



Impacts of Tulip Revolution on Democratization in Kyrgyzstan

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Abstract: The melting down of the former Soviet Union and independence of five modern Muslim republics including Kyrgyzstan is a land mark event in history. The people of this region have no experience of liberal democracy. Askar Akayev became the leader of Kyrgyzstan after independence. In the beginning, he was a good ruler but with the passage of time he adopted the rules of traditional rulers of third world countries. After successful Tulip Revolution Bakiyev got the throne and became the president of the country. In the beginning he ruled nicely but as the time passed his mind changed and tried to consolidate his power which became the source of his downfall. The paper concludes the down fall of Akayev and Bakiyev that had brought Kyrgyzstan into the right track of democracy and created political awareness in the public.

Keywords: Tulip revolution, Democracy, Kyrgyzstan, Constitution, Elections.

1. Introduction

Askar Akayev became the president of Kyrgyzstan after defeating the secretaries of the communist party in 1990 elections. Most of the Central Asian leaders raised from the Communist Party in the Soviet era but Akayev did not come from communist party ranks and was in control when independence came. In fact he was a physicist who was interested in democracy and liberty. The West always praised him and was called Thomas Jefferson [1]. His re-election in 2000 was an example of pre-poll rigging. But despite all of it a free and independent press and opposition parties survived [2]. He ruled the country for fifteen years and finally faced political defeat in 2005 as a result of Tulip revolution. The primary factor which contributed to the Akayev's political defeat was his mishandling and mismanagement of the protests of public in the start of the year of 2002. These protests were the direct result of Azembek Beknazarov, who became the acting Prosecutor General, the he was promoted to the seat of chairman of the parliament, a committee for legal and Judicial Affairs, resolved to impeach Akayev, after expressing a willingness by the government to give one lake twenty five thousand hectares of its land to the government of China, at the eve of negotiation regarding border dispute between the two countries.

Beknazarov seemed unwilling to this offer on the reason that this is a water rich area and have vital importance for the economy of the country, furthermore this area contain the tombs of those people which died when they running away to China to escape execution on the hands of communists during the red revolution. On 5 January 2002, he was arrested and sent to jail. He was charged with using power beyond his jurisdiction and authority as an investigator, seven year earlier, in the Taktogul regional office of prosecutor. Trial started against Beknazarov. Those having sympathy with him, started protests and some of them event went on hunger strike. A demonstrator in hunger strike died of a stroke, the temperature of people increased even more, and the like situation kept swelling in his own town of AkSui, which is located in Jalalabad province, so by March thousands of people, were pouring in to the demonstration [3]. Demonstrators were not in a big number which gave opportunity to the

local police on 17th and 18th March, 2002, to use force to scatter the demonstrators, in which seven unarmed demonstrators were killed. The deaths of protestors put oil on the fire and it proved the cause of protests throughout the country to ask for the resignation of the president [4]. In May 2002, a failed try was made content the opposition. Kurmanbek Bakiev, the then prime minister was removed by Akayev. Nekolai Tanayev then became Prime Minister, a Russian who had long served in the republic, to remove Kurmanbek. Following weeks, Akayev utilized his previous political experience. He made promises to have talks with the parliamentary members and threatened to dissolve the assembly, which would remove the existing parliamentarians of all of their privileges [5].

2. Tactics of the president

Firstly the president Akayev went to the Interior Ministry of Russia for some kind of help. The meeting halls were closed for the purpose of rent and protectors were turned away from Bishkek. Akayev tried to open new ways for negotiations. On behalf of the president, a committee was structured which included political activist, statement and eminent jurists, the committee suggested recommendations for decreasing the authority of the president, giving more powers the prime minister as well as his cabinet, and converting legislature from bi-cameral legislature to uni-cameral legislature. This made Kyrgyzstan from a double housed parliament in to a single housed one. The new form of the constitution put before the masses, in February 2003, was not that constitution which was recommended by the committee; rather it was altered at the president office. This deceiving tactic made the office of the president stronger and dominating than the committee of efficient persons had proposed and made it tricky regarding the impeachment of the president. A referendum, was done whether the president to serve or not to, was passed with a sweeping majority. It was conducted for the purpose to make it sure that Akayev will be able to do this without unnecessary pressure of public, in the march towards referendum the Kyrgyzstan ruling elite included many constitutional alterations that permanently narrowed the chances for opposition parties to have permission for huge public gatherings and meetings. That's why the opposition leaders were nervous that the president will use the freshly structured legislature for the purpose of constitutional amendments in his favor [5].

In 2005, the efforts of president and his advisors were aimed to pollute the environment for the coming elections. Several important persons were rejected and denied of the right to have participation, because of legal issues. These included a many well known famous ambassadors, who were living most of the time abroad and were unable to fulfill the conditions needed for parliamentarian candidate due to their services as a diplomat. Roza Otunbeyeveva, Former foreign minister, was one among these banned and disqualified persons, came back to the Kazakhstan in the year of 2004 from a United Nations duty of diplomatic nature in Georgia, for the purpose to unite the members of opposition to reinvigorate the Ata kurt movement and, consolidating a United group Opposition[6]. The people as well as the leaders of opposition were compelled to lose the election, and reports exposed selling of votes in the majority of districts. More than fifty percent of the anti-presidential candidates got a big number of votes during the early part of election and in all only a third of the seventy five seats were secured at this time. But the political machines of president refused to take a rest, and more efforts were made to defeat the candidates of opposition compared to the previous.

The impartial media groups of Kyrgyzstan reported that electric supply was stopped interval, without having any reason, and until they were compelled to arrange generators, the small group of opposition leaders and media had no means to get access to the readers. The leaders like, Adekhan Mademarov and Kurmanbek Bakiev, belonging to opposition, were expected to be re-elected easily, were defeated in this ballot contest, in South which was also his home area, each one was charged with rigging[7].

3. Tulip revolution

The first Tulip Revolution (people revolution) or First Kyrgyz Revolt compelled Askar Akayev Kyrgyzstan President, to give up power and run away from the country. The protests started after the elections in February and March 2005. The protestors put strong allegations of corruption, nepotism and absolutism by Akayev, his relatives and supporters. Akayev first escaped to Kazakhstan, from there he fled to Russia. Akayev agreed to give his resignation statement and signed it in the presence of a Kyrgyzstan parliament's delegation on 4th April, 2005 at the embassy of Kyrgyzstan in Moscow, Russia. The resignation of Akayev was confirmed by the Kyrgyzstan interim government on 11th April, 2005[4].

The candidates supported by Akayev performed excellent in the parliamentary elections of 2005. However, international observers criticized the results of the election. The "Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe" (OSCE) severely criticized the government of Kyrgyzstan for alleged rigging in the election. A bomb explosion was noticed in the house of Roza Otunbeyeveva, an opposition leader. The Akayev government rejected the allegation. The leader of "People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan", Kurmenbek Bakeyev, supported the demonstrators in front of parliament building in Bishkek. Twenty two other opposition leaders, along with Bakiyev gave out a representative poll of no confidence on the government of Akayev [8]. More than three thousand people in Bishkek

and about fifty thousand in Jalalabad started public demonstrations against the government of Akayev on 19th March, 2005. On 20th March, when the protestors captured official buildings, the government of Kyrgyzstan sent troops of ministry of interior to Jalalabad and Osh to stop and handle the protestors. On 20th March, 2005, almost all of the big towns and southern area cities of the country were in the control of protestors and they were demanding resignation from Akayev. A movement which was called KelKel which means "renaissance and shining of the good". It was the uprising of youths and they were very active in the demonstrations against the government. On 22nd March 2005, Akayev denied to talk with the leaders of the protestors. Ten of seventy one Member of Parliament took side with the protestors[5].

Roza Otunbeyeveva was an important leader of opposition in Kyrgyzstan. She was the second secretary of Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan of the Lenin district council, in 1981. She was the leader till the last movement of her life. The political thoughts of Otunbeyeveva slowly became westernized after the successful 2005 revolution, Otunbeyeveva joined interim government, working as acting foreign minister and ambassador first to the United States and then to England. Anvar Artykov was another important name who took part in the revolution. He was the governor of Osh province in older times. He was supported by kurultai, a customary "Mongol and Turkic opposition council" of elders. Artykov said that they would retain that power "parallel administration" till all of their claims were accepted and issues were resolved. They were an acting power. They could consider the acceptance of their demands when the existing government had been switched by another rule that was trustworthy by the common people.

It was 21st March of the year 2005 when the opposition was well organized in the protest at Jalalabad. Otunbeyeveva said "security forces, including high rank officers, gave up uniforms, wore civilian dresses and took part in the protests. So we have great support from people of all walks of life". On 22nd of March, the leaders of opposition organized a meeting in Bishkek and made a provisional government. At first the supreme court of Kyrgyzstan ordered that earlier government was the authentic and right governing body but then in another decision on 24th March, 2005, it recognized the temporary government. Bakiyev was chosen as an acting prime minister and fresh elections were suggested to be held in July, 2005.

The protests compelled Akayev on 19th and 20th March, 2005, to order the "Central Election Committee" and "Supreme Court" to inquire the assertions of election rigging brought forth by the parties of opposition[7]. Akayev ordered these institutions to "pay special attention to those areas wherever poll results created hard public response removed Bakirdin Subanbekov, the interior minister and the prosecutor Myktybek Abdyldayev. On 23rd March, 2005, police was sent by Akayev and they arrested more than thirty people. The representative of Uzbekistan Foreign Ministry said that the masses in Uzbekistan, which is Kyrgyzstan's near neighbor, were anxious about the events which were taking place in Kyrgyzstan, particularly in its areas located in its southern part. On 24th March, 2005, Akayev and his family ran away from the country. He went first to Kazakhstan but very soon left for Russia. The Russian President, Vladimir Putin offered political asylum to Akayev. On April 3, 2005, Akayev signed his resignation [4].

The resignation was acknowledged by the interim government on 11th of April, the same year. Then Prime Minister Nikolai Tanayev also placed resignation from the office. The opposition began to take control of all the important services i-e the television broadcasters. The Police department dispersed away or united with the demonstrators. All the jailed leaders of opposition, including Felix Kulov, were set free. The Kyrgyzstan's Supreme Court found rigging in the elections and declared the results as illegal. Kurmanbek Bakiyev became acting president and acting prime minister in the interim government. He named his interim cabinet and included his friends and relatives in it. The protestors were robbing bazars and automated bank teller machines in Bishkek and burning structures. At least four people had passed away during the protests. Bakiyev selected Felix Kulov as acting interior minister. Kulov came on media and tempted the public to cool down. On 26th March, 2005 the equipped followers of Akayev prepared an organized effort to go into Bishkek under the leadership of Kenesh Dushebaev and Temirbek Akmataliyev. On 29th March, Akmataliyev proclaimed that he would take part in incoming election. It was 28th of March, that political stabilization was gradually evolved.

The new government declared presidential election on 10th of July, 2005. Nonetheless, the media observers alleged Bakiyev of being deficient of honesty, unable to establish stability and bias against sections of minorities of Russia. The selection of Adakhan Madumarov to be the fourth deputy prime minister position was not accepted due to the fact, that he was also contesting as a candidate for presidential election, it was found as a conflicting interest. Bakiyev was also criticized for re-appointment some of supporters of Akayev in the interim administration. Bakiyev and Kulov made alliance to compete the presidential elections of 10th July, 2005. The arrangement was as if Bakiyev becomes the president, Kulov would be appointed prime minister. The agreement continued until January 2007. It

resulted in the union of the southern and northern parts of the country and it turned the poll more challenging for the rest of the candidates and also aided to stabilize Uzbekistan.

4. Democratization

There were no chances of democracy in Kyrgyzstan but “Tulip Revolution” increased the hopes of real democracy in country. The events of March 2005 continued the process of color revolutions that was started in Georgia in 2003 and in Ukraine in 2004. Some observers are of the view that Kyrgyzstani politics, the end of the regime of former president Askar Akayev seemed to be a big step to the process of democratization [9]. The circumstances soon after the Tulip Revolution created awareness in people and created an environment of great optimism. Within few hours after Akayev ran away to Russia, one could see how the strength of the regime had fallen off, with huge looting in police free Bishkek just one big example. The national television station of Kyrgyzstan, traditionally a spokesman for the government, suddenly changed into an open free platform willing to broadcast just about anyone who want to say anything. Public protests, actions began taking place every day. The demands starting from calls for constitutional reforms to the transfer and replacement of a local hospital officer in the far away villages in the country. The presidential elections of July 2005 which Kurmanbek Bakiyev overwhelmingly won, were given the warmest response from Western observers of all former elections held in independent Kyrgyzstan[10].

The hot phase of Kyrgyz politics culminated in November 2006 when Bakiyev bowed to the pressure from opposition likeminded members of parliament, was unwillingly required to sign a new version of constitution which restricted the authority of the president to a great extent. In fact it was the first big event which showed the weakness of Bakiyev. It was extra-ordinary for a president in a Central Asian country, but it was also the last event. After that one month later, the complete process began going in the opposite way. It was regarded the observers as the phase of consolidation of power of Bakiyev. In December, Bakiyev openly suggested that parliament should adopt new changes to the constitution of Kyrgyzstan or submit to dissolution. Most of the parliament members, including some important opposition leaders opposed. The trend continued till the end of 2007. Bakiyev removed Kulov early that year [6].

5. New draft of constitution

In the fall of 2007, a new draft of a constitution was approved easily in a national referendum conducted by the government. This was followed by new parliamentary elections which provided complete control over the legislature by the Ak Jol party of Bakiyev. Bakiyev had full control over the power and he seemed very secure, but his sudden removal on 7 April 2010, was a big surprise to many people. People staged a protest and the government arrested them along with their leaders. In 2014, more incidents took place in which forces arrested non violent demonstrators. A large number of leaders of opposition and numerous protestors from civil society continuously rose voices against the immoral and ruthless behavior of the government.

After a successful revolution Akayev was substituted by the leader of opposition Kurmanbek Bakiyev, however political instability in Kyrgyzstan remained persistent till 2010. Kurmanbek Bakiyev totally futile to fulfill the pressing desires of the public aimed at reforms. But he very soon bowed to corruption himself and started silencing voices of his political opposition forces. Likewise, he tried to enhance his authority by adopting a new revised constitution concluded by a rigging based referendum in 2007. The interim government formed and approved an altogether alien and new constitution which was completely different from the previous one, in the month of June 2010, despite a deep political and constitutional crisis. The draft was not believed to be accepted but it proved the pillar of continuing pluralist political stability and the hard process of democratization.

6. The Elections of 2010 and 2011

It was in the years 2010 and 2011, that Kyrgyzstan witnessed the first successful contest of presidential and parliamentary democratic elections. These elections made Kyrgyzstan the first country in central Asia in which the political power was transferred in a peaceful and democratic way. In the beginning many people were concerned about the survival of the constitution but the parliament of Kyrgyzstan and the government has performed to date with relative peaceful and democratic means. It was a new tradition appreciated by all the people alike. The warning of Ata-Jurt in 2013 and 2014, to contest the president can be interpreted by its comparative feebleness in the house, as well as the rule’s unfair inquiries of its statesmen. The leaders of all parties constantly dedicated to act upon recognized timetable for parliamentary elections (2015) and presidential elections (2017) despite the infrequent doubts of sudden removal by the parliament, which, under the present constitution, would be a most hard and challenging process. The political parties were growing and some small and regional parties that gained the vote in the local elections in 2012 were conducting campaigns that were having impacts at the national level.

Some political parties that emerged at that time were claiming that they represent the specific interests of a particular social group, such as people of other countries and producers but in fact they were working for their political interests. The strongest and well organized party was the SDPK, which is the party of President

Atambayev, amongst disunity and inner factions of other big political parties. But there was a trend towards party and party system. Strengths were noticed in the lead up to the 2015 polls. There were many incidents in the year 2014 when police jailed non-violent demonstrators. A reasonable number of leaders of opposition and various members from civil society raised voices against government's behavior towards minorities in the same year i-e 2014. The state of Kyrgyzstan is not so old so its institutions are also weak. Similarly the parties are also not so strong and the new constitutional system a very important trend is the increasing role of President Atambayev and his cabinet. Importantly it is an intimidation to the survival and continuation of a balanced democratic rule. But the amplified centralism of the president in the life of the country. Nevertheless, it has also been a deciding confident feature that often makes a link created in the ruling holes created by the other core institutes of government. The alone insistence of Atambayev, the priority to fight exploitation has produced in high numbers of bribery charges against both high and the low level government officials[11].

7. Periodical elections

Kyrgyzstan has made a good progress in holding presidential, local and parliamentary elections. From 2010 to 2012, Kyrgyzstan has successfully held three elections (parliamentary, presidential, and local) and referendum for constitutional change. The parliamentary and presidential elections were appreciated by the international observers. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), however, pointed out some issues in voter registration lists, while the work of the Central Elections Commission (CEC) sometimes there was no transparency. But these weaknesses were not enough to affect the overall result, according to local and international election observers.

8. Political participation

In 2014, all the political parties and political leaders had started preparation for the following general elections, planned for fall 2015. The members of parties which were represented in the parliament started campaigns in their respective areas to ensure a ticket in party lists and to do a ground work for a polling success. There are a total of 192 political parties in Kyrgyzstan, said the Ministry of Justice. The President wanted to hold free and impartial elections. It was his chief priority during his regime and, among other steps, started the collection of biometric personal data of all citizens in order to finish electoral rigging.

Majority of political parties are not so strong to perform as political units. Only two regional parties i.e. "Zamandash" and "Reforma" have a very clear ideology and message. One party works for the benefits of work force employed in Russia [12], whereas the other party works for the production community in Bishkek. The additional political parties that could get national popularity are Onuguu and Bir Bol. Onuguu has a hope to pool seats and votes with bigger political parties previously present in house. The five political parties who had presentation in the parliament, SDPK, is the only one which had not been split. When many members of this party left the party some of its members and big enmity started amongst its top leaders, Ata-Jurt and Respublika had come out to form one bigger party. The two other parties presently seated in the parliament, Ar-Namys and AtaMeken, did not take the risk by doing works in its areas needed to return to parliament in next elections. In Kyrgyzstan there are many interest groups.

9. Mass Media

The mass media of Kyrgyzstan is generally free and diverse but the people of cities have better chances of approach than residents of the remote villages. The residents of Bishkek enjoy very easy access to various prints, TV and radio stations [4]. In the year 2014, the Kyrgyz government succeeded to launch digital TV broadcasts in many parts of the country. This step enabled the broadcasters of Kyrgyzstan to get a nationwide audience. Apart from that, the online media remains mostly free, and a few news sources do publish criticism of the president, the parliament, and the government.

10. Judicial Reforms

Even though Kyrgyzstan witnessed on a determined jurisdictive reforms process in 2010, the court is still the weakest and most corrupted organ of the government. The reforms procedure has been exceedingly affected by politics and polluted by dishonesty. Both the houses, i-e president and parliament have tried to include judges who would work for their political desires. In 2014, President Atambayev asked for an alteration to the constitutional draft by making the Council of the Supreme Court. The NGO society disparaged the suggestion of the president, accusing the president of trying to select the judges who are loyal to the government [13]. The most independent member of the Supreme Court has been the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court, a de facto independent court of constitutional review, which started working in mid-2013 and has issued a big number of decisions, many of them not supported by the president or the government.

11. Eradication of Corruption

Soon after his poll in 2011, President Atambayev announced eradication of bribery and fraud to be a chief primacy and a matter of state safety. In 2013, the president's battle against corruption crushed members of almost all political parties except his own party SDPK. This trend was followed till 2014. This was closely noticed by all other political parties. Despite all these Atambayev continued to say that his campaign against corruption had been very successful. In fact, during the last few years have seen a big number of corruption charges against high profile people, although the number of cases had remained quite less good as compared to conviction rates. The president has alleged the media of giving fake picture of Kyrgyzstan as a corrupt country [14].

12. Fundamental Rights

The fundamental rights record of Kyrgyzstan is not too good, it is mixed. Like the constitutions of other countries the constitution provides identical privileges to all inhabitants alike irrespective of race, religion, color or gender. Besides, in 2014 the government made an accomplishment strategy to prevent torture. The plan was made according to the recommendations of the UN Special Committee on Torture and Other Cruel, Cold-hearted or Humiliating Treatment or Punishment. It contains a set of actions in three important parts i.e. to improve law making, creating awareness and giving departmental, administrative and technical backing.

In the proposal it is suggested to advance a number of drafts and additional regulations to the rules on the imprisonment of accused, the environments of jail and medical examination in jails. Apart from that the parliament has tried to make fundamental privileges for the LGBT communities and the NGOs sector. Moreover, in spite of clear constitutional articles, female and ethnic minorities are hardly represented at both the national and local levels. The discernment contrary to local Uzbek populations is also still present [15].

13. Conclusion

Kyrgyzstan has succeeded in making some good movement in the direction of democratization ever since the replacement of political rules in 2010. The new constitution provides better authorities to house and many provisions are included to avoid the creation of a single, popular leader. In spite of previous criticism and rumors, the constitution is still in force and without change as of early 2015, and the government management had intended to hold presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled in 2015 and 2017. This would mean to finish a decade-long tradition of early elections that greatly helped to reinforce the democracy. The nation has witnessed the emergence of a diversified civil society, political parties of opposition, and independent media, institutions of neighbor countries still largely do not have. Even though these good symbols of development, the internal institutional weakness of various agencies of government, the corrupted judiciary, and the nominal rule of law continue to sabotage the process of democratization in Kyrgyzstan. It can be predicted that in near future Kyrgyzstan will be a well-developed democratic country and the leaders as well as the public will act upon democratic traditions in the light of the experience they gained from the regimes of Akayev and Bakiyev provided the soil of Kyrgyzstan cannot become the part of great game or international politics.

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