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دانشگاه علامه طباطبائی

Allameh Tabatabaee University

ECO College of Insurance

Area Studies Department

M.A Degree Dissertation

**The U.S. Policy in Central Asia and its Impact
on the Colored Revolutions in the Region (The
Case Study of Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan)**

By:

Reza Saeedi

Supervisor:

Dr. Hossein Daheshiar

Advisor:

Dr. Damanpak Jami

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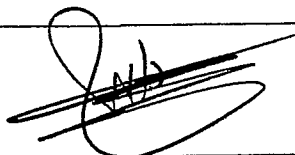
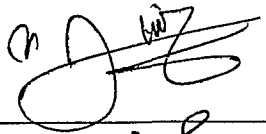
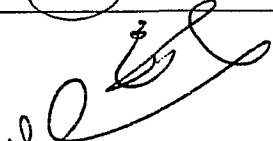
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	دکتر حسین دهشیار	استاد راهنما
	آقای مرتضی دامن پاک	استاد مشاور
	دکتر سید حسن میرفخرایی	استاد داور
	دکتر غدیر مهدوی	نماینده کمیته تحصیلات تکمیلی

Allameh Tabatabaee University
ECO College of Insurance

The undersigned hereby certify that they have read and recommend to the faculty of E.C.O College of Insurance for acceptance a thesis entitled "**The U.S. Policy in Central Asia and its Impact on the Colored Revolutions in the Region (The Case Study of Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan)**" by Reza Saeedi in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Art.

Dated: November 2008

Supervisor:

Dr. Hossein Daheshiar

Advisor:

Dr. Damanpak Jami

Referee:

Dr. Hasan Mirfakhraee

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Abstract

After the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia in 2003 and the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine in 2004, Kyrgyzstan was the next in line of the former Soviet Union republics to continue the line of so called “Colorful Revolutions”. The Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan was more violent than its predecessors and followed the disputed Kyrgyz parliamentary elections, 2005. At the same time it was more divided than previous such revolutions. The protesters in different areas adopted different colors for their protests (pink and yellow). The Tulip Revolution refers to the overthrow of President Askar Akayev and his government in the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan after the parliamentary elections of February 27 and of March 13. The present study tries to analyze the roots and origins of this revolution and the impact of U.S. foreign policy in Central Asia in facilitating these changes.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Kyrgyz Republic is a country in Central Asia which is Landlocked and mountainous, it is bordered by Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the southwest and China to the east. Kyrgyzstan became independent from the collapsing Soviet Union on the 31st of August 1991 and started to exist as an independent state for the first time in history.¹

The country's first freely elected President, the former physicist Askar Akayev, started his presidency very optimistically and wanted to quickly conduct large political and economical reforms in order to transform the country into a market orientated democracy. He also spoke about the importance of a strong party system, free media and a pluralist society. Despite these good intentions the reality of the situation meant that these ideals were very optimistic.

In the years following Akayev's election the country had to deal with growing ethnical and regional tensions as well as a collapsing economy that resulted in huge unemployment, corruption and a growing social inequality. Kyrgyzstan hosts people with over 80 different nationalities.

The biggest ethnical groups are Kyrgyz 66%, Uzbeks 14% and Russians 12%. This mixture of people can to a large extent be explained by Stalin's policy of sending people by constraint to settle in remote parts of the Soviet Union and the illogical borders drawn by the Soviets in Central Asia between 1924 and 1936. The idea was that these new borders should be built on ethnicity.

However, traditionally identities through families, tribes, clans and regions are much stronger in Central Asia.

This is also the case in Kyrgyzstan. As well as ethnical tensions there are regional tensions in the country between the somewhat more developed northern part, where the most of the Russian minority live and the poorer southern part where the most of the Uzbek minority live.

This divide is mainly a political struggle and to some extent a religious one. The collapsing economy has led to GDP per capital declining at a rate of 3.95 % annually for the period of 1991-2003. The official unemployment figures are just a few percent but in reality there is a huge hidden unemployment and a very big shadow economy. According to the World Bank 52% of the population lived in poverty in the year 2001.

Such hardship leads to frustration and despair for the majority of the population. After the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia in 2003 and the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine in 2004, Kyrgyzstan was

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyrgyzstan>

the next in line of the former Soviet Union republics to continue the line of so called “Colorful Revolutions”.²

Like Georgia’s Rose Revolution, the catalyst for Kyrgyzstan’s Tulip Revolution was flawed parliamentary elections. This time too, like in Georgia, the elections were more democratic than the previous parliamentary election, but fell short of being “free and fair” and more importantly did not meet local expectations.

Poverty, corruption, and the fear that the president would sabotage the succession struggle during the last months of his presidential term, made the opposition and masses take to the street in now familiar fashion.

If it succeeds, the “Tulip Revolution” could prove to be the most remarkable of all, causing positive reverberations throughout a region that many had written off as lost from the point of view of building democratic societies. It will put all of the other leaders in the region on notice that they too must take seriously the need for popular political enfranchisement or risk that they will be driven from power.

And if it fails, it will not be because the masses in Central Asia failed to meet the test, but because the ruling elite in Kyrgyzstan managed to sabotage the process of political change. For that reason, even the failure of the Kyrgyz revolution will not leave Central Asia’s other leaders feeling more secure.³

Research Problem

How should we understand the chain of events that led to the storming of the main government building in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on the 24th of March, 2005 – events that led to President Askar Akayev fleeing the country followed by his resignation? There are varying reasons, many diverse views, interpretations and understandings of these events. For example, the Kyrgyz political analyst Nur Omarov stated: “There are now many disputes whether what had happened was a public revolution or a Coup d’état”.⁴ In this study, I am going to analyze the main reasons and roots of Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. I want to examine whether U.S. foreign policy directly played a role in occurrence of Tulip Revolution or not?

² <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav031606a.shtml> – 2006-03-21

³ کولای، الهه. افسانه انقلابهای رنگی، تهران، موسسه مطالعات و تحقیقات بین المللی ابرار معاصر، ۱۳۸۴

⁴ www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st 5 1092107940

Research Question

My main question is: "What is the role of U.S policy in the formation of Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan?" In order to understand the dynamics of the "Tulip Revolution" I will also try to find answers to the following questions during my work. Which background factors were decisive for the "Tulip revolution"? How did the protests and demonstrations develop over time? What interests stood behind this development for U.S. policy in Central Asia?

Review & Literature

Concerning that the Colored Revolutions are new subjects, there are not many books and articles about the topic and the basis of these political events in the region. These books and articles mainly have been written by different writers from different countries, each text reflects the point of view of its writer. The Iranian researches about this title are not sufficient and most of them have been written in Persian .So they are not enough to answer the question raised for this study.

However, some Iranian research in this field is considerable and useful; for instance the book written by Elaheh Koolae the researcher and expert on Eurasia and New Independent States under the title of "The legend of Colored Revolutions" is the unique one in this regard.

This study tries to provide a different research which covers the various dimensions of this new phenomenon in Central Asia and Caucasus.

I have also found some other information which covers some aspects of the research, including the following:

1- Erica Marat, *Kyrgyzstan on the Brink*, Nov. 9, 2006; *the State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia*, Silk Road Paper, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Oct. 2006

2- Hunter, Shirin. "Central Asia Science Independence", Washington D.C, the center of strategic and international studies, 1996.

۳- دهشیار، حسین. سیاست خارجی آمریکا در آسیا، تهران، موسسه مطالعات و تحقیقات بین المللی ابرار معاصر، ۱۳۸۲

۴- کولایی، الهه. افسانه انقلابهای رنگی، تهران، موسسه مطالعات و تحقیقات بین المللی ابرار معاصر، ۱۳۸۴

Research Method

From the beginning of March 2006 to the end of June 2008 I tried to study many articles and research papers in this field, because I could not conduct a field study in Kyrgyzstan, mainly in the capital Bishkek. During this time, I searched in the net as the most available source for this new subject called Tulip Revolution and gathered information from various internet sites as well as a few related books from Iran's Foreign Ministry specialized Library.

Key Words

Kyrgyzstan, Tulip Revolution, Central Asia, U.S policy

Alternative Hypotheses

- 1-The political and economic problems of Kyrgyzstan has motivated the Tulip revolution in this country.
- 2- The Russian policies in the region are the main reason for political changes in Kyrgyzstan.
- 3- The domestic political situation of Kyrgyzstan has made the Tulip revolution.

The Main Hypothesis

"U.S policy in Central Asia facilitated the Tulip Revolution which was mainly caused by economic and political shortcomings in Kyrgyzstan." The present study tries to analyze the process of Colored Revolutions in Central Asia with emphasis on Kyrgyz Tulip revolution. Therefore, the readers will be more familiar with these new changes and events. Colored Revolutions are the names given collectively to a series of related movements that developed in post-communist societies in Central Asia and Caucasus. Some observers have called the events a revolutionary wave.

Participants in the colored revolutions have mostly used nonviolent resistance to protest against governments seen as corrupt or authoritarian, and to advocate democracy and national independence. These movements all adopted a specific color or flower as their symbol. The colored revolutions are notable for the important role of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and particularly student activists in organizing creative nonviolent resistance.⁵

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyrgyzstan>

**CHAPTER I: KYRGYZSTAN: A GENERAL
PERSPECTIVE**

CHAPTER I: KYRGYZSTAN: A GENERAL PERSPECTIVE

1.1 Location and Geography

The Kyrgyz Republic is situated in the centre of Central Asia region, occupying part of the Tien-Shan and northern ranges of the Pamir Mountains. From three sides: north, west and south, it borders with the republics of the former USSR - Republic of Kazakhstan (1,113 km), Republic of Uzbekistan (1,374 km) and Republic of Tadjikistan (972 km), and on the east and south-east - with the People's Republic of China (1,049 km). The total area of the Kyrgyz Republic is 198.500 sq.kms.

The Kyrgyz Republic is a mountainous country. 94, 2% of its territory is situated 1,000 m above sea level and 40,8% of its territory - 3,000 m above sea level. The wide range of absolute heights, complex relief, protracted geologic development of the country and other factors resulted in the variety of natural conditions and the richness of natural resources. All natural zones, characteristic of northern hemisphere, except for tropical zone, can be encountered on the territory of the Republic.



Figure 1.1 Map of Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan population of January 1, 1995 was 4,476 thousand people. More than 70 nationalities live in the Kyrgyz Republic: Kyrgyz (58,6%), Russian (17,1%), Uzbeks (13,8%), Ukrainians (1,8%), Tatars (1.3%), the Germans (0,8%) and others. The capital of the country is Bishkek (about 700 000 people). The basic territorial units in the Kyrgyzstan are oblasts (regions), raions (districts), cities and villages (ails).

1.2 Kyrgyz Peculiarities and Ethnics

In analyzing the internal situation of Kyrgyzstan, its foreign policy, and the evolution of civil society institutions, it is important to take into account Kyrgyz peculiarities. Some of them are basic to the Kyrgyz community since the tribal stage of its evolution. These specific features endured under the Russian Empire and the Soviet rule, when the Kyrgyz community acquired an embryonic form of statehood as a constituent Soviet republic.

Despite the somewhat simplified view of the Soviet Union as a centralized, unitary, egalitarian state with a strong element of totalitarianism that prevailed at some Western research centers, Kyrgyz specifics were in large measure taken into account by the Soviet leadership, which enabled the ruling Communist Party to pursue an effective national policy, maintaining an appropriate balance of forces and stability within the republic. These specifics, which will be considered in more detail below, are still in place as Kyrgyzstan acquired a full-fledged statehood, national sovereignty and independence, which was formally recognized by the international community in the post-Soviet era. One of these key features is the clannish nature of Kyrgyz society and even Kyrgyz statehood.

In this respect, the republic differs substantially from its neighbors – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, where, just like in any Central Asian country, clannishness is an important factor, but still not a core principle of societal structure.⁶ Clannishness has traditionally been a very strong factor, so Kyrgyzstan's well-known division into North and South, widely accepted in many Kyrgyz studies, can only be accepted in the geographic and geopolitical context. Consider the strong Uzbek factor, especially in the south of the country: Uzbekistan has traditionally watched the situation in Kyrgyzstan very closely indeed. Remember the tragic Osh events during the disintegration of Soviet statehood that were essentially an acute ethnic conflict between the Uzbek and Kyrgyz communities, resulting in a considerable loss of life among both

⁶ <http://kyrgyzstan.neweurasia.net/2007/03/29/were-all-in-the-same-boat-now>

ethnic groups, as well as ethnic Russians. Furthermore, there are two industrial centers of gravity – Bishkek in the North and Osh in the South.

There are also socio-cultural, industrial-and-economic, and national and- ethnic ingredients in the republic's division into North and South. Local clans, however, are by far the most important factor, Talas and Chui in the north, Ichilik and Otuz uul in the South, etc. Division by the tribes and families (not the family in the European sense of the word but rather the teyp, or local clan, which can number up to several thousand people) is crucial for the country's population but often incomprehensible in the West. Given the institutional weakness of Kyrgyz statehood, this tribal affiliation plays an important role in providing informal social guarantees, when not the state and its institutions but the clan (teyp) protects an individual belonging to this particular group. Furthermore, the clan is a kind of a "social elevator," ensuring an individual's career advancement and providing opportunities for his self-fulfillment.

Once a person has secured an important political or administrative position with access to certain resources, he strives to bring in representatives of his own clan on whom he can rely. For its part, a clan is interested to have representatives in various administrative positions, seeing this as a method to maintain control over essential resources, strengthen itself or simply ensure its survival. Therefore, *the clan principle plays a substantial role in Kyrgyzstan's political organization*. The balance of forces in the republic is predicated not so much on the lineup of political parties, which are traditionally weak in the post-Soviet area, as on the balance and lineup of forces between the clans.

Furthermore, some parties are in effect built on the principle of clan alliance. So the clan principle oftentimes takes precedence over the political-party organization principle.⁷ Experts on Kyrgyzstan's internal politics note that a representative of a particular clan in a high state or government office strengthens the clan's positions and its hierarchical structure. For example, should some problem arise, even if on a purely personal level, the entire clan can quickly and effectively organize acts of unrest involving thousands of people? Political conflicts and power struggles can easily mobilize a clan to take vigorous action.

This set-up is further strengthened by the complex familial system of relationships and connections between clans, organized on the principle: "if your relative gets married all of his in laws

⁷ <http://www.ipp.kg/en/?REDMANID=3cf8df8a5316c299d95d0f2ff2e3cc59>

automatically become members of your family.” Under this organization, a personal problem is regarded as a collective problem of several clans at once.

This substantially expands the potential number of parties to a conflict, elevating it to a communal level. The clan system, especially strong in rural areas, is less entrenched in Bishkek, which is the largest, most industrialized and “Russian” city in the country with a highly educated population.

The clan system in Kyrgyzstan is further consolidated by the country’s natural geographic division into South and North. The North is more modern and industrialized, as well as more “Russianized” with a higher proportion of ethnic Russians (above all in Bishkek), whereas the South (primarily the area abutting the Fergana Valley) is traditionally agrarian and far more patriarchal.

The second most important factor is Kyrgyzstan’s specific ethnic mix. Being, just like the majority of former USSR republics (except the Baltic countries), a rather artificial state entity, Kyrgyzstan was so organized from the start that it comprised a large and compact ethnic Uzbek minority whose positions were especially strong in the south of the country. The “Russian factor,” traditional for all post-Soviet states, is also present in the republic. Thus, in addition to the clannish/tribal/familial and cultural/historical dimension, the North-South division also has an ethnic component.

According to the first countrywide census of 1999, the total population was 4.852 million (by 2004, more than 5 million; see General), including a 700,000 ethnic Uzbek minority, based mainly in Osh, Batken and Jalal- Abad regions (in the south of the republic). Another 13 percent to 14 percent of the population is Russian-speakers – i.e., non-natives: ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, Dagestan, and others, who live mainly in Bishkek and the Chui region.

Kyrgyzstan’s ethnic makeup is also affected by migration. Just as the majority of other Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan continues to experience an exodus of ethnic Russians, whose number has declined by more than one-third. In 1989 through 1999, of 900,000 Russians living in Kyrgyzstan, more than 300,000 left the republic.

The proportion of other European ethnic groups leaving the republic permanently is even higher. For example, more than one-half of all ethnic Ukrainians have left Kyrgyzstan (from 108,000 to 50,000), while ethnic Germans are in principle disappearing as a diaspora with more than 4/5 of the community leaving the country (from 100,000 to 20,000). In recent years, migration among these ethnic minorities continued, while the change of government, known as the “Tulip Revolution,” only accelerated these processes.