

to retain stability, including political measures, which bear little resemblance to democratic forms. The need to fight the old elites, changing personnel, management paradigms and styles - as a rule, all of this is impossible to implement in democratic procedures.

However, the very existence in our history of March 24, 2005, showing the potential of public forces, independent of the authorities. But at least the freedom of mass media, in my view, has taken away forever the possibility of returning to totalitarianism.

The general trend of development of the Kyrgyz Republic, the orientation of existing processes still remains in the sphere of democratic choice. Many new social phenomena indicate that this

direction of development will be preserved.

Now the most unfavorable: In any scenario there is no reason to talk about stability. There will no longer be stability, in the sense as understood by our neighbors, in Kyrgyzstan.

Thus, Kyrgyzstan is undoubtedly a threat to stability from the point of view of our neighbors and Russia. Precisely because it is, and I am sure will remain, an example of democratic development.

in any case Kyrgyzstan could be viewed as some sort of mirror for its neighbors, with the help of which they could look into their future and attempt to avoid those mistakes that we may have made.

"AUTHORITIES-OPPOSITION" TANDEM IN 2007

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In 2006 Kyrgyzstan failed to find way out of stagnation and develop a consolidated development strategy, which would satisfy all active parts of society: the authorities and opposition, political parties and civil society.

Instead of a loudly announced 8% economic growth, a 2.7% growth was barely achieved, and the GDP is continuing to decrease. Despite the fact that the new authorities position themselves as "industrialists", the economic situation is developing in the opposite direction: there is a considerable reduction of the volume of output in industry, the price index of producers of industrial output increased by more than 15%, the deficit of trade balance increased by 2.2 times, the growth of medium and big enterprises almost stopped, whereas the growth of small enterprises and individual entrepreneurs is insignificant.

The growth of consumer prices, preservation of general wages arrears, and the grave crime rate disturbs the population. Emigration keeps growing: 25,000 Kyrgyzstanis left the country in 2005 and 26,500 in 2006. The number of HIV-infected is growing at a catastrophic pace - compared to 2005, in 2006 it increased almost by 50%. Over 60% of all crimes are serious crimes and felonies, whereas robberies, economic crimes and drug trafficking are on the rise.

It should be acknowledged that such a situation has been developing for years and the main reason for this is the vicious system of a corrupt government which has turned into an instrument for plundering the country's wealth. Not only has the state, an excessive bureaucratic machine, become an insatiable monster, devouring the country - but it has also turned into an obstacle to development.

The share of state expenses in the country's GDP remains high at the level of 27-28%. In 2006 34.3% of the national budget was allocated for maintenance of the state machine. Thus, the Kyrgyz bureaucracy is not only a heavy burden on the national budget but also the main drain on the people's wealth and their incomes.

Influential bureaucrats who control the main financial expenditures of the country, not the commercial and financial bourgeoisie, are referred to as "the new Kyrgyz." The underlying problem is in the absence of a separation between business and power. Business has administrative resources, whereas power is money motivated. Thus, the nomenclature devours Kyrgyzstan.

The rule of law is non-existent in the country, inviolability of private property is virtually absent, and many sectors still receive support from the state.

With such conditions the people naturally expected the new administration to eliminate the vicious system and begin the policy of creating a system of government open to the public, free from corruption, effective, and generating the growth of the population's incomes. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of the population sincerely believed the promises of the leaders of the new administration and at the beginning provided them with strong support. However, the final events of 2006, as verified by sociological surveys, did not justify the expectations of most of those people. The administration and opposition failed to find ways for constructive cooperation and confrontation defined their relations. In response to the demands of the people for changing the system of government, the political leadership responded with a miserable farce of power redistribution by adopting two constitutions in two months.

Negative tendencies in the political system continued in 2007. The parliament helped ruin the tandem, and Kulov founded and headed United Front "For Decent Future of Kyrgyzstan", a new social and political movement, which openly stated the need for early presidential elections. Thus, for the first time after July 10, 2005 presidential elections, Bakiev's legitimacy as President is being openly questioned. Moreover, it is being questioned by one of the main participants of the presidential campaign. To this very day Bakiev's strength was that he was popularly elected, and Kulov's attempt to indirectly recall his share of votes makes Bakiev's authority unsustainable, creating a new political situation.

The start of a sharp polarization of political interests and a deepening feud within political powers are the defining features of the new political situation. De jure Bakiev is a popularly elected president, and even his principled opponents to this very day acknowledge his right for a constitutional term of office. Beknazarov and Co. questioned the President's ability to meet the best expectations of the people, but even they have never openly crossed the line.

After the statement of the United Front, de facto supporters of Kulov and part of the opposition do not recognize Bakiev's authority. Some political forces are already calling for a referendum to confirm the President's legitimacy. Structurally a similar situation emerged after the infamous Aksy events when de jure Aksy was subject to Akaev's authority, but his authority right up to the events of March 2005 was not recognized by residents of Aksy. Later non-recognition of the central authority spread to a number of regions. At present this process of division of the country along political estates may follow a dangerous new course. The administration itself created such force, and in order to tame or pacify it, authorities will have to resort to significant forces and resources.

At the beginning of 2007 a new Cabinet emerged from the ruins of the tandem. However, the people are not in a hurry to call it reformist or innovative. The Cabinet, toeing absolutely the President's line, has made two notable steps - they turned down the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and moved to a two-level budget. Both steps depending on the quality of policy may either strengthen the administration or create new unsolvable problems for it.

Thus, 2007 promises to be a landmark year. There are so many problems and contradictions and not enough ways to solve them properly. There are so many processes and tendencies that have been unfolding for years and so little preparation to transform them into positive channels. It should be acknowledged that the mass of political creative work done by the people, having gone through the process of the 2005 revolution, did not continue.

The victorious part of the political elite divided up the

power, stopped the revolution but so far has been unable to direct the unrealized energy of the people into the proper course. The tragedy of this part of elite is that it does not understand the similarity of the notion of "revolution" to the notion of "justice."

The defeated politicians, speaking of fundamental transformation of the political situation, does not rule out the possibility of taking advantage of the discontent of a significant part of the population and seizing power. The tension that emerged between power groups should be reduced, but the question is how. How can the increasing inter-regional antagonism be overcome?

In the future events will undoubtedly unfold along the course of objective historical and political processes, taking into account the realities. Two dangerous precedents were set in 2005: seizure of power by using force and official legalization of the dangerous "north-south" division through the creation of the tandem. Interference of criminals, irresponsibility and corruptibility of the top leadership brought about the situation of March 2005 when power was seized through violence.

The events of November 2006 demonstrated that the line between political pressure on the authorities and the temptation to seize it by using force is very thin. Given mass protests it was very difficult to withstand such a temptation. Moreover, the politically active part of the population of Kyrgyzstan saw first hand that the successful are never blamed.

In the struggle for power the Kyrgyz Communist language during Soviet times artificially strengthened regional division and local interests. A total domination of the Communist bureaucracy concealed its ideology about local interests and deeply penetrated social relations.

During independence the Kyrgyz government started to rely mainly on clan relations and that way it only strengthened inter-regional antagonisms. Such new factors as competition for scarce jobs, material resources, spare land in the north of the country and position in the state hierarchy also contributed to the growth of inter-regional tension.

Corrupt government and a poor economy aggravated the negative factor of "us vs. them". A forced union - a tandem, bound by a secret division of all important government positions, from the very beginning, contained in itself more destructive potential than constructive potential. Therefore the tandem could have played a positive role only if it existed in a constructive form till the next elections and in a worthy manner gave way to a new generation of the country's leaders.

The main mission of the tandem was overcoming the dangerous tendency of regional divisions and paving the way for balanced development of

Kyrgyz politics for the following period. However, the mission turned out to be unrealizable.

What should be expected in the forthcoming months? To begin with careful attention should be paid to the essence of the authorities and the opposition - the main players on the political scene.

For the authorities the clock is ticking, whereas the number of problems is drastically increasing. The politically active population is not going to be patient. The President recently made the second attempt after 2005 to increase the number of loyal supporters in power. According to experts, in the central government there are more people who imitate loyalty and have a wait-and-see attitude than are really faithful. Even so they are trying to expand and strengthen the social basis for Bakiev's administration as well as make positive growth in the economy tangible for the population.

So far the authorities are relying on the staunch southern electorate and those who have certain benefits from cooperation with the authorities. The administration could also receive the support of those strata of the population that are afraid of the radical actions of the opposition and think that a lean compromise is better than a fat suit.

The pressure on the part of the mass media on people's opinions, especially among rural populations, is continuing with the goal of expanding the support base. The positions of the authorities are very weak in the ideological sphere. Following the example of his predecessor, the President is limiting himself to usual protocol, not paying enough attention to the expectations of the population, and primarily to the expectations of an ideological leadership. More and more important questions are accumulating within the society regarding the fate of the country, the preservation and development of the Kyrgyz nation, its place and role in contemporary human civilization. Given the lack of proper reflection on the part of the population over these problems, there is an increasing suspicion about the unhealthy interests of the administration and doubts about its moral right to rule the country.

The main issue is about the willingness and ability of the President to break the existing corrupt system and become a real leader of progressive transformations. If there are not to be tangible results from the fight against corruption then even the settled opinions of part of the southern electorate could change sharply. Such changes have already occurred in many people's opinion in the South. It is impossible to continue the course of a socially oriented state not increasing the incomes of the population while being at the center of a corrupt system.

On the other hand, democracy is the main resource of Kyrgyzstan in the foreign policy sphere. Whatever our neighbors say about us, Kyrgyzstan is the most free and

democratic society in Central Asia with the strongest and most stable civil society. Kyrgyzstan is strongly tied to international and regional economic relations, and greatly dependent on foreign aid. Assistance to Kyrgyzstan in making transformations is of great importance to donor-states and international financial institutions, and two ideas are of critical importance in this regard - fighting corruption, and development of democracy.

The opposition in its present state could be divided nominally into three camps.

1. Radical opposition. It includes the United Front and radical part of the Movement "For Reforms!" They concluded that "the acting head of the state is unable to act as a guarantor of the constitutional reform, has discredited himself by the previous actions on disruption of the constitutional reform as well as practically lost his legitimacy as a result of repudiation of commitments signed by him, including commitments within the framework of the tandem," and raised the issue of early presidential elections. The radical opposition has one ideology - finish with family rule in the country. Many people are ready to support the essence of the political claims of the United Front towards the authorities, but the proposed solution of crisis puts them on their guard. The disenchanted part of the electorate will undoubtedly support the actions of the United Front and everything will depend on the tactics of political struggle. If the leaders of the opposition manage to attract the main body of civil society, make persuasive steps regarding the southern electorate and, foremost, offer a clear and attractive program for the country for the coming years, then they may become a dominant force in Kyrgyzstan within a short time.

Kulov plays an important role in this. People keep accusing him of inconsistency and indecision, and even in betraying his genuine supporters when he was Prime Minister. The issue is about whether he will position himself as an ambitious Kyrgyz 'Napoleon' or a political 'system designer' who will fight corruption and clear the way for the new generation.

The second obstacle in the way of the United Front is regionalism. No matter how aggravated regional sentiments, no matter how objective are arguments for justification of division, still the majority of the Kyrgyz people support national unity. Therefore any attempts to play on regionalism will in the end discredit any politician. Based on a unique political experience accumulated for the past 16 years, the capacious Kyrgyz society is able to separate the husk of words from the kernel of truth. Significantly powerful politicians who profess ideologies of regionalism and local interests could be found on the extreme right of the authorities and opposition. It is they who played on regional passions of the conservative part of the electorate during the events of November-December in 2006. Therefore collision of these forces is

inevitable. Dissemination of their ideology of regionalism and revanchism among the masses is dangerous.

2. Moderate opposition. These include the socialists, nationalists, liberals, and even communists. That is, those who add stability of the political system and do not allow breaking down the foundations of the state. Except communists who wish return to the Soviet order, others failed to clearly propose their models for the development of Kyrgyzstan. But socialists keep maintaining their principles and calling for a socially oriented economy, nationalists for a distinct development plan, and liberals for more freedom and limitation of state interference into public affairs. A large number of non-governmental organizations are also part of this circle. Notwithstanding their differences, they are united by their aspiration for positive changes, since according to them, the new administration failed to become a force for progress and hinders the country's development. However, the moderate opposition wants changes through constitutional democratic means - on the basis of elections. The radical part of the opposition does not appeal to them by its excessive ambitiousness, inconsistency, and lack of a clear program of action. The moderate opposition may turn into a powerful political force if they manage to create a solid coalition aimed at a concentrated informing of the electorate, and by putting pressure on the authorities to make reforms.

If the authorities fail to appreciate their role in society, and establish constructive relations with it, then many moderate opposition figures will go for a favorable alliance with the radical opposition and question the need for such executive power. As demonstrated by history, one must deal with such things skillfully and not harbor grudges.

3. Favorites-situationists. This is a very common phenomenon in post-Soviet states where positions of the opposition are not regulated legally, politically, nor with relation to political culture. Given the hostile attitude towards dissidence, many cannot openly state their views and have to take such a position. Being in power they undermine it from within.

The people of Kyrgyzstan witnessed how officials and politicians discussed the HIPC Initiative and what their choice was. This is a particular case since it was about a principled and important issue therefore a personal choice has to be principled as well. As was expected the overwhelming majority of officials waited till the master of the "White House" made his choice. The country was again persuaded that the Kyrgyz bureaucratic elite continues to serve individuals and their own selfish ends rather than the people. There were noteworthy exceptions and this gives hope that the authorities may have the people's interests at heart. The whips within the government agencies depend on the position these opposition figures take.

ISSUES OF NATIONAL STATEHOOD IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Whether the states of Central Asia have succeeded in becoming fully-fledged or not is a debatable question, with ambiguous answers. Whether they will succeed is also a valid question.

The search for historical and philosophical roots and bases for the formation of modern platforms of state organization in Central Asia is not particularly successful from the point of view that there is a need to look towards some other history, to appropriate other's ideas of state organization - this is always as unstable as a sandcastle. Or the wandering reference point comes to rest upon myths and legends, which is also generally unreliable, since unconfirmed by real historical facts. And since the textual element of historical background is "far from being perfect" then attempts at inventing evidences of "who is more ancient and stronger" demonstrate serious deliberate distortions, which emerge in the process of the research activities of modern Central Asian historiographers.

It is quite obvious that the work on the restoration of the history of the region's people should continue, but it would be preferable to carry it out without political

straining and fantasizing. There are no doubts that the ancestry of the present people of Central Asia, in various kaleidoscopic ethno-formats, participated in the creation of different states, including great empires. First of all, this was a concerted effort and secondly, the historical memory of the modern people did not preserve the principles, parameters, and systems of state arrangement in the distant to more recent past. For instance, the history of the Kokand Khanate (from reasonably recent history) - is a common history of Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Kypchaks and other people of the region. All of these ethnicities, in one way or another, participated in the formation, development, and downfall of that state. However, the main meanings of the "Kokand state organization" were not only lost (a system of historical and communicative, social and cultural ties between the generations is destroyed), but also not recognized by the descendants of those who lived in that khanate (the exception in this sense are only apologists of FANO (those who want to unite Fergana, Andijan, Namangan, and Osh into one state), but in the mosaic ideology of this so-called movement, religious motives nevertheless are stronger than statism)).