



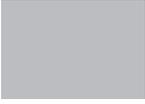
BISHKEK 2014

THE JUNE 2010 'EVENTS' FOUR YEARS ON: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

By Franco Galdini
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'Everything needs to change, so everything can stay the same.'
(The Leopard, Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, 1958)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the night of June 10, 2010, a brawl at 24 Hours casino in Kyrgyzstan's southern city of Osh morphed into a 4-day all-out confrontation between the country's Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in the municipalities of Osh, Jalal-Abad and their surrounding provinces.¹ The immediate result: hundreds of people killed and thousands injured;² thousands of commercial assets and homes burnt to the ground; and approximately 400,000 people internally displaced or made refugees in neighbouring Uzbekistan (ICG 2010). Several independent observers noted that, despite both communities incurring massive material and human losses, Uzbeks bore the brunt of the violence during what came to be known as the June 'events' (ICG 2010; HRW 2010; KIC 2011; AI 2012).³

Using the conflict triangle, this paper analyses the structural contradictions at the root of the events that shook Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 2010, while connecting them to the main actors involved in the violence and their behaviour.⁴ It is argued that, four years on, the driving causes behind the violence remain unaddressed. If anything, the actions of the country's leadership and political elites risk reinforcing destructive trends that may lead to renewed conflict. More ominously, the enduring climate of impunity increases the likelihood that some may re-deploy the same tactics (namely, violence) as in June 2010 for political gain at future critical junctures for the country (for instance during the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections, due to take place in 2015 and 2017, respectively).

In order to prevent the further creep of lawlessness and to reduce the possibility of future violence, it is imperative to re-examine the conflict in the south as the expression of deeper contradictions within the country's polity. In this sense, the

constant struggle over power and resources between the northern elites, concentrated in the capital Bishkek, and the southern elites, largely emanating from the city of Osh, is of major importance. Also notable is widespread poverty in the south, especially acute in the densely populated countryside, and the perception of wealth inequality between communities, particularly in Osh city, which lends itself to easy political manipulation. Another factor catalysing conflict and reducing potential to abate it is the Uzbek community's under-representation in the state administrative and security apparatus, especially relevant in the south. Finally, the presence of pervasive corruption at all levels of the state political and security structures, wherein a symbiotic relationship with the country's criminal underworld undermines faith in institutions, is to be understood as underpinning tension in Kyrgyzstan. All of these ingredients severely curtail institutional capacity to counter violence and, after it has occurred, hamper efforts to hold those responsible accountable for their crimes.

In order to address the root causes of the June 2010 events, the leadership and the political elites in Kyrgyzstan, as well as the international community, need to move beyond narrow 'ethnic' lenses and invest in the country's development,⁵ while promoting corruption-free institutions that represent all the peoples of Kyrgyzstan and endorse inclusive policies in consultation with civil society.⁶ Crucially, bringing those responsible for the violence to justice holds the potential to radically shift political calculations among those who stand to gain from unrest, steering the country away from the possibility of renewed fighting. Failure to do so bodes ill not only for Kyrgyzstan's future, but also threatens to further weaken the state's reach in the Fergana Valley, leaving it powerless to deal with criminal and extremist elements who would thrive in such a volatile environment.

TABLE 1. The conflict triangle applied to the June 2010 events: narrative

A. ACTORS

1. northern Kyrgyz elites
2. southern Kyrgyz elites
3. Uzbek business elites and religious leaders
4. Kyrgyz community in the south (cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad, Osh countryside, Jalal-Abad province): youth, workers, pastoralists
5. Uzbek community (mahallas in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad,
6. Kyrgyzstan's security apparatus (police, army)
7. organised crime (e.g. narco-traffickers)
8. religious groups (IMU, HT)

B. BEHAVIOURS / CONFLICT DYNAMICS

Before June 2010 events

1. intra-Kyrgyz elite competition between north and south
 - Bakiyev's ouster in the April 2010 revolution
 - establishment of the Interim Government (IG), supported by northern Kyrgyz elites and Uzbek elites, opposed by southern Kyrgyz elites (fluid situation, weakness at the centre)
2. May 2010 clashes in Jalal-Abad province: Uzbeks (led by Batyrov) vs. Bakiyev's loyalists → Bakiyev's three family homes burnt to the ground in his native village of Teyit
3. southern Kyrgyz elites whip up nationalist propaganda depicting Uzbeks as a disloyal minority ('diaspora')

During June 2010 events

1. night, June 10-11: first clashes
2. June 11-14: Kyrgyz target Uzbek homes and businesses, with many descending on the city of Osh from the countryside. Role of southern Kyrgyz elite & criminal elements in the violence
3. IG (Bishkek/north/centre) cannot control elements within the police and the army, who give cover to the Kyrgyz crowd and allegedly participate in the clashes in some cases

After June 2010 events

1. continuing state violence vs. Uzbek community after June 14 (ex. police sweep in Nariman)
2. singling out of the Uzbek community for responsibility for the June 2010 events:

- beatings, ill-treatment & torture in prison; legal counsellors harassed, threatened & attacked; lengthy sentences meted out
- 3. persistent marginalisation of the Uzbeks ('diaspora'), along with targeting of their businesses, media, schools
- 4. widespread impunity for perpetrators of violence, especially among the political elite, the police and the army

C. CONTRADICTIONS / STRUCTURES

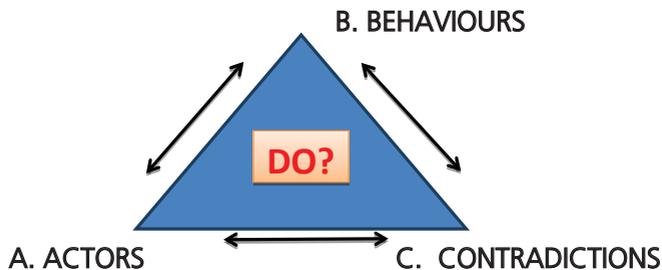
- 1. centre (Bishkek/north + attempts to create a rigid vertical of power) vs. periphery (Osh/south)
- 2. poverty and perception of inequality between communities within Osh city [business class (Uzbeks) vs. working class (Kyrgyz)] & between city and countryside [sedentary/traders (Uzbeks) vs. nomadic/pastoralists (Kyrgyz)]
- 3. under-representation of the Uzbek community in the state's administrative and security apparatus, including at the local level
- 4. pervasive corruption: low institutional capacity to respond to violence ; lack of an independent judiciary; blurred lines between the political/security structures and the criminal underworld (e.g. narco-traffickers)

D. DO?

Recommendations

Note. The division between northern and southern Kyrgyz elite is analytically valuable, yet it is not meant to be all-encompassing. For instance, the Interim Government (IG) did include members of the southern elite, as much as Bakiyev's regime comprised northerners.

The conflict triangle applied to the June 2010 events: visual



THE LEAD UP TO THE JUNE 2010 EVENTS

In April 2010, Kyrgyzstan was engulfed by political turmoil for the second time in five years. In 2005, President Askar Akayev had been ousted in what was 'optimistically mis-named' the Tulip Revolution (Shishkin 2013). On April 7, 2010 President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's was ejected by street protests of an even more violent nature, as unrest boiled over against a background of recurrent power cuts and soaring energy prices. In reality, discontent had been brewing for quite some time as cronyism and corruption entrenched under Bakiyev's watch, along with the thorough blurring of divisions between the state and organised crime.

Since the December 2007 parliamentary elections, the northern Kyrgyz elite had been fuming at 'Bakiyev's continued habit of awarding the majority of key posts (e.g., ministries of defence, finance, internal affairs, emergency situations, and state security; deputy prime minister; prosecutor general) to southerners' (Bond & Koch 2010, 540). Thus, in April 2010, they displayed no hesitation at the opportunity to remove a former political ally now turned powerful foe.⁷ The Interim Government (IG) that was entrusted with drafting a new constitution for the country received the immediate blessing of the Kremlin, whose relationship with Bakiyev had steadily deteriorated since his 2009 recanting on an agreement to expel US forces from Manas airbase in exchange for a credit line worth \$2 billion from Russia (Synovitz 2009).⁸

Following his ouster, Bakiyev sought refuge in his home village of Teyit, an hour's drive from the city of Jalal-Abad, in the country's south. Bakiyev's role in the events that followed has never been verified (Radnitz 2010, 2), but it has been documented (KIC 2011, 14) that his supporters – including members of his clan – occupied government buildings in the southern cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad in protest

at his removal. While the stand-off in Osh in April was resolved without major incidents, the situation in Jalal-Abad escalated in mid-May 2010. One observer describes:

the authorities in Bishkek appealed to an Uzbek businessman and [the] rector [and founder of the People's Friendship University (PFU)], Kadyrjon Batyrov, to retake [a provincial government building in Jalal-Abad] with armed volunteers. 'The interim government involved some Uzbeks in their politics battles, which was not a good idea. They involved them when they took control of the administration building. They were from [the Rodina] party led by Batyrov. On May 14, they gave people weapons so they could take back the administration building' (Pannier 2010).⁹

The episode further escalated the same day when three family houses that belonged to the Bakiyevs were torched in Teyit village. Batyrov and other Uzbek witnesses confirmed to the Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (2010, 14-15) that the properties were already on fire once they arrived on the spot, and that they were accompanied by Kyrgyz supporters of the IG. However, rumours began to spread fast that an Uzbek-only crowd had burnt Kyrgyz homes to the ground at Batyrov's direction.

On May 15, 2010, Batyrov gave a speech from the People's Friendship University's portico where he invited Uzbeks to be more active participants in the country's political life. His words reflected both the IG's invitation to the Uzbek community to articulate demands following the April revolution,¹⁰ as well as the community's frustration at its marginalisation in the state's political, administrative and security apparatus, along with being the prime target of the rapacious practices of Bakiyev's cronies (KIC 2010, 22 & 15).¹¹ However, the speech – widely televised on Uzbek-language stations¹² – resuscitated Kyrgyz perceptions of Uzbek irredentism, whereby Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan would be yearning for reunification with Uzbekistan, or for autonomy – 'a word that was never pronounced by Batyrov' (KIC 2010, 22).¹³ Clashes ensued between an enraged 2,000-strong Kyrgyz crowd and Batyrov's supporters at the

PFU, resulting in 2 people killed and 70 injured (NCI 2011). An arrest warrant for Batyrov was issued shortly thereafter, but by then he had left the country into exile.

As the northern Kyrgyz elites ousted Bakiyev, a southerner, an intra-Kyrgyz-elite struggle for power assumed inter-communal undertones in the weeks following the April 2010 revolution. Since the northern elites could not 'rely fully on the police or army' in the south (Radnitz 2010, 2), they looked to the Uzbek elites, and their broader community, as allies in an attempt to re-establish control over the whole country. As a former Osh-based legal advisor to the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) put it, 'without the Uzbeks, there is no way that the IG could have expelled the Bakiyevs from Jalal-Abad.'¹⁴ From their side, the Uzbeks viewed the new reality as a chance to overcome years of marginalisation and persecution at the hands of the Bakiyev regime and, on the invitation of the IG, they formulated concrete political demands (KIC 2011, 22) to improve their position in the country.

Powerful sections of the southern Kyrgyz elites tried to regain the upper hand by rallying the Kyrgyz populace behind nationalist propaganda depicting Uzbeks as a disloyal minority, or even as a foreign 'diaspora' element in Kyrgyzstan. Stereotypes of Uzbeks owning a disproportionate share of the wealth in the south at the expense of the Kyrgyz were revived to drive a wedge between the northern elites and their southern Uzbek backers, in order to stymie the effects of the April revolution, by which southerners felt marginalised (Nichol 2010, 1).



THE JUNE 2010 EVENTS

Despite declaring a state of emergency between May 19 and June 1 in the city of Jalal-Abad and the Suzak district

of Jalal-Abad province due to the escalating violence, the IG 'failed to recognise or underestimated' the worsening relations between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in the south (KIC 2011, 77).¹⁵ Immediately after reports of unrest in Osh city started emerging, the IG again proclaimed a state of emergency at a special 2 a.m. session on June 11, but was soon overtaken by events.

Drawing from a multitude of sources, FH et al. (2012, 34-64) chronicle the chaotic developments on the night between June 10 and 11, including 'the beginning of unorganized street gatherings among the Uzbek population in different parts of the city' and the simultaneous 'mobilization of Kyrgyz youth in [Osh] city and in neighbouring areas' (ibid. 48). In this acutely polarised context, rumours started circulating fast and contributed to the spiralling of uncontrollable violence, none more so than reports of the murder and mass rape of Kyrgyz girls by Uzbek men at an Osh State University dormitory. This myth prompted a crowd of young Kyrgyz men from villages and towns nearby, as well as from 'far-off mountain regions,' to descend on Osh to exact revenge (ibid. 59; Møllerson 2011, 422). A pattern of attacks by angry Kyrgyz throngs on homes and businesses in Uzbek mahallas,¹⁶ or neighbourhoods, was set in motion. In the following hours, clashes quickly spread to Osh and Jalal-Abad provinces.

While 'the Uzbek forces, outnumbered and outgunned, quickly erected crude barricades to prevent the Kyrgyz from entering their neighbourhoods' and villages, 'the local police and security organs were either incompetent or complacent in the violence, with significant evidence mounting for the latter' (Hanks 2011, 180-1). Allegations regarding elements from the police and the army – some in camouflage gear – clearing the way for Kyrgyz mobs to enter mahallas; beating and killing Uzbeks; storming neighbourhoods on armed personnel carriers (APCs) with bands of gunmen in tow, or with snipers on rooftops firing on residents, were

rife in the immediate aftermath of the events.¹⁷ Likewise, the Kyrgyz crowds were able to seize weapons and military equipment, including armoured vehicles, from border guard posts, military bases and 'government forces, which put up only limited resistance' (HRW 2010, 41).¹⁸

The IG had effectively lost control of the country's south (Doorov & Recknagel, 2010). Violence began to subside on June 14, when a semblance of order was restored, although incidents continued in the next few days, notably looting.

Structural poverty, including unemployment and under-employment as well as lack of education, offered the perfect breeding ground for nationalist propaganda that channelled economic grievances into anti-Uzbek sentiments. Once the Uzbek community had been determined as the culprit behind intra-Kyrgyz divisions following the April revolution, as well as a foreign element with control over a disproportionate share of resources in the country, the stage was set for violence. Uzbek under-representation within the security apparatus played a key part at this point, as did the pervasive corruption beleaguering all institutions in Kyrgyzstan, whose ensuing lack of professionalism severely impaired the state's capacity to effectively respond to the violence. As a result, whether or not the police and the army took sides in the conflict, they certainly failed to protect Uzbek lives and properties.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE JUNE 2010 EVENTS

For the Uzbek community, however, violence did not cease on June 14. In the aftermath of the clashes, police carried out sweep operations in several Uzbek villages and neighbourhoods, arbitrarily arresting and beating members of the community, as well as looting their properties. In one notorious instance, in the village of Nariman, at least two died of

injuries sustained during one search operation on June 21 (HRW 2010, 50-60), while about 45 required treatment in hospital (KIC 2011, 39).

Moreover, a disproportionate percentage of the people put on trial in relation to the June violence were Uzbeks. In its report, the KIC (2011, 39) reveals that Uzbeks were 'more than 30 times more often accused of murder than the Kyrgyz.'

Dozens of defendants have testified under oath in trials related to the June events that they were beaten, tortured, ill-treated, or 'pressured.' Although a prosecutor was always present during the hearings, prosecutorial authorities did not take any action to verify these allegations (HRW 2011, 32).

Instead, confessions extracted under duress were used as proof of culpability in court, oftentimes resulting in lengthy prison sentences. Lawyers defending Uzbek clients have been harassed, 'threatened and physically attacked, including in the courtroom' (AI 2012, 6).¹⁹

Traditionally city-dwellers and merchants, many Uzbeks lost their businesses in June 2010, while others have been forced out of their jobs in civil administration, education and the police in the aftermath of the violence (CERD 2013, 4; ICG 2012, ii & 14). 'Raiding', the forced sale of a profitable business for a token sum (KIC 2011, 22) – a trademark of Bakiyev's rule – continues unabated, with Uzbeks being the prime victims of such practice in the south (Sindelar 2011). Uzbek-language TV stations and newspapers have either been shut down or turned into Kyrgyz-language media (ICG 2012, i & 14; Nurmatov 2014), while 'many schools in Osh and Jalal-Abad have changed the language of education from minority languages into Kyrgyz, and some of them no longer benefit from State funding enabling them to ensure classes in minority languages' (CERD 2013, 5).²⁰

Finally, a climate of impunity is taking root in the country, given the

lack of full and effective investigations into the numerous allegations that members of the law enforcement bodies committed torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and excessive use of force during and following the inter-ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 (CAT 2013, 4).

Effectively, the full apparatus of the state has been brought to bear on the Uzbek community, which remains severely under-represented at all institutional levels, including in the south, where Uzbeks represent a plurality in some districts. As a result, the community's sense of marginalisation, if not outright exclusion, is only heightened. Pervasive corruption permeates a judiciary that lacks independence (CAT 2013, 6), thus reinforcing the culture of impunity and the trends associated with it – most negatively, the incentive to use violence if it serves the narrow interests of some within the elites, as perpetrators won't be held accountable.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

a. Money-politics

In the words of a senior government leader, 'June was retaliation for April' (ICG 2012, 5). In essence, if it is practically impossible to demonstrate premeditation, it is undeniable that the logistical operation put in place once the violence escalated indicates at least some degree of orchestration to sustain it. A well-informed source, speaking on condition of anonymity, describes how

several very discreet neighbourhoods, some 2,000 compounds – such as Cheremushki neighbourhood in Osh old town and houses along the Pamir road, along with a large market – were destroyed, looted and burnt to the ground in Osh and Jalal-Abad. All that was left were the empty walls. This kind of logistics – mobile kitchens to feed the mob; teams of people to drive dwellers out; looters to load the booty onto trucks; and then teams

of people burning houses using fireworks and other highly flammable materials – is not just spontaneous violence. This is well managed and pretty systematic.²¹

Circumstantial evidence points to some political figures contributing to the escalation. Ulugbek Babakulov, a veteran investigative journalist, reports having

personally spoken to eye witnesses in Barpi, where Tashiev is from, including one of my relatives who lives there. They told me that during the June 2010 events, Tashiev's associates were going door to door and dragging young people out of their house. 'Let's go and beat up Uzbeks,' they'd say. If the youth refused, they'd threatened to burn down their house there and then.²²

Kamchibek Tashiev's party, Ata-Jurt ('Fatherland'), a non-entity since its foundation in 2004 until then, went on to win the parliamentary elections held on 10 October 2010 with 8,8% of the national vote – and then form a coalition government with the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) and Respublika Party. Tashiev himself came third in the presidential elections the following year, gathering a handsome 14,3% of the vote (Lenta.ru undated).

Likewise, the name of the now-former Mayor of Osh inevitably surfaces in conversations on the violence in the south. 'People started talking about Melis Myrzakmatov only after the June 2010 events, as he gained considerable authority especially among the nationalists,' says Aziza Abdirasulova, the Director of Kylum Shamy, a human rights NGO.²³ Allegations concerning his 'involvement in both the mobilization of rural Kyrgyz and the distribution of weapons during the June events' have never been investigated (KIC 2011, 81). However, it is natural to wonder how someone under whose watch the June 2010 violence took place could maintain his post as Osh Mayor for three more years after that, as well as allegedly continue amassing a fabulous wealth.²⁴ Several observers point out that, far from being out of the Kyrgyz political game, Myrzakmatov has only temporarily retired from politics and is preparing the ground for his comeback in 2015, this time to the national stage.²⁵

b. Narco-politics

In 2013, then Minister of Interior Shamil Atakhanov reiterated the commonly-held conviction that ‘criminality played a leading role in inciting the Osh events. It was a redistribution of property in which both politicians and – in primis – criminal authorities were involved’ (Kapytin 2013).

While the role of organised crime, particularly narco-traffickers, in the violence has been widely disclosed (e.g. NCI 2011), opinions differ as to the degree of their participation and, more importantly, to the balance of power between criminality and politics in the country. Leaning towards the former, some have gone so far as to call the June 2010 events ‘Central Asia’s drugs war’ (Ibbotson & Lovell-Hoare 2013), yet the local and regional media have so often reported on the links between Kyrgyzstan’s officials – including in the army and the police – and organised crime that one wonders about the value of such debates (Levin 2011; Babakulov 2013).²⁶

Whatever the case may be, it seems safe to assume that

the consolidation of the Uzbek population and the fact that it was turning into an active political force in the south of Kyrgyzstan was considered a threat to the interests of the various clan-based and criminal groups in the region, who did not want to see a possible new competitor on the political stage, acting along the lines of the Interim Government (FH et al. 2012, 27).

In the grey zone where criminality and politics meet in Kyrgyzstan, the aims of organised crime came to overlap with those of the southern Kyrgyz elites, namely ‘to keep the formal loyalty of the central government in Bishkek’ (ibid.) and re-establish their influence on the national stage.

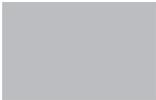
c. Society

Finally, the National Commission of Inquiry (2011) details an April agreement between the Bakiyevs and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) to destabilise Kyrgyzstan, while

including in its report a recommendation about strengthening research and investigation by state institutions on Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) and other radical Islamist groups. While the former claim appears somewhat far-fetched, it is unquestionable that as a result of the violence the Uzbeks have tended to retreat within the secure confines of their own neighbourhoods. Where once stood groups of houses with only few groceries, more shops and services have been developing – as if to achieve self-sufficiency within the community.²⁷

One sign of this turn inwards is the growth of interest in more strictly observant, and sometimes radical, Islam. This is a significant change in a community that, while more observant than many other ethnic groups, had until recently been relatively liberal and relaxed in its religion. In all likelihood, the underground organisation that has benefited most from June 2010 is Hizb ut-Tahrir (ICG 2012, 12).

Although ICG (ibid.) correctly claims that ‘most are turning to stricter Islam, not violent jihadism,’ recent reports suggest that if the marginalisation and targeting of the Uzbek community continue, it could lead to a future backlash (Fake Spaniard 2013; Usmon 2013). Coupled with the power of organised crime, this makes for a bleak picture indeed in terms of the state’s future capacity to exert authority over its territory, especially in the Fergana Valley.



STRUCTURAL CONTRADICTIONS

As highlighted in the narrative, the structural contradictions that have been plaguing Kyrgyzstan since independence are at the core of the June 2010 events. Among them features the persistent competition over power and resources between the northern Kyrgyz elites in the capital Bishkek and the southern Kyrgyz elites, especially in the city of Osh. Bishkek’s attempt to enforce a rigidly vertical structure of governance is predicated on the same principle for which it is opposed in the periphery (Osh), namely as a way of securing a bigger share of the na-

tional budget.²⁸

In the weeks following the April 2010 revolution, the Uzbek community found itself in the middle of this power struggle, which quickly morphed into inter-communal violence as elements within the southern Kyrgyz elites mobilised popular sentiment against the 'Uzbek threat' in order to stage a return to national politics as major players. The specific examples mentioned above should not be taken in isolation, as they epitomise a political system whose agents are self-serving, unresponsive to the people's needs and, crucially, ready to sacrifice social peace and cohesion to achieve narrow personal interests. In this light, the possibility of a future repeat of violence along the same pattern cannot be excluded.²⁹

Another structural problem is the widespread poverty in the south, particularly in the countryside, which afforded nationalist politicians with 'shock troops' in the form of uneducated and un-employed or under-employed Kyrgyz, especially youth from rural areas.³⁰ In turn, the perceived wealth inequality between communities in the cities and between cities and countryside provided fertile ground for nationalist propaganda that exploited economic grievances to stir up anti-Uzbek feelings, which eventually exploded into confrontation. The city of Osh, where Uzbeks and Kyrgyz live side by side, turned into a catalyst for violence that quickly spread to other locations in the provinces.

It should be noted that, while there is some truth in the claim that Uzbeks occupied an important position in business and trade in the south, by no means did they have a monopoly on these areas of economic activity. Rather, trade was possibly one of the few fields left where Uzbeks could earn a living. In the stark words of one victim of the June events:

Look at what I have now – my shop is burned. I have a debt to pay. Who will do that, from what money? What are we going to do now? We have no jobs in the government, we have no jobs in the police, the only thing we had was our trade, and now they took even that from us.³¹

Likewise, poverty in Kyrgyzstan's south is blind to communal differences, especially in rural areas where Uzbek and Kyrgyz often share the same abject living conditions.³²

A third structural issue is the Uzbek community's under-representation at all levels of the state administrative and security apparatus, which reinforces the sense of alienation and fuels resentment, especially among the youth (FH et al. 2012, 19). It is not uncommon for the Uzbek community to be referred to as diaspora (NCI 2011; KIC 2011, 20; ICG 2012, i), seemingly indicating their non-belonging in Kyrgyzstan. This staffing habit within the security apparatus played a key role during the June events in limiting the state's ability to deal with the conflict. Even if they did not openly side with the Kyrgyz against the Uzbeks, the police and the army appeared to condone the former's violence against the latter.

And last but not least is the pervasive corruption that further cripples institutional capacity to respond to conflict, erodes the rule of law, undermines access to justice, and fuses political and security structures with the criminal underworld.³³ For instance, becoming a policeman or a police officer in Kyrgyzstan does not necessarily imply passing a merit-based selection and training process. In a country where many posts are alleged to be available for purchase, lack of professionalism is replicated at all levels of government, severely curtailing state responsiveness to citizens' demands.³⁴

Ominously, the criminal underworld, especially narco-money, has infiltrated Kyrgyzstan's political and security structures to such an extent that 'the boundaries between underworld and upperworld' have been severely blurred (Bond & Koch 2010, 549).³⁵ Overlapping interests between parts of the elite and the criminal world in the summer 2010 represent only one episode within the continuum of structural corruption gnawing at the foundations of Kyrgyzstan's institutions.

Such overall institutional failure had devastating consequences in June 2010, particularly for the Uzbek community. The apparently planned pattern of the violence unleashed upon Uzbeks in the city of Osh led the KIC to conclude that 'there is a consistent and reliable body of material which, if proven beyond reasonable doubt, would show that the attack against the Uzbek mahallas in Osh during the June events satisfy all three physical elements of crimes against humanity' (2011, 50-1).

THE JUNE 2010 EVENTS FOUR YEARS ON: PAST BUT PRESENT

The election on January 15, 2014, of Aitmamat Kadyrbaev as the new Mayor of Osh city, at the epicentre of the June 2010 conflagration, appears to be just another power-play between Kyrgyzstan's elites rather than a real attempt to reach out to the Uzbek community (Sabyrbekov 2014). The central government in Bishkek had been repeatedly trying to replace Myrzakmatov, a former Bakiyev-loyalist turned Kyrgyz-ultra-nationalist, who had disregarded directives from the capital ever since Bakiyev's ouster in April 2010. 'The atmosphere in the city is such that any more or less good relationship with the Uzbeks would mean political defeat for the new Mayor,' an observer starkly remarked.³⁶

Policy-wise, recent proposals suggest that the country's leadership, and elites, continue going about business as usual in disregard of the country's dire need for justice and reconciliation. Bishkek's latest bid to pass legislation trying to enforce a rigid power vertical is a case in point, as it heightens competition with the periphery, while disempowering local structures that could be mobilised to diffuse conflict whenever it arises (DPI 2013).

In the words of one expert:

if institutions of Local Self-Governance have enough political and financial autonomy to formulate local policies, they are fully capable of dealing with questions of peace-making and opposing conflict. We have plenty of examples of this during the incidents in 2010, like in the city of Uzgen

and the surrounding villages, where a policy to diffuse conflict was put into place. In this example, the local administration worked with the local organisations, with elders, with teenagers and the youth and kept the situation under control at all times.³⁷

Naturally, the point here is not to advocate total decentralisation, but rather a proper division of labour between the organs of central and local government, in order to guarantee better service provision and, in the event of conflict, an efficient apparatus capable of tailoring action to local realities. But again, the reason for this latest centralisation attempt has nothing to do with ideology and all to do with corruption, as ‘the mass-pilfering of state money is not possible within a decentralised system of governance.’³⁸

As for recent draft laws privileging the Kyrgyz language and sidelining Russian – the region’s lingua franca and, crucially, ‘the language of inter-national communication’ in the country³⁹ – they send the wrong message to minorities as to their status in Kyrgyzstan, as well as being detrimental to the economy.⁴⁰ One such law was passed on February 25, 2013 (MJKR 2013). At the moment, another bill is being discussed that would further marginalise Russian and oblige public servants to learn the Kyrgyz language, proof of which would be obtained via passing a state language exam (MJKR undated).⁴¹

For his part, however, President Almazbek Atambaev seems keenly aware of the dangers posed by the wave of rampant nationalism in the country, especially in light of current events in Ukraine – ‘where Russian was stripped of its official status. Do not be nationalists. We mustn’t allow the development of the state language to lead to nationalism. The most important thing for Kyrgyzstan is the unity of the peoples’, he recently declared (Yalovkina 2014). In April 2013, the President signed into decree the ‘Concept on strengthening national unity and inter-ethnic relations in the Kyrgyz Republic,’ which was drafted as a result of long consultations between his cabinet and several key stakeholders, including civil society activists and independent journalists (PKR 2013).

The 'Concept' attempts to transcend narrow 'ethnic' explanations for the divisions plaguing the country, listing instead political, economic and demographic changes that have affected Kyrgyzstan in the last decades (ibid., 6 ff.). Moreover, it attempts a delicate balance between the teaching of the Kyrgyz language and the guarantee that all minority languages be protected, with the aim of creating a common civic identity for a new generation of 'trilingual' Kyrgyzstani citizens, who speak Kyrgyz and Russian 'along with one of the widespread languages of the world.' This generation will be 'multilingual, educated and open to innovations and contacts' (ibid., 15 & 18). Erica Marat, a visiting scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, explains how

a group of moderates within the President's administration and civil society is trying to propose more inclusive policies towards minorities – and has been quite successful in undoing some of the changes that the nationalists have tried to enforce. The President and the government had to take some initiatives to neutralise the more extreme versions of nationalism, so they supported nationalist-light policies, so to speak. For example, they are promoting the Kyrgyz language in a more inclusive way via providing adequate financial means for its teaching and creating a more conducive environment in schools for it to be learnt.⁴²

However, Dr Marat (2014) underlines how the 'Concept' – *inter alia* – 'avoids directly addressing the thorny issue of the rights of ethnic Uzbeks in the aftermath of the June 2010 violence.' Moreover, on September 13, 2013, the government announced that as of 2014 the university entrance examination would no longer be administered in the Uzbek language and could only be sat in Russian and Kyrgyz. The decision, lobbied for by nationalists since at least 2010, caused an uproar in the human rights community and is currently being challenged in the courts. Such policy may have long term effects on the employment prospects of a whole generation of Uzbek students. In the words of one human rights advocate, 'how can a student who studied 11 years in Uzbek take the national examination in Kyrgyz or Russian? What will the position of the government be if they don't pass the exam and thus can't get into universities and then get

decent jobs?’ (Toloev 2014).

In this light, as welcome as it may be, the call by Kyrgyzstan’s Grand Mufti Maksatbek Hajji Toktomushev on the fourth anniversary of the Osh events to focus on ‘Islamic teachings about brotherly relations between all Muslims, regardless of their nationality’ rings hollow (RFE/RL 2014). The ‘Concept’ contains innovative ideas that, if put into practice, could help in the long process of reconciliation Kyrgyzstan so badly needs. So far, however, the balance seems to be tipping in favour of nationalist elements, with the clear risk of alienating significant constituents in the country, especially the Uzbeks (PKR 2013, 9-10).

CONCLUSION: WHAT FUTURE?

This paper traces the structural contradictions at the root of the June 2010 events in South Kyrgyzstan, while connecting them to the main actors involved in the violence and their behaviour. To date, these contradictions remain unaddressed, perpetuating a dangerous status quo that may warrant the future use of similar tactics by some in order to achieve political gains. Crucially, the failure to bring those responsible for the violence to justice has alienated the population from the state. This is especially true for the Uzbeks, who have been the main target of police brutality and judiciary action after the June 2010 events. Impunity renders the prospects of reconciliation between the country’s Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities even more remote, while limited housing and monetary compensation schemes – undermined by allegations of large scale corruption – have achieved little in the way of redressing the material and human losses incurred by the victims (IDMC 2014).

In the reigning climate of rampant corruption, blurred lines between the legal and the criminal spheres, and chronic underrepresentation in the state’s institutions, the Uzbek community feels voiceless. Only two alternatives seem to present themselves: either life as second class citizens in their own country – with or without embracing stricter forms of Islam, or emigra-

tion.⁴³ This bodes ill for the future of Kyrgyzstan, whose society can ill afford a repetition of June 2010, and whose economy needs educated cadres and a workforce capable of meeting the huge development challenges the country faces.⁴⁴ Kyrgyzstan's elites may choose to continue ignoring the country's minority constituencies, but they do so at the peril of domestic harmony and stability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The challenges Kyrgyzstan faces at the moment are so extensive that at the very least broad-based intra-elite political cooperation seems an absolute necessity. In this light, all political parties in Kyrgyzstan should contribute to the debate over the structural social, political and economic reforms necessary to effect real change for all the country's peoples, with the inclusion of the country's vibrant civil society.

To the Government and the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan

1. reinforce structures of Local Self-Governance (LSG) at the administrative level, which will be responsible to devise and implement locally-tailored conflict prevention and resolution strategies, in coordination with, and benefitting from the expertise of, the central apparatus of the state;
2. invest in infrastructural development in the rural and the depressed urban areas, including by providing adequate funding to minority-language schools;
3. reintegrate the Uzbek minority in the apparatus of the state at all levels, especially in those areas in the south where they are a substantial minority;
4. fight corruption at all levels of the state administrative and security apparatus, including by adequately financing the Drug Control Agency (DCA) and a well-trained and corruption-free judiciary;
5. revoke recent legislation conferring privileged status to the Kyrgyz language while sidelining Russian, Kyrgyzstan's 'official' language, in favour of promoting Kyrgyzstan's cultural

- and linguistic diversity according to the spirit and the letter of the President's 'Concept', allowing the reinstatement of the Uzbek language university entrance exam;
6. invest in the training of media professionals in peace journalism, in cooperation with, for instance, the Central Asian School of Contemporary Journalism at the OSCE Academy based in Bishkek;
 7. consult extensively with civil society (especially youth and women's) organisations concerning all of the above, in order to benefit from the expertise of the most vibrant civil society in Central Asia, while bridging the growing gap between 'politics' and 'society' in the country.

To the Government of Kyrgyzstan

1. promote reconciliation between Kyrgyzstan's communities by taking a clear stand against exclusive nationalist propaganda, while unequivocally embracing citizenship as the sole principle regulating relations between the state and the peoples (as suggested in the President's 'Concept');
2. investigate all abuses perpetrated during and in the aftermath of the June 2010 events, especially those by the security forces (army and police), and bring all alleged offenders in front of a court of law for a free and fair trial;
3. investigate all reports of beating, ill-treatment and torture equally; bring all alleged offenders in front of a court of law for a free and fair trial; re-try all those sentenced on the basis of confessions extracted under duress and, in case of acquittal, pay compensation for their undue detention;
4. revert the trend of singling out the Uzbek community for guilt regarding the June 2010 events by ensuring thorough and professional investigations and prosecutions according to evidence, rather than community-membership;
5. guarantee that all those who suffered human and economic losses be provided with appropriate compensation on the sole basis of the losses incurred;
6. take concrete measures to eradicate torture, including by supporting the National Preventative Mechanism and Na-

tional Centre for the Prevention of Torture and enforcing the revised Criminal Code that makes torture a serious crime under the law of the country

To the international community and the donors

1. strike a balance between cooperation with the central government and funding for projects geared to reinforce LSG institutions, including for development and conflict prevention and resolution;
2. discuss and promote institutional reforms at all levels of the state institutions, including adequate representation of minorities; a better trained and better paid police force and army, more inclusive of minorities (especially the Uzbeks) at every echelon; and an independent professional judiciary;
3. in line with the recommendations of the LSE Expert Group on the Economics of Drug Policy (2014, 3), 'end the 'war on drugs' and massively redirect resources towards effective evidence-based policies underpinned by rigorous economic analysis', with the understanding that such policies would hold the potential to severely curtail the sway of organised crime and their allies within the political-economic elites on the country.

¹The brawl is presented in most accounts as the starting point of the violence. FH et al. (2012, 35 ff.) offer some alternative versions of the events. For the purpose of this paper, the account most commonly cited has been used.

²According to the latest count, 492 people perished in the violence. Author's interview with Aziza Abdirasulova, Director, Kylym Shamy Human Rights NGO, Bishkek, 8 May 2014. The organisation keeps a list of victims of the violence that it updates any time new information emerges.

³Locals actually use the term 'war', indicating the general population's shock at the level of destruction and suffering wreaked on their lives in such a short span of time. For the sake of simplicity, inverted commas will not appear henceforth when the term 'events' is used. Author's Skype interview with former Human Rights Monitor at the emergency mission of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the south, 5 December 2013. Please notice that the National Commission of Inquiry (2011) challenges this conclusion, stating that the June events brought 'great sorrow and untold hardships to both Kyrgyz and Uzbeks who had been living together for centuries.'

⁴The conflict triangle was first developed by Johan Galtung and the one used here is a variation thereof, based on the example of SIDA 2004. 'The triangle is a useful model for identifying the fundamental dynamics' of a conflict. 'The actors and the structure interact, as the structures of society' influence the actors' behaviour and attitudes, at the same time as the structures are products of the actors' behaviour and attitudes' (SIDA 2004, 37 & 36). For a visual representation of the conflict triangle applied to the June 2010 events, refer to Table 1.

⁵Analysts draw parallels between the events of June 2010 and equally deadly clashes pitting Kyrgyz versus Uzbeks 20 years before, almost to the day (Akkule 2010; Hanks 2011, 177; Saferworld 2011, 3). While in both occurrences violence in the periphery was at least to some extent connected to weakness at the centre (Moscow in 1990, as the Soviet Union was on its way to collapse; Bishkek in 2010, following the April revolution), it is the 'ethnic' dimension of the conflict that is most often cited as a point of comparison. However, if polarisation along community (so-called 'ethnic') lines has been a clear consequence of violence and political manipulation, both before and after the 2010 events, the root causes thereof have to be found elsewhere.

⁶Please refer to the last section of the paper for a full set of policy recommendations.

⁷Bakiyev had been the Chairman of the People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan, an

opposition electoral alliance that contested the February 2005 elections and the March 2005 run off, following which allegations of widespread fraud led to massive protests and Akayev's overthrow in the Tulip Revolution (Azattyk 2004).

⁸Kyrgyzstan was the only country in the world to simultaneously host a Russian base (Kant) and a US base (Manas). The latter has been central to maintaining an open supply route for US forces in Afghanistan. It was finally closed on 6 June 2014 in anticipation of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan (Despain 2014).

⁹An independent source personally acquainted with former Interim President Roza Otunbayeva and with other members of the IG confirmed this version of events on condition of anonymity. Author's interview, Bishkek.

¹⁰Whether Bakiyev's removal from power can be called a revolution is up for debate. Due to widespread usage in the media and the literature, the paper will adopt the term revolution, without implying agreement on the author's part.

¹¹The extent of corrupt practices under President Bakiyev is well documented. A mere six weeks after the April revolution, the IG had already estimated damages for more than 110 million USD linked to the ex-President's close entourage and his son Maksim (Sultanov 2010).

¹²Namely, Osh TV and Mezon TV (FH et al. 2012, 21-22).

¹³FH et al. (2012, 19) are unequivocal on this point: 'There is no basis for seeing the process of ethnic mobilization among Uzbeks as a result of some sort of 'separatist conspiracy' against the Kyrgyz Republic, as some official persons have tried to claim later.'

¹⁴ Author's interview, 7 May 2014.

¹⁵The KIC (2011, 78) continues: 'it was reasonably foreseeable that violence of the type that occurred in southern Kyrgyzstan between 10 and 14 June was a likely outcome. The KIC finds that the [IG] should have foreseen that likelihood and taken measures to lessen it. Further, the [IG] should have developed a contingency plan that would, in the event of violence, have contained it.'

¹⁶'An Arabic word referring to a local neighbourhood in a city, usually defined by the presence of a single mosque. The mahalla is traditionally the lowest unit of administration' (March 2003, 230).

¹⁷FH et al. (2012, 11) qualifies the word sniper as 'often used by witnesses to describe single-round shots fired by a person from the roof of a building or from a height.'

¹⁸ For a detailed account of these events, see HRW (2010), pp. 35-43.

¹⁹ Author's Skype interview with former Human Rights Monitor, 5 December 2013.

²⁰ Even before the June events, Uzbek residents charged that schools in their neighbourhoods were 'chronically underfunded' (Khan 2010).

²¹ Author's interview with source who conducted field research in southern Kyrgyzstan in the immediate aftermath of the June 2010 events. The available satellite images of the destruction 'clusters' in Osh give credence to this account (UNITAR 2010).

²² Author's interview, Bishkek, 9 May 2014.

²³ See endnote 2.

²⁴ Reportedly, Myrzakmatov and Tashiev are among the country's richest man (Tokoeva 2013). As it is the case with so many other political figures in Kyrgyzstan, including Tashiev, it is difficult to separate Myrzakmatov the businessman from Myrzakmatov the politician. The former is alleged to have handsomely paid the Bakievs to earn the position of Osh Mayor, while the latter has improved the former's riches via the privileges afforded by political office. For a list of Myrzakmatov's properties and riches, see Asanbekov (2014).

²⁵ Author's interviews, Bishkek, April-June 2014.

²⁶ In political scientist and Kyrgyzstan expert Johan Engvall's words, '[i]n a system based on controlling rents, the strongest politician needs to be the biggest business executive. By acknowledging this, the question of why criminality is so politically oriented in Kyrgyzstan is less mysterious. As wealth is a necessary precondition for the ability to hold political power, the criminal economy is targeted by political leaders. The same applies vice versa, since political protection is increasingly necessary for generating and protecting wealth, criminal interests are targeting influence over politics and the state. This process has reached the point where a distinction hardly makes sense any longer' (Engvall 2011, 82-3).

²⁷ Author's informal conversations, Osh, December 2013.

²⁸ Author's interview with Nadezhda Dobretsova, founder and Chair, Development Policy Institute (DPI), Bishkek, 11 December 2013. Unequal levels of development between the more industrialised north and the broadly agrarian south are at least partially the result of Soviet policy (Bond & Koch 2010, 537).

²⁹ This has already happened since 2010 in at least one occasion (Trilling 2012).

³⁰ The World Bank (2013, 10) states that '[r]egional disparities remain an important issue due to the large gap in living standards between Bishkek, the capital, and the rest of the country. In 2011, 18 percent of Bishkek's population lived below the poverty line, compared to 40 percent in the rest of the country.'

³¹ See endnote 21.

³² Esenaliev & Steiner (2012, 18) conclude that 'there is no horizontal inequality at all' between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks.

³³ In 2013, Kyrgyzstan scored 6.25 out of 7 in Freedom House's corruption chart, with 7 being the worst (Marat 2013).

³⁴ For a discussion of the Kyrgyz state as an 'investment market', see the interview

with Johan Engvall (Hedfors 2011).

³⁵ The following report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2012, 75) offers an insight of the extent in which state and organised crime have come to overlap: 'Following the 2005 Tulip revolution and lasting until 2009, a number of criminal bosses were assassinated in Kyrgyzstan. This violence – of the kind generally associated with Latin American drug markets – was not a classic turf war between rival gangs. It appears rather to have been a takeover orchestrated at the highest political levels, whereby criminal networks gradually came under the control of high-ranking officials.' UNODC estimates that the northern route, 'the main heroin trafficking corridor linking Afghanistan to the huge markets of the Russian Federation mainly through Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (or Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan) to Kazakhstan,' covers a market whose size 'is estimated to total \$13 billion per year' (UNODC website).

³⁶ Author's email exchange with Osh journalist working for RFE/RL, 4 February 2014.

³⁷ Author's interview with Nadezhda Dobretsova, Bishkek, 11 December 2013. Ms Dobretsova was the Director of Research for a United Nations Development Program (2013) report broaching LSG in Kyrgyzstan. The case of Uzgen is discussed at length therein (59-61).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Author's interview with Asyl Aitbaeva, Director of Interbilim International Centre, Bishkek, 17 April 2014.

⁴⁰ For a discussion on this point, see Dyatlenko 2013.

⁴¹ The Honorable Member of the Kenesh who tabled this draft bill is Ms Urmat Amanbaeva from the Respublika Party. The author's several attempts to discuss the proposed law with Ms Amanbaeva went unanswered.

⁴² Author's Skype interview, 2 June 2014.

⁴³ The NCI (2011) reports that during and in the immediate aftermath of the June events 38,213 people, mostly Uzbeks, left Osh city, Osh and Jalal-Abad provinces for Russia and other countries.

⁴⁴ This is especially true in view of previous waves of (mostly Russian) elite emigration following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

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