 years of independence, Kyrgyzstan mainly relied on the external assistance and mainly it was helping the country to survive. Of course, in helped in the first transitional period, but it also created many problems. First of all, the huge external debt. We have made a difficult choice in favor of independent political and economic development, based on the use of our own resources, and started its implementation.

While Akaev in his speeches was emphasizing a need for and an important role of the international assistance and friendship with the supporting states, Bakiyev was promoting the idea of independency:

15 years for history is a long time; however, for each Kyrgyzstani, it makes a great sense. We had ups and downs, but our main pride is the integrity and unity of Kyrgyzstan’s people. Together with you, we will keep preserving our independency like the apple of one’s eye.

In this passage, the president have been talking about the Kyrgyz nation not mentioning particularly any ethnic groups, defining Kyrgyz people as “Kyrgyzstanis”. However, in contrary to Akaev, he did not dwell on the idea of multiculturalism and multiethnic composition of the country. The narratives of independency and sovereignty played an important role in the speeches performed by President Bakiyev. He even mentioned that the country no longer needed international assistance, thus, creating an image of a strong independent Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, these notions of independence and sovereignty had to deal with a number of

important events affecting the image of ethnic minorities in Kyrgyzstan. First, the independence narratives laid down by the president played a key role in crystallizing the patriotic movements in Kyrgyzstan. More importantly, underlining the need to move away from international assistance, the president undermined the importance of the Russian and American military bases present at the country at that time. Given the fact that several accidents, in which Kyrgyz civilians lost their lives, occurred in the American military base and that the diplomatic immunity enabled American soldiers to avoid prosecution, these discourses could provoke discontent about Americans among the Kyrgyz citizens.

As the imperiled sovereignty theme consisted of several components, another component could be identified. Mentioning the international assistance and the amount of the external debt to be paid to other countries by Kyrgyzstan can be perceived as an attempt of the president to denounce these states to be adding fragility to Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty. Talking about territorial unity as one of the important components of the Kyrgyz national identity, the public addressed by the president could think of the threats to territorial unity regularly raised in the context of the continued border conflicts with neighboring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Although Tashkent was not interested in the protection of Uzbek minorities in Kyrgyzstan and acting as a protecting kin-state, the fear of Kyrgyzstan was that it would possibly not be able to control its own territory. A large segment of the border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan yet had to be delimited; the situation was escalated by the presence of Uzbek enclaves of Shakhimardan and Sokh and Tajik enclave of Vorukh. These enclaves as well as non-delimited areas of the border cultivated the image of population pressures on the territory<sup>178</sup>, which in turn, affected the perceived image of ethnic minorities in Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>178</sup> Laruelle, "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda," March 2012.

Many Tajik and Uzbek families in search of arable land moved to Kyrgyzstan, which resulted in the image of “creepy migration” leading to changing state border, developed by media and politicians<sup>179</sup>. Minorities were thought to be occupying economically profitable niches, especially given the fact that the Uzbeks were mainly involved in agriculture, and Russians – in the service sector.

Therefore, the president’s narratives on independence and sovereignty consisted of many components. They dealt not only with the notions related to the country’s strength and freedom: they also were bearers of some hidden discourses related to ethnic minorities. Thus, the main narrative of those discourses was to ask ethnic minorities living in Kyrgyzstan to recognize symbolic, political, cultural, and economic supremacy of the titular nation<sup>180</sup>. Combined with the narratives on the importance of the national language and culture, these discourses could be interpreted as ethno-centered narratives, different from the ones presented by President Akaev in his speeches.

Bakiyev has mainly been using the notions of independence to underline the sovereignty of the Kyrgyz nation, its distinctive character, as well as to raise the patriotic feelings among the people. The president has also referred to regional consciousness in a particular region of the country; it mostly served to reinforce the Kyrgyz national self-perception and the image of independent Kyrgyzstan:

I would like to thank residents of Jalal-Abad and Talas, Naryn and Issyk-Kul, Batken and Chui, Bishkek and Osh. I thank all residents of our country who have rebelled against unjust behavior of the authorities.

Addressing the residents of different regions of the country, the president sought to emphasize the divisions between northern and southern elites. Kyrgyzstan has always been considered as being divided into two parts: the northern Kyrgyzstan and its people have always

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

been considered different from the southern one; Bakiyev, in turn, was a bright representative of the southern elites. Moreover, the president was trying to raise the patriotic feelings among those Kyrgyzstanis, living abroad:

I would like to deliver special congratulations to those citizens, who have to celebrate this day far from their motherland. I am sure that no matter where they are, they remain true patriots of their country, caring about its further destiny.

*Culture: unique heritage of the Kyrgyz people*

While Akaev was mainly using the notion of the culture shared by representatives of all ethnic groups living in Kyrgyzstan to reinforce the national consciousness among its citizens, Bakiyev's main tool for this was emphasizing the sovereignty, independence, and integrity of Kyrgyzstan without specific references to the multiethnic composition of Kyrgyzstan. The second Kyrgyz president was not mentioning the culture often in his speeches; however, when he did, he mainly was stressing the need to preserve the original culture of the Kyrgyz people:

Only a country based on the availability of equal opportunities, the preservation of the distinctive character, language, culture, and traditions of the nation, populating this country, deserves actual independence.

In this passage, the president supports the idea that the language of the dominant ethnic group should be the main language in a given country. Given the debates on the status of the official Russian and the national Kyrgyz language, this fragment extracted from the President's speech supports the idea that the country needs to start functioning with the use of the national language, giving a tribute to the preservation of the unique traditions of Kyrgyz language. In this speech, the president talked specifically about one nation, along with its traditions and culture. In contrary to Akaev, in his speech, he did not make an emphasis on the multicultural structure of the country's population, but rather on a need to further strengthen the unique Kyrgyz culture:

With the coming of Nooruz, the beauty of the Ala-Too land is renewing, the solemn celebrations are being heard, the joy reigns in the hearts of Kyrgyzstanis, as a bright

example of the unity of our nation and its loyalty to the cultural heritage of our ancestors.

In this passage, the president again emphasized the unique nature of the nation's cultural heritage. However, contrary to Akaev, Bakiyev did not specify that the Kyrgyz nation consisted of representatives of different ethnic groups. Moreover, in another important speech entitled "To the nation", the president seemed to be referring specifically to the Kyrgyz people:

All of us: the politicians, representatives of the scholarly and artistic intelligentsia, should answer the question who we are as a nation. The reality of our social politics depends on that. We would not be able to unite for the construction of a common future without it, we would not be able to declare and hold our geopolitical interests. The main ideology of our country in order to implement our national interests will be the ideology of the reasonable balance. We need to find a balance between introducing the innovations and preserving our national distinctiveness. I consider our cultural uniqueness, our way of living to be our richness and an opportunity to reinforce our position in the global world. We need to clearly understand what our national interests are. I think the national interests of Kyrgyzstan are territorial integrity, cultural distinctiveness, healthy and educated nation.

In this short passage, the president has used the terms "nation" and "national" four times, not mentioning that the whole speech's name was "The address to the nation". Making this speech four years after the revolution, when the country was slightly moving towards the crisis, including the escalation of interethnic relations, the president decided to reinforce the national consciousness of the "Kyrgyz nation" by referring to their cultural distinctiveness and uniqueness of their way of living and traditions. Four years after being in office, the president decided that it was "important to understand what the nation was", and in this speech, he failed to do so. However, the speech, which was presented in Russian, soon became one of the most popular topics discussed in Kyrgyzstan. The reason for this was that the term "natsiya" (nation) and the adjective "natsionalnyi" (national) in the Russian language is rarely used to talk about one's belonging to a certain country, but it is rather used to indicate one's ethnic identity. Thus, talking about the nation and mentioning it in this short passage four times, the president was most likely to refer to the ethnic Kyrgyz people.

Talking about the distinctive and unique culture of the nation, which needed to be preserved and accurately protected from the innovations was reinforcing the ethnic references in the president's speech. Also, using the pronoun "our" in relation to the cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz nation, the president was in a way marginalizing representatives of other ethnic groups, as he was a bright representative of the Kyrgyz southern elite, and, thus, talking about "our culture", the president could possibly talk about culture of the Kyrgyz people. It is important that in contrary to Akaev, talking about the nation and "our unique culture", the president never mentioned representatives of different ethnic groups, which also could be interpreted as a sign of marginalization, especially given the linguistic as well as the political context. In addition to this, the president promised to protect the national interests of the country, strongly connected with the culture of the Kyrgyz people:

We will aim to preserve national cultural traditions as well as the main values of the Kyrgyz society. We will rely on the individuals, who have deserved respect among the people of our country.

In this passage, the president continued to mention the "nation" and its culture and values, which was another indicator of ethnic reference, as the cultural traditions of the Kyrgyz people have been particularly praised by the president and called "the wealth of the nation". Mentioning individuals respected in the country, the president did not specify whom he was talking about; however, one can assume that he was talking about the politicians dominating public arena at the time, as well as representatives of intellectual and artistic elite, who were mainly ethnic Kyrgyz. In the same year, addressing the Kyrgyz citizens on the New Year's Eve – a major holiday in Kyrgyzstan – Bakiyev continued talking about the national culture and the need to preserve it, maintaining a reasonable basis between innovations and the originality and distinctiveness of the ancient Kyrgyz culture, and it actually seemed that the concept of preservation of national culture became one of Bakiyev's priorities. In his inauguration speech,



when he was elected for the second term, the president was talking about similar policies to be introduced:

To fight the state's problems, I am going to implement the strong cultural and social policy (...) To achieve my goals, I will establish the following ideals of our society's development: a strong president, multi-party parliament, effective government, developed civil society, which would be able to protect rights of an individual, the community, as well as the nature and memory of the ancestors and future of our successors. I would like to declare the core of my politics as the steadily following to the principle of the sensitive balance and the support on our strength and the heritage of the Kyrgyz people. According to the Kyrgyz proverb, *kybyragan kyr ashat*<sup>181</sup>. We will follow this proverb and gradually multiply our resources.

In this passage, the president continued emphasizing the cultural values the heritage of the people of Kyrgyzstan. This time, he referred to the ancestors and their heritage, which needs to be preserved, meaning the ethnic Kyrgyz ancestors, who are considered the bearers of the unique culture and complex history. Underlining a need to respect, preserve, and, most importantly, introduce these ancient traditions and values into the policy decisions of modern Kyrgyzstan, president was stressing the essentiality of these traditions and the importance of the values respected by the ethnic Kyrgyz, who lived in ancient times. To finalize his speech, the president used the Kyrgyz proverb, although the whole speech was made in Russian. This proverb also had an analogue in Russian, but the president preferred to use the Kyrgyz version, thus, addressing the population of the country speaking the national language. Importantly, it was the speech made during the inauguration of the president; therefore, the narratives used by the president in this passage could be very symbolical for his whole ruling period, as in this speech, he was setting out the goals for the upcoming years. Emphasizing the need to preserve the heritage left by the ancestors and citing the proverb in the Kyrgyz language, the leader of the state was addressing ethnic Kyrgyz people, thus marginalizing ethnic minorities, who

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<sup>181</sup> The slow and the steady wins the race (translated from Kyrgyz).

neither were involved in the formation of the ancient cultural values nor did they speak the national language.

### **The common historical past narratives**

As it has been mentioned in this chapter already, the “narrative” is understood by this study in the context of presenting a history of a community seeing itself as a nation, not strictly as a linguistic text-type with specific structural features. Narratives about nations present particular concepts of history, which are perceived as relevant for large groups of individuals imagining themselves as a nation. Therefore, it is important in terms of the formation of national identity to examine in what way the nation’s origin or foundation is presented. There seem to be some typical myths of origin available for the Kyrgyz nation, which were also presented in the speeches of Kyrgyzstan’s presidents.

### **Askar Akaev: ancient origins of the nation and complexity of its culture**

In most of his speeches, President Akaev was referring to the common history of the Kyrgyz nation, which has survived through many centuries of hardships and deprivations:

For its long history, the Kyrgyz people have survived both genocide and wars. However, when the nation was on the edge of its extinction, when the Kyrgyz warriors could not any longer oppose the enemies, the Kyrgyz were using their best weapons – their spiritual power – and were eventually becoming the winners.

In this passage, the president referred to the complex historical past of the nation, which despite it, managed to survive these hardships. In this speech, the president in a way was relating those past achievements to the present and future. The country’s leader was raising national awareness through underlining the power of the Kyrgyz people, putting a specific accent on the spiritual wealth of the nation, which has developed since the ancient time. Given their long history, the Kyrgyz people did not have a right to give up their spiritual power and the only way to preserve it was to stay united.

Even talking about historical past of the Kyrgyz people, the president was still upbrining the main idea presented in most of his speeches – the cultural diversity of the Kyrgyz people:

The Kyrgyz land, which was the main meeting point of the Eastern values of the civilization, one thousand years ago, gifted the world with the two great people: poet and philosopher Yusuf Balasaguni and scholar of Turkic studies Makhmud Barskani. The fact that in ancient times our ancestors have been the bearer of the Orkhon-Turkic script is a direct evidence that they have also been related to the ancient civilization formation.

In this passage, the president kept focusing on the cultural values of the Kyrgyz nation; however, this time, he did not emphasize the idea of multiculturalism and the complex composition of the Kyrgyz people. He used the word “ancestors” several times in this passage; however, he did not specify the ethnic origins of these ancestors. Meanwhile, the ancient origins of the Kyrgyz people and their relevance to the evolvement of the Eastern cultures is a common myth related to the historical past of the Kyrgyz. In one of his speeches, the president presents some historical evidence to prove that the ancient origins of the Kyrgyz is not a myth, but a historical fact by quoting some historical sources. Interestingly, this evidence is brought up in several speeches to raise national consciousness and patriotic feelings among the Kyrgyz people. The president uses the terms “Kyrgyz people” and “ancestors” in order to raise the integrity and unity of those living in the country.

Besides this, President Akaev was referring to different events, raising patriotism among the citizens living in Kyrgyzstan, such as jubilees of the national epic Manas or the Kyrgyz sovereignty:

Today’s Nooruz celebration has a special meaning for us, as it is being held in the memorable year of the 2200-years jubilee of the Kyrgyz sovereignty celebration. Besides studying the Kyrgyz history, we are reviving centuries-long traditions of the Kyrgyz people.

The Kyrgyz president introduced these events in order to raise national awareness of the people, living in Kyrgyzstan. In his speech, he specifically underlined that Kyrgyzstan has been

celebrating the 2200-years jubilee of its sovereignty in order to provide additional evidence to support the myth about the ancient origins of the Kyrgyz nation. In general, most of the narratives attributed to the historical past of the Kyrgyz people were related to the concept of the long historical past of the Kyrgyz nation and their spiritual and cultural wealth. However, not many times the president was referring to the historical past of the nation, mostly focusing on the present issues.

### **Kurmanbek Bakiyev: people's revolution and the new order established**

Contrary to his predecessor, Kurmanbek Bakiyev did not reinforce the image of the ancient Kyrgyz nation in his speeches. Moreover, he did not have many references to the common historical past of the Kyrgyz people, mostly referring to the future of the nation. When talking about the past, Bakiyev was mostly referring to the recent events, which, according to him, became historical:

On March 24, 2005, the People Revolution, which led to the renewal of Kyrgyzstan's political life, took place. On this day, the people became the only governors of the country, making decisions about the further development of Kyrgyzstan.

In his speeches, the president was degrading the past authorities of the country, stressing the need for new form of government. However, the way Bakiyev talked about these past developments was not closely related to national identity narratives. In these speeches, the president was serving his own purpose to anchor his authority, given the context of the political events taking place at that time. While talking about the "people" and their authority publicly, in practice, the president was developing the politics of nepotism, assigning his relatives to the governing positions. Therefore, his narratives were conflicting with his actions. However, in one of the passages, the president was raising national identity through addressing residents of different regions and raising the sense of the unity among different regions. Out of the nine

speeches analyzed for this study, the past was mentioned only in two speeches performed by the president, who was mostly referring to the future developments.

### **Common political future**

The images of the Kyrgyz political culture described by the leaders as well as the evaluation of the current economic and political trends presented by them are quite important to analyze the way the national identity was formed among the Kyrgyz people. The more responsible the leaders were for the country's future, the more idyllic and positively constructed they were presenting this future. The notions of the “democratic country”, “united society”, and the “prosperous Kyrgyzstan” were often mentioned in the speeches of both presidents; however, while Akaev was more emphasizing the current political and social trends, Bakiyev was looking for future improvements in the country.

### **Askar Akaev: developing democracy and “eternal friendship”**

The first president of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev, became the president of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic before the collapse of the union. After the dissolution of this big country, Akaev simply continued working as a leader of the state. Therefore, he was not really in charge of bringing any specific changes to a country, as he did not seize the power through revolution or any other kind of revolts, contrary to Bakiyev. Officially, he has proclaimed the upcoming renovation of the country including the development of the new democratic Kyrgyzstan. However, in the speeches analyzed for this study, the president hardly referred to any common future, only slightly mentioning the future in the general context of his speeches. He was emphasizing the fact that all Kyrgyzstanis together will be involved in the construction of a new democratic community and development of the reforms to support this community. For example, while granting new passports to the former citizens of Tajikistan, Akaev expressed joy for them joining the Kyrgyz community and has underlined that together with

the new citizens the country will continue developing the positive changes and working on its democratic principles. In other speeches, Akaev stressed the “eternal friendship” between Russia and Kyrgyzstan, which also in a way implied a reference to the future: the two countries will continue maintaining friendly relationship in several years as well. However, all those limited references to the future were mainly tied to the larger narratives of multiculturalism and interethnic accord, common for the majority of Akaev speeches, not focusing specifically on the future developments.

### **Kurmanbek Bakiyev: the power, independence, and people’s interests**

As Kurmanbek Bakiyev actually seized the power in the course of revolution, he promised Kyrgyzstanis to bring many changes to the existing political order as part of his pre-election campaign. Therefore, when he finally was elected, he became the one responsible for the future of the country and the whole Kyrgyz nation. His discourses about the future were closely tied to the narratives about the present situation in the country and the past developments. He often compared different aspects of the political and economic situation in the country, underlining the positive changes and addressing shortcomings, which need to be fixed in future. He was stressing that “we”, “the Kyrgyz people”, or “the Kyrgyz nation” will gradually solve the existing issues, raising the national consciousness and mobilizing the active people to stand up for the solution of the problems, bothering Kyrgyzstan:

Despite the difficulties, I am confident that with the help of the mutual efforts, we will be able to fix the situation and win the corruption. There are many other problems, and you can feel that and complain about these issues to me and to the leaders of the local administrative offices. And we try to do everything possible to solve them. The authorities are ready to take any steps to protect the interests of the people.

From this passage, it is clear that the future is closely tied to the present and the past for the president. However, underlining that the problem needs to be addressed from various perspectives and everyone needs to be involved in it, the president stresses that it is possible to

fight the corruption and many other issues in the administrative service. He also raises national consciousness by saying that there is the power behind the people, which is ready to fight for their interests and protect their rights. However, contrary to Akaev, Bakiyev did not specify who these “people” are and whom they are composed of.

Another aspect, which is important for the future of nation for President Bakiyev, is the sovereignty and independence of the country. The independence is the most important component of the state for the president, as it can be implied from most of his speeches. In one of the passages, the president noted that the Kyrgyz nation would continue working hard to preserve its status of an independent state. For president, there is not future without independency and sovereignty for the state. This notion of independence also refers to the issue of international assistance discussed earlier in this chapter. The country may be considered independent if in the future it does not depend of international funding and does not have large external debts; that is why, the president sets it as one of the main priorities to work on in the future. Among other issues to work on are the water issues, the problems related to social sphere, and, most importantly, the problem of the low level of trust to the government. Mentioning the last issue, the president want to raise awareness of the nation about its government, this way, raising the sense of national identity and increasing trust to the government, as there is no nation without a proper leader. That is why, in one of his speeches he addresses the government, asking it to stand up for the people’s interests:

The society is waiting to have concrete results from the work done by us. The extent to which the citizens will trust to the government will depend on the work of the executive and legislative branches of the government. The upcoming period will become the period of the highest level of responsibility of each of us for the destiny of the country and the future of Kyrgyzstan. In the upcoming time, in the forthcoming months, we have to take the most important decisions.

Although in this passage the president addressed mainly the authorities, specifically, representatives of the executive and legislative branches of the government, his speech was

published in a number of national newspapers and could be reached by the general public as well. Knowing this, the president has indicated that he was realizing the level of his responsibility for the country's future. In his speech, the leader of the state urged others to work for the prosperity of the Kyrgyz nation and in favor of the people. This way, the president made another attempt to let people know that there is the government working for them and their interests. In this passage, the president also made an attempt to challenge the common in Kyrgyzstan concept that the authorities are there not for the people, but for their own profit and benefits. This concept ruins the sense of national belonging and challenges the national identity among the Kyrgyz people; that is why the president attempted to break this stereotype:

Now we need to think about the quality of economic growth, the quality of Kyrgyzstanis' life, and the quality of public administration. We are currently located in the period when the long-term success of the country depends on our qualification and initiative. We need to do everything possible to make current political stability and economic growth transform into prosperity of Kyrgyzstan. We all think about people's well-being, about the ways to make their life better, and the country –wealthier and stronger. In this sense, we are the one party and one power. Let's work together, let's work better in the sake of prosperity of our country, in the sake of our people.

In this passage, the president not only attempts to break the aforementioned stereotype, but he also stresses the unity of the country and its government to fight the existing problems in future. This way, he reinforces his own authority stressing that he is eligible to bring the fragmented government together to fight with the shortcomings of the current system, as well as he lets people know about the government which, finally, after the revolution is there to make their lives better.

### **Summary**

In summary, it is important to say that the context – the occasion and the topic – were extremely important for the way the political speeches were performed. Both politicians were referring to those living in Kyrgyzstan as to “citizens”, “people”, and the “Kyrgyzstanis”. However, while Akaev was rarely using the term “nation”, Bakiyev was often using in his



speech the word “nation” and “national”, often pairing them with other words bearing positive meaning. In one of the speeches analyzed, the second president of the country was referring to the language and culture of the Kyrgyz people specifically addressing the Kyrgyz ethnic group. Even in other speeches, where the second president addressed the “citizens” or the “Kyrgyzstanis”, he never specified whom he addressed, while President Akaev was often defining in his speeches the “Kyrgyztanis” as representatives of different ethnic groups.

The main tool to form the national identity for President Akaev was a reference to the cultural values and traditions, formed throughout the centuries. These values, according to the president, are shared by representatives of different ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan. Although in his speeches the president was sometimes referring to the political issues, these topics were mainly related to international assistance and international friendship. When talking about sovereignty and independency, the president was stressing its importance; however, he was bringing the balance to his speeches by stressing that even despite its independence, Kyrgyzstan would still need international assistance and help from its “friends”.

President Bakiyev has also been mentioning the culture in his speeches, especially in the ones he was performing in the last years of his regime. In contrary to Akaev, he often mentioned the terms “nation” and “national” in relation to the historical heritage and cultural values, as well as using the word “Kyrgyz” instead of “Kyrgyzstani”. Stressing the unique cultural heritage of the nation, rich historical traditions, as well as citing traditional proverbs in the Kyrgyz language, the president was mainly addressing ethnic Kyrgyz in his speeches. Moreover, in one of the speeches, the president emphasized the need to practice the language and culture of the Kyrgyz people in order to protect it from the external influence. Contrary to Akaev, Bakiyev had never specified that addressing the Kyrgyz nation and Kyrgyz people, he was addressing representatives of different ethnic groups living in Kyrgyzstan.

Besides talking about the cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz people, Bakiyev was dwelling on the ideas of sovereignty and freedom of the Kyrgyz state, saying that independence is the only key to the successful development of the Kyrgyz nation. Talking about international assistance, Bakiyev noted that it caused many problems for Kyrgyzstan, such as an external debt; therefore, according to Bakiyev, it was important to build a new nation based on the country's own capital. Thus, independence and sovereignty were one the main symbols of national identity for Bakiyev. Thus, the ways in which the two presidents were perceiving the nation and building the national consciousness were quite different. However, it is also important to see how the presidents were presenting the common historical past and future in order to examine the processes of national identity formation, introduced by the presidents.

Both presidents were hardly mentioning the past in their speeches; however, when they did, they did it in different ways. While President Akaev was referring to the past to raise patriotic feelings and national identity among the Kyrgyz people by underlining their ancient origins, their spiritual strength, and their historically formed wealthy culture, President Bakiyev mostly referred to the recent events, which he considered historical, namely, the 2005 people's revolution. In his speeches, using different terms interchangeably, Akaev was trying to raise unity among the Kyrgyz people, while Bakiyev's references to the past served mainly to present the overthrown authorities in a negative sense. When mentioning the past, Akaev again referred to the importance of other cultures and representatives of different ethnic groups who made a valuable contribution to what Kyrgyzstan and the Kyrgyz people are now. He was stressing that the contact with bearers of other cultures as well as with representatives of different ethnic groups made the population of Kyrgyzstan culturally wealthy and multiethnic. Bakiyev, on the contrary was only referring to the revolution, addressing residents of Kyrgyzstan's different regions, but not different ethnic groups. Meanwhile, the participants of the revolution were

mostly ethnic Kyrgyz; thus, in his commemorative speeches, Bakiyev was mainly addressing the ethnic Kyrgyz population of the state.

Coming to the perception of the common political future, it is important to notice that President Akaev had almost no references to the future in his speeches. He was rather dwelling on the common current trends, sometimes referring the past development. The references to future have been found only in two speeches analyzed for this study. One of them was performed by the president during the solemn ceremony of granting the Kyrgyz passports to the Tajik refugees. In this speech, the leader of the state underlined the inclusion of the former refugees into the dominant Kyrgyz nation, saying that together with other citizens of the state, they will continue building a new, democratic Kyrgyzstan. In another speech, the president brought up the idea of eternal friendship between the people of Russia and Kyrgyzstan, the friendship that will never end. Given that the large ethnic group of Russians lived in Kyrgyzstan at that time, the president speech could be considered as another attempt to underline the importance of ethnic minorities living in the country for its success and well-being.

President Bakiyev, on the contrary, was referring to the future quite often. Three points can be underlined in his references to the future: a need to work together on the solution of the existing problems, the availability of the authorities to work efficiently, and the will of the authorities to work for the sake of the people but not for the sake of their own benefits. Emphasizing these three points, Bakiyev was mainly raising his own authority attempting to demonstrate the positive changes brought to the political life of the country by the revolution. He was also trying to challenge a common concept in Kyrgyzstan that the authorities are there not for the people, but for their own profit. Using his own phrase, he was trying to fix what was left from the former authorities, mainly, the low trust to the government among the citizens. By doing this, Bakiyev attempted to construct an image of a powerful Kyrgyz nation backed up by

the powerful government, which will independently fight the problems and justify its status of a sovereign state.

Summing up the results of the whole analysis, it becomes obvious that while Akaev was mainly dwelling on the idea of multiculturalism, multiethnic composition of the Kyrgyz nation, and the great cultural heritage of Kyrgyzstanis, Bakiyev was mainly underlining the concept of sovereignty and independence of the state. In all his speeches, Akaev was in a way referring to the multiethnic composition of the Kyrgyz nation; while talking about the “Kyrgyz people”, he was often clarifying that these people are not necessarily ethnic Kyrgyz, but include representatives of different ethnic groups. While talking about the past and the cultural heritage, Akaev was often mentioning that the Kyrgyz culture has encountered many other civilizations, which made it wealthier and more valuable. Bakiyev was mainly talking about current political and economic developments of the country, not often talking about the culture and its people. However, the terms “nation” and “national” were common for Bakiyev’s speeches, but on the contrary with Akaev, Bakiyev never specified what this “nation” was composed of. And although he did not provide specifically any ethno-centered points of view, he never mentioned the importance of multiculturalism or the multiethnic composition of Kyrgyzstan for its successful development, as Akaev often did. On the contrary, he was praising the idea of independence and its importance for the Kyrgyz nation and preservation of its language and traditions.

## CHAPTER IV. DISCUSSION

### National identity shift in Kyrgyzstan

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the 1990 interethnic conflict, which jolted the south of Kyrgyzstan killing many Uzbek and Kyrgyz persons, the newly elected president of independent Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev had to build national identity of Kyrgyzstani people from scratch. Unlike in many other Post-Soviet countries, people in newly independent Kyrgyzstan did not have their own state before the territorial delimitation of Central Asia was held by the Soviets in 1936, while their identity origins have mainly been based on the clan principle<sup>182</sup>. These factors have been complicating the task of Askar Akaev to build national identity of the Kyrgyz people; in addition to it, by 1990, Kyrgyzstan had become a multiethnic state with the large population of ethnic Russians and Uzbeks. Akaev, thus, has chosen an identity construction politics different from those implemented in the majority of other Post-Soviet states. Based on the ideas of civic inclusion, Akaev started promoting the idea of “common home” and multiculturalism in Kyrgyzstan, yet, emphasizing the importance of national culture, which could possibly be enriched by the cultural experiences of other people. These tools to form the national identity of the Kyrgyzstani people have been used by Akaev until the year of 2005, when his regime was overthrown.

The new president of the country, who seized the power through a revolution, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, started building national identity of the Kyrgyz people based on a different principle. The ideas of the “common home” and civic inclusion, introduced by Akaev, have quickly ruined, and the identity narratives and policies build on a more exclusionary, Kyrgyz-centered nationalism took their place. The notions of the “Kyrgyz nation” and the need to preserve the Kyrgyz language and culture have been spread in this Post-Soviet country, where the “nation”

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<sup>182</sup> Kathleen Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories,” *World Politics* 56, no. 02 (January 2004): 224–61, doi:10.1353/wp.2004.0009.

was still understood as “ethnicity” and Russian remained the main language of communication. Moreover, unlike Akaev, Bakiyev was never mentioning the importance of other ethnic groups’ inclusion in the construction of new, successful Kyrgyzstan.

### **Kyrgyzstan: another nationalizing state?**

The processes of national identity formation, especially the discourses, used to shape national identity in Kyrgyzstan, have thus shifted under the regime of the second country’s president Kurmanbek Bakiyev. While under regime of Akaev, Kyrgyzstan seemed to be welcoming representatives of different cultures and other ethnic groups, almost 15 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in 2005, Kurmanbek Bakiyev introduced more Kyrgyz-centered discourses. This was not typical for most of the Post-Soviet countries, the authorities of which were establishing nationalistic policies right after the collapse of the union<sup>183</sup>. Placing representatives of the “titular nation” in the governmental positions, imposing strict language rules were among the policies established by the so-called “nationalizing states” shortly before and immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union<sup>184</sup>. These nationalizing states have been defined as the countries of and for specific nations, not welcoming minorities, but rather making them adapt under the traditions and rules of the countries, in which they lived in<sup>185</sup>.

A prominent example of the nationalizing states were the Baltic countries, where the identity narratives centered mainly on the preservation of the Estonian, Lithuanian, or Latvian national identity simultaneously with these countries’ rapid integration into supranational institutions, such as the European Union<sup>186</sup> took place. These discourses of national identity stressed the nation building and sovereignty of the nation states. Right after the Baltic countries

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<sup>183</sup> Brubaker, “Nationalizing States Revisited,” November 1, 2011.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Brubaker, “National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe.”

<sup>186</sup> Feldman, “Shifting the Perspective on Identity Discourse in Estonia.”

became independent states, the image of these countries as of reconstituted societies became dominant in the public sphere<sup>187</sup>. The post-socialist identity construction contained a key narrative that urged the reification of the Estonian, Lithuanian, and Latvian nation and culture, which existed before the Soviet annexation. This narrative, which emerged right after the fall of the communist regime in these states, became the major strategy of national identity formation in these countries<sup>188</sup>.

The examples of the Baltic States' transition to independence was different from those of the Central Asian countries. Unlike Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, the Central Asian states did not want to become independent countries. The results of the 1991 referendum demonstrated that the residents of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were opposing the dissolution of the Soviet Union and were negatively perceiving the upcoming independence of their countries<sup>189</sup>. At the beginning of independence, the Kazakhstani government introduced a dual definition of the "nation" into the legal infrastructure of the new state<sup>190</sup>. The idea was to establish a "Kazakhstani" nation, at the same time recognizing the poly-ethnic composition of the state and reviving the Kazakh national culture, history, and language as the principal ingredients of the new territorial identity<sup>191</sup>. However, by 1996-1997, the government of Kazakhstan started introducing more aggressive "kazakhization" policies<sup>192</sup>, thus turning the country into a nationalizing state.

While the nationalizing policies of Kazakhstan were a tool to marginalize the pro-Russian political opposition, several reasons could serve to explain the national identity shift in

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<sup>187</sup> Romuald J. Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States, Years of Dependence, 1940-1990* (University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>188</sup> Lane et al., *The Baltic States*.

<sup>189</sup> Reneo Lukic and Allen Lynch, *Europe from the Balkans to the Urals: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union* (SIPRI, 1996).

<sup>190</sup> Fierman, "Language and Identity in Kazakhstan."

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Dave, "National Revival in Kazakhstan."

Kyrgyzstan in 2005. First, it is necessary to look at the example of Kyrgyzstan through the nationalizing states model. Brubaker claimed that the nations are being reified, which makes them to be not simply categories of analysis, but the real entities<sup>193</sup>. The reification of the nations is not only an intellectual, but also a social practice, which includes involvement of some political forces in the national discourse. However, it is hardly possible to speak about the reification of the nation in case of Kyrgyzstan, where the “nation” did not exist before the territorial delimitation took place in the Soviet Union. The “nation”, thus, has not been reified, but created from scratch in this republic through the Soviet institutionalization policies, which have officially registered ethnicity and nationhood in the identification documents.

The institutionalization has been important for the categorization purposes<sup>194</sup>. When the Western part of the world was moving beyond the nation state, the former Soviet bloc was moving towards the nation state, entering the post-multinational era<sup>195</sup>. Brubaker offered to analyze the Soviet Union successor states not as national, but as nationalizing ones – the states of and for particular ethnic groups<sup>196</sup>; and this nationalization can be noticed in the way national identity is being formed as well. However, this may be problematic, as these nationalizing states are national only in form, but not in practice. For example, Kyrgyzstan had large Russian and Uzbek minorities, which rather could make this state multiethnic than national. The fact that during the Soviet times, representatives of the “titular” nations were receiving more privileges, has also affected the post-Soviet discourse with its marginalization and discrimination of the minority groups<sup>197</sup>.

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<sup>193</sup> Brubaker, ““Rethinking Nationhood.”

<sup>194</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism.”

<sup>195</sup> Brubaker, “National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe.”

<sup>196</sup> Brubaker, ““Rethinking Nationhood.”

<sup>197</sup> Brubaker, “Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia.”



Brubaker claims that the first years of independence “furnished abundant examples of nationalizing discourse and policies” in the post-Soviet states<sup>198</sup>. The “us and them” distinction, introduction of the new language policies, diagnosing the titular nations with a weakened status were common in all of the Soviet successor states. In the countries, where ethnic and linguistic lines were strong, nationalization was mainly aimed at strengthening the titular nation at the expense of the national minorities, while in the states where these indicators have been weak and blurred, the nationalization worked to redefine national values and enlarge the “core nation”<sup>199</sup>. However, Kyrgyzstan did not follow the traditional model of a nationalizing state. The first president of the country did not establish any nationalistic policies, on the contrary, he was trying to include as many groups as possible in the decision making process as well as welcoming minorities in most of his speeches. Several factors can serve as explanations to this phenomenon.

First, Kyrgyzstan was not willing to become an independent country, as it lacked its own ideology as well as national identity. Kyrgyzstan did not have its state before 1936; thus, Kyrgyz people did not perceive themselves as a unified nation. The ideology in Kyrgyzstan was mainly built around the clans or regional divisions of people. Although the Soviet authorities have put much efforts to eliminate the importance of clans in Kyrgyzstan, clan politics still remains one of the most important characteristics of this country. The phenomenon of clans is closely related to ethnicity<sup>200</sup>. Clan belongings can often be more important than blood ties and can play an important role in establishing allies as well as in social mobilization<sup>201</sup>. Kyrgyz

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<sup>198</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “Nationalizing States Revisited: Projects and Processes of Nationalization in Post-Soviet States,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 11 (November 1, 2011): 1785–1814, doi:10.1080/01419870.2011.579137, p. 5.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Andrew R. Bond and Natalie R. Koch, “Interethnic Tensions in Kyrgyzstan: A Political Geographic Perspective,” *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 51, no. 4 (July 1, 2010): 531–62, doi:10.2747/1539-7216.51.4.531.

<sup>201</sup> Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics.”

people can be seen as divided into two major clans: the southern (the right wing) and the northern (the left wing) alliances. They perceive themselves different from each other; even though sharing the same ethnic identity, these people do not identify themselves as similar. Political competition among the left and the right wings has been present since the period of Kokand Khanate (1709-1883)<sup>202</sup>. President Akaev was a representative of the northern wing; thus, he had to be careful to ensure proper representation of the southern elites in the government in order not to marginalize the right wing from the political arena and not to cause mass dissatisfactions in the south of the country. This explains inclusionary policies of the first president, who tried to keep his hold on power by protecting interests of everyone.

Furthermore, President Akaev had to build national identity of the Kyrgyz people from scratch; thus, it was easier to follow the path of the Soviet authorities: to promote multiculturalism, at the same time reinforcing the traditions and culture of the Kyrgyz people. The Soviet authorities used the same double identity policy in relation to the residents of the member republics. In addition to it, the recent ethnic conflict between Kyrgyzstan's largest minority group of Uzbeks and the "titular nation" allowed the ground to tremble for escalation of interethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan, which would not have been favorable for the country at that time. Askar Akaev, who have won the elections due to his newly proposed democratic strategy and economic liberalization program<sup>203</sup>, largely accounted for the support of Uzbekistan and Russia, thus, he was interested in making Russian and Uzbek minorities feel welcomed in Kyrgyzstan. The same proposal for democratic transition made Akaev to favor opposition and representatives of different ethnic groups in the political processes. All these

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<sup>202</sup> Berdikееva, Saltanat. "National identity in Kyrgyzstan: the case of clan politics." *The Association for the study of Nationalities' 11th Annual World Convention. 'Nationalism in an Age of Globalization.'* New York: Columbia University, (March, 2006).

<sup>203</sup> Spector, "The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan," March 1, 2004.

policies have helped Akaev, who was new to politics, to hold the power at the beginning of his career and gather support from the opposition leaders.

Thus, Kyrgyzstan under the regime of President Akaev could not be defined as a nationalizing state, not sharing any of its characteristics. However, the “us and them” distinction, introduction of the new language policies, diagnosing the titular nations with a weakened status have appeared under President Bakiyev’s regime. The second leader of Kyrgyzstan has turned Kyrgyzstan from an “island of democracy”<sup>204</sup> to another Post-Soviet nationalizing state. A bright representative of the southern wing, Bakiyev as a new leader was trying to take a revenge for almost 15-year rule of the northern elites. Nepotism and regionalism became the main characteristics of Bakiyev’s regime, along with nationalistic discourses emerging in the political arena. With the support of State Secretary, a person responsible for the construction of ideology and national identity, Bakiyev dwelled on the ideas of preservation of Kyrgyz language and culture, as well the sovereignty and independence of the Kyrgyz state.

The policies as well as discourses of Bakiyev have thus been different from those of his predecessor. In general, the policies of the president were based on the clan identity and regionalism. Favoring ethnic Kyrgyz from the south of Kyrgyzstan, Bakiyev was marginalizing ethnic Uzbeks, living in the same area. At the same time, the northern political elites, including the ethnic Russians, have also been pushed in the background of political life. This way, Bakiyev was attempting to keep his hold on power and control the situation in the country. Making minorities feel as “tenants” in a home, called Kyrgyzstan, Bakiyev was suppressing the minorities’ needs and making them feel unwelcomed and, thus, unable to change the situation in this country. The strategy, chosen by the president, has worked for about five years allowing Bakiyev to stay in the office.

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<sup>204</sup> Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan*, 2013.

The situation has escalated in spring 2010 before the collapse of Bakiyev's regime, when Uzbek leaders gathered for street demonstrations. Leader of Uzbek elites involved in organization of the protests, Kadyrjan Batyrov, was soon accused by the mayor of Osh appointed by Bakiyev, Melis Myrzakmatov, of demanding autonomy for the south of Kyrgyzstan. In fact, the charges against the Uzbek leader were favorable for those who was in competition with Batyrov and opposing the prosperity of Uzbeks and their influence in the region. Although Batyrov was jailed, Bakiyev's strategy to marginalize representatives of ethnic minorities stopped working few weeks after the street protests organized by the Uzbek leader. In an attempt to stabilize the situation, Bakiyev has issued another speech entitled "Address to the Nation". In this speech, the president continued the strategy, typical for a nationalizing state: he underlined the weakness of the titular nation and dwelled on the need to preserve the national language and culture. This way, Bakiyev was trying to raise his authority among the Kyrgyz people at the same time undermining national minorities and lowering their status. However, this time his strategy did not work and the ouster of Bakiyev followed soon.

As the government was overthrown, the situation became chaotic in Kyrgyzstan, and the whole southern region was in disarray. Former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev took an advantage of the chaos in the region to destabilize the situation in the country. Pro-Bakiyev elements, living among the Kyrgyz population, were aiming to organize resistance to the interim government by various means, such as seizing governmental offices and taking officials hostages<sup>205</sup>. The violence in the south was started with a clash between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek gangs in Osh on June 10, 2010, which soon turned into mass fighting among young residents of the region. Fueled by rumors, the clashes acquired mass character, involved other towns and villages of the south, and made many ethnic Uzbeks to flee<sup>206</sup>.

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<sup>205</sup> "Q&A: Kyrgyzstan's Ethnic Violence," *BBC News*, accessed February 28, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/10313948>.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

While the both Kyrgyz-Uzbek clashes are widely referred as to the ethnic conflicts, the latest 2010 interethnic massacre did not really correspond to the characteristics of the ethnic conflict defined by scholars. In ethnic conflicts, a goal of at least one of the participating parties is normally defined in ethnic terms<sup>207</sup>. In other words, one of the sides will use their ethnicity to explain why they cannot fully exercise their rights and are being discriminated against in a given region. Therefore, ethnic conflict is a type of a precedent in which representatives of one ethnic group explain their needs along existing ethnic lines<sup>208</sup>. In ethnic conflicts, organized ethnic groups fight with each other in order to achieve equal distribution of rights and privileges. However, some scholars claim that “ethnicity is not an ultimate, irreducible source of violent conflict” in some cases<sup>209</sup>.

Ethnicity, thus, has been used by Bakiyev as a tool of manipulation; while Kyrgyz-centered nationalism has been employed by the president to strengthen his position in the office and the authority among the ethnic Kyrgyz. During the regime of Bakiyev, Kyrgyzstan became a nationalizing state with its abundant nationalistic policies and Kyrgyz-centered discourses. Interestingly, Kyrgyzstan did not follow a traditional model of a nationalizing state, not introducing nationalistic policies right after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but experience the shift in the processes of national identity formation only 15 years later.

### **The 90s rapid democratization and its effects on national identity in Kyrgyzstan**

The rapid democratization of Kyrgyzstan right after the collapse of the Soviet Union and personality of the leaders contributing to this democratization are seen as reasons of emerging Kyrgyz-centered national identity discourses in the country in this research.

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<sup>207</sup> Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff, *Ethnic Conflict: Causes, Consequences, and Responses* (Polity, 2009).

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Brubaker and Laitin, “Ethnic and Nationalist Violence,” 1998.

Democracy is hard to achieve in a country made up of different nationalities, according to Horowitz, as democratic arrangements tend to get destroyed almost inevitably in the societies divided along ethnic lines<sup>210</sup>. It is hard to escape division of the society; that is why, “the avoidance of bifurcation along ethnic lines becomes the critical task in the maintenance of democracy”<sup>211</sup>, which in turn leads to the limitation of ethnic conflict. Indeed, processes of democratization increase the risk of nationalist conflict, Snyder claimed<sup>212</sup>.

The “elite persuasion” argument explains the correlation between democratization and nationalist conflict: before the process of democratization starts, nationalism is normally weak or absent among the population<sup>213</sup>. Later popular nationalism emerges when elites start using nationalist appeals to compete for popular support. In this situation, the elites do not want to surrender the political authority to average citizens. Nationalism becomes a “convenient doctrine” that justifies a partial form of democracy, in which elites can rule in “the name of their nation”<sup>214</sup>. Lack of democracy was characteristic for Akaev in the last years of his presidency. The partial form of democracy during the regime of Akaev was justified by the inclusionary form of nationalism: Akaev claimed that he was governing to the better in the name of his nation, consisting of different ethnic groups.

This inclusionary nationalism is typical for some democratizing states, welcoming the national minorities, yet underlining the need to preserve the traditions and culture of the titular nation<sup>215</sup>. This order of things was typical for the regime of Akaev: welcoming minorities, he was stressing the importance of cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz people. Snyder claims this type of nationalism can serve to justify the failed transition to the full-fledged democracy. This way,

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<sup>210</sup> Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p 682.

<sup>212</sup> Jack Snyder, Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence*.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

Akaev tried to let people know that he was working his best to preserve the nation, even though his proposed democratic strategy was failing. Since Akaev managed to hold the power for about 15 years, the national identity discourses have been based on the ideas of civic or inclusionary type of nationalism: inclusion of the minorities and preservation of the national culture.

Inclusionary nationalism was evolving in the countries, where the government did not face strong opposition. However, if the authorities of a state are opposed by some political groups, an exclusionary form of nationalism emerges. Snyder introduced the exclusionary nationalism, which is totally different from its inclusionary form<sup>216</sup>. These nationalist elites in democratizing countries often argue that ethnic minorities or other political opponents should be excluded from the nation because they act inappropriately and against the interests of the majority group, seeing these individuals as internal enemies<sup>217</sup>. This tactic is defined as exclusionary nationalism, which is more likely to prevail when the democratizing country is poor and institutions are weak<sup>218</sup>.

Obviously, Kurmanbek Bakiyev used exclusionary nationalism as part of his strategy to keep the power, marginalizing all possible opponents. Kyrgyzstan was still considered a democratizing country, as the leaders of the 2005 revolution promised to put an end to the corruption in state services and finally introduce the full-fledged democracy, the idea of which has quickly failed under Akaev's regime. Therefore, the exclusionary nationalism emerged in Bakiyev's "democratizing" Kyrgyzstan. Firstly, nationalism was justifying the failed transition to democracy. Secondly and most importantly, Bakiyev was suppressing the opposition, which included representatives of Uzbek and Russian political elites, who were supporting the idea of a democratic Kyrgyzstan, which failed under the regime of Bakiyev. Having seized the power by revolution, Bakiyev knew that there was strong opposition in Kyrgyzstan, whose power

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Marx, *Making Race and Nation*.

<sup>218</sup> Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence*.

could deprive Bakiyev of his presidential status. Since the opposition in Kyrgyzstan included many representatives of different ethnic groups, he had to first marginalize ethnic minorities. This strategy worked, especially given the status of Uzbeks in the south, who gave up making any claims during the regime of Bakiyev.

### **National identity shift in Kyrgyzstan: explanations**

Given the factors, discussed above, the study may conclude that the shift in national identity formation can be explained by the personality of the state's leaders as well as various socio-political factors, which had influenced the presidents' governing patterns in the democratizing state. In general, the struggle for power in Kyrgyzstan was conditioning the way national identity was formed by the two presidents. Kyrgyzstan has become a nationalizing state 15 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as President Akaev with his ideas of inclusionary nationalism managed to hold the power until 2005, i.e. exactly for 15 years.

Akaev has been new to the system and needed to gain support of more experienced political activists. Moreover, his proposed strategy of democratic transition and economic liberalization had to be implemented, as it was planned to bring success to the newly elected president<sup>219</sup>. Thus, Akaev had to act in a democratic manner, including minorities in the decision making processes, as well as promoting multiculturalism in his country. Moreover, he had to favor opposition, mainly consisting of Russian and Uzbek elites; that is why he had to act respectively towards the minorities. Besides this, the proposed program of economic liberalization was in need of international support, specifically, assistance of Uzbekistan and Russia – the kin states of the two largest minority groups in Kyrgyzstan<sup>220</sup>. That is why the narratives of multiculturalism as well as policies making minorities feel welcomed in

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<sup>219</sup> Spector, "The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan," March 1, 2004.

<sup>220</sup> Karagulova and Megoran, "Discourses of Danger and the 'war on Terror.'"



Kyrgyzstan were common at the public arena of the country under the regime of President Akaev.

The second president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, was a representative of the opposition party, being a representative of the southern clan. He also was quite new to the politics, but differently from Akaev, having come from the opposition, he had support of influential opposition members Roza Otunbayeva and Almazbek Atambayev<sup>221</sup>. In addition to it, Bakiyev appointed popular political activist Felix Kulov as the prime minister, which also has earned him some points. Having strengthened his position in the office, Bakiyev started implemented his strategy of favoring southern elites, consisting mainly of his relatives, as well as marginalizing ethnic minorities and promoting Kyrgyz-centered nationalism<sup>222</sup>. In light of the events taking place in the country (the presence of Russian and American military bases and debated territories at the border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), most of the Kyrgyz people could be persuaded by the narratives of the weakened Kyrgyz nation as well as the need on preservation of national language. Bakiyev, thus, was presented as a hero, preserving the Kyrgyz nation from foreign invaders, being the only one, who could accomplish this mission. Moreover, these Kyrgyz-centered narratives were partially justifying the nepotism and regionalism widely used by Bakiyev.

The 2010 ethicized conflict in the south of Kyrgyzstan, which occurred two months after the ouster of the president, has proved that Bakiyev used ethnicity as a manipulation tool for his personal purposes to hold the power. According to many views, this conflict was also organized by pro-Bakiyev elements, in order to represent the new interim government in an

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<sup>221</sup> Juraev, “Kyrgyz Democracy?”

<sup>222</sup> Laruelle, “The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda,” March 2012.

unfavorable light, as those, unable to control the minorities in the country<sup>223 224 225 226</sup>. McGlinhey claims that the structural causes—political elite fragmentation and a civil society that can readily be mobilized for both liberal and illiberal ends—are behind the June 2010 ethnic violence and Kyrgyzstan's enduring political instability<sup>227</sup>. Hanks claimed that the problems of national identity formation and destabilized political situation in the country were also among the reasons leading to the 2010 violence in Osh<sup>228</sup>.

In this conflict, the supporters of Bakiyev attempted to present the Uzbek minorities as the opponents of the Kyrgyz people as those attempting to undermine ethnic Kyrgyz and seize their land<sup>229</sup>. It was easy to do so in light of the 1990 ethnic conflict. Indeed, manipulating with ethnicity and starting a violent conflict in the south – the region, where the former leader was coming from could possibly serve his main goal to get the power back. Political fragmentation and not stable situation in the south were indeed one of the reasons for the conflict; however, the national identity discourses popularized by Bakiyev were not among the violence's causes, they just made it easier to manipulate with the notions of ethnicity and national identity for Bakiyev. And although many reasons could be among the factors, contributing to the escalation of ethnic affairs in June 2010 (the mass fight in casino, alleged rape of the Kyrgyz women)<sup>230</sup>, the one cause which led country to the massacre was Bakiyev's desire to keep the power by any means. The former president of the country hoped that the escalation of the situation in the

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<sup>223</sup> "Q&A."

<sup>224</sup> Rezvani, "Understanding and Explaining the Kyrgyz-Uzbek Interethnic Conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan."

<sup>225</sup> Reuel R. Hanks, "Crisis in Kyrgyzstan: Conundrums of Ethnic Conflict, National Identity and State Cohesion," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13, no. 2 (June 1, 2011): 177–87, doi:10.1080/19448953.2011.578861.

<sup>226</sup> Eric McGlinchey, "Exploring Regime Instability and Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan," *Asia Policy* 12, no. 1 (2011): 79–98, doi:10.1353/asp.2011.0030.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Hanks, "Crisis in Kyrgyzstan," June 1, 2011.

<sup>229</sup> Rezvani, "Understanding and Explaining the Kyrgyz-Uzbek Interethnic Conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan."

<sup>230</sup> McGlinchey, "Exploring Regime Instability and Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan," 2011.

south would help him get back to the power. He expected that the narratives diagnosing the Kyrgyz nation with the weakened status, as well as other Kyrgyz-centered discourses he was popularizing during the years of his presidency would have an effect in light of the 2010 conflict, and Bakiyev again will seem the only hero able to stop the violence in the south.

Thus, the thesis argues that the shift in national identity discourses can be explained exclusively by the shift in the presidential regimes and the political climate in Kyrgyzstan. If under Akaev's regime Kyrgyzstan was a democratizing state with small numbers of opposition, which is typical for the emergence of inclusionary nationalism, having survived the revolution of 2005, Kyrgyzstan became a democratizing country with strong opposition, in which exclusionary nationalism could help the leader to hold the power. The national identity discourses based on the ideas of inclusionary nationalism, popularized by the first president of the country, served to help Askar Akaev to hold his position in the office. The proposed democratic transition of the country has helped Akaev to win the elections in 1990; therefore, he had to follow its main principles.

The democratic transition supposed freedom of speech, economic liberalization, as well as equal opportunities for representatives of different groups. The economic liberalization could be achieved only with the help of Russia and Uzbekistan, which were the kin states to the two largest national minority groups in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, according to the core democratic principles, Akaev had to be welcoming all minority groups living in Kyrgyzstan. However, the project of the proposed democracy did not work that well few years after its introduction. To justify the failed attempt to introduce the full-fledged democracy in the country, Akaev was building national identity of the Kyrgyzstani people based on the inclusionary nationalism, which supposed that Akaev was the one working hard to protect the country's national values at the same time welcoming minorities and their cultures.

Kurmanbek Bakiyev chose to use another strategy to hold the power. Now Bakiyev knew that the power in Kyrgyzstan can be seized by revolutionary means and that there was strong opposition in the country, therefore, he started building national identity of the Kyrgyz people based on the exclusionary form of nationalism. This type of nationalism served to marginalize ethnic minorities and political opponents of Bakiyev from the decision making process, thus, securing Bakiyev's regime from revolutions or other political revolts. This argument is evidenced by the nepotism in the state structures typical for the regime of the second president.

### **The case of national identity in Kyrgyzstan: further implications**

The case of Kyrgyzstan demonstrates a different way of transition from the Soviet policies of authoritarianism to a new model of Post-Soviet democracy. While its Central Asian neighbors have been continuing following the policies typical for the Soviet regime, Kyrgyzstan stepped on a path of rapidly developing democracy in 1991 with the election of Askar Akaev as a president of this newly independent state<sup>231</sup>. Freedom of speech and press, liberalization of economy, as well as involvement of different political groups in the decision making process have evolved in Kyrgyzstan during the first few years of Akaev's regime. Akaev was new to the political system and could win the elections only due to his proposed democratic strategy, which was soon supported by a number of opposition groups. Akaev gained their support easily by including them into the political process.

While democracy was developing rapidly in the Kyrgyz Republic, the country did not become a typical "nationalizing state" right after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as it happened in most of other Soviet member republics<sup>232</sup>. While the Baltic states have taken the

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<sup>231</sup> Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan*, 2013.

<sup>232</sup> Brubaker, "Nationalizing States Revisited," November 1, 2011.

anti-Soviet course shortly before after the collapse of the Union, introducing strict language policies and integrating national minorities into the hosting cultures, the same processes took place in most of the Central Asian countries shortly after the Union's dissolution. However, this did not happen in Kyrgyzstan, which also made this country an exceptional example of transition to independence.

While national identity in other Post-Soviet countries was focused on “us” and “them” distinction, introduction of the new language policies, diagnosing the titular nations with a weakened status, the discourses of the first Kyrgyzstan's president could be characterized by the double identity narrative, welcoming the minorities and underlining the importance of authentic Kyrgyzstani culture. Although some scholars claimed that introducing national hero Manas as the main ideological character was automatically excluding non-Kyrgyz citizens<sup>233</sup><sup>234</sup>, this was not so. The values propagated by Manas epic included interethnic accord and stability in the country, while several narratives of the epic were telling the stories of the friends of Manas coming from different countries and choosing to live in Kyrgyzstan. This way, Akaev was not marginalizing anyone, gaining popular support and reinforcing his position in the office.

“Nationalization” or “kyrgyzification” of the state took place 15 years after Kyrgyzstan had gained independence: in 2005, Akaev's regime has been ruined, and opposition member Kurmanbek Bakiyev came to power, introducing new national identity policies and narratives. It was the first time in Central Asia when the presidential power has been transmitted, even though the power was seized by a revolution. After that, Kyrgyzstan followed the path taken by most of its neighbors: to hold the power, Bakiyev had to build the national identity based on

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<sup>233</sup> Hanks, “Crisis in Kyrgyzstan,” June 1, 2011.

<sup>234</sup> Robert Lowe, “Nation Building and Identity in the Kyrgyz Republic.”

the ideas of exclusionary revolutionary nationalism<sup>235</sup>. This type of nationalism helped Bakiyev to marginalize the opposition groups, mainly consisting of representatives of other ethnic groups. The exclusionary nationalism was used in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union to help the leaders of these Central Asian states to control their countries.

Contrary to the exclusionary nationalism, its more inclusive civic model employed by Akaev to build the national identity of the Kyrgyzstani people from scratch was not typical for other Central Asian countries<sup>236</sup>. Most of the studies have been focusing on the processes of national identity in Kyrgyzstan, focusing mainly on the developments, which took place before the collapse of the Soviet Union<sup>237 238 239</sup>. However, most of them tended to underestimate the influence of democratic transition as well as tendencies and personal traits of the presidents on the formation of national identity. This study claims the democratic transition, which took place in Kyrgyzstan in the first years of independence, has affected the further practices of national identity formation.

Building a democratic society, Akaev had to form the national identity of the Kyrgyz people based on the ideas of multiculturalism and civic inclusion – the model defined as civic nationalism by Snyder<sup>240</sup>. This type of nationalism could be employed by Akaev as he did not face serious opposition at the first decade of his regime; moreover, nationalism could be used by the president to justify the failing democratization strategy<sup>241</sup>. Since Akaev managed to hold

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<sup>235</sup> Jack Snyder, “Nationalism and the Crisis of the post-Soviet State,” *Survival* 35, no. 1 (March 1, 1993): 5–26, doi:10.1080/00396339308442671.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Huskey, “National Identity from Scratch.”

<sup>238</sup> Laruelle, “The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda,” March 2012.

<sup>239</sup> Marat, “Imagined Past, Uncertain Future.”

<sup>240</sup> Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence*.

<sup>241</sup> Snyder, “Nationalism and the Crisis of the post-Soviet State.”

the power for 15 years, the national identity of the Kyrgyzstani people was based on the ideas of civic inclusion. When this strategy failed in 2005, and new president Bakiyev came to power, he started building national identity following the different principle, turning the country into a nationalizing state. The revolutionary exclusionary nationalism of Bakiyev was used to marginalize all pro-democratic opposition groups and help the president to keep the hold on power. Thus, the shift in national identity in Kyrgyzstan can be explained through the prism of rapid democratic transition, which took place in Kyrgyzstan at the time of Post-Soviet transition.

The case of Kyrgyzstan presents an interesting of correlation between democracy and the processes constituting to identity formation particularly in the Post-Soviet space. Most countries have been divided into two camps after the collapse of the Soviet Union: those promoting democracy and those adhering to a more authoritarian model of government. While Kyrgyzstan was among those opting for democracy, its national identity discourses were different from other pro-democratic countries. For example, the Baltic States were also promoting a European model of government based on the principles of democracy and equal opportunities, yet, its national identity policies were quite nationalistic, promoting national languages and urging minorities to respect the dominant culture<sup>242</sup>. Kyrgyzstan's attempt to introduce democracy was followed by the imposition of national identity based on the principles of inclusion and equality, as well as on the ideas of multiculturalism. This can be explained by the fact that Akaev in first years of his presidency did not face serious opposition; on the contrary, he tried to gain the support of many political groups, including them into the decision making process.

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<sup>242</sup> Lane et al., *The Baltic States*.

The processes of national identity formation in Kyrgyzstan based on the inclusion principles were different from the Baltic States with their pro-democratic policies, as well as it was different from other Central Asian states, the governments of which followed more authoritarian models. The government of Kazakhstan, for example, also followed the model of civic inclusion in the first years of independence; however, as President Nursultan Nazarbayev started getting pressure from the pro-Russian opposition groups, he started to build national identity of Kazakh people with help of more exclusionary nationalism. This is not to say that Akaev did not face serious opposition during 15 years of presidency; however, he was managing to marginalize these groups still using the ideas for civic inclusion and trying to provide these groups with a chance to participate in the governmental process<sup>243</sup>. This did not happen to Bakiyev: the second president of Kyrgyzstan decided to follow the traditional model of Central Asian leaders and suppress opposition movements, often headed by representatives of ethnic minority groups, by the means of exclusionary nationalism. Moreover, this type of nationalism served well to suppress the people's demand for democratic government. The case of Kyrgyzstan, thus, demonstrates that there is certain correlation between democracy and nationalism, supporting Snyder's argument that rapid democratic transition at the beginning can cause a violent ethnic conflict at the end, when the democracy project did not succeed<sup>244</sup>.

The case of Kyrgyzstan also proves the rightness of Brubaker's model of nationalizing states. Although Kyrgyzstan was an exclusion to this model for 15 years, the developments brought to the country by Bakiyev demonstrate that all of the Post-Soviet countries gradually became the states of and for titular nations – the nationalizing states<sup>245</sup>. However, hardly the policies of the Soviet Union affected Kyrgyzstan's becoming a nationalizing state, as Brubaker claimed, these were rather personal ambitions and goals of the country's leader, which made

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<sup>243</sup> Spector, "The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan," March 1, 2004.

<sup>244</sup> Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence*.

<sup>245</sup> Brubaker, "Nationalizing States Revisited," November 1, 2011.



Kyrgyzstan become the state of and for particular nation. The institutionalization of nationhood as well as favoring the representatives of the titular nations common at the times of the Soviets could have an effect on the identity formation; however, if it had influenced the national identity policies, it would have happened shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but not 15 years after it. However, the identity policies introduced by Akaev managed to prevent the emergence of Kyrgyzstan's nationalizing state, which proves that the actions of political actors may play an important role in the processes of identity formation<sup>246</sup>.

## Conclusion

The transformation of Kyrgyzstan's island of democracy into another Post-Soviet nationalizing state took place after the presidential regime had changed in Kyrgyzstan. Representative of intellectual elite Askar Akaev was replaced by native of Jalal-Abad region Kurmanbek Bakiyev. Both leaders wanted to keep power and both of them used national identity for this purpose. However, the way they used it was different. Askar Akaev has won the power due to his proposed democratic transition based on the ideas of equality and economic liberalization. During first years of his presidency, he has gained the support of many people, not suppressing the opposition, but including it into the decision making process. This allowed Akaev to build national identity of Kyrgyzstani people based on the ideas of civic inclusion, or using inclusionary nationalism as its main agenda. The principles of multiculturalism, interethnic peace and harmony in the country, as well as benefits brought by the ethnic minorities to Kyrgyzstan were in the center of Akaev's discourses. This way, he was supporting the image of popular democracy, as well as pleasing Russia and Uzbekistan – strategic economic partners of Kyrgyzstan and the kin-states of the two largest minority groups in the country. The exclusionary nationalism got on the agenda of identity formation after the Tulip

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<sup>246</sup> Fearon and Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity."

revolution in Kyrgyzstan and Bakiyev's arrival to power. Ruining the remains of democracy in a still "democratizing country", Bakiyev quickly marginalized all political opponents and introduced nepotism to the system. The exclusionary nationalism was used by him to justify his actions and marginalization of political opponents, which often were representatives of non-Kyrgyz ethnic groups. Therefore, race for the control of the power provoked the national identity shift in Kyrgyzstan. The personalities of the two presidents as well as their policies explain why Kyrgyzstan has transformed into a nationalizing state 15 years after the independence.

The case of Kyrgyzstan has demonstrated that not only the policies of the Soviet Union have conditioned the evolvement of the nationalizing states, but also personal ambitions and goals of the leaders may contribute to the formation of the countries of and for particular nations. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan was the only country in Central Asia, which started transition to democracy after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which has affected the national identity discourses popularized in the country. Lastly, the case of Kyrgyzstan proves that identity is a dynamic and a constantly changing phenomena; thus, political actors, their policies and discourses, placed in the context of certain events may highly affect the way national identity is formed, which happened in this Central Asian country.

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