Sabine Fischer, Heiko Pleines (eds.)

Crises and Conflicts in Post-Socialist Societies

The Role of Ethnic, Political and Social Identities

CHANGING EUROPE

Edited by Dr. Sabine Fischer, Dr. Heiko Pleines and
Prof. Dr. Hans-Henning Schröder

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CRISES AND CONFLICTS
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Dieser Titel ist als Printversion im Buchhandel

oder direkt bei *ibidem* (www.ibidem-verlag.de) zu beziehen unter der

ISBN 978-3-89821-855-9.

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Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Foreword

This book presents some of the many fine papers presented at the Changing Europe Summer School on 'Crises and Conflicts in Eastern European States and Societies: Stumbling Blocks or Stepping Stones for Democratisation?' held in Warsaw in September 2007. The Summer School brought together about 30 young scientists from all over the world who work on issues related to Central and Eastern European societies and the enlarged EU. Participants were selected with the help of international referees.

Over the course of the Summer School, the participants, mostly doctoral students from the disciplines of political science, sociology, social anthropology, economics and law, presented papers on their current research. Some of the best Summer School contributions were selected for publication in this edited volume.

This book would not have been possible without ample support. First of all, our thanks go to the participants in the Summer School, who, with their enthusiasm and knowledge, made it an unforgettable event. Special thanks also go to the German Historical Institute, which hosted the Summer School; Director Klaus Ziemer and his staff created the perfect environment for the Summer School. We would also like to thank all the referees who supported us in the selection of appropriate participants. We are additionally grateful to all those who helped to organise the Summer School and the book production, namely Hilary Abuhove (language editing), Christopher Gilley (language editing), Judith Janiszewski (style editing), Julia Kusznir (organisational support), Matthias Neumann (technical editing), Daniela Chodorowska and Susanne Schaller (Summer School organisation).

Last but certainly not least, we want to express our gratitude to the Volkswagen Foundation, which generously supports the Changing Europe Summer Schools.

Bremen and Paris, January 2008
The editors

Sabine Fischer and Heiko Pleines

Introduction

Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe has been characterised by historically shaped crises and conflicts on all levels of political, economic and societal life. Minority and ethno-political conflicts, many of them currently at a stalemate, have severely hampered state-building and societal stability – and continue to do so. Contradictory interpretations of history prevent societies from forging a common identity and thus impede nation-building processes. Political and social identities exert an important influence on democratic and socioeconomic transformation processes. The focus of this edited volume is on the role of various ethnic, political and socioeconomic identities in post-socialist societies.

The first two parts of this book deal with ethnic and national identities. The four contributions in the first part look at ethnic division and the identities of ethnic minorities. Elina Karakulova examines the role of multiethnicity in Kyrgyztan's 'Tulip Revolution', focusing on the political instrumentalisation of ethnic divisions. Taking the German minority in Kazakhstan as an example, Alexander M. Danzer goes on to look at ethnicised symbolic landscapes as constraints to nation-building. In his contribution on Hungarian minorities in Slovakia and Romania, Robert Sata develops a quadric model of ethnic relations from a political science perspective, whereas Anders Blomqvist presents an analysis of relations between Romanian and Hungarian ethnic groups based on an examination of national narratives.

The contributions in the second part of this volume focus on state-building. Michael Bobick employs a social anthropology approach to discuss the concept of sovereignty against the backdrop of the Moldovan-Transnistrian conflict. Lili Di Puppo compares national and international approaches to fighting corruption in Georgia.

The third part turns the readers' attention to political identities. In many post-socialist societies, the division between communists and anti-communists is of special importance. Meanwhile, right-wing populism poses a serious challenge to mainstream politics. Gábor Halmai discusses the latter scenario in Hungary, while Birgit Hofmann examines the role of the communist past in the Czech Republic.

The fourth part of the volume continues to discuss the role identity issues play for democratic consolidation, but this time the focus is on socioeconomic identities based on class, social capital and youth. Rafael Mrowczynski compares the emergence of middle classes in Russia and Poland, while Karol Mojkowski examines social capital through the prism of Warsaw. After a general reflection on the political challenges of democratic consolidation in Bosnia-Herzegovina by Maja Nenadović, Franziska Blomberg looks into the role of youth-work in this specific context.

The final part of the book presents three different cases of social and gender identities in transformation. Volha Vysotskaya looks at the motives of highly-skilled workers for migrating from the former Soviet Union to Germany. Olha Yarova proceeds to examine the migration of unskilled women from Ukraine to Italy, with emphasis on the change in gender roles in Ukrainian families caused by female labour migration. The final contribution, by Klea Faniko, Fabio Lorenzi-Cioldi, Fabrice Buschini and Armand Chatard, investigates the reception of affirmative action plans for women in Albania.

Taken together, the contributions in this volume reflect the wide variety of challenges and conflicts linked to ethnic, national, political, social and gender identities in post-socialist societies in Central and Eastern Europe. They not only serve to illustrate the significant differences among post-socialist transformations, but also highlight the variety of theoretical concepts and methodological approaches that can be used to research identity, its change and impact on societal developments.

Part I. Ethnic Divisions. Memories, Identities and Demarcation

Elina Karakulova

1.   Multiethnicity in Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution

1.1.   Introduction

The purpose of this work is to investigate and analyse the role of ethnicity in the 2005 'Tulip revolution' in Kyrgyzstan. More precisely, the work attempts to understand why the political confrontation during the February–March 2005 events in Kyrgyzstan increased concerns about the country's multi-ethnicity. Drawing on an analysis of the secondary literature, media and field reports on the 'revolution' and theories on transition and nation-building, this work analyses why ethnicity became an issue, in what ways an ethnicisation of political confrontation took place and what the possible consequences of it are.

Using Brubaker's theory on 'ethnicity without groups', I argue that the political struggle between the incumbents and opposition during the 'Tulip revolution' did not acquire an ethnic spin because the sudden change of government unleashed long-standing ethnic groups' antagonisms and competition for better opportunities. Instead, I argue that ethnicity was summoned, mobilised through various deliberate and unintended activities and narratives, such as intra-ethnic elite rivalry, the patterns of political mobilisation by the opposition, a media 'discourse of danger' and specific issues of political instability which involved ethnicity.

In order to substantiate my argument I used a combined conceptual framework that brings together some elements of transitional theories in semi-authoritarian societies and a constructivist approach to ethnicity. The vast range of literature has focused on ethnicity in semi-democracies or semi-autocracies, trying to explain structural causes of the high potential for ethnic conflict in such settings. Among the normative suggestions which have been made, are the lack of an institutional basis for a peaceful transfer of power, the presence of deep cleavages along which political competition occurs, elites playing an ethnic card in order to get a plurality of supporters, and an unfinished nation-building project. Most transitologists refer to ethnic communities as fixed and unitary actors, whether involved in a conflict through a psychological quest for 'group worth' or driven by opportunistic competition. This work attempts to combine some parts of the theories mentioned, such as the role of elites, nation-building legacies, with a rather new approach to 'ethnicity without groups'. This perspective on ethnicity as something fluid, ever-changing and eventful enabled me to identify some factors and *events*, which are not directly connected to ethnicity but which contributed to the reification of ethnic 'groupness', i.e. a certain degree of unity and solidarity on the ethnic basis.

Some of the findings suggest that one of the most conspicuous activities was electoral mobilisation during and after the parliamentary race, which often evolved around ethnic candidates, political and media discourse on intra-ethnic group struggle, and discussion of the status of the Russian language after the 'revolution'. Among the indirect consequences of the reification of ethnic 'groupness' after the March 2005 events are the increased out-migration among members of the non-titular nationalities, some objective instances of ethnic violence, and fears of prosecution and oppression expressed by some national minority groups.

By identifying and analysing the ways ethnicity becomes politicised, one can also identify the ways to intervene and prevent such forces from making ethnicity the primary feature of every-day politics. Consequently, by stopping ethnicity form becoming politicised, it may be possible to avoid inter-communal confrontations with dreadful repercussions.

1.2.   Multi-Ethnicity in Kyrgyzstan's 'Tulip Revolution'

This work seeks to contribute to the debate on the February–March 2005 protests that forced the first president of the newly independent ex-Soviet Kyrgyz republic, Askar Akaev, out of the office on the allegations of authoritarianism by looking at a rather specific issue of ethnicity and the role it came to play during and in the early aftermath of the 'Tulip revolution'. The focus is inspired by the increased concern over the interethnic conflict and ethnic violence allegedly unleashed by the drastic political change, expressed by the people, media and early scholarly works.[1]

Drawing on an analysis of secondary literature, media and field reports on the 'revolution' and theories on transition and nation-building, this work will analyse why ethnicity became an issue, in what ways ethnicisation of political confrontation took place and what the possible consequences of it are. Using Brubaker's theory on 'ethnicity without groups'[2], I will argue that political struggle between the incumbents and opposition during 24 March events took an ethnic tone through the patterns of political mobilisation, intra-ethnic struggle and the 'securitisation'[3] of multi-ethnicity by the media, political entrepreneurs and civic organisations. Thus, multi-ethnicity, even if has become conflict-prone after the 'Tulip revolution', is not a result of 'long-

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1   See for example, Burke, Justine: Kyrgyzstan's Revolution. Be Careful What You Wish For, in: EurasiaNet Commentary, 25 March 2005; Saipov, Alisher: Interethnic Clashes are Possible in Kyrgyzstan, in: Ferghana.ru, 6 March 2005; Pushaev, Yuri: After March Events in Kyrgyzstan Russians Face New, not the Best Times in Their Lives, in: Ferghana.ru, 15 July 2005; Herd, Graeme: Colorful Revolutions and the CIS: Manufactured versus Managed Democracy?, in: Problems of Post-Communism, 2005 (Vol. 52), No. 2, pp. 3–18.

2   Brubaker, Rogers: Ethnicity without Groups, Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

3   'Securitisation' is used as formulated by Ole Wæver.

standing' ethnic cleavages, but rather of the reification of ethnic 'groupness'[4] under rapid political change.

With the ousting of Askar Akaev, the idea of Kyrgyzstan as a 'common home' promoted by his presidency in an attempt to accommodate the country's multi-ethnicity seemed to have suffered a setback, putting the issue of future interethnic relationships and the fate of the national minorities into question. Represented by over eighty different ethnic groups, with Uzbeks and Russians being the largest national minority communities, multi-ethnicity in the region has been generally seen as problematic and conflict-prone.[5] Political changes and economic stagnation after the fall of the Soviet Union apparently exacerbated the potential for ethnic conflict, especially in overpopulated areas like the Ferghana Valley in the South of Kyrgyzstan, which witnessed violent armed clashes between Uzbek and Kyrgyz population in June 1990. As a result, instability following the fierce takeover of the government headquarters on the 24 March was said to be unleashing 'long-standing' ethnic antagonisms.[6] However, approaching ethnicity from 'long-standing' hostilities obscures an analytical view of the events, implying that any political instability will be almost automatically followed by interethnic confrontation.

The way in which the country's multi-ethnicity received social salience early after the 'Tulip revolution', with reports on increased instances of interethnic clashes by the media and civil society organisations[7] and appeals of discontent with the ethnic situation by national minority groups,[8] not only 'securitises' ethnicity, but also to a certain extent contributes to a reification of ethnic identities, putting them in the 'foreground'.[9] Once it has been politicised and mobilised, ethnic 'groupness' can lead to dismal outcomes, for it is hard to demobilise and de-politicise.

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4 Brubaker, Rogers: Ethnicity without Groups, Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

5 Patnaik, Ajay: Nations, Minorities and States in Central Asia, Kolkata: Anamika Publishers and Distributors Ltd, 2003; Kulchik, Yuri / Fadin, Andrei: Central Asia after the Empire, London: Pluto Press, 1996; Tabyshalieva, Anara: The Challenge of Regional Cooperation in Central Asia. Preventing Ethnic Conflicts in the Ferghana Valley, Washington D.C.: USIP, 1999; Slim, Randa: The Ferghana Valley. In the Midst of a Host of Crises, in: Mekenkamp, Monique / van Tongeren, Paul (eds): Searching for Peace in Central and South Asia. An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building Activities, Boulder/CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002, pp. 141–167.

6 Burke, Justine: Kyrgyzstan's Revolution. Be Careful What You Wish For, in: EurasiaNet Commentary, 25 March 2005.

7 International Crisis Group: Kyrgyzstan. After the Revolution, in: International Crisis Group Asia Report, 2005.

8 Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan Appeal to President for Protection Against Nationalistic Tendencies, in: Gazeta.kg, 1 November 2005.

9 Abdurasulov, Abdujalil: Titular Group and Ethnic Minorities after the Kyrgyz Revolution. The Changed Interaction, paper presented at the roundtable on 'Understanding the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan One Year On. Dynamics and Implications', London School of Economics and Political Science, 28 February 2006.

Among the indirect consequences of the reification of ethnic 'groupness' after the March 2005 events has been the increased emigration among members of the non-titular nationalities, some objective instances of violence on an ethnic basis,[10] and fears of prosecution and oppression expressed by some national minority groups.[11]

1.3.   Ethnicity and Political Change in Semi-Authoritarian Societies

It has been widely suggested that 'revolutionary' and rapid attempts to introduce political changes in semi-authoritarian societies run the risk of producing violent conflicts and aggravate already existing social and ethnic cleavages.[12] Transitologists give different accounts on why ethnic heterogeneity is conflict-prone in semi-democracies. Thus, Snyder suggests that the early stages of democratisation tend to spark ethnic conflict not because nations are being awakened by liberal institutions, but because elites use nationalist appeals to gain popular support. Nodia argues for the normalcy of the ethnicisation of political change in transitional semi-authoritarian societies as the 'demands of democracy-building provide incentives for molding nations out of preexistent ethnic material'[13] since any democratisation movement needs to determine the substance of 'We the People.' Horowitz in his extensive research of the *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*[14] criticises the elitist approach to ethnic violence in transitional societies, suggesting instead more focus on the psychological power of ethnic identification, and the search by ethnic communities for a 'group worth' and group legitimacy in a certain polity. This possesses a much stronger explanatory power for ethnic conflict than do the materialist and elitist approaches. According to Horowitz, the self-interested elites do not simply manipulate the blind masses in order to create ethnic hostility. This symbolic zest for 'group worth' represents a *real* and not phoney consciousness among both the elites and the wider population.

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10   Disturbances in Iskra Village Intensified, in: Akipress, 6 February 2006; Toralieva, Gulnura: Russians are Fleeing Kyrgyzstan, in: Gazeta.kg, 14 February 2006.
11   Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan Appeal to President for Protection Against Nationalistic Tendencies, in: Gazeta.kg, 1 November 2005.
12   Snyder, Jack: From Voting to Violence. Democratization and Nationalist Conflict, London: W.W. Norton and Company Ltd, 2000; Nodia, Ghia: Nationalism and Democracy, in: Diamond, Larry / Plattner, Mark (eds): Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, pp. 3–22; Ellingsen, Tanja: Colorful Community or Ethnic Witches' Brew?, Multiethnicity and Domestic Conflict during and after the Cold War, in: The Journal of Conflict Resolution, 2000 (Vol. 44), No. 2, pp. 228–249.
13   Nodia, Ghia: Nationalism and Democracy, in: Diamond, Larry / Plattner, Mark (eds): Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, pp. 3–22, here p. 9.
14   Horowitz, Donald: Ethnic Groups in Conflict, Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 2000.

Gurr and Ottaway[15] give a thorough analysis of regime-types in the interdependent triad of political change – regime – ethnicity. Regime type is viewed as a dimension of the ethno-political environment that shapes the course and modes of ethnic political mobilisation. Aklaev, for instance, suggests that in the post-Soviet period, during ethno-political crises leaders turned to authoritarian methods of dealing with various competing groups.[16] Ottaway explained this with the semi-authoritarian nature of most of the former Soviet states,[17] which she singles out as a separate regime type. As rightly noted, 'In countries where […] ethnic or religious conflict divides and mobilises the population, for example, semi-authoritarian governments play on the public's grievances and fears and get support by promising solutions.'[18]

Ottaway's typology is very useful in providing an understanding of why semi-authoritarian regimes possess little institutional framework for legitimate change of political elites. It also explains the fact that once rapid transformation is in place in such societies, the rules of the game change completely, creating uneasy allegiances and instability.

Another strand of literature has been focused on unfinished and exclusionary nation-building projects that contribute to the politicisation of ethnic belonging and intensify ethnic cleavages.[19] On the one hand, this is due to the tendency of radical voices to prevail among different competing ethnic communities during the transitional nation-building process, which further polarises divisions.[20] Horowitz, draw-

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15   Ottaway, Marina: Democracy Challenged. The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003; Gurr, Robert: Peoples Against States. Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World System, in: International Studies Quarterly, 1994 (Vol. 38), No. 3, pp. 347–377.

16   Aklaev, Airat: Democratization and Ethnic Peace. Patterns of Ethnopolitical Crisis Management in Post- Soviet Settings, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.

17   The similar view was expressed in Mansfield, Edward / Snyder, Jack: Democratization and the Danger of War, in: International Security, 1995 (Vol. 20), No. 1, pp. 5–38.

18   Ottaway, Marina: Democracy Challenged. The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 17.

19   See for example, Bohr, Annette: Central Asian States as Nationalizing Regimes, in: Smith, Graham (ed.): Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands. The Politics of National Identities, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Khazanov, Anatoly: After the USSR. Ethnicity, Nationalism and Politics in the Commonwealth of Independent States, Madison/WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995; Kolstø, Pål: Political Construction Sites. Nation Building in Russia and the post-Soviet States, Boulder/CO: Westview Press, 2000; Tishkov, Valery: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union. The Mind Aflame, London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997; Brubaker, Rogers: Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and National Question in the New Europe, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Wimmer, Andreas: Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict. Shadows of Modernity, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

20   Snyder, Jack: From Voting to Violence. Democratization and Nationalist Conflict, London: W.W. Norton and Company Ltd, 2000; Diamond, Larry: Introduction, in: Diamond, Larry / Plattner, Mark (eds): Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994; Horowitz, Donald: Democracy in divided societies, in: Diamond, Larry / Plattner, Mark (eds): Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy, Baltimore/MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, pp. 35–55.

ing on the example of African and South Asian transitional societies, argues that any attempts to shut out minorities from political participation is dangerous and can lead to various forms of violence.[21]

On the other hand, nation-building in semi-democracies is very often about 'nationalising'[22] state policies, which attempt to identify legitimate an 'owner', ethno-cultural leader and 'indigenous' group. Such policies tend to divide the citizenry between more legitimate 'owners' and partially legitimate ones.

To use Bohr's standpoint on the issue, some the Central Asian states managed all the same to make valuable steps in protecting ethnic minorities and introducing democratic institutions. In this way, their 'nationalising' policies transcended the earlier efforts impeding the democratisation process.[23] Most of the ex-communist countries have been involved in rather exclusionary nation-building practices, exacerbating interethnic tensions.[24] In this respect, ethnically polarised societies are more difficult to consolidate for a common nation-building project, which is said to be one of the pre-requisites for a peaceful transitional process.[25]

The common critique of the outlined theories is the disproportional analytical value given to the state and its institutions as a key-determinant of ethnic interaction during rapid transitional processes.[26] Thus, these theories tend to overproblematise multi-ethnicity. Another point of critique is that most of the discussed theories take ethnic groups as fixed, bounded and conflict-prone. It has been unclear what qualifies

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21   Horowitz, Donald: The Deadly Ethnic Riot, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
22   Brubaker, Rogers: Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and National Question in the New Europe, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
23   Bohr, Annette: Central Asian States as Nationalizing Regimes, in: Smith, Graham (ed.): Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands. The Politics of National Identities, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
24   Brubaker, Rogers: Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and National Question in the New Europe, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Bohr, Annette: Central Asian States as Nationalizing Regimes, in: Smith, Graham (ed.): Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands. The Politics of National Identities, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Saroyan, Mark: Majority-Minority Relations in the Soviet Republics, in: Saroyan, Mark (ed.): Minorities, Mullahs and Modernity. Reshaping Community in the Former Soviet Union, Berkeley: University of California, 1997.
25   Aklaev, Airat: Democratization and Ethnic Peace. Patterns of Ethnopolitical Crisis Management in Post-Soviet Settings, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999; Snyder, Jack: From Voting to Violence. Democratization and Nationalist Conflict, London: W.W. Norton and Company Ltd, 2000; Patnaik, Ajay: Nations, Minorities and States in Central Asia, Kolkata: Anamika Publishers and Distributors Ltd, 2003; Horowitz, Donald: Democracy in divided societies, in: Diamond, Larry / Plattner, Mark (eds): Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy, Baltimore/MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, pp. 35–55; Diamond, Larry: Introduction, in: Diamond, Larry / Plattner, Mark (eds): Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.
26   Hughes, James / Sasse, Gwendolyn: Comparing Regional and Ethnic Conflicts in the Post-Soviet Transition States, in: Hughes, James / Sasse, Gwendolyn (eds): Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union. Regions in conflict, New York/NY: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001.

as a 'deep ethnic cleavage'[27] and whether it precedes or follows on from the political upheaval. Thus, there has been little attention given to the saliency of cleavages and accounts that differentiate between perceived and objectively existing cleavages, which makes a big difference in an analysis of inter- and intra-group interaction during political upheavals.

1.4. 'Eventful' Ethnic Identity

A rather different approach to ethnicity and 'ethnic conflict' was introduced by Brubaker, who, first, suggests avoiding treating ethnic groups as 'putative things-in-the-world […] but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and disaggregated terms'[28], which can help us to analyse how ethnic 'groupness' is being formed as a result of deliberate group-making projects, coding and framing by politicians, media, and governments. Brubaker suggests that nowadays there are many more actors that are interested in 'ethnicising' political violence, such as incumbents, kin states, organisations, politicians and the actors of the political struggle themselves. Brubaker notices that in such cases 'ethnicity' as such is not a source of conflict; rather conflicts or violence for specific political interests are being deliberately framed in ethnic terms, reifying ethnic 'groupness'.

'Groupness' implies a certain degree of solidarity provoked by an event, be it deliberate mobilisation by elites or media, violent incidents, or socio-political instability. In other times, when such triggering events are absent ethnic identity is not salient, the level of ethnic 'groupness' is very low.

Reeves, in her accounts of identity during the 'Tulip revolution'[29], rightly suggests that this is precisely the 'groupist' approach that predominates nowadays and hinders a cohesive analysis of the events, producing an ethnic discourse of danger, which has the potential to materialise.

Among the most valuable advantages of an 'eventful' approach to ethnicity is the possibility to see *why* and *how* intra-ethnic struggles, political entrepreneurship, media superficiality and the agendas of certain institutions, rather than ordinary people, allow for a problematisation of ethnic heterogeneity, the mischaracterisation of whole regions as ethnic crises zones, and the interpretation of social and political

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27   Horowitz, Donald: Democracy in divided societies, in: Diamond, Larry / Plattner, Mark (eds): Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy, Baltimore/MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, pp. 35–55.

28   Brubaker, Rogers: Ethnicity without Groups, Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 11.

29   Reeves, Madeleine: 'We're with the People!' The Eventfulness of Identity in Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution, paper presented at the roundtable on 'Understanding the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan One Year On. Dynamics and Implications', London School of Economics and Political Science, 28 February 2006.

upheavals in ethnic terms. Later on in this chapter, I will employ this theory in analysing the events, narratives and activities that were either aimed or contributive to the formation of conflicting ethnic 'groupness'.

1.5.   The 'Tulip Revolution' in Ethnic 'Groupness' Reification

In this section I will focus on three factors which had the most immediate and profound effect on the reification of ethnic 'groupness': the omnipresent discourse of intra-ethnic group struggle, patterns of political mobilisation by the opposition and some instances of political instability that accompanied the 'Tulip revolution'.

There are a growing number of scholars who believe that regional divisions in Central Asia are the primary feature of political life since independence in 1991.[30] According to Melvin and Kadyrov, the centre-regional developments in the post-independence Kyrgyz Republic have been marked by a clear South-North political rivalry, which had already intensified under the perestroika policies. The interpretation of the causes of the 'Tulip revolution', both in the media and academic writings, have followed this pattern and see the events of 24 March as a North-South political confrontation.[31] Whether clan rivalry was political reality or a constructed myth, the argument here suggests that the regional struggle substantially reified ethnic identities during the events of February–March 2005 in Kyrgyzstan and was one of the contributing factors to the emergence of the narrative of ethnic conflict in the media.[32]

The ousting of the Akaev's administration by seizure of the 'White House' in Bishkek was seen by many as a victory of the southern political elites over their northern rivals,[33]

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30   Melvin, Neil: Patterns of Centre–Regional Relations in Central Asia. The Cases of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan, in: Hughes, James / Sasse, Gwendolyn (eds): Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union. Regions in conflict, New York/NY: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001; Kadyrov, Shokhrat: Political Technologies in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Central Asia, in: Vestnik Evrazii, 2005 (Vol. 4), No. 2, pp. 202–235; Beissinger, Mark: Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena. The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions, paper presented to the London School of Economics Shapiro Seminar Series, 2005; Kurmanov, Zaynidin: The 2005 Parliamentary Elections in Kyrgyzstan and Collapse of the Akaev Regime, in: Central Asia and the Caucasus, 2005 (Vol. 3), No. 33, pp. 7–14.

31   Kurmanov, Zaynidin: The 2005 Parliamentary Elections in Kyrgyzstan and Collapse of the Akaev Regime, in: Central Asia and the Caucasus, 2005 (Vol. 3), No. 33, pp. 7–14; Knyazev, Alexander: Damped Revolution. 'New Clans' are Striving for Power in Kyrgyzstan, in: Liter.kz, 3 May 2006; Pushaev, Yuri: After March Events in Kyrgyzstan Russians Face New, not the Best Times in Their Lives, in: Ferghana.ru, 15 July 2005; Todua, Zurab: Kyrgyzstan after Akaev. What Happened and Why, What Next?, in: Central Asia and the Caucasus, 2005 (Vol. 3), No. 2, pp. 14–23; Marat, Erica: The Tulip Revolution. One Year After, Washington D.C.: The Jamestown Foundation, 2006.

32   Election-related Disturbances Hit Southern Kyrgyzstan, in: Eurasia Insight, 4 March 2005, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav030405.shtml; Saipov, Alisher: Interethnic Clashes are Possible in Kyrgyzstan, in: Ferghana.ru, 6 March 2005.

33   See: Dual Power Scenario Takes Hold of Kyrgyzstan, in: Eurasianet, 22 March 2005; Knyazev, Alexander: Damped Revolution. 'New Clans' are Striving for Power in Kyrgyzstan, in: Liter.kz, 3 May 2006.

a victory of the more ethnically conservative 'Kyrgyz nationalists' over more Russified urban and 'multicultural' Kyrgyz elite from the north.[34] The omnipresent discourse on regional strife and the presence of two potential presidential candidates from the South (Kurmanbek Bakiev) and the North (Felix Kulov) produced numerous speculations in the media on the possibility of civil war between the two regions, as though people really divide themselves into 'southerners' and 'northerners', unless the two strongest leaders negotiate a joint form of governing.[35]

Markedly, there was persistent discussion of the ethnic aspect of both politicians. The local media expressed hopes for the new president Bakiev to be minority-friendly due to his former education in Russia and, more importantly, his ethnically Russian spouse.[36] This factor seemed to be enormously powerful for the people in the atmosphere of ethnicised politics and fear of ethnic conflict and minority oppression. Due to the lack of empirical data it is hard to say with great confidence whether it was the case or not. However, drawing on the media writings, the ethnicity of Bakiev's wife seemed to be an ethnic security card for the new president. For Felix Kulov this card appeared to be his low proficiency in the state language,[37] which for many was a proof of his high level of Russification pulling him out of the raw of 'Kyrgyz nationalists'.

Thus, the growing ethnic polarisation within the Kyrgyz has had a tendency of scaring away national minority communities.[38] It produced a sense of exclusion from decision making process on the part of members of the non-titular nationalities, as they were not allowed to get involved in the ethno-regional Kyrgyz strife.[39] The politically important Uzbek minority community, whose support was used by the early Akaev's administration, grew increasingly isolated. Attempts by the opposition to

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34 Melvin, Neil: Authoritarian Pathways in Central Asia. A Comparison of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan, unpublished paper, 2002; Pushaev, Yuri: After March Events in Kyrgyzstan Russians Face New, not the Best Times in Their Lives, in: Ferghana.ru, 15 July 2005; Todua, Zurab: Kyrgyzstan after Akaev. What Happened and Why, What Next?, in: Central Asia and the Caucasus, 2005 (Vol. 3), No. 2, pp. 14–23; Marat, Erica: The Tulip Revolution. One Year After, Washington D.C.: The Jamestown Foundation, 2006.

35 Temirbaev, Vyacheslav: Who is Interested in Distemper?, in: Moya Stolitsa Novosti, 19 April 2005; Dubnov, Arkady: One Year Ago the President Fled Kyrgyzstan, in: Vremya Novostei, 24 March 2006.

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