External Factors of Authoritarianism: Influence of Russian Policies on Regulations of Civil Society in Kyrgyzstan

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of International Relations

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

Supervisor: Dr. Indrė Balčaitė

Word Count: 16, 380

Budapest, Hungary

2017

ABSTRACT

In the last half a decade, Kyrgyzstan, being arguably the most open to democratization among the Central Asian states, had drifted more towards authoritarianism. In 2014 and 2015, the Parliament attempted to adopt two controversial bills restricting civil liberties and diverting the democratic course of the country. This thesis analyzes the influence of external factors, specifically, how "foreign agents" and "LGBT propaganda" laws that were adopted earlier in Russia influenced the attempts of adopting respective bills in Kyrgyzstan. It undertakes process tracing to investigate the process of deliberation of each of the two bills. Three ways of indirect influence are identified: inspiration, encouragement, and demonstration. The Russian policies inspired certain Kyrgyz lawmakers and Russia's international authority encouraged them to act, while the Russian experience became a template for them to emulate. Although the thesis primarily focuses on the process of diffusion, it also considers the possibilities of direct Russian promotion and Kyrgyz receptiveness to the bills as alternative explanations. By using the available theoretical framework for analysis, the thesis contributes to the literature with empirical findings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to express special gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Indrė Balčaitė for her valuable advice, guidance, patience, and encouragement throughout the thesis project.

I would also like to thank Dr. Alexander Astrov and the whole International Relations Department faculty and staff.

I express endless gratitude to Central European University for the opportunity to deepen my knowledge, widen my horizons, and experience the diversity. Despite the challenging times, it inspired and empowered not just its students, but the whole academic community throughout the world.

Lastly, I express special thanks to my family and friends for their love, support, and patience.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB – Asian Development Bank

BRICS – Brazil, Russia, Iran, China, South Africa

CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States

CSTO – Collective Security Treaty Organization

CU – Customs Union

EAEU – Eurasian Economic Union

EU – European Union

IMF – International Monetary Fund

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

MP – Member of the Parliament

NCO – Non-Commercial Organization

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OBOR – One Belt One Road

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

SCO – Shanghai Cooperation Organization

WB – World Bank

INTRODUCTION

A claimed oasis of democracy in the authoritarian steppes of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan is arguably the most open and welcoming of Western support for democratization in the region. Having undergone two popular uprisings that resulted in ousting dictatorial leadership and adopting a parliamentary form of government, in 2015, Kyrgyzstan was the only country in the region with a regime not considered consolidated authoritarian.[1] According to Freedom House reports, the country's democracy indicators have been better than its neighbors' since its independence in 1991. However, in 2014 and 2015, the Parliament attempted to adopt two controversial laws diverting the democratic course of the country. "Foreign agents" bill threatened to harass the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in loosely-defined "political activities" and limited their freedoms. The second bill aimed at prohibiting the dissemination of information about "non-traditional sexual relations" and thus limiting the freedom of speech and discriminating lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) groups in the country. The initiation of both laws increased the violence and hatred towards foreign-funded NGOs, LGBT activists and minorities, and harmed the internationally-valued democratic image of the country in Central Asia. What has changed in the country in the last half-a-decade that allowed to bring about the proposals of laws constraining civil society considered the most vibrant in the region?

Recent literature on the international dimensions of authoritarianism suggests that the rise of powerful autocratic states such as Russia, China, Iran, and Venezuela influences the degree of authoritarianism in the world.[2] Throughout the 2000s, the normative appeal of

[1] Freedomhouse.org, "Kyrgyzstan | Country Report | Nations in Transit | 2016," *Freedomhouse.org*, accessed May 27, 2017, https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2016/kyrgyzstan.

[2] Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008); Azar Gat, "The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 4 (August 2007): 59–69; Thomas Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion: Concepts, Dynamics, and Future Research: Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," *International Studies Perspectives* 11, no. 4 (November 2010): 375–92; Jakop Tolstrup, "Black Knights and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes: Why and How Russia Supports Authoritarian Incumbents in Post-Soviet States: Black Knights and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes," *European Journal of*

democracy declined. In the literature, the use of concepts such as "democratic recession"[3] and "democratic rollback"[4] became common. Aggressive, neo-imperial, and failed democratization attempts in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere harmed the appeal towards democracy; they were interpreted as Western and or American intrusion, thus disinteresting the cooperation with them.[5] Meanwhile, Russia and China, two rising autocrats adopted contrasting foreign policy approaches that directly criticized the Western interventions on the basis of the principle of 'non-interference in international affairs'.[6]

In his 2008 book *The Return of the History and the End of Dreams*, Robert Kagan, one of the pioneers of the literature on the international dimensions of autocracy, argued that the world "[had] become normal again".[7] According to Kagan, the optimistic and promising years following the end of the Cold War were just "a mirage" and the world returned to the old reality of competition and confrontation.[8] Azar Gat reflects that in this emerging struggle between democracy and autocracy, autocracies "may have enough weight to create a new non-democratic but economically advanced Second World".[9] In addition, Gat is worried that the Western political and economic order is "vulnerable to unforeseen developments such as a crushing economic crisis", as a result of which, a "successful nondemocratic Second World could … be regarded by many as an attractive alternative to liberal democracy".[10]

Kyrgyzstan's change of direction that could be seen in country's closure of American airbase, extending the lease for Russian military bases, joining Russian-led economic union,

Political Research 54, no. 4 (November 2015): 673–90; Julia Bader, Jörn Grävingholt, and Antje Kästner, "Would Autocracies Promote Autocracy? A Political Economy Perspective on Regime-Type Export in Regional Neighbourhoods," *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 1 (March 2010): 81–100.

[3] Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," 376.

[4] Peter Burnell and Oliver Schlumberger, "Promoting Democracy – Promoting Autocracy? International Politics and National Political Regimes," *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 1 (March 2010): 1.

[5] Ibid., 2; Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," 382.

[6] Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion."

[7] Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*, 3.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Gat, "The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers," 66.

[10] Ibid., 67.

and attempting to adopt Russian style autocratic policies could be explained by the changes in the international politics and the balance of power that Kagan and Gat write about. Current dynamics such as Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, and the rise of populism throughout Europe indicate that liberal values are going through a turmoil. Meanwhile the rise of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS), Russia's aggressive behavior and Chinese growing influence in Africa and South America show the rising influence of non-democratic, authoritarian powers. In addition, in the context of this confrontation, the recent Western sanctions on Russia over the annexation of Crimea have not had positive results so far. Instead, some analysts fear that it created an opportunity for Russia to pursue alternative global financial institutions to Western prototypes.[11] Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov even had talked about an alternative "post-West"[12] world order where Russia would be the leading power.[13]

Although Russia's global ambitions can be questioned, its influence cannot be underestimated in Central Asia. The role of Soviet heritage, a common linguistic space, and preexisting transport and communications infrastructure are a few examples of Russian presence in the region. It also acts as the security guarantor in the region, especially for a small country like Kyrgyzstan. Recently, it launched its regional economic union that aspires to outgrow the European Union (EU) and is closely working with China on cross-regional economic projects such as "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) initiative. Given these global and

[11] Emma Ashford, "Not-So-Smart Sanctions," *Foreign Affairs*, December 14, 2015, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2015-12-14/not-so-smart-sanctions.
[12] Dw.com, "Битва Дипломатов, Или Словесная Перепалка Габриэля С Лавровым [The Battle of Diplomats, or a Verbal Skirmish between Gabriel and Lavrov]," *DW.COM*, accessed May 21, 2017, http://www.dw.com/ru/%D0%B1%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BF%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%BE%D0%B2-%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%B8-%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%81%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%8F-%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BA%D0%B0-%D0%B3%D0%B0%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%8D%D0%BB%D1%8F-%D1%81-%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%8B%D0%BC/av-37892608.
[13] Tapestry, "Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov – 'The West Needs Us. We Don't Need the West.' |," *Tapnewswire.com*, accessed May 21, 2017, http://tapnewswire.com/2016/01/russian-foreign-minister-lavrov-the-west-needs-us-we-dont-need-the-west/.

regional developments and strong Kyrgyz-Russian ties, the hypothesis that Russia could have influenced the anti-democratic changes in Kyrgyzstan in the last five years can be justified.

Research question

A few years prior to Kyrgyz attempts to adopt these laws, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed similar bills into laws. Hence, the Kyrgyz proposals raised much concern in the country that the politicians were following the Russian example. Russian influence is strong in the country, but there was no trace of open support or promotion of the laws by the Kremlin representatives. The thesis analyzes the influence of these two Russian laws on the regulations of civil society in Kyrgyzstan, which the thesis believes can be indicative of the country's democratic outlook. Thus, the driving research question of the thesis is: how do Russian authoritarian policies influence regulations of civil society in Kyrgyzstan?

Hypothesis

To answer the posed question, the thesis undertook process tracing of each policy that included a textual analysis of the respective Russian laws and Kyrgyz bills, media screening, and semi-structured interviews with the insiders of the policy proceedings, including politicians, civil society activists, journalists, and experts. The results suggest that the Russian authoritarian policies - although with little effect - did indirectly influence the anti-democratic developments in Kyrgyzstan's civil society regulations in three main ways: through inspiration, by providing alternative politics based on conservative values; through encouragement, by supporting it with the Russian example and international authority; and through demonstration, by providing a ready template for emulation, with certain tools such as policy wording and legal justifications. Thus, the hypothesis presented in the thesis is that Russian authoritarian policies, through the process of diffusion, indirectly affected the decisions of Kyrgyz authorities to strengthen the regulations of civil society activities in Kyrgyzstan. However, although the thesis

relies on the process of diffusion as the main theoretical framework of analysis, it does consider the possibility of direct Russian interference and the Kyrgyz receptivity to adopting the laws in Kyrgyzstan. The literature review outlines the theoretical avenues in more detail and give justifications for certain decisions.

Chapter outline

Chapter 1 justifies the case selection, outlines methods used to answer the research question and to test the hypothesis, and addresses ethical implications regarding the interviews and overall thesis project. Chapter 2 turns to the literature on international dimensions of authoritarianism to set the theoretical framework for analysis. Chapter 3 studies Russia-Kyrgyzstan relations to establish the conditions for the process of diffusion to occur, and thus, addresses the context for the more detailed case study of the bills. Finally, Chapter 4 deals with the bills where it studies diffusion hypothesis and offers certain mechanisms of the process. The chapter also addresses the possibilities of direct Russian influence as an alternative to diffusion process. In Conclusion, the thesis reflects on the overall project process and findings and draws implications for future research.

CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This section aims to justify the case selections and the methods it chose to investigate the research question and the hypothesis. It also addresses aspects regarding the interviews such as the selection criteria, the list of final interviewees, and how they were conducted, and considers the ethical implications.

1.1 Rationale for case selections

Firstly, why consider Russia and Kyrgyzstan? In recent literature on the international dimensions of authoritarianism, Russia has become the major suspect of influencing autocratic trends in the world. Due to the geographic proximity, historic and cultural ties, and economic links, Kyrgyzstan, and Central Asia in general are seen as the potential targets of Russia's influence. Whereas other Central Asian states are ruled by long-standing autocrats, Kyrgyzstan is the only exception. Freedom House *Nations in Transition 2016* report shows that Kyrgyzstan is the most democratic or, more aptly, the least authoritarian in the Central Asian region.[14] Further, Wolfgang Merkel argues that hybrid regimes, regimes that are not fully authoritarian or democratic, are likely to shift to one or another regime type.[15] Thus, Kyrgyzstan, being a hybrid regime, can drift to one or another form of government. If Russia's influence on autocracy can be seen in its vicinity, then Kyrgyzstan is a suitable place, because other states are already strong consolidated authoritarian regimes.

The thesis sets the timeframe of Russia-Kyrgyzstan relations between 2010 and 2015. This period is preferred for several reasons. In 2010, Kyrgyzstan went through yet another violent regime change that took down a more pro-American Kurmanbek Bakiev's regime and transformed the country into a parliamentary republic. The new government managed to shut

[14] Freedomhouse.org, "Kyrgyzstan | Country Report | Nations in Transit | 2016."
[15] Wolfgang Merkel, "Are Dictatorships Returning? Revisiting the 'democratic Rollback' Hypothesis," *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 1 (March 2010): 25.

down the American "Gansi" airbase[16] which had agreed an extension with the previous regime,[17] extended the contract for the Russian airbase,[18] and joined the Russia-led economic union[19]. These and other developments warmed Russian-Kyrgyz relations and the number of regular visits and meetings increased. Within the same period, two controversial bills were initiated and strongly debated in the Kyrgyz Parliament.

Why evaluate the regulations of civil society as an indicator of democracy? The level of freedom in the civil society can indicate the level of democracy in the country. Restrictions of the former can affect the latter. Democracy is not limited to elections, not even if they are free and fair, which has been more or less the case for Kyrgyzstan's last several elections according to Freedom House reports and the monitoring missions of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).[20] It is also about various principles such as free press, human rights, independent judiciary, and vibrant civil society. Freedom House, one of the leading institutions in observing democracy in the world, stresses the importance of civil society for democracy as a space that keeps political pluralism, gives voice to citizens, and controls the long arm of the government.[21] The two Russian laws on NGOs and LGBT propaganda limited civil liberties and harmed democracy in the country.

Secondly, civil society in Kyrgyzstan is a contested arena and is yet to be controlled by the government. Lucan Way argued that Russia's influence in Central Asian states'

[16] Olga Dzyubenko, "'Mission Accomplished' for U.S. Air Base in pro-Moscow Kyrgyzstan," *Reuters.com*, March 6, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-kyrgyzstan-usa-base-idUSBREA251SA20140306.
[17] Ferghana.ru, "Kyrgyzstan: Why Did French and Spanish Military Withdraw from Manas Airbase?," *Ferghana.ru*, October 27, 2009, http://enews.fergananews.com/news.php?id=1434.
[18] Grigorii Mihailov, "Авиабаза Кант Обеспечит Безопасность Киргизии [The Kant Airbase Ensures the Security of Kyrgyzstan]," *Ng.ru*, January 31, 2017, http://www.ng.ru/cis/2017-01-31/1_6916_kirgizia.html.
[19] Azattyk.org, "Кыргызстан Присоединился К ЕАЭС [Kyrgyzstan Joined the EAEU]," *Azattyk.org*, accessed May 27, 2017, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/27002605.html.
[20] Freedomhouse.org, "Kyrgyzstan | Country Report | Nations in Transit | 2016"; OSCE.org, "Parliamentary Elections, 10 October 2010 | OSCE," *OSCE.org*, accessed May 27, 2017, http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/kyrgyzstan/117850; OSCE/ODIHR, "KYRGYZ REPUBLIC PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 4 October 2015 OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report" (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, January 28, 2016), http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/kyrgyzstan/219186?download=true.
[21] Freedomhouse.org, "Supporting Civil Society | Freedom House," *Freedomhouse.org*, accessed May 30, 2017, https://freedomhouse.org/program/supporting-civil-society.

authoritarianism is limited as they are already authoritarian.[22] However, this is the case because most of the analysis focused on elites in these target countries.[23] Elites represent the most influential strata of power, which makes them reasonable object of study. However, they are the least democratic groups. Elites are interested in consolidating their power and keeping it as long as possible, which leads them to practice authoritarian tactics, and therefore follow more authoritarian international actors' examples such as Russia's. Looking at elites therefore, will not produce tangible results. To solve this issue, the thesis follows Charles Ziegler's suggestion that one should look at civil society groups as they still enjoy democratic freedoms. He argues that the civil society, though weaker than elites, can impact national politics and represent the level of democracy in the country.[24] As the "arena of contention" between democratic and autocratic forces, civil society groups can be more indicative of external influences on both democratic and autocratic trends.[25] That is especially true in Kyrgyzstan. According to Freedom House, Kyrgyzstan's 2015 "civil society" score was 4.75, whereas the regional average is 5.35, with 7 being the lowest indicator.[26] Local journalist, Bektour Iskender, although sees much room for improvement, believes that Kyrgyzstan's environment for civil society is better than in any other Central Asian state.[27] Thus, if there is negative, non-democratic external influence in Kyrgyzstan, its effects should be visible in the country's management of civil society, whereas looking at the elites will produce little evidence as they are already authoritarian.

[22] Lucan A. Way, "The Limits of Autocracy Promotion: The Case of Russia in the 'near Abroad': The Limits of Autocracy Promotion," *European Journal of Political Research* 54, no. 4 (November 2015): 691–706.
[23] Charles E. Ziegler, "Great Powers, Civil Society and Authoritarian Diffusion in Central Asia," *Central Asian Survey* 35, no. 4 (October 2016): 550.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 553.
[26] Freedomhouse.org, "Kyrgyzstan | Country Report | Nations in Transit | 2016."
[27] Bektour Iskender, Thesis interview, Face-to-face, May 2017.

1.2 Process tracing

The thesis undertook process tracing to investigate the process of deliberation of each of the two bills. It included a textual analysis of the respective Russian laws and Kyrgyz bills, media screening, and semi-structured interviews with the insiders of the policy proceedings. According to Stephen Van Evera, process tracing should indicate if a "given stimulus caused a given response".[28] In the case of this thesis, the "stimulus" is the Russian authoritarian policies, while the "given response" is the Kyrgyz attempt to emulate them. Such a stimulus and response should be traceable "in the sequence and structure of events",[29] which the thesis attempts to accomplish. Thus, in the data collection, the thesis looks for specific Russian policy formulations, political decisions, and justifications that could be traced in the Kyrgyz bills, and also considers any direct contact of authorities that could influence the proceedings.

1.3 Interviews

To get a balanced understanding of the bill proceedings, it was important to reach out to the insiders of the process with both supporting and opposing viewpoints. Being away from Bishkek, the author used emails, private messages, and phone calls to contact three initiators of the bills, two supporting and three opposing members of the parliament (MPs), the leader of the nationalist movement "Kalys" ("Just" or "Judge"), who was actively supporting the bills, a well-known activist who strongly opposed the bills, two Bishkek based LGBT organizations, three local political experts, two journalists, and two Parliament insiders. However, most ignored or declined the request. All the MPs ignored the request, with only one explicitly declining an interview. He confirmed the author's expectations that the MPs are fearful in such

[28] Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*, 8. printing, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1997), 65.
[29] Ibid.

questions by noting that "[no MP] will agree as they are scared" to relate their names with labels such as "LGBT", "foreign agents", "West", or "Russia".

In the end, four interviews were obtained: a journalist, two representatives of one LGBT organization, employee of another NGO and a Parliament insider. Two interviews were conducted via skype and two face-to-face under the auspices of a conference that took place in Prague in spring 2017. Bektour Iskender is a journalist and a co-founder of Kloop.kg – Bishkek based free media outlet and school of journalism – was the only one to insist on foregoing his anonymity. Kloop.kg was in the forefront of reporting on the respective parliamentary hearings and public developments such as demonstrations in support of the bills that "Kalys" organized. Kyrgyz Indigo, an LGBT organization that has been also closely following the bill developments, agreed on the name of the organization being used. Although it was not possible to contact the MPs, other parliament insiders were more approachable. A parliament insider was an assistant of an MP with liberal views who had opposed both bills. One of the valuable interlocutors was an NGO worker who opposes the adoption of the "foreign agents" bill, but generally supports some form of control over the NGOs, which he believes would increase their quality. Although only four interviews were conducted, they were able to reveal much information that are not publicly available such as the mood in the Parliament and the peculiarities of "Kalys" demonstrations, which greatly contributed to the thesis project by enhancing the process trace.

As the research involves human subjects, it is essential to consider possible ethical implications. Because of the topic's sensitivity, especially of the "LGBT propaganda" law, the interviewees' reputation and for some, safety can be at stake. Therefore, the author sought informed consent before each interview and ensured anonymity and confidentiality, in one case with a change of detailed information such as gender, unless agreed otherwise. Two of the four interviews were audio recorded, as initially agreed with the interlocutors. The recordings are

encrypted and will be kept by the researcher until a successful thesis defense. To prevent third party possession, they will be destroyed afterwards. Potentially, the study can also pose a risk for the researcher. Whereas there were plenty of occasions when journalists were persecuted for their articles, there were no such cases for academic works. Nevertheless, to prevent false accusations, the thesis does not insult any individual and only uses data collected from the interviews and publicly available sources. In addition, the interview data is cross-checked with the public sources to minimize the risk.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

How do Russian authoritarian policies influence the regulations of civil society in Kyrgyzstan? The previous chapter explained why civil society is an important indicator of democracy and why looking for Russian authoritarian influence in Kyrgyzstan's civil society regulations is justified. However, it did not elaborate on how Russian authoritarian policies influenced it. To answer the "how" question, the thesis turns to the literature on the international dimensions of authoritarianism. The primary concerns here are what "influence" is and how it operates. The literature on the international dimensions of authoritarianism is relatively new, and while there is an agreement on the existence of negative authoritarian influence, there is little consensus on its mechanisms. There are three main theoretical approaches to the study of influence mechanisms: promotion, diffusion, and collaboration. These mechanisms of influence differ depending on what the analysis focuses on: the intent of a "parent" state or the effects on the "satellite".

When focusing on the intents of a parent state, the research is usually tilted to investigate parent state actions and underlying motivations to support incumbent regimes abroad. In the literature, it is known as "autocracy promotion". There are also authors who argue that satellites can be receptive to parent state influences and that the two can collaborate. Although this theoretical stream also focuses on the intents, it is different from the concept of "autocracy promotion". The theory of authoritarian "collaboration" considers not just parent state motivations, but also the target state reactions. In a case of a target state resistance to external pressure, it can be called "promotion", but in a case of receptiveness, it should be called "collaboration". When the research focuses on the effects of Russian authoritarian policies in authoritarianism, then the investigation is about indirect and unintentional promotion of autocratic practices and diffusion of non-democratic sentiments. The mechanism is diffusion of policies with no intent or motivation from the part of a diffuser. The primary focus is on the

target state and its vulnerabilities to various influences exerted from the parent state. Thus, the literature review, after outlining the concept of "influence", elaborates on three main theoretical streams: authoritarian "promotion", authoritarian "collaboration", and authoritarian "diffusion" in that order.

What is influence? Influence is best described through the concept of power, as the amount of power can be translated into influence e.g. make others do what they otherwise would not do.[30] There are two main ways to influence: through hard power or soft power. Jeffrey Hart describes power as "control": control over resources, over actors, and over events and outcomes.[31] His description of power, especially the third form, imply motivations of actors to reach certain goals.[32] These forms of power can be argued to produce direct influence when one can simply command the other to comply with its own rules and guidelines. Traditionally, military might and resources play a decisive role in pushing for one's own agenda and interest. In recent history, the United States attempts to forcibly change and install democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq can be classic examples.

Alternatively to direct practice of command, dictionaries describe influence as producing an effect "without exertion of force".[33] One can attract others to 'want what it wants'. Joseph Nye, Jr. argued that whereas military capability of a state is still a major factor in international politics, factors of technology, education, information, and economic growth started playing greater roles in power distributions.[34] Intangible sources of power such as culture, ideology, language, and institutions became the carriers of change in the globalized world. The popularity of democracy after the end of the Cold War attracted many states to

[30] Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (Autumn 1990): 154.
[31] Jeffrey Hart, "Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations," *International Organization* 30, no. 2 (1976): 289–305.
[32] Ibid., 296.
[33] Merriam-webster.com, "Definition of INFLUENCE," *Merriam-Webster.com*, accessed May 31, 2017, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/influence.
[34] Nye, "Soft Power."

emulate American and European forms of government and practice democratic principles, if not practically, at least formally.

Thus, according to Hart and Nye, influence is the ability to change one's behavior and it can take the form of hard, military, economic, and/or other forms of leverage and command or can be soft through cultural, ideological, and other forms of attraction. Although influence is more complex than direct-indirect binary that the chapter proposes, this vision suits the thesis goals as it studies the possibilities of all promotion, collaboration, and diffusion of Russian policies, which align with respective direct-indirect binary vision of influence. Russian authoritarian policies were either forcibly promoted in Kyrgyzstan or were attractive to Kyrgyz authorities for emulation. In the case of attraction, Kyrgyz authorities could emulate the policies by themselves or could collaborate with the Kremlin representatives. As now the chapter outlined what the influence is, it will elaborate on the mechanisms of authoritarian influence in more detail.

2.1 Promotion

The concept of autocracy promotion focuses on the intents of a parent state. Oisin Tansey, Kurt Weyland, and Jakop Tolstrup discuss the concept, but only Tansey defines the concept and outlines directions to study it. According to Tansey, to be considered autocracy promotion, external policies should be "driven by the intention to promote transition to or consolidation of an autocratic regime."[35] All other activities that are aimed at achieving objectives unrelated to the regime type should not be considered autocracy promotion.[36] Moreover, Tansey argues that the underlying motivation should be ideological.[37] Thus, for Tansey, there must be an agent with an intent to promote autocracy with ideological motivations

[35] Oisín Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion," *Democratization* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 148.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., 150.

of spreading authoritarian form of political regime. Such clear guidelines should allow researchers to study the phenomenon with concrete empirical evidence and effectively argue for the existence or absence of external influence. However, it is hard to argue that states consciously aim at autocracy promotion in its strict sense. Thus, the concept in the literature is largely misused, while those who follow strict definition, find few convincing cases of autocracy promotion.[38]

In his article, "Problems in studying the international dimensions of authoritarianism", Jakop Tolstrup raises the problem of conceptual ambiguity. He argues that, although many authors are using the term "autocracy promotion", in fact they describe different scenarios and provide unrelated examples.[39] For example, Lucan Way argues that Russia has been concentrating on its own economic and geopolitical interests in Central Asia[40]. Russia has self-serving motivations, but the author nevertheless attributes its actions to autocracy promotion. Inna Melnykovska, Hedwig Plamper, and Rainer Schweickert specifically ask "do Russia and China promote autocracy in Central Asia?" The authors provide evidence of close Russian and Chinese relations with Central Asian countries and even the cases of intrusions into their domestic politics, but they indicate various motivations ranging from economy to security that indirectly result in the diffusion of autocratic principles.[41] Thus, if their conclusions are assessed by the strict criteria, they seem to suggest an indirect diffusion rather than promotion. Such

[38] Oisin Tansey, "Questioning 'Autocracy Promotion,'" *The American Political Science Association - Comparative Democratization* 13, no. 1 (February 2015): 1, 4–7; Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion"; Jakop Tolstrup, "Problems in Studying the International Dimension of Authoritarianism," *The American Political Science Association - Comparative Democratization* 13, no. 1 (February 2015): 1, 8–11; Kurt Weyland, "Autocratic Diffusion and Cooperation: The Impact of Interests vs. Ideology," *Democratization*, April 3, 2017, 1–18.

[39] Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion," 143–45; Tolstrup, "Problems in Studying the International Dimension of Authoritarianism," 8.

[40] Way, "The Limits of Autocracy Promotion."

[41] Inna Melnykovska, Hedwig Plamper, and Rainer Schweickert, "Do Russia and China Promote Autocracy in Central Asia?," *Asia Europe Journal* 10, no. 1 (May 2012): 75–89.

deliberations are "contradiction in terms", as Tansey points out in his criticism of the usage of the term in the literature.[42]

However, it is not easy to empirically identify actor motivations. One can argue that Tansey's definition is too rigid. External actors are not open about their true intentions, which makes confident classifications difficult. Unlike democracy promotion, actively and openly pursued by various international actors, autocracy promotion lacks such features as it is perceived as wrongdoing.[43] In addition, very few states promote authoritarianism for ideological purposes. Instead, they pursue their interests. Kurt Weyland stresses the importance of differentiating between interests and ideology.[44] Promotion of autocracy for ideological purposes can be found in history and is rare in the modern world. Weyland cites Hitler's Nazi Germany, Mussolini's fascist Italy, and Soviet communism as historical examples, and uses Hugo Chavez's Venezuela as the only modern example.[45] Today, states bolstering authoritarianism pursue their interest unrelated to ideology.

Tansey, in his earlier work, admitted these criticisms. His strict definition is oblivious to those external factors of authoritarianism that are not limited to utter ideologically-driven promotion. Most probably, Russia is not promoting autocracy in Kyrgyzstan, but is pursuing other goals that could be bolstering authoritarianism as a by-product. However, the concept of autocracy promotion does not allow or provide guidelines to investigate different considerations as it rejects all other forms of influence as unrelated to the concept. Moreover, these problems with "motivations" raise the question of relevance of the "autocracy promotion" concept. Actors may have various interests such as extending the market or having military locations in the target state territory which may result in supporting the incumbent regimes; in most of these cases, identifying their motivations seem irrelevant. Research shows that even the democratic

[42] Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion," 145.
[43] Tansey, "Questioning 'Autocracy Promotion,'" 5–6.
[44] Weyland, "Autocratic Diffusion and Cooperation."
[45] Ibid., 10–11.

states may bolster authoritarianism in the pursuit of their interests, who are hardly motivated to bolster authoritarianism.[46] The United States' military cooperation with Saudi Arabia, Turkey under Erdogan, and Kyrgyzstan under the Bakiev regime are vivid examples. Therefore, although the thesis will investigate the possibility of certain pressures from Russian authorities, it does not aim to establish clear motives behind them. Hence the existence of influence will not prove or disprove Russia's engagement in autocracy promotion in the strict sense.

2.2 Collaboration

The concept of autocracy promotion presupposes the main actor as the promoter that brings changes to the target state. In contrast, authoritarian "collaboration" implies that the target states can be, to a varying degree, receptive to the external influence. Authoritarian collaboration is different from promotion. Essentially, promotion is a one-way process, whereas collaboration is two-way.[47] Although it also needs to have an element of intent, unlike promotion, the intent is mutually agreed and desired. Collaboration as such can happen for various reasons between various actors, but in the context of authoritarianism, it should be aimed at preventing democratic spillover and result in strengthening the autocratic regime.[48] Christian von Soest argues that the main motivation behind authoritarian collaboration is not the ideological commitment to authoritarianism, but rather a self-serving one to secure one's own regime by preventing democratic spillover.[49] Roy Allison similarly observed that he primary reason for cooperation in Central Asia that involves Russia or China, especially within

[46] Thomas Ambrosio, "Democratic Black Knights," *The American Political Science Association - Comparative Democratization* 13, no. 1 (February 2015): 2, 12–14.
[47] Christian von Soest, "Democracy Prevention: The International Collaboration of Authoritarian Regimes: The International Collaboration of Authoritarian Regimes," *European Journal of Political Research* 54, no. 4 (November 2015): 629.
[48] von Soest, "Democracy Prevention"; Roy Allison, "Virtual Regionalism, Regional Structures and Regime Security in Central Asia," *Central Asian Survey* 27, no. 2 (June 2008): 185–202; Tolstrup, "Black Knights and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes."
[49] von Soest, "Democracy Prevention," 624.

the frameworks of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), is two-fold.[50] Central Asian states collaborate with Russia or China in the hope of political solidarity, while Russia and China hope to gain access to energy resources or strategical military locations and prevent Western influence.[51] Tolstrup along the same line, argues that Russia supported and collaborated with pro-Russian candidates in the elections in Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova with a main motivation to have "Russia friendly" leadership and to avoid democratic spillover effects.[52]

The notion of collaboration faces similar challenges as promotion: it also has to differentiate the "deliberate" type of collaboration to withstand democratization pressures and the "general" authoritarian cooperation that may result in bolstering autocratic regimes.[53] The essential difference of collaboration from promotion is the mutual, responsive interaction of actors. Although authors offer actor motivations such as preventing democratic spillover and strengthening the status quo, establishing them is as challenging as in the process of "promotion". Von Soest argues that the conditions under which authoritarian regimes decide to collaborate can be indicative of their motivations. When the decision making takes place in the context of crisis events such as Arab Spring or Color Revolutions, autocrats "feel more pressure to intervene abroad" and collaborate to secure themselves than in normal times.[54] However, even when identifying conditions, true motivations remain vague. In addition, von Soest can identify motivations only in crisis times, which are rarer than peacetime collaborations.

In addition to the problems related with establishing motivations, collaboration has another difficulty. Collaboration is usually still an asymmetrical relationship where one of the partners dominates. Von Soest argues that it is nevertheless to some degree a voluntary

[50] Allison, "Virtual Regionalism, Regional Structures and Regime Security in Central Asia."
[51] Ibid.
[52] Tolstrup, "Black Knights and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes."
[53] von Soest, "Democracy Prevention," 626.
[54] Ibid.

relationship that aims at mutual benefit and two-way support. However, it is hard to establish the level of voluntary receptivity of a target state in the context of Russia and Kyrgyzstan for example, as the latter is extremely weak. Kyrgyz authorities can be interested to show compliance as they may not have other choice even if they wished to resist. As a strategy of weak states, "bandwagoning" can be the only way out for Kyrgyzstan to gain any benefit from the collaboration rather than being harmed.

Finally, the collaboration concept does not explain change, but rather continuity. If Kyrgyz politicians welcomed Russia's influence because they also wished to secure their positions and authoritarian rule, which is the underlying assumption for both von Soest and Allison, it is difficult to argue that Russian authoritarian policies influenced anti-democratic trends in Kyrgyzstan and strengthened autocracy. The policies did not bring authoritarian change but rather reinforced the existing status quo. Julia Bader, Jorn Gravingholt, and Antje Kastner argue that the study of the international dimensions of authoritarianism becomes more complicated in the cases of high target state receptivity for this specific reason.[55] Thus, the theoretical framework of collaboration is not suited to explain the autocratic turn that the Russian authoritarian policies may have influenced in Kyrgyzstan. It would imply that Kyrgyzstan was already on this track and that Russian authorities supported the country in advancing and continuing the same trend.

2.3 Diffusion

Whereas authoritarian promotion and collaboration mechanisms mainly focus on the intent of the parent states, authoritarian diffusion brings the effects in the "satellite" state to the fore. Thus, the angle of analysis switches from the parent state to the target state and from intentions and motivations to effects and results.

[55] Bader, Grävingholt, and Kästner, "Would Autocracies Promote Autocracy?," 97.

Thomas Ambrosio, one of the pioneers of the literature on the international dimensions of authoritarianism, observed that Russia took successful measures to resist and counter democratic pressures after the Color Revolutions, and thus became an example for other incumbent governments to emulate.[56] He suggested a framework of authoritarian "diffusion" to study the phenomenon. Diffusion, for Ambrosio, is a process of a spread of a practice or an idea from one unit or population to the other over time.[57] According to Ambrosio's framework, countries such as Russia and China, rather than aggressively promoting a particular form of government, are more interested in "creating global conditions under which democracy promotion is blunted and state sovereignty (understood as the ability of leaders to determine the form of government for their country) is … entrenched".[58] It is a more indirect approach that provides "alternative sources of aid and support, undermining democracy promotion, and serving as a model for others to follow".[59] Nicole Jackson in support of the concept, argues that Russia, through indirect diffusion of norms and ideas unintentionally prolonged the survival of Central Asian autocrats.[60] The degree of diffusion can be argued to be dependent on the density of ties between the countries. As Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way argued, the density of ties between powerful states and its small neighbors can determine the level of influence that the former has over the latter.[61] This is because close cross-border relation serve as channels and routes for the diffusion of ideas and norms.

In the case of diffusion, the influence operates in the mix of soft power and minimal hard power means where a "country … structure[s] a situation so that other countries develop

[56] Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," 375.
[57] Ibid., 378.
[58] Ibid., 376.
[59] Ibid., 377.
[60] Nicole J. Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule: A Case Study of Russia's Influence on Central Asian Regimes," *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 1 (March 2010): 101–18.
[61] Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "Linkage versus Leverage. Rethinking the International Dimension of Regime Change," *Comparative Politics* 38, no. 4 (July 2006): 383–85.

preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own."[62] The concept may encounter similar criticism as collaboration: how can one argue that Kyrgyzstan was influenced by Russia if the country was already attracted to authoritarian policies and the Russian example only reinforced the existing trend? However, the concept of diffusion, unlike collaboration, is geared to study the underlying conditions and processes that altered the preferences of Kyrgyz authorities. It argues that new ideas and norms, previously non-existent in the country, diffuse into it, thus attracting it to change its policies. It may lead to collaboration where Kyrgyz authorities ask for support and help in carrying out certain autocratic policies, but the decision for collaboration would come because of the successful diffusion of Russian norms and ideas in the first place. Therefore, it is rather communication as a result of long-time diffusion processes that altered the environment in Kyrgyzstan to prefer Russian authoritarian policies.

Diffusion does not require intentionality and motivation as it focuses on the effects on the "satellite". Ambrosio argues that actors' primary goal is democracy resistance.[63] However, even if one can convincingly argue that Russia influenced authoritarian trends in Central Asia, it is hardly possible to establish its intents and motivation through the study of the diffusion process. On the other hand, as the thesis question focuses on the "satellite" state and investigates the "how" question regardless of the parent state motivations, the concept of diffusion suits the study well.

According to Ambrosio, there are two issues regarding the research of diffusion: establishing whether it occurs, and understanding the factors that cause it to occur.[64] Establishing the existence of diffusion is the most difficult task.[65] Unfortunately, Ambrosio does not give any guidelines on how to establish its existence. The thesis uses Levitsky and Way's concept of "linkage and leverage" in an attempt to establish conditions for the existence

[62] Nye, "Soft Power," 168.
[63] Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," 377.
[64] Ibid., 378.
[65] Ibid., 378–79; Burnell and Schlumberger, "Promoting Democracy – Promoting Autocracy?," 5.

of diffusion in Russia-Kyrgyz relations in the next chapter. There is no perfect way to study the existence of diffusion process and Ambrosio[66] and other authors[67] explain the difficulty of the task. Nevertheless, linkage and leverage set the conditions under which the diffusion process can occur, which can be indicative of the existence of the process itself.

Leverage is defined as the "incumbent governments' vulnerability to external pressure" for change.[68] Such leverage can take various forms including military force, punitive sanctions, and diplomatic persuasion.[69] In a way, leverage is synonymous to hard power persuasion or getting other's do what one wants, despite the resistance from the part of target states. However, the existence of potential leverage can be enough to alter the target state behavior, who, understanding its vulnerable position, will try to align itself with the country that holds the leverage. Linkage, on the other hand, is defined as "the density of ties and cross-border flows" between two countries and is much closer to determine the existence of diffusion.[70] As Levitsky and Way argue, extensive relations and exchange of people and goods between a country in transition and the US or the EU, consolidated democratic entities, can have positive effects on democratization processes in the former.[71] Linkage, unlike leverage, is more subtle form of power. Levitsky and Way quote Nye to argue that linkage "generates 'soft power,' or the ability to 'shape preferences' and 'get others to *want* what you want'".[72] The high degree of linkage can enhance the "effectiveness of leverage"[73], and the two in tandem can give a lot of power to states to exert their influence and pursue their interests. Although linkage and leverage do not directly explain the process of diffusion, they set the conditions that should be present for a diffusion process to take place. If one can find linkage and leverage between a powerful parent

[66] Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," 378.
[67] Burnell and Schlumberger, "Promoting Democracy – Promoting Autocracy?," 5.
[68] Levitsky and Way, "Linkage versus Leverage. Rethinking the International Dimension of Regime Change," 382.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 383.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., 385.
[73] Ibid., 386.

state and a weak "satellite", it demonstrates that the latter is vulnerable to the diffusion of norms and ideas from the former.

If and when one accepts that diffusion process has happened based on the favorable conditions for it to occur, the next step is to understand the factors that cause it to happen. Although Ambrosio did not offer guidelines on how to establish diffusion process, he offered two main mechanisms of the diffusion process, that is in which case and why one emulates or learns from the other: "appropriateness" and "effectiveness". Appropriateness is state's adaptation to altered conditions.[74] In the quest for legitimacy, states adopt certain norms and practices or claim to do so in order to show their willingness to "adhere to dominant international values."[75] After the end of Cold War, it was appropriate to adopt democratic principles and norms. But in recent years, Ambrosio argues, democracy's legitimacy and appropriateness is questioned, and alternatives such as the Russian model and China's one-party capitalism become more accepted. Effectiveness is a process of learning through adopting external experience in line with local conditions.[76] "Learning" is argued to be different from diffusion,[77] but for Ambrosio, successful diffusion results in the target state learning from the parent. Policymakers do not always choose the best options from international experience, but rather prefer models that fit their interests and biases.[78] Thus, effective policies of China and Russia become models for other authoritarian countries to emulate. Kremlin's effective measures to insulate itself from democratic pressures after the color revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine served as a model for Central Asian autocrats to adopt similar policies.[79]

[74] Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," 379.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 382.
[77] von Soest, "Democracy Prevention," 628.
[78] Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," 382.
[79] Ibid., 382, 383–84.

2.4 Conclusion

The chapter examined the literature on the international dimensions of authoritarianism in search of a theoretical approach to study the mechanisms of influence. Three ways how a parent state can affect changes in the target state were identified. Theory of autocracy promotion cannot explain the process as its strict definition is oblivious to various developments and moreover, implies establishing motivations which is hardly possible and unnecessary. Collaboration is also incompetent as it is hard to measure the voluntary receptivity of a target state when the relations are highly asymmetrical. Moreover, collaboration cannot explain the process of change, but rather continuity. Thus, Ambrosio's framework of diffusion suits the thesis goals as it does not aim to establish parent state motivations or interests, considers the asymmetric relations, and focuses on the target state developments. Nevertheless, the thesis does not limit the mechanism of influence to a mere indirect diffusion process, but additionally considers the possibilities of parent state pressure and target state receptivity, but without any claim to establish motivations behind them. As identifying the existence of the diffusion process is the most difficult task, the thesis can only argue that the presence of certain conditions can strongly suggest its existence. Hence, Levitsky and Way's concept of "linkage and leverage" will be used to establish the conditions that are favorable for the process of diffusion to occur. Furthermore, the empirical chapter employs Ambrosio's concepts of "appropriateness" and "effectiveness" to study how and why Russian experience of adopting authoritarian policies influenced Kyrgyz authorities' decisions and actions.

CHAPTER 3: LINKAGE AND LEVERAGE IN RUSSIA-KYRGYZSTAN RELATIONS

This chapter serves as a background chapter for the case study of the bills. As outlined in the literature review, the thesis can only argue for the existence of conditions for the diffusion process to occur, not for the existence of the process itself. So, for this, the chapter studies linkage and leverage in Russia-Kyrgyz relations in the period between 2010 and 2015. The central argument of the chapter is that strong linkage and leverage between Kyrgyzstan and Russia make the country vulnerable to Russian influence and diffusion of norms, ideas, and practices that strengthen autocratic grip of the elite and impede the democratic progress.

The existing studies already show the density of linkages between Russia and Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan being one of them, that can set a strong case for the existence of the conditions for the process of diffusion to occur in the region. Examples are strong economic ties up to the point of economic dependence of some Central Asian states on Russian energy;[80] established Russian-led regional organizations;[81] increased social linkages through labor migration,[82] the presence of Russian diasporas,[83] and common historical, linguistic, and cultural space;[84] deep penetration of Russian media and telecommunications; and finally, Russian sponsored NGOs, think tanks, and institutions[85]. In time, these linkages and the available levers that come with them start shaping target state politics to become more similar to or appreciative of the developments in the parent state. This chapter further elaborates on these findings in three sectors: security, economy, and society. In the chosen period, Russia had a strong presence in

[80] Melnykovska, Plamper, and Schweickert, "Do Russia and China Promote Autocracy in Central Asia?," 79; Tansey, "The Problem with Autocracy Promotion," 148.
[81] Melnykovska, Plamper, and Schweickert, "Do Russia and China Promote Autocracy in Central Asia?," 78.
[82] Nicole J. Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule: A Case Study of Russia's Influence on Central Asian Regimes," *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 1 (March 2010): 109.
[83] Melnykovska, Plamper, and Schweickert, "Do Russia and China Promote Autocracy in Central Asia?," 82.
[84] Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule," 110.
[85] Melnykovska, Plamper, and Schweickert, "Do Russia and China Promote Autocracy in Central Asia?," 82.

each of these sectors in Kyrgyzstan, affecting some decisions and changing the course of the country's political orientation.

3.1 Russia as security guarantor

Kyrgyz foreign policy concept, last updated in 2007, lists Russia as its most important partner in many aspects.[86] Cooperation with Russia is seen as one of the "most important conditions" for the country's "peaceful and future development" and "implementation of long-term goals".[87] Russia serves as the guarantor of Kyrgyzstan's security and prosperity.

To ensure the national security, the government also stresses the importance of cooperation in two regional organizations, where Russia has a strong presence: SCO and CSTO. Within the framework of CSTO's Collective Rapid Deployment Force, Russia opened an airbase near Bishkek, in the city of Kant in 2003. Its main goal was to ensure the security of member states. Marcel de Haas argues that for Kyrgyzstan, Russian-led security organization is vital as its "survival depends to a high extent on Moscow's protection".[88] Almazbek Atambaev, the serving President of Kyrgyzstan since 2010, on the contrary, likes to comment that Kyrgyzstan does not need external protection, takes pride in having closed the U.S. airbase in the country, and has talked of plans to close the Russian airbase as well.[89] However, the agreement to extend the lease of the Russian airbase for another 15 years was signed recently.[90] Because the airbase is part of the CSTO, it does not pay any rent to Kyrgyz government, and pays less than the market price for utilities.[91]

[86] Minjust.gov, "Концепция Внешней Политики Кыргызской Республики [Foreign Policy Concept of Kyrgyz Republic]," *Minjust.gov*, January 10, 2007, http://cbd.minjust.gov.kg/act/view/ru-ru/4569?cl=ru-ru.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Marcel de Haas, "Relations of Central Asia with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 30, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 5.
[89] Vladislav Vorob'ev, "Атамбаев: Российская База Должна Уйти Из Киргизии [Atambaev: Russian Base Should Leave Kyrgyzstan]," *Rg.ru*, December 1, 2016, https://rg.ru/2016/12/01/atambaev-rossijskaia-baza-dolzhna-budet-ujti-iz-kirgizii.html.
[90] Mihailov, "Авиабаза Кант Обеспечит Безопасность Киргизии [The Kant Airbase Ensures the Security of Kyrgyzstan]."
[91] Ibid.

In the context of authoritarian diffusion, scholars argue that in Central Asia, regional security organizations and bilateral agreements strengthen the incumbent regimes and harm the democratization processes.[92] Regional security organizations in Central Asia are largely ineffective and function only because of the Russian or Chinese financial and political support, whereas smaller members like Kyrgyzstan contribute little and only pay lip-service.[93] However, these organizations remain important for Central Asian leaders for different purposes.[94] Securitization of issues makes it easy to justify government crackdowns on various issues. For example, under the pretext of religious extremism supported in the framework of the SCO, Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov violently suppressed the Andijan uprising in 2005, which left hundreds of people dead.[95] SCO, with China and Russia as leading members, is seen as a platform to counter Western presence in the region. The organization's principles of "diversity" and "non-interference" legitimize autocratic governments, while its commitment to fight the three evils ("extremism", "terrorism", and "separatism") tolerate and justify repressive measures against the opposition.[96]

Indeed, CSTO and SCO had little impact on Kyrgyzstan's security issues so far. In 2010, during the ethnic clashes in the south of the country, the only case when Kyrgyzstan asked for security support, CSTO refused to intervene claiming that the issue was internal.[97] SCO simply ignored the conflict. Nevertheless, Kyrgyzstan keeps its membership as it cannot guarantee its own security and needs Russian assistance with any possible future threats. Russia's bilateral or multilateral security involvements have created conditions under which Russian ideas and

[92] Allison, "Virtual Regionalism, Regional Structures and Regime Security in Central Asia"; Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule," 111; Melnykovska, Plamper, and Schweickert, "Do Russia and China Promote Autocracy in Central Asia?," 77–78.
[93] Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule," 112–13; Allison, "Virtual Regionalism, Regional Structures and Regime Security in Central Asia," 187, 190–91.
[94] Allison, "Virtual Regionalism, Regional Structures and Regime Security in Central Asia," 185.
[95] Mansur Mirovalev, "Uzbekistan: 10 Years after the Andijan Massacre," *Aljazeera.com*, accessed May 23, 2017, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/05/150511123115026.html.
[96] Melnykovska, Plamper, and Schweickert, "Do Russia and China Promote Autocracy in Central Asia?," 77.
[97] de Haas, "Relations of Central Asia with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization," 5.

norms are being transmitted to its weaker partners. Kyrgyzstan, due to its extensive dependence on Russian security assistance and strong involvement in CSTO and SCO, leaves itself vulnerable to Russian interests.

3.2 Kyrgyzstan's economic dependence on donors

Kyrgyz economy highly depends on external support. According to various sources, since independence, Kyrgyzstan received over $8 billion in the form of grants and credits.[98] In 2013, Kyrgyzstan's external debt was around $3 billion.[99] The main bilateral creditors of the country are China with over $500,000, Japan with over $300,000, and Russia with over $300 million.[100] Main international financial institutions are International Monetary Fund (IMF) - $180 million, Asian Development Bank (ADB) - $590 million, and World Bank (WB) - $664 million.[101] In addition, the U.S. government agency, USAID, spends around $40 million in average every year in support of various government and non-government sectors.[102] Although Russia is clearly one of the biggest donors, it is noteworthy that Western donors also spent significant amount in the country that can translate into a leverage, making Kyrgyzstan a playing field of multiple actors.

Surely, one of Russia's advantages over the West is the of the Soviet heritage. The pre-existing transport and communication infrastructure, business and trade connections, almost non-existent linguistic and cultural barriers, and capital flows made it difficult for Kyrgyzstan to divert its economy away from Russia. Although Kyrgyzstan neighbors China, one of the

[98] Maria Indina, "Внешняя Помощь Кыргызстану Составила Более $8 Млрд [Forieng Aid to Kyrgyzstan Is More That $8 Billion]," *Knews.kg*, September 28, 2016, http://knews.kg/2016/09/vneshnyaya-pomoshh-kyrgyzstanu-sostavila-bolee-8-mlrd/.
[99] Ivashenko Ekatarina, "Бездонная Бочка, Или Куда Идут Деньги Инвесторов [Bottomless Barrel or Where Do Foreign Investments Go?]," *Fergananews.com*, accessed May 23, 2017, http://www.fergananews.com//articles/7805.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] USAID.gov, "U.S. Foreign Aid by Country," *USAID.gov*, accessed May 27, 2017, http://explorer.usaid.gov//cd.

fastest growing economies, economically it is far more connected to Russia, with which it has no shared borders. Below, the section outlines three main Russian economic levers of influence over Kyrgyzstan.

The first economic lever is the direct bilateral transfers in the forms of credits, grants, and budget support. Credit is Russia's one of the strongest levers in Kyrgyzstan. The Kremlin pressures or attracts the Kyrgyz authorities by promises of new credits or debt forgiveness. For example, Russian minister of finance, Olga Lavrova, promised to write off $300 million within 10 years starting from 2016,[103] though it was given back in 2009 for 40 years at a favorable yearly rate of 0.75%.[104] In 2009, another $193.5 million was restructured, meaning that 95% percent of the debt was written off.[105] In 2012, another $489 million was agreed for a write-off and is already in the process.[106] Further, in the period between 2009-2015, the Russian government started giving bilateral grants in support of the Kyrgyz budget, in total of $645 million.[107] Under the framework of the EAEU and Customs Union (CU), Russia gave $200 million in 2014 and $129 million in 2015 to build cross-regional roads.[108] These are only the few notable examples of Russian transfers and support.

Secondly, Russia employs hundreds of thousands of migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan. Remittances coming from Russia constitute over 95% of all remittances to Kyrgyzstan and around 32% of the national GDP.[109] Since 2009, the migrants' situation has worsened. Due to the CU, Russia and Kazakhstan closed its doors to Kyrgyz migrant workers and products. Although people continued traveling illegally, many were arrested, harassed, and sent back.

[103] Ekatarina, "Бездонная Бочка, Или Куда Идут Деньги Инвесторов [Bottomless Barrel or Where Do Foreign Investments Go?]."
[104] Sergei Masaulov, "Российская Помощь Кыргызстану: Частные Мнения И Реальные Факты [Russian Help to Kyrgyzstan: Personal Opinions and Real Facts]," *Ritmeurasia.org*, accessed May 23, 2017, http://www.ritmeurasia.org/news--rossijskaja-pomosch-kyrgyzstanu-chastnye-mnenija-i-realnye-fakty-21914.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid.
[109] David Trilling, "Remittances to Central Asia Fall Sharply, as Expected," *Eurasianet.org*, April 21, 2015, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/73061.

Falling remittances worsened the living standards of millions in the country. In addition, returning migrant workers from Russia increased the unemployment level in the country. Many businesses working in the Russian market were forced to cut expenditures or close.

After joining the EAEU in 2014, among other things, the Kyrgyz citizens were promised the right to travel and work in Russia freely.[110] They were exempt from Russian language and history tests, and had a right to sign a working agreement with the employers, that allowed to record their labor history.[111] However, the promises to be fulfilled, the Kyrgyz authorities faced demands for domestic changes. Firstly, they had to comply with the EAEU, i.e. Russian standards, which meant that almost no Kyrgyz products could be exported because of their quality. Secondly, Kyrgyzstan had to raise tariffs to non-members of the EAEU, which meant that Kyrgyzstan could not re-export from China. In the 1990s and the 2000s, re-export was the most profitable business in Kyrgyzstan, raising the living standards of millions in the country.[112] Kyrgyz authorities had little choice but to join the EAEU; the country's economy highly depends on the Russian market, which forced it to agree to Russian demands. The EAEU has become one of the prominent platforms for Russian influence.

Thirdly, Russia has big stakes in the energy sector in the country. Jackson argued that Russia is actively trying to control the Central Asian energy assets in an "attempt to lock these states into long-term relations with Russia".[113] In 2014, the local company providing Kyrgyzstan with gas, "KyrgyzGaz", was bought by Russian "Gazprom". Further, Russia promised to finance the multi-billion-dollar construction of hydroelectric dam "Kambarata-1". Russia and Kyrgyzstan signed agreements in 2009, 2012 and 2013 to allocate 50% of shares to

[110] Aziza Marat kyzy, "Кыргызстан: Запаздывают Долгожданные Льготы Для Мигрантов [Kyrgyzstan: The Promises of Benefits for Migrant Workers Are Being Late]," *Gezitter.org*, accessed May 23, 2017, http://www.gezitter.org/tamozhennyj_sojuz/39964_kyirgyizstan_zapazdyivayut_dolgojdannyie_lgotyi_dlya_migrantov_/.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Atlas.media.mit.edu, "OEC - Kyrgyzstan (KGZ) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners," *Atlas.media.mit.edu*, accessed May 23, 2017, http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/kgz/.
[113] Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule," 108.

Russia.[114] Due to the regional water conflicts and Uzbekistan's strong opposition[115] to giving Russia control over the water management in the region, the project has been frozen. However, Russian authorities let Kyrgyzstan know in any possible situation about the project and its promise to support. Lastly, Kyrgyzstan, after joining the EAEU, receives gas and oil for cheap prices lower than the market prices for non-members. Leaving the Union threatens with high energy prices. Although it is well-known that Russia uses its natural resources and energy assets to pressure governments, the Kyrgyz authorities quietly accept it when dealing with Russian officials.

Russian authorities strategically use each of the existing economic levers to pressure the authorities in Kyrgyzstan. Cases such as debt forgiveness and the promise to build Kambarata hydroelectric dam stop the Kyrgyz officials from criticizing Russia openly and opposing joint projects and agreements. In his recent visit to Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, openly threatened with the consequences of leaving the EAEU when the officials from Belarus were complaining about energy prices.[116] Such messages make sure that other members, especially the weak Kyrgyzstan, stay in tune with the Kremlin.

Despite the sanctions and falling oil prices, Russia was able to fasten its regional economic integration project and to tie its members to itself. Kyrgyzstan was provided economic packages to integrate its economy to the EAEU market. As discussed by Levitsky and Way, extensive linkages create favorable conditions for external influence and act as transmitters of ideas and norms, thus changing the environment of a target country. Increasing

[114] Aidanbek Akmat uulu, "Камбаратинская ГЭС-1 Нуждается В Смене Инвестора? [Kambarata-1 Hydroelectric Power Station Needs a Change of Investor?]," *Azattyk.org*, accessed May 23, 2017, https://rus.azattyk.org/a/27126141.html.
[115] Eleonora Beishenbek kyzy, "Камбарата-1. Позиция Соседа Тормозит Строительство [Kambarata-1. The Position of the Neighbor Stopping the Construction]," *Azattyk.org*, accessed May 23, 2017, https://rus.azattyk.org/a/27052749.html.
[116] Vladimir Kuz'min, "Медведев: В ЕАЭС Никто Никого Насильно Не Держит [Medvedev: No One Is Forcibly Holding Anyone in the EAEU]," *Rg.ru*, accessed May 23, 2017, https://rg.ru/2017/03/07/medvedev-nazval-shantazhom-perenos-v-eaes-dvustoronnih-problem-uchastnikov.html.

economic dependence force the satellite states to align its political and economic goals to match those of their dominant partner and the latter can impose conditionality to push for its own interests.[117] Kyrgyzstan's dependence on Russian economy has created favorable conditions for the diffusion of Russian norms and ideas. In this environment, the Kyrgyz authorities have to consider Russia's interests and position. Nevertheless, considering the total amount of external support that Kyrgyzstan is getting, one should not downgrade the Western input, especially to the public sector since the country's independence; it can also be translated into an influence and be a lever for change. In this matter, although Russia's overall economic influence is stronger, Kyrgyzstan remains an arena of contention for various donors trying to keep its presence in the country.

3.3 Support for Russia within Kyrgyz society

Among many donors operating in Kyrgyzstan, Russia enjoys much approval from the local population, which makes it easier for the decision-makers to use Russian example and authority as a support. Russian news and entertainment media sources are the most popular in the country. Due to their slow development and poor quality, the local TV channels cannot compete with the high-quality Russian alternatives. The lack of correspondence abroad, leaves the population to Russian framed world news.[118] These media channels serve as platforms that can cultivate supportive environment for Russia. Ziegler observes that the media influence contributes the 90% approval ratings of Russian President Putin, far higher than the Kyrgyz President Atambaev's 60%.[119]

Russian government also recently launched a series of "soft power" projects such as "Russky Mir" (Russian World), Russian World TV, and Valdai discussion club. Jackson notes

[117] Melnykovska, Plamper, and Schweickert, "Do Russia and China Promote Autocracy in Central Asia?," 79–80.
[118] Ziegler, "Great Powers, Civil Society and Authoritarian Diffusion in Central Asia," 558.
[119] Ibid.

that Russian financed NGOs and think tanks have proliferated throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries and Putin's government has put much effort into "selling Russia" to the outside world.[120] However, there is also a strong presence of Western NGOs and institutions in Kyrgyzstan that counterbalance the Russian influence. Civil society, as noted at the beginning, is a contested arena, where Western institutions arguably have established stronger roots, especially in the first 15 years of Kyrgyzstan's independence when the authorities had strong interest in democratic principles and were open for American guidelines of democracy promotion. The Russian government is a latecomer. Nevertheless, it had certain advantages and favorable pre-conditions such as the common language and culture that allowed it to easily gain audience, especially in the remote parts of the country. Together with the near-monopoly of media, Russian "soft power" projects widened the market of ideas, offering norms alternative to those advocated by the Western actors.

Russian ideas and norms do find some resonance in the society. In the general elections of 2010, an openly pro-Russian party gathered 7.7% of votes and 25 seats (the largest party had 8.8% of votes and 28 seats) ending up as the third largest party[121] in the Parliament. "Ar Namys" ("Pride" or "Dignity") appealed to the Russian supporters in the country. During his campaign, electoral posters in the central streets of the capital showed Feliks Kulov, the leader of the party, shaking hands with Medvedev or Putin with the slogan underneath: "Be with the first".[122] In 2010, shortly before the general elections, Kulov traveled to Moscow where he signed an inter-party agreement with "United Russia" and met then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and exchanged words of solidarity and support.[123] As part of their campaign, party members offered

[120] Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule," 110.
[121] Centrasia.ru, "Парламентские Выборы В Кыргызстане: Что Есть, Как Будет И Должно Бы Быть? [General Elections in Kyrgyzstan: What Is, What Will Be and What Should Be?]," *Centrasia.ru*, accessed May 27, 2017, http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1287674820.
[122] Marat kyzy, "Migrant Benefits Are Being Late."
[123] Kremlin.ru, "Dmitry Medvedev Met with Chairman of Kyrgyzstan's Ar-Namys (Dignity) Party Felix Kulov," *Kremlin.ru*, accessed May 30, 2017, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/8990.

to open another Russian military base in the south of the country, lobbied the closure of American transit center (former Gansi airbase),[124] and supported security cooperation with CSTO and Russia.[125] In an interview, when asked what Kyrgyzstan can learn from Russia, Kulov's respond was short: "first and foremost – stability and order".[126] Following Putin's politics of "sovereign democracy" in the 2000s, Kulov believed that "order" and democracy in Kyrgyzstan was different from that of the West[127] and argued that the country should follow a model closer to its own region. The party was also against the new constitution that transformed the government into a parliamentary system.[128]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the initiators of the controversial "foreign agents" bill are the leading members of the party as well. Although the party was relegated to the opposition, its relative success tells us that Russian politics and leaders had support in the country. In the next general elections in 2015, the party lost its seats, however. Bektour Iskender believes it was because the party changed its tactics and did not appeal to the pro-Russian electorate. In general, by 2015, the support for Russia among the Kyrgyz declined due to the economic problems related with the EAEU.[129]

3.4 Conclusion

In an attempt to establish the conditions for the diffusion process, the chapter studied linkage and leverage in Russia-Kyrgyz relations in the period between 2010 and 2015. During this time, with American military base closed, Russian base extended for another 15 years,

[124] Ria.ru, "Партия 'Ар-Намыс' надеется, Что Премьером Киргизии Станет Феликс Кулов ['Ar Namys' party Hopes That Its Leader Feliks Kulov Becomes a Prime-Minister of Kyrgyzstan]," *Ria.ru*, 20101014T1040+0400Z, https://ria.ru/politics/20101014/285434105.html.
[125] Erika Marat, "Феликс Кулов: «В Международном Сотрудничестве Кыргызстан Должен Исходить Из Коллективных Интересов Стран ОДКБ» [Feliks Kulov: 'In International Cooperation, Kyrgyzstan Must Proceed from the Collective Interests of the CSTO Countries']," *Golos-Ameriki.ru*, accessed May 23, 2017, http://www.golos-ameriki.ru/a/flix-kulov-interview-2010-10-08-104577794/189131.html.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Iskender, Thesis interview.

Kyrgyzstan becoming a member of the EAEU, and pro-Russian party holding one fourth of the parliament seats, Russia had strong presence in Kyrgyzstan. Following Levitsky and Way, the chapter analyzed the Russian influence in Kyrgyzstan by investigating security, economic, and social spheres. It demonstrated strong linkage and leverage in the Russia-Kyrgyzstan relations and argued that it created favorable conditions for a diffusion process to take place. However, the chapter, as to paint a more realistic picture of the situation, also indicates considerable Western counterbalancing presence, especially in the public sector in the form of extensive networks of NGOs and significant financial support that can also influence the developments. The next chapter turns to how the Russian influence played itself out in the case studies of "foreign agents" and "LGBT propaganda" bills.

CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF RUSSIAN "FOREIGN AGENTS" AND "LGBT PROPAGANDA" LAWS ON REGULATIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN KYRGYZSTAN

Chapter 3 demonstrated that Kyrgyzstan is vulnerable to diffusion of ideas and norms from Russia. The country counts on the Kremlin's protection; its economy is heavily tangled with Russia's; and a considerable part of society is supportive of Russian politics and norms. Such conditions create a favorable environment for the process of diffusion. However, on their own they do not explain *how* Russian authoritarian policies influence the regulations of civil society and human rights conditions in Kyrgyzstan. Hence, this chapter offers a case study of two bills. It investigates two Russian authoritarian policies that the Kyrgyz parliamentarians attempted to adopt in 2014 and 2015: the so-called "foreign agents" law that severely constrains the activities of NGOs and the homophobic law forbidding "LGBT propaganda".

The thesis considers the possibility of direct promotion of Russian policies by Russian figures, of collaboration of Russian and Kyrgyz representatives in promoting the laws, and of diffusion of Russian norms and ideas in Kyrgyzstan. To find how Russian authoritarian policies influenced Kyrgyz regulations of civil society, each case study investigates three sets of questions:

- Regarding promotion, it asks if Russian authorities financed or bribed Kyrgyz politicians, discredited the opposition, initiated and funded public movements, delivered supportive and encouraging speeches, or directly pressured or encouraged the Kyrgyz government through economic incentives.
- It asks if Russian and Kyrgyz political figures collaborated, e.g. did Kyrgyz politicians consult the Kremlin experts? Did Russian authorities offer legal or financial support for adopting these laws in Kyrgyzstan? Did they discuss the bills during official visits or meetings?

- The third set of questions investigates the diffusion process: Did Kyrgyz politicians refer to Russian authorities' arguments justifying the adoption of laws? Did they appeal to Russian value systems and norms such as "sovereign democracy" and protection of traditions? And did Kyrgyz authorities refer to Russia's example and international authority as of alternative international support?

Process tracing included a textual analysis of respective Russian laws and Kyrgyz bills and related documents, media screening, and semi-structured interviews with the insiders of the policy proceedings (see Introduction). As expected, although there are educated guesses and theories, there is no convincing evidence of promotion or of collaboration regarding the adoption of the laws. However, a varying degree of Russian influence through diffusion supported both the NGO and LGBT bills. The mechanisms of diffusion are established through the concepts of "appropriateness" and "effectiveness" offered by Ambrosio's framework of authoritarian diffusion (see Chapter II).

4.1 Background to bills

In 2013, two leading members of the pro-Russian "Ar Namys" party in the Parliament proposed a bill on non-commercial organizations (NCOs; synonymous to NGOs) that resembled the anti-democratic Russian "foreign agents" law[130]. The wording of the bill was

[130] Ivo.garant.ru, "Федеральный Закон От 20 Июля 2012 Г. N 121-ФЗ 'О Внесении Изменений В Отдельные Законодательные Акты Российской Федерации В Части Регулирования Деятельности Некоммерческих Организаций, Выполняющих Функции Иностранного агента' [Federal Law from July 20, 2012. N 121-FL 'On the Introduction of Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Russian Federation Regarding the Regulation of Activities of Non-Commercial Organizations Performing the Function of a Foreign Agent']," *Ivo.garant.ru*, accessed May 14, 2017, http://ivo.garant.ru/#/document/70204242/paragraph/1:0; Kenesh.kg, "О Проекте Закона «О Внесении Дополнений И Изменений В Некоторые Законодательные Акты КР» (О Некоммерческих Организациях, О Государственной Регистрации Юридических Лиц, Филиалов (Представительств), В Уголовный Кодекс КР) [On the Draft Law 'On Amendments and Additions to Some Legislative Acts of the Kyrgyz Republic' (On Non-Profit Organizations, On State Registration of Legal Entities, Branches (Representative Offices), and the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic)]," *Kenesh.kg*, accessed May 15, 2017, http://www.kenesh.kg/ru/draftlaw/126137/show.

clearly identical to that of its Russian predecessor with a similar vague description of what constituted a political activity and the attachment of the label "foreign agent" to selected NGOs. Despite the domestic and international criticism[131], the law passed the first out of the three parliamentary readings with an overwhelming majority in June 2015.[132] However, the "Ar Namys" party, initiators and main drivers of the bill failed to secure seats in the general election in autumn of the same year. Thus, when the law came to the second reading in April 2016, with the involvement of local NGOs, it was dramatically changed and the term "foreign agent" was dropped.[133] Although almost half of the MPs supported the initiative, it eventually failed to pass the third reading in May 2016, even before the final decision by the President.

The LGBT law prohibiting propaganda of "non-traditional sexual relations" and family values was approved in the first reading of the parliament in October 2014.[134] The text of the law highly resembled the Russian law from 2013 on the "protection of children" from propaganda of "negative family values"[135]. The initiators were more diverse than in the case of

[131] Fergananews.com, "Кыргызстан: Правозащитники Призывают Парламент Отклонить Законопроект Об «иностранных Агентах» [Kyrgyzstan: Human Rights Activists Urge the Parliament to Reject the Bill On 'foreign Agents'],"* Fergananews.com*, accessed May 15, 2017, http://www.fergananews.com//news/23439.
[132] Ulugbek Akishev, "Видео: Парламент Обсудил Закон Об «иностранных Агентах» В Первом Чтении [Video: Parliament Discusses Law On 'foreign Agents' in First Reading],"* KLOOP.KG*, May 27, 2015, https://kloop.kg/blog/2015/05/27/live-parlament-obsuzhdaet-zakon-ob-inostrannyh-agentah/.
[133] Fergananews.com, "Кыргызстан Отказывается От Термина «иностранный Агент» В Отношении НКО [Kyrgyzstan Refuses the Term 'foreign Agent' regarding the Non-Commercial Organizations],"* Fergananews.com*, accessed May 14, 2017, http://www.fergananews.com//news/24663.
[134] Kg.akipress.org, "ЖК В Первом Чтении Одобрил Законопроект О Лишении Свободы За Формирование Положительного Отношения К Нетрадиционным Сексуальным Отношениям [Parliament in the First Reading Approved the Draft Law on Imprisoning for the Formation of a Positive Attitude towards Non-Traditional Sexual Relations],"* Kg.akipress.org*, n.d., http://kg.akipress.org/news:604655.
[135] Ivo.garant.ru, "Федеральный Закон От 29 Июня 2013 Г. N 135-ФЗ 'О Внесении Изменений В Статью 5 Федерального закона 'О Защите Детей От Информации, Причиняющей Вред Их Здоровью И Развитию' и Отдельные Законодательные Акты Российской Федерации В Целях Защиты Детей От Информации, Пропагандирующей Отрицание Традиционных Семейных ценностей' [Federal Law No. 135-FL of June 29, 2013 'On Amendments to Article 5 of the Federal Law' On Protection of Children from Information Harmful to Their Health and Development 'and Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation in Order to Protect Children from Information That Promotes Negative Traditional Family Values'],"* Ivo.garant.ru*, accessed May 25, 2017, http://ivo.garant.ru/#/document/70403756/paragraph/1:0; Kenesh.kg, "О Внесении Дополнений В Некоторые Законодательные Акты Кыргызской Республики (В Уголовный Кодекс КР, В Кодекс КР Об Административной Ответственности, В Законы КР «О Мирных Собраниях», «О Средствах Массовой Информации») [On the Introduction of Amendments to Some Legislative Acts of the Kyrgyz Republic (the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Code of Administrative Responsibility of the Kyrgyz Republic, the

the NGO bill. Over 20 MPs from all the party groups in the Parliament signed themselves as supporters, while the lead authors were from three different parties, including "Ar Namys". The initiators of the NGO law also actively participated in adopting the anti-gay law. Unlike the "foreign agents" law however, the LGBT law created more public resonance and attracted support from various nationalist and homophobic groups.[136] As Kyrgyz Indigo, a Bishkek-based LGBT rights activist group said, in such questions, Kyrgyzstan is predominantly a conservative country, and the bill worsened the situation for LGBT minorities. In June 2015, the bill was approved in the second reading of the Parliament by overwhelming majority. Although some of the supporters are in the newly elected parliament, many failed to secure their seats in 2015. The law, thus was shelved before reaching the third reading. According to Kyrgyz Indigo who are following the Parliamentary agenda, the hearing of the bill has been postponed many times already.[137]

Due to the Soviet legal legacy, many laws in Kyrgyzstan are copied from Russia. Not all of them are authoritarian; for example, the Kyrgyz criminal code is also copied, but it suits the local conditions and does not harm the democratic environment. However, in the cases of "foreign agents" and "LGBT propaganda" bills, it is different. The section "The diffusion of Russian authoritarian policies" outlines three main ways how Russia influenced the bills in Kyrgyzstan:

- inspiration: by offering an alternative, moral based politics that appealed and inspired certain anti-Western MPs and nationalist groups in Kyrgyzstan;

Laws of the KR 'On Peaceful Assembly', 'On Mass Media')]," *Kenesh.kg*, accessed May 31, 2017, http://www.kenesh.kg/.

[136] El 'diyar Arykbaev, "Видео: Как «Кырк Чоро» И «Калыс» Сорвали Мероприятие В Честь Дня Против Гомофобии [Video: How 'Kyrk Choro' and 'Kalys' disrupted the Event Organized on the Day against Homophobia]," *KLOOP.KG*, May 19, 2015, https://kloop.kg/blog/2015/05/19/video-kak-kyrk-choro-i-kalys-sorvali-meropriyatie-v-chest-dnya-protiv-gomofobii/.

[137] Kyrgyz Indigo, Thesis interview, via Skype video, May 2017.

- encouragement: by leading such lawmakers with an example and supporting them with Russia's strong international authority; and
- demonstration: by showing how to adopt such bills and, thus providing them with certain tools such as accurate policy wording and legal justifications to propose and pursue the bills.

Thus, the findings of analysis suggest that the Russian authoritarian policies not only inspired and supported the Kyrgyz lawmakers, but also provided them with tools to pursue these policies. In addition, to report on the findings regrading promotion and collaboration, the available data suggest that the Kremlin had direct interest in Kyrgyzstan, namely the successful accession of Kyrgyzstan into the Russian-led EAEU project where the initiation of controversial bills became a tactical move to distract public attention from the process (section 4.3 "Promotion and collaboration hypotheses"). The paragraphs below analyze each process in detail in that order.

4.2 The diffusion of Russian authoritarian policies

Recent Russian discourse of protecting "traditional values" became an inspiration for its foreign supporters, including the authorities in Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, the Kyrgyz authorities were encouraged to pursue the bills in Kyrgyzstan by justifying their actions before the domestic audience and international critics with Russia's example and international authority. This change is explained by Ambrosio's concept of "appropriateness" which says that states alter their behavior depending on the international conditions and of what is deemed "appropriate".[138] As elaborated in Chapters 3, Russia's recent global rise and strong presence in Central Asia made its policies attractive for like-minded autocratic countries.[139]

[138] Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," 379.
[139] Ibid., 377, 387.

4.2.1 Inspiration: offering alternative political discourse

Putin's recent campaign for "traditional values" as an alternative moral justification for its authoritarian policies offered its neighboring countries an alternative political discourse that contradicts that of the universal human rights by discriminating LGBT minorities and constraining the freedom of speech. The Russian example inspired the Kyrgyz lawmakers to adopt similar language.

During his third term (2012-present), Putin started a new political discourse in Russia on advocating morals and presenting the government-church alliance as the protector of traditional, conservative values.[140] As Gulnaz Sharafutdinova explains, the new "morality politics" was a response to the Bolotnaya protests in 2011-2012 and the controversial Pussy Riot affair. The anti-gay and "foreign agents" bills, along other conservative bills such as prohibition of abortion, the ban on cursing, and tax on divorce, are the few products of the new Putin's politics of morality.[141]

One can see Russian ideas and values mirroring in the Kyrgyz bills on "foreign agents" and especially on LGBT propaganda. They argued that there are internationally funded NGOs that have "destructive" goals harming the local values.[142] Kyrgyz supporters of the bills were inspired by the Russian discourse and echoed similar arguments of protecting traditional family values and morals.

[140] Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, "The Pussy Riot Affair and Putin's Démarche from Sovereign Democracy to Sovereign Morality," *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (July 4, 2014): 615–21.
[141] Ibid.
[142] El 'diyar Arykbaev, "Автор Закона Об «иностранных Агентах»: «Политическая Деятельность — Философское Понятие» [The Author of the Law On 'foreign agents': 'Political Activity Is a Philosophical Concept']," *KLOOP.KG*, April 9, 2015, https://kloop.kg/blog/2015/04/09/avtor-zakona-ob-inostrannyh-agentah-politicheskaya-deyatelnost-filosofskoe-ponyatie/; Chloia Geine, "Видео: Пикет За Ужесточение Контроля Над НКО [Video: Demonstration for Tightening Control over NCOs]," *KLOOP.KG*, June 16, 2014, https://kloop.kg/blog/2014/06/16/live-miting-protiv-npo-v-bishkeke/.

4.2.2 Encouragement: powered by Russian international authority

Russia's adoption of "foreign agents" and "LGBT propaganda" laws also encouraged the Kyrgyz lawmakers by making the conditions more favorable for such laws and practices to be adopted. As Ambrosio explained, the changing international environment makes some norms "appropriate" to follow,[143] the Russian authority and example are changing the playing field for Kyrgyz lawmakers. Madaliev, in the interview for Eurasianet.org, explained that in the 1990s, when Kyrgyzstan adopted various American style laws and signed international agreements, it was in a different, "unipolar world order, [where] the United States was the dominant country" and argued that "now we see that this order was unjust."[144]

Hence Kyrgyz lawmakers are shifting their anchor of support away from the West and closer to Russia. It is visible in the behavior of the Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev, too. During his visit to Brussels in 2013, Atambaev, calmed the critics by saying that he did not support the new NGO bill.[145] However, he changed his opinion in 2014. The President could have said anything to please the audience in Brussels, but, while his true intentions are unknown, his deliberation and argumentation[146] suggest that he agrees with Putin's position on NGOs. During the fifth parliamentary term (2010-2015), with the strong presence of pro-Russian party, for many Kyrgyz lawmakers, it has become more "appropriate" to follow the Russian lead and easier to challenge, what they and Russian authorities believed, the Western intrusion.

[143] Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," 379.
[144] David Trilling, "Kyrgyzstan Debates Russian-Style 'Foreign Agents' Law," *Eurasianet.org*, December 1, 2014, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/71131.
[145] Akipress.org, "Кыргызстану Не Нужен Закон Об Иностранных Агентах, - А.Атамбаев [Kyrgyzstan Does Not Need a Law On 'foreign Agents']," *Akipress.org*, accessed May 16, 2017, http://kg.akipress.org/news:582798.
[146] El 'diyar Arykbaev, "Атамбаев Поддержал Идею Закона Об «иностранных Агентах» [Atambaev Supported the Idea of a Law On 'foreign Agents']," *KLOOP.KG*, December 2, 2014, https://kloop.kg/blog/2014/12/02/atambaev-podderzhal-ideyu-zakona-ob-inostrannyh-agentah/.

4.2.3 Demonstration: the Russian template for Kyrgyz lawmakers

Furthermore, Russian laws and experience of adopting them *demonstrated* certain Kyrgyz politicians how to go about adopting similar laws in Kyrgyzstan. Ambrosio's concept of "effectiveness" explains that external policies and experience can be adopted by satellite states in line with local conditions.[147] The main mechanism here is learning – a satellite state learns the parent state policies and practices by copying and emulating them. Thus, the Russian example not just inspired and encouraged, but also showed how to achieve their goals by providing the initiators of the bill in Kyrgyzstan with tools and arguments.

4.2.3.1 The *copy-pasted* "foreign agents" bill

The initiators of the NGO law Tursunbai Bakir uulu and Nurkamil Madaliev, copied most of the provisions from its Russian predecessor. Russian authorities did not take any action to impose or advise the laws. However, the texts and formulations there by themselves already provided the Kyrgyz lawmakers with much unintended support. A parliament insider reports that almost all MPs and Kyrgyz lawmakers depend on external expertise or samples to write their own proposals.[148] The Parliament lacks its own experts and specialists that could formulate bills, drawing instead on other countries' examples.[149] In an interview with Kloop.kg, Bakir uulu admitted that "all good aspects of the [Russian "foreign agents"] law" were copied and justified it with the fact that "any law is usually taken from somewhere as a basis".[150] According to his interviews, Bakir uulu had wanted to propose it since 2006, and the Russian precedent not only inspired him,[151] but also provided with a finished intellectual product that he could

[147] Ambrosio, "Constructing a Framework of Authoritarian Diffusion," 382.
[148] MP Abdusaliev Daniyar in Akishev, "Video: First Reading."
[149] MP assistant, Thesis interview, via Skype phone call, May 2017.
[150] Aizirek Almazbekova, "Интервью: Бакир Уулу Рассказал, За Что Он Не Любит НПО [Interview: Bakir Uulu Said Why He Does Not like NGOs]," *KLOOP.KG*, September 27, 2013, https://kloop.kg/blog/2013/09/27/interv-yu-bakir-uulu-rasskazal-za-chto-on-ne-lyubit-npo/.
[151] Asel Kalybekova, "Kyrgyzstan Q&A: Author of 'Foreign Agents' Bill Seeks to Thwart 'Sabotage,'" *Eurasianet.org*, October 3, 2013, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67580.

simply apply in Kyrgyzstan. Thus, the Russian law at the minimum saved much time for the initiators by providing a ready text and a conceptual basis.

Besides the factual wording of the policy, the Kyrgyz supporters used legal justifications similar to those of Russian initiators and supporters of the laws. In Russia, the law was initiated and unanimously supported by the ruling party "United Russia".[152] The supporters in both countries had three main arguments on why the law is needed. First, the law protects the national sovereignty and ensures national security.[153] Putin's main reason to introduce the law was the pretext to protect the national security by containing the foreign-funded NGOs after the Color Revolutions.[154] Talking on national security, Bakir uulu raised concerns that two revolutions in Kyrgyzstan and Color Revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia were carried out by NGOs with political agenda funded and guided by international donors.[155] He argued that existing statutes did not allow the law enforcement agencies to inspect NGOs so a separate legal procedure was needed. However, while his inclusion of revolutions in Kyrgyzstan in his examples raised dissatisfaction among some MPs who believed they were popular uprisings against the dictatorial rules, he was not able to bring any other evidence of NGO activity in the last 25 years that threatened national security.[156]

As the second justification, the supporters argued that NGOs themselves should fulfill the transparency demands; and assured that there was nothing to be afraid of if they were open and honest about their activities. Co-author of the law and a deputy from Russia's State Duma Irina Yarovaia had delivered similar comforting messages to the critics in 2012, arguing that

[152] ntv.ru, "Дума Приняла Закон Об «иностранных Агентах» И Выдала Бессонова Правосудию [The Duma Passed a Law On 'foreign Agents' and Left Bessonov to Justice]," *NTV.ru*, accessed May 15, 2017, http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/310601/?fb.
[153] Akishev, "Video: First Reading."
[154] Jackson, "The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule," 105.
[155] Akishev, "Video: First Reading."
[156] Ibid.

the Russian law would only affect very few organizations.[157] Kyrgyz MPs used similar arguments. In the first reading, one could hear the voices of reassurance like "99.99% of NGOs can continue working" or that the law is "only about 10-12 NGOs".[158] However, all the opposing deputies raised concerns that the law was being copied from Russia, and reminded that Russian officials were saying the same things and now numerous NGOs were facing cuts and closures.[159]

The last argument that the supporters of the Kyrgyz bill raised was the fact that NGOs are not political entities, therefore should not be involved in political activities. In Russia, MPs similarly accused "foreign agents" and their leadership for pursuing political agenda, while hiding behind the legal protection designed for NGOs.[160] This time, supporters stressed the official charters of NGOs. They argued that each NGO had a charter and that it should keep to its goals stated in that charter. However, the main problem, and arguably the most debated topic in this case is about what constitutes a "political activity". Both Russian and Kyrgyz parliamentarians were not able to give a clear definition. Both groups, instead of defining what was "political activity", outlined what did not count as political.[161] That did not eliminate ambiguity. The Kyrgyz MPs faced similar problems as the Russian ones because they fully followed their template.

[157] Rafael' Saakov, "Госдума Одобрила Закон Об НКО И 'иностранных агентах' [State Duma Approved the Law on NCO And 'foreign Agents']," *Inosmi.ru*, July 7, 2012, http://inosmi.ru/social/20120707/194612322.html.
[158] Akishev, "Video: First Reading."
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ivo.garant.ru, "Federal Law from July 20, 2012. N 121-FL."
[161] Ibid.; Kenesh.kg, "On the Draft Law 'On Amendments and Additions to Some Legislative Acts of the Kyrgyz Republic' (On Non-Profit Organizations, On State Registration of Legal Entities, Branches (Representative Offices), and the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic)"; Arykbaev, "Political Activity Is a Philosophical Concept."

4.2.3.2 Russian "LGBT propaganda" law and the harsher Kyrgyz version

The Kyrgyz version of the LGBT bill was harsher than its Russian predecessor. Whereas the Russia law forbids spread of "non-traditional sexual values" to the underage, the Kyrgyz bill forbids it for everyone. The Kyrgyz bill also includes a prison sentence up to a year as a punishment, whereas Russian law carries only fines and administrative responsibilities. All other aspects of the Russian version were copied. In his address to the Cabinet of Ministers, Baktybek Kalmamatov, the lead supporter of the LGBT law, openly referred to the Russian law and said that the Russian version was too "soft".[162] The existing Russian text of the law provided the Kyrgyz authorities with a ready template, saving them much time and effort. They only had to apply it in line with local conditions, which they believed required harsher punishments.

Unlike with "foreign agents'" bill, the LGBT bill attracted a lot of support from both the MPs and the public. Although both bills were justified as protecting morals and traditional family values, the LGBT bill supporters especially stressed this aspect. Nationalist movements such as "Kyrk Choro" ("40 Men") and "Kalys", organized a number of demonstrations in support of the "LGBT propaganda" bill.[163] The leaders of these groups claim they are against both Russia and the West and fight for the interests of Kyrgyzstan. As part of their demands, they requested to adopt the NGO and the LGBT bills, to introduce the death penalty for

[162] Kabarlar.org, "Бактыбек Калмаматов: Наверное, В Самом Правительстве Есть Геи, Раз Оно Так Защищает Их (ВИДЕО) [Baktybek Kalmamatov: Perhaps, There Are Gays in the Government If It Is Protecing so Much (Video)]," *Kabarlar.org*, n.d., http://kabarlar.org/news/42049-baktybek-kalmamatov-navernoe-v-samom-pravitelstve-est-gei-raz-ono-tak-zaschischaet-ih-video.html.

[163] Adilet Makenov, "Бишкек: Активисты Вышли На Митинг Против «пропаганды ЛГБТ» [Bishkek: Activists Organize a Demonstration against 'LGBT Propaganda']," *KLOOP.KG*, May 19, 2016, https://kloop.kg/blog/2016/05/19/bishkek-aktivisty-vyshli-na-miting-protiv-propagandy-lgbt/; El 'diyar Arykbaev, "Движение 'Калыс' Угрожает 'радикальными Мерами' ЛГБТ И НПО [Movement 'Kalys' threatens With 'radical Measures' against LGBT and NGO]," *KLOOP.KG*, February 27, 2014, https://kloop.kg/blog/2014/02/27/live-protivniki-szhigayut-fotografiyu-aktivista/; El 'diyar Arykbaev, "Видео: Противники Геев Провели Митинг Возле Парламента [Video: Enemies of Gays Organized a Demonstration near the Parliament]," *KLOOP.KG*, February 5, 2015, https://kloop.kg/blog/2015/02/05/live-protivniki-geev-provodyat-miting-vozle-parlamenta/; Geine, "Видео: Пикет За Ужесточение Контроля Над НКО [Video: Demonstration for Tightening Control over NCOs]"; Arykbaev, "Video: How 'Kyrk Choro' and 'Kalys' disrupted."

pedophilia, and to fire government authorities who leave their parents and children in nursing homes.[164] This politics of safeguarding conservative morals has its roots in Russia's "moral politics" that was discussed above.[165]

4.3 Promotion and collaboration hypotheses

There is no convincing evidence to support either promotion or collaboration hypotheses. The common theory that the interviewees gave was the supposition that the bills were a tactic for public distraction, mainly from economic problems and Kyrgyzstan's accession process to the EAEU.[166] There were several reasons to believe so. First is the active and well-prepared and organized participation of nationalist groups "Kyrk Choro" and "Kalys" in public debates in support of the bills and their sudden disappearance at a certain point. Whereas "Kyrk Choro" was known for disruptions of LGBT community meetings, small "Kalys" demonstrations had advocated radical measures, but were mostly peaceful and very well prepared. Fluent in English, Russian, and Kyrgyz, Jenish Moldakmatov, the leader of "Kalys", could give long, sophisticated responses to various questions and justify his controversial positions. All this would not create any suspicion if not their sudden and complete disappearance after the general elections in 2015. That could suggest that their funding stopped at a certain point.

Unfortunately, there was no possibility to get an interview with their members. Moldakmatov, stopped his activities as an opponent of LGBT and NGOs and has been quiet since. However, in an interview, Iskender recollected that all the developments around the bills seemed "very artificial".[167] When Kloop.kg was trying to get more information on the bills,

[164] Arykbaev, "Video: Enemies of Gays Organized a Demonstration near the Parliament."
[165] Sharafutdinova, "The Pussy Riot Affair and Putin's Démarche from Sovereign Democracy to Sovereign Morality."
[166] Iskender, Thesis interview; Kyrgyz Indigo, Thesis interview.
[167] Iskender, Thesis interview.

especially on the LGBT bill, with questions such as "what does 'non-traditional sexual relations' mean?", the initiators were nervous and had "little idea" of the bills themselves.[168] In addition, Iskender is also surprised by the sudden disappearance of "Kalys" and "Kyrk Choro" from all the developments after months of very active involvement. According to him, all this suggest that they "completed" their "role" or "mission" and were no longer needed.[169]

According to Iskender and Kyrgyz Indigo team, in 2014 and 2015, the Kyrgyz authorities needed a distraction. Kyrgyzstan was joining the EAEU and approving a series of bills that cut trade relations with China, fully opening the market for the EAEU members, while the Kyrgyz businesses and products were not able to equally compete in the new, closed market. One of the theories is that Kyrgyz authorities could not afford a failure to join the EAEU as it would upset the Kremlin officials and cost selected Kyrgyz leaders Russian patronage and other benefits. As it is difficult to beautify Russia for the public at large, it was easier to "demonize someone"[170], which lead the Kyrgyz authorities to actively discuss the NGO and LGBT bills in public.

Was it only in the interest of Kyrgyz authorities to please the Kremlin or was it communicated with the Kremlin officials? Iskender, Kyrgyz Indigo, and another NGO interlocutor say that it is both. Kyrgyz MPs travel Russia the most and Russian officials visit Kyrgyzstan more than any other country.[171] In addition, there were numerous meetings among the EAEU participants behind the closed doors. In any of these meetings the parties could communicate the importance of Kyrgyzstan's entry to the EAEU, which then lead the Kyrgyz authorities to use a tactical move to successfully deliver the Kremlin interest.

In the interview, the assistant of a liberal MP could not support or dismiss the "distraction" theory, but confirmed that the EAEU-related laws were being approved during the

[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.
[170] Kyrgyz Indigo, Thesis interview; Iskender, Thesis interview.
[171] Iskender, Thesis interview.

heightened debates on the NGO and the LGBT bills.[172] He explained that there was a strong presence of the Russian influence, but to his knowledge, no MP was pressured or advised by the Kremlin officials. He also does not possess any information on the Kremlin funding of the non-party movements such as "Kalys" who were, in fact, pressing the MPs. However, he agrees that these bills were taking most of the time of the parliamentary sessions during which, other, "more important"[173] bills finalizing Kyrgyzstan's accession to the EAEU were being approved. Also, both the NGO and the LGBT bills passed one of their readings in June, right before the summer holidays when the MPs usually rubber stamp bills in big numbers.

Thus, on the one hand there is evidence of Kyrgyz politicians using Russian examples to truly adopt the bills in order to protect traditional values, which correlates with the similar Russian practice. On the other hand, there are suggestions that the whole process was set up in order to distract the public and ensure smooth and fast accession of Kyrgyzstan to the EAEU. In both cases nevertheless, the departing point for Kyrgyz authorities was Russia: in the first case, the Russian example and international authority as inspiration and encouragement, in the second case, the fulfillment of Russian interest to widen the economic union. However, despite these apparent indicators of the Russian influence, the "foreign agents" bill was not passed in the third reading, while the "LGBT propaganda" bill has been frozen since the second reading approval.

There are several explanations to it. Firstly, as outlined in Chapter 3, the pro-Russian party "Ar Namys", the main driver and supporter of the bills, lost their seats in the general elections in November 2015. Another theory relates to the distraction theory meaning that the bills were not planned to be approved in the first place. Also, Kyrgyz Indigo interviewees voiced the belief that the LGBT law might be frozen until the moment when the government

[172] MP assistant, Thesis interview.
[173] Ibid.

needs another distraction.[174] Furthermore, some interviewees think that there was a pressure from donors.[175] As discussed in Chapter 3, although Russia is one of the biggest donors in Kyrgyzstan, Western institutions such as WB, IMF, and USAID provide much financial support which can potentially be a lever of influence. Donors, besides NGOs, finance many projects for municipalities, ministries, and local governments. Many MPs travel to various conferences and trainings around the world under NGO programs funded by foreign donors and the Parliament runs numerous projects with donors' financial support. The level of corruption being high, much of the money ends up in the pockets of the authorities. Therefore, for many MPs, cutting international donor funding meant a loss of income.

4.4 Conclusion

The laws appealed to certain Kyrgyz "patriotic" MPs and nationalists and inspired them to pursue an alternative, conservative-moral-based political discourse. Further, Russia's example and international authority encouraged and made it look "appropriate" for certain Kyrgyz MPs to adopt it in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, the Russian laws provided the Kyrgyz supporters with all the available tools to pursue the bills: a ready text and a conceptual basis such as "political activity" and "non-traditional sexual relations" which at a minimum saved much time for local MPs. Russia inspired of what can be done, encouraged its' supporters to follow the lead, and showed how to do it.

There are also suggestions of possible promotion or collaboration processes. The strange behavior of MPs, sudden and complete disappearance of "Kalys" and "Kyrk Choro", and the eventual drop of the bills suggest that the whole process was a set-up to distract the public attention from the Kyrgyz accession to the EAEU, a Russian-led union in Eurasia.

[174] Kyrgyz Indigo, Thesis interview.
[175] NGO worker, Thesis interview, Face-to-face, Spring 2017; Iskender, Thesis interview.

The chapter process-traced the available data for diffusion, promotion, and collaboration hypotheses. Due to the lack of information, the hypotheses of promotion and collaboration have little power in explaining the Kyrgyz attempts of adopting the bills. However, given the strong ties between Kyrgyzstan and Russia, there were considerable conformations for the diffusion of Russian authoritarian policies.

CONCLUSIONS

Kyrgyzstan, being praised for being on the democratic path, raised concerns among the liberal institutions in the 2010s. Its attempt to adopt authoritarian policies following the Russian example would tighten the regulations of civil society and harm the democratic development in the country. In the context of recent rise of authoritarian powers such as Russia, China, and Venezuela and the trembling liberal world, the thesis analyzed the influence of Russian authoritarian policies on the developments in Kyrgyzstan.

The findings suggest that Russian policies did influence the developments in Kyrgyzstan. Its policies became attractive to certain Kyrgyz lawmakers and nationalist groups. Although the recent claims of increasing global influence of authoritarian powers is largely exaggerated, their influence in their vicinity should not be underestimated. Russian presence in Central Asia strengthens existing autocratic elites and impedes the democratic developments in the civil society sector.

Although the three ways of influence that the thesis suggests – inspiration, encouragement, and demonstration – need further enhancements to better explain the processes, they can be tools for further similar research. With Ambrosio's concepts of "appropriateness" and "effectiveness", they were able to explain the process of diffusion of Russian authoritarian policies. Process-tracing inspirational ideas, encouraging examples, and demonstrative experience in a given case study can be a method to study the mechanisms of diffusion process to answer the how questions.

The gathered data was not enough to investigate the process of promotion and collaboration. However, these theories in their strict form are of little use. They stress the importance of motivations of parent states, which even in the best case, will remain vague. Actors wish to hide their motives, especially if they are to strengthen authoritarianism. These

theories should be reconsidered to accommodate more cases that are not limited to ideological aspirations.

The thesis, although identifying three ways in which Russia indirectly influenced the developments in Kyrgyzstan, does not measure their impact. While the failure of the bills may suggest their insignificant impact, a more comprehensive study including their effects on the NGO workers, LGBT groups, and the society at large should be done. Next research could therefore focus on the effects of the policies and measure their impact. Such a study would clarify if all the concerns regarding the external factors of authoritarianism is empirically justified.

Another thesis observation suggests that the developments in Kyrgyzstan in the last half a decade are vivid illustrations of the battle for influence between multiple actors. As mentioned in the Introduction, hybrid regimes have not reached the balance and can swing either to democracy or autocracy.[176] Although it was not in the scope of the thesis, its analysis showed that the civil society in Kyrgyzstan is an "arena of contention"[177], which is open for multiple actors. Kyrgyzstan's dependency from donors, both Russia and the West, is a good example of that. Hence, the further research should also focus more on the balance of power and the Russia-West contention in the civil society of Kyrgyzstan.

In general, civil society is an area that should get more attention in the study of international factors of authoritarianism. The analysis of the ruling elites in hybrid regimes cannot indicate the level of democracy or autocracy as the elites tend to be already authoritarian. However, civil society sector, being outside of the ruling institutions, is more democratic and the developments there should indicate the level of democracy better. The thesis study illustrated it in its choice of case studies.

[176] Merkel, "Are Dictatorships Returning?," 25.
[177] Ziegler, "Great Powers, Civil Society and Authoritarian Diffusion in Central Asia," 553.

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