

Democracy in Kyrgyzstan: problems and specific features

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Abstract

The article examines the state of democracy in the Kyrgyz Republic, with an emphasis on understanding democracy through the lens of the political consciousness, social memory and spiritual and cultural values of the Central Asian republic via comparative and typological methods. The result of the article shows the struggle between the new political culture and the traditional political order, which channels the democracy development in a specific direction. In conclusion, it may be reasonable to study further the existence of the hybrid regime as it applies to the situation in Kyrgyzstan before the transition to a parliamentary government.

Keywords: Civil Society, Democracy, National Will.

Democracia en Kirguistán: problemas y características específicas

Resumen

El artículo examina el estado de la democracia en la República Kirguisa, con énfasis en entender la democracia a través de la conciencia política, la memoria social y los valores espirituales y culturales de la República de Asia Central a través de métodos comparativos y tipológicos. El resultado del artículo muestra la lucha entre la nueva cultura política y el orden político tradicional, que canaliza el desarrollo de la democracia en una dirección específica. En conclusión, puede ser razonable estudiar más a fondo la existencia del régimen híbrido según se aplica a la situación en Kirguistán antes de la transición a un gobierno parlamentario.

Palabras clave: sociedad civil, democracia, voluntad nacional.

1. Introduction

The Kyrgyz Republic is considered to be the most democratic state in Central Asia and the country that is least susceptible to authoritarian tendencies. Kyrgyzstan's resistance to authoritarianism was dramatically demonstrated by the two color revolutions that took place in 2005 and 2010. Since gaining independence in 1991, Kyrgyzstan has been known as an island of democracy in Central Asia. However, in light of the past two decades and the overthrow of presidents Djumanaliyev (2011) and Kurmanbek Bakiyev (2010) it is reasonable to question the quality of Kyrgyz democracy and whether it exists at all. The analysis of reasons why there were color revolutions in a number of CIS and Balkan countries revealed that they had a similar origin, namely – they demonstrated by national will. The reaction was often a protest against a particular regime or policy (Djumanaliyev, 2011). Nevertheless, this brings up the question about the democracy level of each movement. The protests took a form of a mass movement, but in some cases, were sparked by the sum of actions, performed by specific civil or political groups (Lipset & Lakin, 2004; Djumanaliyev, 2011). The revolutionary movement took place against the background of deep economic problems in the light of poverty and deprivation. In comparison with the developed West democracies and even with the developing democracies of the Eastern Europe, such a poor country like Kyrgyzstan, which does have some underground oil and gas resources, has a potential for political antagonisms. The country is between two great countries – Russia and China. In a geopolitical aspect, therefore, a small country with a population of 5 million people, where 40% of the population is below the poverty line (daily income rate: under 22% of USD 1), could not fail to undergo a general democratic processes that occurred in the region. Thus, the purpose of this article is to consider the democratic process development in Kyrgyzstan (Akmoldoyeva, 2013).

1.1. Country in Permanent Transition

After gaining independence, Kyrgyzstan officially declared itself, in its 1993 Constitution, to be a secular and democratic state. Consequently, the Kyrgyz Republic, like all post-Soviet countries, was labeled as a state in transition. However, this definition is the result of trying to understand developments in Kyrgyzstan using Western expectations about building a liberal democracy. Based on this knowledge, it would be appropriate to ask the question - is it possible to build a liberal democracy in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan? It should be noted that this question can apply to all post-Soviet states. While many of the states in Central Asia reflect liberal democratic values, in reality they are gravitating towards authoritarianism displaying a stark contradiction. The theory of transitology was taken up by Central Asian scholars (including Kyrgyz) in the early years of independence (including Kyrgyz) with great fervor. Transitional state theory came at a convenient time for developing states because the term transition became a scapegoat for economic, political and social failures. No one, including the government, has been willing to take any responsibility for what happened.

In this article, I intend to temper the transition concept in explaining the political processes taking place in Kyrgyzstan in order to try and determine the quality of democratic reforms. In this regard, given the current developments in the country, it is safe to say that the end of the transition period is not in sight. The reason being because, in reality, Kyrgyzstan has yet to establish the conditions necessary for a stable democratic government. Transition theory was primarily imported from the West, which after centuries of development is a stronghold of democracy. A few years ago, Zbigniew Brzezinski believed

that transition period for the countries of Central Asia would last 15-20 years. He gave Kyrgyzstan an above average chance of success. Yet his forecast projects a Western vision of democracy and therefore relies on a Western way of perceiving modernization reforms. In reality, Western interpretation of democratic reforms in Central Asia fail to account for the region's mentality. Ultimately, regional identity and perceptions lead to profound changes in the substance of democracy in Kyrgyzstan. In this regard, the following thesis by Pogosyan sounds befitting: many researchers believe that Soviet society embraced ideas of democracy, but that it could not realize the process because of its closed, undemocratic nature, that is, government suppression of civil society and hence the absence of a place for civil initiative and self-organization (Pogosyan, 2011). Indeed the era is characterized by uncertainty Karl and Schmitter (1991) and in the case of Kyrgyzstan, has modified society's behavior and defined the country in the eyes of the international community. Several questions arise with respect to our country - why have early democratic reforms failed to consolidate and bring positive results? What is Kyrgyzstan's status in this situation, who will help and what should be done?

1.2. How People in Kyrgyzstan Understand Democracy

After gaining independence Kyrgyzstan set off on a democratic course without any prior experience. When looking at the term democracy, we can agree with Giddens (2005) who stated that, declared democratic ideals are not always consistent with reality. The fact is that the elites zealously demonstrate their commitment to democracy in Kyrgyzstan, says little about the system of governance (Giddens, 2005). Indeed, for more than two decades, Kyrgyzstan's former and current presidents enthusiastically not only about the commitment of the republic to democracy, but also of its achievements. Askar Akayev has repeatedly declared that Kyrgyzstan has always been the leader of democracy and reform in the Commonwealth of Independent States (Akayev, 2003). Internal levers of democracy promotion occasionally failed. Bakiyev (2010) on the other hand pioneered the so-called counsel democracy, where the emphasis was to be placed on the inclusion of different social groups in the process of public policy making and implementation under the auspices of the People's Kurultay (Bakiyev, 2010). Despite these outward displays of commitment, Presidents Akayev and Bakiyev (2010), became more and more inclined to use authoritarian mechanisms, which ultimately ended in both of them fleeing the country.

It is difficult to operationalize democracy (Lipset & Lakin, 2004), especially in a country that only superficially observes democratic principles. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the key is to use the term democracy within two frameworks state and society. Kyrgyzstan, as a state has all the basic features of a democracy (elections, multi-party systems, etc.), but it cannot claim that society is democratic. While Kyrgyzstan may have implemented some of the universal principles of democracy, based on society's behavior, worldview and culture, Kyrgyzstan is far from the ideals espoused in political theory. As a result, democratic ideals have retained only their superficial character and have not become internalized by society at large. Kyrgyzstan does not have a unique national democratic identity. What this means is that Kyrgyzstan has not been able to earn a place among the world's recognized democracies because it has not shown itself to be a stable and democratically oriented state. So much so that more often Kyrgyzstan was associated with a country rapidly losing its statehood.

At first Kyrgyz people held a peculiar understanding of democracy. They saw it as absolute freedom in everything, which led to chaos in official and public life. Seymore Lipset and Jason Lakin are right in saying that democracy and equality are not the same (Lipset & Lakin, 2004). The main mistake was that democracy was chosen emotionally and not rationally (Lipset & Lakin, 2004). After gaining independence emotions ran high and overwhelmed us from the beginning. The initial fervor gave us the extraordinary impetus for self-realization. This included choosing our own developmental path and our own presidents - who themselves were democratically inexperienced and simply repeated liberal democratic slogans without understanding them. These same emotions accompanied us during the first Tulip Revolution of 2005, the second Rose Revolution in 2010 and continue to be seen at protests and rallies. We have lived in an emotional democracy for over twenty years without having a thorough and thoughtful strategy or developmental program, but instead, Kyrgyzstan is surviving on loans, donor assistance and the various aid projects. This is how many Kyrgyz understand democracy and due to this mentality we are known as a country in permanent revolution (Karabayev, 2012).

1.3. Revolutionary Democracy or a Democratic Revolution

The Kyrgyz revolutions, in relation to the country's democratic development, can be viewed in two ways. One, as a proof that society is dedicated to the chosen democratic path and thus in clear opposition to authoritarianism. Two, as a reflection of society's inability to reconcile conflicting ideas about the country's developmental path and weakness of the central government.

The first aspect reflects the level of democratic development, the open expression of the will of the people, eager to implement and demand the realization of their democratic values and freedoms. From this perspective, some unrest that took place can be taken as revolutionary according to certain parameters. If we take the Marx and Lenin's handling of revolutions, the classic elements of a revolutionary situation are as follows: the inability of the authorities to maintain the status-quo, the reluctance of the poor to live according to old rules and the motivation of the masses (Lenin, 1969). The people must be convinced of the necessity to overthrow the existing government due to its failure to implement the principles of democratic development, where the emphasis is put on the people as the main force of democracy. One can only wonder and marvel at the inspiration and courage displayed against the authoritarianism of the first and second president. It is indicative of the people's strong potential. According to one historian, the suppression of civil and political rights was one of the main causes of the crisis in 2010, the result of which president Bakiyev (2010) was overthrown (Djumanaliyev, 2011). However, at the same time, it was essential to have grassroots protests in order to make them truly popular revolutions. However, in the end, it was the opposition that played that organized the masses and coordinated protest movements in the capital and in the regions. The opposition managed to motivate the masses and encouraged them to seize power. This is the basic outline of the colored revolutions in Kyrgyzstan.

The impression that Kyrgyzstan's revolutions made on the international community was influenced by preexisting historical, social and geopolitical ideas. The West mostly interpreted it as progress towards global democracy. However, in response to the revolutions Russia and the Central Asian region became more guarded, fearing the export color revolutions, and rightfully criticized Kyrgyz authorities for their failure to maintain peace. The Tulip Revolution in 2005, and the Rose revolution in

2010 showed the democratic potential of the country and the necessity for change in the direction towards quality governance. Therefore, the positive side to these coups, despite their destructive character, is the demonstrated desire to adopt democratic values to Central Asian and particularly Kyrgyz value systems. However, currently, Kyrgyzstan's democratic development is cyclical: a declaration of democratic principles that fade with the passing time; followed by stagnation in reforms and a turn towards authoritarianism and finally culminating in the revolutionary overthrow of the regime.

The second characteristic of the Kyrgyz revolutions is that, ultimately, they could not achieve fundamental regime change due to the weakness of the state, the presidents, and the government. It is evident that this is true in relation to the situation after the 2005 coup. After coming to power, Kurmanbek Bakiyev (2010) quickly outdid his predecessor Askar Akayev. Bakiyev (2010) quickly inserted family members into critical sectors of the economy and political system and established a much harsher authoritarian system. Similarly, it is relevant to recall the idea of Karl and Schmitter (1991) that...at a time when society seems to be on the verge of great beginnings, when it might start a new era, it gives in to the illusions of the past and willingly gives its hard-won power to the real or imagined community leaders of the past (Marx, 1958). The revolutionaries were the most susceptible to these illusions. They dreamt of a better life, but in reality, they handed over power to the same generation of political elites who had promised to finish what was started, but usurped power instead. Thus, the results of the revolution were disappointing. There was little progress and in some respects the country regressed. As a result, democracy in the post-Akayev era took a step back. This caused frustration and widespread disappointment within the country, in the region, and in the global community.

Consequently, the Kyrgyzstan that existed between the revolutions can only be labeled a pseudo democracy. Questions about progress remain rhetorical. Towards what goal is Kyrgyzstan transitioning towards? Is there a transition at all? After two decades of independence, the country is not closer to answering these questions. Each president promised democratic reform, but what resulted was a very peculiar mix of some democratic values and traditional behavioral norms, both on the personal and governmental levels. There is no point in saying that we are building a liberal democracy, when reality shows something completely different.

1.4. Parliamentary Democracy or Crisis of Democracy

After the revolution of 2010, Kyrgyzstan became the first and only parliamentary democracy in Central Asia. Many sources that discuss the essence of democracy point out that parliamentary democracies have a higher chance of survival than presidential ones (Lipset & Lakin, 2004). Perhaps this is the case and contemporary democracies support these facts, but it should be noted that this corresponds mainly to developed forms of democracy that have had centuries of stable development. Kyrgyzstan, on the other hand, adopted parliamentarism at a time of great instability. Debate continues among supporters and opponents of the idea of parliamentarism. According to supporters, the overthrow of the authoritarian regimes and the change from presidential to parliamentary systems can be considered an achievement in the process of democratization. The system in Kyrgyzstan will avoid the vicious circle that previously existed because parliamentarism is built on the principles of equal opportunity, openness and transparency of the political process. The Constitution of the Republic, adopted in 2010, does not allow for the concentration of power. The president's powers are greatly reduced in favor of the parliament.

The parliament, in turn, forms the government (Imanaliyev, 2013). The opposing view reflects the sentiments of the population who believe that Kyrgyzstan hastily chose its new parliamentary model. It is possible that the parliamentary system is appropriate for Kyrgyzstan, but, at least, after 20 - 30 years, when the party system will stabilize and political institutions represent the interests of the citizens not with slogans, but with actions (Egemberdiyeva, 2012). The main arguments put forth against a parliamentary system in Kyrgyzstan is that it lacks established parties, it has a weak civil society, there is lack of compromise among political elites, there is an absence of communication between society and the country's difficult geopolitical environment.

One of the most important factors critical to the success of a parliamentary system is the development of strong political parties that have clearly defined platforms. Kyrgyzstan adopted the parliamentary system while its political arena was in full disarray. Kyrgyz political parties often improvise and the political platforms that they present do little to support the stable development of the country. It is difficult to find the ideological underpinnings of any party. Our political parties have a unique understanding of their role as intermediaries between the government and the public, for the most part, political parties pursue self-interested goals or the interests of their leaders. Considering the history of these parties, it is difficult to discuss any specific policy proposals for getting the country out of its current political crisis. Some of the problems include difficulties in establishing parties, lack of inter-party dialogue, dependence on compromising materials as a political tool and sometimes just emotional outbursts against each other. It is difficult to imagine a fair playing field under these conditions. Some researchers believe that the parliamentary system in Kyrgyzstan is the result of an informal agreement between influential political figures (Marat, 2012), which partially explains the political developments in the country. One can objectively see that party formation is more dependent on financial support and not as a reflection of the electorate. Events following the April 2010 events showed that even historically established and respected parties have a difficult time breaking the election threshold despite being considered favorites. For example, the long established party Ata Meken struggled to gain seats in parliament and Ak Shumkar failed altogether. Among the favorites, only the Social Democratic Party (Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan) managed to be successful and then only through the use of administrative resources. The fact that Ata Jurt and Respublica, parties that were formed on the eve of the election, were able to enter parliament speaks for itself.

1.5. Elite in Kyrgyzstan

In connection with the question of political parties is the question of the elite. The elite of the country will be judged by their desire to address the country's problems and society's interests and not their personal ambitions, as cliché as that sounds. Kyrgyzstan's elite bear a special and historic responsibility to future generations for the changes that are taking place in society. It is the elite that should be leading the evolution of the country's social, political and cultural processes. However, they have failed to do so because of the constant change with every coming election, self-interest and the intractability of political conflicts. The level of political culture of many representatives of the elite is disastrously low and characterized by slogans.

The political culture in Kyrgyzstan is too idiomatic, which hinders political settlement and thus makes development highly complex, controversial and unstable. Kyrgyzstan's political instability is due

to the fact that, according to Seymore Lipset and Jason Lakin, only ideology or values should divide groups, not interests (Lipset & Lakin, 2004). In Kyrgyzstan, everything is absolutely to the contrary, it is interests that motivate the actions of the elite. These factors put into question the stability and viability of Kyrgyzstan's democracy. However, some experts do believe that Political elite competition can be seen between leaders of parties and between the various factions in parliament. Also, for the first time, the country is displaying an ideological discourse. Nevertheless, the overall culture of political consensus is still underdeveloped.

It might be too early to say that Kyrgyzstan has formed a national elite, capable of responsibly representing the interests of the people. The elite need to develop a new dialogue that prioritizes social cohesion and a desire to wrench Kyrgyzstan out of a state of deep crisis.

1.6. Modern Kyrgyzstan

Currently, Kyrgyzstan is a state that has not overcome its challenges; for five years, it has experienced two revolutions resulting in the decline of the economic development; it is in the state of permanent political crisis, which has not been resolved through parliamentary governance.

The first Constitution declared the Republic to be a democratic secular state. It was an imperfect document, at the same time, many experts are increasingly calling for a return to this seminal document that marked the turning-point in Kyrgyzstan's historical development. According to one expert, in the Constitution, adopted May 5, 1993, there were many provisions congruent with the Kyrgyz mindset. This Constitution subsequently underwent six amendments, which indicated the country's evolving approach to the concept of democracy. In 1996, the country's electoral system was changed by the division of parliament into two chambers - the Legislature and the House of People's Representatives. 1998 saw the introduction of articles on private ownership and freedom of the media.

In 2002, a new Constitution was being written, and in 2003, it was adopted; it synthesized all the changes and addressed many issues of an economic and socio-political nature. In 2006, the post-revolutionary version of the Constitution was approved, after undergoing additional changes. In response, to the decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic, drastic steps, which eventually resulted in the formation of a new parliament, were made. There were some changes in the judicial system of the Republic: instead of the previous three courts, there are now two - the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court. The Arbitration Court joined the Supreme Court as a court reviewing economic matters. In 2010 after the second revolution that led to a change of power, a Constitution which legislated a parliamentary form of government was adopted. Thus, the systematic change in the basic laws of the country led to a condition of the sustained crisis in the country. This indication is significant; it is a reflection of the Kyrgyz understanding of democracy and of the Kyrgyz mindset.

Kyrgyzstan is a country characterized by patrimonial relationships. Kyrgyzstan is a state with an unresolved identity crisis in civil, as well as cultural, political, religious, ethnic, and linguistic matters. The multi-ethnic nature of our state, which is home to between eighty and one hundred ethnic groups, makes civic identity a real problem. Inter-ethnic conflicts have arisen in the wake of the revolutionary rallies in 2010. The identity crisis is inevitably connected with the crisis of national development. Problems arise when the state is simultaneously trying to maintain its ethnic diversity while promoting national unity.

In this context, Kyrgyzstan needs a national idea capable of unifying society, which would arise from among the people. Out of habit, some ideology is expected from the state. However, while the government has repeatedly voiced variants of a national idea aimed at unifying society, these have not proven viable. Common slogans include The Seven Testaments of Manas, Kyrgyzstan - our common home and Kyrgyzstan - the country of human rights. Yet none of these ideas stirred patriotic feelings in the Kyrgyz people and civil society continues to be in a state of sporadic development. As one expert notes, public opinion polls show that only 55% of the population identifies themselves as citizens of Kyrgyzstan, i.e. almost half the population has a different community and do not tie themselves to the Kyrgyz state. This is an alarming fact and points to the failure of the state's nation building programs. However, catering ideological and political agendas to each individual group is impossible and would contribute little to developing a national identity. This suggests that the state is unprepared – it is shortsighted, but insists that it is dedicated to democratic reforms. This is yet more proof of the country's eternal transition; it's clear from whence the system came, but unclear as to where it is headed. Exacerbating the situation is Kyrgyzstan's poor economic situation. After independence Kyrgyzstan suffered dramatic industrial decline, which continues today. Many in the country go abroad as economically vulnerable migrant workers. There is also the ongoing problems with privatization. Foreign direct investment raises the perennial question of where and how it is spent, since it is not a transparent process and corruption is a major feature the economy. Finally, there is the unresolved energy crisis. Of course, there are some positive aspects, but, overall the trend is negative.

Kyrgyzstan is also in a state of permanent political crisis. The imperfection of parliamentarism created numerous contradictions. At the same time the relationship between domestic and foreign policy is burdened with numerous problems. According to the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, Kyrgyzstan is the clearest example of how the world's major global players can influence the internal power relationships of a small state. In this sense, the political scientist N. Omarov was right in the fact that the foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan imitates others, it is irrational and illogical. Domestic issues are not resolved ... it resembles chaos. The current breakdown of the country's economic classes can help us understand the country's developments: as show data of the World Bank in Kyrgyzstan 1, 7 million people live below the poverty line, it is 32 %. After two decades, social grievances are still expressed through protest, which in the case of Kyrgyzstan, often results in coups. Currently, social tension has subsided somewhat, but at times there are outbreaks of social conflict. Another area of potential conflict is between the traditionalists and westernizers. The first one appeared immediately after independence and focused on reviving Kyrgyz traditional values and cultural symbols; the second focused on Western values, which poured into the country and were amplified by increasing globalization.

1.7. Reasons Why Transition Is Still Ongoing

The copying of Western liberal democracy did not give positive results in the context of Central Asia. The development of democracy under local conditions failed because it was unable to overcome the barriers attributed to the uniqueness of our culture and the unique peculiarities of the Kyrgyz mindset. Currently, there is a need to consider opposing views in order to clearly understand the problem and highlight the challenges and incongruities with the current form of democracy. The alternative is to continue Westernization, which has so far lead to nowhere.

One point of view is that, in Central Asia, democracy is misunderstood and not trusted. Bunstra (2012) (head of the EU Central Asia Monitoring program), for example, belongs to this camp, noting that: Authorities (as well as some Western experts opposing democratic progress) often claim that the historical development of Central Asia is different from the rest of the world and cannot be adjusted to Western values. Undoubtedly, the government mechanisms may vary depending on the society, but concepts like free and fair elections, government transparency, government accountability to Parliament and a developed civil society are considered to be an integral part of any democratic state (Bunstra, 2012). Based on the thesis above, it appears that we do not understand democracy, perceiving it negatively and opposing its establishment in the region and in the country. But it does not make sense that we would declare that we have a democracy without making any attempts to achieve it.

In the context of democracy's applicability to all countries Przeworski et al. (1998) suggests the idea that culture cannot be regarded as an obstacle to democracy; people can be taught democracy. He comes to the conclusion that there is no culture absolutely antithetical to democracy. We can agree with him in the latter part that hardly any culture, including Kyrgyz culture, is incompatible with democracy. At the same time, Seymour Lipset and Jason Lakin would argue that cultural differences are a serious obstacle for smooth implementation of democratic values. In this regard, Huntington's excerpt can serve as the main thesis saying that today under the influence of modernization, global politics is being built anew, in accordance with the direction of culture development... state behavior is determined by cultural preferences (Lipset & Lakin, 2004). Gibson (1998) also suggests that successful democratization cannot be guaranteed only by institutional transformations (changing the constitution, laws, institutions of political power, and the like), but assumes, and moreover, makes it necessary to the formation of a specific set of cultural values (Gibson, 1998). It is not accidental that the historical development of culture forms a value system that defines the essence of a particular nation. Initially the Kyrgyz were influenced by a nomadic way of life – the nomadic archetype that contributed to the formation of a truly unique mindset. Naturally, during the transition to a sedentary way of life the first serious cultural transformations occurred; it was an internal crisis of culture. However, the basic archetypal elements of the nomadic consciousness remained as a source of cultural identity.

One of the characteristics of the Kyrgyz mindset that is detrimental to democratization is tribalism. In this regard, we should note that, historically, tribalism for the Kyrgyz nomads served as a positive attribute. It united the clans in the face of natural and economic problems by forming a kinship of spirit. However, in the course of time, the objective necessity of the clan's function has disappeared and the idea of it retreated. During the Soviet period, the tribal way of life and cultural self-determination were destroyed. However, after independence, this trait has re-emerged and gained a negative connotation in the context of the political establishment.

In the terms of the current situation in Kyrgyzstan, tribalism was utilized for gaining votes for the election into the Parliament of the Republic (Jogorku Kenesh); this practice originated after independence and is used to the present day. Kinship promotes unity in pursuit of a common goal - state representation. The use of tribal symbols has become a political fad accompanied by plenty of traditional Kyrgyz events (slaughtering cattle to get a blessing, collective meals and exchanging presents). Even presidents take part in such events; both A. Akayev and Bakiyev (2010) had kin support and their blessings. By the twentieth anniversary of independence, tribal networks are critical in order to ascend to power. It is no

coincidence that a sufficient number of studies have been devoted to the subject of tribalism in the country.

The same characteristic, however, is also at the heart of the debilitating levels of corruption, which has impacted the entire political system. Corruption is endemic in part because of the poor economic conditions in Kyrgyzstan. At present, it is almost impossible to imagine the effort necessary to contain corruption, much less destroy it. Another political consequence of tradition is the fact that the nomadic mindset, as opposed to the sedentary mind, recognizes the possibility of the rise to power of any person or clan, not by passing it down from father to son, but by the use of force. Strength and power were the main features of legitimacy. Power in nomadic culture was neither deified, nor sacralized, nor fortified by religious doctrine, as it was in ancient sedentary centers. This point explains some of the realities of current political life.

Problems of regionalism persist in Kyrgyzstan's political system as evidenced by the study of the representation of the northern and southern clans in the government between 2000 and 2004. Noteworthy is also the increasingly powerful role of the People's Kurultays (congress) as a kind of civil participation, as a result of which the law On Public Kurultay was adopted. Since the term of the first Kyrgyz president, Askar Akayev, Kurultays have asserted their role in the political process and over time their value began to increase. At the same time, Kurultays gained a negative reputation after Bakiyev (2010) had co-opted it for his deliberative democracy movement. It should be noted that Kurultay's are used by the government as well as by the opposition, on both the regional and national level, as a tool to influence the course of political processes. At this moment there are opposing views on this structure. For example, according to the well-known sociologist K.Isaev, Kurultay must exist on a legal level and the other branches of government should be accountable to it. In contrast to this view, another expert historian calls the establishment of the Institute of the National Kurultay in Kyrgyzstan...is an attempt to form a parallel government. Kurultays represent the possibility to play political games and manipulate the opinion of the people can be used to implement the narrowly-vested interests of certain opposition groups (Arzimatova, 2012).

The existence of tribalism and regionalism certainly hinders the process of implementing democratic values and prevents a legal culture from taking root. In this regard, the insistence on our uniqueness is not the parasitic existence mentioned by Bunstra (2012), nor is it a simple trick used so as not to introduce democracy. Instead, it is a purposeful rejection and unwillingness to change because the status-quo is advantageous for representatives of the new elite. It is a virus that has not just entered the consciousness, but one that has formed a rich and diversified net, the destruction of which will require a wholly new approach. More than likely, this is impossible to achieve for the political establishment which is currently in power because, for more than twenty years, the same people, who were brought up in the former Soviet system, have been leading the country. Occasionally, there is a change, but this is simply a reshuffling of the same political deck of cards.

Following the discussion concerning Kyrgyzstan's political consciousness and system of cultural values, S. Lipset adds that cultural opposition also makes for difficulties when transitioning from one sort of social logic to another (Lipset & Lakin, 2004). It occurs because the cardinal changes in values lead to a cultural crisis in the entire system. Kyrgyz culture has suffered this crisis twice: first, in the period of transition from a nomadic to a sedentary way of life; second, when it became a part of Russia and later a part of the USSR. Though there were a number of arguments marking this step as positive,

there were negative points as well. There are fewer parallels between European Colonialism in Africa and Asia and Soviet Colonialism as mentioned in K. Collins' monograph Collins (2006) than are readily apparent. There was a definite drawback to the socialist way of life, including economic subordination to the center. At the same time, it is impossible not to acknowledge the positive impact of the vast developmental projects in the Central Asian republics. However, one of the most detrimental aspects was the cultural assimilation of small and unique cultures into the larger Soviet identity. Therefore, in a manner of speaking, Kyrgyz cultural norms were internalized on a subconscious level.

Accordingly, the third cultural crisis coincided with the transition to independence. It has been difficult to console the idea of freedom of self-determination, on the one hand, with the set of universal values attributed to democratic culture. Once again, S. Lipset and J. Lakin are on point, saying that if the culture has to change with the advent of democracy, then it must be true that some cultures are more closely related to democratic values. As a result, culture can be a barrier to the development of democracy». It is for this reason that there was a crisis of cultural identity. Since independence Kyrgyzstan has experience two major cultural directions: a revival of national identity paired with Westernization. In this situation, if we want to focus our attention on the successful establishment of democracy, we must realize that it is pointless simply to insist on its existence in the country. It would be more productive to understand and realize what led to the unsuccessful implementation of liberal democracy. The uniqueness of Kyrgyz culture must not be interpreted as an absurd justification for the failure to establish democracy, but it is a contributing factor that needs to be considered in order to address the issues at hand. Over the past two decades, the cultural component has become more and more relevant in the research revealing its influence on achieving democratic reforms. Knowledge, understanding and the proper perception of culture can help us understand how Kyrgyzstan reached this state of permanent transition.

1.8. Hybrid Regime

Interest has developed in using the hybrid regime concept as a way to account for Kyrgyzstan's transitional state. The hybrid regime is a political system that combines important elements of authoritarianism and democracy. In my view, it makes sense to use this term in relation to Kyrgyzstan, at least during the period before the transition to the parliamentary system. In this context, the work done on Russia as a hybrid regime is interesting. Applying the comparative approach, we could rightly note that, in Kyrgyzstan, there are signs of authoritarianism (as evidenced by two violent changes in government), and there are certain characteristics and elements of democracy. It is unlikely that anyone will deny that the country exhibits the presence of at least the basic building blocks of elections, of a multi-party system, etc.

Another important point is the fact that in the application of the term hybrid we are freed from insisting on our uniqueness. In this case, the hybrid model is used as a certain way of understanding government; Kyrgyzstan, for example, is more suitable to the electoral patronage system (Collins, 2006). In practice, Kyrgyzstan's patronage system is revealed through relationships at all levels (local government).

2. Conclusion

Special emphasis should be made on the vulnerability of hybrid regimes to collapse. Throughout Kyrgyzstan's previous decade it has consistently dangled very close to such a collapse. This dangerous environment is felt by almost every citizen and is discussed in the press by domestic and foreign politicians. Another aspect of this phenomenon is the low level of confidence in the state. Kyrgyzstan also fits into this metric of the hybrid model. Trust in the state has long been exhausted and pessimism on the level of the ordinary citizens has become the norm. The problem of succession in hybrid regimes is very serious. The example of Kyrgyzstan in this regard is also quite revealing. Succession has been a destabilizing issue up to the voluntary stepping down of Roza Otunbayeva, who put a stop to the pattern of revolutionary power transfer. Thus, it may be reasonable to study further the existence of the hybrid regime as it applies to the situation in Kyrgyzstan before the transition to a parliamentary government. A more important question is how have things changed with the transition to a parliamentary system. Although authoritarianism is no more the essence of the patronage system has not changed much. The period of transition has not yet moved into the final phase of development. It is difficult to say how applicable the hybrid model is to countries with a parliamentary form of government and vestigial patronage habits. How soon will the state of transition end in Kyrgyzstan and when will it be on the path of stable democratic development is, for now, difficult to say.

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