

# **A Tale of Two Revolutions:**

## **Catalysts for Mass Mobilization in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan 2005-2010**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction and Research Design**

This study aims to explain and conceptualize the most significant catalysts for mass mobilization focusing on the resulting dynamics visible in both the Tulip Revolution in 2005 and in the Kyrgyz uprising of April 2010.

#### **Hypothesis**

Broadly this paper hypothesises that these instances of mass mobilization are discrete processes but do share some common features.

Political factors whilst susceptible to idiosyncratic nuances between both instances of mass mobilization are largely similar. However, economic factors are more *significant* for mass mobilization in the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution than in the Tulip Revolution.

In addition, the external dimension of casual factors was also regarded as more considerable for the Tulip Revolution than the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution. Yet, this paper determines that external factors are not regarded as significant in relation to other localized causal factors. Therefore the external dimension will only briefly be touched upon in the closing section of this paper.

*Why* differences and similarities exist is highlighted by comparing the most significant factors that catalysed mass mobilization for the Tulip Revolution in 2005 and the Kyrgyz Revolution in 2010. For instance:

*Fear* is regarded as more significant as a causal factor for mass mobilization in the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution than it was in the Tulip Revolution. This will be demonstrated by analysing factors pertaining to opposition repression; and the crackdown of mass media, *inter alia*.

*Political anger* is regarded as being similar as a causal factor for mass mobilization in both revolutionary events. This emotion is explored through the causal factors of nepotism; and constitutional amendments.

The *economic situation* is regarded as more significant as a causal factor for mass mobilization in the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution than it was in the Tulip Revolution. This has been highlighted in graph 1.1.

*Subversive clientelism* (or informally-led elite networks) is regarded as more significant as a causal factor for mass mobilization in the Tulip Revolution than it was in the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution.

## **The Importance of Understanding Kyrgyzstan**

This paper is an account of what inspired the generation of mass mobilization in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan with considerable attention paid to the informal (and often clandestine) aspects of politics

For the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution, in particular, this study will make a departure from the classic theories of social movement to explain how revolutionary action can be achieved from a *grassroots* level in the post-Soviet space.

With regard to the 2005 revolution, this paper will deconstruct some of the comparative political science accounts which situate the Tulip Revolution within the sphere of the broader colour revolution literature. This paper will dispel the popular notion that the Tulip Revolution was a responsive consequence of the coloured wave of revolutions and that its influence was deeply profound in mobilizing the Kyrgyz populace. The Tulip revolution will be analysed in this paper without a predefined theoretical framework.

## **Relevant Literature**

It would appear that mass mobilization as a tool for structural political change in the relevant literature largely neglects much of the contextual factors in post-Soviet Central Asia. This therefore fuels the need for this project to be undertaken.

This paper accepts the definition of mobilization offered by J. Craig Jenkins:

“Mobilization is the process by which a group secures collective control over the resources needed for collective action. The major issues, therefore, are the resources controlled by the group prior to mobilization efforts, the process by which the group pools resources and directs these towards social change, and the extent to which outsiders increase the pool of resources.”<sup>1</sup>

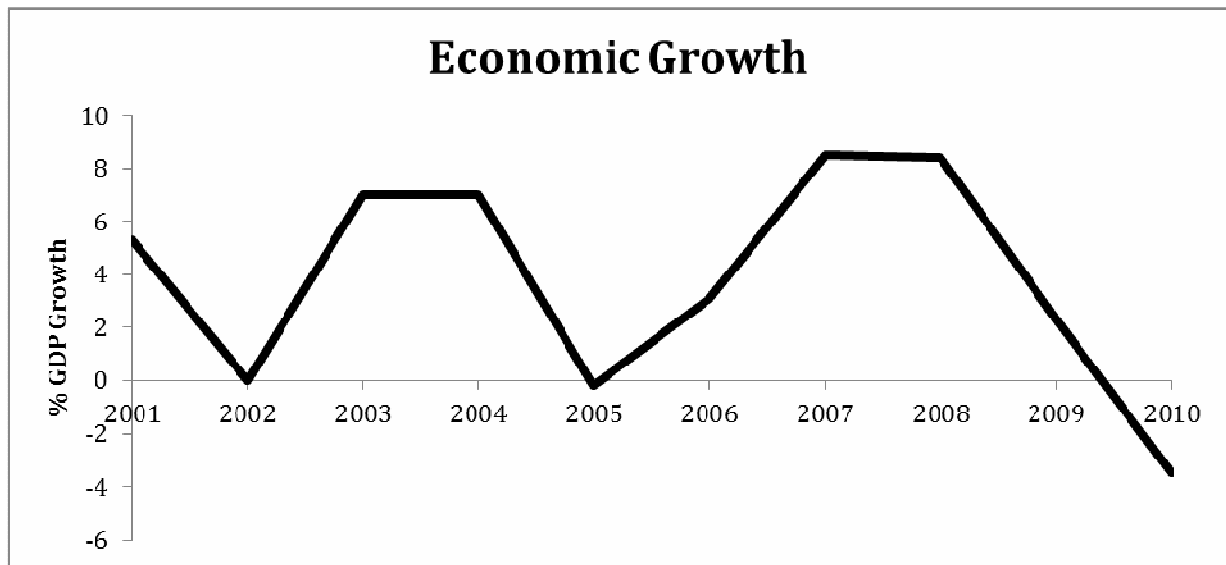
Catalysts for initiating social movements for regime change are often simplified and dichotomized as either ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’; this paper will show that the reality is decidedly more complex and localized.

## **What Differentiates the 2005 and 2010 Revolutions?**

Implicit within this study is the assumption that the 2005 Tulip Revolution and the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution, whilst sharing a number of causal factors, were driven by particular factors which illustrate the events may be discrete. The factors particular to each revolution are important to note because they indicate that these two revolutions are worth approaching individually; and not part of one “revolutionary moment” set within the narrative of Kyrgyzstan’s post-Soviet trajectory.

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<sup>1</sup> Craig J. Jenkins, “Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9 (1983), pp. 532-33.



Graph 1.1 Economic Growth in Kyrgyzstan 2001-2010 Source: <http://data.worldbank.org/>

It is apparent that the economic conditions in the country deteriorated markedly before both revolutions. However, as the graph above shows, while the Kyrgyz economy registered 0% growth in 2005, illustrating a stagnation in economic activity, the economic downturn before the 2010 revolution was both qualitatively greater and began from a point of higher growth. The implications of this retraction and recession<sup>2</sup> in the Kyrgyz economy are obvious, affecting labour markets; property values; savings and investments; and public services and, crucially general faith in the Bakiyev government. As such, this graph highlights that economic factors were perhaps more prevalent in the process of mass mobilization in 2010 than it was for the Tulip Revolution in 2005.

As the graph below shows, unemployment affected almost one fifth of the population consistently from 2005 to 2010. From these results it can be deduced that no significant change took place regarding levels of unemployment *after* the Tulip Revolution.

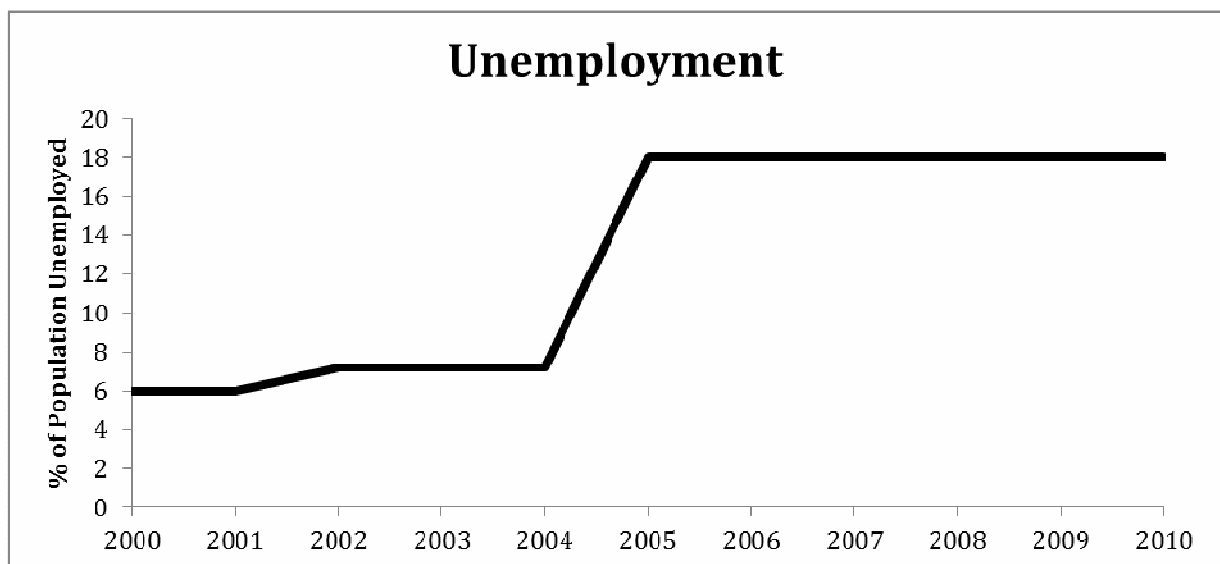
The unemployed represent a source of opposition and instability for the incumbent regime. Lipsey & Chrystal clarify why the unemployed can be a source of social disturbance:

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<sup>2</sup> 'Recession' will be understood according to the Oxford definition: "a period of temporary economic decline during which trade and industrial activity are reduced, generally identified by a fall in GDP in two successive quarters".

“[t]he longer-term effects of high unemployment rates for those who have become so disillusioned that they have given up trying to make it within the system, and who may be contributing to social unrest, should be a matter of serious concern to the haves as well as the have-nots.”

As such, the fact that unemployment remained just as high as it was *after* the Tulip Revolution is an indicator that people were angry regarding the lack of economic reforms in the country. This can further suggest that economic factors were more prevalent for the mass mobilization process in the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution than it was for mass mobilization in the 2005 Tulip Revolution.



Graph 1.2 Unemployment Rates in Kyrgyzstan 2000-2010

Source: [www.indexmundi.com](http://www.indexmundi.com)

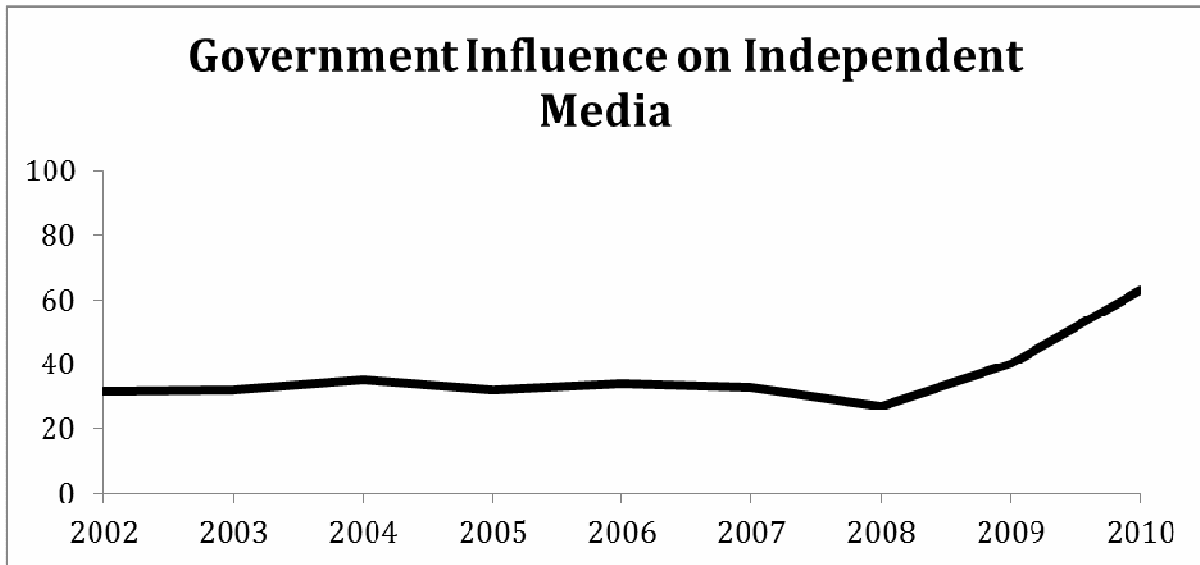


Graph 1.3 Political Rights in Kyrgyzstan 1991-2008

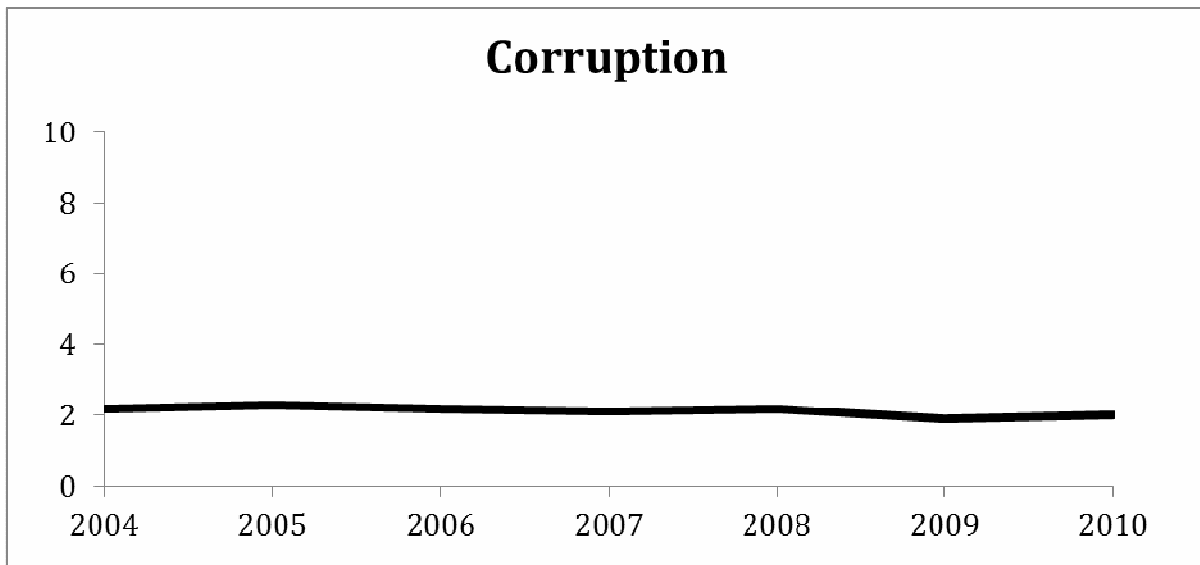
Source: [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)

The conditions pertaining to political rights in Kyrgyzstan between 2005 and 2010 remained largely the same, as the graph above displays. There was decidedly little qualitative shift in the provision of political freedoms, rights, and in the reform of key institutions. Some would suggest that this is evidence of a consistency between the two revolutions. But, in fact, the stagnation of democratic change between these two revolutions could also indicate that we should view these processes as different. This paper purports that it is *this* very stagnation that can provide a rational basis for mass mobilization. This makes Kyrgyzstan an interesting case because unlike similar color revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution deposed a regime that had that professed democratic ideals and was itself a result of a colour revolution. This renders measurement of the impact of the stagnation of democratic reform highly challenging.

An indicator that is not ambiguous, however, is the freedom of the press. As the graph below shows, the government influence on independent media between 2008 and 2010 increased significantly whereas the impact of government controls of the media in the lead up to the Tulip Revolution were probably negligible as no significant changes occurred during that period.



Graph 1.4 Government Influence on Independent Media 2002-2010 Source: [www.rsf.org](http://www.rsf.org)



Graph 1.5 Corruption Levels in Kyrgyzstan 2004-2010 Source: [www.transparency.org/](http://www.transparency.org/)

As the graph highlights, there was a startling lack of change in levels of corruption which were consistently poor.

Therefore, just like with the unemployment graph above, a lack of change can suggest that the status quo remained with regard to political reforms *after* the Tulip Revolution. In other words, the Tulip Revolution heralded a wave of expectation that was not forthcoming in this regard. This suggests that political grievance is an important factor for both revolutionary events.

### **Mass Mobilization and Revolt in Kyrgyzstan in 2005**

This chapter will delineate what it regards as the *most* significant (substantive) factors that catalysed mass mobilization for the Tulip Revolution.

## **The Tulip Revolution**

This paper has prioritized three key catalysts which precipitated mass mobilization. These are: the ‘Aksy’ event; *political* anger and grievance; and subversive clientelism.

### **The ‘Aksy’ Event**

The ‘Aksy tragedy’ is regarded as “the real spark”<sup>3</sup> that stimulated an increase in the levels of criticism for President Akaev.

Sadar Bagishbekov director of Central Asian human rights-based NGO ‘Voice of Freedom’ stated that,

“[p]eople who were born during the Soviet Union could not believe they could change something: that they could defend their rights; that they could actually protest against the government; that they could actually *change* the government.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Author interview with David Guilette, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Author interview with Sadar Bagishbekov, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January 2011.



It appears Aksy was simply more than a single event in 2002. It awakened a belief that ordinary people could participate in politics. As such, the Aksy tragedy is regarded as the first of three underlying, substantive factors that catalysed citizens to mobilize and revolt.

### **Aksy within the literature**

With regard to the social movement literature, the Aksy event therefore provided a situation, as described by Tarrow, whereby people were armed with “common purposes and solidarity”. The death of the six demonstrators also meant that once Baknazarov was released there was still a need and momentum for justice to be sought: namely, an unquantifiable type of revenge on behalf of the victims’ families. Thus, according to Gullette,

“[Aksy] acted as a good point for the opposition to rally around a single issue which helped them to overcome their differences, solidify their actions, and to get Akayev out of office. There was no other unifying factor. Otherwise if there had been then the opposition group would not have fallen apart so quickly after the revolution.”<sup>5</sup>

Aksy is now synonymous with the free-thinking spirit said to encapsulate Kyrgyzstan’s nomadic and perambulant pre-Soviet past.

In an interview with Mirsuljan Namazaliev, founding member of KelKel and Co-Founder of the Central Asian Free Market Institute, Aksy was referred to as the homeland of political protests; a place where people knew how to protest *well*:

“[m]ost people in Aksy are well trained in protesting. They are the *best* demonstrators in Kyrgyzstan! When people from Aksy demonstrate they are perfectly coordinated and are always organized. They are good at this as they are used to such protests and activities.”<sup>6</sup>

When notions of diffusion or ‘demonstration effect’ relating to the previous colour revolutions are cited as a source of inspiration for the Tulip Revolution few outside Kyrgyzstan are quick to point out the resonance of the Aksy tragedy as the foundational and *localized* stimulus for the eventual Tulip Revolution. Thus, according to the definition offered by

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<sup>5</sup> Author interview with David Gullette, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Author interview with Mirsuljan Namazaliev, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January 2011.

Beissinger, modular behaviour comes from the “significant part on the prior successful example of others”. This paper contends that the prior example of the Aksy tragedy was more pertinent in generating mass mobilization than any effect of the previous colour revolutions.

In sum, according to Bagishbekov, “the time between the Aksy tragedy and the Tulip Revolution was a period whereby a *breakthrough* in mentality change occurred: that people were realizing that they could stand up against the government.”<sup>7</sup> This psychological modulation acts as the founding catalyst which empowered, emboldened and inspired the Kyrgyz people.

### **Political Anger and Grievance**

Should this paper consider the Aksy tragedy as a founding catalyst for mass mobilization regarding the Tulip Revolution it shall consequently determine *political* anger and grievance as the pistons that generated the oppositional momentum that led these factors to be instrumentally channelled, finally, by self-interested informal actors (subversive clientelism). It is largely this tripartite combination that catalysed mass mobilization for the Tulip Revolution.

### **Political anger and grievance: democratization and back again**

According to Kyrgyz academic Shairbek Juraev, Kyrgyzstan, “represented a rare case of seemingly successful democratic changes in a region where such notions were hard to anticipate.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, the Kyrgyz populace had tasted the relative freedoms of civil society and political participation in the post-Soviet era, something which made the political arena in Kyrgyzstan somewhat unique vis-a-vis its Central Asian neighbours. Scott Radnitz commented that, “Kyrgyzstan’s relatively free political society was complemented by a civil society, which, by Central Asian standards, was modestly thriving.”<sup>9</sup> For instance, Kyrgyzstan had a variety of independent media outlets some of which were critical of the president and his policies

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<sup>7</sup> Author interview with Sardar Bagishbekov, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Shairbek Juraev, “Kyrgyz Democracy? The Tulip Revolution and Beyond” *Central Asian Survey* 27:3 (2008), p. 254.

<sup>9</sup> Radnitz, *Weapons of the Wealthy*, 72.

This seemingly anomalous trend in post-Soviet Central Asia can be challenged by primordialist notions that pre-modern Kyrgyz tribes displayed inherent democratic traditions.<sup>10</sup> Bakyt Beshimov, a prominent opposition leader, supports this view and notes the “mentality of the mountain people, who honour spiritual freedom and freedom of opinion”.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, what is important in the context of this paper is that political anger and grievance was accentuated in 2005, having reversed - from a position in which the state was showing positive signs of democratization - back in the direction of a state displaying increasing trends towards authoritarianism.

### **Political Anger and Grievance Situated in the Social Movement Literature**

Resource mobilization literature takes the firm position that dissent and grievances *alone* are not enough to catalyse mass mobilization. This paper agrees that, in the case of the Tulip Revolution, the level of grievance (and anger) did not conjure mass mobilization independent of other factors. However, this paper does not agree with Buechler’s assertion regarding resource mobilization, in which he claims that grievance is a “secondary” factor and *not* decisive when making an assessment on whether or not social movements will arise. According to Nurbek Toktakunov, Director of Human Rights NGO ‘Precedent’, anger alone was enough to fuel the Tulip Revolution. This remark stands contrary to Buechler’s judgement. When asked about the role of external actors in precipitating the mass mobilization of 2005 he responded that,

“[t]here were enough *internal* factors to create a revolution in 2005. I speak with a variety of people on a daily basis about social, economic and political concerns – taxi drivers, market sellers, to governmental officials – and I sensed that everyone was angry and that *something* was going to happen. I could actually *feel* the anger towards the government!”<sup>12</sup>

This paper offers the notion that political anger and grievance was a requisite factor in generating a high level of dissatisfaction across the entire country which perpetuated until it was channelled by opportunistic non-state elites for personalistic pursuits.

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<sup>10</sup> Shairbek Juraev, “Kyrgyz Democracy?” 258.

<sup>11</sup> Bakyt Beshimov, in Shairbek Juraev, “Kyrgyz Democracy?” 258.

<sup>12</sup> Author interview with Nurbek Toktakunov Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January 2011.

Political anger and grievance can be highlighted by three prominent events: constitutional amendments; nepotism; and persecution of the opposition.

### **Constitutional Amendments**

The manipulation of the constitution which afforded Akayev a third term in office, when two terms had been constitutionally-agreed upon as the maximum period of time for one president, provoked a high degree of political anger and grievance among the Kyrgyz populace.

According to David Gullette, this act “was seen as a clear breach of the constitution by the Kyrgyz people”. In addition, Kyrgyz sources who wish to remain anonymous confided that Akayev’s decision to remain in power for an additional third term was a critical juncture which unified the majority of Kyrgyz citizens in opposition to the then incumbent regime. This relates to Tarrow’s notion of a “common purpose and solidarity”. Sultan, a Bishkek-based middle-aged man originally from Naryn confessed that,

“he [Akayev] stayed for too long. People already wanted change by 2000. When the constitution was changed to allow him [Akayev] more time in charge people were united in one thing, his removal from office.”

Scott Radnitz points out succinctly that, “[E]ven after Akayev’s authoritarian turn, the high degree of pluralism that resulted from his earlier reforms was impossible to suppress.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, Akayev had planted the seeds of democratization. These seeds had started to develop, which made the process of uprooting an impossible task without the use the repressive tactics employed by leaders like Akayev’s Uzbek counterpart Islam Karimov.<sup>14</sup> As Akayev did not follow the path of his Uzbek political counterpart, such anger and grievances were not quelled.

### **Nepotism**

With regard to the thematic ambit of this paper, nepotism is treated as a form of corruption in the political environment. In particular, this relates to Asker Akayev and his involvement of various family members in both the economic and political realms of the country.

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<sup>13</sup> Radnitz, *Weapons of the Wealthy*, 73.

<sup>14</sup> Make a reference to Andijon and perhaps mention Kyrgyzstan – did not mirror/copy such tactics/...

In an interview with Gulzada (pseudonym), the Director of an international development organization based in Bishkek, Akayev's domestic predicament was clearly summarized:

“[A]kayev's problem was not in controlling the country. It was keeping all the members of his family content. It was becoming more and more apparent that *this* was becoming his greatest challenge. We felt such anger towards his family! Had he not had such demands placed on him from his wife and children perhaps things would have been different...”<sup>15</sup>

In an interview, Azamat Temirkulov remarked that, “there is a common belief that the wife of Askar Akayev was deeply involved in personnel policies and the distribution of resources”. Temirkulov confers that whilst there is no evidence to support such claims per se; these rumours were so widespread that they weakened the president's crumbling credibility.<sup>16</sup>

### **Persecution of the Opposition**

Azamat Temirkulov reviews this dynamic laconically and states that, “[t]he persecution of oppositional leaders, protestors and independent mass media was another factor that increased social protest. The clamp down was a direct cause for mass mobilization: it was not only an incentive for elites, but also for the rest of the population.”<sup>17</sup>

This paper regards the arrests of Topchubek Turgunaliyev, Felix Kulov, and Beknazarov, respectively, as the three most significant examples that angered and outraged political actors and society alike with regard to opposition persecution.

In sum, the combination of anger and grievance generated from these three categories – constitutional amendments, nepotism, and persecution of the opposition – significantly fueled a solidified and collective movement against the incumbent political regime.

The nature of anger and grievance as a catalyst for the Tulip Revolution appears to deviate from the texture of anger and grievance as a mobilization catalyst in the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution. Whilst political grievances were also present in 2010, this paper postulates that the

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<sup>15</sup> Author interview with Gulzada, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Azamat Termirkulov, “Kyrgyz “revolutions” in 2005 and 2010”, p. 591.

<sup>17</sup> Azamat Termirkulov, “Kyrgyz “revolutions” in 2005 and 2010”, p. 592.

political complaints were not as salient as they were in 2005 which, in turn, highlights a distinction between the two revolutionary events.

The third, and final, element that then siphoned these two catalysts to react and then combust into revolutionary action was the channeling process for effective mass mobilization, subversive clientelism.

### **Subversive Clientelism Addressing Informality of Kyrgyz Politics**

This section will address the opaque role of informal politics. This paper subscribes to Radnitz's view that subversive clientelism was the method that mobilized the populace in a collective action against the Akayev regime. However, this paper will not adhere to Radnitz's conclusion that the strength and loyalty related to these vertical informal ties was the *fundamental* motivation for mass mobilization in 2005. Rather, this paper postulates that such vertical loyalties were activated *in conjunction* with the high level of anger and grievances, alongside inspiration taken from the Aksy event, in order to successfully attain mass mobilization.

A particular feature of Kyrgyzstan's pre-modern history is the relationship between informal and formal powers. For instance, no formal power or centralized authority existed in Kyrgyzstan until the arrival of Tsarist Russia. Thus, "[N]o part of the Kyrgyz population developed a practice of exercising political power over territory or people, and no particular tribe secured authority over others; furthermore, no formal law was ever established that was equally applicable to all."<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Hansen and Dukenbaev stress the continuity of this informal heritage in contemporary Kyrgyzstan stating that,

“[t]he people of the region have shown little respect for *formal* rules and institutions” and instead “resolve their problems not through courts of law, and the like but through *informal* channels of communication.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Shairbek Juraev, “Kyrgyz Democracy?” 260.

<sup>19</sup> Hansen and Dukenbaev in Shairbek Juraev, “Kyrgyz Democracy?” 260.

In effect, despite the colonised engineering performed by the Soviet regime, they were unable to completely eradicate many of the traditional institutions that allowed subversive clientelism to flourish.<sup>20</sup>

Radnitz highlights the importance of Akayev's liberal political and economic reforms as the groundwork that created the conditions for the flourishing of subversive clientelism. Radnitz posits that:

“[T]hese reforms resulted in a wider dispersion of resources than during the Soviet era, or contemporaneously in countries that underwent less dramatic reforms, such as in Belarus and Uzbekistan. Although many members of the Soviet-era elite still occupied the highest positions of the executive branch in Kyrgyzstan through the early 2000s, a new set of elites emerged that was not loyal to, or dependent on, the regime.”<sup>21</sup>

Akin to the previous example concerning political anger and grievance Akayev's liberal reforms appeared to contribute towards his eventual downfall as a new, powerful and influential generation of elites emerged with no connection to the political regime.

### **Subversive Clientelism in the Tulip Revolution**

Mass mobilization, according to Radnitz, resulted “from the aggregate decisions of numerous self-interested actors, and as a by-product of the institutional incentives endemic to nondemocratic political systems.”<sup>22</sup> Radnitz elaborates that a way for wealthy actors and political aspirants to protect their interests is “to create a social support base by making material and symbolic investments in local communities.”<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the Akayev reign, a proliferation of informal elites emerged with no affiliations to the political regime. An increasing number of informal actors compounded with the wanton neglect displayed by the state to its disenfranchised citizens resulted in a power vacuum.

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<sup>20</sup> Oliver Roy in Azamat Termirkulov, “Kyrgyz “revolutions” in 2005 and 2010”, p. 319.

<sup>21</sup> Scott Radnitz, *Weapons of the Wealthy*, 5.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, 4-5.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*.

This lacuna was duly filled by vigilante-type actors who ostensibly sought ways to protect Kyrgyzstan's vulnerable populace in order to further their own personal goals and ambitions.

### **Subversive Clientelism within the literature**

Subversive clientelism aligns itself somewhat with resource mobilization theory. As described above, grievances and anger may be instrumentalized and manipulated by entrepreneurs trying to form social movements for personal resource gain.<sup>24</sup> Resource mobilization theory suggests that such social groups assemble when an elite class has sufficient capital available to mobilize. Thus, it is deduced that people mobilize to become the recipients of personal remuneration; they do not do so on the basis of cause. However, this is not clear with the case of subversive clientelism. Certainly, with regard to the first point, grievances and anger were instrumentalized by "entrepreneurs." However, people did not mobilize for remuneration alone. A variety of reasons existed with regards to what motivated different members of the group. The notion that people mobilized out of a genuine loyalty is not considered by resource mobilization. Clan loyalties are strong and can encompass a large mass of people, yet, the strength of these bonds is not considered by resource mobilization theory.

This paper posits that Radnitz somewhat overemphasizes the viewpoint that people were mobilized by informal actors *fundamentally* as a result of their loyalty in this parochial, vertical power relationship. Matthew Fuhrmann, a Political Scientist at the University of South Carolina, advocates the genuine character of the revolution and the concomitant motivations for mass mobilization. He asserts that, "[i]t should also be pointed out that protestors' motivation for demonstrating went beyond simply supporting particular candidates."<sup>25</sup> While the protest lacked a strong ideological texture as in the Rose and Orange revolutions, Tarrow's "common purpose and solidarity" was fulfilled by a wave of anger and grievance directed against the incumbent Askar Akayev. It was not primarily activated by a common sense of loyalty to (albeit influential) informal actors. These informal actors were able to mobilize their constituencies with relative ease precisely *because* a wave of discontent already existed. Informal actors (aggrieved political

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<sup>24</sup> John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, *The Enduring Vitality of the Resource Mobilization Theory of Social Movements* in Jonathan H. Turner (ed.), *Handbook of Sociological Theory* (New York: Springer Publishing, 2001) 533-65.

<sup>25</sup> M. Furhamann in Sally Cummings and Maxim Ryabkov, "Situating the Tulip Revolution" *Central Asian Survey* 27:3-4 (2008), p. 246.



candidates) who believed that fraud had, or *may* have, been committed utilized the imbedded collective dismay of the populace to rally support. It was this *combination* that allowed for mass mobilization to catalyse. Moreover, the Aksy event was to further provide a sense of belief that the collective goal of removing Askar Akayev was possible.

### **The 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution**

Some commonalities were shared across the two events. For instance, both revolutions were partially catalysed by those who became intolerant of the increasingly authoritarian nature of the regime. Moreover, the requisite *political* anger and grievance – a component for catalysing the Tulip Revolution - was caused largely by highly negative views regarding nepotism, constitutional amendments, and persecution of the opposition

A significant aberration, however, from the Tulip Revolution was the significance of the *economic* situation in 2010, which induced mass discontent hence revolutionary revolt. Moreover, there was a striking absence in the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution of self-interested informal actors as demonstrated in the previous chapter using Radnitz's theory of subversive clientelism.

Instead, the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution has been described as a “grassroots” revolution. Some may wish to dichotomize the Tulip Revolution from the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution by describing the former as “top down” whilst referring to the latter as “bottom up”. However, doing so encourages an oversimplified approach to the study, and a temptation to categorize rather than to analyse the peculiarities of both events. The 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution was quicker, more spontaneous and more violent than its predecessor. Thus, whilst these two revolutions

displayed some congruity, the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution was, as affirmed rather candidly by an anonymous commentator amidst the event, “not the Tulip Revolution all over again”.<sup>26</sup>

In an interview in 2011, David Gullette noted the usefulness of this comparative approach when analysing these two revolutionary events:

“The reasons behind these two revolutions may be similar on the surface... When you start to investigate it [the catalysts which precipitated both revolutions] more deeply you have to think about the kinds of *particular* challenges that people were facing at that *particular* time. This is what makes a comparative approach interesting.”<sup>27</sup>

Gullette’s view is at ease with Flyvbjerg’s notion of a “nuanced view of reality”. In other words, a general overview of both events may portray these historically critical junctures to be similar in nature. However, greater analysis and respect for the idiosyncratic character and details peculiar to both events highlight significant distinctions as to how these events were precipitated.

This paper prioritizes *three* key catalysts which precipitated mass mobilization in 2010. These are deteriorating economic conditions; *political* anger and fear and the police shooting at White House demonstrators. The combination of these catalysts was enough to bypass the need for mobilization orchestrated by self-interested informal actors. This paper will support the idea that the raw emotions of dismay, anger and fear generated from the populace did not require the conduit of self-interested informal actors or the manipulated emancipation of a *raison d’être*. The repressive police action at the White House on the day of the protest served to combust these negatively-charged emotions into purposive action. It was a wave of negative emotions that surpassed a ‘tipping point’ which therefore precipitated mass mobilization.

### **Social Dismay from Deteriorating Economic Conditions**

You cannot make a revolution with silk gloves. ~ Joseph Stalin

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<sup>26</sup> Anonymous, “Not the Tulip Revolution Again, *Eurasianet*, p. 1, accessed on 2 January 2011, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav040810d.shtml>.

<sup>27</sup> Author interview with David Gullette, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January 2011.

Contrary to the significant factors which precipitated the Tulip Revolution, greater emphases throughout the series of interviews and from the analysis of the related literature points towards complaints relating to *economics* as a significant factor.

### **The Kyrgyz economy: A bleak outlook**

Social dismay from economic conditions must be placed within the overall context of the economy of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan more broadly before focusing on some of the economical nuances that generated social dismay.

In comparison with the other four post-Soviet Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan is the second smallest in terms of size (Tajikistan being the smallest) whilst its population is also the second smallest (Turkmenistan is the lowest). Moreover, of all the post-Soviet states, Kyrgyzstan is the second poorest (per GDP), only slightly ahead of Tajikistan. According to the International Monetary Fund in 2010, Kyrgyzstan's GDP was \$2,162 (ranked 143rd from 182 countries) whilst Tajikistan's GDP was \$1,907.9. In addition, it has a mountainous terrain of which a mere 7% of its total land mass is arable (despite approximately 40 per cent of the population working in the agriculture industry).<sup>28</sup> Such unenviable statistics have beset post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan with economic challenges throughout the reigns of Akayev and Bakiyev, respectively. Meanwhile the global financial crisis which began in 2007 was indiscriminate and set the rather bleak backdrop for the economic conditions that caused such austere circumstances for the Kyrgyz populace.

### **Increased Tariffs**

[the regime] picked the pockets of people who hardly made both ends meet, the patience of the people... burst." - Akylbek Zhaparov, the former Minister of Economy<sup>29</sup>

The most corporeal and tangible cause of social dismay regarding the vastly deteriorating economic conditions in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan was the astronomically steep rise in tariffs.

In an interview with American University of Central Asia academic Azamat Temirkulov, he maintained that, "I think of course that there are many causes, some people say that the rise in

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<sup>28</sup> David Gullette, "Institutionalized Instability: Factors Leading to the April 2010 Uprising in Kyrgyzstan", *Eurasia Review* 3 (2010), p.95.

<sup>29</sup> Akylbek Zhaparov, in Azamat Termirkulov, "Kyrgyz "revolutions" in 2005 and 2010", p. 596.

tariffs for electricity and communication were the main cause. That was probably true. That was the main cause for people to mobilize.”<sup>30</sup>

Public services such as heating, energy and electricity rose exponentially at the end of 2009. This uniformly created a profound sense of dismay.

The government pointed out that the previous seven years had witnessed a steady rate of utility prices. However Gulnara Ibraeva, a sociologist at the American University of Central Asia, made the issue with regard to the Kyrgyz populace wholly unambiguous:

"Most simple economic calculations show that the largest part of the population is simply not able to cover necessary expenses and compensatory fees will only enforce inflation. In this situation, people living near the capital are simply beginning to cut themselves off from the utilities, voluntarily severing their radiators and hot water pipes. The quality of life is falling. Consequently, the level of distrust in the government and its political reforms is growing."<sup>31</sup>

These forecasts were to prove accurate. The majority of interviewees consulted for this paper corroborated the view that social dismay from the deterioration of economic conditions, and in particular with regard to an increase in tariff prices, was an underlying, substantive factor that catalysed citizens to mobilize and revolt leading to regime change in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan in 2010.

According to Azamat Temirkulov, “[T]he situation in which Kyrgyzstan found itself began not with the political but with social problems.”<sup>32</sup> Therefore, unlike the catalysts for mass mobilization in the Tulip Revolution, “the pistons that generated the oppositional momentum” started *not* with political anger and grievance but rather it began with social dismay from deteriorating economic conditions. Gullette observed that, “[O]n top of the difficulties that people had endured... people could not afford or tolerate such a drastic price increase.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Author interview with Azamat Temirkulov, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January 2011.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Azamat Termirkulov, “Kyrgyz “revolutions” in 2005 and 2010”, p. 595.

<sup>33</sup> Author interview with David Gullette, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January, 2011.

The dire economic environment adversely affected the general populace. Therefore, those Tilly referred to as “ordinary people” had what Tarrow called “a common purpose” to improve their collective economic situation. In addition, whilst noting Schaefer’s definition of relative deprivation theory as “the conscious experience of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present actualities,”<sup>34</sup> the people of Kyrgyzstan felt they deserved more; or at least they expected more. Many of the non-elite respondents made remarks about Kyrgyzstan and her financial measurements vis-à-vis the other Central Asia states. Gulhar Vorobieva from Osh mentioned that: “[I]n general, we feel disadvantaged. We only have to look over at Kazakhstan and *even* Uzbekistan to remind us of how poor our country is becoming.”<sup>35</sup>

Thereafter, such negative emotions and feelings regarding social dismay from deteriorating economic conditions were compounded with further negative emotions from a sense of *political* anger and fear.

### ***Political Anger and Fear***

#### **Bakiyev: A Tougher Regime?**

Dinara Oshpakhnova, Director of Bishkek-based NGO ‘Coalition for Civil Society’ provided a vivid and comparative account of fear:

“[U]nder Akayev we were able to function normally as an NGO. It was free. We had some pressure because of the nature of our monitorial work. Political regimes generally don’t like this. However it was *much* worse under the period of Bakiyev because they [Bakiyev’s regime] scared the entire population. They killed people, they killed journalists... It was really an awful period.”<sup>36</sup>

More poignantly however Oshpakhnova concluded that, “[P]eople understood that Bakiyev was *not* Akayev. And that he [Bakiyev] could *kill* people.” This view was consistent

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<sup>34</sup> Richard T. Schaefer, *Racial and Ethnic Groups, 11th Ed.* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2008), 69.

<sup>35</sup> Author interview with Gulhar Vorobieva, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Author interview with Dinara Oshpakhnova, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January, 2011.

with non-elite respondents who placed a higher degree of emphasis on fear than they did regarding the Akayev regime. For instance, Gulhar Vorobieva noted that,

“The time under Bakiyev was worse than Akayev. People were starting to become really scared of what might happen to them if they went against the regime. It was a tense time here. I knew many who abandoned their political activities out of fear that they would be punished by the regime.”<sup>37</sup>

### **Severe Repression of Opposition**

A chief illustration of the fear which contributed towards the precipitation of mass mobilization was highlighted by instances of extreme opposition repression. Unlike the arrests of Turgunaliyev, Kulov and Beknazarov which contributed towards notions of political anger and grievance, which led to mass mobilization for the Tulip Revolution, the nature of political repression under the Bakiyev regime was more violent, solemn and worrisome.

Fear was a widespread emotion after the former head of the president’s administration, Medet Sadyrkulov, was found dead: the result of an apparent car accident. Bakyt Beshimov, an opposition member of Parliament, was quoted in the *New York Times* saying, “[W]e are absolutely in agreement that it is an assassination. He became a victim of this repressive regime.”<sup>38</sup> Fear became contagious as an effect of the political repression. Former First vice Prime Minister, Elmira Ibrakhimova, said: “I think I might be next,” having resigned shortly after Mr. Sadyrkulov.<sup>39</sup>

Venera Djumataeva, a broadcaster with RFE/RL’s Kyrgyz Service, postulated that “[S]ince Bakiyev became president about 10 well-known public figures – including five

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<sup>37</sup> Author interview with Gulhar Vorobieva, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Ethan Wilensky-Lanford, “Critic of Kyrgyzstan Leader Is Believed Dead in a Suspicious Car Crash”, *New York Times*, 13 March 2009, accessed 27 November 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/14/world/asia/14kstan.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/14/world/asia/14kstan.html?_r=1).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

members of parliament – have been murdered”.<sup>40</sup> In addition, Djumataeva continued “[a]bout 20 politicians or journalists have fled the country and received political asylum in the West.”<sup>41</sup>

## **Mass Media**

Indeed the Bakiyev regime had targeted both opposition members and those who posed a threat from within the mass media. According to Temirkulov,

“[t]he same methods were used against the free mass media [as those used against members of the opposition]: independent publishers were closed through the courts; and journalists were killed in circumstances which many saw as the work of the [Kyrgyz] Special Services.”<sup>42</sup>

Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, deplored the alleged murder of Gennady Pavlyuk: “I condemn the murder of Gennady Pavlyuk,” she declared, “and I trust that full light will be shed on this crime. It is essential for the whole of Kyrgyz society that the authorities spare no effort in upholding the basic human right of freedom of expression. I am deeply concerned about reports of unacceptable pressure on the press in Kyrgyzstan, which, like every country, requires open debate for its political, social and economic development.”<sup>43</sup>

A sizeable discrepancy between the politicized complaints regarding catalysts for mass mobilization for both revolutions is the inclusion of *fear* as an emotional component concerning the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution. Fear was an emotion rarely expressed by interviewees regarding the Tulip Revolution.

Such fear surmounted any levels of trepidation experienced during the Akayev reign. Fear therefore became an additional fuel alongside anger, which was to induce mass

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<sup>40</sup> Venera Djumataeva, “The Roots Of Kyrgyzstan's Uprising” *RadioFreeEurope*, 23 April 2010, accessed on 3 May 2010, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Commentary\\_Roots\\_Of\\_Kyrgyzstan\\_Uprising/2022430.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Commentary_Roots_Of_Kyrgyzstan_Uprising/2022430.html)

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Azamat Termirkulov, “Kyrgyz “revolutions” in 2005 and 2010”, p. 595.

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous, “Director-General Irina Bokova condemns murder of Kyrgyz journalist Gennady Pavlyuk” accessed on 3 March 2011, [http://portal.unesco.org/ci/fr/ev.php-URL\\_ID=29405&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/fr/ev.php-URL_ID=29405&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

mobilization. In 2010, “[F]ear was spreading in the country, which quickly turned into a deep anger against Bakiyev.”<sup>44</sup>

### **Political Anger**

This paper puts forth three sources of political anger: constitutional amendments; nepotism; and Maksim Bakiyev.

### **Constitutional Amendments**

Constitutional amendments were an active factor in precipitating the requisite political anger that then catalysed mass mobilization for 2010, as it was in 2005. For example, Bakiyev announced that his plans to change the constitution to cater to his vision of “consultative democracy” had been endorsed despite the assembly heavily criticizing his proposals. According to Jim Nichol, a specialist in Russian and Eurasian Affairs, “[T]hese proposals appeared similar to those taken in Turkmenistan by the late authoritarian President Saparamurad Niyazov.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Nepotism**

Nepotism was a factor present in both the politicized discontent for the Tulip Revolution and the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution. Nevertheless, the high level of vitriolic replies garnered throughout the interview process aimed directly at the Bakiyev family was a striking understanding of events as opposed to the occasionally nostalgic outlook regarding the Akayev era. Moreover, the weight in favour of this view from the (albeit limited) literature corroborates this examination.

Roza Otunbaeva encapsulates the difficulty with nepotism throughout the Bakiyev years in a statement made whilst working under Bakiyev as a minister:

“Today, there are five Bakiyevs working in the ‘White House’ on the top echelons of the power. I do not speak about their numerous relatives who have captured all floors of the ‘White House’.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Djumataeva in Azamat Termirkulov, “Kyrgyz “revolutions” in 2005 and 2010”, p. 596.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Azamat Termirkulov, “Kyrgyz “revolutions” in 2005 and 2010”, p. 594.



Furthermore, using the headline ‘The Nepotism that Sparked a Revolution’, *The Independent* leaves its readers with little doubt as to what triggered the mass mobilization.

### **Maksim Bakiyev**

If the Tulip Revolution lacked a solitary despotic hate figure then a further distinction can be made regarding the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution. Bakiyev’s son, Maksim, represented the kernel of many people’s anger and hatred towards the then incumbent regime. Examples of nepotism regarding Maksim Bakiyev are so numerous that they comfortably exceed the realm of this study. In Bishkek, any mention of *korruptsii* (corruption in Russian) or *semyeĭstvennost* (nepotism in Russian) nonchalantly induced a myriad of anecdotal comments which were often colourful and *consistently* derogatory with Maksim Bakiyev frequently playing the protagonist.

The hatred of Maksim Bakiyev continues to linger on in Kyrgyzstan today as a visible by-product of the hatred that was generated like unwanted remnants of a Soviet-styled environmental disaster. According to many non-elite respondents, immediately after the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution Bakiyev was asked by a Latvian journalist what awaited him back in Kyrgyzstan. Bakiyev allegedly replied “five million sheep!” In line with Machiavelli’s ‘Il Principe’, Maksim Bakiyev showed both contempt and disdain for his supposed subjects. Archibald Macleish makes sense of this scenario when he wrote, “[T]he dissenter is every human being at those moments of his life when he resigns momentarily from the herd and thinks for himself.” Maksim, the self-proclaimed shepherd, has hitherto not been reunited with his baying flock.

### **Political Anger and Fear in the Social Movement Literature**

In 2005 the backdrop for political anger (and grievance) was a gradual decline in the democratization process and a movement towards a more authoritarian regime. However, for the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution much of the anger was generated due to a *lack* of change as promised by the Bakiyev regime *subsequent* to the Tulip Revolution (see political graphs above).

The nature of anger and fear as a catalyst for mass mobilization for the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution deviates away from the texture of anger and grievance as a mobilization catalyst in the Tulip Revolution. Whilst political grievances were present in 2005 this paper identifies that the political complaints were more salient, and therefore more significant, in inducing mass

mobilization in 2010. This highlights a distinction between the two revolutionary events. Throughout the interview process, respondents addressed the respective social, economic and political conditions of Kyrgyzstan leading up to the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution with more passion and energy. Saliently, many people appeared almost nostalgic for the Akayev regime and its concomitant political structure. Time may be an influencing factor here. For instance, people are more likely to become impassioned about events that took place one year ago rather than six years ago. However, these replies were consistent and both elite and non-elite respondents were more animated in their responses with regard to the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution than they were for the Tulip Revolution. In addition, the literature appears to support this conclusion.

Resource mobilization literature takes the firm position that dissent and grievances *alone* are not enough to catalyse mass mobilization. This paper states that, in the case of the 2010 Revolution the level of anger (and fear) was enough to conjure mass mobilization unaccompanied by other factors. The finding for mass mobilization in the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution stands diametrically opposed to Buechler's assertion that grievance is a "secondary" factor and *not* decisive when making an assessment on whether or not social movements will arise. From the emotions generated by a blend of economic social dismay and political anger and fear there was sufficient "solidarity" and enough of a "common purpose" to prompt mass mobilization in 2010. This paper asserts that these were the significant factors which precipitated mass mobilization in 2010. Unlike the Tulip Revolution, the process was quick and explosive, and bypassed the need for informal elites to channel (and manipulate) emotions for their own goals.

This paper notes that these factors were sufficient for mass mobilization on April 7 2010 – the day of the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution. These factors were significant to satisfy the first stage of the mobilization process for the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution. The final significant factor – the police shooting at protestors – was the significant factor which satisfied the second stage of the mobilization process. The complex two-stage process must be linked together to complete the entire mass mobilization process for the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution.

### **Police Shooting at White House Demonstrations**

This paper considers it appropriate to track the mobilization process back to the events that occurred in Talas - an *oblast* in the northwest of Kyrgyzstan situated near the Kazakh border - on 6 April before the events of the 7 April and the subsequent police shooting.

Akin to the Tulip Revolution, many regard the “real spark” for the mass mobilization to be attributable to the arrest of the vice-president of the opposition party Ata-Meken (“Fatherland”), Bolot Sherniazov. This incident “served as a stimulus for mass mobilization in this area” in the same way as the arrest of Beknazarov had done so in 2005.<sup>47</sup>

Thereafter, a protest developed, which led to government officers being taken captive and office buildings being seized. The government replied to this subordination by arresting opposition leaders in the capital Bishkek. According to Gullette, this was done “in an attempt to undermine the scheduled demonstrations in Bishkek.” However, Gullette continued, “[T]he previous day’s protest in Talas and the arrest of opposition leaders only *galvanized* (author’s italics) the protestors.”<sup>48</sup>

Whilst the Tulip Revolution was sparked by demonstrations in the southern regions (Jalal-Abad, Osh), the protests which initiated the mass demonstrations in Bishkek erupted mainly in the poor and isolated northern regions, such as Talas, where residents had long bemoaned their exclusion from political participation.<sup>49</sup> In this regard, the regionalised dichotomy appears relevant. For instance, the southern region of Aksy initiated the protests in 2005 that ousted ‘northerner’ Akayev. Whereas the 2010 demonstrations began in the northern region of Talas: a movement that would eventually overthrow the ‘southerner’ Bakiyev.

This paper postulates that the third and final significant catalyst that precipitated mass mobilization was the unexpected and explosive reaction caused by excessive police repression

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<sup>47</sup> Azamat Termirkulov, “Kyrgyz “revolutions” in 2005 and 2010”, p. 597.

<sup>48</sup> <sup>48</sup> David Gullette, “Institutionalized Instability” p.92.

<sup>49</sup> Ilisher Khamidov, “Not the Tulip Revolution All Over Again” *Eurasianet* 7 April, 2010, accessed on 2 May 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav040810d.shtml>

against protestors on 7 April 2010. According to Azamat Temirkulov, “as more people were killed, additional participants joined the protests.”<sup>50</sup>

Azamat Temirkulov pondered that, “if the police hadn’t killed people or have opened fire on people in 2010 perhaps they would have stayed on the central Square (Ala-too square) just like they did in 2006 and 2007. Perhaps they would have just gone home?”<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, can the notion of a ‘tipping point’ be conceptualized when analysing catalysts for mass mobilization? Thus, can feelings of anger, fear and any other evocative emotion for that matter reach a certain point whereby a tacit collective agreement is activated which then precipitates mass mobilization to enforce political regime change in authoritarian polities? According to Azamat Temirkulov, ‘anger’ was the main incentive for thousands of people to mobilize in 2010. To gauge when anger turns to mass mobilization is a crucial barometer for this paper. It will, admittedly, be the most difficult aspect to prove, and will concede the need for further primary research.

### **External Factors: Conspicuous Absentees**

Academics such as Bunce and Wolchik and Beissinger are in little doubt as to the influence of previous revolutionary events in precipitating mass mobilization in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. However this paper contends that such external catalysts were largely marginal, overemphasized or negligible. Throughout the interview process there was a conspicuous lack of *significance* attributed to the role of external actors. The majority of respondents consistently attached more significance to internal and localized factors in determining the catalysts for mass mobilization.

### **Role of External Non-State Actors**

The potential external non-state actors identified after a thorough literature review were listed as international NGOs, criminal groups and Islamic militant groups.

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<sup>50</sup> Azamat Termirkulov, “Kyrgyz “revolutions” in 2005 and 2010”, p. 597.

<sup>51</sup> Author interview with Azamat Temirkulov, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January 2011.

Throughout the interview process no mention was made of the role of Islamic militant groups. Of the twenty interviewees only Dinara Oshrahknova mentioned Islamic militant groups and did so only fleetingly. Dinara feared the increasing role of these groups whilst Kyrgyzstan existed in the vortex of weak and vulnerable state post-2010 Kyrgyz Revolution. However even Dinara did not attribute *any* role to these groups when mass mobilization was considered.

The role of criminal groups, unlike Islamic militant groups, was mentioned throughout the interview process. However, due to the clandestine, informal and perilous nature of these networks, no concrete explanation was offered regarding their position for mobilizing the masses in 2005 and 2010.

The role of external NGOs and non-state groups (i.e. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), proliferated across Bishkek and beyond such as USIAD and Eurasia Partnership Foundation, played a role in mass mobilization. However, the significance of these actors has been summarized by Azamat Tumirkulov:

“[T]he Kyrgyz Revolution of March 2005, as well as the other “colour revolutions” were carried out by various political forces (political parties, movements, etc.), and civil society, including NGOs. However, the particularity of the Kyrgyz revolutions consists of the fact that patronage networks and traditional institutes played a very active and probably a major role.”<sup>52</sup>

In other words, some believe these groups were often attributed with assisting the revolution rather than directly causing the mass mobilization to emerge. For instance, Amamat Tumirkulov continues:

“[A]t the beginning of the mobilization of the “Tulip Revolution”, the opposition concentrated its efforts on the mobilization of resources inherent to modern states – political parties, NGOs, networks of human rights defenders and the media. However, *these resources were insufficient for an effective and full-scale mobilization of the population* [author’s italics].”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Azamat Termirkulov, “Kyrgyz “revolutions” in 2005 and 2010”, p. 593.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

An ethnographical report considered by John Heathershaw echoes this sentiment and supports the notion that, “internationally-backed ‘civil society’ (a disparate collection of on-governmental organizations: NGOs) was, at best, a marginal influence.”<sup>54</sup> Both elite and non-elite respondents for this paper appeared to mimic the above claims made by Tumirkulov and Heathershaw. There were notable exceptions to this as Burul Mekenbaeva stated that, “internationally-backed NGOs were essential in the mobilization process for the Tulip Revolution.”<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, according to Radnitz, “NGOs are often detached from the broader society they claim to represent, a fact that is especially striking in rural societies.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, how much influence can NGOs claim to have had on the rural populace when Temirkulov accurately considers that, “the basic force of the Tulip Revolution was the periphery”?<sup>57</sup>

No non-elite respondent attributed *any* significance to the role of external non-state actor in the mobilization process for both revolutions.

### **Role of External State Actors**

External Actors are considered here as the US and Russia. This paper purports that both Russia and the US played a negligible role in precipitating mass mobilization for the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution. They did appear to play a slightly stronger role in 2005. However, just like the case of external non-state actors (such as international NGOs), their role was marginal at best.

Starting with the US, Graeme Herd noted that perceptions existed in the CIS that the US were accredited with ‘manufacturing democracy’ throughout the revolutionary wave starting with Serbia’ Bulldozer Revolution in 2000. There was a conspicuous absence of any express mention of the US throughout the non-elite interview series concerning both revolutionary events. The elite respondents did mention the role of the US and in particular with regard to the

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<sup>54</sup> John Heathershaw, “Rethinking the International Diffusion”, p. 315.

<sup>55</sup> Author interview with Burul Mekenbaeva, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, January, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Azamat Temirkulov, Informal Actors and Institutions in Mobilization: the Periphery in the ‘Tulip Revolution’, p. 319.

Tulip Revolution. However, on the whole, their responses did not generally indicate any significance vis-a-vis their role in the mass mobilization process.

Radnitz discounts the role of diffusion and external assistance as catalysts for stoking revolutionary fires.

One feature that did emanate from the elite interviews was the role of Steven M. Young, US Ambassador for Kyrgyzstan between 2003 and 2005. Mars Saryev, Mirsuljan Namazaliev, and Shamil Ibraghimov all took note of the role played by Steven Young in the lead up to the Tulip Revolution. However, there was a near-total absence of any mention with regard to the US and its role in the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution.

In addition, the role of Russia was similarly treated with indifference. Russia did lead a media campaign against the Bakiyev administration. However, this soft power approach did little to mobilize a baying crowd to overthrow the regime. Like the US, a lack of mention of Russia from non-elite respondents and a negligible amount from elite interviewees render Russia's role for this paper as negligible.

As stated by Azamat Temirkulov with reference to the 2010 Kyrgyz Revolution,

“[T]here were no leaders, either political or organizational. There were only dissatisfied people....”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Azamat Termirkulov, “Kyrgyz “revolutions” in 2005 and 2010”, p. 597.