

Situation Report

Introduction

On the 7th of April, 2010, President K. Bakiev who had come to power on the 24th of March, 2005, so called Tulip Revolution which deposed A. Akaev, Kyrgyzstan's long-term president, was ousted. His overthrow had been preceded by wide arrests of opposition leaders with whom he had been struggling for five years and who demanded that Bakiev resign and his family leave the top political stage.

On the eve of the second overthrow, police headed by Minister of Interior, M. Kongantiev, and Vice Prime Minister, A. Japarov, in Talas region clashed with opposition protests and in rounds of skirmishes the opposition won out. The two ministers were beaten almost to death and the latter escaped to somewhere while the former was saved by his wife for forty thousand USD. On the 7th of April it gathered masses in Bishkek, lunged to fight the police, wrenched out its weapons and panoply and set police cars on fire. Concentrated on the main square of Bishkek the opposition partisans and leaders launched attacks on the House of Government, office of Prime Minister and President. To prevent the mobs of marchers and lookers-on from capturing the offices snipers and policemen opened fire and killed many citizens. On that day the ambulance desperately worked to save lives of the wounded though seventy-five citizens were lost in the attempts of authorities to quell down the protests. Besides the attacks to the presidential and ministerial offices, the mobs thrust to the offices of National Security Service and Prosecutor's Office in an attempt to save previously detained opposition leaders and burned them all. Feared of wide clashes and lack of good prospects out of them, police, army and security service defected from the president to the Provisional Government leaders.

With the confrontation not yet ceased and resignation of the Prime Minister, D. Usenov, the crowds of people looted malls, shops and boutiques in Bishkek. The small and medium businesses suffered damages. Bakiev accused the opposition of unconstitutional coup d'état and refused to resign. The government of Russia suspected of backing the opposition recognised the Provisional Government.

President Bakiev escaped to South, allegedly, to look for partisans. He tried to gather support masses and organised with his brothers and family protests in Jalalabat province and city of Osh. All of them failed. Finally, OSCE, US, Russia and Kazakhstan presidents mediated the resignation of Bakiev. Today Bakiev is being hosted by Lukashenko Alexander, president of Belarus.

The opposition leaders formed Provisional People's Government headed by R. Otunbaeva, ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs, MP of Social Democratic Party and active contributor to the Tulip Revolution. Among the initial decisions of the Provisional Government were suspension of financial operations throughout the country, cancellation of increased tariffs on electricity supply and mobile communication, abrogation of certain governance structures as Central Agency for Development, Innovation and Investment established by K. Bakiev. A list of political figures who served to Akaev and Bakiev was formed to prevent their penetration into the new political system. Nevertheless, the officials who served both relying on their local partisans, including criminal gangs and kinsmen, grab the state power in their native regions and towns. The country is currently in chaos. Local authorities sweep one by one depending on which faction gathers more partisans.

As to the death toll, the number of the killed reached 86 people and the wounded reached up to 400 people.

The worst thing in the current political situation is that the Provisional Government has not yet got legitimisation.

Background of conflict

The President Bakiev has been quite successful in economic and social fields since his elections in July, 2005. In particular, during his tenure several industrial plants launched their operation, hydroelectric power plant has been under construction, new roads were paved in remote areas and communications improved. Kyrgyzstan more than doubled its state budget since 2005, started regularly paying its debts accrued during the tenure of A. Akaev, elevated rating in Doing Business, reconsidered to its own benefit contractual terms with gold miner Cameco Company engaged in gold mining. The government became more socially reliable as pensions and social benefits were paid regularly and appropriately. The most crucial point in Bakiev's sway was that Kyrgyzstan became less dependant on foreign and international aid and consultation – a feature dreamed-of during Akaev's reign – and, thereby, seemed to enhance its true sovereignty. Throughout 2005-2009 the President Bakiev managed to gain control of the legislative and judicial branches of power. His motley Ak-Jol party consisted majority in the parliament. He proved to be effective and successful to neutralise the not less motley opposition which instead of offering development programmes was capable of only demanding the president's resignation since 2005.

His shrewd and effective politics and policies seemed to have been confirmed by the presidential elections held in July 2009 as a result of which he got overwhelming share of votes though the campaign and ballot were harshly criticised by international observers. Actually, he agreed to curtail his constitutionally designated five-year term by a year and his next actions revealed the reasons why he had decided to agree to curtailment and re-election.

First of all, the President Bakiev intended to undertake deep and wide administrative and managerial reform and consolidate power, or it can be said, pave way for his successor, presumably, for his thirty-three-year-old younger son Maxim Bakiev. He redesigned top public bodies, abrogated some redundant and useless structures, combined functions in executive bodies and set up state bodies completely new for Kyrgyzstan. He divided Presidential Administration into President's Secretariat and President's Apparatus with analytical and PR functions bestowed upon the former and chancellery and HR functions bestowed upon the latter. In addition, he appointed State Minister of Foreign Affairs responsible for coordination of all foreign policies of all the executive bodies and State Minister of Interior equally responsible for coordination of law enforcement agencies, security and law and order. However, the two key know-how of Bakiev's reforms was creation of Central Agency for Development, Innovations and Investments, a body designed to control, manage and augmentation of country's financial assets. This body delegated its function of managing the financial assets to Kyrgyzstan's Development Fund, closed joint stock company staffed with supporters of the Bakiev family. The Central Agency itself was to be headed by Maxim Bakiev. Overall Bakiev's policies were to consummate in establishment of Special State Council staffed with key political decision-makers and designed to appoint Provisional president if the incumbent president on some reason can't fulfil or stops fulfilling his duties. In the history of Kyrgyzstan such an ambitious step had been undertaken previously.

Secondly, to privatise key public sectors as energy and telecommunications was another crucial task. The Soviet-built dilapidated infrastructure, facilities and equipment of energy system needed large capital investment and despite urgent attempts to attract investments starting from

2007 none of national and international investors showed interest in the energy sector. Bakiev understood in 2009 that without pre-term elections he could not ensure political stability in the country and his tight grip of top decision-making.

Thirdly, since 2005 Bakiev ushered in games resembling the Great Game flirting with Russia and the USA which both hold military bases near to Bishkek. During visits to Russia he several times promised expelling the Americans – for whom the military base at Manas airport is an important nexus – from Kyrgyzstan. Finally, he struck a deal with the Russian government of receiving 150 millions USD as credit to respond to budget needs and 300 million USD to infuse the country's economy in exchange to expelling the American base. Moreover, Russia promised to invest 1.7 billion USD into a to-be-built Kambar-Ata-1 hydroelectric plant. Nevertheless, returning to home Bakiev was quickly seduced to American offers to allocate donor aid or money to budget, infrastructure of Manas airport, opening anti-terror training centre in the South and etc. At the most desperate times, the Americans exploited Turkish top officials, including the President Abdullah Gül of the Turkish Republic, to smooth the diplomatic negotiations on allowing the American base to stay at its place. Bakiev seemed quite happy with his crafty tricking of both Americans and Russians.

The last half-year the successful Bakiev committed egregious blunders in internal and international politics. But these blunders have their pre-history and both, the blunders and the pre-history, predetermined the end result of the Bakiev's reign. In 2007 Bakiev betrayed by his close coterie understood that only did reliance on his family secure him position and power. He appointed his younger brother J. Bakiev Chief of Presidential Guard. In 2009 Bakiev overreached relying on his own family. He opted for this choice despite the opposition's harsh criticism of clan's and family's rule and revolution's driving force to eradicate clanship which produces injustice, poverty and backwardness. In March 2009 his family concocted murder of M. Sadyrbaev, all-powerful and crafty Chief of Presidential Administration, who helped Bakiev in a series of intricate chess moves neutralise the opposition and get rid of revolutionary companions. M. Sadyrbaev was murdered because of his disappointment with Bakiev family's scenario of country's development and inheritance of presidential post by Maxim Bakiev and his plan to join the opposition which gradually grew from inflow of former top officials.

His last half-year period of tenure Bakiev began with the reform of public administration, placement of his son into top position and financial asset centre, and Kurultai, traditional convention of nomad people for consultation on what paths to choose, which strategic, social, economic and political decisions to take. In the midway he permitted the Cabinet of Ministers to shift the burden of renovation of energy system to ordinary people and privatise public companies of energy distribution and public telecommunication company in non-transparent and devious way ending in his son's hands. His son basked in unlimited opportunities to turn over the Russian credit (0.7% of interest), initially earmarked for financing business plans of individual entrepreneurs, through his banks and the Kyrgyzstan's Development Fund with his friends and a certain Gurevich whom Italian court accused of financial machinations and links with the Russian mafia. Just from crediting agriculture with 23% of interest Maxim Bakiev profited large amount of money.

The Bakiev's last moves and the his son's machinations invoked the protests opposition which held Kurultai with its own agenda on the 17th of March and planned to hold another one on the 7th of April. The opposition activated its negotiations with Russian Prime Minister V. Putin. V. Putin asked accountability for the management of the Russian credit and got furious with glaring malfeasance of the money. He put all available pressure on Kyrgyzstan by raising price for diesel and gasoline (193.5 USD for each ton) to be sent to Kyrgyzstan and not allowing the Kyrgyz entrepreneurs with their goods to cross the border. In March 2010 Russia together with

Kazakhstan and Belarus had formed Customs Union to which the entrance of Kyrgyzstan, WTO member, was not due.

Forecast

One of the first priority tasks the Provisional Government has to tackle is to ensure political stability and prevent economy from drastic negative changes. Kyrgyzstan needs humanitarian aid, mainly in food security, since the political instability negatively impacts economic affairs.

In the economic field, facing lack of resources, despite improved indicators of state budget and management, the Provisional Government has to find resources to renovate the out-of-date facilities of the energy system. Among tactical tasks of the Provisional Government is to prevent outflow of investments and rapid organisation of discussion and meetings with foreign and domestic businessmen to heed to and comply their interests and concerns. For Kyrgyzstan creating favourable business climate has been crucial since the independence and serious steps to this were undertaken under Bakiev's tenure.

In the realm of foreign affairs, the Provisional Government must tackle the problem of collision of Russian and American interests as Russia contributed to the collapse of the Bakiev's regime and proposed humanitarian aid. As to the USA, the government assured that the issue of the American base would not be considered in the nearest future. Anyway, the Kyrgyzstan's relations with both powers will undergo reloading, especially after apparent fact that it has return to Russia's zone of influence. To make it worse, the permanently divided and unable to unite political platforms oppositional leaders will undergo showdown of pro-Russian and pro-American interests in Kyrgyzstan.

For the current time, the new leaders declared that the Tulip Revolution consummated and they attained the goals set in 2005: overthrow of clannish rulers and victory over their authoritarian power. They promise that from now on power will not be concentrated in hands of one family or political figure. They plan to undertake constitutional reforms and amend Election Code. The semi-presidential system will shift to parliamentary system. The installation of the latter is too early for Kyrgyzstan as its parties are immature and artificial and electors and political partisans differ not by ideological preferences but by kin ties and familiarity with party leaders. The voters respond to images and recognisability of politicians rather than their programmes and ability to fulfil their programmes. Moreover, it is still unclear whether the overthrow of Bakiev leads to modernisation or retrieval of traditional political relations. At last, emergence of new opposition to the Provisional Government is expected.

The fate of Bakiev and Akaev seems to found trend allowing gathering and leading widely resented masses to unconstitutionally overthrow incumbent governments.

Finally and most importantly the new authorities have to overcome the long tradition of Central Asian authoritarianism which derives from spatial setting and historic and cultural grounds.

Spatial structure makes Kyrgyzstan's borders in the Feghana valley vulnerable and the country devoid of core space as the country consists of valleys and mountain ridges where population is locked and evolved cultural and local differences and differed in socioeconomic development, i.e. political and economic integration of Kyrgyzstan is fragile. The regions structurally ruptured have long been fastened by administrative measures rather than economic and social ones. Thus, spatial looseness and the vulnerable borders might compel the central authority to continue authoritarian trend.

Incisive resource imbalances in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia– shortage of capital, difficulty to extract and transport mineral resources, shortage of, mainly, land, water and overabundance of workforce, might make the Provisional Government, as it made the previous governments, quell down spontaneous outbursts of social resentment, and prevent from population's politicisation and the opposition's activity. To respond such challenges the new authorities might gain tight control over society, create repressive bodies, support of communal collective values and values of obedience and stability and eradicate political pluralism. The incisive resource imbalances might be serious obstacles to democratic development and the cycle of authoritarianism might return despite the brightest wishes and intentions of the top officials of the Provisional Government.

Nevertheless, there are some positive trends to overcome authoritarianism: the civil society which has become strong since 1990s thwarted any moves to split the country along regional and ethnic lines, recommended measures to cease violence and is taking part in mass media disclosure and formation of Electoral Committee for the future elections. The citizens have learnt how to oppose the state if it conflicts with public interests and they need little the state's care and are independent. They are ready to resent if the authorities oppress them.

Kyrgyzstan is looking for its own model and the best model will be the one that grounds on traditions of the Kyrgyz political culture.