

**Kyrgyzstani civil youth movements after the Tulip revolution:  
self realization, nationalism and the state**

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After the wave of electoral revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan many governments of the former soviet republics understood the potential and the role that can be played by the youth movements in organizing political upheavals and resorted to a special legislation and measures aimed at channeling their activities. This article is aimed to show the state of the youth organizations and the civil society after the Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan and the authorities' response in this regard.

Since the Tulip revolution gave somewhat an impulse for the birth of a young civil society and to various youth ideological circles including the ultra-nationalist ones, it is necessary to return back to these events. If in the first three case studies of Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine the role of the youth in mobilizing support in an effort to unify the opposition and bring about the downfall of the incumbent regimes, was clearly demonstrated the contribution of the youth organizations in the Kyrgyz "revolution" is not so obvious. KelKel (Renaissance) was one of the radical youth movements which participated in the revolution. It was created in January 2005 by a number of young people under the age of 35 and initially organized their activities underground. The size of the movement was limited to 20-25 activists. Shortly after its foundation it was temporarily joined by another youth group "Birge" (Together) which shared common objectives with KelKel, i.e. to end the Akaev's regime. Their activities went as far as mobilizing students and organizing the protests of "pacific resistance" in the streets, publishing and distributing leaflets, informing students on electoral violations and ongoing events. Yet, the size and importance of the youth movements and protests was exaggerated. Indeed, first of all despite pledges of some KelKel activists, this youth movement has never succeeded to expend its influence beyond Bishkek, even though it had shown some presence during the Talas upheavals, their seminars were mainly

organized with Bishkek students outside of the universities and even this outreach was limited. The former member of KelKel Gulshair Abdirasulova complained that students constantly led themselves being instrumentalized by the universities rectors and that despite of organized workshops directed to rising awareness on human and student rights and that finally KelKel's effect on them was insignificant.

Second, the KelKel's role in the opposition movement was ambiguous too. Though the movement was depicted by the opposition as a youth wing of the People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan (Narodnoe Dijenie Kirgizstana), a movement that unified the opposition during the revolution period, it was anything but an integrated and coherent unit of the opposition. KelKel and Birge existed and operated their activities apart from the opposition and even separately from each other. KelKel had their base in the People's Movement building while Birge associated itself rather with the Respublica newspaper house. The opposition and the movements neither controlled nor coordinated each others activities. Though KelKel and Birge activists visited Ukraine, enriched their "revolutionary now-how", kept contact with the leaders of Ukrainian youth movements along the revolution in Kyrgyzstan to consult on various organizational issues, this knowledge was little if at all used by the opposition. The only thing that united the youth and the opposition, according to Timur Shaihuddinov, one of the Birge's leaders, during the revolution period was a joint will to oust Askar Akaev from the presidency. Furthermore, on the main day of revolution youth groups other than minor KelKel & Birge activists and students were present on the Ala-Too plaza: the rural youth mobilized by regional patriarchs stormed the capital and the White House. The fact that the opposition relied on the rural youth masses is also an indicator of KelKel's marginal influence over the events. Instead, KelKel was instrumentalized by some of the opposition leaders who sought to enhance their chance to obtain a seat in the new government as a reward for their "achievements before the revolution" including namely the creation of a youth radical movement. But as soon as Birge expressed its disaccord on methods and choices, during one of the opposition's congresses these leaders took a distance and stopped expending their protectorate. Birge and KelKel youth were "forgotten" as soon as the revolution was over and these leaders came to power. Finally, KelKel ended its activity in 2006 when their main leaders quit the movement at the age of 30-35 preoccupied by career perspectives. Alisher Mamasaliev became a parliamentarian in the pro-governmental party Akjol while Azima Rasulova went to run the

national TV program Zamana. Mamasaliev's departure to the pro-presidential structure discredited KelKel's oppositional orientation and was one of the reasons of its dissolution. As for Azima, she was quickly marginalized at her new work by the pre-revolutionary TV channel personnel and had to quit shortly after her appointment. This story arises some new questions: did young activists appear on the eve and functioned only during the electoral turmoil or do they have a continuing political and social interest? Did the post-communist Kyrgyzstani youth become more active in political life and if yes does it find there its proper place? Does the incumbent regime have to fear the youth force on the eve of the presidential elections of 23 July 2009?

KelKel and Birge set up a first example of discontent for Bishkek students and the youth in general. Since then one can notice a considerable activation of the youth movements. The Tulip revolution or its consequences led on the one hand to the creation of new organizations, the restructuring of others and the dissolution of the third. On the other hand, it was followed by the diversification of the youth activity. To feature these processes let's take few examples of the situation in Bishkek since most of the youth organizations are active in the capital. Some of them are representative of the younger generation of the civil society, which was long dominated by the female population. They continue the tradition of activity in the sphere of human rights and advocacy and are usually given by the authorities a label of "politicized organizations/movements" because they oppose to the government. Others are also active in the social sphere but operate separately from the civil society and far from political questions, so have a facility of registration as ordinary public associations (*obchestvennaia organizacia*). Here, we picked up a number of organizations/movements representative in each category basing our selection on the level of their engagement.

### *Bishkek background*

After the end of the revolution and the dissolution of KelKel, Birge took a different path. It was first created as the Youth Club of Kyrgyzstan co-opted at that time by the pro-presidential political party Alga Kyrgyzstan! allegedly for security reasons, then suddenly transformed into Birge in February 2005, a radical youth movement acting against incumbent president Askar Akaev, and joined KelKel. Later Birge however withdrew from KelKel because of the "generational issues" as it was later noted by its leader Timur Shaihuddinov: Birge was comprised of students and saw

itself as a more radical movement whilst KelKel activists were older and were “too” cautious in undertaking civil disobedience. Also, Birge split from KelKel as the young people sought to sustain as an independent structure and autonomous leaders. In March 2006, Birge evolves into the Alliance of the liberal youth “Free generation” inspired by western ideas of liberal economy and individual freedom. Presently, the Alliance left aside radical methods because of the generational reasons again: the “leaders grew out from the age of protests”, and runs educational and informative projects. Its involvement in 2006 in the advisory council on constitutional reforms created to gather all political parties, civil society and opposition with the aim to elaborate a new collective constitution which would satisfy all the parties, was the last one before the Alliance withdrew from the political sphere and cut contacts both with the opposition and the state. “It’s not yet the moment, liberal ideas are not common in the society”, recalls Timur but he does not give up his ideals. Instead, he works with students with the aim to raise their knowledge and interest in economics and finance, business and liberal market. Also, he helps preparing the institution of young ombudsmen that will protect and lobby student rights. The Alliance organizes various seminars with professors of economics and prominent politicians in the office located in Togolok Moldo street.

Another youth club Kebe! (Move!) appeared in the late 2007 in the aftermath of the energy crisis provoked by excessive use of water from the Toktogul reservoir by hydro power station and subsequent electricity cuts throughout the country during 2008 and beginning 2009. Different rumors circulated suggesting that the water in the reservoir was transformed into energy and secretly sold by the authorities either to the Kazakhs or the Chinese. The energy crisis severely undermined the legitimacy of the ruling elite and gave room to some new criticism from the opposition but also from youth civil organizations. Kebe! cashed in on this opportunity to offer the youth a missing platform allowing reflecting on recent developments and voicing out their messages to the authorities. The club which is still not officially registered then gathered the youth from different political parties namely Ak Shumkar, Ata Meken, SDPK, Green party, Ar Namys, NGOs and students under 35. Thus, another critical political event HIPC – an initiative put forward by the World Bank which would position Kyrgyzstan in the list of heavily indebted poor countries in exchange of cancellation of certain external debts – was discussed on the platform and charged against the current regime as unacceptable.

Besides permanent movements and structured organizations, Kyrgyztani youth resorted to single actions in support to acts of civic disobedience in relation to national political and economic agenda. *Ia ne veru...* (I don't believe...) and *Jebe!* (Don't eat!) became such actions designed to correspond to a situational goal. *Ia ne veru...* appeared in response to violations during parliamentary elections of December 2007 and during presidential elections of July 2009. The name of the action speaks for itself. Under the umbrella of these manifestations, the youth from various political parties like Green Party, *Ata-Meken*, *SDPK* and youth movements protested against the frauds of electoral campaigns and the results of the elections. Thus, *Ia ne veru...* activists sabotaged high level governmental meetings to express their distrust like one that was hosted by the Central Electoral Commission (*TSIK*) at the *Ak-Keme* hotel to report on the electoral process to international donors and civil society in June 2009. Seemingly, *Ia ne veru...* sabotaged the official meeting of candidates to the elections held at the *Dostuk* hotel during the same period. If *KelKel* functioned only during one election, *Ia ne veru...* aspires for a longer "specialization" in elections though its protest nature might work against them. First of all, as numerous experts and regular people observed, protests were out of date in Kyrgyzstan because the population was tired of political instability and did not want to support public protests any longer. And second, the activists might reject themselves such type of political behavior as it does not bring dividends any longer with the authorities, who have learned to simply ignore them.

*Jebe!* single action resorted as a reaction to a notorious World Bank HIPC project in winter 2006. In their action *Jebe!* activists went as far as to analyze this program together with independent law and economics experts, to read trendy literature on instrumentalization of global financial mechanisms by western states and to contact a number of African countries - members to the program in order to learn their experience. Such an in-depth analytical work led them to a conclusion that a 2 billion USD external debt is not worth to accept such a "humiliating" status and ruin Kyrgyzstan's international image. So, a group of activists protested before governmental buildings against not only the governmental original decision to adhere the initiative but also the World Bank's financial policy. *Jebe!* criticized namely that "one third of the allocated money goes to the payment of the World Bank's experts which does not match with the official ideology of international donors to "help" developing countries".

“Non politicized” organizations erupted after 2005 and put forward other types of problems challenging the Kyrgyz society. They underlined for instance a significant national spiritual decline, high level of demoralization of younger generations of 1990s and 2000s, the loss of Kyrgyz values, the problem of modern identity and the risk of erosion of the Kyrgyz statehood. This is the case of Kyrgyz El (Kyrgyz people), created in 2006 by the group of “patriots” living or studying abroad who first got mobilized on specialized internet chats. The urgency to react and not only reflect became later the reason to create a core team in Bishkek that runs today various projects. The core idea of their activity is to hinder demoralization of the Kyrgyz population and form a national identity that would help stopping further decline. To do this they suggest looking for example at national heroes of the past that could serve as models of courage, wisdom, honesty and other and give example to the youth. And of one of the Kyrgyz El projects “Insan” (personality) identifies such heroes of the Kyrgyz history (of pre- and soviet times), which were largely ignored by the population or discredited as a result of 1916 revolution, and makes them public on their internet site. The group is searching currently a funding to finance billboards containing short biographies of historic personalities that would be then placed in the central park of Bishkek for the public. This organization does not target only Kyrgyzstani population but expands its coverage to Kyrgyz Diasporas located in neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkey because these populations are exposed in a greater extent to the potential loss of Kyrgyz language and culture. Their activity is real as they sent last year novels by Kyrgyz soviet and contemporary writers in Kyrgyz language to a large Kyrgyz community in Uzbekistan and plans the same project in Afghanistan together with the Committee for migration and employment based in Bishkek. So far, they financed their projects on their own through mobilizing young businessmen and securing governmental administrative support.

Another youth organization Kyrgyz Nur (Kyrgyz Sun Shine), first a part of Kyrgyz El, withdrew and evolved into an independent organization in late 2007. It shares however similar goals as to raising patriotic feelings among the Kyrgyz population through the promotion of the Kyrgyz language and the knowledge of its own history. Kyrgyz Nur members issued for example 2000 examples of textbooks in Kyrgyz language for children under school age containing information about national symbols such as koomuz (musical instrument), Manas (national hero) etc. Besides these “patriotic” activities, the organization is highly oriented to social solidarity. They work with

orphans and disabled people on a regular basis. This assistance does not result only in financial or cultural support but also in lobbying legislation designed to facilitate professional and social integration of these groups into society.

Ak Shumkar Kut (White falcon happiness) created in 2005 follows the same patriotic stance but with a great focus on Islam. Ak Shumkar Kut propagates religious values among its members as a source for renewal of the Kyrgyz society through organizing various seminars with students. Such movements can rely on a concrete social basis: according to a survey conducted among the Kyrgyzstani youth, 17 % of respondents think that Kyrgyzstan should be an Islamic state, while 15% are still indecisive regarding secularism, and 68% believe that their country should be secular. During one of such gatherings, activists discussed a negative influence over the Kyrgyzstani youth coming from the West. The MTV channel was thus charged for diffusing immoral and perverted messages and severely condemned. The group also showed intolerance towards homosexuals.

### *Organization*

A contemporary youth politicized activist cumulates at a time various statuses. Thus, a member of a youth organization may participate at one time in a radical (officially considered as destructive) and in a social (see here as constructive) youth movements, in a political party, in a human rights NGO, in the government and a private sector. S(h)e might be equally active in all these areas. Such a pluralist self positioning allows the Kyrgyzstani youth to adopt flexible itineraries in a complex political environment, to shape their career perspectives, to earn their lives and to lobby their different interests according to a situation. Young leaders can seek for a career within a youth wing of a political party, earn their lives as civil servants and reflect on Kyrgyzstan's future or the youth' issues on organized platforms. Different statuses offer various opportunities in a volatile political environment. For instance, one of the Kebel leaders serves also as a director of an NGO that works with internally displaced migrants settled in Bishkek outskirts (novostroiky). The NGO promotes the concept of inter-aid, *ashar*, and trains migrants to form working groups aimed at collecting money, knowledge and labor force to build their houses and family businesses in the *novostroiky*. These self governed territories are important in the eyes of authorities in the light of the past actions of illegal land invasion by migrants and are perceived as potential conflict zones because of the law living standards. Mirzat can play in future an important role as a mediator

between these groups and the authorities and pursue a political career independently from his membership in Kebel. Many young activists have to seek other opportunities since youth activism does not currently provide for their living. So, it is not surprising that the composition of politicized organizations and movements such as Kebel, the Alliance, Ia ne veru ..., as it happens in the rest of the Kyrgyz civil society, is very dynamic. These movements are flexible enough to include members of other organizations, of youth wings of political parties, young state functionaries and even businessmen. Members of different organizations participate in each others activities and know each other very well.

Consecutively to alternating and/or superposing statuses of the leaders, organizations instrumentalize their official statuses too. Today in Kyrgyzstan the number and the size of constructive youth organizations is more important than that of radical ones. Generational reasons only partially explain this phenomenon. In fact, the criteria of constructiveness becomes a condition for a youth organization first of all to be heard and listened by the authorities, and second to gain financial support from international donors. We heard that Soros foundation denied funding projects of several politicized youth movements on the eve of presidential elections of July 2009 allegedly to avoid any potential replication of charges of coup d'état. Political opportunities that evolved after the Tulip revolution following the creation of new institutions and initiation of a brand new Kurmanbek Bakiev's youth policy incite Kyrgyzstani youth to give up protest moods and choose constructive methods if they want to participate in new processes. Furthermore, Kurmanbek Bakiev's new policy of dialogue with all third political forces encourages and makes possible this dialogue with the youth too but presumes that they be equal social and political partners, i.e. responsible and coherent. Young leaders also see that protest methods adopted by the opposition have no longer effect and even turned into ridicule.

Consequently, most of the young activists have officially chosen a non radical posture for their movements but however join from time to time protest single actions that do not directly discredit the official image of their organization. Some of the members of Kebel for example were involved in a number of protests organized by Ia ne veru... action separately from the rest of the movement because the official framework of their own organization does not allow such type of political behavior. Moreover, respondents are skeptic about Kurmanbek Bakiev's new policy of dialogue



since it presupposes integrating very different opposition forces to executive branches which does not follow his longstanding objective to stabilize the power through homogenizing the ruling elite. Respondents feared that their alternative ideas could be heard but not taken into account or just appropriated by the authorities. Therefore, occasional protests are undertaken to remind the authorities of an existing latent civic disobedience and help to keep them awake.

The situation in patriotic non politicized organizations is different in the sense that they are more structured and institutionalized. It comes from the fact of being recognized by the state and most importantly being able to conduct their activities quietly. Any deviation from this positive image is taken seriously so these organizations take their time to reflect on their recruitment policy and most importantly are cautious to undertake any political debate within the organization that might potentially split it. So, the organization may account individuals with different political orientations but united by the problems of national construction. They toughly select their activists around a core team based on a range of criteria. The sense of patriotism, high level of education and ability of critical thinking, honesty and high virtues, the will to make Kyrgyzstan better are essential moral characteristics to pass the entry test to Kyrgyz Nur or Ak Shumkar Kut. Social status was not mentioned as important in selecting the candidates while personal political ambitions, corruption and hypocrisy are severely condemned. But ordinary people even with such requirements can not easily join these organizations. Usually the membership is acquired through connections with current members, i.e. trusted people, which suggests that patriotism is elitist. Once a new member is admitted, the organizations provide him or her with self improvement and qualification upgrade courses. These courses have an objective to develop among the members a high level of faithfulness to the organization and to the cause. Kyrgyz Nur's leader Almaz Ayilchiev mentioned for example that he set up very tough criteria for the selection of his members, because he is seeking to surround himself with faithful individuals and that the organization's activities will serve as training with various real life experiences to test them. He does not hide that such a life school, a sort of replacement to Komsomol, will develop a core team prepared to undertake more serious projects like going possibly into politics. In this perspective, the organizations appear as incubators for future elite. Both types of the youth use their structures to prepare their future entry into politics but through different ideologies: a nationalistic and a democratic paths.

### *Ideology*

Two different ideologies can be clearly observed as the mobiles of the youth organizations: a nationalistic and a democratic one. In Kyrgyzstan, they are separated, unlike in Ukraine, though for a limited number of organizations like Kebel nationalism can do together with democracy. Politicized organizations like the Alliance of the liberal Youth, “Ia ne veru”, that are involved in human rights field are highly concerned with democratic principles. They want political parties become stronger and play a crucial role; they support the opposition and fight for free and fair elections. Democracy is considered as the best model for Kyrgyzstan to follow. Yet, they do not operate in abstract ideals of democracy disconnected from the Kyrgyz reality. The post-revolutionary developments led to a massive disillusionment and new conclusions among the youth: the current political regime can not get cleaner despite the efforts of the civil society and international donors. It did not however lead to the youth discouragement and apathy. First, their further engagement allows them to have identity and distinguish themselves from the rest of the youth and the society as a community of young people with a critical thinking. They are proud to be among the “awakened” and not to be a part of an unconscious and instrumentalized mass. Second, a new approach was set up to reorient the youth engagement. If they can not change the current system of political practices they can prepare the future alternative generation of civil servants and politicians with a different political culture oriented to democracy and liberal economy free of tribalism and regionalism. Consequently, only undergraduate and post-graduate students who still have a “clear mind” are targeted as considered worth of training. Activists plan working even with teenagers as the cultivation of critical thinking has to start as soon as possible. Activists are aware of their logistical limits and don’t aim to change the whole population: if a critical mass is attained it will be sufficient to change the society. In short, these young activists work to create a strong civil society in Kyrgyzstan.

As for the non politicized organizations, they are rather concerned with the development and the nationalist agenda. Since official Bishkek has started “finally” to recognize and address the national construction issue and since these organizations turned out to be in the official line, the theme of nationalism has somehow lost its political content for them. The fact that there is practically no ongoing public debate on the national ideology and its implications on minority populations has furthermore contributed to the acceptance of nationalism as something natural and

longtime needed among the population. And the youth organizations derive their legitimacy, here the right to exist, run its activity on its own discretion and feel useful, from sticking to the official line. It is worth noting however that this legitimacy is rather collateral because nationalist ideas that started circulating independently among the youth coincided with the launching of the official ideology. In the meantime, they seized the moment to get an official recognition and ease their insertion in political and intellectual landscape. Kyrgyz El, for example, which runs a project on celebrating great national heroes and promoting the knowledge of the Kyrgyz history, praised the new Kurmanbek Bakiyev's initiative to launch a national research on Kyrgyz history with the aim to issue a single history textbook for schools. Kyrgyz El members used this opportunity to meet political personalities when they could present their activities and achievements and to get noticed.

Also, issues addressed by the national construction agenda such as sovereignty, economic and political independence, territorial integrity need an immediate resolution and seem to be closer to popular concerns than that of democratization and thus help these young activists to enhance their legitimacy and feel useful. The concern with an existing ideological vacuum is not voiced out publicly, that's why also these organizations don't position themselves as political, but rather serves in order to grace the patriotic cause and the patriotic status. At first glance activists look ambitious in their will to address such vast issues, which are basically the state's prerogatives, but they do not pretend to criticize or replace the state but rather complement it and fill in the eventual gaps.

The members of Kyrgyz Nur and Kyrgyz El call themselves patriots and consider the promotion of patriotism among the population as a cure for many national challenges: it can for example stop emigration processes, encourage business investments, mobilize the youth, and develop social solidarity. Patriotism is directly linked to Kyrgyz language, history and culture. According to the activists, Kyrgyz people can become proud of its country and nation, i.e. patriot, if it will learn to assert its "kyrgyzness" through restoring its ancient values and high morals. Activists suggest returning to the history and learning from ancestors the ethics and the life philosophy. Yet, this nationalism is modern and pragmatic: social practices that do not match current reality are rejected as obsolete. For example, a social practice of holding large celebrations with exaggerated expenses, food and guests is criticized as it has a devastating effect in current times of economic

difficulties. Another socio-economic practice of bride kidnapping raises doubts as to its roots and adequacy to current situation. Besides, the majority of these patriots are modern Bishkek inhabitants with western diplomas and working experience in international organizations such as USAID and UN.

But what does patriot stand for? Despite varying levels of nationalism, for all these organizations to be a patriot means first of all to belong to the titular nation, to know its own history and culture, to speak Kyrgyz language. This set of criteria is not only implemented to characterize and select the activists themselves but also used to describe an ideal future Kyrgyz citizen. One might think that this set of requirements targets mainly the capital Bishkek where historically even the autochthon population speaks Russian. But today, Kyrgyz villages do not correspond any longer to the former stereotype describing every kid as able to list his seven ancestors and reproduce his family genealogical tree. So, the promotion of patriotism is a nationwide objective. But the level of nationalistic feelings varies. For most of these organizations, to promote the titular nation does not mean to exclude the other but rather to take the responsibility for the well-being of Kyrgyzstan. Thus, only when the titular nation will achieve a high level of development it will become attractive for minorities to fully adhere the Kyrgyz state. But other organizations may show intolerance vis-à-vis minorities, mainly Russians. Ak Shumkar Kut for example has a strong memory, thanks to the support of older generation, of the past soviet politics regarding the autochthon culture and language. It severely condemns it and suggests implementing only one language, the Kyrgyz. Consequently, Russian minority would have to learn the Kyrgyz as once the Kyrgyz population had to learn and speak only Russian during the soviet era. In the eyes of the elder mentors, it would restore the justice. Curiously, this nationalism has more to do with pragmatism than with the memory of past. Thus, the mentors suggest that it would be better if Central Asia was under the British Empire's occupation as at least they would now speak English, an international language, and have a different political system. It is worth also noting that the concept of nation is still marked by soviet theory of ethnos.

#### *State response*

2009 was assigned as the year of the youth in Kyrgyzstan. The youth at the age from 14 to 35 constitutes 40% of the total population. Various problems touching this large part of the population

including a high rate of the youth among immigrants, low level of education among the rural youth, unemployment among young graduates served to legitimate the restart of the youth program that was already launched in 2000 but unsuccessful. To tackle the aforementioned issues, state reconceptualized its former policy, resorted to a long-term plan of activities and allocated a budget worth of 50 million soms. These events seem to be a continuation of the vague of legislations passed in Russia and Kazakhstan prior to coming to Kyrgyzstan and a part of the Kurmanbek Bakiev's new conception of the dialogue between the state and society. So far, this conception resulted in the reinforcement of control over the civil society through making amendments to the law on peaceful meetings and draft law on NGOs of February 2009, adaptation of a new electoral code of December 2007, and new politics of cooperation with the opposition.

The present program's goals and fields of activity are very broad. In general it seeks to improve conditions of the youth of different social groups and statuses. It aims for example at providing assistance to young families and disadvantaged youth, but also at involving talented youth and young specialists to governmental responsibilities and providing support to youth organizations. A key idea penetrating the project at all stages is that the youth is now conceived as a subject, an actor and not only a beneficiary of the State. As in other social areas, we can notice that the Kyrgyz State is seeking to end with paternalistic relationship between the society and the State and to create an autonomous and self-sufficient society.

Among various social groups, state puts an accent on the active part of the youth. A recent survey conducted by an independent sociological research centre SIAR based in Bishkek, which was used by the government to design the new state policy, gave a definition specifically for the active/semi active youth. It turned out that this category of the youth is the one that already accounts members of or the individuals seeking to join public or political organizations, who are responsible and decision-makers, able to guide and influence their environment. This targeted group is supposed to realize together with the Agency for physical culture and sports, youth issues and children' care, a core body, the objectives of the program.

At first glance, the national program seems to be both beneficial for the active youth and for the government. New institutions are about to be created on the national and regional scale, as for

example a newly created Presidential Council in Kyrgyzstan or the CIS youth assembly which should be soon adopted by the CIS presidents. New levels of decision making and strategy elaboration will be also soon accessible to the active youth. Thus, a summit gathering youth wings of pro-presidential parties of Russia, Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan was already held on the Issik-kul northern shore and seems to reveal a commonness of political processes across the post-soviet space. With Kyrgyzstan being a part of this vague, the new youth policy is symbolic of a successful modernization of the Kyrgyz State and gives the president Kurmanbek Bakiev an additional image of a reformer and the leader of the youth. An image that he has been seeking since his legitimacy was constantly undermined by various forces throughout the first mandate. Raising young loyal elite will first of all limit if at all suppress any possible civic disobedience among the youth and disadvantage opposition forces in the plausibility of great upheavals. Second, in addition to other forthcoming reforms designed to render more efficient the government and the parliament, to co-opt civil society and the opposition, the youth program will contribute to the strengthening of the legitimacy and the power of the incumbent regime.

As for the young people, participation in the project opens up various opportunities for self realization and self promotion. On the one hand, it helps the brightest activists to get indentified and consequently make a career in the Agency, the ruling party or local administrations. On the other hand, the participation in the national project gives a possibility for certain protest organizations to get “normalized” or to receive a social approval. The Agency, which is put in charge of the ideological attraction of the program, keeps close contact with the youth and does not hesitate to invite oppositional organizations to assist to program’s activities. The official line keeps the project open for all youth movements. Some of the activists of oppositional Jebe! or Ia ne veru...thus participated in the first informal National Youth Congress organized by the Agency to check the new ideology and probably await until an official proposition is made. Such a deviation raised doubts among other members of these movements and other organizations as to their orientation. Remaining organizations even praised the Agency for their efforts of managing to divide the youth wing of the civil society. Many activists reported that the state used different tactics of cooptation. Some of them were encouraged to join the pro-presidential party and run local elections. Others were intimidated or blackmailed by the national security forces and financial police. It is not true that young activists have nothing to loose, they do – a future career.

In post-communist new consumption societies, age has proper indicators and thus puts social pressure on the youth. By the age of 30-35 a young man is supposed to have a stable situation which is declined in having a separate living place, a nice car, a social position and far going career perspectives. If on the eve of the Tulip revolution, the activists were consumed by the hope of the aftermath change, the reality leaves no room for hope and a fearless behavior. The youth after 25 is concerned with future career possibilities and is vulnerable to the politics of divide and rule.

But not all the youth organizations will cede to the politics of cooptation and join the official line. They realize that the national program seems to serve as a mechanism that would allow authorities to open a register of existing youth movements be they political, social or entrepreneurial and to check their activities. It is one of the technologies allowing the State to “see” the youth organizations and keep them on the surface. Furthermore, by organizing competition for governmental grants, which is supervised by the committee composed half by governmental officials and half by youth representatives (whose neutrality is questionable), the program creates a perfect tool of inciting the youth to become loyal. By allocating grants only to the loyal ones and leaving oppositional organizations without funding the state will limit considerable the activity of the later. Taking into consideration that international donors don’t fund any longer oppositional youth projects and the new law project that if adopted would allow to the government control NGOs’ funding, such a measure will lead to the dissolution or underground activity of oppositional youth movements.

### *Conclusion*

We assist presently to the formation of the young generation of the civil society in Kyrgyzstan. Yet, its further development will be shaped by the new national youth policy launched in 2009. This policy might potentially reshuffle the civil landscape and reorganize youth movements. Loyal youth might gain a greater representativeness in the government while the oppositional one get marginalized and turned into underground movements. The further implementation of the national policy will guide the future developments.