INTERPRETING SECURITY:
GROUNDING THE COPENHAGEN SCHOOL IN KYRGYZSTAN

by

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A thesis submitted to The University of Birmingham for
the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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May 2009

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a critique of the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security via an exploration of the socio-political situation in post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan. Centrally, I consider how different forms of knowledge can inform our interpretations of security. I argue that it is vital to challenge the underlying normative assumptions of the securitization and societal security, which manifest as a disciplinary "Westphalian straitjacket", if we are to produce accounts of places such as Kyrgyzstan that are not founded on stereotypes and untested assumptions.

I argue that it is necessary to prioritise context when using theoretical concepts in order to fully situate our research. Adopting an interpretive approach not only in relation to Kyrgyzstan, but also securitization theory, I highlight the pluralities and contradictions of *how* security means in different settings and on different analytical levels. The issues raised are explored via the reflexive consideration of a number of protests in Bishkek, as well as discussion of the wider socio-cultural and political setting of post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan.

I conclude that loosening the Westphalian straitjacket that currently restricts the normative and empirical utility of the Copenhagen School, and IR more generally, is a crucial step towards a more complex and nuanced understanding of security.

IN MEMORIAM

John Preston Hadwen

1933 – 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of the most enjoyable aspects of undertaking this thesis has been wide range of people whom I have had the opportunity to meet. Many of them have provided not only inspiration and encouragement as I've lurched through the process of writing my thesis, but also considerable amounts of practical assistance. I initially started keeping a list of people whom I would like to thank shortly after arriving in Bishkek. Since then it has grown considerably and continues to do so.

Firstly, thanks must go to my supervisor, Derek Averre, who has provided timely advice and comments as well as humour throughout, and the ESRC, which has funded this thesis (award number award no. PTA-030-2003-00646). The project has gone through a number of incarnations since I started out, partly in response to changing circumstances in Kyrgyzstan, and partly as I have tried out different ways of getting to grips with the issues raised in the course of research. While many people have contributed to this process, particular thanks is due to Lene Hansen, who generously found time to read and comment on my still embryonic ideas about the Copenhagen School, and Dvora Yanow, who not only introduced me to interpretive methods but since then has provided encouragement and advice on how to deal with the "political baggage" of research.

Within CREES, Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik was an email correspondent extraordinaire about the fieldwork "experience", managing to highlight the humour of almost all situations. Marea Arries has provided administrative support far beyond the call of duty, for which I am extremely grateful. While teaching as well as trying to write up has been a challenging experience at times, Jeremy Morris in particular has helped make it as painless as possible in the circumstances, for which I am extremely grateful.

Moving beyond CREES, I would like in particular to thank Joy Fillingham, Nicola Corkin, Madeleine Reeves, John Heathershaw, Caleb Wall, Ben Paarman and neweurasia's bridge bloggers, especially Yulia Savchenko, Elena Skochilo, Tolkun Umaraliev, Asqat

Yerkimbay, Abdul Gamid, Asel Kurmanakunova and Adil Nurmakov. Rui Ramahlo and Becca Barrett have provided much-valued friendship.

In Bishkek, heartfelt thanks goes to Anna Kirey and members of Labrys who made Bishkek, at last, feel "svoi" and show what can be achieved if one has the motivation. At KRSU, I would like to thank Olga Yurevna Shubina and Zamira Sherematovna Karabaeva, as well as Tatyana Valentinovna Donenko. Elsewhere in Bishkek, exchanges with Kristel Maasen, David Mikosz, Mirsuljan Namazaliev were greatly appreciated, helping me to think differently about events. Similarly in Osh, thanks are due to Alisher Akhmetovich Sabirov, Gulya Khalilova and the "southern" Peace Corps volunteers, especially Bryan Schubert, Larry Tweed and Liz Paul.

Last but far from least, thank you to R. I am indebted to you for your support, understanding, patience and encouragement.

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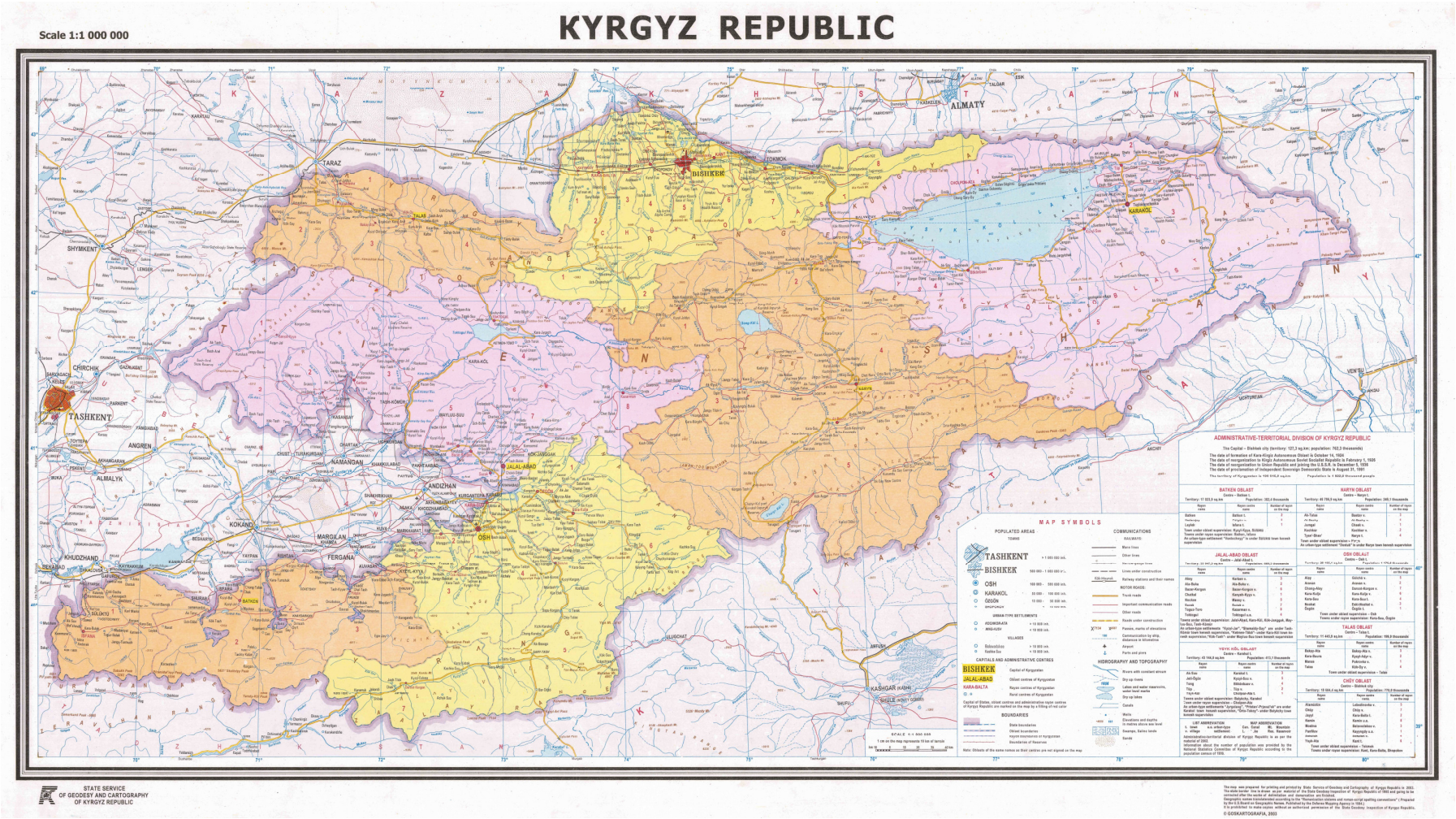
Map of Central Asia[1]

[1] http://www.advantour.com/img/central-asia/centrasia.pdf [last accessed 02.10.2009]

Map of Kyrgyzstan[1]



[1] http://www.advantour.com/img/kyrgyzstan/kyrgyzstan-map-large.jpg [last accessed 02.10.2009].

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CARs	Central Asian Republics
CEC	Central Election Committee
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EWVP	Early Warning for Violence Prevention
FTI	Foundation for Tolerance International
ICG	International Crisis Group
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IR	International Relations
IWPR	Institute for War and Peace Reporting
KRSU	Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LBT	Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender
MSN	*Moya stolitsa novosti*
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
RSCT	Regional Security Complex Theory
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION, SPELLING, TRANSLATION & CITATION

I have used a modified version of the Library of Congress transliteration without diacritics for materials originally in Russian. Exceptions are where there is a commonly accepted English form.

In the case of Kyrgyz names, certain changes to the transliteration system have been made to more accurately reflect Kyrgyz pronunciation. Principally this is reflected in the use of J rather than the Russian Dzh.

British spelling has been used throughout with the exception of the word "securitization", for which I have maintained the spelling used by the Copenhagen School, and in the case of quotations, where the author's original spelling and/or transliteration has been retained.

All foreign words and expressions are in italics.

When citing newspaper and electronic media sources, I have initially provided a full citation including URL. Further citations are abbreviated, but include the article title in order to ensure clarity in light of the fact that multiple articles from the same edition are sometimes cited.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security, how these concepts can be used to study security in Kyrgyzstan and what the resulting interpretations of security tell us about the relationships between theoretical- and empirical-based interpretations of security. These issues are explored using an interpretive methodology, including ethnographic fieldwork methods, in order to reflect upon the relationship between theoretical and empirical approaches to the creation of knowledge about security. In doing so, I emphasise the importance of situating – and situated – knowledge in order to challenge the underlying assumptions of the Copenhagen School's theoretical approach.

Centrally, this thesis argues that context must be prioritised when analysing security in order to reduce the tendency of International Relations and Security Studies to ignore understandings that fail to match the disciplines' Western-centric normative assumptions. As such, the relationship between theoretical and empirical knowledge is reversed, with events in post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan being used to provide an empirical critique of the concepts of securitization and societal security.

1. Interpretations of Security in Central Asia & Kyrgyzstan

> It seems to me that here in Kyrgyzstan everything's done on paper, but in actual fact there is no security.[1]

An opinion poll conducted by IRI in April 2005 found that "security" was rated as being the most important value to Kyrgyzstani people.[2] While the importance of security to people may seem at first glance self-evident, trying to ascertain what "security" actually means to people is a far more complex endeavour, as my interviewees' responses to the question "what is security?" demonstrated. One respondent described it as being "when nobody intrudes into my personal life, when nobody hurts me, when my rights and beliefs are respected. […] security is when nothing threatens you".[3] Others described security variously as the "possibility for one to preserve some sort of autonomy independently of society, of other people, of the state"[4], an "activity that does not harm the state, […] stability and peacefulness in general"[5], "the absence of war with neighbouring countries"[6], or "when someone feels absolutely confident in himself that he won't be discriminated against, that he won't be subjected to threats to his life, to his property, or to his historical, cultural or other values".[7] Most striking, however, was how many of the people I interviewed and spoke with concluded their description of security: "but of course, in reality, there is no security here".

It is precisely the perceived lack of security in places such as Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia that have made "security" such a matter of debate. What are the causes of insecurity?

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[1] Personal interview, representatives of NGO Peremena, Bishkek, 24.11.2005.
[2] "Security" was given a mean score of 7.48, where 1 – "important to me" and 9 – "most important to me". IRI, Baltic Surveys / The Gallup Organization *Kyrgyzstan National Voter Study* April 2005: 45, http://www.iri.org/eurasia/kyrgyzstan/pdfs/2005-04-15-KyrgyzstaniPublicOpinion.pdf [last accessed 22.06.2006].
[3] Personal interview, member of NGO Labrys, Bishkek, 14.12.2005.
[4] Personal interview, youth activist group Birge! representative, Bishkek, 23.11.2005.
[5] Personal interview, youth activist group KelKel representatives, Bishkek, 22.11.2005.
[6] Personal interview, Uzbek National-Cultural Organization Orzo representative, Osh, 05.06.2006.
[7] Personal interview, Uighur National-Cultural Organization Ittipak representative, Bishkek, 19.12.2005.

What are the effects of insecurity? How can security be created? How should we define security and in relation to whom? The answers to these questions tell us as much about the people, organisations and institutions asking them and their conceptualisations of the world as they do about "security". Individuals, for example, are likely to refer to their sense of personal safety, quality of life and rights, while governments often invoke "national security" as a shorthand for the protection of the state as both a physical and symbolic entity. The answers suggested by scholars and analysts tend to be more circumspect and more abstract: despite "security" having generated sufficient debate to warrant its study being classed as a sub-discipline of International Relations,[8] it remains an essentially contested concept, its meaning determined by the normative and empirical concerns of the discipline.[9]

In the case of Security Studies, these concerns have traditionally been defined in relation to the security of state and its monopoly on the use of violence,[10] or, more simply, matters of war and peace. In the aftermath of the Cold War, however, the nature of war and peace changed, reflecting the change from a bipolar to multipolar international order. Most centrally for the study of security, the nature of organized violence altered, with the state's monopoly on its use no longer being absolute. Kaldor conceptualised this change with the idea of "new wars" or "postmodern wars": low intensity, often localised conflicts that are political in nature and which have transnational elements. In contrast to "old wars", which were fought by states over issues of sovereignty and territory, new wars have blurred the distinction between the "internal and external, between aggression (attacks from abroad) and repression (attacks from inside the

[8] This thesis follows the convention of denoting the disciplines of International Relations (IR) and Security Studies with capitals to distinguish them from empirical international relations and security studies.
[9] Baldwin, David, A. (1997) "The concept of security", *Review of International Studies* 23: 5-26.
[10] Nye, Joseph S. & Sean M. Lynn-Jones (1988) "International Security Studies: A Report of a Conference on the State of the Field", *International Security* 12(4): 5-27.

country) [and] even between [the] local and global".[11] The cause of new wars, Kaldor argues, is "identity politics", with claims to power being made "on the basis of a particular identity".[12]

Encouragingly, theoretical debates about how to define and conceptualise security have since broadened to encompass issues beyond "war and peace". As will be discussed later in this chapter, the state-centricism of IR and Security Studies and its narrow focus on violence has been significantly challenged by a range of new approaches, described collectively as critical security studies, over the last decade and a half. Security is increasingly seen as more than simply the absence of violence, but rather is seen as encompassing a range of issues that affect people's lives individually, collectively and even globally. Questions of culture and identity in relation to security have become major topics of discussion, generating sometimes heated debate, suggesting that the multiple and situated nature of security both as a concept and a practice is being recognised and addressed by scholars in a variety of ways.

Yet discussion of security in post-Soviet Central Asia suggests that the concept of "new wars" has been the only substantial innovation offered by security studies scholars to assist our understanding of the region. The region's apparent potential for ethnic conflict has been a recurring theme in security analyses since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Certainly, to the Western observer unfamiliar with the region, the apocalyptic warning from a Russian presidential adviser in 1991 that Central Asia could explode into "a thousand Yugoslavias" probably did not seem particularly hyperbolic[13] and appeared to be supported by recent events: there had been pogroms resulting in the deaths of dozens of Meskhetian Turks in parts of the Ferghana Valley belonging to Uzbekistan in 1989, the "Osh events" of 1990 in Kyrgyzstan had

[11] Kaldor, Mary (2001) *New and Old Wars: Organised violence in a global era* (2nd edition), Cambridge: Polity Press: 1-5.
[12] Kaldor, Mary (2001): 6.
[13] Hyman, Anthony (1993) "Moving Out of Moscow's Orbit: The Outlook for Central Asia", *International Affairs* 69(2): 289.

claimed the lives of between one and two hundred Kyrgyz and Uzbeks,[14] and civil war broke out in Tajikistan in May 1992. Add to this concerns about the region as a hotbed of Islamic extremism and secessionism,[15] as well as a key transit route for narcotics, trafficked people and weapons,[16] and conventional IR wisdom suggested that with the lid of the Soviet pressure cooker now removed from the ethnically diverse and fractious newly independent republics, conflict was inevitable.[17]

This characterisation of security – or rather, the lack of it – in the Central Asian republics has generated an understanding of the region that emphasises the apparent danger that the region poses for the developed world if events are not controlled or contained.[18] At the global and regional level, one result has been the rise of the neo-realist "New Great Game" paradigm, with Central Asia as the arena in which Russia, the US, China, and other less major players compete for political influence and access to valuable resources such as oil. This paradigm gained renewed currency following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the US and subsequent US-led invasion of Afghanistan.[19] In addition to the new focus on the perceived danger posed by Islamic extremism in the region as part of the Global War on Terror, the region

[14] Tishkov, Valery (1995) "'Don't Kill Me, I'm a Kyrgyz!': An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict", *Journal of Peace Research* 32(2): 135. It is worth noting that other figures are also quoted, some claiming as many as 300 deaths and 500 injured, although a figure of around 200 is more common.
[15] Tazmini, Ghoncheh (2001) "The Islamic revival in Central Asia: a potent force or a misconception?", *Central Asian Survey* 20(1): 63-83.
[16] Madi, Maral (2004) "Drug trade in Kyrgyzstan: structure, implications and countermeasures", *Central Asian Survey* 23(3-4): 249-273; McFarlane, S. Neil & Stina Torjesen (2005) "'A wash with weapons'? the case of small arms in Kyrgyzstan", *Central Asian Survey* 24(1): 5-19; Jackson, Nicole J. (2006) "International Organizations, Security Dichotomies and the Trafficking of Persons and Narcotics in Post-Soviet Central Asia: A Critique of the Securitization Framework", *Security Dialogue* 37(3): 299-317.
[17] Hyman, Anthony (1993). See also Kaiser, Robert J. (1994) "Ethnic Demography and Interstate Relations in Central Asia" in Szporluk, Roman (ed.) *National identity and ethnicity in Russia and the new states of Eurasia* New York: M.E. Sharpe: 260; Jones-Luong, Paula (1997) "In Its Own Image: Toward a Reconceptualization of Central Asia" *PONARS Policy Memo* 21: 1.
[18] Nourzhanov, Kirill (2009) "Changing security threat perceptions in Central Asia", *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63(1): 87.
[19] See for example Menon, Rajan (2002) "The New Great Game in Central Asia", *Survival* 45(2):187–204; Edwards, Matthew (2003) "The New Great Game and the new great gamers: disciples of Kipling and Mackinder", *Central Asian Survey* 22: 1, 83-102.

suddenly assumed international strategic significance for the national security of countries including the US, Russia and China and, by extension, for global security.[20] Kyrgyzstan in particular was thrust into the international spotlight as first the US established a military presence in the republic in December 2001 in the form of the Manas Air Base, and then Russia followed suit in September 2003, setting up an air base at Kant less than 30 miles away from Manas.

Acceptance of the New Great Game paradigm amongst analysts and policy makers alike has, as Nourzhanov argues, meant that all too frequently understandings of Central Asian security have "been dominated by a focus on regime survival in individual countries on the one hand, and on the forceful imposition of the global security agenda on the other".[21] Discussion of security in Kyrgyzstan in the last decade has reflected this trend: whereas in the 1990s it was assumed that the "transition to democracy" would create stability and security in Kyrgyzstan, by the early 2000s the Akaev regime had adopted an increasingly authoritarian approach to ensuring stability. Drawing on the global security agenda's focus on the "new" global threats of terrorism and extremism that demanded norms of stability and state security, the Kyrgyzstani government has increasingly argued that democratisation is not only a threat to regime survival, but also a currently impermissible luxury that endangers not only the survival of the Kyrgyz Republic, but also the Central Asian region and the international community.[22] Domestically, the Tajik civil war has been invoked as a warning to those who questioned the overriding

[20] See for example Giragosian, Richard (2006) "The Strategic Central Asian Arena", *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 4(1): 133-153; Blank, Stephen (2008) "The Strategic Importance of Central Asia: A View From America", *Parameters* 38(1): 73-87.
[21] Nourzhanov, Kirill (2009) "Changing security threat perceptions in Central Asia", *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63(1): 85.
[22] Wilkinson, Claire (forthcoming 2009) "International Agency in Kyrgyzstan: Rhetoric, Revolution & Renegotiation" in Kavalski, Emilian (ed.) *Stable Outside, Fragile Inside?: Post-Soviet Statehood in Central Asia*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

prioritisation of security and stability, and incursions into Kyrgyzstan by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in 1999 and 2000 used to underscore the immediacy of the threat.

The result of analysts' overwhelming focus on these two issues has been the neglect of the national and local levels of security. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the Aksy tragedy in 2002, which culminated in the fatal shooting of six and wounding of a further 12 by police during a protest march on 17 March,[23] should have been seen as a timely reminder that internal socio-political events could have implications not just for domestic and national security, but also for regional and international security. Yet despite the political importance of the Aksy events in Kyrgyzstan and the fact that it generated warnings that there was a danger of civil war,[24] Central Asian security has continued to be seen primarily as a strategic geopolitical issue.

The strength of realist or neo-realist views of the region's security has been demonstrated by the failure of high profile internal events, such as Kyrgyzstan's 2005 March events, during which Askar Akaev was ousted, and the Andijon massacre of May 2005, to generate any sustained challenges to the dominant discourses of security identified by Nourzhanov. Kyrgyzstan's initially internationally feted "Tulip Revolution" rapidly became seen as the start of the republic's descent into socio-political crisis and state failure as the new government struggled to establish stability.[25] Similarly, initial criticism of the Uzbek government's shooting of unarmed protesters in the Ferghana Valley town of Andijon[26] was eventually overshadowed by the geopolitical consequences of international criticism of the incident as

[23] A detailed account of the Aksy events has been published by Radnitz, Scott (2005) "Networks, localism and mobilization in Aksy, Kyrgyzstan", *Central Asian Survey* 24(4): 405-424.
[24] Pannier, Bruce (2003) "One Year Later, Aksy Deaths Were Watershed Moment in Kyrgyz History", *Eurasianet.org* 17.03.2003, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav031703a.shtml [last accessed 20.04.2009].
[25] International Crisis Group (2005b) "Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering State", *Asia Report* 109, 16 December.
[26] Human Rights Watch (2005) "'Bullets Were Falling Like Rain' The Andijan Massacre, May 13, 2005", *Human Rights Watch* 17(5). An alternative assessment that conflicts with HRW's version is provided in Akiner, Shirin (2005) "Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment", *Silk Road Papers,* http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/publications/0507Akiner.pdf [last accessed 02.07.2005].

Uzbekistan ordered the closure of the US Karshi-Khanabad air base, which was established in October 2001 to support Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.[27]

Encouragingly, within IR, Security Studies and related disciplines, some scholars have sought to challenge such portrayals of Central Asia. McFarlane and Torjesen have suggested that this "proliferation of alarmist writing" about the region has been the result of three main factors: the "generalisation for all of Central Asia based on trends in one country, exaggeration of crisis signs and failure to take into account stabilising factors in Central Asian societies". These factors have distorted analysis of a wide range of issues, [28] placing excessive emphasis on the instability and insecurity of the region. Megoran echoes and expands upon these criticisms. In addition to noting the effect of "geographical imagination" and "how (often unexamined) worldviews construct and depict certain places as imbued with certain qualities" lead to stereotypical characterisations becoming axiomatic, he argues that many accounts of issues in the Central Asian region lack an empirical basis and therefore show at best limited understanding of the local context and dynamics.[29]

It is difficult to disagree with McFarlane, Torjesen and Megoran. Not only is empirical detail too often sacrificed for abstract theorizing, but people replaced by statistics, generalisations and stereotypes. Security studies has been particularly guilty in this respect: the focus on geopolitics has meant that alternative conceptualisations of security in Central Asia have been largely marginalised despite the insights they could offer. Perhaps most worryingly, the issue of human security in the region has been neglected, despite the widely acknowledged influence of poor socio-economic conditions on socio-political stability at all levels.[30] Similarly,

[27] Marten, Kimberly (2005) "Understanding the Impact of the K2 Closure", *PONARS Policy Memo* 410
[28] McFarlane, S. Neil & Stina Torjesen (2005): 5.
[29] Megoran, Nick (2007) "On researching 'Ethnic Conflict': epistemology, politics, and a Central Asian boundary dispute", *Europe-Asia Studies* 59(2): 258.
[30] Glenn, John (2003) "Human Security and the Disaffected of Central Asia", *International Relations* 17: 453-475.

there has been at best limited recognition amongst analysts of the heterogeneity of Central Asia. Despite the five republics covering an area larger than that of Western Europe, the tendency has been to assume a one-size fits all approach to the "Stans" on the basis of their ex-Soviet status and other apparent commonalities such as religion.

This is not to say that matters related to "security" have been entirely ignored. Indeed, analyses of issues within states or in particular regions and locales – the Feghana Valley being a case in point – frequently reflect the human security agenda, despite coming from other disciplinary perspectives. Matters have been explored in terms of their impact on the lives and experiences of the region's inhabitants rather than being the exclusive preserve of the state, creating space for the inclusion of non-traditional security issues such as poverty and health issues, as well as exploring traditional security issues such as territorial borders from non-state-centric perspectives;[31] for example, how do borders impact on people's lives? Are rigorous border controls a source of security, as state-centric approaches would suggest, or a source of insecurity, as human-centred approaches have suggested? What are the causes of conflict? Crucially, in common with human security's perspective, many of these approaches recognise that the state itself may be a source of insecurity as well as a potential guarantor of security for people living on its territory.

Similarly, a considerable number of scholars have written about socio-political matters in Kyrgyzstan, producing analyses that scholars of security would do well to consider: explorations of ethnic, regional, religious, clan and tribal identities, often assumed to be the cause of conflict and corruption, have been conducted, providing insights that frequently contradict over-simplistic

[31] See for example Megoran, Nick (2002) *The Borders of Eternal Friendship? The politics and pain of nationalism and identity along the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley boundary, 1999-2000,* unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge; Megoran, Nick (2004) "The critical geopolitics of the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Feghana Valley boundary dispute, 1999-2000", *Political Geography* 23(6): 731-764; Reeves, Madeleine (2007) *Border Work: An Ethnography of the State at Its Limits in the Ferghana Valley,* unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge.

received wisdom.[32] Similarly, analysts have paid not inconsiderable attention to competition over natural resources, with scarcities of both land and water seen as important conflict vectors.[33] A smaller number of researchers have investigated gender issues, informal social networks, poverty and migration both separately and in various combinations.[34] A common theme in many of these studies is conflict,[35] either the potential for it to occur or its resolution – a topic that would appear to be well within the domain of security. Yet Security Studies as a discipline has been reluctant to engage with these issues, preferring to concentrate on regional analysis and the interaction of states as formal politico-territorial entities. The domestic sphere, despite the inevitable interrelationships between the domestic, regional and international levels, has frequently been ignored or only paid lip service.

The result is that while almost any issue in Central Asia has security implications, Security Studies has not often found a way to integrate consideration of domestic events into the

[32] Elebayeva, Ainura, Nurbek Omuraliev & Rafis Abazov (2000) "The Shifting Identities and Loyalties in Kyrgyzstan: The Evidence from the Field", *Nationalities Papers* 28(2): 343-349; Hunter, Shireen T. (2001) "Religion, Politics, and Security in Central Asia", *SAIS Review* 21(2): 65-90; Temirkulov, Azamat (2004) "Tribalism, Social Conflict, and State-Building in the Kyrgyz Republic", *Berliner Osteuropa Info* 21: 94-100; Radnitz, Scott (2005); Collins, Kathleen (2006) Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Gullette, David (2006) *Kinship, State, and "Tribalism": The Genealogical Construction of the Kyrgyz Republic,* unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge; Fumagalli, Matteo (2007a) "Informal Ethnopolitics and Local Authority Figures in Osh, Kyrgyzstan", *Ethnopolitics* 6(2): 211-233; Fumagalli, Matteo (2007b) "Framing ethnic minority mobilisation in Central Asia: The cases of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan", *Europe-Asia Studies* 59(4): 567-590.

[33] International Crisis Group (2002) "Central Asia: Water and Conflict" *Asia Report* 34, 30 May; Kemelova, Dinara & Gennady Zhalkubaev (2002) "Water, Conflict, and Regional Security in Central Asia Revisited", *New York University Environmental Law Review* 11: 479-502; Jones, Kevin D. (2004) "Land Privatization and Conflict in Central Asia: Is Kyrgyzstan a Model?" in Burghart, Daniel L. & Theresa Sabonis-Helf (eds.) *In the Tracks of Tamerlane: Central Asia's Path to the 21st Century* Center for Technology and National Security Policy: 259-273, available at http://www.ndu.edu/ctnsp/tamerlane.htm [last accessed 03.04.2009]; Lewis, David (2008) "Resources and Rivalry in The 'Stans", *World Policy Journal* 25(3): 125-135.

[34] Abazov, Rafis (1999) "Economic Migration in Post-Soviet Central Asia: The Case of Kyrgyzstan", *Post-Communist Economies* 11(2):237-252; Handrahan, Lori (2001) "Gender and ethnicity in the 'Transitional Democracy' of Kyrgyzstan", *Central Asian Survey* 20(4): 467-496; Heyat, Farideh (2004) "Re-Islamisation in Kyrgyzstan: gender, new poverty and the moral dimension", *Central Asian Survey* 23(3&4): 275-287; Kuehnast, Kathleen & Nora Dudwick (2004) "Better a Hundred Friends than a Hundred Rubles?: Social Networks in Transition–The Kyrgyz Republic", *World Bank Working Paper* 39.

[35] International Crisis Group (2001) "Incubators of Conflict: Central Asia's Localised Poverty and Social Unrest", *Asia Report* 16, 8 June.

study of security in Central Asia. Furthermore, when analysts have made reference to socio-cultural factors, all too often they are used unquestioningly and reified as explanatory variables, with little or no effort made to understand the local meanings of concepts. The effect is to produce accounts of security in both the region as a whole and in the individual republics that are not only partial, but also often fail to fully account for why certain situations and events have developed in a certain way due to their reliance on Western normative assumptions.

2. Kyrgyzstan: A Domestic Political Overview from Independence until March 2005

Despite growing concerns from the late 1990s onwards about President Askar Akaev's increasingly authoritarian style of rule, until very recently Kyrgyzstan had nonetheless succeeded in maintaining its international reputation as a regional anomaly or, as it has been popularly dubbed, an "island of democracy" in Central Asia.[36] The republic's favourable international reputation was in no small part due to Akaev himself: a Leningrad-educated optical physicist by profession, he stood out from the other four post-Soviet Central Asian leaders due to his minimal involvement in the Soviet Communist Party prior to the collapse of the USSR. He entered the political arena in the Kirgiz Soviet Socialist Republic in 1986 when he was elected first to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kirgizia, and then became a People's Deputy of the Kirgiz SSR. His political career advanced in 1989 with his election to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR by the electorate of Nookatsk district, Osh region. He was later chosen to be a member of the Chamber of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and of the Committee for Economic Reform of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. At the same time, his

[36] Anderson, John (1999) *Kyrgyzstan: central Asia's island of democracy?* Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers. Anderson's book provides a more in depth account of Kyrgyzstan's political development through the 1990s than is provided in this section, which is designed to provide a broad overview of key events and processes and locate key actors in relation to these.

academic career continued to flourish; he was elected Vice-President of the republic's Academy of Science in 1987, and President in 1989.

However, it was in the wake of the Osh conflict of 1990, which resulted in numerous civilian deaths and the Soviet army and Interior Ministry troops being called in to quell the unrest,[37] that Akaev suddenly came to the fore. In October 1990 parliament refused to re-elect the then-chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Absamat Masaliev, citing his failure to address the republic's worsening economic situation and mismanagement of the Osh events. Consequently, Akaev, who was viewed very much as an academic rather than an apparatchik, was chosen as a compromise candidate, and, as Anderson notes, immediately distinguished himself from his predecessor by his willingness to engage directly with protesters outside the parliament and pro-reform statements.[38] Ten months later, in August 1991, Kyrgyzstan declared independence from the USSR and presidential elections were scheduled for October that year. Akaev ran unopposed and was elected with an overwhelming majority as independent Kyrgyzstan's first president. He subsequently chose Feliks Kulov, who would later become a key rival and then central political figure in post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan, as vice-president in 1992.

Initially the international community was optimistic that Akaev would implement both economic and political reforms in order to put Kyrgyzstan firmly on the path towards becoming a Western-style democracy. While some economic reform was attempted, by the mid-1990s it was becoming increasingly evident that Akaev was finding democratization an impediment to his desire for regime stability. Problematically, Akaev's reliance on informal kinship and patronage networks directly contradicted his public declarations of commitment to reform and democratise the Kyrgyzstani political system. The situation was exacerbated by the new prominence of

[37] Anderson, John (1999): 20. For a more detailed account and analysis of the Osh events, see Tishkov, Valery (1995) "Don't Kill Me, I'm a Kyrgyz!: An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict", *Journal of Peace Research* 32(2): 133-149.
[38] Ibid.

regional and clan rivalries, which had been held in check under the Soviet system by informal power sharing arrangements,[39] as well as continued presence of parliamentary deputies elected in 1990 who had a vested interest in ensuring reforms did not result in their unseating.[40] Akaev and his wife were seen to be consolidating ever more power and resources around "the family" – a perception that had the effect of undermining his political legitimacy and growing opposition to his rule.

A new Constitution was approved by the Kyrgyzstani parliament on 5 May 1993, defining the republic as "a sovereign, unitary, democratic republic built upon the basis of a legal, secular state".[41] Notably, in light of discussions preceding the final version, reference to Islam and other religions as a source of moral values was absent, as was the designation of Russian as a language of interethnic communication.[42] In terms of the country's political structure, the new Constitution provided for the formation of a one-chamber parliament, known as the Zhogorku Kenesh or "Supreme Council", comprised on 105 elected deputies. The Zhogorku Kenesh had not insignificant powers, especially by Central Asian standards, including the power to legislate, approve key presidential appointments and in some situations override presidential vetoes of legislation.[43] The president, meanwhile, was to appoint the prime minister, instigate legislation and could dissolve parliament before term subject to referendum.[44] Criteria for presidential candidates were also included in the Constitution, including that a candidate knew the state language (a criterion that would subsequently become a matter of much dispute) and was a Kyrgyzstani citizen with a minimum of 15 years residency preceding his or her candidacy.

[39] Collins, Kathleen (2006) Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 240
[40] Anderson, John (1999): 28
[41] Anderson, John (1999): 26.
[42] Anderson, John (1999): 26.
[43] Anderson, John (1999): 27.
[44] Anderson, John (1999): 27.

The introduction of the new Constitution did not, however, reduce political infighting, with continued tensions between the Zhogorku Kenesh and the executive over the worsening economic situation (consumer inflation peaked at 1,363% in 1993)[45] and allegations of corruption in awarding contracts to foreign investors. In mid-December the parliament held a failed vote of no confidence in the government, leading Akaev to dismiss his government and form a new one in January 1994. Kulov, who had lost the post of Vice-President with the restructuring brought in with the 1993 Constitution, was appointed as Governor of Chui Oblast. Yet a year later faced with continued problems, Akaev sought to impose his authority on the parliament by holding a referendum that asked people if they supported his policies and supported him remaining in post until the end of his elected term. Unsurprisingly, Akaev saw the 95% yes vote as a mandate to continue with his current policies despite parliamentary opposition.[46] Nevertheless, the parliament maintained its opposition to the President over the coming months, resulting in October 1994 in the dissolution of parliament by Akaev and a referendum on constitutional change (to be approved by referendum, rather than by parliament) and the formation of a new bi-cameral professional parliament.[47]

Elections to this new parliament were eventually held on 5 February 1995. More than one a thousand candidates attempted to register, resulting in 936 candidates, the vast majority of whom were unaffiliated with a political party, eventually standing for the 105 available seats.[48] Both the first and second rounds of voting saw large numbers of complaints about irregularities, with international observers reporting a range of problems both before and on polling day. In terms of composition, the new Jogorku Kenesh did not mark a major departure from its previous

[45] Namazie, Ceema Zahra (2002) "Early Evidence of Welfare Changes in the Kyrgyz Republic: Have Things Got Worse with Reforms?" *LSE STICERD Research Paper* DARP 63: 3-4.
[46] Anderson, John (1999) 28.
[47] Anderson, John (1999) 28-29.
[48] Anderson, John (1996) "The Kyrgyz Parliamentary and Presidential Elections of 1995", *Electoral Studies* 15(4): 530.

incarnation, continuing to be dominated by ethnic Kyrgyz males.[49] Akaev expressed dissatisfaction with the results and suggested that quotas for ethnic minorities and women be introduced via changes to the electoral law, but no action was taken and the new deputies were quickly distracted by disputes about the responsibilities of each chamber, given that the Constitution had been written for a single chamber parliament.

However, Akaev was not able to capitalise on the squabbles as much as he might have hoped. His efforts to follow in the footsteps of his neighbours, Uzbek President Islam Karimov and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev, and gain an extension of his powers and mandate were unsuccessful, leading Akaev to call presidential elections for the end of 1995, despite this being almost a year earlier than stipulated in the Constitution. The effect of this decision was to limit the amount of time potential candidates had to collect the required 50,000 signatures in support of their candidatures, meaning that in the end the presidential election was contested on 25 December 1995 by only three candidates: Askar Akaev, Communist Party secretary Absamat Masaliev and former parliamentary speaker Medetkan Shirimkulov.[50] Official figures reported a turnout of 86.19 percent, with 71.59 percent of votes being cast for Akaev – a result that, despite irregularities, seems likely to have been in keeping with popular option and the tendency for voters to support existing leaders.[51]

In the aftermath of his victory Akaev rapidly turned his attention to extending the powers of the president. Draft changes to the Constitution were published in January 1996 and the concentration of power with president justified on the grounds of needing to fight corruption and crime. Despite claims that the changes were anti-democratic from opposition figures, the

[49] The new Jogorku Kenesh included all of five women. Ethnically, despite the fact that at the time ethnic Kyrgyz made up 55 percent of the republic's population, there were 86 Kyrgyz deputies (82 percent of the seats), six Russians, five Uzbeks, two Karachai and one German. Anderson, John (1996): 531.
[50] Anderson, John (1996): 532
[51] Ibid.

changes were endorsed by a nationwide referendum on 10 February 1996.[52] Akaev showed a continuing anti-democratic bent through out the latter half of the 1990s as he sought to consolidate resources amongst members of his "family". This group was slowly but surely reduced in size, resulting in the exclusion of a number of the most capable members of Kyrgyzstan's political elite and, correspondingly, the gradual growth of opposition to his rule.[53] With parliamentary elections scheduled for 20 February 2000, Akaev increasingly openly adopted authoritarian measures to silence his critics and opponents.

The stakes were made higher for Akaev because of the fact that presidential elections, which he hoped to contest despite contention about the constitutionality of his candidature, were scheduled to be held in the autumn of 2000.[54] Further constitutional revisions were introduced with the effect of limiting the number of candidates able to meet all the criteria,[55] and supposed irregularities were then used to exclude competition that had managed to meet all the criteria, including Feliks Kulov's Ar-Namys party and Daniyar Usenov's Bei Bachara party. Nevertheless, unlike many opposition figures, both Kulov and Usenov succeeded in standing for election to the Jogorku Kenesh and were seen to have strong chances as established politicians.

The turnout for the first round of the parliamentary elections on 20 February 2000 was very low at just 57.8 percent, rising to 61.9 percent in the second round of voting that was held on 12 March 2000. Only three candidates were elected in the first round, and one of them, Usenov, was then disqualified due to apparently failing to declare property.[56] The second round of voting resulted in the election of a further 85 deputies, with the final five seats requiring

[52] Anderson notes that the turnout of 96.62 percent of the population, with 94.31 percent of votes cast in favour of the changes suggests that "this was an event with more ritualistic than substantive content". Op cit: 532.
[53] Nogoibaeva, Elmira (2007) “Kyrgyzstan: formirovanie i vzaimodeistvie politicheskikh elit” ["Kyrgyzstan: formation and interaction of political elites"], *Tsentralnaya Aziya i Kavkaz* 1(49): 120.
[54] Abazov, R. (2003) “The parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan, February 2000″, Electoral Studies 22: 546.
[55] Abazov outlines the new stipulations imposed on parliamentary candidates. Op cit: 547.
[56] Abazov, R. (2003): 550

another round of voting to decide them. Surprisingly, despite a strong showing in the first round of voting, Feliks Kulov failed to win a seat in the Jogorku Kenesh and was subsequently arrested.[57] Overall, as the OSCE/ODIHR final report concluded, "the negative trends identified during this election, particularly given that most were political in nature rather than solely technical or legislative, represent a reversal of previous positive developments".[58]

Events in the run up to the presidential elections in the autumn did nothing to contradict this conclusion; opposition figures were excluded from standing by the sudden introduction of bureaucratic restrictions such as the need to pass a Kyrgyz language exam set by a newly-founded language commission, if they had not been rendered ineligible to stand by new or reopened criminal cases against them: both Daniyar Usenov and Feliks Kulov found themselves subject to prosecution, as did Topchubek Turganaliev of the party Erkindik, who was sentenced to 16 years imprisonment for supposedly plotting to assassinate Akaev.[59] Eventually six candidates were registered as presidential candidates, including opposition politicians Almazbek Atambaev and Omurbek Tekebaev.

Campaigning for the elections centred on debates about the economic situation of Kyrgyzstan, future constitutional reform, national security in the wake of incursions by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan into Batken oblast and, last but by no means least, the constitutionality of Akaev seeking what could be seen as a third term. The Constitutional Court had ruled that despite being elected in both 1991 and 1995, Akaev had only served one term under the 1993

[57] OSCE/ODIHR (2000) *Final Report on the Kyrgyz Republic Parliamentary Elections 20 February & 12 March 2000*, 10 April: 23.
[58] Op cit: 2.
[59] OSCE/ODIHR (2001) *Final Report on the Kyrgyz Republic Presidential Elections 29 October 2000,* 16 January: 3.

Constitution.[60] Amidst charges of widespread irregularities, on 29 October 2000 Akaev won the presidential election with 74.5 percent of the vote.[61]

The final five years of Akaev's rule was largely a continuation of previous anti-democratic and authoritarian trends, with disastrous consequences for the country, as Engvall describes:

> In the end, the government was run almost like a gigantic private estate constructed around control of the country's few profitable industries. Within the presidential family, the most notorious targets of criticism for absorbing state resources were the first lady, Mairam Akaeva, the president's son-in-law, Kazakh businessman Adil Toigonbaev, and, during the last years, the president's eldest son, Aidar Akaev. Men loyal to the president's son held the posts of minister of finance, minister of national security, and head of the customs service.[62]

The fragmented opposition received a further blow with the sentencing of Feliks Kulov to seven years of imprisonment in early 2001 in an event widely seen as politically motivated both at home and abroad. Unrest grew and at times spilled over into demonstrations. The most infamous incident followed the arrest of opposition politician Azimbek Beknazarov, which sparked protests in his constituency in May 2002, including the so-called Aksy tragedy that cost the lives of five unarmed Kyrgyz citizens at the hands of the law enforcement agencies and led to the resignation of Akaev's Prime Minister, future president Kurmanbek Bakiev.

Despite continued harassment of civil society, independent media and opposition figures between 2000 and 2004, it was only in early 2005 that discontent began to coalesce into a force capable of challenging Akaev. The bellwether for this change was Akaev's blatant attempts to rig the forthcoming parliamentary elections scheduled to be held in February 2005, which eventually led to his overthrow on 24 March 2005.[63]

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[60] Ibid: 5.
[61] *Journal of Democracy* (2001) "Election Watch", 12(1): 181
[62] Engvall, Johan (2007) “Kyrgyzstan: Anatomy of a State”, Problems of Post-Communism 54(4): 39.
[63] The events leading up to 24 March are discussed in detail in section x chapter x of this thesis. See also Radnitz, Scott (2006) "What really happened in Kyrgyzstan?", *Journal of Democracy* 17(2): 132-146 and the 2008 special issue of *Central Asian Survey* 27(3-4) on Kyrgyzstan's "Tulip Revolution".

2. Research Process & Working Research Questions

Dissatisfaction with how IR and in particular Security Studies have frequently portrayed Central Asia provided my initial motivation for this thesis. My interest in Central Asia developed as a result of spending nine months studying Russian philology at the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University in Bishkek while an undergraduate student of Russian. Upon my return from Kyrgyzstan, I became increasingly aware that my impressions of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia jarred with the descriptions that I was reading in academic journals and works. It also appeared that I was far from alone in experiencing this phenomenon; Paula Jones-Luong wrote in 1997 that "Central Asia has been consistently mis-analysed by policy-makers and scholars alike in the post-Soviet period based on erroneous assumptions regarding Central Asia's past, present and future".[64]

While many disciplines, not least Area Studies of the former Soviet Union,[65] have struggled to cope with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Security Studies has arguably struggled more than most. In 1994 Dannreuther commented that one of the challenges for scholars and analysts after the Soviet Union's collapse was finding a way to "incorporate the newly independent Central Asian states into an appropriate conceptual framework".[66] Yet while there had been sufficient debate about the nature of security and how to study it by 1997 to cause Baldwin to comment that "[r]edefining 'security' has recently become something of a cottage industry",[67] this has not been reflected in studies of Central Asia or any of the individual

[64] Jones-Luong, Paula (1997): 1.
[65] Bunce, Valerie (1995a) "Should Transitologists be Grounded?", *Slavic Review* 54(4): 111-127; Karl, Terry Lynn & Philippe C. Schmitter (1995) "From an Iron Curtain to a Paper curtain: Grounding Transitologists or Students of Postcommunism?", *Slavic Review* 54(4): 965-978; Bunce, Valerie (1995b) "Paper Curtains and Paper Tigers", *Slavic Review* 54(4): 979-987; Kubicek, Paul (2000) "Post-communist political studies: ten years later, twenty years behind?", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33(3): 295-309.
[66] Dannreuther, Roland (1994) "Creating New States in Central Asia: the Strategic Implications of the Collapse of Soviet Power in Central Asia", *Adelphi Papers* 288: 51.
[67] Baldwin, David A. (1997): 5.

republics. Centrally, as outlined in the previous section, the influence of culture and society on security was missing, leaving behind a narrow focus on "traditional politico-military hegemony" and natural resource exploitation.[68]

The Copenhagen School's approach to security, and especially the concept of societal security, seemed to me to potentially offer a way to incorporate consideration of socio-cultural factors back into the study of security. Societal security was particularly appealing as it addresses identity as a possible security referent, expanding the definition of security beyond that of state security. I felt that this could provide new insights into the nature of security in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan, with its reputation for ethnic diversity, in conjunction with the fact that I already had some in-country experience and relevant language skills, was an ideal location to investigate the Copenhagen School's approach. The aims would be twofold: firstly, to develop a more comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the socio-political situation in Kyrgyzstan, and specifically on "security" issues, than is provided by the current state-centric, elite-driven discourse on international and national levels. Secondly, to interrogate the empirical viability of the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security.

While these aims have remained central to my thesis, how I have gone about investigating them has changed considerably since I started in 2004. For Kyrgyzstan, undoubtedly the biggest change was the ousting of Askar Akaev on March 24, 2005. Although like many people I remain ambivalent about the "March events" and their impact on Kyrgyzstan and its people,[69] their impact on the development of this thesis was undoubtedly positive. Most importantly, I was forced to re-examine my focus on ethnicity as a societal identity (that is, an identity that can compete with the state for people's loyalty) and seek a more situated and

[68] Edwards, Matthew (2003): 85.
[69] I use the term "March events" rather than "Tulip Revolution" due to the contested nature of the March events in Kyrgyzstan. Similarly, referring to Kyrgyzstan after March 2005 I use the term "post-Akaev" in order to avoid the more controversial and politically-loaded appellation "post-revolutionary Kyrgyzstan".

grounded approach to the subject. The necessity of this change and its effects and implications are discussed in chapter two.

For the Copenhagen School's theory, meanwhile, the biggest challenge turned out to be Kyrgyzstan. Consequently, my biggest challenge has been trying to negotiate between theory and realities and somehow bridge the divide between the two. Before departing for Kyrgyzstan, I was guided more by theory, but this situation reversed very soon after my arrival in Bishkek as theory was shelved in favour of trying to understand what was happening in the country. By the end of my fieldwork, it seemed all but impossible to reconcile the two components. Thus I gained a third aim: how to effectively integrate theoretical and empirical perspectives. As will be demonstrated in chapter two, it was only with the adoption of an interpretive stance to this task that this thesis began to take on its final form.

Most importantly, assuming an explicitly interpretivist stance, while presenting certain problems in relation to disciplinary conventions, meant that it was finally possible to define in more detail the main foci of my research, or in other words, working research questions. They can be summarised in relation to three broad areas – empirical, theoretical and methodological:

- Empirically, I wanted to explore local understandings of socio-political events in post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan and what interpretations of security they created in order to develop a more nuanced and less stereotypical account of security based on local understandings.
- Theoretically, I wished to compare and contrast local interpretations of security with the Copenhagen School's conceptualization of security via securitization and, less directly, societal security.
- Methodologically, I wanted to examine how security could be studied empirically. I consider how knowledge about security is generated and how a theory – in this case

securitization – can be utilised in an empirical, fieldwork-based investigation to highlight particularities, anomalies and alternative understandings and interpretations, rather than imposing a structure that limits the scope of study (what does or doesn't "count" as security) and may to some extent dictate a study's findings due to epistemological or normative assumptions.

Within each of these overarching areas, more specific themes developed as I continued my research, refining the scope of this thesis as outlined below:

- Empirically, this thesis focuses on a nine month period from September 2005 until June 2006. Within that period, I have paid particular attention to mass public protests in Bishkek that occurred from 21-29 October 2005, on 29 April 2006 and 27 May 2006, while seeking to ensure that they are as widely and deeply contextualised as possible. To this end, my fieldwork was multi-sited: I spent four months in Bishkek (September 2005 – January 2006) before returning to the UK for two months and then returning to Kyrgyzstan to spend three months living in Osh but returning to Bishkek to observe the April and May protests (late March – June 2006).
- Theoretically, building on current critiques of securitization and societal security, I have focused on three aspects of the Copenhagen School's theory that are particularly problematic for its empirical utility: the exclusion of forms of expressing security other than speech (chapter three); the spatially situated nature of securitization and interpretations of security (chapter four); and the underdeveloped conceptualisation of so-called functional actors – that is, actors who have significant, but not defining, influence on security – and their implications for interpretations of security (chapter 5). Underpinning these aspects is my argument, presented in chapter one, that it is vital to

challenge the normative assumptions inherent in Copenhagen School theory if it is to gain more universal empirical utility.

- Methodologically, this study considers how adopting an interpretive stance can be used to decentre theory and its assumptions. I argue that adopting an interpretivist methodology, including an ethno-methodological approach to fieldwork, can facilitate the contextualisation of securitization and security by requiring the explicit consideration of alternative interpretations and conclusions and the situated nature of knowledge creation – a topic to which I will return in chapter two.

7. The Structure of the Thesis: An Explanatory Note

The structure of this thesis is the product of needing to combine two quite distinct elements: firstly, the context-specific and situated empirical materials that were generated during my stays in Kyrgyzstan and the intervening period between periods in-country, and, secondly, the body of literature that comprises "Securitization Studies" – that is, the works of the various authors associated with the so-called Copenhagen School as well as critiques and applications of the core concepts.

The task of marrying these elements to create empirically-based critiques that reflect back on theory has in large part determined the scope of the thesis, as well as its structure. My approach emphasises the *process* of research, rather than seeking to present an authoritative account of "security" or Kyrgyzstan. Throughout my doctoral studies it has seemed vital to be open about how this thesis developed and how the research "really" happened. Not only is this due to wanting to disassociate this study from the universalistic knowledge claims that positivist science is too often wont to make, but also because of a sense of frustration that the experiential aspects of research are frequently "written out" of theses, articles or books when they offer a way for us to engage not just as disembodied expert Researchers but as people whose thinking

and understanding develops over time as a result of interactions, conversations and reflection.

As such, I have consciously not erased the "dislocations" or, to borrow Katz's term, "displacements"[70] that occurred as I explored different issues and responded to changing circumstances, experiencing geographical, temporal and physical dislocations. These displacements are reflected in the different foci of the chapters and, particularly in the case of chapters two and five, the different writing styles that I have used to situate my research. Some will no doubt find this frustrating, while others will feel that I have not gone far enough in that the basic institutionally-sanctioned form of the thesis – a printed text – has remained.

In many ways I share this sense of frustration, despite having the luxury here of being able to explain to some extent why this thesis is structured as it is. The wide range of issues that emerged from attempting to engage with the concepts of securitization and societal security in relation to empirical case studies necessitated a selective and thematic approach; rather than attempt to produce a comprehensive empirically-based critique – a task that would extend far beyond the scope of a thesis – I chose to focus primarily on four aspects of securitization theory that proved particularly problematic and thought-provoking in relation to events in Kyrgyzstan between September 2005 and June 2006. Each of these problems is the topic of a particular chapter:

3. Extending securitization beyond the "speech-act" to include non-verbal forms of expressing security concerns/insecurities;
4. The geographical situatedness of securitization narratives about "security" in Kyrgyzstan in 2005-2006 and accommodating the multiple meanings and interpretations of securitizing actors words and actions within the securitization framework;

[70] Katz, Cindi (1994) "Playing the Field: Questions of Fieldwork in Geography", *The Professional Geographer* 46(1): 67.

5. The problem of identifying so-called functional actors in empirical situations and distinguishing them from securitizing actors.

In each case, the theoretical problem has been interrogated via an exploration of particular events or a particular phenomenon that was present in Kyrgyzstan or that became evident during the fieldwork that I undertook. Looking at the thesis chapter by chapter, these events/phenomena are:

3. The Akmatbaev protests that occurred in Bishkek between 21 and 29 October 2005;
4. The international, national and local media and academic securitization of events in Kyrgyzstan in spring 2006, especially the discourse of Kyrgyzstan as a "faltering" or "failing" state and the For Reforms! movement's protests on 29 April and 27 May 2006 in Bishkek;
5. The influence of international state actors, the media and non-governmental actors on "security" in Kyrgyzstan in 2005-2006.

While in chapters three, four and five the focus is predominantly empirical and concerned with the interpretation of specific events and trends, in chapter five I take a step back from the specificities of protests in Kyrgyzstan to consider a more abstract problem with securitization theory. Despite the change of focus away from specific events to wider trends and dynamics, the discussion is still very much grounded in discussion of events and actors in Kyrgyzstan.

In addition to the three "empirical" chapters outlined above, the thesis has a further three chapters and an introduction. The introduction and chapter one serve to introduce Kyrgyzstan and Copenhagen School security theory respectively, providing an introduction to the concepts that will be discussed in chapters three to five, as well as to Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia.

Included at the end of chapter one is my first attempt to explore the implications of trying to use securitization theory as a framework to investigate events in Kyrgyzstan, namely the so-called "Tulip Revolution" of 25 March 2005. It was my dissatisfaction with the theory, which increased significantly once I was in Kyrgyzstan, that caused my decision to situate my research within an interpretivist methodology. This decision and its implications is the subject of chapter two, in which I explore and problematise key theoretical and methodological assumptions in relation to conducting an empirically-based investigation into the concept of security as conceived by the Copenhagen School.

Finally, the chapter six provide an opportunity to reflect back on the issues discussed in the preceding chapters. I consider what conclusions can be drawn and what the implications are for the Copenhagen School as well as for studies of Central Asia. Inevitably for a thesis of this nature, far more questions are raised than can be answered, and I conclude by discussing the possibilities for further research on securitization and in relation to Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia.

CHAPTER ONE

A REDEFINITION OF SECURITY: THE COPENHAGEN SCHOOL

…there are very many different aspects of security, of course there is security in the sense of the country, the security of

> an organisation, the security that you and I are sitting here and have the opportunity to talk peacefully, that you have the opportunity to carry out your research. I simply don't know which [sort of] security you had in mind.[71]

The divergent approaches taken to analyses of security-related issues in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan broadly reflect theoretical debates over the nature of security in the post-Cold War world. As previously outlined, on the regional level analysts have continued to view security as relating to the state and the international system, with the emphasis being on regional – and hence global – stability, enforced by military power. This traditional approach focuses primarily on the relationships between states and groups of states, and pays little attention to domestic issues unless they have international significance, as in the case of terrorism, for example. Meanwhile, at the domestic or intra-state level, approaches that relate security to the individual, society and the wider environment have gained currency.

Central to debates in International Relations surrounding the nature of security has been discussion of the role and position of culture and identity in the discipline ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically. Much of this debate has been concerned with what the subject of security is thought to be. Realists and neo-realists continue to argue for the centrality of the state, while others argue that the concept must be broadened in order to accommodate so-called "new" security issues and the post-Cold War international order. Adherents of traditional IR have railed against these seemingly fuzzy and ephemeral concepts for being, variously, unscientific, subjective and undefined, or, on those occasions where their relevance has been grudgingly acknowledged, attempts have been made to recast them into a more objective and essentialist mould.[72] On the other side of the divide, a growing number of scholars see identity and culture as concepts central to the understanding and explanation of the

[71] Interview with Country Director, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Bishkek, 06.12.2005.
[72] McSweeney, Bill (1998) "Durkheim and the Copenhagen school: a response to Buzan and Wæver" *Review of International Studies* 24: 137-140.

contemporary world on all analytical levels and spatial scales, to which the increased prominence of feminist, constructivist and poststructuralist writings attests.[73]

Unfortunately, however, the debate within IR's sub-discipline, Security Studies, between traditionalists, wishing to maintain a focus on the use of military force and interstate politics, and the non-traditionalists, who wish to redefine the security agenda by either broadening or deepening it, appears to have largely resulted in an uneasy truce; dialogue has too often given way to a 'you go your way, I'll go mine' attitude, described by Campbell:

> Where once we were all caught in the headlights of the large North American car of international relations theory, now the continental sportster of critical theories has long since left behind the border guards and toll collectors of the mainstream – who can be observed in the rearview mirror waving their arms wildly still demanding papers and the price of admission – as the occupants go on their way in search of another political problem to explore.[74]

At the same time, the occupants of the "continental sportster" have not always agreed upon their destination, nor how to get there. Three main European "schools" of security had emerged by the start of the 2000s, identified by Ole Wæver as the "Aberystwyth", "Paris" and "Copenhagen" schools.[75] Of these three schools, it has been the work of the Copenhagen School in conceptualising security as a "speech-act" that has garnered particular attention. While the Aberystwyth School has extended the agenda of Critical Security Studies to suggest that the ultimate concern of security studies is human emancipation,[76] and internal security provided the

[73] Krause, Jill & Neil Renwick (eds.) (1996) *Identities in International Relations* London: Macmillan Press Ltd.; Hopf, Ted (1998) "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory" *International Security* 23(1): 171–200; Bøås, Morten (2000) "Whose Security?", *Cooperation and Conflict* 35(3): 309–319; Tickner, J. Ann (2004) "Feminist Responses to International Security Studies" *Peace Review* 16(1): 43–48.
[74] Campbell, David (1998) *Writing Security - United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (2nd edition), Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press: 215.
[75] In addition, Canada, where the concept of human security has undergone significant development, can be seen as "more European than American", as Wæver notes. Wæver, Ole (2004) "Aberystwyth, Paris, Copenhagen. New 'Schools' in Security Theory and their Origins between Core and Periphery" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Montreal, March 17-20.
[76] C.A.S.E. Collective (2006) "Critical Approaches to Security in Europe" *Security Dialogue* 37(4): 448.

locus of the Paris School,[77] the Copenhagen School's theorizing has centred around addressing the need to include so-called 'new' security issues such as migration, transnational crime and intrastate conflict in any security analysis, whilst avoiding a move to either a global or individual conceptualisation of security that certain scholars have advocated.[78] In developing their three main concepts of securitization, sectoral security and regional security complex theory, a primary motivation was the inability of traditional International Relations to accommodate these new threats theoretically or empirically due to an almost exclusive focus on the state and the military.[79]

1. The Copenhagen School's Conceptualisation of Security

The name "Copenhagen School" was first used by Bill McSweeney in 1996 as a collective shorthand for a series of works produced by scholars originally associated with Denmark's Copenhagen Peace Research Institute.[80] Due to the relatively large body of contributors and the different perspectives they have brought to the works, the so-called Copenhagen School is most productively viewed as a research programme, rather than a comprehensive theoretical approach to security, with integrated ontology, epistemology and methodology; the central concepts have not developed in parallel to each other, resulting in shifts in the School's epistemology over time that have affected the concepts both individually and collectively. Indeed, considering the theoretical developments that can be charted through

[77] C.A.S.E. Collective (2006): 449.
[78] Wæver, Ole (1995) "Securitization and Desecuritization" in Lipschutz, Ronnie D. *On Security* New York: Columbia University Press: 47-49.
[79] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (1997) "Slippery? contradictory? sociologically untenable? The Copenhagen school replies" *Review of International Studies* 23: 242.
[80] McSweeney, Bill (1996) "Identity and Security: Buzan and the Copenhagen School" *Review of International Studies* 22: 81-93.

successive works,[81] especially Buzan's 1991 second edition of *People, States and Fear*,[82] Wæver et al.'s 1993 book *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe,*[83] and, most centrally for this thesis, Buzan and Wæver's *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* in 1998,[84] and the increasing focus on three concepts – securitization, societal security within Buzan's idea of security sectors, and to a lesser extent regional security complexes[85] – in both theoretical and empirical terms, it is evident that it is impossible to talk of Copenhagen School 'theory' *per se* in any meaningful sense without further reference to the particular concepts and their relationships, as well as, in many cases, their accompanying critiques. Most recently, the CASE Collective (of which Wæver is a member) offered the following assessment of the Copenhagen School's approach, highlighting its widely acknowledged internal contradictions but also the interrelatedness of its core concepts:

> The reflections of the Copenhagen School are the result of a rare theoretical merger between something like an 'English School constructivist realist' coming from a strategic studies background (Buzan) and a self-proclaimed 'post-structural realist' strongly influenced by the works of Derrida and Kissinger (Wæver). This merger, and the diversity and heterogeneity in the thinking of each single author, creates a complex and dynamic, yet also vulnerable, theoretical position, drawing upon a broad range of diverse influences. Often as part of controversies and critiques, much attention in the past has been attributed to the idea of securitization and, in particular, securitizations using identity as a referent object (Buzan et al., 1993). Yet, the recent publication of a fully fledged theory of regional security complexes (Buzan & Wæver, 2003) has made clear that single elements of the theory can perhaps best be understood in conjunction, by taking into account how processes of securitization in the theory work in combination with the concepts of sectors/referent objects and security complexes.[86]

2. The Concepts

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[81] For an overview on the School's development, see Huysmans, Jef (1998a) "Revisiting Copenhagen: Or, On the Creative Development of a Security Agenda in Europe" *European Journal of International Relations* 4(2): 479-505.
[82] Buzan, Barry (1991) *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (2nd edition), Hemel Hempstead: Harvester.
[83] Wæver, Ole, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup & Pierre Lemaitre (1993) *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe,* London: Pinter.
[84] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998) *Security: A New Framework for Analysis,* Boulder, CO & London: Lynne Rienner.
[85] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003) *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[86] C.A.S.E. Collective (2006): 452-453.

Over the last decade, both the concepts of securitization and societal security have inspired - or provoked - extensive debate. Fittingly, it has been the authors of the original concepts (Buzan in the case of sectoral security, Wæver for securitization) who have most actively engaged in debate with their critics,[87] contributing to a body of critical literature that in several cases not only highlights areas of contention, but which also provides much-needed further insight and clarification into the conceptualisation of societal security and securitization. Much of the debate surrounding the Copenhagen School and their concepts of securitization and societal security was sparked by the publication of *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* in 1993, thus predating the publication of *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* by some five years. Links were also made in the subsequent debate to Buzan's second edition of *People, States and Fear* that had been published in 1991, in particular by one of the Copenhagen School's central critics, Bill McSweeney, who engaged in an exchange with Buzan and Wæver in the journal *Review of International Studies* that ran from 1996 to 1998.[88] Articles by Michael Williams,[89] Jef Huysmans,[90] Olaf Knudsen,[91] and Johan Eriksson[92] should then be added to McSweeney's contributions, which taken together with various works written individually by Wæver and Buzan beyond the works already noted can be said to represent the primary critical debate concerning the Copenhagen School.[93]

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[87] Knudsen, Olav F. (2001) "Post-Copenhagen School Security Studies: Desecuritizing Securitization" *Security Dialogue* 32(3): 355-368.
[88] McSweeney, Bill (1996); Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (1997); McSweeney, Bill (1998).
[89] Williams, Michael C. (1998a) "Modernity, identity and security: a comment of the 'Copenhagen controversy'" *Review of International Studies* 24: 435 - 439. Williams, Michael C. (1998b) "Identity and the Politics of Security" *European Journal of International Relations* 4(2): 204-225.
[90] Huysmans, Jef (1998a).
[91] Knudsen, Olav F. (2001).
[92] Eriksson, Johan (1999a) "Observers or Advocates? On the Political Roles of Security Analysts" *Cooperation and Conflict* 34(3): 311-330; Eriksson, Johan (1999b) "Debating the Politics of Security Studies. Response to Goldmann, Wæver and Williams" *Cooperation and Conflict* 34(3): 345-352.
[93] Wæver, Ole (1993) "Societal security: the concept" in Wæver, Ole, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup & Pierre Lemaitre (1993) *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe,* London: Pinter: 17-40; Wæver, Ole (1995); Wæver, Ole (1996) "European Security Identities" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 34(1): 104-132; Buzan, Barry (1999) "'Change and Insecurity' Reconsidered" *Contemporary Security*

Due to the empirical material of this thesis being drawn from a single country, rather than the Central Asian region more widely, I have focused on two of the Copenhagen School's three concepts: securitization and "securitizations using identity as a referent object", otherwise known as societal security. Regional Security Complex Theory, the central concept of the Copenhagen School's most recent work, is outside the scope of this thesis, which does not seek to address regional security dynamics. However, as observed by the CASE Collective above, the concepts are best understood collectively. In addition, *Regions and Powers* represents the Copenhagen School's most comprehensive attempt to unite the School's theoretical components and its empirical studies of specific geographical regions to date, and as such it requires consideration, albeit only briefly, not least as RSCT highlights the continued centrality of the state in the Copenhagen School's thinking.

RSCT's organising principle is that of levels of analysis (i.e. domestic, state-based, regional, interregional, global), which is linked to the sectoral approach developed in *Security: A New Framework for Analysis,* using the mechanism of securitisation with the aim of answering the question "are the threats that get securitised located primarily at the domestic, the regional, or the system level?"[94] However, their premise that the regional level has gained greater autonomy and prominence in international politics and the privileging of an approach founded on the idea of bounded territoriality[95] threatens to reverse the Copenhagen School's efforts to widen the concept of security beyond the state: using RSCT, states and their groupings once again become the default unit of analysis as the distribution of power is envisaged in broadly neo-realist terms.[96] The result is that the influence of specific circumstances to determine the

Policy 20(2): 1-17; Wæver, Ole (1999) "Securitizing Sectors? Reply to Eriksson" *Cooperation and Conflict* 34(3): 334-340; Laustsen, Carsten Bagge & Ole Wæver (2000) "In Defence of Religion: Sacred Objects for Securitization" *Millennium* 29(3): 705-739.

[94] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003):13.

[95] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 3-4.

[96] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 4.

dominant level(s) of analysis is curtailed in favour of an imposed preference for the regional level.[97]

The rest of this chapter provides a summary of the Copenhagen School's concepts of societal security and then securitization. In contrast to the realist-orientated RSCT, these two concepts exhibit a more constructivist approach to security. However, the failure of the concepts to live up to Wæver's claim of being "constructivist all the way down"[98] has led to extensive critiques, of securitization in particular. I summarise the central concerns of these critiques in relation to each concept, as well as considering key theoretical innovations that have been proposed. I briefly outline how these issues relate to my concerns about the empirical viability of securitization and societal security, before presenting a fuller critique of the Copenhagen School's theory and the problems posed by its Eurocentric normative assumptions. The impact of this Eurocentrism or "Westphalian straitjacket" is demonstrated via a case study of the events of March 2005 in Kyrgyzstan. I conclude that in its current form there are fundamental problems with the concept of securitization that must be addressed if it is to be used for the analysis of security in locations such as Kyrgyzstan. Finally, I provide an account of my research methodology, including fieldwork methodology and data sources.

[97] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 12.
[98] Wæver, Ole (1995): 204.

2.i. Security Sectors & Societal Security

The notion of security sectors originated in the second edition of Buzan's *People, States and Fear*.[99] The concept was then developed in *Security: A New Framework For Analysis* to facilitate the accommodation of referent objects other than the state, based on the idea of there being five sectors of security – military, political, economic, societal and environmental – each with their own characteristic relationships.[100] The purpose of the sectors is to break down the widened security agenda into more manageable sections to facilitate analysis, with each sector "looking at the whole but ... seeing only one dimension of its reality."[101] In the case of societal security, this means analysing systems "in terms of patterns of identity and the desire to maintain cultural independence."[102] The insights gained from this exercise can then be aggregated with evidence from other sectors to achieve a whole, but nuanced, view of security processes in a given situation or location, their interactions and the implications of such relationships.

As noted above, societal security is seen as being primarily about identity, insofar as

> Society is about identity, the self-conception of communities and of individuals identifying themselves as members of a community. These identities are distinct from, although often entangled with, the explicitly political organizations concerned with government.[103]

Thus identity is seen as the organising concept for the sector, with societal *insecurity* occurring "when communities of whatever kind define a development or potentiality as a threat to the survival of their community",[104] or more accurately, the identity of their community as such, hence Wæver's assertion that one could equally talk of "identity security".[105] The key point here

[99] Buzan, Barry (1991).
[100] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 7.
[101] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 8.
[102] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 8.
[103] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 119.
[104] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 119.
[105] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 120.

is that the identities in question are those of *collective* identities, rather than simply those of individuals, whereby there is a "we" identity that can be invoked as requiring protection and having a right to existence.

Wæver identifies three types of issue that can be seen as threats to societal security:[106]

- Migration: "*X* people are being overrun or diluted by influxes of *Y* people; the *X* community will not be what it used to be, because others will make up the population; *X* identity is being changed by a shift in the composition of the population";
- Horizontal competition: "although it is still *X* people living here, they will change their ways because of the overriding cultural and linguistic culture *Y*";
- Vertical competition: "people will stop seeing themselves as *X*, because there is either an integrating project ... or a secessionist-"regionalist" project ... that pulls them toward either wider or narrower identities".

It is also noted that depopulation could constitute a fourth category in certain circumstances when the effect is the potential elimination of an identity, as in the case of ethnic cleansing, or an extremely large-scale epidemic, such as AIDS in parts of Africa.[107] However, the authors are keen to point out that in many cases the threat is more directed at the individual, which is a "threat *in* society", rather than a societal security threat; only when an issue "threatens the breakdown of society" does it warrant "societal" status.[108]

This distinction highlights one of the more problematic moments in the conceptualisation of societal security that is presented: how the word "society" is used. Promisingly, the authors note the potential ambiguity present in the term "societal", explaining that

> the related term *society* is often used to designate the wider, more vague *state population,* which may refer to a group that does not carry an identity. In this terminology, Sudanese society, for example, is that population contained by the Sudanese state but which is composed of many societal units ... . This is not our use of societal; we use societal for communities with which one identifies.[109]

[106] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 121.
[107] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 121.
[108] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 121.
[109] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 120.

The point is further clarified in the chapter's endnotes, in which it is argued that if 'society' was used to mean the population of a state, then in effect the state would be the classifier of society, thus removing "independent judgement from the societal sector and [making] it derivative of state classifications."[110]

Nevertheless, the subsequent discussion of referent objects (i.e. identity communities that can be invoked in the name of 'security') and security actors seems to favour communities at either the national (state) or supra-national level, with sub-national/sub-state identities consigned to the past as outdatedly "narrow" or "pre-modern".[111] In contrast, "in the present world system, the most important referent objects in the societal sector are tribes, clans, nations (and nation-like ethnic units, which others call minorities), civilisations, religions and race."[112] The Copenhagen School justifies this assertion on the grounds that "limited collectivities (states, nations, and, as anticipated by Huntingdon, civilizations)" are the most amenable to being securitized (i.e. treated as threatened and in need of defence beyond measures available within the realm of usual politics) since they "engage in self-reinforcing rivalries with other limited collectivities, and such interaction strengthens their "we" feeling."[113] Meanwhile, individuals and "small groups" are effectively excluded from analytical consideration on the grounds that they "can seldom establish a wider security legitimacy in their own right. They may speak about security, but few will listen."[114]

McSweeney in particular has challenged the Copenhagen School's treatment of identity. His central criticism, which was based on his reading of *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe,* is that the authors vacillate between objectivist and deconstructionist approaches to identity, leading to the reification of "society" and "identity", which are "projected

[110] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 139 (Endnote 1 to Chapter 6).
[111] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 56, 123.
[112] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 123.
[113] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 36-37.
[114] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 36.

as objective realities, out there to be discovered and analyzed."[115] This leads on to the commonly echoed criticism that the Copenhagen School's approach precludes discussion of the processes of social construction due to their questionable insistence on defining their collectivity as 'society' (in reified form) and accompanying refusal to consider sub-state groups as an acceptable unit of analysis. As McSweeney argues,

> If, rather than assuming that identity is the unique variable vulnerable to threat, the authors had posed the problem as 'What is the focus of the security concerns of the people who comprise "society"?', the intuitive evidence alone would have suggested a range of values, with economic welfare prominent. This would force the level of analysis down from society as a whole to its social group components. That would open up not just a methodological can of worms for the authors – as they realize – but a theoretical one also. Their focus on the domestic dimension of the security problem could no longer remain at the macro-level of society, and a new conceptual schema would be required to deal with the dynamics of a sub-societal, societal and state interaction. This would have resulted in a quite different approach, in which the apparent fact of societal identity was exposed as an integral, political aspect of the security problem, rather than a taken-for-granted reality which defined the problem.[116]

He adds further weight to his argument in favour of a reformulation of the concept by questioning the causality of the identity-security connection, pointing out that it is possible that a security problem itself creates separate identities, rather than vice versa, as the Copenhagen School supposedly claims; this issue, he proposes, can "only be revealed by deconstructing the process of identity formation at the sub-societal level".[117]

If the charge of reification can be dismissed on the grounds that the Copenhagen School are merely treating a particular identity as fixed within a given period for the purposes of analysis, their insistence on such a narrow range of possible societal identities is harder to justify. In answer to McSweeney's argument in favour of moving to a sub-societal level of analysis, Buzan and Wæver counter that "unless one is extremely careful, this becomes another mono-unit ontology, where all security is ultimately individual security and the security of the

[115] McSweeney, Bill (1996): 82-83.
[116] McSweeney, Bill (1996): 85.
[117] McSweeney, Bill (1996): 85.

state has to be measured and discussed on the basis of how it influences the aggregate security of 'its' individuals."[118] While this danger is undeniably present, it nonetheless seems overly cautious to exclude sub-societal groups as a unit of analysis wholesale, particularly in light of the authors' recognition that societal identities such as 'the nation' and the state are not contiguous,[119] logically meaning that 'society' is unlikely to be entirely homogenous and that this condition must be given due consideration. Indeed, Wæver's definition of a societal identity in *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* seems to lay down sufficient basic criteria to make the refusal to consider such sub-state units unjustifiable:

> [A] societal identity is one that is not only robust enough in construction, and comprehensive enough in its following, but also broad enough in the quality of the identity it carries, to enable it to compete with the territorial state as a political organising principle. A societal identity is able to reproduce itself independently of the state and even in opposition to the state's organisational principle.[120]

For the purposes of this thesis, I have used this basic criterion to identify the social group identities that are active in relation to securitizations. The one-country nature of my study, however, makes the rejection of sub-state groups as suitable units both untenable and undesirable. Moreover, as McSweeney rightly notes, the Copenhagen School's desire to pre-define what identities "count" is problematic: a societal identity may emerge in response to a situation, as people mobilize around a particular issue and associate themselves with a common identity. As such, a societal identity is better seen as a temporary crystallisation of the multiple identities on which people draw in their everyday lives. Williams has proposed a similar approach in order to address the charges of reification that have been levelled at the Copenhagen School by situating societal identities within the security context.[121]

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[118] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (1997): 245.
[119] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 119.
[120] Wæver, Ole, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup & Pierre Lemaitre (1993): 23.
[121] Williams, Michael C. (2003) "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics", *International Studies Quarterly* 47(4): 519.

My reasons for rejecting the prescriptive methodological collectivism dictated by Buzan and Wæver and including sub-societal identities are based on a less theoretical concern: focusing solely on ethnic, religious or clan identities in Kyrgyzstan would exclude other identities that may be mobilized or relevant in relation to issues of security. My immediate instinct was that Kyrgyzstanis' identities, like anyone elses', are complex, multiple, inherently situated and experienced intersectionally – i.e. via a combination of identities. Thinking about my year in Bishkek, people were certainly conscious of ethnicity, but it was one of many identities that people possess and therefore only sometimes defining in the manner presumed by the Copenhagen School. Deciding at the outset to focus on a particular identity or category of identities, I concluded, would inevitably produce an account of security that while theoretically cohesive would not reflect local perspectives and experiences of identity. I consider this issue in greater detail in chapter two.

2.ii. Securitization

Within any sector, security is analysed using the concept of securitization. Securitization treats security as a "speech-act", in which "the utterance itself is the act. By saying the words, something is done (like betting, giving a promise or naming a ship)."[122] The "security" part of the act is taken to signify the presence, according to the speaker, of an existential threat to a referent object, or, more simply, a threat to its continued survival. This (real or perceived) existential threat is then used rhetorically to argue for the implementation of measures not sanctioned within "normal" politics. It should be noted that the word "security" itself does not necessarily have to be uttered. There may be cases, particularly where securitization has become institutionalised, when there is only a "metaphorical security reference": "Constant

[122] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 26.

drama does not have to be present, because it is implicitly assumed that when we talk of *this* (typically, but not necessarily, defense issues), we are by definition in the area of urgency: By saying 'defense' (or, in Holland, 'dikes'), one has also implicitly said security and priority".[123] The fundamental message of any securitization narrative is that if measures are not taken to address the threat to the referent object immediately, then "it will be too late, and we will not exist to remedy our failure".[124] Securitization is, therefore, in the words of the Copenhagen School "the move that that takes an issue beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special sort of politics or as above politics."[125]

Within the concept of securitization a number of actors, objects and conditions are specified. Firstly, a **securitizing actor** is the person or persons who "speak" security by producing the narrative that seeks to portray an issue as warranting special measures to ensure its continued survival. By extension, the securitising actor may be the people speaking on behalf of a state or government (politicians, diplomats) or a community (cultural elites, community leaders). Secondly, a **referent object** is designated by the securitizing actor. This is the person/community/concept that is portrayed as existentially threatened and which has a legitimate claim to survival. As noted earlier, each security sector has a particular referent object. Whatever the referent object is, be it the state, identity, or the environment, it must be designated as facing "an existential threat requiring emergency action/special measures."[126]

In the societal sector the referent object will be an identity, or more accurately, a particular construction of an identity, of a community that is perceived to be threatened. The **audience** is the target of the securitizing actor's threat narrative. If it endorses the narrative and proposed measures (despite the fact that the measures violate normal political procedures) then the

[123] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 27.
[124] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 26.
[125] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 23.
[126] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 27.

securitization is deemed successful. If it is rejected or disputed then it is only possible to talk of a "securitising move".[127]

In addition to the three components specified above, the Copenhagen School refers to the presence of functional actors and facilitating conditions in relation to a securitizing move or securitization. A **functional actor** is taken to be any actor who is not the securitizing actor or the referent object, but who has the ability to significantly influence security dynamics in a particular sector.[128] No further guidance is offered regarding the nature of functional actors by the Copenhagen School, an issue that I address in chapter five. Finally, the so-called **facilitating conditions** of a securitization must be considered, that is, "the conditions under which the speech act works, in contrast to cases in which the act misfires or is abused".[129] In contrast to functional actors, these are defined very precisely and are divided into two internal and external conditions. **Internal facilitating conditions** are that the act conforms to the "general grammar of security". Wæver explains what this entails: The speech act should "follow the security form, the grammar of security, and construct a plot that includes existential threat, point of no return, and a possible way out". In addition, it must conform with "the particular dialects of the different sectors, such as talk identity in the societal sector [or] recognition and sovereignty in the political sector".[130] **External facilitating conditions**, meanwhile, refer to the securitizing actor possessing sufficient social capital and hence authority (although not necessarily in an official capacity), and the degree to which objects included in the threat narrative are perceived to be threatening. The stronger the audience's perception that something is threatening, the more likely the securitization will be successful.

It is the interactions of these actors and conditions that create a securitization. The

[127] This criterion is ambiguous as it does not specify whether or not the measures must be enacted or merely agreed to in principle for a securitization to be successful.
[128] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 36.
[129] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 32.
[130] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 33.

Copenhagen School is keen to stress this point, emphasizing that "[s]ecuritization is intersubjective and socially constructed" and going on to explain that "security (as with all politics) ultimately rests neither with the objects nor with the subjects but *among* the subjects".[131] However, despite their intentions, the danger is that when used to analyse empirical data, the analyst resorts to "editing" in order to ensure a good match between data and theory. Rather than demonstrating the particular dynamics involved in the construction of security in a particular case, securitization theory risks being overly prescriptive due to its narrow definition of security and how it is constructed. The result, as will be demonstrated in the case study of the March events of 2005 in Bishkek, is that analysis using securitization may produce an account of security that although theoretically cohesive and complete, does not actually reflect how a securitization actually developed at the time.

Despite the problems and contradictions caused by the narrowness of the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security, even critics and outright opponents of widening the security agenda and considering referent objects in addition to the state have conceded that the 'spirit' of the Copenhagen School is "to invite and open up the discussion of security rather than to entrench into a fortified position".[132] As well as actively engaging in the chiefly theoretical debates surrounding the Copenhagen School, Buzan and Wæver have called explicitly for more "micro-studies" utilising securitization to properly test the concepts and "how the empirical matter might be decanted into our theoretical container".[133] Significantly, however, such micro-studies have almost without exception generated further criticism of the concepts and attempts to increase their empirical utility. In common with this thesis, debates have centred on the "narrowness" of securitization theory in terms of the form of the security act, its context, and the

[131] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 31.
[132] Eriksson, Johan (1999b): 349.
[133] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 74, 443, 488.

nature of the act.[134]

To date there have been a number of insightful explorations of each of these issues. The speech-act as the medium for the expression of security has been critiqued not only for its exclusion of images and physical action,[135] but also for the creation of a "silent security dilemma" whereby speaking security *decreases* the speaker's security rather than acting to legitimise the neutralisation of threat.[136] Building on the Copenhagen School's concept of facilitating conditions, scholars have attempted to expand consideration of context within securitization's framework in a number of ways. Hughes has called for the audience's *pre-cognitive biases*, or existing world view, to be added to the facilitating conditions for a successful securitization to occur.[137] Similarly, considering the impact of photographic images on security policy, Möller has argued that the "collective memory of the targeted audience" must be taken into account as a precondition for a successful securitization.[138] In addition, increased attention has been paid to how better to include consideration of securitization's context. Salter has proposed dramaturgical analysis to consider the "setting" of a securitization, since the process "reflects the complex constitution of social and political communities and may be successful and unsuccessful to different degrees in different settings within the same issue area and across issues".[139] Stritzel, meanwhile, has argued that it is their "embeddness in social relations of meaning and power that constitutes both actors and speech acts", leading him to propose an additional framework to

[134] McDonald, Matt (2008) "Securitization and the Construction of Security", *European Journal of International Relations* 14(4): 564.
[135] Williams (2003); Möller, Frank (2007) "Photographic Interventions in Post-9/11 Security Policy", *Security Dialogue* 38(2): 179-196; Hansen, Lene (2008) "Visual Securitization: Taking Discourse Analysis from the Word to the Image", Paper presented at the 49th annual ISA Convention, San Francisco, CA, March 26-29, 2008. (Cited with permission).
[136] Hansen, Lene (2000) "The Little Mermaid's Silent Security Dilemma and the Absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29(2): 285-306.
[137] Hughes, Bryn (2004) "Political Violence and Democracy: Do Societal Identity Threats Matter? The Security and Politics of Identity" Paper presented at the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, University of Adelaide, 29 September – 1 October: 16.
[138] Möller, Frank (2007).
[139] Salter, Mark (2008) "Securitization and desecuritization: a dramaturgical analysis of the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority", *Journal of International Relations and Development* 11: 321-349.

facilitate the consideration of context in applications of securitization.[140]

Although these works have consolidated existing critiques of securitization and societal security in particular through the addition of empirical case studies, it is debates over the *nature* of security that have provided the most fundamental challenge to the Copenhagen School. Wæver has previously asserted that the securitization approach has an distinct advantage over the majority of mainstream and critical approaches to security in that it "points to the inherently political nature of any designation of security issues and thus it puts an ethical question at the feet of analysts, decision-makers and political activists alike: why do you call this a security issue? What are the implications of doing this – or of not doing it?"[141] In practice, however, the Copenhagen School stops in a position described by Eriksson as "observe how others advocate!"[142] Security may be intersubjectively constructed between the actors in a securitization, but in applying securitization the analyst is objectively reporting the results of this process. The result is that an unwieldy "objective constructivism" ties the hands of any analyst wishing to explicitly consider the questions suggested by Wæver.

While theoretically-orientated scholars such as Taureck have dismissed calls for greater consideration of securitization's normative and political implications as "fashionable", "misled", and "of no relevance to securitization theory",[143] there is now a nascent trend in securitization studies that has started to address the wider normative and political implications of securitization theory. The concerns per se are not new, as evidenced by Huysmans', Eriksson's and Wæver's exchanges in the late 1990s.[144] However, in contrast to attempts to refine or strengthen the

[140] Stritzel, Holger (2007) "Towards a Theory of Securitization: Copenhagen and Beyond", *European Journal of International Relations* 13(3): 367-370.
[141] Wæver, Ole (1999): 334.
[142] Eriksson, Johan (1999): 314.
[143] Taureck, Rita (2006) "Securitization theory and securitization studies", *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9: 53 & 60.
[144] Huysmans, Jef (1998b) "Security! What Do You Mean?", *European Journal of International Relations* 4(2): 226-255; Eriksson, Johan (1999); Wæver, Ole (2000) "The EU as a security actor – Reflections from

theoretical framework provided by adding new criteria or theoretical categories,[145] or by specifying additional conditions and variables,[146] securitization studies has recently become increasingly concerned with a more fundamental reconceptualisation of the Copenhagen School's theory.[147] The starting point for this undertaking has been the growing dissatisfaction with the "objective constructivism" that has resulted from the School's continuing efforts to marry realist and constructivist perspectives on security. Stritzel concludes that attempts to address the criticisms that have been made have, in the end, been "hampered by too many contradictory concepts creating several tensions and multiple centres of gravity in their overall argument".[148]

Yet such efforts, although to be welcomed, still do not go to the very heart of the problem. I argue that the Copenhagen School's internal contradictions are symptomatic of a deeper problem, which continues to afflict International Relations and Security Studies, not just securitization. To return to the motoring analogy first used when introducing the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security, on a fundamental level commonalities between the "large North American car" and the "continental sportster" still exist; they are both generically still cars: different models, but the same mode of transport. Furthermore, there has still been little thought given to whether it is the most effective mode to reach the selected destination. Similarly, the various 'new' approaches that have developed since the early 1980s are still fundamentally part of the discipline of IR and, more importantly, its culture.

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a pessimistic constructivist on post-sovereign security orders", in Kelstrup, Morten & Michael C. Williams (eds) *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration: Power, security and community* London & New York: Routledge: 250-294.

[145] Stritzel, Holger (2007); Vuori, Juha A. (2008) "Illocutionary Logic and Strands of Securitization: Applying the Theory of Securitization to the Study of Non-Democratic Political Orders", *European Journal of International Relations* 14(1): 65-99.

[146] Balzacq, Thierry (2005) "The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context", *European Journal of International Relations* 11(2): 171-201.

[147] Balzacq, Thierry (forthcoming 2009) "Constructivism and Securitization Studies", in Mauer, Victor & Myriam Dunn Cavelty (eds.) *Handbook of Security Studies* London & New York: Routledge.

[148] Stritzel, Holger (2007): 377.

This culture *of* IR[149] suggests that although new epistemologies are introduced, the underlying assumptions on which these are built have rarely been questioned, even in recent enterprises such as the C.A.S.E. Manifesto.[150] To return for a final time to Campbell's motoring analogy, few people have considered whether western cars are the best way to reach a particular destination, particularly when journeying beyond the asphalted roads of western Europe and North America – or in this case to Central Asia – nor whether they cope effectively with the terrain. In the same way, it is often assumed that theories and concepts developed in the West can and do accurately portray conditions in the non-Western world, with at best only surface consideration given to precise socio-historical circumstances. For all the conceptual innovation that has been proposed in relation to the concepts of securitization and societal security, little thought has been given to this issue. The result, as I shall demonstrate in the following section, is that the analytical power of the Copenhagen School remains tightly bound by the Westphalian straitjacket of International Relations. Until this straitjacketing is addressed, securitization theory will continue to produce accounts of security that fail to reflect dynamics beyond those specified by the theory, undermining its potential empirical utility.

3. The "Westphalian Straitjacket" & The Copenhagen School[151]

Buzan and Little have described IR's "Westphalian straitjacket",[152] as "the strong tendency to assume that the model established in seventeenth century Europe should define

[149] Valbjørn, Morten (2004) "Culture and IR - Culture in IR: Ignoring, Introducing, up-Dating or Forgetting the Concept of Culture in International Relations", Paper presented at The Fifth Pan-European International Relations Conference, the Hague, Netherlands, 9–11 September, 2004. (Cited with permission).

[150] C.A.S.E. Collective (2006). One honourable exception is Bourbeau, Philippe (2008) "Media, Migration, and Security: An obvious link?", Draft paper for presentation at the ISA Annual Convention, San Francisco, 25-29 March 2008. (Cited with permission).

[151] Sections 3 and 4 of this chapter were previously published as Wilkinson, Claire (2007) "The Copenhagen School on Tour in Kyrgyzstan: Is Securitization Theory Useable Outside Europe?", *Security Dialogue* 38(1): 5-25.

what the international system is for all times and places".[153] In the contemporary world, this Westphalian straitjacket continues to constrain IR in several ways. Most fundamentally it manifests itself in the assumption that the "European" or, more accurately, the Euro-American model of the state and the accompanying political culture is valid globally. Thus the use of words such as 'state' and 'society' take on a normative dimension, the assumption being made that they can be used directly and are understood in "Western" rather than local terms and contexts. Moreover, where there is a mismatch between theoretical expectations (i.e. that a system operates in a Western way) and empirical evidence, IR theory's normative Westphalian straitjacket acts as an editor, highlighting similarities to the Euro-American model, rephrasing to better suit Western understandings and excising specificities deemed irrelevant to the Western model.

The Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security is still firmly bound by the Westphalian straitjacket at all analytical levels. The School's treatment of the Central Asian region is particularly instructive. Paradoxically Buzan and Wæver note that the domestic level is likely to be dominant for security in Central Asia,[154] but security dynamics in the former Soviet Union are nonetheless described as "a regional security complex around Russia".[155] Central Asia is characterised as a "weak subcomplex" of weak "not very state-like" states and weak powers, with high potential for penetration by external powers and Russian involvement still strong.[156] Central Asian security discourses are thus presented via the prisms of the main power, Russia, of external powers, and the formal statehood of the republics, directly contradicting the assertion that RSCT helps ensure local factors are properly considered and the role of great

[152] Buzan, Barry & Richard Little (2001) 'Why International Relations Has Failed as an Intellectual Project and What to Do About It', *Millennium* 30(1): 19–39.
[153] Buzan, Barry & Richard Little (2001): 25.
[154] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 46-47.
[155] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 397.
[156] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 423-426.

powers not overemphasised.[157] The Westphalian straitjacket is thus not only a conceptual constraint, but also a powerful operational one as it filters security narratives for "suitable" – i.e. Euro-American – content and context.

Such a collective portrait of the five Central Asian republics, while undoubtedly concurring with portrayals of the region in much of the "New Great Game" literature that has emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union, effectively obscures the effect of local context in favour of focusing on primarily geostrategic regional dynamics. Security is seen from the point of view of outsiders and using their terms and interpretations rather than local ones. Empirically, securitization is further restricted to the realm of high politics at the level of the state, with little potential for including sub-state actors that do not interact with official politics, leaving security sectors to merely analyse various aspects of the state's security as non-state actors and groups are left in the analytical shadows.

In the case of Central Asia, the focus on the state as the referent of security is particularly problematic. The conceptualisation of the state has been explored by Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong specifically in the post-Soviet context, challenging the idea of the state being a "coherent and unitary actor". In many of the USSR successor states, "no one single agent has uniform influence or authority across all state sectors, and state action is neither centralized nor coherent".[158] Thus there are multiple and competing loci of authority-building as state-building progresses. While securitization theory is well-equipped to deal with the official or formal level – indeed, it is ideally suited to an exploration of security discourses and their relative successes – this focus on state-level politics means that the analysis is in danger of obscuring informal politics and their dynamics, which can possess significant influence and legitimacy. Kathleen Collins highlights the importance of taking other levels and forms of politics beyond the

[157] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 46-47.
[158] Grzymala-Busse, Anna and Pauline Jones Luong (2002) "Reconceptualizing the State: Lessons from Post-Communism", *Politics & Society* 30(2): 352–533.

official level into account with reference to clan influence on formal institutions in Central Asia. Discussing regime consolidation in the Central Asian republics, she comments that "[f]ormal appearances, in short, were deceptive. For the effectual reality of Central Asian politics — at the crucial level of *informal* regime behavior — was nonconsolidation."[159]

The Copenhagen School, however, leaves informal behaviours and levels unaddressed. With regards to the state, Buzan and Wæver point out that the presumption that all states are fundamentally alike is "hugely distorting". However, their suggestion that all states can be located on a spectrum between "strong" and "weak" according to "the degree of socio-political cohesion between civil society and the institution of government"[160] fails to consider the nature of state-society relations, i.e. *how* the government and civil society interact. As such, it is a missed opportunity. Rather than presenting the analyst with a rare opening through which to begin contextualising a country or region's security dynamics by considering the nature of the state, the proposed strong/weak distinction merely once again demonstrates the presence of the normative Westphalian straitjacket, as Tickner argues:

> ... the multiple adjectives and classification schemes employed – weak, quasi, failed, corrupt, incomplete, backward – make use of dichotomous, evolutionary language that suggests that third world states simply fail to live up to the basic standard of modern civilisation.[161]

In this respect, the distinction between "strong" and "weak" states warrants further examination precisely for the dichotomous normative assumptions that are contained within it about statehood and consequently security. As I discuss in chapter five, designation as a "weak" or "failing" state is an indication that security dynamics are likely to exhibit cross-level – that is, domestic-external – characteristics that securitization theory is not able to consider due to its

[159] Collins, Kathleen (2002) "Clans, Pacts and Politics in Central Asia", *Journal of Democracy* 13(3): 145.
[160] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 22-23.
[161] Tickner, Arlene (2003) "Seeing IR Differently: Notes from the Third World", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 32(2): 315.

focus on the state level. The effects of this shortcoming are particularly evident in relation to functional actors and their influence on the sphere of security: in contrast to the secondary status that functional actors are accorded by the Copenhagen School, I demonstrate that in some cases functional actors can define security on a particular analytical and spatial level. However, due to the Copenhagen School's reliance on the state as the basic unit of analysis, competing interpretations of security that may exist at the sub-state level are redacted from accounts of security created using securitization theory.

The concepts of societal security and securitization are similarly affected by disciplinary normative assumptions. In the case of societal security, the constitution of a societal referent object involves a logic that is founded on a certain normative understanding of society and its identity that suggests the continued presence of the Westphalian straitjacket. Despite the Copenhagen School explicitly stating that referent objects at the supra- or sub-state level are possible, subject to establishing security legitimacy within socially defined boundaries,[162] the assertion that a society "differ[s] from social groups in having a high degree of social inertia, a continuity often across generations and a strong infrastructure of norms, values and 'institutions' in the wider sense"[163] assumes a degree of continuity, stability and cohesion that is not present in many Second and Third World countries, if, indeed, it is present in all Western countries.

This presumption about the nature of society is compounded by the tendency to focus on inherently European understandings of identity, first and foremost nations and ethnic groups, drawing on the ideas of the nation-state and national self-determination. Such identities can arguably be seen as being linked to the state, since citizenship and nationhood/ethnicity are viewed as overlapping, if not contiguous, identities, whose bearers comprise "society" within a given politico-territorial entity, most often a state. Moreover, these identities are viewed as

[162] Wæver, Ole, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup & Pierre Lemaitre (1993): 39.
[163] Wæver, Ole, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup & Pierre Lemaitre (1993): 21.

largely stable, "often solidly sedimented"[164], neglecting their potentially contingent and reflexive nature. Identity and society are therefore still in danger of being seen in essentialist terms and as inherently linked, both in terms of how they operate and what they signify, due to Western assumptions about how people conceptualise and prioritise their identities based on the Westphalian notion of the nation-state, as I explore in chapter two.

The result is that the societal sector is less able to accommodate identity groups that do not operate in parallel to the state, or at least on a similar level, due to both normative understandings of what 'identity' and 'society' mean, and, as shall be seen, the privileging of speech over other forms of expression. This is not to say that potential societal referent objects cannot be constructed within the theoretical framework provided by the Copenhagen School. What must be questioned, however, is whether the criteria and mechanisms provided for their construction and securitization are able to accommodate different interpretations of normative concepts, rather than automatically using Western interpretations and understandings, as Grete Bille explains:

> What is needed is emic studies exposing if the local communities do have concepts of race and ethnicity, and of religion for that matter, as an element of their understanding of self and other, as well as a solution to the problem ... of finding both adequate and agreed definitions of the key concepts in order to incorporate these local understandings in an analysis of their importance to conflict relations and solutions.[165]

Despite the apparent theoretical flexibility of designating identity as the referent object of the societal sector, it is here that the Westphalian straitjacket is most restrictive. More than in any other sector, there is a need to consider local context and particularities, rather than assuming commonalities exist: whilst comparison may serve to emphasise similarities between economies and militaries, for example, it often highlights the individuality of local cultures, with

[164] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (1997): 244.
[165] Bille, Grete (1996) *Societal Security and the Kurdish Problem*. Centre for Peace and Conflict Research Working Papers no. 19. Copenhagen: COPRI: 4.

which understandings of identity are inextricably linked. Thus, paradoxically, the societal sector has both the greatest *potential* to accommodate "glocalisation", but also the greatest limitations – if the socio-cultural context is not explicitly examined.

The use of the concept of securitization within the societal sector further raises the stakes. Critiques of securitization indicate the continued presence of a normative Westphalian straitjacket in the form of inherently Eurocentric assumptions about the social and political context in which any securitization occurs. There are two key issues. The first issue is that an explicit link between securitization and the construction of *both* the referent object and the securitising actor needs to be made in order to avoid oversimplification by presenting securitization as a uni-directional and entirely linear process. Just as security is constructed between the actors, so are the identities of the actors and objects constructed by the process of securitization.[166] In other words, as I have argued earlier in this chapter when discussing societal security, identities are not necessarily pre-existing, but rather become evident as a result of a securitising move or securitization. Securitization must, therefore, consider how the constituent parts are constructed in relation to each other and the context if it is to loosen the Westphalian straitjacket.

The second issue is the privileging of speech over other means of expression. The implications of this narrow focus on speech has been explored by Lene Hansen, who considers the notion of a "silent security dilemma", signifying a situation when "raising something as a security problem is impossible or might even aggravate the threat being faced".[167] At the heart of Hansen's discussion is the issue of 'voice': who can and cannot "speak" security. In this respect the Westphalian straitjacket manifests itself in the Copenhagen School's presumption that

[166] Huysmans, Jef (1998a): 494.
[167] Hansen, Lene (2000): 287.

speech is possible and desirable for any actor.[168] This may be broadly true in Western countries, where the principle of free speech is (within certain bounds) *de facto* as well as *de jure*, but is often not the case in non-Western countries where significant sections of the population may not be afforded the ability to express societal security concerns actively (censorship, imprisonment, threats) or passively (political/social disenfranchisement).[169] In such cases, other forms of expression may – or may not – be used to express security concerns: physical migration or protest actions for example. These actions logically point to the fact that a community perceives an existential threat and feels the need to act against it. However, on a basic level such physical expressions cannot be accommodated by securitization unless someone verbally interprets the reasons for the behaviour in question, at which point a securitising actor, referent object and threat discourse may be created in accordance with the securitization framework.

The central position of speech in the School's conceptualisation of security thus sets overly restrictive criteria for an analysis of security. Michael Williams takes up this point with reference to the increasing prevalence and importance of media images in political communication, arguing that

> ... securitization theory must develop a broader understanding of the mediums, structures, and institutions, of contemporary political communication if it is to address adequately questions of both empirical explanation and ethical appraisal in security practices.[170]

This is especially important in setting where politics is not a public and/or participatory process and access to traditional fora such as print media is limited. Such limitations may not involve direct action like censorship or prohibition; even underdevelopment of a country's infrastructure or high levels of poverty can effectively "silence" people, potentially leading them to seek other means of expressing concerns and gaining support. Thus security discourses are constructed, to

[168] Hansen, Lene (2000): 285.
[169] Vuori (2008), however, argued that at the state level the absence of democracy does not hinder the use of securitization for security analysis.
[170] Williams, Michael C. (2003): 512.

echo and extend Williams' title, via words, images and actions.[171] Therefore it must be considered, by what means 'security' is expressed, and secondly, how securitising actors and referent objects are constructed, given that they are mutually reinforcing. A consideration of these questions in any empirical study is an important step towards at least "subtitling", if not "translating", and "glocalising" the security speech-act and loosening the Westphalian straitjacket of normative assumptions.

The need to consider informal dynamics becomes even clearer at the empirical level. While it is possible to problematise the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security in a theoretical discussion, any empirical operationalisation is nevertheless bounded by securitization's internal logic, including its normative Westphalian assumptions. It is therefore necessary to examine the actual impact of the Westphalian straitjacket when the concepts of securitization and societal security are operationalised in a specific context. In order to explore how securitization theory could be applied to Kyrgyzstan and what the implications of the theory's narrow conceptualisation of security were on a practical level, I undertook a preliminary case study of the "March events" as a securitization.[172] The case study, which is presented in the following section, focuses on the two months prior to the ousting of then-president Askar Akaev and his government and pays particular attention to the local context and conditions. It draws on reports from local and Russian newspapers, articles in the international media, as well as the material presented in locally-published books on the "March events"[173] to map the development

[171] Williams, Michael C. (2003): 511–31.
[172] Previously published as Wilkinson, Claire (2007).
[173] Kazybaev, P. (ed.) (2006) *24 mart 2005 – narodnaya revolyutsia* [24 March 2005 – People's Revolution]. Bishkek: Uchkun; Knyazev, Aleksandr (2006) *Gosudarstvennyi perevorot 24 marta 2005 I Kirgizii* [The coup d'etat of March 24, 2005, in Kirghizia]. Bishkek, Almaty: Obshchestvennyi fond "Aleksandra Knyazeva"; Shishkareva, Elmira (ed.) (2005) *The Spring of 2005 Through the Eyes of People of Kyrgyzstan: Anxieties, Expectations, and Hopes (Oral Histories).* Bishkek: Foundation "Publishing Development Centre".

of security narratives using the framework provided by securitization and societal security in order to facilitate an initial critique of securitization theory.

4. Taking Copenhagen to Kyrgyzstan: An Initial Exploration

As I began to plan my fieldwork, circumstances in Kyrgyzstan changed quite radically: protests over the conduct of parliamentary elections that had begun in January 2005 culminated, largely unexpectedly, in the ousting of President Askar Akaev on 24 March 2005. This event was, methodologically speaking, the catalyst for a fundamental reappraisal of how I wished to approach my exploration of security in Kyrgyzstan. It no longer seemed possible to simply go and apply the concepts of securitization and societal security to Kyrgyzstan; the socio-political situation was changing on a daily basis as public protests continued, and everything was in a state of constant flux. I felt far less sure of my knowledge of Kyrgyzstan, which had been gained whilst a student there several years earlier, as I read dramatic accounts of events in the aftermath of the so-called "Tulip Revolution" that included regular public demonstrations, less frequent assassinations, and predictions from international commentators of impending societal collapse.[174] Most centrally, there was a need to actively reassess my perceptions of societal and political dynamics in the Republic, and to see how, or if, the securitization framework could be applied.

This exercise served as an extremely useful way to begin to explore the ongoing local dynamics in Kyrgyzstan, as well as testing the empirical potential of the Copenhagen School's

[174] See for example International Crisis Group (2005a) "Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution", *Asia Report* 97, 4 May.

framework for the analysis of security to take into account local specificities.[175] As will be demonstrated, a closer look at how events progressed, and how the various securitising actors constructed – and were constructed by – securitising narratives, suggested that the process of securitising the incumbent president as a threat to Kyrgyzstan that must be removed was not as linear and clear cut as the concepts of securitization and societal security might make them seem in a retrospective application. Despite the portrayal of the events as a continuation of the colour revolutions that had occurred in Georgia and Ukraine, the contradictions and incongruities that become evident as securitizing moves are traced in the weeks and months preceding the storming of the White House in Bishkek confirm once more the need to question one's assumptions at all stages of inquiry and consider the local context rather than blindly applying theory. This will be discussed in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

4.i. Interpreting the "March Events" of 2005 via Securitization

Despite hopes in the early 1990s that Kyrgyzstan might undergo a successful transition to a market economy and democratic political system in the Western model, by the mid-1990s the republic appeared to be in state of economic stagnation and de-democratisation as President Akaev consolidated his power-base within his and his wife's respective clans. Informal systems of patronage rendered formal institutions increasingly impotent. As patronage networks took on even greater significance, so state-society relations worsened, meaning that terms such as 'society' and 'civil society' were largely empty of meaning and certainly did not correspond with the social reality beyond the formal level of high politics. Public discontent about worsening socio-economic conditions and corruption led to localized protests in 2000 and 2001 and the shooting of six unarmed demonstrators by police in the southern town of Aksy in 2002 further

[175] Knyazev, Aleksandr (2006): 11.

eroded Akaev's domestic legitimacy. In an effort to justify President Akaev's efforts to suppress political opposition, threats to Kyrgyzstan's stability and territorial integrity from terrorists, extremists or other unnamed "third forces" were invoked with increasing frequency.

Against this background some political opposition did survive. However, prior to the protests that occurred surrounding the parliamentary elections, which grew in scale and demands throughout January, February and March 2005, the lack of cohesion amongst the various politicians identified as being "opposition" members meant that they did not have sufficient legitimacy to be seen as a credible collective political actor. People's participation in the majority protests was based on some personal affiliation to the figure in question, as one woman from the northern town of Talas explained:

> Ravshan has his own voters, Imanaliev his own. Borubaev has his own voters, and Sherniyazov his own, but Talas is small. Overall, the town broke into six or seven groups. … I didn't want to vote for anyone [in the second round of elections] … But then I had to vote for someone and as Imanaliev came from my village, I voted for him.[176]

Nevertheless, due to changes in the electoral system prior to the parliamentary elections that further enhanced political individualisation and the importance of patronage networks,[177] the initial securitising moves that occurred effectively constructed not only a referent object and narrative of threat, but also the securitising actor itself in the form of 'the Opposition'.[178] As noted above, local issues and loyalties originally brought people out on to the streets; it was only as protests grew in scale and spread in various regions, particularly the south around Osh and Jalalabad, that the focus moved from individual figures to an Opposition as a collective entity. In effect, protest actions and narratives constructed the Opposition as the securitising actor – a role

[176] Shishkareva, Elmira, (ed.) (2005): 26.
[177] International Crisis Group (2005a).
[178] For the purposes of this case study, 'Opposition', with a capital letter, is used to refer to the collective entity and identity of opposition politicians and their supporters as an actor in securitising moves/securitizations. In contrast, the use of 'opposition' is used merely to indicate that the person/group in question was not seen as being pro-Akaev regime.

opposition figures were initially reluctant to be cast in. Roza Otunbaeva, later dubbed the 'locomotive of the revolution',[179] explicitly rejected the idea of going beyond the bounds of "normal" politics by staging a revolution: "we are not talking about a revolution, but about a peaceful, orderly and constitutional transfer of power".[180] Similarly, Topchubek Turgananliev stressed the need to remain within the law: "Thousands of people can come out to support their candidates. But we should keep in mind that we can only act by lawful methods."[181]

The securitization narrative developed through a number of stages and levels as events progressed, and was increasingly able to use the government's counter-securitising moves to consolidate all aspects of its own narrative and construction, both of the referent object and its securitising actor. The culmination was the overthrow of the government when people finally responded to the threat narrative, physically affirming the securitization with the storming of the White House and overthrow of the government. However, as will be seen, this event was only belatedly incorporated by the securitising actor – the Opposition – into their narrative of events as a justified action beyond 'normal' politics. As Roza Otunbaeva asserted on 12 April, "on March 24 a popular revolution was made, we call it so, no matter what you call it."[182]

The initial securitising moves were constructed on the local level by a number of candidates broadly seen as being either non-pro-government or opposition who had been barred from standing in the elections. They called on their supporters, whose responses were based on personal connections rather than an evaluation of the argument, to protest the decisions of the Central Elections Committee, which was portrayed as acting in favour of the

[179] Abdyrazakov, Sydyk (2005) 'Kyrgyzstan: Boiling Over', *Transitions Online,* 21.03.2005, http://www.projecttransitionaldemocracy.org/document.php?docid=1072&regionid=20&projecttransitionaldemocracy=df45081f76e4ecb3e717b683d05c6885 [last accessed 14.09.2006].
[180] Ragozin, Leonid (2005) 'Kyrgyzstan feels wind of change', *BBC News*, 03.02.2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/asia-pacific/4229985.stm [last accessed 12.09.2006].
[181] Gordeyev, Andrei (2005) 'Kyrgyzstan protests: rehearsal for revolution?', *Eurasianet*, 13.01.2005, htpp://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/eav011305_pr.shtml [last accessed 12.09.2006].
[182] *RIA Novosti* (2005) 'Kyrgyzstan to Face Presidential Election Acid Test', 12.04.2005, http://en.rian.ru/onlinenews/20050412/39698078-print.html [last accessed 12.09.2006].

government.[183] This began the process of constructing a narrative of threat, based on the implicit and explicit message that the government does not have the interests of the people at heart since it refused to allow "the people's choices" to stand. This narrative gained ground throughout January and February amongst protestors, particularly as the government did not appear to take the protests seriously and responded only arbitrarily.

The fact that media access was increasingly severely limited, even in the capital, meant that people's perceptions were influenced by what they heard at protests and via social networks. An increasing sense that the government was responsible for the media black-out also served to strengthen the narrative considerably, not least with incidents such as electricity being cut off to the American-funded publishing house where several pro-opposition newspapers were printed, and Radio Azattyk, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Kyrgyz service, being prevented from broadcasting when an auction for its wavelengths was announced.[184] However, at the end of February it was difficult to identify the actors involved in any securitising moves: the government denied involvement, and the opposition was still recognisably fragmented. Alymbek Akunov, from Naryn oblast, described the situation: "Our people could not do that [choose one opposition leader]. In Ukraine, in Georgia, they chose one colour… We have six colours. Atambaev came with one colour, people from Talas came with green, Bakiev's group with orange. It was multicoloured, but it was clear that it was not friendly."[185]

The first signs that these securitising moves could metamorphose into a successful securitization came in early March, when the supporters of a number of candidates physically occupied local administrative buildings and chased local governors – seen as government lackeys – out of towns. At least on a local level it appeared that people had accepted the

[183] Gordeyev, Andrei (2005).
[184] Reporters Without Borders (2005) "Authorities harass independent media ahead of legislative elections", 25.02.2005, http://www.rsf.org/articlephp3?id_article=12671 [last accessed 8.09.2006].
[185] Shishkareva, Elmira, (ed.) (2005): 31.

security narrative presented, and, indeed, had progressed to taking "extraordinary" measures to counter the constructed threat, signified not least by growing demands for Akaev's immediate resignation.[186]

The government's response was to try to counter the original narrative with its own securitization. It attempted to cast Kyrgyzstan as its referent object, arguing that the protests were a threat to the republic's existence: as government officials threateningly warned, those who wanted to see Ukraine 2004 could end up with Tajikistan 1992 – a thinly-veiled reference to the possibility of civil war.[187] Those leading the protests were accused of being provocateurs and of being unpatriotic and self-interested political mercenaries who had no greater motive than to gain power themselves at the cost of the people.[188]

This counter move failed, and in fact ended up strengthening the original threat narrative by increasing perceptions that President Akaev's main concern was to hold on to power at any cost, a view openly voiced in a statement by one opposition group that concluded "the future of the country is in danger!"[189] More significantly, this counter move served to consolidate the Kyrgyzstani people as the referent object. It also effectively constructed the securitising actor in the form of the Opposition, to some extent moving the focus away from specific individuals – developments on the ground amongst the hitherto incohesive opposition leaders reflected this

[186] *Kyrgyz Weekly* listserv, 6-12.03.2005, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/KYRGYZNEWS/message/1504 [last accessed 8.09.2006]: 1, 13, 16-19, 26.
[187] *Kyrgyz Election News* listserv, 2.03.2005, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Kyrgyz-elections/message/32 [last accessed 13.09.2006].
[188] Akaev, Askar (2005) "K razumu! Zayavlenie Prezidenta Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki A. Akaeva" ["Come to your senses! Statement by A. Akaev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic"], *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* 29, 23 March: 1; Wilkinson, Claire (2005) "e-Revolution in Kyrgyzstan", *Journal of the Danish Society for Central Asia* 1(1): 17–21.
[189] *Moya stolitsa novosti* (2005) "Budushchee strany v opasnosti. Zayavlenie Obshchestvenno-politicheskogo dvizheniya 'Jany Bagyt' po itogam vyborov v Jogorku Kenesh KR" ["The Country's Future is in Danger. Statement by the social-political movement Jany Bagyt on the results of elections to the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic"], 16.03.2005, http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/9698/ [last accessed 22.03.2009].

new legitimacy several days later when the Co-ordinating Council of Kyrgyz National Unity was founded in Jalalabad on 15 March, creating a focal point for the Opposition.

Even so, at this stage the transformation from securitising moves to securitization had still not been made: while local audiences had accepted the security narrative, which had been increasingly collectively constructed, it was not yet significant insofar as endorsing the need to take action against the perceived threat – protests were still in response to locally-based issues. In other words, on a national level, the audience was content to call for immediate resignations, but did not at this point see the need to move beyond this to actually accepting the idea of using politically extraneous measures to eliminate the perceived threat. The success, or otherwise, of the cumulative securitising moves remained undecided, particularly in the capital, as was noted by one Russian commentator: "The very first protest actions showed that the Opposition could not count on widespread support in the capital." Even so, the article noted that the Opposition had resorted to force in Osh and Jalalabad to occupy local administrations, noting the departure from peaceful methods of achieving their aims.[190] However, others questioned the degree of control the Opposition had over events,[191] raising the question of whether the opposition was only actually formed as a securitising actor retrospectively, rather than during events.

24 March saw the default completion of the securitization as "extraneous measures" were implemented, overtaking any speech-acts. Opposition leaders had organised a mass rally in the capital, Bishkek, with people being bussed in from southern regions of the country to join the opposition's supporters. The rally began peacefully, with leading opposition figures using a series of speeches to reiterate their message that Akaev must relinquish power sooner, by

[190] Panfilova, Viktoriya, Ivan Sas, & Anatolii Gordienko, 2005. 'Revolyutsiya tolpy. Demokraticheskoe varvarstvo protiv tsivilizovannogo avtoritarizma. Bunt oppozitsii na yuge Kirgizii mozhet privesti v voine s Uzbekistanom' ['Revolution of the crowd. Democratic barbarism against civilised authoritarianism. Opposition revolt in the south of Kirghizia could lead to war with Uzbekistan'], *Nezavisimaya gazeta,* 22.03.2005, http://www.ng.ru/cis/2005-03-22/1_revolution.html [last accessed 22.03.2009].
[191] Shermatova, Sanobar (2005), 'Kirgizskii bunt i "voina nervov"' ['Kyrgyz revolt and the "war of nerves"'], *Izvestiya,* 24.03.2005, http://www.izvestia.ru/comment/article1449109/ [last accessed 22.03.2009].

resigning, or later, at the presidential elections scheduled for December 2005. It appeared that the securitising dynamic had begun to abate, and that events could be brought back into the realm of "normal" politics. Certainly this appeared to be the Opposition's intention:

> It is particularly worth noting that the opposition leaders held a coordinating council meeting 24 hours prior to the protest to agree on actions. Agreement was reached only over THE CONDUCTING OF A TERMLESS PROTEST OUTSIDE THE "WHITE HOUSE". ITS STORMING WAS NOT PLANNED. Protesters planned to erect yurts and tents on the square and await a peaceful outcome. But…[192]

This impression changed rapidly with the arrival of a large group of protesters from the southern city of Osh. Eyewitness accounts recounted that rather than joining the existing rally, they continued to the White House, their numbers swelled by youths who had grown tired of listening to speeches in the face of "white-hat" provocateurs, allegedly hired by the regime. Clashes ensued between this group of demonstrators and the police before the latter, under orders not to use force, fled.[193] This left the way open for the White House to be stormed by this "significant" – though not majority – audience, whose actions in effect completed the securitization, although it was only constructed in speech-act terms by the Opposition after the event. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath, opposition leaders seemed shocked by what had happened: Now-President Bakiev was widely quoted as saying that "he had not even imagined how it would end",[194] whilst Anvar Artykov reflected that "We [the Opposition] just intended to weaken their hold on power".[195]

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[192] Emphasis in original. Gruzdov, Yurii (2005) 'Krakh rezhima Akaeva' ['Collapse of Akaev's regime'], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 25.03.2005, http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/9760/ [last accessed 23.30.2009].
[193] Zygar, Mikhail (2005) 'Revolutsiya v Kirgizii. Pogromootvod' ['Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. Riot deflector'], *Kommersant,* 25.03.2005, http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=557605 [last accessed 23.03.2009].
[194] Akilova, Leila, Vera Tokombaeva & Ella Taranova (2005) 'Zavodnoi apelsin' ['A clockwork orange'], *Rossiiskaya gazeta,* 25.03.2005, http://www.rg.ru/2005/03/25/kyrgyzyia-revolyutsiya.html [last accessed 23.03.2009].
[195] Shishkareva, Elmira, (ed.) (2005): 45.

5. Looking Back at Copenhagen: Initial Conclusions & Concerns

As can be seen from the final two quotations, the outcome of the protests was not predicted. Indeed, it was only after the events that they were labelled a "People's Revolution" by the Opposition who took power.[196] It is this post-event speech-act that enables the application of the securitization framework to provide a clear and unambiguous final retrospective account of what happened. Even so, as can be seen from the evolution of events described, the conceptualisation is not trouble-free in terms of accurately describing the development of the securitization and its constituent parts. Contrary to the linear dynamic described by securitization, starting with a securitising actor who then constructs a referent object and threat narrative to be accepted or rejected, the process may in practice start at any point, with the component parts developing simultaneously and contributing to each other's construction. Furthermore, securitising moves do not exist in isolation and may be simultaneously or subsequently linked to other securitising moves that in total contribute to a securitization even if they are individually unsuccessful. In the Kyrgyzstani case, while the referent object was relatively quickly constructed, the threat narrative took far longer to develop as it effectively co-constructed the securitising actor in the form of the Opposition, who gained legitimacy only as the narrative began to be accepted and expanded from multiple locales to the national level after 24 March.

Most significantly, at several stages physical actions overtook any speech-act interpretation, and were only reincorporated into the overall securitization structure with

[196] This interpretation of events has subsequently been incorporated into official discourse with the signing of a decree making March 24 a national holiday entitled "Day of the People's Revolution" by President Kurmanbek Bakiev on 22 March 2006. http://www.president.kg/press/news/956/ [last accessed 29.03.2008].

retrospective narrative interpretation on the part of the opposition positing itself as the securitising actor. Securitization is currently unable to describe such a sequence of events without "cleaning up" the order of events to fit the need for the speech-act to have chronological precedence. This fact, as noted earlier, is likely to have a far greater impact in non-democratic contexts, since it is under such conditions that freedom of speech is likely to be restricted, especially for non-state actors. Moreover, even if speech is in principle an option, it may be rejected as being ineffective or pointless, hence Otunbaeva's labelling of protests as "street democracy". As she explained, "people here have no other option but to go out on the square and demand power back."[197] Such a potential effect is unacknowledged by the Copenhagen School.

The move from speech-act to physical action highlights securitization's over-reliance on the medium of speech, as discussed in the first section of this chapter. People felt unable to get their security concerns addressed adequately through politics, official or otherwise, resulting in a leapfrog over securitization into physical action, first peacefully, then involving the use of force. Tempting as it is to assume that this was mainly the result of the political realm being largely closed off to all but a small political (clan-based) elite in the republic, it is also a result of Kyrgyzstani society having a far more localised and fragmented character than Western conceptions of society, with transitions between the various spatial scales (local, provincial, regional, national) often being disjointed physically, mentally, culturally and linguistically, making talk of 'society' meaningless without qualification. Such fragmentation also renders the theoretical mechanism of securitization unstable, since fundamental assumptions about

[197] Grigorieva, Ekaterina (2005) "Roza Otunbaeva: 'My ne predstavlyaem takogo interesa dlya Zapada, kak Gruziya ili Ukraina'" ["Roza Otunbaeva: 'We are not of such interest to the West as Georgia and Ukraine are'"], *Izvestiya* 21.02.2005, http://www.izvestia.ru/world/article1239177/ [last accessed 23.03.2009].

legitimacy and the norms of political behaviour are thrown open to question and multiple levels must be considered.

The events of 24 March in Bishkek showed the effects of this fragmentation very graphically: even though in theory all the protesters were there for the same reason – to call for Akaev's resignation and protest election violations – they had been motivated to attend on the basis of support for individual opposition leaders (personal/local loyalties). Furthermore, it was the protesters from Osh, not inhabitants of Bishkek who it appears eventually led the storming of the White House after clashes with police, whilst many of the city's inhabitants remained uninvolved, fearing further violence and instability. This 'southern' role was noted by some politicians, including then vice governor of the southern Osh oblast, Mirlan Bakashov, who asserted that "if our people had not gone to Bishkek, nothing would have happened."[198] The country's population remained divided even as the securitization was completed; a significant fact not reflected in the account provided by the Copenhagen School's framework.

Evidently, in this case, the dynamics assumed by the concept of securitization do not reflect how events actually happened, even on the basic level described above. Securitization provides a tidied-up, simplified view of things by concentrating on the outcome rather than the process. Local specificities and multiple processes are conveniently overlooked at best, and at worst reinterpreted or "edited" to fit linear analytical assumptions regarding how the different constituent parts of a securitization are constructed. As has been shown, the relationships between the securitising actor, referent and the threat narrative are in many respects mutually reinforcing.

[198] Shishkareva, Elmira, (ed.) (2005): 44.

6. Research Methodology: From Theory to Fieldwork

As well as highlighting a considerable number of conceptual problems in the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security, the initial appeal of which lay in its potential ability to examine anomalies and attempt to explain them, my initial exploration of applying securitization to the "Tulip Revolution" raised considerable questions about how best to conduct my fieldwork. While a number of proposals have been made regarding remedying the School's shortcomings on a theoretical level, none have yet addressed the issue of how exactly to conduct an empirically-based securitization study. Certainly, empirical studies have been encouraged, but the majority of scholars have heeded Buzan and Wæver's call to examine "how the empirical matter might be decanted into our theoretical container" [199] without considering the impact of the decanting process on the empirical material and subsequent findings. How could the "editing" process inherent in applications of securitization theory to empirical material, which strips out local specificities and anomalies that do not fit with the Copenhagen School's ontology and normative assumptions, be reduced?

The results of my initial exploration of applying securitization theory to the case of the "Tulip Revolution" highlighted several problems for fieldwork. First and foremost, echoing Kierkegaard's maxim that life must be lived forwards but understood backwards,[200] securitization theory focuses on successful outcomes – i.e. completed securitizations – not process. Consequently, analysis of a situation and application of the framework cannot be undertaken until a securitization move is completed, so that the relevant actors, referent object and threat

[199] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 49.
[200] Kierkegaard, Soren Aabye (1813-1855).

narrative can be identified. Fieldwork, however, necessitated a change to focus on the process of securitising moves so that if any of them eventually resulted in a securitization I would be able retrospectively to analyse it. Consequently, the scope of my investigation broadened considerably. Rather than using the Copenhagen School's criteria when looking for potential securitising actors and referent objects, which seemed extremely deterministic, I decided to explore "security" more widely while I was in Bishkek and Osh and then analyse the data I gathered using securitization theory once I returned to Birmingham.

I decided to use a range of methods in order to ensure that I would still be able to use the Copenhagen School's framework to analyse the data, but at the same time try to explore the local context in as much depth as possible. My prior knowledge of Kyrgyzstan, and in particular Bishkek, informed my selection of data collection and generation methods, as did logistical limitations. I had spent the 2000-2001 academic year as a guest student at the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University (KRSU) in Bishkek studying Russian philology. As well as improving my Russian to the point that I could operate confidently and effectively in a Russophone environment, my year at KRSU provided me with a wealth of tacit knowledge into how Bishkek and its residents operate. This information was invaluable when I arrived back in the city, which seemed as unfamiliar as it was familiar, and began to re-orientate myself and decide how exactly to investigate "security" since I already knew the layout of the city and where particular landmarks and buildings were located. In addition, my previous association with KRSU provided me with a vital concrete starting point when I was recognised on the street by a former teacher and gratefully accepted her hospitality and advice regarding whom to talk to and what events could be of interest to me.

I chose to split my fieldwork into two visits, returning to the UK between the two. The first phase was to be conducted in Bishkek for approximately four months. In addition to data collection, my time was to be used to make arrangements for the second phase of my fieldwork

in Osh, a city I had never visited. While Bishkek was a reasonably familiar setting and presented less of a logistical challenge, I was unsure what to expect from Osh. Locals in Bishkek often suggested that I would not be able to communicate using Russian in the south of the country and that it was more dangerous than Bishkek for me as a Western woman. At the same time, they were almost all keen to stress that it – and the south of the country more generally – was more properly Kyrgyz than Bishkek. Given the received wisdom that Bishkek and Osh represented "two Kyrgyzstans", as an acquaintance in Bishkek described it, I wished to see how the north and south differed from each other and if this impacted on understandings of "security".

Even as I booked my flight to Osh when I returned to Bishkek at the end of March 2006, I was unsure how I was going to be able to carry out fieldwork in the city. I had the names and telephone numbers of various contacts, but the first challenge was going to be finding somewhere to live and orientating myself. Eventually, the day before I was due to go to Osh, a personal contact from KSRU interceded on my behalf and generously contacted the local parliamentary deputy to request that he assist me. As a result, my arrival in Osh was unexpectedly smooth; a flat that I could rent had been found for me, I was shown around the city on the first day (accompanied by stern warnings not to go out alone, especially to the bazaar) and I was given various people's mobile phone numbers to contact if I needed any assistance or had any problems. After this extremely hospitable welcome, Osh proved in some ways to be an easier and more relaxed place for fieldwork than Bishkek.

In Bishkek, logistical constraints made themselves apparent from the first day. Prior to arrival, my plans for fieldwork had been ambitious and centred on holding a series of focus groups with the participants drawn from a range of demographic groups. Working independently without any institutional affiliation, however, meant that this was not going to be possible without a huge amount of additional expenditure beyond my budget. In addition, local contacts with whom I discussed the possibility expressed uncertainty that people would wish to discuss topics

such as “security” and personal experiences in groups with strangers. It was encountering issues such as these that made me decide to adopt a combination of informal semi-structured interviews with representatives of different communities and groups, analysis of Russian-language print media, photographs and observation, and a social survey.

To start with, I drew up an interview “wish list”. This initially included representatives of the Russian, Uzbek and Uighur national-cultural organisations that were based at the *Dom druzhby* ("House of Friendship") on the north east side of the central Ala-Too Square, as well as a number of local and international non-governmental organisations. Over the next few weeks, as I found out more about what was happening in the city, more people were added to the list on a rolling basis: youth political groups, journalists, a few more NGOs and, finally, sexual minorities. Once I had obtained contact details for the organisations and people whom I wished to interview, I began approaching them and requesting interviews. Responses were inevitably mixed, but perseverance, particularly when telephoning people, paid off and over the next three months I was able to arrange interviews with 16 people or organisations.[201] Beyond a very basic set of topics about which I wanted to talk (their or their organisation’s opinions about the current political and socio-economic situation in the country) and asking my interviewees directly what they thought “security” was, I preferred to let the precise topic of conversation be guided by my interviewee. Many interviewees spoke at length without prompting and I was surprised on occasion by the frankness of their answers. In Bishkek all interviewees consented to their interviews being recorded, while in Osh several people preferred that I took notes only.[202]

[201] See appendix 1.

[202] The names of all respondents have been changed, except in cases where the respondent gave explicit permission to use his/her real name. Consent was given verbally, rather than being documented. Although I am aware that this does not conform with Western ethical norms of informed consent, the decision was taken based on consideration of socio-cultural conditions in Kyrgyzstan and what would be the most appropriate way to obtaining consent. The names of all research participants have either been removed or changed. For a detailed consideration of research ethics in Central Asia, see Wall, Caleb & John Overton (2006) “Unethical ethics?: applying research ethics in Uzbekistan”, *Development in Practice* 16(1): 62-67.

Once I had decided to use Russophone print media as a source of information, a daily task was combing a number of kiosks and stands to buy the day's newspapers. There were a number of key newspapers of which I tried to buy every issue, and then I supplemented this core with any other newspapers that were available.[203] I did not buy any hard copies of the government owned *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, since I could access it electronically via Eastview's database and it would have added several more kilograms to the eight kilograms of newspaper, representing news coverage from late September 2005 until 2006, that I sent back to the UK. Collectively, these newspapers enabled me to go back and trace individual securitising moves and related events, building up a composite account of what had happened from multiple points of view. In addition, I made extensive use of local and international electronic print media to ensure as full a picture as possible was gained. The main local electronic media source was the independent news-site *Gazeta.kg*, while internationally I followed coverage of Kyrgyzstan published by organisations such as the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), *Eurasianet*, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (*RFE/RL*) and *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* as well as the websites of main stream media such as the BBC on the relatively rare occasions that Kyrgyzstan was deemed particularly newsworthy.[204]

My decision to use photographs and observation as a method was due to my interest in the frequent protests that were occurring and related dynamics. Protests, with their demands for immediate action, status as the "last resort" for people who have tried every other way to get their opinion heard and potential to disrupt the socio-political life of the capital (and the country, on occasion), seemed to me to be an expression of security concerns. Problematically, however, until someone said what those security concerns were, securitization theory could not accommodate them. Yet the protests demonstrated that physical expressions can sometimes

[203] Details of newspapers and Internet media used is given in appendix 2.
[204] See appendix 2.

precede a security speech-act, and it seemed imperative to consider the protests directly as constructions of "security". Their importance was further heightened as I found that reportage of protests often did not reflect what I had seen and heard when at the protests, with attendance figures being inflated by hundreds or even thousands by some reporters. Similarly, I found that people's reasons for attending protests were far more diverse than the organisers claimed. These disparities strongly suggested that a closer look at protests was required to understand their relationship to "security" in the country – a topic that I return to in chapters three and four.

Finally, in light of the centrality of the concept of societal, or community, identities to the Copenhagen School's theoretical framework, I decided to undertake a social survey to explore local understandings of identity. I had been increasingly uncomfortable with the Copenhagen School's specification of societal identities in relation to Kyrgyzstan. Although McSweeney's accusation that the Copenhagen School reifies identity can be rebuffed, as Williams argues, by clarifying that the identity is fixed only within the context of the securitization, this does not negate the problem that an essentialist understanding of identity brings. While ethnicity is often assumed to be a defining identity for people, as are tribe or clan affiliations and religion in the case of ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, there is a danger of essentialising these identities to the exclusion of other identities that people use to negotiate their lives. As such, I wished to explore how local people understood and negotiated their own identities and hence "unpack" the assumption that certain identities (specifically ethnicity, clan/tribe membership or religion) automatically have greater resonance and importance for people.

The survey consisted of twenty questions in Russian, most of which required answers of a few words at most.[205] The questions concerned the following identities:

1. Citizenship (questions 1-3)

[205] See appendix 3 for a sample questionnaire and a summary of the results.

2. Language (questions 4-6)
3. Nationality/Ethnicity (questions 7-9)
4. Place of birth and residence, rural or urban resident (questions 10-11, 14)
5. Clan, tribe or origins (question 12)
6. Religion (question 13)
7. Profession (questions 15-17)
8. Political (question 18)

The final two questions asked respondents to rank a list of characteristics in order of importance to their sense of personal identity and to classify their level of income. In addition, the questionnaires used in Osh had one extra question asking what sources of news and other information respondents used. I settled on a sample size of 300 in each city on the basis that it would be large enough to be representative and (in principle) valid for statistical analysis, but small enough to be manageable with my limited resources and time.

For practical reasons as well as concerns over the degree of bias I would potentially introduce as a foreigner (in the form of people giving the answers they 'thought' I wanted to hear, or not wishing to share personal details with a stranger), I needed to find locals to conduct the survey for me. In Bishkek I arranged for the survey to be completed via a local academic contact, who employed two research assistants to administer the surveys. They chose to distribute the questionnaires to thirty KRSU students, each of whom was responsible for the return of ten completed questionnaires. Despite my initial concern that this could skew the sample if the students chose to ask friends rather than family the resultant sample proved to be broadly in keeping with Bishkek's overall demography.[206]

[206] Tables 1 and 2 in appendix 3.

Lacking similar academic contacts in Osh, I employed two research assistants directly and gave each of them 150 questionnaires to complete. Significantly, as I will discuss in chapter two, I employed one assistant, Jyldyz, who spoke Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Russian, and a Russophone assistant, Aigul,[207] who also spoke, in her words "kitchen Kyrgyz and Tatar". Both interviewers were native to Osh. I gave no instructions about who should be chosen as a respondent in any way, nor where respondents should be found. Jyldyz chose to locate respondents in public places, such as cafes, the bazaar and the park. Apart from four of her work colleagues, she chose respondents randomly, noting in her debrief comments that "to be honest, people were not very open while answering the questions", but that most people who refused did so because they were busy, and only a few "because of sensitive questions about their identity".[208] In contrast, Aigul used a snowball approach to find respondents, starting with friends from the same microregion of Osh and her family. She also chose to leave questionnaires with people, rather than interview them directly. The final sample sizes were 292 in Bishkek and 253 in Osh.

Having returned to Birmingham, I coded the responses and used SPSS to analyse the data. Coding was initially made as extensive as possible, despite the unwieldiness of the exercise, to ensure the full range of responses was included. Crosstabulations were also constructed and Chi-square values calculated for all variables to determine if there were statistically significant associations between certain variables at the 99 percent probability ($p = 0.01$) level. Due to limitations and biases of the data, I did not pursue any further statistical analysis. Similarly, I do not claim that my data is representative of the Kyrgyzstani population as a whole and the two samples are not directly comparable since the Bishkek survey was conducted in November 2005 and the Osh one in May 2006. Rather, my purpose was to use the

[207] Names have been changed.
[208] Debrief session with Jyldyz, Osh, 11.06.2005.

survey data in conjunction with regional and national data to provide the starting point to explore local identities as an inherently *intersectional, multiple* and *situated* phenomenon – an undertaking that proved ultimately elusive, as I discuss in the penultimate section of the next chapter.

This chapter has been concerned primarily with the "what" of my research: what has been written about "security" in relation to Kyrgyzstan; what is securitization theory and what has been written about it; what are the results of applying securitization to events in Kyrgyzstan; what methods I used in the field to collect data. What it has not addressed, however, is the "how" of this project: how have I reached the conclusions presented in this thesis, how have my findings been shaped by the personalities and locations involved in the project, how (and why) have I engaged with securitization theory despite its well-documented flaws and shortcomings? In short, to paraphrase Yanow's book title,[209] *how* does this research mean? This is the subject of chapter two.

[209] Yanow, Dvora (1996) *How Does a Policy Mean? Interpreting Policy and Organizational Actions* Georgetown: Georgetown University Press.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM THEORY TO KYRGYZSTAN: SITUATING SECURITY & IDENTITIES[1]

> What political scientists need is an approach that allows them to go beyond simply projecting their own concept onto the world – that allows them to hear other "voices" […] in the "conversation of mankind".[2]

If the largely theoretical critiques of the Copenhagen School highlight a considerable number of problems with the concepts of securitization and societal security, then attempting an empirical investigation of "security" utilising the framework provided by the Copenhagen School has proved even more problematic. The concerns discussed in chapter one about the privileging of the public voice over other forms of expression, the reification of identities, the inherently retrospective and outcome-orientated nature of securitization and the role of the analyst, are made more immediate. Most worrying was the sense that, despite the Copenhagen School's claims to the contrary, starting out with theory would result only in findings that conformed to the suggested framework (i.e. successful securitizations), rather than capturing the multiple, fragmented, fluid and often contradictory security dynamics evident in Kyrgyzstan.

While the theory requires that events have already taken place and the outcome known, fieldwork requires attention to be paid as much to process. Fieldwork requires strategies to cope with this shift in focus and both generally and specifically in relation to the theoretical approach of the research, must be found or improvised. As such, research often becomes a far less pre-planned undertaking, moving into the realm of praxis rather than methods. While methods are theoretical ideal types, instructions for and descriptions of how one is supposed to conduct

[1] Sections of this chapter have previously been published in Wilkinson, Claire (2008) "Positioning 'Security' and Securing One's Position: The researcher's role in investigating 'security' in Kyrgyzstan", in Wall, Caleb R.L. & Peter P. Mollinga (eds.) *Fieldwork in Difficult Environments* Berlin & Vienna: Lit Verlag: 43-67.

[2] Schwartz, Joel D. (1984) "Participation and Multisubjective Understanding: An Interpretivist Approach to the Study of Political Participation", *The Journal of Politics* 46(4): 1132.

research, praxis is concerned with actions that are "entailed, required, or produced by a theory, or by particular circumstances".[3] In other words, it is about how the research was actually done, rather than how it is supposed to have been done or how it is subsequently presented.

How I proceeded with my fieldwork was largely determined by conditions in post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan, which were considerably different from those I had anticipated when writing my research proposal in 2003. Yet it was also a reaction against disciplinary theoretical commitments. Traditionally, the process of writing has involved transformation of praxis into a formal methodology. The researcher is expected to edit out the "messiness" of one's fieldwork, tie up loose ends, systematise her account and show the step-wise progress of the research (which may not have ever actually happened). An additional purpose of this exercise is to ensure that our final accounts meet the criteria specified for particular knowledge claims – i.e. the underlying assumptions about what we're saying. In the case of IR, and Security Studies especially, the continued preference for expert theoretical knowledge over local situated knowledge reflects the continued influence of positivistic criteria on how we write our research: it should be presented as universalist (i.e. that generalisations can be made from it), use "preestablished impersonal criteria" (i.e. use observation and previously confirmed knowledge) and be disinterested, meaning that "[s]cientific claims should be assessed independently of local social, economic, political, and personal interests".[4]

In the case of this research, it would involve redacting events in Kyrgyzstan to fit the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security presented by securitization and societal security. Yet I found myself fighting against this process: how could I justify editing my research to fit this format when it was dissatisfaction with existing treatments of Central Asia and the redactional tendencies of theoretical approaches that had in large part provoked me to

[3] *Oxford English Dictionary* (2008) "praxis, *n.*", d. Online version, www.oed.com [last accessed 12.05.2009].
[4] Law, John (2004) *After Method: mess in social research*, London & New York: Routledge: 16-17.

undertake a PhD in the first place? Tim Pachirat, reflecting on his own research,[5] describes the quandary that this poses vividly and humorously:

> Light footed the brave ethnographer crosses the swinging bridge only to realize half way through that the ropes are fraying under the weight of baggage hitherto unexamined. Creak, creak, SNAP! Alas, there falls our brave ethnographer into the Canyon of Postmodern Doubt and Despair.[6]

This "baggage" – and how to find a path out of the "Canyon of Postmodern Doubt and Despair" – is the subject of this chapter. It is based upon my experiences of preparing to return to Kyrgyzstan, conducting fieldwork in Bishkek and Osh between September 2005 and June 2006, and then trying to "make sense" of my interpretations in relation to the concepts of securitization and societal security. Centrally, I argue that "security" cannot be seen as an objective phenomenon that can simply be located and reported; rather, the researcher must explicitly situate herself and her research within local contexts, showing how her materials were constructed and her role in this process. I begin by reflecting upon how the researcher can use the experience of fieldwork itself, not just the materials that are brought back from "the field" to situate and contextualise her research. I then provide an account of how I ended up using ethnographic methods and adopting an interpretivist methodology and consider the epistemological consequences of this approach in terms of the relationship between theory, methods and empirical perspectives, before discussing a number of issues arising from my fieldwork: how can one actually conduct fieldwork on a concept such as security; researcher and respondent positionality; the situatedness of identities. Writing the researcher "back in" to the final research account by use of "confessions", as well as adopting an explicitly reflexive stance in relation to the praxis of research, facilitates the consideration of ambiguities of meaning and

[5] Pachirat, Timothy (2008) *Repugnance and Confinement: Dividing Space, Labor, and Bodies on the Kill Floor of an Industrialized Slaughterhouse*, Unpublished PhD thesis, Yale University.
[6] Pachirat, Timothy (2005) personal email. Used as the epigraph for the panel proposal "The Political Baggage of Political Ethnography" for the 2007 Mid-West Political Science Association Annual Conference, Chicago, 12-15 April.

context that theory often erases. I conclude that accessing local situated knowledge is vital for bridging the empirical, methodological and theoretical divides, since it is only through the reflexive exploration of people's experiences, including those of the researcher, that the full context of security can be understood and the normative assumptions of the Copenhagen School challenged.

1. More Than a Means to an End: Of Fieldwork "Confessions" & Contextualisation

> Confessions reveal how the research came into being, expose the human qualities of the field-worker, chronicle the researcher's shifting points of view during the fieldwork and writing phases of the research, and remind readers that the fieldwork process is imperfect but not fatally flawed.[7]

A "confession" seems to imply something that should not be shared openly or freely, and which is often viewed negatively or as a source of shame. Similarly, it often seems that we are supposed only to show the "product" of our research, not the "process". Writing about his experiences of fieldwork on Morocco, Rabinow comments on the paradoxical way in which we treat fieldwork and the data it produces:

> As graduate students we are told that 'anthropology equals experience'; you are not an anthropologist until you have the experience of doing it. But when one returns from the field the opposite immediately applies: anthropology is not the experiences that have made you an initiate, but only the objective data you have brought back.[8]

In light of this, I want to make a "confession": my fieldwork, and by extension my research, is the product of circumstance, of serendipity and coincidence, of contingency, of interpretations and being interpreted. My experiences are part of my data. I am not an ethnographer in any formal sense, other than by "accidentally" using methods that can broadly be defined as ethnographic. I set out for Kyrgyzstan with a Plan and a Methodology that detailed which groups I was going to interview, what formal methods I was going to use, and how my empirical fieldwork related to my

[7] Magolda, Peter M. (2000) "Accessing, Waiting, Plunging in, Wondering, and Writing: Retrospective Sense-Making of Fieldwork", *Field Methods* 12(3): 210.
[8] Rabinow, Paul (1977) *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* Berkeley: University of California Press: 4.

chosen theoretical and disciplinary approach, namely Security Studies. For a number of reasons, as I shall subsequently explain, this "Plan" was doubtful even before I departed for Kyrgyzstan and did not survive long once I was in Bishkek. But first, I would like to reflect on why I am "confessing" this to you.

The description I have given at the end of the previous chapter of the research that I undertook in Bishkek and Osh, and what I then did with the information that I gathered once I returned to Birmingham, is accurate. It also suggests a degree of purposefulness and straightforwardness that certainly did not feel present at the time. As such, much as I have argued that securitization strips context from the analysis of security that it presents, so the presentation of a formal research methodology is stripped of context. The researcher is portrayed as an impartial bystander, anonymously observing how others speak security, as Eriksson put it.[9] Yet if securitization is, as the Copenhagen School claims, "intersubjective and socially constructed",[10] then what of the researcher's role in constructing it? After all, it is the researcher who acts as the "translator" between events and theory; my understandings and interpretations of people's words and actions, as well as my interpretation of the theory, all contribute to the final account of security that I present to you, the reader.

A formal methodology reveals very little about the role of the researcher in creating the very knowledge that she presents. It doesn't tell you how I negotiated access to my interviewees, nor how or why I decided to interview these people in particular. What did I document and why? What was the motivation for doing the survey when, like many social scientists, I am sceptical of statistics at the best of times? (This was exactly why I chose to do it – to see how the results could be affected by contextual factors.) What language or languages did I work in? Did I use an interpreter? Why didn't I make an effort to learn Kyrgyz, which is, after

[9] Eriksson, Johan (1999a): 314.
[10] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 31.

all, the state language? In short, how did I affect my research? Answering such questions in detail, I believe, is vital for understanding my (and anybody else's) research and the accounts that I present in this thesis by making explicit the knowledge claims to which this thesis pretends. The importance of this is explained by Yanow and Schwartz-Shea:

> As long as a researcher is writing for a community of readers sharing the same presuppositions and assumptions, there is little or no need to be explicitly reflective about what was done either in accessing or generating data or in analyzing them, beyond a simple description of settings and sources. But when writing for other interpretive (or meaning or discourse or epistemic) communities, or across communities (as in interdisciplinary or cross-cultural work), or within communities with no agreed-upon procedural norms or when such norms are under contestation, explicit statements of methodological concerns and methods procedures become more necessary.[11]

My thesis is both interdisciplinary and cross-cultural, coming under the broad and at times vague heading of Area Studies. On the one hand I draw upon the Copenhagen School's theoretical conceptualisation of security, while on the other I am seeking to challenge the accounts that it produces and prioritize understandings of Kyrgyzstan – an agenda far closer to the concerns of critical geography and anthropology. The consequence is that explicitly including the researcher is vital in order to allow people to evaluate his or her claims fully by providing a strongly reflexive account of the research: not only is the pretence of "objectivity" rejected, but the researcher – me, in this case – seeks to situate both the research and herself within wider socio-cultural, political and economic contexts both on the level of the field and the broader culturo-spatial scales she operates in.[12] "Confessions" are a part of this exercise, as Magolda's description at the start of the section illustrates.

Moreover, directly addressing these questions can help to reveal the deeper socio-cultural context of the fieldwork locale. The issue of language is an apt example: I conducted

[11] Yanow, Dvora & Peregrine Schartz-Shea (2006) "Introduction" in Yanow, Dvora & Peregrine Schartz-Shea (eds.) *Interpretation and Method*, New York & London: M.E. Sharpe: xiii.
[12] Presser, Lois (2005) "Negotiating Power and Narrative in Research: Implications for Feminist Methodology", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(4): 2068.

almost all of my research in Russian.[13] There are several reasons, all specific to my research context, that explain this. Firstly, although Kyrgyz is the state language, Russian has official status as a language of interethnic communication. Kyrgyzstan's history as part of the USSR means that Russian is still widely spoken either as a first or second language and despite efforts to linguistically Kyrgyzify politics and business, Russian remains more widely used than Kyrgyz in many urban areas. Russian is also many people's everyday language regardless of their ethnicity, including most of the people whom I decided to interview – principally representatives of various NGOs and international organisations, and journalists. Amongst survey respondents, for example, 73.9 per cent of the Bishkek sample classed Russian as their main language of communication, while in Osh the figure was 26.5 per cent with a further 26.1 per cent classing Russian as one of their main languages.[14] In light of this, Russian is not only an official "language of interethnic communication", as the government calls it, but also an everyday lingua franca. Secondly, I already spoke Russian to a high level having taken my undergraduate degree in Russian and was comfortable using it to conduct taped interviews. These two factors meant that specifically *for my fieldwork* Russian was the most appropriate language.[15] This is not, of course, to say that many of my respondents would not have appreciated an effort to learn some Kyrgyz or, in Osh, Uzbek. Certainly, they would have done and I did contemplate taking lessons while in Bishkek, before concluding that given my relatively short time in each city I would be better, on this occasion at least, to concentrate on using my existing language skills to

[13] The only times when Russian was not used was when speaking to people and interviewees for whom English was their preferred language.
[14] See Table 4 appendix 3 for full details. A distinction is made between "native language" and "main language of communication" since native language designation does not always indicate proficiency in that language, nor that it is spoken on an everyday basis. In addition, respondents were asked in which language they thought.
[15] By contrast, for example, if I had attempted to conduct research in a rural area, then Russian would have been largely useless. The decision to use Russian was determined by the precise circumstances of the research being undertaken – and, it should be noted, the research focus was in no small part determined by Russian being a suitable language for fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan and my having previously studied Russian in Kyrgyzstan.

pursue my fieldwork. With regards to Osh, I did consider working with interpreters if using Russian proved impolitic or impossible, not least as while in Bishkek I was often told than no-one in Osh spoke any Russian at all. In the event, it turned out the groups that I wished to talk with, and most other people, were happy to speak with me in Russian as the common language of communication, even if on occasion non-standard grammar led to a certain ambiguity in my exchanges – a topic to which I return in relation to questions of positionality.

As this seemingly simple example illustrates, to properly situate our research we have to at least partially step back into the disordered, confusing, illogical, serendipitous world of fieldwork experiences. Language was only one minor aspect of my fieldwork on a practical level, but explaining the situation helps to provide as full a picture as possible, both of Kyrgyzstan, but also of the research and the researcher. This argument is not new. Yet while some disciplines – principally anthropology, but also areas of sociology and geography, for example – have paid increasing attention to the situated knowledge that empirical research produces, other disciplines, including IR and Security Studies, have proved far more reluctant to address matters such as the researcher's positionality and experience of research. Despite political science, including IR, having experienced an interpretive or "ethnographic turn" of sorts,[16] traditional positivistic approaches have continued to dominate the mainstream, despite calls for increased methodological pluralism from within the discipline.[17] Consequently, even post-positivist scholars of IR and especially Security Studies have often been reluctant to engage fully with the “mess” of

[16] Neufeld, Mark (1993) “Interpretation and the ‘science’ of international relations”, *Review of International Studies* 19: 39-61; Price, Richard (1993) “Interpretation and disciplinary orthodoxy in international relations”, *Review of International Studies* 20: 201-204; Vrasti, Wanda (2008) “The Strange Case of Ethnography and International Relations”, *Millennium* 37(2): 280.

[17] Central to this trend in the US has been the Perestroika Movement, while in Europe the C.A.S.E. Collective’s 2006 “manifesto” is a good example. Monroe, Kristen R. (2005) *Perestroika!: The Raucous Rebellion in Political Science*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; C.A.S.E. Collective (2006).

empirical research, as evidenced by the lack of attention paid to questions of methodology.[18] The result could be described as objective constructivism or constructivism at arm's length; although the constructed nature of the object of study's world is acknowledged, academic research continues to present what Pouliot calls "experience-distant" knowledge that is deemed to be objective and neutral.[19]

I do not believe that social research is ever completely objective or value-free. How we choose to present our research, what methods we use, how we conduct our research are all part of the "political baggage" of research. Many of the issues I will discuss in this chapter are no doubt familiar to anyone who has conducted fieldwork. Yet, paradoxically, many of them get written out or relegated to a single sentence or footnote in the completed thesis or final report. This happens for numerous reasons: respectability, concerns about how one or one's research will be perceived (is writing about one's own experiences and feelings merely egocentric navel-gazing, for example), maybe even a feeling that revealing the "messy", personal side reduces authorial authority. It is difficult to maintain the position of being an objective "expert" and dispassionate consummate professional when one admits to having personal biases and having chosen to include or exclude something or someone for personal reasons rather than for solely "respectable" reasons such as logistics or not meeting some criteria. The result, as Doty describes with painful accuracy, is that "Our ideas, curiosities, intellectual wanderings, and ethical concerns are twisted and contorted to fit our professional voices and all the while the soul of our writing becomes eviscerated, our passions sucked into a sanitized vortex that squeezes the life out of the things we write about".[20]

[18] Pouliot, Vincent (2007) "'Sobjectivism': Toward a Constructivist Methodology", *International Studies Quarterly* 51(2): 359-384; Balzacq, Thierry (forthcoming 2009): 17.
[19] Pouliot, Vincent (2007): 359.
[20] Doty, Roxanne Lynn (2004) "Maladies of Our Souls: Identity and Voice in the Writing of International Relations", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17(2): 380.

Both as social scientists and as human beings, we have a responsibility to "tell it as it happened", rather than how we would have liked it to be or a neatly edited selective account. The world around us is messy, interconnected and often chaotic. Simultaneously there is also order, patterns and systems. The challenge is to coherently integrate these two facets of the social world in our research, rather than seeing them as a dichotomous pairing: research being about the "mess", writing about order. We should be interrogating our interpretations of what we have been told, challenging our disciplinary and personal assumptions to create a reflexively analytical and multilayered narrative. At the very least, this requires that we acknowledge the experience and process of research. As an integral part of the context that she is describing and analysing, the researcher as a person, not just as a Researcher, is key to this process. Her decisions and actions impact on her material, even if only in subtle ways such as how people respond to her. Take for example the response of one respondent to my question about what he understood by security: "there are very many different aspects of security/safety, of course there is security/safety in the sense of the country, the security/safety of an organisation, the security/safety that you and I are sitting here and have the opportunity to talk peacefully, that you have the opportunity to carry out your research. *I simply didn't know which [sort of] security/safety you had in mind*."[21] Regardless of my apparent efforts to keep the question as neutral and non-personal as possible, my respondent instinctively wished to frame his answer to meet my inferred requirements – in this case the requirements of a junior Western researcher asking a journalist writing for an international audience about "security".

Our respondents implicitly – and sometimes explicitly – write us into our own research; their responses are given within the context of what they know or have inferred about us, as well as their own personal context. The change in dynamics this can create, with the respondent at

[21] Emphasis added. Interview with Country Director, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, Bishkek, 06.12.2005.

times holding the dominant position, further draws us into our research data, making us an integral part of the material we create. As Wax argues, "in the field, one's basic humanity is emphasized, and such essential traits as age, gender, temperament, and ethnicity become, if anything, magnified in the process of developing interactions with strangers".[22] This human aspect of research and its effects and implications should not be simply swept under the carpet as a messy inconvenience: it is what makes our research alive, interesting, engaging and, most importantly, credible.

2. Research Praxis: Adopting an Interpretive Approach

> Praxis is the idea that you do something because you want to do it, and after you've done it, you find out all the reasons why you did it. But all those thing that I might say are the reasons, I've only found out that they were the reasons for doing it *by* doing it […] I can think of great reasons afterwards, but it'd be dishonest.[23]

Prior to arriving in Kyrgyzstan, I had justified my focus on Copenhagen School theory on the grounds, as Buzan and Wæver asserted, that its aim is not to simply apply the theories to a given situation, but also to examine any problems that arise and attempt to explain them.[24] Granted, there were problems, but overall I felt they could be addressed with a little consideration. In theory, the combination of securitization and societal security seemed to create a potentially reflexive approach to analysis. However, theoretical potential does not always translate into empirical utility; as one political scientist whom I met while at Copenhagen University observed sorrowfully, reality has a nasty habit of interfering with theory. With the benefit of hindsight, realising this was a positive development, enabling me to start addressing my discomfort about how theory "edits" the social world and its inhabitants, but also highlighting

[22] Wax, Rosalie H. (1986) "Gender and Age in Fieldwork and Fieldwork Education: 'Not Any Good Thing is Done by One Man Alone'", in Whitehead, Tony Larry & Mary Ellen Conway (eds) *Self, Sex and Gender in Cross-Cultural Fieldwork* Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press: 130.
[23] Wilson, Tony (1984) *Whatever You Want: New Order Play at Home*, RPM Productions.
[24] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 49.

the other, bigger questions that I felt required consideration: namely how Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan in particular were being presented in Western discourses and why these jarred so much with my experiences in Bishkek and subsequent understandings of the region.

I experienced a growing sense of unease about attempting to analyse Kyrgyzstan using the Copenhagen School's concepts as I followed events following Askar Akaev's ousting in March 2005 via electronic media sources in English and Russian. Specifically, I continued to be struck by the sense of very partial accounts being presented, with the interpretation taken depending on the media outlet's own position and audience. Whilst Russian-language coverage undoubtedly reflected the biases and agendas of the publishing outlets, Western coverage left me feeling that the so-called "Tulip Revolution" was not so revolutionary, nor so pro-democratic, as many commentators were implying. Thus, for example, Western media sources such as the Open Society Institute-funded *Eurasianet*, the internationally-funded Institute for War and Peace Reporting,[25] and the British BBC featured coverage that often suggested that a full-scale country-wide revolution had happened,[26] accompanied by dramatic images of protesters in Bishkek,[27] personal accounts of people actively caught up in the storming of the White House[28] and headlines implying that the effects of the March events could be felt across the region as a continuation of the pro-democracy "colour revolutions" in Ukraine and Georgia.[29] Martha Brill

[25] See http://www.iwpr.net/index.php?p=-&apc_state=heno-top_aims.html&s=o&o=top_supporters.html for a full list of donors [last accessed 01.04.2008].
[26] For example, *BBC* (2005) "Revolutionary Mood Sweeps Kyrgyz Press", 26.03.2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4382591.stm [last accessed 01.04.2008]; MacWilliam, Ian (2005) "Kyrgyzstan's Friendly Revolution" *From Our Own Correspondent,* 26.03.2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4382591.stm [last accessed 01.04.2008].
[27] *BBC* (2005) "In Pictures: Kyrgyzstan Protests 24 March 2005", 24.03.2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_pictures/4379795.stm [last accessed 01.04.2008].
[28] See for example Imakeev, Meder (2005) "Eyewitness – Defending the White House", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 363, 29.03.2005, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=238729&apc_state=henirca2005 [last accessed 01.04.2008].
[29] See for example *Eurasianet* (2005) "Akaev Administration Collapses in Kyrgyzstan, Sending Tremors Across Central Asia", 24.03.2005, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav032405.shtml [last accessed 01.04.2008]; Alibekov, Ibragim, Kamron Kambarov & Esmer Islamov (2005) "The Kyrgyz Revolution: Neighboring

Olcott's commentary on the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace website reflected the tone that Western coverage most frequently took:

> The ouster of Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev shows that popular expectations in the Asian states of the former Soviet Union are not appreciably different from those in the European ones. For the third time in eighteen months seriously flawed elections have brought down the government in a CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) state, and for the first time this has occurred east of the Urals.
>
> 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. If the revolution is unsuccessful, it will not be because the masses in Central Asia failed to make the grade, but because the ruling elite in Kyrgyzstan managed to sabotage the process of political change.[30]

In addition to the implicit assumption in much reportage that the March events marked Kyrgyzstan's return to a path towards democracy, which was presented particularly in the immediate aftermath of Akaev's overthrow uncritically as a positive development, there was also frequent reference to the dangers of such socio-political upheaval, as Olcott emphasised:

> But if the situation in Kyrgyzstan fails to stabilize, the fears of these men [the leaders of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan] could be warranted. Violence in one Central Asian state has inevitable repercussions throughout the region. All remember how long it took to resolve the civil war in Tajikistan (from 1992 to 1997) and, though few like to admit it, the genesis of that conflict was a struggle for power among competing elite groups.[31]

Certainly, continuing reports of frequent public demonstrations and less frequent assassination attempts[32] added to the sense of crisis, strengthening both my sense of

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Leaders Try to Make Best of Difficult Situation", *Eurasianet*, 01.04.2005, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav040105.shtml [last accessed 01.04.2008]; Nobel, Filip, Lidiya Isamova, Eduard Poletaev, Zamir Karajanov, Matluba Azamatova, Zokirjon Ibrahimov, Kudrat Babajanov & Sid Yanushev (2005) "A Shock to the System for Kyrgyzstan's Neighbours", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 363, 29.03.2005, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=238735&apc_state=henirca2005 [last accessed 01.04.2008].

[30] Brill Olcott, Martha (2005) *Kyrgyzstan's "Tulip Revolution"*, 28.03.2005, http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=16710 [last accessed 01.04.2008].

[31] Brill Olcott, Martha (2005) *Kyrgyzstan's "Tulip Revolution"*, 28.03.2005.

[32] In addition to the assassinations of Usen Kudaibergenov on 10 April 2005 and Jyrgalbek Surabaldiyev on 10 June 2005, there were two failed attempts on the life of Bayaman Erkinbaev in June 2005 as well as attacks on two of then-acting president Bakiev's security guards on 11 June. Marat, Erica (2005) "Instabilities in Southern Kyrgyzstan Burden Government with More Problems" *Eurasia Daily Monitor*

uncertainty and curiosity: how partial was the view of events I was getting? What wasn't being reported? How were Kyrgyzstanis making sense of events? How were different protests and events related? Most importantly, reflecting back on the concepts of securitization and societal security, how could I use the theoretical framework to examine the exceptions, the contradictions, the dissonances and disjunctures in accounts of Kyrgyzstani socio-political events? Yet at this stage I did not find any solutions and persisted with my original Plan, despite my doubts.

Arriving in Bishkek, logistical issues rapidly caused me to reconsider what I would actually be able to get done; despite optimistic hopes of "hitting the ground running" it was clearly not going to be possible, not least as there were more pressing matters to attend to like finding a place to live and working up the courage to cold call people. Since I did not have any formal institutional support,[33] I lacked the resources, contacts or facilities to carry out focus groups. More generally, and more worryingly, it quickly became apparent to me that I needed some time to "tune in" to events and opinions and how they were being interpreted – and how I was interpreting them, on the basis of the information that had been available to me until my arrival (namely Russian- and English-language electronic media sources with all associated problems of bias and selectivity). I was suddenly painfully aware of the need to question my culturally-subjective interpretations of interpretations, even if it meant coming up with the same answer at the end of the process.

14.06.2005, http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2370267 [last accessed 01.04.2008]. Erkinbaev was subsequently assassinated in Bishkek on 21 September 2005. Marat, Erica (2005) "Erkinbayev's Assassination Provokes Controversy in Kyrgyzstan" *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 27.09.2005, http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2370267 [last accessed 01.04.2008].

[33] Originally I had arranged to be based at an independent research institute in Bishkek. However, up on arrival it became evident that they had agreed out of a sense of obligation and were not in a position to assist me. Furthermore, due to the initial vagueness of my research plans, I found it easier to operate independently but re-establish my connection with the Slavic University informally, which minimised my social obligations as a formal visitor – something I was keen to do given my discomfort with the communality of social relations in Kyrgyzstan and the stress of "passing" in a heterosexual and cissexual environment where being outed could have extremely negative consequences both personally and professionally.

This realisation, underlined by developments in my understanding of the limitations of my theoretical approach and how it results in a selective interpretation of events due to underlying Western normative assumptions described in the previous chapter, left me feeling very uncertain about how to proceed with fieldwork. There was a fundamental decision to be taken: allow the theory to take precedence despite recognising that it would "edit out" many of the processes and interlinkages in narratives of "security" in Bishkek, or worry about the theory later and concentrate on building a more comprehensive – and therefore broader – picture of "security" in Kyrgyzstan and how people related it to their lives, identities and communities. Rather than proceeding in an organised, step-wise manner, praxis took over. My decisions were based on hunches, instinctive guesses and the desire to try and understand, rather than explain, what was going on around me. I pursued leads that seemed interesting to me or that enabled me to find out more about a particular topic, largely regardless of whether I could see an immediate connection to securitization.

In the event, the decision to adopt an interpretivist approach to my research questions was largely intuitive; while some may object to its opportunistic nature, it felt like the only way to start "making sense" of everything that I was becoming ever more aware of in circumstances of rapid socio-political change, multiple and often competing public voices (not to mention the silent/silenced ones), limited reliable information and the importance of informal politics and networks. It also made it possible to focus in on "locally attached meanings", key to understanding how processes "actually" work, rather than how one thinks they work. Most importantly, an interpretivist methodology is flexible enough to accommodate the inevitable "mess" of the social world, working on the principle that "multiple realities enhance each other's meanings" rather than being problematic.[34] In effect, it permitted me to move from a

[34] Erlandson, David A., Edward L. Harris & Barbara L. Skipper (1993) *Doing Naturalistic Enquiry*, Newbury Park, London & New Delhi: Sage Publications: 14.

theoretically-led neo-realist positivist position in which theoretical issues were given precedence over empirical realities, to one where emic inquiry into a situation is used to ground theory; put simply, rather than apply the concepts of securitization and societal security to Kyrgyzstan (positivistic hypothesis testing), Kyrgyzstan has been applied to the theory.

As with any decision, my change of fieldwork plan has had consequences. Most fundamentally it has led to me considering the construction of knowledge and the politics that underlie it. However, I realised this relatively late in my fieldwork, due to trying to be a "real" Political Scientist[35] and consequently maintaining, even when in Kyrgyzstan, that ethnography was not what I was about – I clung to the naïve idea that I had when I originally wrote my research proposal, namely that I was going to gather my data using methods x, y and z, take it all home and analyse it using securitization theory regardless of its not inconsiderable flaws. Who I was and how I interacted with the field did not matter; echoing Dickens' Thomas Gradgrind, I maintained that research was about facts. To consider issues of positionality and identity would be self-indulgent "navel gazing". Indeed, completing the final assignment for an advanced qualitative methods course in April 2005 while on a three-month visit to the Political Science Department of Copenhagen University (which I hoped was going to help make me a "proper" Political Scientist before I went to Kyrgyzstan), I decisively concluded that the "personal" did not have a place in research such as mine. Ironically, I then offered myself an escape route, writing that, "as usual, the qualification is context, always context".[36]

The blinkered nature of my stance has not been missed by all political scientists, as Bayard de Volo and Schatz note: "The irony is that although political scientists, as students of power and politics, are well positioned to consider these links, the discipline tends rather to

[35] I use this to indicate that my intention at this point was to strive to conform with the disciplinary conventions and norms of Political Science and its related disciplines, including IR and Security Studies.
[36] Wilkinson, Claire (2005) "An Unfinished Revolution, Unfinished Research and Playing It Straight". Unpublished essay written for an Advanced Qualitative Research course. Ironically, I hated the course, which focused on autoethnography, at the time.

ignore them".[37] In the field, the relevance of this point was proven: intuitively it made more sense to ignore the discipline and concentrate on "being there", observing, experiencing, listening, participating and, always, questioning, regardless of how relevant or not it might seem at the time. Once I had returned from Kyrgyzstan, however, issues of power and politics and especially the nature of the knowledge claims we make loomed ever larger and became impossible to ignore, resulting in the adoption of an interpretive approach to both fieldwork and writing.

The change of focus that occurred during my research was in large part due to my understanding of "the field" of research changing as I experienced an ongoing series of displacements that made bounding the field a Sisyphean task as it took on multiple dimensions. While prior to arriving in Bishkek it seemed entirely logical to think of Kyrgyzstan as a discrete research location, not least as I had previously experienced it as somewhere very physically remote and isolated from "home" in 2000-2001,[38] the ability to send SMS messages to friends and family in the UK and other countries caused me to question the country's apparent remoteness. Granted, geographically it was a long way from Birmingham or wherever "home" was, but one could not really claim to be isolated in a city with an increasing number of internet cafes and VOIP telephone centres and the ability to contact people at will by mobile phone pretty much anywhere in the world. Over the next few months, the field's geographical boundaries were stretched and ruptured by the formation of fields of *knowledge* and *power* centred around the issue "security" and operating at and across multiple spatial scales. The end result, as Ferguson and Gupta observe, has been that I have never really been "out of field", regardless of

[37] Bayard de Volo, Lorraine & Edward Schatz (2004) "From the Inside Out: Ethnographic Methods in Political Research", *PS: Political Science & Politics* 37(2): 268.

[38] During my year as a student in Bishkek it was rarely possible to make international calls, internet access was only available on painfully slow and intermittent connections at a few expensive internet cafes and email was still far from ubiquitous either in the UK or Bishkek. The sense of being isolated from the rest of the world was compounded by the postal service being exceptionally unreliable; some months after returning to the UK, I met up with a German friend who asked if I had received any letters from her while in Bishkek. I had not, despite the fact that she had been writing regularly every month for the ten months I was there.

my geographical location.[39] Rather, "the field" has manifested as the knowledge fields (disciplinary, local, community/identity and so forth) in which I operate, with "security" providing a connecting thread, echoing Dewsbury and Naylor's observation that we join up field sites "through out practices".[40] The multidimensional nature of "the field" became especially apparent to me in relation to the different securitization meta-narratives about Kyrgyzstan that existed in late 2005 and early 2006 as I found myself temporarily displaced back to the UK, as I explore in chapter four.

The problematic nature of "the field" has been discussed at length over the last ten to fifteen years as researchers have become increasingly dissatisfied with spatialised understandings that portray it as a remote and geographically distinct and bounded location.[41] Crucially, reconsiderations of the field have extended to critiques of the disciplinary field of anthropology and its policing of what can and cannot be classed as "real" ethnography.[42] While traditional ethnography was defined by the researcher's prolonged immersion in a locale and focus on the everyday lives of the people present there, what Denzin calls postmodern or interpretive ethnography presents a more flexible methodology designed to accommodate the contemporary world and the changing nature of the field and our relationships with it.[43] Amit Vered notes that this flexibility is not entirely new, noting that "[t]he ethnographic 'field' has

[39] Gupta, Akhil & James Ferguson (1997) "Discipline and Practice: 'The Field as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology" in Gupta, Akhil & James Ferguson (eds) Anthropological locations: boundaries and grounds of a field science Berkley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press: 35.
[40] Dewsbury, J.D. & S. Naylor (2002) "Practising geographical knowledge: fields, bodies and dissemination", Area 34(3): 254.
[41] Gupta, Akhil & James Ferguson (1997): 3; Caputo, Virginia (2000) "At 'home' and 'away': reconfiguring the field for late twentieth-century anthropology" in Amit, Vered (ed) Constructing the field: ethnographic fieldwork in the contemporary world London & New York: Routledge: 19-31.
[42] Clifford, James (1997) "Spatial Practices: Fieldwork, Travel, and the Disciplining of Anthropology" in Gupta, Akhil & James Ferguson (eds) Anthropological locations: boundaries and grounds of a field science Berkley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press: 185-222; Amit, Vered (2000) "Introduction: constructing the field" in Amit, Vered (ed) Constructing the field: ethnographic fieldwork in the contemporary world London & New York: Routledge: 1-6.
[43] Denzin, Norman K. (1997) Interpretive Ethnography: Ethnographic Practices for the 21st Century Thousand Oaks, London & New Delhi: Sage Publications.

always been as much characterized by absences as by presences and hence necessitated a variety of corresponding methods – interviews, archival documents, census data, artefacts, media materials and more – to explore processes not immediately or appropriately accessible through participant observation."[44] What is more novel, however, is that ethnography has increasingly becoming "recognizable as a flexible and opportunistic strategy for diversifying an making more complex our understanding of various places, people, and predicaments through an attentiveness to the different forms of knowledge available from different social and political locations" as the "fetishisation" of participant observation ceases.[45]

In light of this broader definition of ethnography, it seems entirely possible to talk of this study as using ethnographic methods to generate materials, and arguably even as political ethnography in places (chapter three, for example). However, it should be noted that I make no claim to conform to the disciplinary – and disciplining – practices of anthropology. Rather, I have utilized ethnographic methods within an interpretivist methodology. The distinction has traditionally been more than academic: while traditional or "realist"[46]ethnography casts the researcher as an observer and sees meaning as culturally defined, interpretivism casts the researcher as "the data interpreter [who is] empowered by their understanding of participant experience", while "meaning is what the researcher understands it to be."[47] The distinction inevitably becomes more blurred when we talk of postmodern or interpretive ethnography as Denzin does, and it is to this type of ethnography that subsequent discussion refers.

[44] Amit, Vered (2000): 12.
[45] Gupta, Akhil & James Ferguson (1997): 35
[46] Denzin, Norman K. (1997): xiii.
[47] Maggs-Rapport, Frances (2000) “Combining methodological approaches in research: ethnography and interpretive phenomenology” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 31(1): 220.

2.i. Interpretivist Approaches: Reaching the Parts that IR Theory Cannot Reach?

> [I]nterpretive approaches can be used either to supplement or to undermine the traditional, positivist-inspired approach to the study of international politics, and, by extension, to serve either a political agenda embedded firmly in the status quo or one having a radical emancipatory content.[48]

In contrast to positivist methodologies, which presuppose an objective, step-wise, linear process of inquiry from hypothesis to testing to conclusions, interpretivism is founded on the "ontological and epistemological presuppositions" of phenomenology and hermeneutics, "which hold that knowledge and the knower are situated, rather than 'objective' (in interpretive philosophers' and researchers' understandings of the concept) and that researchers must, per force, interpret what they observe".[49] Yanow explains the significance of interpretivism for empirical research:

> Phenomenology provides a constructionist (or constructivist) ontology centered on the primacy of context; such context-specificity is fundamental to case-based research, and it is completely antithetical to a positivist scientific insistence on universal, generalizable laws or principles. Hermeneutics provides an interpretive epistemology rooted in the potential for multiple possible meanings of language, acts or physical artefacts; also context-specific, such potential multiplicities and their possible incongruences are what lead field researchers to access data from a variety of sites (neighbourhoods, agency divisions, etc.) across a research setting.[50]

As such, the researcher herself becomes an integral part of the construction of knowledge: using her a priori experience and knowledge – that is, what she already knows and has experienced – in conjunction with "empathetic understanding" of others to create findings. Put less abstractly, the underpinning position of interpretivist methodologies is

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[48] Neufeld, Mark (1993): 40.

[49] Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine & Dvora Yanow (2002) "'Reading' 'Methods' 'Texts': How Research Methods Texts Construct Political Science", *Political Research Quarterly* 55(2): 461. For a fuller account of interpretive philosophy, see Yanow, Dvora (2006a) "Thinking Interpretively: Philosophical Presuppositions and the Human Sciences", in Yanow, Dvora & Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (eds.) *Interpretation and Method*, New York & London: M.E. Sharpe: 5-26.

[50] Yanow, Dvora (2003) "Interpretive Political Science: What Makes This Not a Subfield of Qualitative Methods", Qualitative Methods Section, *APSA Newsletter* 2.

> that the researcher draws on a basic commonality of human experience and processes of understanding, and that through learning the language of the setting and its customs, the researcher can acquire sufficient familiarity as to be able to understand events that transpire, while at the same time drawing on sufficient 'stranger-ness' to make the accepted, unspoken, tacitly known, commonsensical, taken-for-granted, local 'rules' of action and inaction stand out as, in some way, different, thereby opening them up for reflection and examination.[51]

The result is a "thick description" of a situation, location or issue. That is, an account that is humanistic, detailed and inferential, including details not only of *what* people did but *how* they did it and their interactions with other people with an awareness of the socio-cultural norms that give actions specific meaning. Geertz uses the example of "two boys rapidly contracting the eyelids of their right eyes". For one boy, the action is "an involuntary twitch", while for the other it is "a conspiratorial signal to a friend". While the movement is the same in both cases, "the difference […] between a twitch and a wink is vast, as anyone unfortunate to have had the first taken for the second knows."[52] A thin description reports the action, but a thick description contextualises it by explicitly considering the socio-cultural meaning as well.

However, if fieldwork requires an awareness of the double hermeneutic[53], then writing requires what Yanow has called a triple hermeneutic, with the third interpretive moment occurring "during deskwork while reading and rereading fieldnotes and analyzing them, and during textwork, while crafting a narrative that presents both fieldwork and analysis." All of the sense-making processes that one experiences in the field continue during the "deskwork" and "textwork" of processing data and creating one's analysis: reviewing events, perceptions, reactions, rereading interviews and printed sources, re-examining photographs, allowing the researcher to test and refine her interpretations in relation to previous and other interpretations.

[51] Yanow, Dvora (2006a): 19.
[52] Geertz, Clifford (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books: 5-6
[53] The double hermeneutic is a theory developed by Anthony Giddens that the relationship between everyday concepts and social science concepts is two-way, i.e. they both influence and affect each other. Giddens, Anthony (1977) *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, New York: Basic Books.

Yanow further notes the existence of a fourth interpretive moment, which does not belong to the researcher but to the reader or listener: how you interpret what I'm saying.[54]

Consequently, while the interpretivist approach is relatively straightforward to explain on an abstract level, it is important to be aware that interpretivist knowledge claims differ fundamentally from those made by positivist paradigms. As previously noted, positivist science is predicated on the idea that the world is knowable via "rigorous, repeatable steps of discovery by a neutral observer making neutral, impartial observations following the rules of the scientific method" to create neutral observations that can be generalised to create universal laws.[55] Positivists assess truth claims against criteria of validity (representivity, repeatability, reliability) and objectivity, holding that there is a definite answer to be found. In contrast, the interpretivist paradigm holds that there are multiple realities with no "right" or "wrong" realities, and that there are differences amongst realities "that cannot be resolved through rational processes or increased data."[56] As a result, validity is governed by inquiry being able to "demonstrate its truth value, provide the basis for applying it, and allow for external judgements to be made about the consistency of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions."[57] All research, regardless of whether it is positivist or interpretivist, must demonstrate that it is rigorous and systematic, or, in other words, that it is *trustworthy.* However, as table 2.1 below demonstrates, the terms used to assess trustworthiness differ fundamentally between paradigms:

[54] Yanow, Dvora (2006b) "Reading as Method: Interpreting Interpretations", Paper presented at the workshop on Political Ethnography: What Insider Perspectives Contribute to the Study of Power, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, 26-28 October: 4.
[55] Yanow, Dvora (1996): 5.
[56] Erlandson, David A. et al. (1993): 14.
[57] Erlandson, David A. et al. (1993): 29.

Table 2.1: Establishing Trustworthiness: Positivist & Interpretivist Terms[58]

Criterion	*Positivist Term*	*Interpretivist Term*
Truth value	Internal validity	Credibility
Applicability	External validity	Transferability
Consistency	Reliability	Dependability
Neutrality	Objectivity	Confirmability

Taken together, these criteria provide a way for the reader to evaluate interpretivist inquiry by establishing trustworthiness, and, by extension "a reasonable claim to methodological soundness". To take each term separately, this means:

Credibility is defined as "the compatibility of the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the inquiry's respondents with those that are attributed to them."[59] It is ensured by prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation – every piece of data used should be confirmed by at least one other, preferably different source, with the degree of convergence between different sources providing a standard or evalution.[60] In addition, member checks, peer debriefing and the creation of "holistic views of the context" through the use of photographs, documents and other materials to provide background are used to create a credible account of the research.

Transferability, as with positivist paradigms, is assessed "in terms of the extent to which [an inquiry's] findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents." However, this should not be taken to mean that interpretivist research design can be evaluated against a criterion of replicability. Rather, the researcher

[58] Adapted from "Table 7.1 Establishing Trustworthiness: A Comparison of Conventional and Naturalistic Enquiry", in Erlandson, David A. et al. (1993): 133.
[59] Erlandson, David A. et al. (1993): 29.
[60] Erlandson, David A. et al. (1993): 138-9.

> attempts to describe in great details the interrelationships and intricacies of the context being studied. Thus the result of the study is a description *that will not be replicated anywhere* [emphasis added – CW]. The 'thick description' that has been generated, however, enables observers of other contexts to make tentative judgements about the applicability of certain observations for their contexts and to form 'working hypotheses' to guide empirical inquiry in those contexts.[61]

"Thick description" is central to facilitating transferability by providing a detailed and contextual account of the research. "Purposive sampling" also facilitates transferability, being "governed by emerging insights about what is relevant to the study and purposively [seeking] both the typical and divergent data that these insights suggest."[62]

The criterion of consistency is embodied in the idea of *dependability*. In contrast to positivist claims, consistency does not necessarily imply replication, since changes in findings may be caused not only by error but also by altered circumstances or "reality shifts". Therefore, Erlandson et al. suggest that the interpretivist researcher should be aiming for "trackable variance"; i.e. "variabilities that can be ascribed to particular sources (error, reality shifts, better insights, etc.)".[63]

Finally, *confirmability* refers not to the establishment of objectivity – which is held to be an illusion – but to the idea that data can be tracked to sources and that the logic of enquiry is both explicit and implicit in the study.[64] This criterion recognises that the researcher is a co-constructor of his or her findings and requires explicit reference to the role the researcher has played in his or her choice of methods, decisions and interpretations. Disappointingly, within the discipline of IR, Neufeld's warning with which I opened this section appears to have gone unheeded. As a result, the potential of interpretivist approaches to challenge disciplinary dogma and accepted ways of knowing has been largely stunted. Considering the place of ethnography

[61] Erlandson, David A. et al. (1993): 30-32.
[62] Erlandson, David A. et al. (1993): 33.
[63] Erlandson, David A. et al. (1993): 34.
[64] Erlandson, David A. et al. (1993): 35.

in IR, Vrasti takes up the issue fifteen years after Neufeld, and concludes that there has been a "critical lag" between anthropology and IR:

> While in cultural anthropology ethnography was rewritten in a climate of disciplinary uncertainty and hermeneutic ambiguity, in international studies the 'ethnographic turn' was used to facilitate a return to empiricism, albeit a new and improved kind of 'emancipatory empiricism', which promised to refurbish the parochial vestiges of the discipline and restore its much-desired critical voice while keeping its regulatory mechanisms intact.[65]

At the heart of the problem is, as Vrasti puts it, "a selective, instrumental and somewhat timid understanding of what ethnography is and does".[66] Most importantly, this understanding has largely stripped the politics from ethnography and other interpretive methods. Despite Wæver's aforementioned protestations to the contrary, the Copenhagen School's inability to consider context and the role of the analyst within the framework of securitization is an excellent illustration of this: the importance of context and contextualisation is recognised in the seemingly constructivist notions of facilitating conditions and societal security, but these concepts are then hamstrung by the pre-determinism caused by the Copenhagen School's narrow definition of security.

Adopting an explicitly interpretivist approach does not, of course, directly address the shortcomings of securitization and societal security. What it can do, however, is offer the researcher an alternative way to engage with theory. Rather than defining how the researcher should interpret a given phenomenon or situation – in this case security in Kyrgyzstan – securitization becomes *one of many* possible interpretations. It is therefore a point of comparison, permitting the researcher to test her interpretations and those of others against it. Significantly, reinterpreting theory in this way creates space to consider the politics of knowledge production both empirically and within disciplines, an undertaking for which ethnography is well-

[65] Vrasti, Wanda (2008): 281.
[66] Vrasti, Wanda (2008): 280.

suited, as Vrasti notes.[67] In the case of the Copenhagen School, the effect is to reveal the Westphalian straitjacket and encourage the researcher to not only recognise it but critically engage with it.

3. From Security as Speech Act to Talking *Bezopasnost*

Both theoretically and practically, speaking "security" is a value-laden venture. Ole Wæver goes so far as to suggest that the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security, in contrast to the majority of mainstream approaches, has the distinct advantage that it "points to the inherently political nature of any designation of security issues and thus it puts an ethical question at the feet of analysts, decision-makers and political activists alike: why do you call this a security issue? What are the implications of doing this – or not doing this?"[68] However, all too often these questions have not been answered satisfactorily beyond epistemologically-based arguments that have little empirical application.

The field researcher faces a very fundamental question: how to approach "security" in the field? The fieldworker no longer has the "advantage" of merely "observing how others advocate [security]" to paraphrase Eriksson[69]: she is now on the ground alongside her research subject and faces many of the same issues as her informants as she tries to make sense of events going on around her. Contrary to what theory often suggests, events do not happen in a stepwise, logical, measured fashion. Rather, they are "messy" – seemingly unpredictable, random, spontaneous, and in the field have to be dealt with in unedited, complex, multiple form.

Kyrgyzstan's continued instability after the March events of 2005 has meant that security has been an often mentioned subject, be it in terms of state viability or territorial integrity, high

[67] Vrasti, Wanda (2008): 284.
[68] Wæver, Ole (1999): 317.
[69] Wæver, Ole (1999): 317.

corruption levels or, at the human end of the scale, the continuing high levels of poverty[70] and poor health indicators.[71] Certainly, going on statistics, the situation in 2005 and 2006 appears quite severe, even allowing for the number of protests in 2006 being a vast improvement on the 2005 figure. This impression is only strengthened by the fact that both mass media and analytical coverage of post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan has tended to focus on the prevalence of phenomena associated with instability: public demonstrations, assassinations, the "criminalisation" of the country, the inability of the government to carry out reforms or respond to the demands of the public. But with "security" being mentioned so frequently and in so many contexts, how to study this arguably contested concept in a reasonably meaningful way? What does it actually mean to research "security"?

Once in Bishkek my sense that the Copenhagen School's analytical tools weren't quite as sensitive as I had hoped grew: there was no room for discussion of what constituted "normal" politics and who defines it – a fraught question in Kyrgyzstan even before March 2005 – and, even more frustratingly, no space to consider the questions "how" and "why" events developed in a particular way, why people participated in a particular protest or not, nor how it related to their lives and communities. Most worryingly, securitization theory risked obscuring the interconnections between different communities, identities, and perceptions both within Kyrgyzstan and internationally. The importance of this "interconnectedness" was not lost on some of my interviewees, who talked explicitly about it: "… I already want to emphasise again the extent to which everything has become interconnected. Waste uranium, or radioactivity, or air pollution, or something else, they don't look at ethnic or religious identity, they'll get everyone

[70] The State Statistics Committee's most recent figure (2002) for the percentage of the population living below the poverty line is 44%. See http://www.stat.kg/Rus/Home/MonBedn.html [last accessed 15.03.2009].
[71] The most recent (2006) WTO core health indicators for Kyrgyzstan are available at http://www.who.int/whosis/en/ [last accessed 15.03.2009].

in succession."[72] In this respect, it felt like it was a choice between classing everything or nothing as security. After all, given the unstable socio-political conditions, virtually all issues were being framed in existential terms on multiple levels: the future existence of the country was being questioned, as was the future of many societal groups, including the Kyrgyz themselves, and on the personal level people did not know how they would live in the future.

The word "security" itself proved less than easy to pin down. Virtually all fieldwork was conducted in Russian, but the research is being written up in English and uses concepts defined and explained in English. Specifically, and centrally, the word "security" presents a problem: whilst English draws a distinction between "security" and "safety", Russian has only one word, *bezopasnost*, literally meaning "without danger" and defined as "a state in which danger does not threaten; in which there is defence from danger".[73] It often appeared to me that people talked more about safety in an immediate physical sense than security in the sense of an existential threat. It is often difficult to distinguish between the two at the sub-national level, particularly in light of the unstable socio-political situation. Similarly, the societal dimension, with its focus on group identities, allows for greater overlap between safety and security than would be the case with inanimate, institutional referent objects such as the state, since discussion with people will be framed by whichever understanding of *bezopasnost* is more relevant to them, regardless of theoretical criteria. Throughout this section I have preserved and highlighted this ambiguity of meaning in quoted interview excerpts by using the Russian term *bezopasnost*, rather than lay claim to "knowing" or correctly interpreting what my respondents meant. Whilst this deliberate ambiguity may seem unnecessary to some, it is a useful way of highlighting the situation-specific nature of our understanding and helps to decentre both theory and the

[72] Interview with representative of the Uighur National-Cultural Association Ittipak, Bishkek, 19.12.2005.
[73] Ozhegov, S.I. & N.I. Shvedova (eds) (1997) *Tolkovyj slovar russkogo yazyka* [Explanatory dictionary of Russian], Moscow: Azbukovnik: 41.

researcher by demonstrating how security, or rather, *bezopasnost,* means in the fieldwork context.

In light of the centrality of reflexivity to undertaking a successful empirical study of security, local understandings of the concept must be particularly closely considered. As noted in chapter one, security is often expressed indirectly or implicitly through particular words or actions, as the Copenhagen School acknowledges: “By saying ‘defense’ (or, in Holland, ‘dikes’), one has also implicitly said security and priority.”[74] In Kyrgyzstan, one word/action that seemed to implicitly say security was “protest”, as I explore in chapter three. Nevertheless, I was conscious of the need to ensure that my interpretations were rooted in local understandings. To help address this issue I introduced a check question during interviews: "what does “security” mean to you?" On its own this question would have been wholly inadequate, but within the wider context it proved to be very important in picking up nuances, contradictions and ensuring I did not leap to conclusions on the basis of limited information. In addition, from a theoretical perspective, it further highlighted the need to understand what we – and others – mean when we use certain words, since no word is value-neutral and our usage is informed by a myriad of socio-cultural factors that require explicit interrogation by the fieldworker.

Of all the interviews I conducted in Bishkek and Osh, only members of KelKel, a youth organisation that was a high-profile actor in protests leading up to the “Tulip Revolution”, immediately moved for a definition related to the state rather than considering a number of levels first. Answers ranged from a largely abstract consideration of “security”, as in the case of the quotation from IWPR’s Country Director I referred to in the introduction of this chapter,[75] to very personal accounts, such as that given by a member of Labrys, an NGO supporting lesbian, bisexual and female-to-male transgendered people:

[74] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 27.
[75] Page 72 of this chapter.

> For me *bezopasnost* means when nobody intrudes into my personal life, when nobody hurts me, when my rights and beliefs are respected. And *bezopasnost* for me is when it is quiet on the street, when I can walk around alone at night, when I do not fear meeting my husband somewhere around the corner (which I often did). *Bezopasnost* is when you just know that your day will be calm, free of stress or negative experiences. My husband used to beat me up constantly… So when I go to bed without having been told off or beaten up or having had my mood spoiled by anyone, I think I have had a safe day. That is, *bezopasnost* is when nothing threatens you.[76]

Several respondents were keen to stress the absence of *bezopasnost* in Kyrgyzstan: "*Bezopasnost*, it seems, means that there is such a system in the country so that there is respect towards individuals and that people are permitted to be themselves, because at the moment we don't have this. So, in this sense, we have no *bezopasnost*" reasoned one youth activist in Bishkek.[77] Another youth activist who also worked as a journalist framed his answer with reference to an attack he had recently suffered:

> *Bezopasnost* isn't even a topic here now, I'll just say one thing, everyone, most likely, knows, there's been attacks on deputies, they have openly made threats by telephone, openly said to me that if I don't leave Osh they'll come and get me. I did a sort of hidden interview with them, the border guards come in, even in the open they're not afraid of me and openly beat me badly. That was in Osh not long ago, around the 6th or 7th of December. Well then, what sort of talk about *bezopasnost* can there be?[78]

Most frequently, however, interviewees were keen to stress the range of possible definitions, often contextualising their answers in considerable detail. For example, the president of one local NGO working on conflict prevention and mediation explained how definitions of *bezopasnost* have changed over time, but that currently different actors – in this case the Kyrgyzstani government and the NGO sector respectively are using different definitions:

> … this is possibly from my experience of work. Now we already have several understandings in the region of what *bezopasnost* is, incidentally thanks to international organisations, that earlier by *bezopasnost* we always had in mind state *bezopasnost* or regional *bezopasnost* and today we focus on the term human *bezopasnost*. I think that this understanding [of the term] is getting through to a certain elite, to a certain section of the elite. Secondly, who answers for it. If earlier, as we said, there was such an understanding, a Soviet ("*sovok*") understanding, as state

[76] Interview with member of LBT NGO Labrys, Bishkek, 14.12.2005.
[77] Interview with representatives of Birge! Youth Movement, Bishkek, 23.11.2005.
[78] Interview with representative of KelKel Youth Movement, Bishkek, 22.11.2005.

> *bezopasnost*, then the institutes of state were responsible for state *bezopasnost*. As a rule this is the Ministry of Defence, the police, the Committee for National Security, and so on. Today, since we're now talking about human *bezopasnost*, there is also the notion that not only state institutions are responsible for it [i.e. *bezopasnost*], but that the civil sector should also carry responsibility. … Further, since we're talking again about state *bezopasnost*, it is borders, one's territory, the territory of the country, maybe its natural resources, it's intelligence officers, the CIA and the like as a threat. Today we include in *bezopasnost* such things as a quality education, for example, equal access to resources, ecology has become a very serious matter, and, well, quality of life in general. So we're already changing the component parts of the word *bezopasnost*. Well, and, if earlier when we talked of *bezopasnost,* then as a rule, we were looking as an external enemy as a threat, some form of inter-state war. But today, when we talk about *bezopasnost*, here [in Kyrgyzstan], undoubtedly, we're talking about internal political chemistry, put it this way, about the interrelationships between the authorities, the opposition and citizens, about the presence or absence or weakness or strength of mechanisms of state institutions or other institutions that are capable of resolving disputed, conflictual problems.[79]

Bezopasnost, it appeared, was going to be a concept that securitization could not easily accommodate due to the multiplicity of meanings it possessed once removed from the abstract and isolated world of theory.

4. Researcher Positionality: Roles & Perceptions

> Where are *you,* dear Author, in this research project? In reading documents and in interviewing topic-relevant actors, you are – we assume – acting out of your role as researcher. But in field research that is more participatory than just observational, researchers often adopt a situation-specific role in addition to their researcher-role, acting in keeping with the demands of that role when necessary.[80]

Although explicitly asking what *bezopasnost* meant to my interviewees was helpful for mapping the range of possible interpretations, I was increasingly conscious of the impact of positionality on people's responses. Anthias defines positionality as referring to "placement within a set of relations and practices that implicate identification and 'performativity' or action" that combines "social position (as a set of effectivities; as outcome) and social positioning (as a set of practices, actions and meanings; as process)."[81] In other words, it is about how our identities affect our

[79] Interview with representative of Fund for Tolerance International, Bishkek, 30.11.2007.
[80] Yanow, Dvora (2006b): 20-21.
[81] Anthias, Floya (2002) "Where do I belong? Narrating collective identity and translocational positionality", *Ethnicities* 2(4): 501-502.

interactions with our social environment, and by extension the conclusions we reach, both in terms of how we perceive others and how we are perceived.

Reflecting on this issue before arrival in Bishkek was the source of no small amount of anxiety. What to wear? How to appear suitably professional? How to deal with social situations? I knew from my previous experiences in Bishkek that I often felt more uncomfortable with certain aspects of social interaction there than I do in the UK, especially in relation to gender norms and expectations. My coping strategy was to retreat into the role of a Researcher. The notion of the fieldworker performing a role is not new, and in many ways it is an accurate reflection of how many of us operate, consciously considering our role(s) in the field and less consciously even when at home "off-duty". We often become more aware of the importance of how we are perceived in an unfamiliar setting, and use "props" to "signal" our role, much as an actor would. For example, I chose to wear formal suits much of the time in Bishkek, for a time grew my hair slightly longer, strove to speak formal Russian, had business cards printed to help appear professional, and generally tried to interact with people in my formal role as a Researcher.

The performance of being a Researcher was very much a tactical choice based on previous experiences in Kyrgyzstan as a tall and androgynous-looking female who is solidly built with short cropped bleached hair and a tendency to wear jeans, loose shirts (never blouses – they're impractical and never fit) and work boots for all but the most formal occasion. Some female researchers have commented on using their femininity to their advantage in the field with male informants, acting "more female" than they feel they do otherwise.[82] Due to my appearance and its distance from local ideals of femininity and womanhood, I am doubtful that trying to act in a more "feminine" manner on an interpersonal level (such as being coquettish or trying to be a "damsel in distress" to allow a male respondent to take control) would have had much effect for gaining access and it would certainly have increased my sense of personal discomfort

[82] Comment from an anonymous reviewer of the first draft of Wilkinson, Claire (2008).

considerably. On the rare occasions that I noticed an effort to engage me on a directly personal and potentially (hetero)sexual level, I was quick to move the conversation back to more comfortable ground, either by making myself "unavailable" (phantom boyfriend syndrome), less stereotypically desirable (I'm too independent, too opinionated, I don't want children, my career/education is the most important thing for me, I'm divorced), or simply pressing on with whatever I wanted to talk about.

At the same time, I was conscious of trying to be more deferential in my dealings with people and at times of deliberately assuming in a subordinate or "junior" role in interviews, stressing my desire to listen and learn. I was aware that my status as a young, unmarried, obviously western, female, though often frustrating, could also work to my advantage. This was particularly the case with personal contacts, where I was treated in effect as an honorary daughter or junior member of an extended family network who was to be helped and assisted. Nowhere was this truer than my relationships with several people I had known whilst at the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University (KRSU) as a student: on the one hand they were a great source of friendship and assistance, on the other I was aware that I had an obligation to play a role as a student and native English assistant for English lessons when requested.[83] This was an archetypal situation-specific role, and one I was happy to fulfil, at least for the first month or so, as it provided me with a "way in" to my fieldwork at a time when I felt very out of my depth and unsure what I "should" be doing.

Despite feeling more an outsider than insider, it seems in most cases people perceived me on their terms, rather than on mine, so in terms of potential sources of bias my nationality, unusual appearance (by local norms), status as an unmarried woman (especially in Osh) and

[83] Laura Adams refers to this phenomenon as being a "mascot researcher" in that the researcher feels that she has given up a degree of control over her own research in order to meet the obligations of the status afforded to her by her informants. Adams, Laura (1999) "The Mascot Researcher: Identity, Power, and Knowledge in Fieldwork", *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28(4): 331-363.

sometimes my lack of Kyrgyz were my most relevant attributes for the people I interacted with. Even the fact that people would often read me as male did not carry the same implications as it would in a western setting,[84] due to the fact I was so obviously a foreigner in every sense of the word. Indeed, I was far more anxious about not conforming to gender norms than others people generally seemed to be. The extremity of my self-consciousness and the need to decentre myself in the field was made clear in Osh: people often asked if I was an *americanets* (male American), and I always corrected them, saying I was an *anglichanka* (Englishwoman). Much of the time, the response would then be, "ah, vy anglichanin!" ("oh, you're an Englishman"). This became a source of concern and some anxiety to me over time, until I mentioned it to an extremely feminine volunteer worker one evening, only for her to reply that the same thing often happened to her. As I then realised, the issue was largely linguistic: in contrast to Russian, Kyrgyz does not have grammatical gender, and in contrast to Bishkek, people's knowledge of Russian is often more limited as Kyrgyz and Uzbek are more commonly spoken.

More generally, my perceptions and interpretations were affected by a different set of largely hidden biases: those of a gay woman who is used to being implicitly, if not always explicitly, "out", with all attendant consequences, positive and negative. On a purely practical level, my experience reflected Walter Williams' observation that, "I have found that my gayness is much less of a problem than the common obstacles facing most fieldworkers" (Williams 1996: 70).[85] Beyond everyday practicalities, however, my sexuality and my fear of being identified as gay was a large part of my sense of needing to maintain an outsider position, both for safety and in order to keep a sense of self and be able to switch off from performing situation-specific roles actively or passively. Ironically I was far more conscious of my visibility than local lesbians,

[84] See for example Halberstam's discussion of the "bathroom problem" – i.e. getting mistaken for a man in the women's bathroom - which very much reflects my personal experiences. Halberstam, Judith (1998) *Female Masculinity*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press: 20-29.
[85] Williams, Walter L. (1996) "Being Gay and Doing Fieldwork" in Lewin, Ellen & William L. Leap (eds.) *Out in the Field*, Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press: 70.

seeing as in local terms I could be read either as lesbian or just as a western woman, as a member of Labrys made clear at a gathering. I was initially taken aback when she asked if I was actually gay, until she explained: "well, all Western women look like you, so how do we know?" I suspect I found this more amusing than many straight women would, given how often "lesbian" is used as a shorthand for "unfeminine" and masculine in the heteronormative world.

My being gay also undoubtedly influenced my decision to try to get in contact with both LGBT organisations. Helpfully, my Researcher role providing a "safe" identity from which to negotiate initial contact, especially with Labrys, an NGO for lesbians, bisexuals and female-to-male trans people.[86] I would suggest that their initial agreement to be interviewed hinged on me being a westerner and female, and therefore, in all probability, gay-friendly. The dynamic changed on meeting in person when they correctly read me as gay. Whilst all relationships change once people have met in person, the change in this case was to a more personal level due to the perceived shared experience of being gay and a sense of not having to explain oneself or answer well-meant but naïve questions about one's sexuality, for example.[87] This common identity helped me to feel, in some ways, an insider, both in relation to Labrys and Bishkek more generally, since I no longer felt so mentally and emotionally isolated: my fieldworker Researcher and home personalities could sometimes meet up comfortably once more and I could let my guard down.

With the exception of interviews with Oazis and Labrys, where I used my own gay identity as a common reference point, my Researcher role was built on the basis of being a

[86] Labrys has since expanded to become a fully LGBT organisation. Details can be found at http://kyrgyzlabrys.wordpress.com/ [last accessed 09.04.2009].

[87] One of the best illustrations of how naïve the sort of questions members of the LGBT community often get asked by well-intentioned straight people is the Heterosexuality Quiz. Devised by M. Rochlin in 1982, it poses a list of questions such as "What do you think caused your heterosexuality?" and "To whom have you disclosed your heterosexuality? How did they react?" It is now sometimes used to facilitate thinking about heteronormativity, or issues of unearned privilege more widely.
See http://www.pcc.edu/resources/illumination/documents/heterosexual-quiz-glbtq-oppression-exercise.pdf [last accessed 09.4.2009].

doctoral student from a UK university and former student of KRSU. The former provided a certain status, whilst the latter provided a kind of credibility and source of trust, as it implied that I knew something about Kyrgyzstan and its history, and, perhaps more importantly, had a broader interest in the country than just my research. This active projection of my Researcher role extended to my "off-duty" persona in the field other than socialising with people I had met through Labrys. Questions about my marital status, lack of husband/boyfriend and children could all be shrugged off to a greater or lesser extent by referring to my desire to complete my education first, and the need to stop travelling in order to have a family. At the same time I learnt that sometimes it was easier to give an understandable answer than try to explain what is to some extent unexplainable in local terms: particularly in Osh, saying I was divorced provoked no questioning, in contrast to trying to explain that 26 is still considered young to be getting married in "my" culture. Furthermore, in conjunction with my "Westernness", my Researcher role allowed me to bridge the gender gap, gaining a sort of "honorary male" status that mitigated local gender stereotypes about how and what a woman should be. I do not know if being viewed as a divorcee affected perceptions of me since I did not use this tactic with any of my informants, only in more everyday encounters to curtail the need for lengthy explanations or cut off a battery of personal questions, albeit sometimes unsuccessfully.

My awareness of being an outsider based on my personal experience, arguably made me more aware of gaps and silences in who gets to "speak" security in the public domain and in whose name. I was particularly interested in why some identities that people tend to feel are very fundamental to their sense of self – gender in the case of the social survey I conducted, sexuality in my case – proved incapable of generating sufficient cohesion to meet the Copenhagen School's criteria of a "we-feeling". In this respect I was able to use my awareness of how being gay affects how I see things, or a "gay sensibility" to inform my research, or, more

accurately, to add a different angle.[88] This is not to say that other people would not have been aware of such "silences", nor that there are not many more "silent/silenced voices" that I did not seek to include and that a different sensibility would have revealed. At the same time, to not reveal the role my personality played in shaping my fieldwork in every respect vastly reduces the "I-witnessing" potential that is so central, indeed vital, to ethnographic methods. This is because I negotiated personal relationships and keeping a "safe" distance and selected which accessible identities I wished to include in my study. These processes were all informed by how I perceive the world around me with my own biases and sensitivities, and all of these factors are reflected in the research and its results.

In addition, there is a second aspect to positionality: how our respondents perceive us. As noted earlier, on occasion our informants force us to become an active part of our research, no matter how much we may seek to keep the focus on them. It was an exchange during an recorded interview with a representative of the Uighur National-Cultural Association Ittipak in Bishkek that made me feel my pretence of "objectivity" and, perhaps more importantly, impartiality, was decontextualising my research: the "security" that we were discussing implicitly through reference to the threat of religious terrorism was grounded in our perceptions of each other and our positionalities as much as in my respondent's personal experiences, as the following excerpt shows:

> CW: So you have already spoken about extremism, terrorism. How real, from your point of view, is the threat of religious extremism or terrorism? States are always talking about it.
>
> Ittipak Representative: You know, I'd say once again, if it wasn't for the machinations of the special services, well, we'll be open, who gave rise to Bin Laden?

[88] Wafer, James (1996) "Out of the Closet and into Print: Sexual Identity in the Textual Field", in Lewin, Ellen & William L. Leap (eds.) *Out in the Field* Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press: 261. A sensibility is created by an explicit awareness of how any aspect of one's personality affects one's perception of the surrounding world. I would argue, however, that is likely to be a personal and emotive aspect rather than a purely objective characteristic in that it has affected one's experiences and is likely to be at odds with the prevailing societal norms, i.e. a "marked category", for example, a feminist sensibility or an immigrant sensibility in relation to one's old and new countries.

> CW: I'd say the Americans.
>
> IR: Well, then, you see, it's politics again. And then evidently something somewhere didn't work out, or may be it's still something, some kind of continuation of that game. And today, to say that, supposedly, religious fanatics are ruling, well then, let's acknowledge that there have been these problems in the Christian world. Ulster, right, and it still is [a problem]. But yet again I understand that they [the problems] have occurred where? That means where a certain Catholic minority has been subject to discrimination. If this wasn't the case, then there wouldn't be these problems. …[89]

My respondent drew me in, turning the tables on me as interviewer by asking me a question, forcing me to take a position that one way or another had the potential to affect our rapport and therefore what opinions he expressed in the remainder of the interview. Implicitly my answer, which in this case corresponded to his perception of events, created a degree of shared understanding about the subject being discussed. His use of Northern Ireland as an example of religious-based conflict further personalised and contextualised our conversation. On a basic level it reflected his awareness that he was talking to someone of British nationality but, as he had previously established by asking about Bin Laden, he knew that I was not uncritical of Western foreign policy. It also permitted him to keep control of the conversation as he explained his views to me using "safe" examples from a political point of view, before moving to talk about the more politically-sensitive topic of China's labelling Uighurs as religious extremists.

Reflecting on the transcript of this interview and others, I was struck by the dishonesty of using excerpts as evidence of "security" without contextualising how this *bezopasnost* was created. Firstly, there is the ethical matter of how we represent our informants and their words. Particularly with people who could be identified and whose position is politically or socially sensitive, not making the context of their comments clear would be highly irresponsible. This contextualisation does not just extend to using longer excerpts of transcripts to situate what is said. It also needs to involve reflection on the interviewer/researcher's position and how this may have affected what has been said. Particularly for groups that feel marginalised or discriminated

[89] Interview with representative of the Uighur National-Cultural Association Ittipak, Bishkek, 19.12.2005.

against, talking to a foreign researcher or journalist can be a way to be heard, to have a "voice" in some respects. As researchers, we need to ensure that both these voices and our own are included in the conversation.

5. Problems of Identity: Interpreting Survey Data

> Still, when we went to the south [of Kyrgyzstan], we met a mullah.
> He has five or six children, but when he is with his friends he
> dresses in women's clothes and dances.
> But otherwise he is a mullah.[90]

As well as issues of researcher positionality, there was the arguably far more important issue of respondent positionality to explore. How did people in Kyrgyzstan experience identities? What identities mattered to them? If one follows the Copenhagen School's assertion that societal identities are "socially sedimented" and relatively unchanging and stable,[91] it should be possible to define which identities qualify as "societal" identities in Kyrgyzstan by a straightforward analysis of empirical data to ascertain the presence of suitable identities such as tribes, clans, nations (and nation-like ethnic units, which others call minorities), civilizations, religions and race."[92] As discussed previously, one of the most frequently cited facts about Kyrgyzstan is that the population is made up of more than 80 ethnicities or nationalities. Similarly, there has been considerable attention paid to the influence of tribes and/or clans both in society and in politics by scholars and the media alike. To this one could also add religion as a potential societal identity given the resurgence of Islamic practices. It would appear that all one needs to do is go out and find these identities and wait for them to "speak" security. However, the Copenhagen School's concept of societal identities is not only overly simplistic but dangerously presumptuous. Even in the most stable socio-political environments, people do not define themselves in isolation from their environment but more *in relation to* their environment, drawing

[90] Interview with representative of the NGO Oazis, Bishkek, 26.11.2005.
[91] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (1997): 243.
[92] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 123.

on the most relevant identity or identities they have in a given situation. Yet again, I was left unhappy with the theory's objectivist conceptualisation of identity as I experienced how I was constructed and constructed myself in relation to events, interactions and exchanges, and tried to interpret other people's highly contextual, multilayered identities.

The question, therefore, was whether it was possible to investigate identities empirically in a systematic way whilst avoiding simply finding the identities that one sets out to look for. Ethnicity, religion and kinship may all be resonant identities for people in Kyrgyzstan, but they are intersectional – that is, experienced in combination with other identities – and are the subject of continuous, often subconscious, negotiation. Identity is inherently relational and situated; in the course of our daily lives we draw on multiple identities that frame our interactions with other people, organisations and institutions, and the state in its many manifestations. Thus, to recall Megoran's conclusion, it is not the importance of an identity such as ethnicity that is to be questioned, but *how* it is experienced by people and what significance it has for them, which "is not necessarily in the way that outsiders consider it to be."[93]

Working on the premise that people are the constructors of their own and others' identities, I arranged for a survey to be conducted as the starting point for a reflexive exploration of how people in Bishkek and Osh experienced identity. Details about the content of the survey and how it was conducted have already been provided in chapter one. The purpose of the survey was not to "find" identities, but rather to provide me with preliminary empirical information to assist me in gaining a foothold on the inherent relativity and contingency of identities in the two locations. Are there definitely "sedimented" group identities in Kyrgyzstan? What aspects of their identity do people feel are most fundamental to their sense of self?

[93] Megoran, Nick (2007): 255.

Before discussing some of the results of the survey in any detail,[94] it is worth noting that the data presented should not be seen as representative of the Kyrgyzstani population as a whole; it relates only to the specific samples. Similarly, the two samples are not directly comparable since the Bishkek survey was conducted in November 2005 and the Osh one in May 2006. Furthermore, in order to avoid the presumption that their ethnicity was automatically significant, I refer to my two research assistants by name: Jyldyz described herself as Kyrgyz, in her twenties, unmarried, Muslim and a native speaker of Kyrgyz, while Aigul described herself as Tatar (but unsure "what sort" of Tatar, since her father was a Crimean Tatar and her mother a Bashkort Tatar), Russian or European, a speaker of Russian and some Tatar, an atheist, a mother, in her thirties and a widow. Similarly, when referring to the ethnicities of respondents, I use them as a shorthand for ethnicity with which they identified. With these caveats in mind, however, comparing and contrasting the samples' basic demographic characteristics with regional and national data is useful for providing a starting point for reflecting on factors that may have influenced the results and their implications for understanding local identity dynamics. This is particularly pertinent as the results from the two locations exhibit certain anomalies. Considering the reasons for the differences and anomalies offers further insights into the context of the fieldwork, as will be discussed.

In contrast to the samples' age and sex profiles, which conformed to national data, the ethnic composition (table 2.2) of each sample demonstrates notable anomalies.

[94] Full results are given in appendix 3.

Table 2.2: Ethnic Groups in Kyrgyzstan as a Percentage of Population/Samples

	National*	Bishkek*	Bishkek sample (2005)	Osh*	Osh sample (2006)
Kyrgyz	68.4	60.1	37.8	47.6	56.5
Uzbek	14.3	1.7	4.5	45.0	20.1
Russian	9.5	26.9	30.2	3.3	8.3
Tatar	0.7	1.8	3.4	1.3	10.7
German	0.2	0.4	1.7	<0.1	0
Kazakh	0.8	1.5	2.1	<0.1	1.2
Tajik	0.9	0.2	0.3	0.4	0
Uighur	1.0	1.7	7.6	0.4	0.8
Dungan	1.1	0.5	1.4	<0.1	0
Korean	0.4	1.6	2.4	0.2	1.2
Turkish	0.7	0.3	0	0.5	0
Ukrainian	0.6	1.4	2.4	0.2	0
Other	1.4	1.8	4.5	1.0	1.2

*2006 figures. Adapted from "Tablitsa 1.13: Raspredelenie postoyannogo naseleniq po otdelnym natsionalnostyam" in (2006) *Demograficheskii ezhegodnik Kyrgyzskoj Respubliki* Bishkek: National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic: 102 [national], 106 [Bishkek *gorkenesh,* Osh *gorkenesh*].

Specifically, the Bishkek sample contained a far smaller proportion of Kyrgyz (defined by the nationality specified in their passports) than the national and city data at 37.8 percent compared to the national figure of 68.4 percent and city figure of 60.1 percent. It is likely that this is a sample bias stemming from arranging the survey via the Kyrgyz-Slavic Russian University, where "Russified" ethnicities are proportionally overrepresented even by local standards. Most notably, Uighurs are proportionally overrepresented to a far greater degree than Russians or any other "European" ethnicity, accounting for 7.6 percent of the sample compared to an overall Bishkek figure of 1.7 percent – or a 447 percent overrepresentation. Other ethnic groups show less dramatic overrepresentation in the Bishkek sample.

In the case of the Osh sample, there are also some notable differences between municipal nationality statistics and those of the sample. Two anomalies merit further consideration: the under-representation of Uzbeks and the overrepresentation of Tatars. Uzbeks comprised only 20.1 percent of the survey sample in Osh, despite accounting for 45 percent of the city's population. Tatars, meanwhile, made up 10.7 percent of survey respondents – an over-

representation of 823 percent in comparison to the 1.3 percent of Osh's population that they comprise. Russians and Kyrgyz are also overrepresented in the Osh sample, albeit to a far lesser extent. The low percentage of Uzbek respondents may reflect a number of factors, including interviewer effect (ethnic identity, languages spoken, gender) or wider factors such as there being fewer Uzbeks in the areas in which survey data was gathered (for which, in turn, there are several possible reasons such as the concentration of certain ethnicities in certain spheres of employment or the higher residential density of one ethnic group in a particular part of the city). Overrepresentation of Tatars, however, is likely to be the result of interviewer effect in that Aigul drew her sample from her social circles, especially when it is noted that Jyldyz had no Tatars in her sample but other ethnicities are more comparably represented, as shown in table 2.3:

Table 2.3: Ethnicities of respondents in Osh sample by Interviewer (percentage)

	Interviewer	
	Jyldyz	**Aigul**
Kyrgyz	64.4	51.0
Uzbek	24.0	17.4
Russian	8.7	8.1
Tatar	1.0	17.4
Kazakh	1.9	0.7
Uighur	0	1.3
Korean	0	2.0
Other	0	2.0

The anomalies described in the samples' ethnic composition suggest that ethnicity is a salient identity marker in that it at least partially accounts for the differences seen in the samples. However, ethnicity's role is not defining and reflects the interplay of identities and specific circumstances. The overrepresentation of Uighurs in the Bishkek sample is a pertinent illustration of this insofar as one needs to consider a far wider range of possible factors to be able to get behind the statistic, not least of which in this case are socio-economic status and less

tangible phenomena such as cultural values that place importance upon hard work and academic achievement.[95] The implausibility of a solely ethnicity-based explanation in this case makes the necessity of this problematisation clearer than cases where essentialist narratives of a particular identity often effectively closes down efforts to develop a more nuanced understanding of identity dynamics.

To this end, in order to better consider what factors people felt were salient to their sense of self, respondents were asked to rank a number of factors from most important (lowest number) to least important (highest number) from a list, with an option for other responses provided. Table 2.4, below, shows the percentage of respondents who selected each option as the most important characteristic of their personality.

Table 2.4: Most defining aspect of one's personality responses (percentages)

Characteristic	Bishkek	Osh
Man / Woman [gender][96]	31.3	26.1
Nationality [ethnicity]	7.6	9.9
Place of residence	2.7	1.2
Place of birth	0.7	2.0
Political views	4.5	1.6
Professional affiliation	28.9	9.1
Citizenship	7.2	2.0
Urban / Rural	2.4	0.4
Religion	4.8	17.8
Age	3.8	1.2
Other[97]	4.1	17.8
No answer	2.1	11.1

[95] Illustrative of this was the views expressed by a representative of the Uighur National Cultural Centre Ittipak: "And everyone says that, well, Uighurs live better than the indigenous Kyrgyz, but excuse me, in this situation I usually say: you see how many hours a day I work, how many do you work? You look how much my sons work, and your sons, see, are lying around, not seeking work. I'm not stealing any work, there's work for me, I won't take someone else's. I'm better expending a bit of my own sweat and knowledge, and I earn money. It's in our mentality; Uighurs are one of the hardworking peoples among the Turkophones. And this isn't nationalism, but I love my people, I know that they're worthy of a better life. Why? Because they are hardworking, peace-loving, tolerant and talented." Interview, Bishkek, 19.12.2005.

[96] The Russian words for "man" and "woman" were used in the survey rather than "gender" in order to ensure that the meaning was clear to all potential respondents, some of whom may not know what gender means or associate it with Western norms, which are not always viewed positively.

[97] See page 121 for examples of responses given by respondents in the "other" category.

While the two samples show considerable differences, gender is viewed as the most defining aspect of one's personality by over a third of Bishkek respondents and a quarter of those surveyed in Osh by frequency. Similarly, as can be seen in figures 2.5 and 2.6 below, gender has the lowest mean score of any of the characteristics listed in both survey locations (4.58 in Bishkek, 4.06 in Osh), which is suggestive of its relative importance even when it is not considered to be the most important characteristic in absolute terms.

Figure 2.5: Mean Ranking of Characteristics' Importance in Defining Respondents' Personality, Bishkek sample (n=264). Lower score = greater importance.

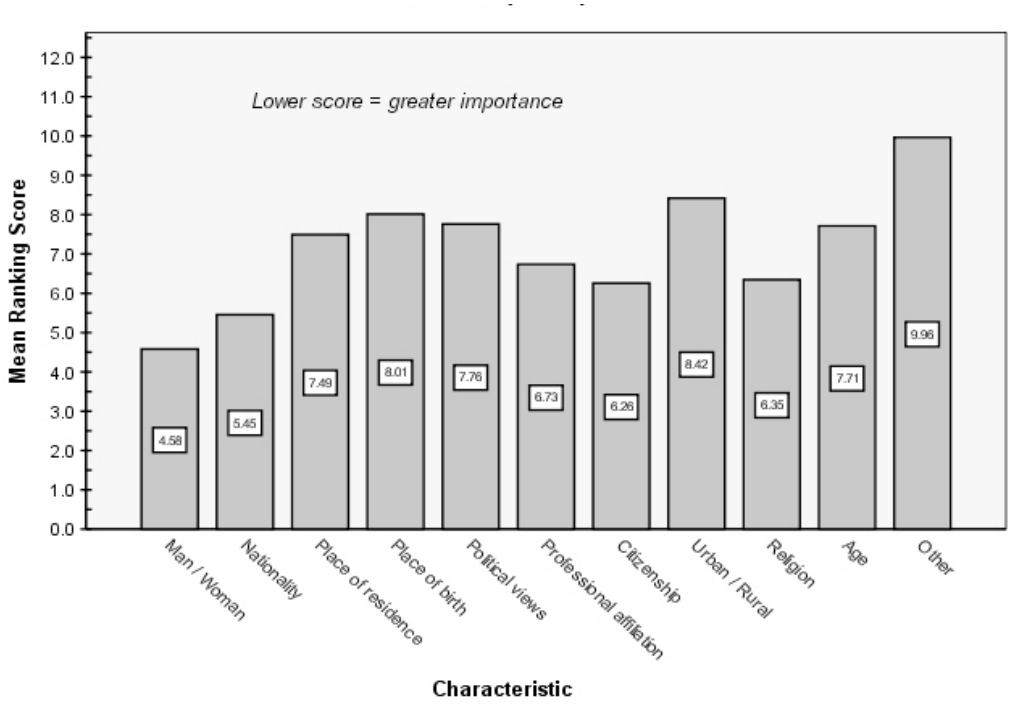
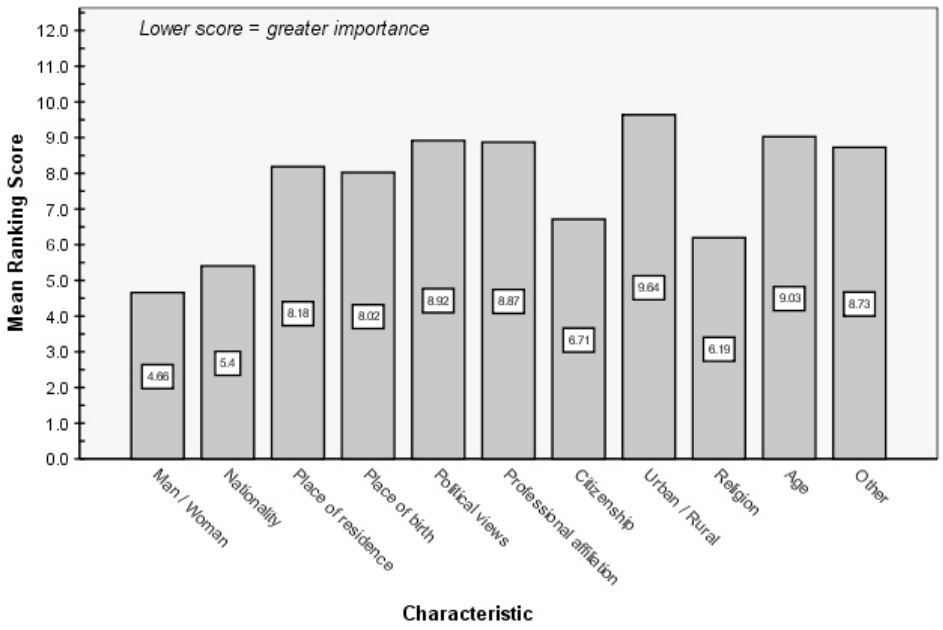


Figure 2.6: Mean Ranking of Characteristics' Importance in Defining Respondents' Personality, Osh sample (n=238). Lower score = greater importance.



The significance of gender's ranking in the survey stems from the fact that it is rarely seen as a defining group identity in its own right, if, indeed, it is considered at all.[98] For many people, gender is usually a fundamental component of identity that intersects with another or other identities; as one respondent noted, "everything else comes out of no. 1 [gender]".[99] It is in conjunction with another identity that draws on shared values or experience, for example, mothers (female gender plus having children) or imams (male gender plus Muslim religion), that gender can take on particular significance, providing the extra element of identity necessary for a collective identity. Yet despite its intersectional nature, it is necessary to give explicit consideration to gender as a fundamental aspect of identity in any exploration of identities, be they theoretical or empirical, individual or collective.

[98] Hansen, Lene (2000): 289-306.
[99] Respondent 221, Bishkek sample.

Beyond gender, the rankings of individual characteristics in Bishkek and Osh differ markedly. In Bishkek professional affiliation was seen as the most defining characteristic of their personality by almost the same proportion of respondents as chose gender (28.9 percent), with no other characteristic being ranked in first place by more than 7.6 percent of respondents. In contrast, religion was selected as the most important characteristic by 17.8 percent of respondents in Osh, with a further 17.8 percent selecting "other" criteria, such as one's name (23.9 percent of "other" responses) or "family" (15.2 percent of "other" responses).

Given the presumed centrality of ethnicity to people's identities, it is notable that only 7.6 percent of respondents in Bishkek considered it of paramount importance, with a comparable percentage, 9.9 percent, allocating it top ranking in Osh. Nevertheless, the mean ranking of nationality is second only to gender at 5.45 in Bishkek and 5.4 in Osh, indicating that while it may not be the sole defining attribute of people's identities, it is undoubtedly influential. Similarly it is notable that religion is not more highly ranked overall in either sample. Even in Osh, which is often portrayed as being more religiously observant than the secular north of the republic and where 17.8 percent of respondents selected religion as the defining characteristic of their personality, its mean ranking is 6.19, almost a full place lower than nationality and more than two places lower than gender. In comparison, only 4.8 percent of Bishkek's respondents felt religion to be their defining personal characteristic, but its mean ranking was not greatly lower than that in the Osh sample at 6.3.

The relative similarity in the mean ranking of characteristics, as well as the diversity exhibited in respondents' choices of most defining characteristic, suggests that it is often difficult to talk of any identity in isolation from other identities; rather, identity is fundamentally intersectional at the personal level. This becomes particularly important when it is considered that any identity is experienced intersubjectively; how we perceive others and are perceived are co-constitutive processes that form our identities. This dynamic was reflected in responses to the

survey's third question, "What do others think of your nationality?" In Bishkek, a large proportion of respondents did not answer this question (25.8 percent), a further 25.8 percent didn't know, and 19.6 percent responded that either they didn't care or that it didn't matter. Only 18.6 percent answered the question with reference to their perceived nationality (i.e. by noting what nationality other people think they are). The high percentage of responses unrelated to or dismissive of the importance of nationality is likely to indicate that, in Bishkek at least, outside of the official institutional sphere nationality is not seen as a particularly active marker of identity for people insofar as it does not have automatic societal salience. This interpretation is supported by the low percentage of respondents who selected nationality as their defining personality characteristic in Bishkek, as previously discussed.

However, elsewhere in Kyrgyzstan nationality appears to be experienced as a far more active identity marker. The results of the Osh survey indicate that people are very aware of ethnic identification (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7: Responses to Question About What Others Think About the Respondent's Nationality (percentages)

	Bishkek	**Osh**
Positive response	13.4	7.5
Negative response	1.4	0.8
That is the same nationality as self-identification	14.8	48.6
That is a different nationality from self-identification	3.8	24.1
Doesn't matter / Don't care	19.6	4.3
Don't know	25.8	5.9
Other	2.7	0.8
No answer	25.8	7.9

A total of 72.7 percent responded by stating what nationality other people thought they were, with 24.1 percent indicating that people thought they were a different nationality from the one with which they identified. This was particularly true for respondents who self-identified as Russian or Tatar, many of whom noted being mistaken for Russians in the case of Tatars, and

Tatars in the case of Russians. Similarly, respondents who identified as Kyrgyz reported that people thought they were Uzbek, or, more rarely, Korean, while conversely Uzbek respondents reported that it was assumed by others that they were Kyrgyz.

The potential implications of this awareness of other peoples' perceptions of one's ethnicity is likely to give ethnic identities greater mobilising potential as the effects of perceptions can be directly experienced in opposition to one's own choices of identity. In effect, being perceived as someone that we are not can serve to heighten awareness of how we perceive ourselves as we become conscious of being "othered". A conversation with Aigul illustrated this point. She noted that she would not infrequently be asked where she was from when in public places, such as in buses, by Kyrgyz or Uzbeks (or, to use her term, "Asians"). On hearing that she was local, she would often be asked either her nationality or her name, the latter of which is Turkic and therefore unlikely to belong to an ethnic Russian. She reported that people were often far more friendly towards her on finding out she was Tatar, and suggested this could be due to a perceived commonality of religion or broader Turkic heritage.[100] I suggest that her awareness of such incidents was intensified due to her describing herself as "European" and Russian and on occasion voicing extremely negative views of "Asians", thus creating a disjuncture between her self-perception and others' perceptions of her identity.

However, even when we perceive that we have a common identity with an interlocutor, our perception of what this common identity is, or should be, affects our behaviour and self-presentation. In Osh, this inadvertently led to a form of interviewer bias in that the perceived identity of the interviewer affected respondents' answers. Indeed, it was partly on this basis that I did not conduct the survey personally and employed two local research assistants. However, while I removed one source of bias – myself – it was replaced with a different one, demonstrating that despite our best efforts to create unbiased data, in reality it may not possible.

[100] Personal conversation, 22.04.2006, Osh.

Despite researchers' best efforts, it is not possible to prevent people from unconsciously adjusting their self-presentation in response to their interlocutor.

In addition to creating basic descriptives for the Osh survey data, I created descriptives for Jyldyz's and Aigul's respective samples. This revealed certain differences in the two samples, especially regarding people's responses to the question about their knowledge of their origins.[101] Specifically, all Kyrgyz respondents in Jyldyz's sample who said that they did know their origins included the name of a clan or tribe. None of them simply replied affirmatively, or offered information relating to social class, parents' profession or geographical origins. Meanwhile, only 19 percent of Aigul's respondents named a clan or tribe, but 42.2 percent replied either simply affirmatively or provided details relating to social class, parents' profession or geographical origins. In contrast, only 10.3 percent of the Bishkek sample named a clan or tribe, with 42.3 percent saying that they knew but either providing no details or details other than tribe or clan affiliation.[102] Based on these differences, I compiled a crosstabulation of the data, comparing the frequency of each answer (actual counts) for each interviewer and the overall frequency of each response in the Osh sample, which gives expected counts by assuming that responses are proportionally the same in both sub-samples. By comparing actual and expected counts using Chi Squared, it is possible to see if the difference between the two is statistically significant – i.e. if there is a correlation between the interviewer and responses. It is important to note that this does not imply any causality, merely that there is a correlation between the interviewer or the interviewer's behaviour and the respondents' answer to the question.

[101] The question about origins was phrased to avoid specific reference to tribe or clan, allowing respondents to interpret it as they wished to.
[102] Table 10 appendix 3.

Table 2.8: Crosstabulation of Responses to Question About Knowledge of Descent or Origin by Interviewer in Osh (excluding no answer responses, n=246)

			Interviewer		
			Jyldyz	**Aigul**	**Total**
Response	**Yes with tribe/clan named**	Count	64	27	91
		Expected count	38.5	52.5	91.0
	Yes with no detail or socio-geographical detail	Count	0	67	67
		Expected count	28.3	38.7	67.0
	No	Count	40	48	88
		Expected count	37.2	50.8	88.0
Total		Count	104	142	246
		Expected count	104.0	142.0	246.0

Chi square = 84.439, p = <0.01[103]

Table 2.8 shows that if there was no interviewer effect, it could statistically be expected that around 38 or 39 of Jyldyz's sample would name a tribe or clan in their response, and around 52 or 53 of Aigul's sample. Similarly, there would be approximately 28 other affirmative responses with no tribe or clan named or with other information about the respondent's origins in Jyldyz's sample and approximately 39 in Aigul's if there was no interviewer effect. In contrast, there is little difference between actual and expected counts for respondents answering negatively, suggesting that the interviewer did not affect negative replies.

However, while a statistically significant correlation between the interviewer and whether or not Kyrgyz respondents named their tribe or clan can be established, we are still left wondering how Jyldyz and Aigul could have affected the responses. Was it the result of Jyldyz being more thorough in eliciting answers from her respondents? Even if this were the case, and I suspect it was one factor, there would seem to be more complex factors at play to cause all Jyldyz's Kyrgyz respondents to name a tribe or clan (presumed to be their own). In comparison,

[103] The Chi Square test indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between the interviewer and respondents' answers – i.e. that if a hundred samples were taken, these results would occur no more than one per cent of the time.

of the 62 Kyrgyz respondents in Aigul's sample, only 23 named a tribe or clan, 26 answered affirmatively but did not give any further information, nine said that they didn't know and four gave no answer. The fact that in Aigul's sample 79% of Kyrgyz respondents said that they knew their "origins" even if they did not offer details suggests that knowing one's origins is linked to understandings of what it means to identify as Kyrgyz in Osh. While it is impossible to know for sure, the results of Jyldyz's sample suggest that visible identity markers (i.e. appearance) may have had an effect. In this respect ethnicity may indeed be relevant, since in Osh it is frequently a visible identity that is likely to be amongst the first things we consciously or subconsciously perceive about others on first meeting them – as indicated by responses to the question about what others thought of the respondents' ethnicity. It seems possible to me that the respondents' naming of a tribe or clan served as a means of signalling a shared identity with Jyldyz by confirming their "Kyrgyzness" in the same way as people may seek to find a commonality during conversation with a new interlocutor on the basis of home town or region. Awareness of one characteristic of the person, such as accent, clothing with particular cultural meaning,[104] or ethnicity, means that it can be used as the basis positioning oneself in the exchange by either emphasising commonalities (as in the case of Kyrgyz respondents) or differences. In contrast, Kyrgyz respondents in Aigul's sample arguably did not feel it necessary to include the name of a tribe or clan since it would not have meaning for someone who was not Kyrgyz.

While in some circumstances others' perceptions of us may exert considerable influence on their interpretations of an interaction and possibly how they perform their own identity, on a broader and less personal level the effect of temporal circumstance can seem to play a role in the values and identities with which people associate themselves. Out of general interest I included a general question on political views: "Are you for a democratic society or for strong

[104] For example, rainbow flags as an indication of someone's sexual orientation, or the wearing of particular colours to indicate gang membership.

power (or other)?" As Table 2.9 below shows, there were notable differences in the responses from Bishkek and Osh.

Table 2.9: Responses to the question
"Are you for a democratic society or for strong power (or other)?"

	% of respondents in Bishkek (December 2005)	**% of respondents in Osh (June 2006)**
For democratic society	25.4	71.9
For strong power	48.5	17.8
For both	19.2	0.8
Other	5.5	3.6
No answer	1.4	5.9

One might expect some differences between responses in the northern, more secular, more Russified capital and the southern city of Osh, with its large Uzbek population[105] and reputation for being more religious and conservative, but the results at first glance – and going on received wisdom about democracy being associated with liberal Western norms – are counterintuitive: I had assumed that if there was a difference, then support for democracy would be higher in Bishkek than in Osh, as the former is seen as less traditional, more socially liberal and more open to external influences. However, the statistics suggest the opposite is true.

In this case, it is possible to suggest that the timing of the survey had a significant effect on the results. On 28 October 2005, there had been a large public rally under the slogan "Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan Without Organised Crime" in Bishkek. This was the culmination of the series of protests discussed in chapter three sparked by the murder of a

[105] As of 2005, according to official data Uzbeks comprised 31.25% of the population of Osh oblast. Figures from the Osh *Dom druzhby*, 23.05.2006.

parliamentary deputy on 20 October. The leader of one of the protesting groups was the murdered deputy's brother, alleged criminal authority Ryspek Akmatbaev. After several days of protests demanding the immediate resignation of the then-Prime Minister, Feliks Kulov, President Kurmanbek Bakiev agreed to meet with a delegation from the group protesting against his Prime Minister, raising fears amongst the public that the government was weak and becoming criminalised. Given the resonance of this situation, as well as evidence suggesting that residents of the capital are relatively more aware of crime and concerned about instability,[106] it is perhaps less surprising that a relatively low proportion of respondents said they were solely in favour of a democratic society.

Similarly, a consideration of the circumstances in Osh, as well as Kyrgyzstan more widely, as of June 2006 suggests that the survey data is highly contingent. On a local level protests had been extremely limited in number and size and were generally related to local issues such as perceived unfair arrests. There was also a sense of "protest fatigue" among residents, leading to either negative views of those protesting or an outright lack of interest.[107] Nationally, the situation had become less tense with fewer protests overall, with those that did occur taking place predominantly in the north. Perceptions of instability may also have been lower due to different and more limited media coverage of protests in favour of more local concerns. In these circumstances democracy is more likely to be seen in positive terms, such as a guarantee of being able to practice one's religion, rather than an ineffective form of government in the face of serious threats.

The use of quantitative data has traditionally been associated with positivistic knowledge claims. However, as this section has demonstrated, an interpretive perspective can be adopted

[106] IRI (2005): 11, 14.
[107] Informal interviews, Osh, 26.04.2006.

towards numbers.[108] Considering possible reasons for unexpected or unusual results can offer a medium through which to explore not only the socio-cultural and temporal contexts in which the data was produced, but also help the researcher to consider a wider range of possible interrelationships and dynamics by highlighting their complexity and multiplicity. In this respect the questions about origins and political orientation were particularly interesting. In the case of the Osh data, I had expected there to be differences between the samples, as indeed there are, but I was not expecting to find such a marked contrast in how one particular question was answered. Responses to the question about support for democracy, meanwhile, were unexpected enough to make me initially doubt my coding and use of SPSS.

In both instances, subsequent reflection on the results provided me with "food for thought" about Kyrgyzstan and how people actually experience events and identities, contributing to the ongoing process of interpretation. Identity is located somewhere between the two extremes of the Copenhagen School's predefined and reified (even if only temporarily) understanding of the term on the one hand, and constructivists' claims that identity is nothing more than a social construct on the other. However, Brubaker and Cooper observe that efforts to avoid reifying identities are in danger of leading us into an analytical quagmire:

> We argue that the prevailing constructivist stance on identity – the attempt to 'soften' the term, to acquit it of the charge of 'essentialism' by stipulating that identities are constructed, fluid and multiple – leaves us without a rationale for talking about 'identities' at all and ill-equipped to examine the 'hard' dynamics and essentialist claims of contemporary identity politics. 'Soft' constructivism allows putative 'identities' to proliferate. But as they proliferate, the term loses it analytical purchase. If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere. If it is fluid, how can we understand the ways in which self-understandings may harden, congeal, and crystallise? If it is constructed, how can we understand the sometimes coercive force of external identifications? If it is multiple, how do we understand the terrible singularity that is often striven for – and sometimes realized – by politicians seeking to transform mere categories into unitary and exclusive groups? How can we understand the power and pathos of identity politics?[109]

[108] Yanow, Dvora & Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine (2006): xix.
[109] Brubaker, Rogers & Frederick Cooper (2000) "Beyond 'identity'", *Theory and Society* 29: 1.

These questions echo my own conclusions. While I am unhappy with the Copenhagen School's treatment of identity in relation to societal identities, they are more than "just" a social construct insofar as a particular identity is capable of mobilizing people to protest or even commit acts of violence *in the right circumstances.* The key then, rather than trying to explore identity via a survey, as I initially attempted, is to observe what groupings and loyalties crystallise in relation to a particular event or situation. In this way, it is possible to continue to utilise the term "identity" as a *contextual* and inherently *situated* analytical category.

6. Conclusion: Context via Situated Knowledge

At the start of this thesis, I noted that “security” was rated as the most important value to Kyrgyzstanis in an April 2005 poll.[110] Yet, as has been explored in this paper, such a “fact” is largely meaningless when taken out of its socio-political context. Recourse to theoretical frameworks cannot replace the detailed and careful interrogation of the object of study within a specific locale, paying attention to local understandings. Moving the local to the foreground of study permits us to focus on specificities, ambiguities and the disjunctures between theory, method and the field. For the study of social phenomena, such an approach is likely to be far more revealing and nuanced than a focus on commonalities both theoretically and empirically, as well as facilitating the bridging of the gap that too often exists between these two integral parts of research.

Field work places the researcher in the position of a mediator between cultures and their norms. This refers not only to the cultures of countries, but also institutions and organisations, leading Yanow to call people in this role “border crossers” or, in some ways, “bicultural

[110] IRI (2005): 45.

'translators'", who have both expert and local knowledge.[111] Yet local knowledge, which is situational and experiential, is often viewed as inferior to "expert" or "scholarly" knowledge, which is theory-based, abstracted and generalized,[112] leading it to be overlooked in IR and Security Studies. Making this "local knowledge" explicit is perhaps the most vital component for ensuring our work is fully contextualised and focused on the subject of research, not on the researcher. In this sense it is up to the researcher to present this knowledge and use it to both contextualise and decentre IR's disciplinary preference for expert knowledge.

During my time in Bishkek and Osh, the importance of local knowledge was demonstrated to me more than once and I actively tried to get my interviewees to explain things that were, judging by the looks on their faces, incredibly obvious. In many cases this involved me deliberately asking questions that must have seemed at best naïve and at worst idiotic. It became apparent that it was often an effective way of building up my understanding of the situation, frequently making me rethink my interpretations and understandings, and had the advantage of helping my respondents explicitly articulate the interconnections they saw between different topics. The answer I received from Oazis' representative to my question about the importance of sexual orientation in one's identity demonstrates the range of references involved:

> CW: Every person has their own identity. There are many aspects of it. But in my opinion, in my personal experience, my sexual orientation is more important than, say, the fact that I am English. It plays a more important role. How do you think sexual orientation influences the formation of personality here? Is it the same as everywhere, or there are some differences?
>
> Respondent: I think it's like everywhere. These people face the same problems as in other countries. And of course, first of all they want to organise their private life according to their sexual orientation. Nationality comes second… They try to associate with the people who are like them, not nationality- but personality-wise. But when the circle of contacts is wide, divisions begin: this is a Kyrgyz circle, and this is an Uzbek one. Europeans, Russians join in all circles, they're more or less neutral, but they try to keep themselves to themselves. Everyone has their own traditions, certain groups consider themselves more elite so to speak. Just like Baltic people – they don't associate with Russians, that circle is beneath

[111] Yanow, Dvora (2004) "Translating Local Knowledge at Organizational Peripheries", *British Journal of Management* 15: S14-S15.
[112] Yanow, Dvora (2004): S10.

> them. The same happens here. But mostly the division is social. Wealthy people form one circle. Common people and slackers not earning good money will form another circle, irrespective of ethnicity.[113]

The focus moved rapidly from sexual orientation and an international commonality of experience to what identities people use in different situations and factors influencing these choices. Furthermore, my respondent's answer contained a good deal of analysis: he notes the importance of ethnic divisions and cultural background in broadly post-Soviet terms before focusing on Kyrgyz and picking out what he feels is a primary marker and organiser of society in Kyrgyzstan – or at least, in Bishkek.

Other respondents were careful to note the multiple nature of their identity and illustrate how they related to each other. Thus, for example, the representative of the Uighur National-Cultural Association Ittipak in Bishkek saw no contradiction between his identity as a Kyrgyzstani and as a Uighur, in contrast to the essentialist stereotypes of ethnicity frequently attributed to Central Asians:

> Ethnicity is of secondary importance to me. And here that means that I am talking about the fact that today we should be raising Kyrgyzstani patriots, i.e. so that people change their mentality, so that they don't identify themselves by ethnicity but that a civic identity is placed highest here. […] Yes, my historical motherland is there [Xinjang], I was born there, but today I am a citizen of Kyrgyzstan and that means that the national interests of the Kyrgyz state should be absolutely paramount. But at the same time I should explain to Kyrgyz and other people that we also have an ancient culture…

Reflexive consideration of factors such as the praxis of research, how local concepts and their expression relation to the concept being investigated and the positionality of both the researcher and people in Kyrgyzstan, all contribute to the creation of a thick description of the research. Local knowledge both contributes to the researcher's account of their subject and also underpins it. The researcher cannot simply locate "security", or indeed any other phenomenon.

[113] Interview with representative of NGO Oazis, Bishkek, 26.11.2005.

Rather, she must build up sufficient description around it so that it is made “visible”, in much the same way as an artist may draw an object using negative space. The negative space in this case is “security”, which is interpreted in relation to that which surrounds it, namely the research itself.

CHAPTER THREE

PROBLEMATIC PROTESTS: ADDING ACTIONS TO SECURITIZATION'S WORDS

One of the most problematic aspects of the Copenhagen School's concept of securitization has been the privileging of speech over non-verbal forms of expressing 'security' narratives. In its orthodox theoretical form, the only way to incorporate non-verbal expressions of 'security' is by their subsequent or retrospective incorporation into a security narrative by a securitising actor. Without this post-event 'translation' of actions into words by actors, securitization is unable to accommodate non-verbal expressions of 'security' such as protests and demonstrations or migration.

The analytical consequences of this over-reliance on the medium of speech are considerable even for an orthodox retrospective application – i.e. relying on what people have said about an event – of securitization theory. As previously discussed, there are two central problems with the primacy accorded to speech in securitization. While the case study of the March events of 2005 in chapter one demonstrated that it is possible to apply the securitization framework to empirical cases, the conceptualization is not trouble-free in terms of accurately describing the development of the securitization and its constituent parts. Contrary to the linear dynamic described by securitization that begins with a securitizing actor who then constructs a referent object and threat narrative to be accepted or rejected, I have argued that the process may in practice start at any point, with the component parts developing simultaneously and contributing to each other's construction. Secondly, where physical action overtakes or replaces verbal expressions of 'security', I concluded that "[s]ecuritization is currently unable to describe such a sequence of events without 'cleaning up' the order of events to fit the need for the speech-act to have chronological precedence."[1]

The effects become even more problematic when events are observed first-hand by the researcher, rather than being reconstructed and analysed on the basis of others'

[1] Wilkinson, Claire (2007): 20.

accounts. As demonstrated in chapter one, not only is the securitization framework going to produce a version of events that has been "edited" to ensure chronological order and a linear and step-wise progression (from actor to speech-act to audience to outcome), but the final analysis is likely to erase the *local knowledge* that can be generated by fieldwork even if empirical detail is included. The result is an account that is informed not by reflexive consideration of local interpretations and understandings, but by the normative assumptions of the theoretical framework in the form of the so-called Westphalian straitjacket.

This unfortunate state of affairs leads us directly to the theoretical and methodological questions at the heart of this chapter. Firstly, how can we prevent, or at least reduce, the selectivity and simplifying that the application of securitization theory so often involves? And secondly, how can the researcher be freed from the Westphalian straitjacket sufficiently to avoid producing accounts of "security" that, while theoretically coherent, fail to illuminate local conditions and dynamics?

I argue that in its current form securitization creates meta-narratives of security that are effectively abstractions of "on the ground" security dynamics in that they are decontexualised and "de-situated". This chapter focuses on the necessity of not only situating individual securitizations contextually but also relationally – i.e. in relation to other securitizing moves, regardless of their eventual outcome. Following a brief explanation of meta-narratives, I discuss the phenomenon of public protests as an expression of security narratives in Kyrgyzstan by extending the Copenhagen School's understanding of "implied security" to actions, meaning that actions can be directly included in a security narrative in addition to traditional speech acts. I then present a case study of the October 2005 Akmatbaev protests, on the basis of which I argue that while it is possible to map protests to the securitization framework in its current format, such an approach neglects the interconnectedness of securitising moves, as well as being an oversimplification of the relationships between words and actions and the meanings that they generate within specific contexts.

1. From Meta-Narratives to Emic Accounts

As discussed in chapter two, fieldwork places the researcher in the role of a "border crosser" or "bicultural 'translator'" between the scholarly-academic sphere and its discourses – primarily, in this case, securitization theory – and the field, where local knowledge is central to understandings of what is going on. In principle, therefore, the fieldworker is particularly well-placed to begin the process of loosening the Westphalian straitjacket by ensuring that local knowledge is not edited out of the "final" analysis that is presented by compiling "thick" accounts of the events being investigated. Throughout this thesis I have aimed to compile accounts using a variety of materials in order to ensure consideration of multiple perspectives: newspaper reports, editorials and commentaries, bulletins from the Foundation for Tolerance International's Early Warning for Violence Prevention project, comments and responses from people to whom I spoke, my own observations and photographs, as well as images published in local print and electronic media.[2] I have not sought to create a neat, "mess-free" account of events, but rather to focus on the disjunctures and contradictions of which I became increasingly aware as I, like many local people, tried to make sense of the various protests that became a focal point as my fieldwork continued. I argue that it is necessary to explicate these disjunctures and contradictions and their possible interpretations to fully understand the deeper context from which these dynamics gain meaning.

In an orthodox application of the securitization concept, rather than reflecting how "security" is perceived 'on the ground', the result is a *meta-security narrative* or a *meta-securitization*. This is an abstraction of all the different acts and narratives that were present in the process, stripped of any internal dynamics and local context that are not directly relevant. As such, it is likely to miss precisely the anomalies and specificities that require explication. I argue that tracing securitising narratives from completion to start can permit the

[2] Photographs from *Gazeta.kg* used with author's permission. Personal email 23.04.2008.

researcher to access the numerous "voices" on which the final securitization has been constructed and reveal the underlying dynamics by shifting securization's focus from *outcome* to *process(es)* and by widening its scope to include *actions* as well as *words*. This is a vital first step towards loosening the normative straitjacket and addressing one of the most problematic internal inconsistencies of the Copenhagen School's approach, since it facilitates access to local interpretations and decentres securitization's normative assumptions about the construction of "security".

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is two-fold: firstly, to illustrate the situated and dynamic relationships between words and actions for security narratives, and secondly, to consider how an explicitly reflexive consideration of multiple local understandings can help reduce the danger of analytical misinterpretation. These aims will be explored in this chapter and chapter four using a series of three empirical case studies of protests held between October 2005 and May 2006 in Bishkek. The case studies each demonstrate different situated relationships between actions and words, presenting emic perspectives on the protest phenomenon to interrogate local meanings and understandings of public protests as a means of expressing "security" concerns.

After a brief review of the precise theoretical shortcomings addressed, I consider the phenomenon of protests in post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan between March 2005 and June 2006 and outline the sources used to construct the accounts presented in this chapter and chapter four, paying attention to their broad socio-political agendas in the case of the media. The rest of this chapter then focuses on a series of protests by various groups that took place over eight days in October 2005, which I have collectively called the "Akmatbaev protests". By contrasting two versions of events – the first based on my interpretations at the time on the basis of my experiences and reporting by Bishkek's independent print media, and the second based on reports in the government-owned newspaper *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* – I explore how sometimes 'actions speak louder than words' in the creation of competing security narratives and a subsequent meta-securitization.

2. Securitization: Easier Said Than Done

At the heart of securitization is the "speech-act". The Copenhagen School has traditionally focused only on successful – i.e. complete – securitizations. However, there is much to be gained for studying "unsuccessful" securitizations, not least as in practice the distinction between successful and unsuccessful is far less clear than the theory suggests, as Wagnsson explains:

> it is helpful to be cautious when applying the notion of "successfully" securitised. A political leader may, for example, "speak security" primarily with an external audience in mind, with the aim of deterrence or to improve his/her state's position in a negotiation. If s/he then gains the ear of the public, securitisation has been achieved more or less "by mistake", since the primary intention was not to convince the population that the problem amounted to an existential threat. Alternatively, if a president leads his/her country to war, but is widely criticised by the opposition and eventually ousted from office in a coup d'état, is this a case of successful securitisation? In both cases, securitisation has been reached, but not necessarily "successfully".[3]

She goes on to suggest that in order to assess whether different actors view an issue in the same way, "we should always begin the analysis by asking *to whom* a securitising move is directed and/or in the eyes *of whom* an issue is securitised".[4] While this is undoubtedly a step in the right direction in that it creates space for the consideration of different levels and audiences, this conclusion does not go far enough in shifting the fundamental focus of securitization theory from *outcome* to *process*; the question of *how* securitising moves are constructed remains unaddressed.

Several scholars have turned their attention to this matter to date. In particular, Williams has discussed the *how* question of securitization in relation to the need for securitization theory to consider not only speech-acts, but also images. Centrally, he argues that the increased importance of televisual images for political communication causes the processes of securitization to "take on forms, dynamics, and institutional linkages that cannot

[3] Wagnsson, Charlotte (2000) *Russian Political Language and Public Opinion on the West, NATO and Chechnya.* Stockholm: Akademitryck AB, Edsbruk: 18.
[4] Wagnsson, Charlotte (2000): 18.

be fully assessed by focusing on the speech-act alone."[5] Therefore, Williams asserts, "securitization theory must develop a broader understanding of the mediums, structures, and institutions, of contemporary political communication if it is to address adequately questions of both empirical explanation and ethical appraisal in security practices."[6] However, how precisely this is to be achieved methodologically is not explored beyond a call for the use of "broader techniques".

Most recently, Stritzel has attempted to refine the Copenhagen School's theoretical approach to facilitate empirical application of securitization theory. Stritzel contends that it is necessary to reconceptualise securitization to resolve current tensions in the theory and create a framework able "to provide better guidance for systematic and comparative analysis, yet leaving it to the empirical studies themselves to work out in detail which element of the framework is, when and why, most important."[7] He proposes achieving this via the theoretical elaboration of securitization's "embeddedness" based on the claim that "security articulations need to be related to their broader discursive contexts from which both the securitizing actor and the performative force of the articulated speech act/text gain their power."[8]

At first glance this proposal seems to support Huysmans' 1998 assertion that a "cultural-historical interpretation of the rhetorical structure would reduce a tendency to universalize a specific logic of security" since how security is understood in different locations "is based on specific cultural and historical experiences".[9] Unfortunately, however, from the point of view of using theory reflexively to consider the particularities of empirical cases – a quality of the existing framework that is explicitly recognised by the Copenhagen School[10] – Stritzel's endeavour seems more conventionally positivistic and universalist: "theoretical contradictions, anomalies and inconsistent applications of securitization cannot only be

[5] Williams, Michael C. (2003): 512.
[6] Williams, Michael C. (2003): 512.
[7] Stritzel, Holger (2007): 358.
[8] Stritzel, Holger (2007): 359-60.
[9] Huysmans, Jef (1998a): 501.
[10] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (2003): 49.

celebrated as 'diversity', […] they also have clear disadvantages. Most importantly, they prohibit the improvement of existing concepts in the light of (comparative) empirical findings."[11]

Although scholars working from theoretical perspectives may welcome efforts to create a more comprehensive theory, Stritzel's suggestions arguably limit the depth of insight that can be generated from empirical studies by more precisely defining what is and is not within securitization's theoretical reach. Anomalies and contradictions are likely to be either ignored or "edited" out of empirical analyses in the quest to ensure universality and comparability. In contrast, I argue that it is precisely these anomalies and contradictions that analysis should seek as far as possible to explore and explain. Williams' and Huysman's critiques of securitization are important first steps, but require further extension: actions as well as words and images must be considered and context explored reflexively to create a "thick" account of events. The role of securitization theory in this process is not so much framework as that of a starting point or frame for interpretive empirical inquiry that prioritises situated local knowledge and ways of knowing.

2.i. Protests as Implicit Security

A fundamental characteristic of mass protests in Kyrgyzstan in the autumn of 2005 and spring 2006 was the presence of a narrative portraying Kyrgyzstan (the land, rather than the state) and/or its people as being subjected to an existential threat – from corruption, criminalisation, worsening economic conditions – and a demand for immediate action from the government to address the threat. Arguably the measures demanded, such as the instigation of constitutional reform, were extraordinary not in themselves but because of the priority that was demanded for them via mass protests. Under other circumstances these measures would be classed as "normal" politics, but due to the urgency accorded to them

[11] Stritzel, Holger (2007): 359.

and the physical way in which this was articulated, they came to represent "crisis" politics and therefore enter the realm of 'security' issues and securitization, despite the Government's efforts to desecuritise the issues involved. In addition, a not inconsiderable number of media commentators and analysts in effect launched their own counter-securitising moves, casting the protests themselves as a threat to Kyrgyzstan's wellbeing if not its very existence. It seemed that physical action largely negated the need for verbal explication of the threat; the potential for physical action to escalate into violence was automatically and implicitly a matter of security, as the deployment of more than three thousand policemen "to ensure public order" at the 27 May protest illustrates.[12] This recalls Wæver's previously noted assertion that security can be implicitly invoked "via a metaphorical security reference".[13]

In the same way, protests in post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan have become institutionalised as an implicit matter of security, because of the urgency and priority they symbolise. While this is as far as the Copenhagen School develops the notion of "implicit security", I extend this concept to include actions in order to facilitate my examination of protests as an articulation of "security". Rather than considering actions only once they have been given meaning via verbal explication or naming by a securitizing actor, I focus on actions directly by considering how they are understood within a specific context, sometimes without being explicitly articulated,[14] by different groups of people.

This is largely the domain of "local knowledge" that is–in contrast to so-called "expert knowledge"–*experiential, context-specific, tacit, everyday* and *practice-based*.[15] By focusing

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[12] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "MVD KR: Za poryadkom v Bishkeke budut sledit bolee trekh tysyach militsionerov" ["Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic: more than three thousand policemen will ensure order in Bishkek"] 27.05.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/05/27/militia [last accessed 23.04.2008].

[13] Buzan, Barry, Jaap de Wilde & Ole Wæver (1998): 27.

[14] In such circumstances, it is often a question of drawing conclusions based on observation of people's behaviour and paying particular attention to apparent contradictions between words and actions, for example.

[15] My emphasis. Yanow, Dvora (2004): S12. See chapter two for a fuller discussion of expert and local types of knowledge.

on such local knowledge, it is possible to explore both words and actions beyond the theoretical framework offered by securitization, revealing dynamics that would usually slip beneath securitization's radar. Rather than starting with the aim of reconstructing securitizations by matching suitable evidence to support the theoretical model, I draw on multiple materials to create a "thick" narrative account of events that is largely based in emic perspectives as well as my own experiences of "eye-witnessing" the protests and living in Kyrgyzstan in this period of time.

The result is an account of events and processes that can be used to decentre theory, by causing it to be used as a frame to facilitate one's exploration rather than as a tool to be directly applied. This process focuses on what does not "fit" with securitization or is not accounted for by it and, most importantly, permits consideration by the researcher of *how* actions and words mean in addition to *what* they mean. The following sections demonstrate this decentring of theory in favour of local knowledge via the reflexive consideration of action – in this case protesting – as an expression of "security".

3. The Rise of "Protestocracy" in Kyrgyzstan

> We must stop populist politics. Everything is in our words, our actions, our behaviour.[16]

While Kyrgyzstan had seen occasional outbreaks of large-scale protests before 2005, it was in the first quarter of 2005 that the phenomenon of frequent public demonstrations and protests first developed as a feature of the socio-political life of the country. The catalyst for the protests was efforts by the then-president, Askar Akaev, to rig elections to the parliament, known as the Jogorku Kenesh, in favour of his supporters. Over a three month period the scale of protests escalated, culminating on 24 March with the overthrow of the president and

[16] President Kurmanbek Bakiev at the end of a meeting with deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh and government officials on 25 October following the murder of Deputy Tynychbek Akmatbaev on 20 October 2005. *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* (2005) "Chto pokazhet sledstvie" ["What the investigation will show"] 108, 28.10.2005: 2.

government that became known as the “Tulip Revolution” by some, including the new government, and as the “March events” by others.

The March events did not, however, mark the end of the protest phenomenon. Indeed, arguably the most striking feature of the post-Akaev socio-political situation in 2005 and 2006 was the high incidence of public protests. Official data estimates that there were approximately 2000 unsanctioned protests, demonstrations and marches in 2005, and a further 726 incidents in 2006.[17] Looking at the second half of 2005, data from the Early Warning for Violence Prevention programme, run by the local NGO Foundation for Tolerance International, notes that between 26 June 2005 (the start of the programme) and 2 December of the same year, a total of 152 “conflict incidents” were recorded, of which public protests made up just under 60 percent (91 incidents).[18] Of these public protests, 38.5 percent occurred in Bishkek and 22 percent in Osh oblast, with Jalalabad oblast accounting for a further 20.9 percent. The primary reasons for the protests were diverse,[19] as table 3.1 on the next page shows:

[17] Karimov, Daniyar (2007) “Bolee 700 nesanktsionirovannykh aktsij protesta zafiksirovano v Kyrgyzstana v 2006 godu” [“More than 700 unsanctioned protest actions recorded in Kyrgyzstan in 2006”], 24.kg news agency, 08.01.2007, http://www.24.kg/community/2007/01/08/20281.html [last accessed 13.03.2007].

[18] Data compiled by Early Warning for Violence Prevention staff and used with permission. There were 91 demonstrations or pickets recorded in the five-month period. One incident is classed as being in one location on one day and is not dependent on the number of participants. For example, a protest in three towns that continued for two days would count as six incidents. It is therefore a relatively crude measure, but useful for checking estimates.

[19] Protests were categorised by Early Warning Prevention staff based on the main conflict dynamic or parties involved. In the majority of cases the protests were localised, small-scale and sparked by a conflict between individuals.

Table 3.1 : Main Issue in Demonstrations & Pickets July – December 2005[20]

Reason for demonstration or picket	Frequency	%
Political power distribution	1	1.1
Dissatisfaction or support of state position	1	1.1
Water	1	1.1
Ecological or economic damage	1	1.1
Trade	1	1.1
Dissatisfaction or support of state position at village level	2	2.2
Elections	2	2.2
Gas-oil-coal-electricity	2	2.2
Stealing/corruption/bribery	3	3.4
Jobs/salaries	3	3.4
Dissatisfaction or support of state position at rayon/oblast level	5	5.6
Human rights	5	5.6
Criminalization of politics	9	10.2
Legal proceedings	14	15.8
Dissatisfaction or support of state position at national level	17	19.1
Land (seizures or demands for allocation)	22	24.8
Total	89	100.0

19.1 percent of the protests between the end of June and the start of December 2005 were caused by "dissatisfaction or support of [the] state['s] position at [the] national level." These were the incidents that attracted most coverage from local and international media and analysts, since they were portrayed as evidence of Kyrgyzstan's continuing socio-political instability and possibly even impending state failure. After the initially positive reception of the March events, with many at home and (especially) abroad characterising the "Tulip Revolution" as a continuation of the so-called "colour revolutions", enthusiasm waned rapidly and euphoria was replaced with increasingly doom-laden predictions about

[20] N = 89, missing = 2. Data from the period 30.06.2005 to 02.12.2005.

Kyrgyzstan's future. This change of mood was clearly evident in international reports: International Crisis Group's cautiously optimistic tone in its May 2005 report had turned to a far more worried one by December, when ICG released *Asia Report* 109 entitled "Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering State".[21] Similarly, the Fund for Peace ranked the republic 28th in the *Failed States Index 2006* based on data collected between May and December 2005.[22]

Local opinion in autumn 2005 shared the disillusionment of international reports over the lack of change and progress, but the continuing state of upheaval was not generally taken to be a sign of impending state collapse. Rather, the ongoing political turmoil was seen by the general public as a secondary concern in relation to the more tangible and pressing issue of earning a living amidst declining living standards. The assassination of parliamentarian and businessman Bayaman Erkinbaev outside his flat on a central Bishkek street on 21 September 2005 highlighted the contrast in attitudes. Sections of the media, including the popular *Vechernii Bishkek,* were, not unexpectedly, quick to conclude that "it is obvious that the country is being completely ruled by crime", noting that not only was Erkinbaev the third politician to be assassinated since March that year, but that "pressure is being put not only on politicians but also other well-known persons. We recall that not long ago the secret murder of the son of a well-known journalist took place."[23] The mood amongst people on the street was less alarmist, however, with one of my contacts commenting that there was no need to be particularly alarmed since politicians were only out to "deal with" each other.[24]

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[21] International Crisis Group (2005b).

[22] In 2005 Kyrgyzstan ranked 65th in the *Failed States Index* with a score of 80.4 out of a maximum 120; in 2006 it rose to 28th place with a score of 90.3 out of a possible 120, before falling to 41st place in the 2007 *Index*, scoring 88.2 out of 120. See http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=99&Itemid=140 [last accessed 02.03.2008].

[23] Previously Usen Kudaibergenov, seen as an ally of Feliks Kulov (a candidate for the presidential elections at that point) was shot dead on April 10, 2005, and Jogorku Kenesh deputy Jyrgalbek Surabaldiev was shot dead on June 10, 2005. Temir, Elvira & Yurii Kuzminikh (2005) "Ubit Bayaman Erkinbaev" ["Bayaman Erkinbaev killed"], *Vechernii Bishkek* online version, 22.09.2005, http://members.vb.kg/2005/09/22/panorama/1.html [last accessed 31.07.2008].

[24] Personal conversation, Bishkek, 22.09.2005.

This sense of everyday life continuing largely unaffected by political and business-related infighting altered noticeably only once: Bitel GSM, the largest mobile phone operator in Kyrgyzstan, was seized by armed men on 15 December 2005, due to an ownership dispute, leaving many people without a service as the result of damage to equipment during the seizure.[25] The seizure itself did not appear to be cause for much concern amongst those watching from the other side of Prospekt Chui as far as I could tell,[26] but people, myself included, reacted with considerably more worry to the realisation that they no longer had any mobile phone service; events were now impacting on our lives directly, making it far harder to ignore the possibility that the socio-political situation could worsen.

Similarly, protests were as a rule viewed as at worst an inconvenience to life in the capital. It was not unusual to see groups of people protesting outside the White House and other government buildings, and it was not always possible to ascertain the purpose of their protest. However, provided the protesters were peaceful, most people seemed content to let them continue. This relaxed attitude to protests – and the general socio-political situation in the country as a whole – changed sharply on 21 October 2005. The sharp increase in public concern and anxiety was provoked by events related to a mass protest launched by so-called crime boss Ryspek Akmatbaev on the Old Square opposite the Parliament following the allegedly politically motivated murder of his brother, Jogorku Kenesh deputy Tynychbek Akmatbaev. As *Moya stolitsa novosti,* the newspaper that had earlier been most active in supporting the "revolution" and Akaev's ousting, subsequently reflected, "[f]or practically all of the seven months after the revolution, Kyrgyzstan has been in the grip of uncontrolled unilateral grabs and passionate protesting. But the events of the end of October exceeded

[25] *Novyi region* (2005) "Zakhvat ofisa MTS v Bishkeke" ["Seizure of MTS Office in Bishkek"] 16.12.2005, http://nr2.com.ua/kiev/49912.html [last accessed 06.09.2008]; *Gazeta.kg* (2005) "Rezervspetsmet smenil rukovodstvo Bitela i poobeshchal pohinit svyaz" ["Rezervspetsmet replaces Bitel management, promises to fix service"], 15.12.2005, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2005/12/15/bitel2/ [last accessed 06.09.2008].

[26] I met a former classmate who worked at Bitel in the watching crowd who seemed sanguine about the situation, commenting only that "it happens" and that she thought things would return to normal soon. Personal conversation, Bishkek, 15.12.2005.

even the counterrevolutionary outburst of 17 June for drama."[27] These events, which are the subject of the rest of this chapter, demonstrate how protests were utilised as a physical means of expressing existential (and by extension "security") concerns by different actors.

The October series of protests was particularly significant from a securitization perspective since they marked start of mass 'societal' action that directly challenged the government's legitimacy and ability to keep control. In many ways it marked the start of the phenomenon of "protestocracy", whereby people believed – or were encouraged to believe – that the only way to try and effect any changes was to take to the streets and physically present their demands. "Normal" political processes were increasingly presented as ineffective and useless, as opposition politician Kubatbek Baibolov subsequently made clear in May 2006:

> When and in what circumstances do protests occur? When dialogue between civil society and the authorities breaks down. When the impetus coming from the common residents is ignored by highly placed bureaucrats. That is, the wishes and needs of people are not considered at the top. Then the masses start to experience a need to address the authorities directly and the necessity of a protest arises.[28]

3.i. The *How* of Protests

As previously discussed, each of the protests examined in this thesis exhibits a different interrelationship between words and actions. My own observations and experiences of attending protests in Bishkek on 29 October 2005 and the preceding seven days, and on 29 April and 27 May 2006 provided me with my starting point for thinking about the protests and what was happening. Even when watching the protesters, contradictory interpretations of events were frequently evident. This led me to try to find as many sources of information about the protests as possible, which included conducting informal and formal interviews,

[27] Timirbaev, Vyacheslav (2005) "Bezvlastie vlasti ili vlast bezvlastiya?" ["Anarchy of power or the rule of anarchy?"], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 126 (317), 01.11.2005: 3.
[28] Temir, Elvira & Gulchekhara Karimova (2006) "Pryamaya liniya: Na piket s buterbrodom i butylkoi vody" ["Direct Line: To the picket with a sandwich and a bottle of water"] *Vechernii Bishkek,* 96 (9020), 26.05.2006, Bishkek: 5.

field notes of conversations and observations, photographs, NGO reports, including the Early Warning for Violence Prevention (EWVP) project's weekly bulletin, and media reports. The aim in all instances was to ensure that my interpretations and conclusions were subjected to triangulation and, as far as possible, that the particularities of different information sources were taken into account. This latter task was somewhat complicated by the unavailability of comprehensive information about media sources, for example, as well as logical and practical constraints that meant that compromises had to be made in selecting sources.

In the case of the EWVP, I was able to ascertain with relative ease that although the project was formally run by Foundation for Tolerance International, a local NGO, it was funded by a variety of international donors including the OSCE and that the director of the programme was not local and had a background in conflict resolution. In subsequent talks with the director, I learnt that the project's bulletins were compiled using eyewitness accounts from a network of "reporters" around Kyrgyzstan, who submitted reports on a weekly basis. These reporters also solicited information from other locals. The task of the bulletin was to provide an overview of events deemed to have violent conflict potential and make recommendations for interventions. As such, it was a publication concerned primarily with security in both the physical and existential sense and was of particular use in gauging the power and persistence of securitizing meta-narratives about events. Furthermore, a questionnaire conducted by the EWVP staff indicated that its audience was far wider and diverse than had originally been intended due to the perceived lack of reliable and timely information in the republic, as well the fact that it was available in English, Russian and Kyrgyz. In this respect it was a useful source for triangulating my interpretations and also gave an indication of what the media was not covering that week.

Despite efforts under both Akaev and then Bakiev to curb the media, Kyrgyzstan continues to have an independent and mainly privately owned media. Indeed, IREX's 2005 Media Sustainability Index commented that the republic had "completed 2005 with

censorship ended and a hitherto unknown level of freedom of expression".[29] Nevertheless, journalists frequently came under pressure from the authorities or other public figures and cases of journalists being attacked were not uncommon – a fact referred to by several of my respondents in Bishkek and Osh.

While television is the dominant medium nationally, print media and electronic media continue to survive in Bishkek and Osh despite difficult economic conditions and maintain impressive circulation figures: Kyrgyzstan's largest newspaper, *Vechernii Bishkek*, has a Friday print run of 50-60 thousand and a weekday run of five to seven thousand, while the weekly independent *Delo No* has a weekly print run of 20,000.[30] Other newspapers had smaller circulation figures (see table 3.2 below), but in a country with high poverty levels and a population in Bishkek of less than one million, the presence of more than 35 newspapers and journals, virtually all of which are privately owned, can be taken as an indication that newspapers are far from redundant in Kyrgyzstan.

[29] IREX (2005) "Kyrgyzstan", *Media Sustainability Index:* 225, http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI_EUR/2005.asp [last accessed 02.10.2009].

[30] 2008 figures. Media Support Center Foundation (2009) "Ekspertnyi sovet natsionalnoi gazetnoi premii predstavlyaet soiskatelej nominatsii 'Tirazh goda-2008" [Expert Panel of the Nation Newspaper Awards presents nominees for 'Circulation Figures 2000"], http://msc.kg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=264&Itemid=1 [last accessed 06.10.2009]

Table 3.2: Details of Selected Newspapers in Bishkek[31]

Name	Publication frequency	Circulation	Language	Year founded
ResPublica	Twice weekly	5,000	Russian	1992
Times of Central Asia	Weekly	5,000	English	1999
Zaman Kyrgyzstan	Weekly	6,200	Kyrgyz, Turkish	1992
Aalam	Twice weekly	10,000-13,000	Kyrgyz	1991
Agym	Twice weekly	12,000-17,000	Kyrgyz	1992
Argumenty i fakty - Kyrgyzstan	Weekly	5,000	Russian	2001
Bagyt	Weekly	5,000	Russian	2002
Blits Info	Weekly	10,000	Russian	1996
V kontse nedeli	Weekly	24,000	Russian	1990
Vechernii Bishkek	Five times per week	20,000 (Mon-Thurs); 60,000 (Fri)	Russian	1974
Daat	Weekly	50,000	Kyrgyz	2002
Delo No...	Weekly	40,000	Russian	1991
Komsomolskaya Pravda v Kyrgyzstane	Weekly	15,000	Russian	1991
Kut Bilim	Weekly	6,000	Kyrgyz	1953
Kyrgyz ordo	Weekly	5,000	Kyrgyz	1999
Kyrgyz rukhu	Weekly	7,000	Kyrgyz	1991
Kyrgyz tuusu	Twice weekly	20,000	Kyrgyz	1924
Limon	Monthly	3,000	Russian	1994
Litsa	Monthly	3,000	Russian	2000
Moskovskii komsomolets v Kyrgyzstane	Weekly	7,000	Russian	2000
Moya stolitsa novosti	Five times per week	5,000 (Tues-Thurs, Sat), 17,000 (Fri)	Russian	2001
Obshchestvenniy Reiting	Weekly	5,000	Russian	2000
Ordo	Weekly	5,000	Kyrgyz	1997
Rossiiskaya gazeta v Kyrgyzstane	Five times per week	3,500	Russian	2002
Slovo Kyrgyzstana	Twice weekly	7,000	Russian	1925
Erkin too	Twice wekly	10,000	Kyrgyz	1991

[31] Data complied from undated information on the website of the Public Association "Journalist", http://www.monitoring.kg/?pid=69 [last accessed 06.10.2009].

Indeed, newspapers, due to their availability, portability and the range of views (re)presented, were central to compiling the case studies, as well as for guiding my interpretations through consideration of the various newspapers' positionality. Here it is important to note that while in this chapter and chapter four I primarily use print media sources to triangulate my accounts of the protests and related events, in chapter five I address the issue of the media as a potential securitizing or functional actor and the impact that the media can have on people's understandings of events. While this is undoubtedly an artificial divide in relation to discussion of the media, it is necessitated by the different theoretical problems addressed in each chapter. Significantly, the position of several popular newspapers changed over the course of 2005-06. This was most notable in relation to the opposition newspaper *Moya stolitsa novosti,* more commonly known as *MSN*, which was at the forefront of anti-Akaev media coverage in the run up to 24 March and greeted his overthrow triumphantly:

> Our dear readers!
>
> The revolution has taken place! The Akaev regime has fallen! Life is returning to normal! […]
>
> We congratulate everyone on this victory – those who achieved it with their hands, those who helped them, those who were in sympathy, and those who were afraid to sympathise! Now the whole world knows that the people of small Kyrgyzstan are brave, decisive and courageous. It is a very patient people, but one should not eternally try its patience. Akaev and his clique thought that they ruled a nation of slaves and plebeians who would never get up from their knees. They were mistaken, and this mistake will cost them dearly.[32]

However, by autumn 2005 the newspaper was at best ambivalent about the aftermath of the "revolution", discussing the Akmatbaev protests on 28 October under the heading "Playing at revolution, or Why should the country pay for someone's ambitions?"[33] and on 1 November openly acknowledging that "[t]he euphoria linked to the March revolution has very rapidly

[32] *Moya stolitsa novosti* (2005) "Vesna svobody nashei" ["Spring of Our Freedom"], 25.03.2005, http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/9768/ [last accessed 25.08.2008].
[33] Jolmukhamedova, Lyudmila (2005) "Zaigralis v revolyutsiyu ili Pochemu strana dolzhna rasplachivatsya za chi-to ambitsii?" ["Playing at revolution, or Why should the country pay for someone's ambitions?"], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 125 (316), 28.10.2005: 3-4.

changed to deep disappointment, since the change expected from and promised by the new authorities has not materialised. Worse than that, life has become harder and more uneasy."[34]

Although this acknowledgement set the general tone for *MSN*'s coverage of politics for the first half of 2006, it did not extend to supporting the new opposition's protests, which were viewed as a threat to Kyrgyzstan's stability and wellbeing. This opinion was largely echoed in Bishkek's other most widely and frequently available newspaper, *Vechernii Bishkek,* which was bought under the control of *MSN*'s proprietor, Aleksandr Kim, at the start of October 2005 following a prolonged legal battle with Askar Akaev's son-in-law Adil Toigonbaev.[35] Previously the newspaper had maintained a relatively pro-Akaev position, but with the change of owner switched to a more critical stance of both the government and the new opposition. These two newspapers formed the core of the securitizing actor that presented a narrative of Kyrgyzstan as a geographical entity and as a people being existentially threatened by protests, the organisers of which were cynically putting their own interests above those of the people.

In the independent (locally interpreted as not pro-government) newspaper *ResPublica,* published twice weekly, and the weekly "socio-political" newspaper *Delo No.* the tone was similarly negative about the protest phenomenon, despite *ResPublica*'s Chief Editor's view of journalism as a neutral and non-political undertaking: "I have never thought that if you criticise, for example, the country's leaders or some other subject, that it is some sort of opposition. It is simply an attempt to cast light on sore points to which it is necessary that someone pays attention, in this case the executive powers."[36] Nevertheless, the newspaper's articles added to the "protests as threat" securitising narrative, growing

[34] Timirbaev, Vyacheslav (2005) "Bezvlastie vlasti ili vlast bezvlastiya?": 3.

[35] Krasilnikova, Svetlana & Sergei Chernov (2005) "Akaevy poteryali svoi poslednii oplot" ["Akaevs lose their last stronghold"], *Delo No,* 33 (610), 05.10.2005, http://delo.to.kg/2005/33/05.shtml [last accessed 09.09.2008]; *Regnum* (2005) "U gazety 'Vechernii Bishkek' poyavilsya novyi glavniy redactor (Kirgiziya)" ["*Vechernii Bishkek* has a new chief editor (Kyrgyzia)"], 03.10.2005, http://www.regnum.ru/news/kirghizia/522328.html [last accessed 26.08.08].

[36] Interview with Chief Editor of *ResPublica,* Bishkek, 09.11.2005.

increasingly strident as the protests continued, as demonstrated by Kalugin's provocative polemic "The Kyrgyz "For Reforms" Protest and the gay march in Moscow", which drew a negative comparison between the efforts of LGBT activists to hold a Pride march in Moscow and those of the new Kyrgyz Opposition to hold the 27 May protest. It concluded that:

> Opposition members and certain NGOs of Kyrgyzstan are trying with all their strength to make their position in the social and political life of the country a priority, and also to turn public opinion towards the notion that the parliament and human rights NGOs are the only possible saviour of the wholeness and flourishing of the people of Kyrgyzstan.[37]

In the cases of *MSN*, *Vechernii Bishkek* and *ResPublica,* most of their direct criticism was aimed at the new Opposition from the end of 2005 onwards, while the government was treated less harshly by the print media. Problems were still discussed, but most journalists refrained from open criticism of the authorities once the dust had settled from the Akmatbaev protests at the end of October 2005. *Delo No* was an exception in this respect, and was often as damning of the government as of the opposition. I found their coverage noticeably sharper than other publications and when rereading newspapers for this chapter discussed this with Elena Skochilo, an independent journalist in Bishkek. She commented that "[o]n the whole, the newspaper *Delo No* is a little chauvinistic because its owners are ethnic Russians. This has a bit of an influence on the material published. But overall it is considered to be quite objective by the population."[38]

The other two exceptions to the strong anti-protest line taken by the Russophone print media was the government-owned *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* and the Internet newspaper *Gazeta.kg*. *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* was not a popular local choice of newspaper: it was seen as government propaganda and therefore, in local terms, "unobjective".[39] While in Bishkek I bought it infrequently for largely logistical reasons since I knew that it was available via the *Eastview* database, making hard copies less vital. A further reason for its lack of popularity

[37] Kalugin, S. (2006) "Kyrgyzskii miting "za reformy" i shestvie geev v Moskve" ["The Kyrgyz "For Reforms" Protest and the gay march in Moscow"], *ResPublica*, 16 (628), 24.05.2008: 3.
[38] Personal email, 04.07.2008.
[39] Conversation with newspaper seller in kiosk on ulitsa Sovietskaya, 30.11.2005.

was its reader-unfriendly format and formal reporting style, with a strong focus on coverage of parliamentary proceedings, official events and the publication of laws, orders and decrees. When reviewing the events of the three case studies, however, *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* proved extremely useful, offering a markedly different version of events from those I experienced. This was clearest in the case of the Akmatbaev protests where its reports on government and parliamentary activity contrasted with claims of government inaction, as will be discussed in greater detail later on in this chapter.

The final print medium that I have made considerable use of consists of material from the Internet newspaper *Gazeta.kg*. Founded in 2003, it identified itself as a radical opposition newspaper,

> a fighting publication, irreconcilable with Kyrgyzstan's authorities, calling for a struggle, for fights, for revolution … [that] welcomed the revolution and with the same inexhaustible fervour started to expose the new authorities, relatively quickly confirming its own opinion that they are even worse than the old authorities.[40]

However, the changing political circumstances in Kyrgyzstan and the appointment of a new Chief Editor in December 2005 led to a more moderate tone of coverage, with a focus on fact-based articles rather than comment and analysis. It has the considerable advantage of immediacy over its traditional print media counterparts, with articles being published and updated within hours of a newsworthy incident occurring, which often made for far more comprehensive coverage of events. I have used *Gazeta.kg*'s coverage from all the protests to help triangulate my own impressions of being at the protests, aided by the Chief Editor's photographs in the case of the 2006 protest, which have proven useful both in their own right and for contrasting and comparing with my own as I have compiled the case studies. Photographs have also been used to document the interplay of words and actions in the form of banners, placards and other slogans, as well as other incongruities present in some of the narratives presented in relation to the protests. Finally, other sources such as blogs and

[40] Nosikov, Anton (2005) "Vtoroe rozhdenie Gazety.kg" ["The second birth of Gazeta.kg"], *Gazeta.kg,* 01.12.2005, http://older.gazeta.kg/view.php?i=17949 [last accessed 26.08.2008].

international media coverage have been included where available in order to ensure that my interpretations (which are, after all, interpretations of interpretations) are as credible as possible, if only due to the recognition and acknowledgement of alternative plausible versions.

4. The Akmatbaev Protests: October 2005

> We would like to see changes with our eyes, not with our ears.[41]

The initial series of mass 'societal' protests in Bishkek was sparked by the murder of Jogorku Kenesh Deputy Tynychbek Akmatbaev in October 2005. The protests caused particular concern both domestically and among international actors with a presence in the country due to the active involvement of people allegedly connected with organised criminal groups. Key amongst such people was Tynychbek Akmatbaev's brother, Ryspek Akmatbaev, who initiated the first protest following Tynychbek's death. Ryspek was widely acknowledged to be the leader of an organised criminal group or an *avtoritet*. He had previously served time twice and a warrant for his arrest was issued in 2001 on suspicion of his having committed three murders.[42] In order to avoid arrest he had been absent from Kyrgyzstan for several years, returning only after 24 March 2005. *Vechernii Bishkek* reported on 25 October that,

> According to some information, Ryspek Akmatbaev is accused of crimes covered by six articles of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic. In part, the *avtoritet* is suspected of committing several murders, kidnapping people, armed assaults, banditry and deliberately causing damage to others' property. …
>
> Akmatbaev himself denies any part in these crimes. After the "Tulip Revolution" he voluntarily went to the General Procurator's Office, where he had a personal meeting with the then General Procurator, Azimbek Beknazarov. The latter showed wondrous

[41] Marat Ismanaliev of the United Fatherand party quoted in Vzhesinskaya, Alla (2005) "Demokratiya, kak ona est, ili kak ona – nas…" ["Democracy as it is, or as it has been to us…"], *ResPublica*, 39 (605), 26.10.2005: 5.

[42] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Akmatbaev Ryspek Abdymalikovich" entry in "Kto est kto" ["Who's Who"], 30.01.2006, http://www.gazeta.kg/people/2006-01-30/190 [last accessed 29.08.2008]. Ryspek was subsequently murdered when coming out of a mosque in the village of Kok-Jar, Alamudunskii region, Chui oblast, on 10 May 2006. His death ended his controversial quest to take up his deceased brother's seat as Jogorku Kenesh deputy for the Balykchy electoral district.

> liberalism. Ryspek, for whom an arrest warrant was active under the previous regime and who would have been locked up if caught, was released to go home. This was so that, as Beknazarov announced, he [Ryspek] could prove his innocence, upon which he continues to insist.[43]

Regardless of the veracity of such allegations, Ryspek's reputation as an *avtoritet* lent weight to the impression amongst the public that he was capable of mobilising significant resources, both human and financial, to support his cause. As such, the threat that he was perceived to pose to the Kyrgyz state was considered particularly grave, especially in light of existing dissatisfaction with the government's failure to make progress with promised reforms. In these circumstances, the potential for issues being securitized was heightened by the general state of crisis and, specifically, growing frustration at the lack of effective political dialogue between the public and the authorities.

In contrast with the protests of the following spring, I was less familiar with the details of the local context when these protests began, due to only having been in Bishkek for approximately a month. Due to this need to "catch up" with the background to events (such as who Ryspek Akmatbaev was), my initial impressions were very much guided by the coverage in whatever newspapers I could access – most usually, as discussed earlier, *Vechernii Bishkek*, *MSN, ResPublica* and *Gazeta.kg* – as well as talking to friends, acquaintances and passers by to ascertain their opinions. In light of this, it is perhaps not surprising that my interpretations at the time largely reflected the popular opinion of President Bakiev being slow to react and then acting, if not inappropriately by meeting with a delegation of Akmatbaev's supporters, then certainly unwisely. However, when I added in the Early Warning for Violence Prevention's bulletins and coverage from *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, I was surprised to find that the government's response had been considerably more active than I, as well many Bishkek residents and even the Deputy US Ambassador,[44] had

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[43] *Vechernii Bishkek* (2005) Rubric "kstati" ["Incidentally"], 204(8878), 25.10.2005: 1.

[44] Donald Lu, Deputy US Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic was quoted as saying that "a situation in which the famous head of a criminal group is openly frightening the government and parliamentarians is 'scandalous'." *Moya stolitsa novosti* (2005) "Situatsiya nazvana skandalnoi" ["Situation is called scandalous"], 125(316), 28.10.2005: 2.

previously thought; while the media and sections of civil society were launching a securitising move centring on the threat posed to Kyrgyzstan society by Ryspek's protest and lack of a "decisive" government response, President Bakiev was attempting to keep the issue from becoming a security issue by seeking a legislatively-based solution. Yet his efforts were not only obscured by the protest-based securitising moves, but became the perceived threat itself in a securitising move. It was evident that events and especially the government response had been interpreted very differently.

To explore this contrast in interpretations, I have divided the case study into two parts. The first part explores the "on the ground" view of events that I experienced at the time of the protests. The second part then presents a broader chronological account of events based mainly on materials from *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* and the Early Warning for Violence Prevention bulletins 17 and 18. The majority of this material was available at the time, but was largely ignored in favour of more populist and "objective" sources of information for the reasons mentioned earlier. This second account very much supplements the first one in providing a comprehensive and "thick" narrative of the protests. However, as will be discussed in the case study's conclusion, it also raises the question of why the government's efforts to prevent the situation's securitization failed, as well as demonstrating clearly why actions must be considered not only *in addition to* but *in relation to* words.

4.i. An Experiential Account: Actions

Events were set in motion by the murder of parliamentary deputy Tynychbek Akmatbaev in Prison Colony 31 on 20 October 2005. The following day newspaper coverage focused mainly on the circumstances of his death. *Vechernii Bishkek* led with the headline "Deputy Akmatbaev shot by Prisoners", and recounted how two of the newspaper's journalists had accompanied the commission headed by Akmatbaev to three strict regime colonies and "as it

turned out, the 'VB' journalists were amongst the last to see Tynychbek Akmatbaev alive…"[45] *MSN,* meanwhile, devoted a single half-column on the front page of its Saturday edition under the heading "Emergency in Colony".[46]However, the initial reaction of the print media was muted, most probably due to the lack of information available at the time of going to press; for journalists and the public alike, it was simply too early to see how things would develop. Deputy Erkinbek Alymbekov was an exception, his initial reaction quoted in Friday's *Vechernii Bishkek*: "we've let the genie out of the bottle. […] I can say only one thing: this is the result of the events of 24 March. It is a problem of national proportions. If we carry on like this then we will lose sovereignty and the country."[47]

Opinion about the danger posed by the incident took on wider resonance over the weekend as Ryspek and his supporters began their protest on Ala-Too Square. While none of the newspapers publish over the weekend, *Gazeta.kg* provided a great deal of coverage for those with internet access, reposting 30 related articles from a range of sources on Saturday 22 October and a further three on the Sunday.[48] The site reported at 11.15 on Saturday 22 October that "since Saturday morning, 800 to 1,000 young people of a sporty appearance have gathered on Ala-Too Square in front of the White House".[49] For many hearing such reports, or seeing the crowd for themselves on the Square, it is likely to have recalled the events of 24 March, leading to fears that "criminals" were about to attempt a direct seizure of power. A subsequent report on the site, citing *ITAR-TASS* and *RIAN*, that

[45] Khokhlova, Nadezhda & Sveta Lokteva (2005) "Deputata Akmatbaeva rasstrelyali zeki" ["Deputy Akmatbaev Shot by Prisoners"], *Vechernii Bishkek* 202(8876), 21.10.2005: 1.
[46] *Moya stolitsa novosti* (2005) "ChP v kolonii" ["Emergency in Colony"], 122(313), 21.10.2005: 1.
[47] Temir, Elvira (2005) "Kommentarii deputatov Jogorku Kenesha" ["Commentary from Jogorku Kenesh Deputies"], *Vechernii Bishkek* 202(8876), 21.10.2005: 1.
[48] See entries for 22 and 23 October 2005 at http://older.gazeta.kg/rubric.php?r=49 [last accessed 27.08.2008].
[49] *Gazeta.kg* (2005) "Okolo tysyachi chelovek sobralos na tsentralnoi ploshchadi Bishkeka" ["Around a thousand people gather on Bishkek's central square"], 22.10.2005, http://older.gazeta.kg/view.php?i=17284 [last accessed 27.08.2008].

Akmatbaev "had declared jihad on Feliks Kulov"[50] further heightened fears of impending disorder and insecurity due the implied extremism.

After a weekend in which there had been time for rumours both about what had happened and about Ryspek himself to be discussed, and for Bishkek's residents to experience the inconvenience and sense of uncertainty engendered by the protest – which moved to the Old Square in front of the Jogorku Kenesh late on 22 October – newspaper coverage recommenced on Monday 24 October with *Vechernii Bishkek* noting that despite the considerable number of TV channels which had been present over the weekend, there was uncertainty about what the protest actually was: "it appeared that none of those present had understood what this was. A remembrance ceremony for the murdered deputy Akmatbaev? A peaceful protest or a carefully planned political action?"[51] The journalist herself seemed undecided, preferring to avoid drawing any conclusions in favour of reporting who said and did what. What we did know at this point was that Ryspek claimed that Feliks Kulov was responsible for his brother's murder and was demanding his immediate resignation, promising to continue his protest until this was achieved.

On the Tuesday, a pro-Kulov anti-protest began on Ala-Too Square as the anti-Kulov protest led by Ryspek Akmatbaev continued on the Old Square. While out purchasing the day's newspapers, I decided to go and have a closer look at the protests in person. On Ala-Too Square banners had already been erected in front of the statue of Erkindik and around one hundred people or so were milling around, as though waiting for someone to arrive or something to happen (figure 3.2 top left). The crowd was mixed by age, ethnicity and gender, and judging by their clothes and appearance I concluded that they were mainly from Bishkek. Shortly afterwards, a minibus bearing the logo of the Ar-Namys party and loud speakers

[50] *Gazeta.kg* (2005) "V Bishkeke prokhodit miting s trebovaniem otstavki Kulova. Rysbek [sic] Akmatbaev obyavil Feliksu Kulovu dzhikhad" ["Protest in Bishkek demands Kulov's resignation. Rysbek [sic] declares jihad on Feliks Kulov"], 22.10.2005, http://older.gazeta.kg/view.php?i=17286 [last accessed 27.08.2008].

[51] Khokhlova, Nadezhda (2005) "Plakaty, povara i tualety" ["Placards, cooks and toilets"], *Vechernii Bishkek,* 203 (8877), 24.10.2005: 1.

attached pulled up and people congregated around it. The atmosphere seemed relaxed, though people were keen to take the microphone and speak out in support of Kulov (figure 3.2 top right), as well as ensuring that the media and others could see their slogans as clearly as possible (figure 3.2 bottom left).

The only moment of tension was when one man started heckling the speaker and the police quickly pushed through the crowd and led him away (figure 3.2 next page bottom right), though comments from people standing near to me, as well as my own impression from his behaviour and odour, suggested that he was most likely drunk – as subsequently reported by *MSN* – rather than a provocateur and people did not seem overly concerned by the incident.[52]

[52] Malevanaya, Darya (2005) "Ryspek, ty ne prav!" ["Ryspek, you're wrong!"], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 124 (315), 26.10.2005: 1-2.

Figure 3.2: Scenes from pro-Kulov protest held on Ala-Too Square, Bishkek, 25 October 2008. The start of the protest (top left), a member of Ar-Namys speaking (top right), women with slogans expressing support for Kulov (bottom left), militsia leading a drunk man away after he started heckling speakers (bottom right).

While observing the protest, I fell into conversation with a student who had also come to see what was happening. She confirmed my sense that the pro-Kulov protest was safe for bystanders, but felt that the atmosphere at the anti-Kulov protest on the Old Square could be less welcoming, adding that she had heard reports that weapons had been seen. Nevertheless, we were both curious and decided to go together to look at the other protest. Three things were immediately noticeable as we approached the Old Square: there was a far greater police presence, although their behaviour suggested that they had little intention of interfering with the protest; the proportion of men and ethnic Kyrgyz was far greater than at the pro-Kulov protest that we had just come from and most of the protesters were not local –

this last fact being unsurprising given that Tynychbek Akmatbaev was the deputy for the Balykchy electoral district, located approximately 112 miles east of Bishkek at the western end of Lake Issykul; and the atmosphere did indeed seem far tenser and hostile. The protesters had set up several yurts and portaloos and there was evidence of food being prepared. Some protesters stood on the steps of the parliament building, clustered around a TV that had been set up under a sun umbrella. The main body of Ryspek's supporters, however, sat in long rows opposite the parliament, with groups of men dressed almost without exception in leather jackets or tracksuits – often called "sportsmen" collectively by locals with the tacit implication that they are "heavies" – standing at either end. The sentiments expressed in the slogans displayed also appeared less temperate: "Shame on Kulov, Kulov, you're guilty of Akmatbaev's death!", "Our elected deputy Akmatbaev was killed by Kulov" (figure 3.3), "Kulov's the chief schemer", "Better death than the Kulov-Chechen mafia!" (figure 3.4),[53] "Kulov, who's next?" (figure 3.5), "Kulov + Batukaev = murderers" and "Kulov to resign!" (figure 3.6). It would have been quite an intimidating sight even without the rumours of people being armed and Ryspek's reputation; as it was, people's growing sense of concern and frustration with the apparent lack of government response to these "criminals" holding an unsanctioned protest appeared to be very understandable: why weren't the police doing anything?!

[53] Batukaev is the alleged leader of the Chechen mafia in Kyrgyzstan and Ryspek Akmatbaev's arch-enemy. Kulov, who had been imprisoned on politically motivated charges for several years until 24 March 2005, was alleged to have colluded with Batukaev while in prison to arrange Tynychbek Akmatbaev's death. Saidazimova, Gulnoza (2005) "Kyrgyzstan: Prison Unrest Highlights Alleged Political Power Struggle", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,* 02.11.2005, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1062578.html [last accessed 13.05.2009].

Figure 3.3: “Kulov, shame, Kulov, you're guilty of Akmatbaev's death”, “Our elected deputy Akmatbaev was killed by Kulov”. Anti-Kulov protest outside Jogorku Kenesh, Bishkek 25 October 2005.

Figure 3.4: “Kulov’s the main schemer”, “Better death than the Kulov- Chechen mafia!” Anti-Kulov protest outside Jogorku Kenesh, Bishkek, 25 October 2005.

Figure 3.5: “Kulov, who’s next?” Anti-Kulov protest outside Jogorku Kenesh, Bishkek, 25 October 2005.

Figure 3.6: "Kulov + Batukaev = murderers", "sack Kulov". Anti-Kulov protest outside Jogorku Kenesh, Bishkek, 25 October 2005.

The reportage in Tuesday's (25 October) newspapers reflected and amplified the sense of unease I and others to whom I had spoken had felt about the anti-Kulov protest. *MSN* opened its coverage with "The criminal world has declared war on the Prime Minister", describing how

> Last Saturday, under the leadership of Ryspek Akmatbaev, brother of the murdered deputy Tynychbek Akmatbaev, his relatives, constituents and compatriots [from the same area of Kyrgyzstan] gathered in the square in front of the government building (early estimates are of around 800 people). They demanded the immediate resignation of Kulov. The people, so-called *bratki* who were armed to the teeth, conducted themselves quietly, gun-barrels only glimmered from under the counter.[54]

A second *MSN* journalist picked up the theme in her article, suggesting that the threat posed was greater than many of Bishkek's residents, used to protests, thought: "The law enforcement agencies so far have preferred not to notice gun-barrels glimpsed under the counter, but the civilised portaloos (a rare phenomenon for mass demonstrations) are completely misleading passers-by".[55] Meanwhile in reference to the absence of an official response from President Bakiev, *Vechernii Bishkek*'s front page headline asked the

[54] Malevanaya, Darya (2005) "'Rekviem' so stvolami" ["'Requiem' with gun barrels"], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 123 (314), 25.10.2005: 1.
[55] Orlova, Tanya (2005) "Kriminalitet ne budet diktovat usloviya prezidentu" ["Criminals will not dictate terms to the President"], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 123 (314), 25.10.2008: 2.

uncomfortable question “Will Bakiev back down to Akmatbaev?” and wrote bluntly that “[t]he continuing conflict on the square could provoke a new wave of migration. Worried phone calls are coming into the editorial offices constantly from Russophone citizens. Residents of Bishkek are concerned about a new wave of looting and outbreak of criminality.” The impression of alarm and imminent danger was further contributed to by the publication on *MSN*’s front page of an open statement from NGO representatives and politicians to the President and Prime Minister asserting that events “could lead to conflict in society” and demanding from the addressees:

> 1) a rapid and sufficient response on your part to the events that have occurred and that you give a political response;
> 2) that the preservation of civil order and the safety/security of citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic is ensured within the bounds of the law;
> 3) that you defend the tandem [i.e. Bakiev as President and Kulov as Prime Minister] for which the people of Kyrgyzstan voted.[56]

One was left with an overall impression that not only was the government being unacceptably slow to respond to the situation, it was perhaps unable to. Reports of heated exchanges during the second failed attempt to hold an extraordinary session of the Jogorku Kenesh on 24 September (Ryspek’s supporters blocked the entrance to the Jogorku Kenesh), and the unusual “point blank” refusal by deputies to comment to the press did nothing to dispel this impression.[57]

Faced with the visible evidence of the ongoing protest and inactivity on the part of the police, reports in the same articles of the governmental meetings that had taken place since Akmatbaev was shot dead compounded the impression of weak and indecisive leadership rather than demonstrating that the situation was being taken seriously and action taken. Media opinion was already massing behind Feliks Kulov, with Tanya Orlova of *MSN* noting that “Feliks Kulov, who is keeping the situation under control, reacted entirely efficiently to the provocation that has begun. A press conference was already called in the daytime [22

[56] *Moya stolitsa novosti* (2005) “Zayavlenie” [“Statement”], 123 (314), 25.10.2008: 1.
[57] Skorodumova, Elena (2005) “Vse resheniya parlamenta dolzhny byt obosnovannymi” [“All parliament’s decisions must be well-founded”], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 123 (314), 25.10.2008: 4.

October], which filled in details. At it, the Prime Minister, without seeking to justify himself, answered all questions posed accurately, without avoiding a single one."[58] Yet despite the article's heading – "Criminals will not dictate conditions to the President" – the only mention of Bakiev was a single sentence noting that the President had issued orders to the law enforcement agencies and that by the time of the press conference, 15.00 on Saturday 22 October, Bakiev had already discussed the situation three times with the Prime Minister and had held a session with the law enforcement agencies.

Wednesday 26 September saw the media's coverage extend further into the realm of commentary and analysis, with *ResPublica* portraying Akmatbaev's protest as the start of a "bandit revolution" made possible by the failure of those who came to power following Akaev's ousting to address the "the demands of the people who made the revolution".[59] The word "crisis" also featured, despite *Delo No.* reporting that "[it's] unbelievable, but a fact! All calm in Bishkek"; contrary to public fears of an increase in crime, the Minister of Internal Affairs was quoted as reporting a reduction in the incidence of crime. While the Minister maintained that the reduction was due to the intensified work of the police,[60] popular opinion concurred with the explanation attributed to him in the newspaper *Litsa* on 27 September: "the likelihood of crime in the republic has lessened, due to the fact that they (criminals – one supposes) are protesting on the square."[61] In light of this perception of the anti-Kulov protesters as "criminals", or at least being connected to organised crime, it was unsurprising that reports of Bakiev's intention to meet with a delegation of Ryspek's supporters was met

[58] Orlova, Tanya (2005) "Kriminalitet ne budet diktovat usloviya prezidentu": 2.
[59] Biyalinov, A. (2005) "Kriminalno-politicheskii krizis v Kyrgyzstane – chto nas zhdet vperedi?" ["The Criminal-Political Crisis in Kyrgyzstan – what awaits us?"], *ResPublica*, 39 (605), 26.10.2005: 1.
[60] *Delo No.* (2005) "Neveroyatno, no fakt! V Bishkeke spokoino" ["Unbelievable but a fact! All quiet in Bishkek"], 36 (613), 26.10.2005: 1.
[61] Beishenova, Meerim (2005) "Deputaty, vozmushchennye bespomoshchnostyu silovikov, sozdali svoyu komissiyu" ["Deputies concerned by the helplessness of the law enforcement bodies, have created their own commission"], *Litsa*, 21 (62), 27.10.2005: 3.

with strong public disapproval, further adding to opinions of Bakiev as a weak and inept head of state.[62]

Support for Feliks Kulov was expressed strongly in the newspapers, with headlines including "General, the people are with you!"[63] and "Protest in Bishkek: Hands off Kulov!",[64] as well as reports that the Jogorku Kenesh had declined to consider Kulov's resignation. At the same time some commentators began to wonder whether or not the crisis was in effect fuelling itself, with *Vechernii Bishkek*'s Daniyar Karimov and Erlan Satybekov concluding that "The confidence of Kulov's opponents is adding to the hysteria that is being artificially heightened in society by various political and civil society leaders."[65] This sentiment was repeated in published calls for people not to give in to provocation.[66] Yet others felt that the threat unleashed by Akmatbaev's murder and the resulting protests could not be underestimated:

> A particularity of political murder in Kyrgyzstan is that it occurs in a relatively small country and the death of even one politician or public figure causes an essential change in society's political palette and the power structure; changes in the political elite occur and so on. In a single hour the distribution of political forces in the country can change.
>
> An analysis of the socio-political situation forming in the country at the moment allows one to conclude that there is a direct threat to both the state's security, to peace and order, and to the President's personal security. Moreover, this threat, in our opinion, comes not from criminal structures, but from the bureaucratic apparatus. Persons who illegally built up capital in the Akaev era, representatives of the corrupted elite, have very successfully made it into the highest echelons of power. These people, who have direct lines into the criminal world, are possibly the participants and organisers of criminal gang wars in the country. To leave them in power any longer, and even more so to depend on them, is truly similar to death![67]

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[62] The news was originally reported in *Vechernii Bishkek* and rapidly became a topic of public discussion. Satybekov, Erlan (2005) "Prezident primet delegatsiyu Ryspeka" ["President will receive delegation from Ryspek"], *Vechernii Bishkek*, 205 (8879), 26.10.2005: 1.

[63] Mukashev, Kubanychbek (2005) "General, narod s toboi!" ["General, the people are with you!"], *Vechernii Bishkek*, 205 (8879), 26.10.2005: 1.

[64] Avdeeva, Elena (2005) "Miting v Bishkeke: ruki proch or Kulova!" ["Protest in Bishkek: Hands off Kulov!"], *Belyi parakhod KG*, 2, 26.10.2005: 1.

[65] Karimov, Daniyar & Erlan Satybekov (2005) "Komu Kulov ne avtoritet, ili Kak Ryspek novuyu kyrgyzskuyu elitu napugal" ["For Whom is Kulov not an *avtoritet*, or How Ryspek frightened the new Kyrgyz elite"], *Vechernii Bishkek,* 205 (8879), 26.10.2005: 4.

[66] *Moya stolitsa novosti* (2005) "Ne poddavatsya provokatsiyam" ["Don't give in to provocation"], 124 (315), 26.10.2005: 1.

[67] Kojomkulov, T. (2005) "Politicheskii terror po-kyrgyzski" ["Kyrgyz-style political terror"], *ResPublica*, 39 (605), 26.10.2005: 7.

I returned to Ala-Too Square after lunch on Wednesday 26 October and found the pro-Kulov protesters fewer in number and more dispersed around the square than the previous day, but apparently more organised, as evidenced by the stickers worn by participants – shown on the hats of the two men third and fourth from left in figure 3.7 – and the provision of refreshments, as well as their relocation to the southern side of Ala-Too Square to enable speakers to use the microphone visible in figure 3.6 that was set up on the permanent stage located there. Most striking when surveying the scene was the increased prominence of a large yellow banner proclaiming "We're against civil war" (figure 3.8).

Regardless of whether or not one felt that such slogans were overly dramatic – and I found myself undecided, on the one hand feeling that the level of threat was being exaggerated by the media and others with their own agenda, on the other aware that it was only a few months earlier that protests had led to the storming of the White House and two nights of widespread looting in Bishkek – it was difficult to feel sanguine about the state of affairs.

Figure 3.7: Aksakals taking refreshments at the pro-Kulov protest. Note the stickers in the ak kalpaks of two of the men, and the microphone and speakers set up behind them. Ala-Too Square, Bishkek, 26 October 2005.

Figure 3.8: Yellow banner with the slogan “We’re against civil war”.
Pro-Kulov protest, Ala-Too Square, Bishkek, 26 October 2005.

While nothing changed noticeably on the two squares on Thursday 27 October with both protests continuing, dissatisfaction with President Bakiev was now being voiced more stridently. Bakiev was increasingly being portrayed as a threat to the stability of the country as a weak and prevarication-prone leader, as the latest open letter made clear:

> Mr President!
>
> In connection with the situation that has formed, representatives of civil society address you with the demand to receive without delay a group of the leaders of nongovernmental organisations.
>
> Your speech at the meeting with deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh and members of the Government on 25 October shocked the entire people of Kyrgyzstan. The public expected from you a clear and unambiguous position. You should have said that you will not permit the criminal world to dictate terms to the state. You should have said that peaceful citizens can feel safe. You should have said that you firmly support the Government and its head, F. Sh. Kulov.

> Instead of this, you said that you were waiting for the results of the investigation. You said that there is nothing awful in that armed people, who are wanted for arrest, have gathered on the square."[68]

The outraged tone of the letter, which was also published in Thursday's *Vechernii Bishkek,* continued in relation to Bakiev's intention to meet with anti-Kulov protesters:

> You are preparing to receive a delegation of protesters at the parliament not today, not tomorrow, but on Friday 28 October, i.e. the day of the start of the trial of Ryspek Akmatbaev, who is accused of committing particularly serious crimes – murder and robbery! Surely you must understand that in receiving a defendant you are putting pressure on the court?![69]

This strong condemnation of Bakiev's handling of the situation could not be countered by the limited number of articles published about what actions the government and President were taking. *Delo No* had reported on 26 October in a single column article on page seven that "The powers are starting to act", citing Kulov's signing of a decree on immediate measures for stabilisation of the socio-political situation in the capital of the Kyrgyz Republic on 24 October,[70] and there were several other brief reports to be found on various pages – if people were actively looking for them, as I was. Many people did not feel inclined to give the government the benefit of the doubt, nor had time to comb through newspapers to find information that they instinctively disbelieved: Bakiev's assurance on 27 October that Kulov had his "full trust"[71] rang hollow to people already convinced by the account presented in the media and used to politicians pursuing their own interests above everything else.

In the event, Bakiev met with a delegation of Ryspek's supporters on the morning of 27 October. Ryspek was not part of delegation, which subsequently decided to halt their protest. The news was posted by *Gazeta.kg* at 12.59 using reports from AKIpress and

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[68] *Litsa* (2005) "Grazhdanskii sector trebuet prezidenta prinyat ikh 'Bakiev po suti potreboval diktatorskikh polnomochii'" ["Civil sector demands that the President receives them 'In effect Bakiev has demanded dictatorial powers'"], 21 (62), 27.10.2005: 1.

[69] *Litsa* (2005) "Grazhdanskii sector trebuet prezidenta prinyat ikh 'Bakiev po suti potreboval diktatorskikh polnomochii'".

[70] *Delo No.* (2005) "Vlast nachinaet deistvovat" ["Authorities begin to act"], 36 (613), 26.10.2005: 7.

[71] Satybekov, Erlan (2005) "Glavnoe, chto Bakiev verit Kulovu" ["Main thing is that Bakiev trusts Kulov"], *Vechernii Bishkek* (online version), 206 (8880), 27.10.2005, http://members.vb.kg/2005/10/27/panorama/3.html [last accessed 28.08.2008].

Azzatyk. Reactions to the news were mixed, with caution expressed by many: “Nothing’s been solved yet. Things will get a lot worse” commented one *Gazeta.kg* reader.[72] “The latest postponement of a solution to the conflict” concluded another.[73] Coverage in Friday’s newspapers echoed these sentiments: “Ryspekovites leave. But for how long?” asked Darya Malevanaya in *MSN*.[74] *Vechernii Bishkek,* meanwhile, ran a front page with coverage of people demanding that they be allocated land threatening to join forces with Ryspek Akmatbaev, with “Anara” explaining that “there’s no trust in the country’s leadership, but he [Ryspek] will make them give us land.”[75]

The effect of such coverage, as well as commentary criticising the government and voicing fears that “a continuation of the conflict between different forces and attempts to divide the sphere of influence could one day mean that there will not be anything left to divide” as one appeal to the President put it, was that even though the protest had ended, people felt more fearful about their future than ever: the speed at which Ryspek and his supporters had packed up their camp and left the Old Square following their private meeting with President Bakiev left many wondering if it was already too late to talk of a possible criminalisation of politics when circumstantial evidence suggested it was already a fact. If this was the case, then the threat was more serious than ever, lending weight to the Presidential Human Rights Commission's call for the public to unite and support the political Bakiev-Kulov tandem: “Our ancestors always united and halted their infighting when a universal threat appeared. This time has come”.[76] As will be discussed in section 5.i, this call resulted in a

[72] Comment No. 45699 (2005) “Storonniki T. Akmatbaeva priostanavlivayut miting” [“T. Akmatbaev’s supporters halt protest”], *Gazeta.kg*, 27.10.2005, http://older.gazeta.kg/view.php?i=17455 [last accessed 27.08.2008].
[73] Comment No. 45701 (2005) “Storonniki T. Akmatbaeva priostanavlivayut miting” [“T. Akmatbaev’s supporters halt protest”], *Gazeta.kg*, 27.10.2005, http://older.gazeta.kg/view.php?i=17455 [last accessed 27.08.2008].
[74] Malevanaya, Darya (2005) “Ryspekovtsy ukhodyat. No nadolgo li?” [“Ryspekites leave. But for how long?”], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 125 (316), 28.10.2005: 2.
[75] Oreshkin, Andrei (2005) “Ne dadite zemlyu – sami otberem!” [“If you don’t give us land, we’ll take it ourselves!”], *Vechernii Bishkek,* 207 (8881), 28.10.2005: 1.
[76] Skorodumova, Elena (2005) “Ne dopustim khaosa” [“We will not permit chaos”], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 125 (316), 28.10.2005: 2.

further protest on the morning of Saturday 29 October on Ala-Too Square, which represented a meta-securitization of the situation.

4.ii. An Alternative Retrospective Account: Words

The previous section provided an "on the ground" account of the anti- and then pro-Kulov protests and people's reactions based on how I experienced them at the time as someone actively following events. Central to this experience was my perception, echoed by people to whom I spoke, about the government's apparent inaction, which seemed to confirm local media portrayals of the government as weak and incompetent. I was somewhat surprised, therefore, to discover that *Slovo Kyrgyzstana,* the government-owned newspaper, presented a very different account of the government's response. Rather than being paralysed by indecision, within the Jogorku Kenesh and White House it seemed that actions were being taken to address the issue. Crucially, however, this information was not widely known at the time by the public for the reasons discussed in section 3.i.

This section reviews the government's responses to the protests. Within an orthodox application of securitization theory, this information would most probably be included as part of a comprehensive retrospective account of the various securitising moves and counter-moves performed by the actors involved. However, I have chosen to consider it separately to highlight how interpretations of events can be affected by what information is used. Including details from *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* within one overall account creates a degree of comprehensiveness absent from many people's, including my own, interpretations of events at the time. This is another way in which securitization meta-narratives decontextualise the events described by removing details of what, and how, information was used locally to interpret events. Without these details, it is far harder to understand how the situation developed and how the subsequent "Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan Without Criminality" protest related to the events preceding it, as I discuss in the penultimate section.

As noted previously, Jogorku Kenesh deputy Tynychbek Akmatbaev was shot dead on 20 October 2005, during a visit to prison colony No. 31 in the village of Moldovanovka, near Bishkek. Accounts state that Akmatbaev had decided to visit prison colony No. 31 having spoken with inmates who were protesting over conditions in prison colony No. 3 in his capacity as head of a parliamentary commission investigating rebellions by inmates in a number of prison colonies.[77] Once in the prison colony, Akmatbaev and those accompanying him were taken hostage by a group of inmates, during which Akmatbaev was killed by gunshots and three others were severely injured and subsequently died.[78] Following reports of the incident, Prime Minister Kulov was apparently instructed by President Bakiev to take personal control of the situation.[79] Kulov recounted how he came to negotiate with inmates at a press-conference on 22 October:

> He [President Bakiev] instructed me to go to the colony and deal with the situation personally. On the way there I was met by the deputy parliamentary speaker, B. Sherniyazov, who reported that inmates were demanding me for negotiations. In response to the question of why they wanted me, I received the reply that the Procurator wasn't there, nor the Minister [of Internal Affairs] or the Deputy Minister [of Internal Affairs]. I had to conduct a harsh conversation with the prisoners.[80]

As a result of these negotiations, the body of Akmatbaev and the two injured hostages were handed over to Kulov,[81] as was the perpetrator.[82]

The next day, Friday 21 October, Jogorku Kenesh deputies held a working meeting about the incident at which they heard information from "Prime Minister F. Kulov and representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the General Procurator's Office and the Special Procurator's Office."[83]

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[77] Khokhlova, Nadezhda & Sveta Lokteva (2005) "Deputata Akmatbaeva rasstrelyali zeki": 1.
[78] Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project (2005) *Weekly Bulletin* 17, 26.10.2005. Received by email; Slashcheva, T. (2005) "Kogda ne bylo kvoruma…" ["When there was no quorum…"] *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* 107 (21868), 25.10.2005: 3-4.
[79] Turkmenov, U. (2005) "Tragediya – vne politicheskikh schetov" ["Tragedy is beyond political scores"], *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 107 (21868), 25.10.2005: 2.
[80] Turkmenov, U. (2005) "Tragediya – vne politicheskikh schetov": 2.
[81] Khokhlova, Nadezhda & Svet Lokteva (2005) "Deputata Akmatbaeva rasstrelyali zeki": 1.
[82] Slashcheva, T. (2005) "Kogda ne bylo kvoruma…": 4.
[83] Slashcheva, T. (2005) "Kogda ne bylo kvoruma…": 3.

Saturday 22 October saw the start of a protest led by the deceased deputy's brother, Ryspek Akmatbaev, calling for the immediate resignation of the Prime Minister, who they claimed was responsible for Tynychbek Akmatbaev's death. The protestors initially congregated and set up yurts on the central Ala-Too square in Bishkek, but moved to the old square opposite the Jogorku Kenesh building by 18.00.[84] The same day Feliks Kulov held a press-conference and gave his evaluation of events following the murder on 20 October.[85] The author of an article in the privately owned newspaper *Moya stolitsa novosti* reported that "by the time of the press conference, 15.00 on Saturday 22 October, Bakiev had already discussed the situation three times with the Prime Minister and had held a session with the law enforcement agencies."[86]

A first attempt to hold an extraordinary session of parliament was held on Sunday 23 October, but was postponed due to quorum not being met.[87] Ryspek Akmatbaev and his supporters remained in the old square, continuing to call for Kulov's resignation. A second attempt to hold an extraordinary session of parliament was made the following day, Monday 24 October, but once more quorum in the chamber was not reached, not least because of around 500 protesters blocking the side entrances to the Jogorku Kenesh.[88] Deputy Speaker of the Jogorku Kenesh, Bolot Sherniyazov, "spoke with protesters for a long time" before entering the building.[89] Rather than attend the extraordinary session, President Bakiev held a working meeting with Prime Minister F. Kulov, Security Council Secretary M. Niyazov, Minister for Justice M. Kaiypov, Minister for Internal Affairs K. Kongantiev, and Chairman of the National Security Service T. Aitbaev. *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* reported that

[84] Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project (2005) *Weekly Bulletin* 17.
[85] Turkmenov, U. (2005) "Tragediya – vne politicheskikh schetov": 2.
[86] Orlova, Tanya (2005) "Kriminalitet ne budet diktovat usloviya prezidentu": 2.
[87] Slashcheva, T. (2005) "Kogda ne bylo kvoruma…": 4.
[88] Slashcheva, T. (2005) "Kogda ne bylo kvoruma…": 3-4; Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project (2005) *Weekly Bulletin* 17.
[89] Slashcheva, T. (2005) "Kogda ne bylo kvoruma…": 4.

> At the session the head of state heard reports from each head on the situation that has formed after the well-known events at detention facility No. 31. … The head of the state demanded that all those present take measures to ensure public order. The President also demanded that the public and the media received information about the measures taken by the authorities on time.[90]

Also on 24 October, Secretary of the State Security Council, Miroslav Niyazov, held a press conference for journalists, "where he gave his evaluation of the situation that had developed in the capital, talked about the measures taken by the authorities to diffuse and stabilise the situation."[91] Feliks Kulov also signed a government resolution entitled "On immediate measures for the stabilisation of the socio-political situation in the capital of the Kyrgyz Republic, the city of Bishkek".[92] This resolution was published on 25 October in *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, under the heading "Towards Common Sense".[93] The Tuesday finally saw a parliamentary session to discuss the events take place, with 53 deputies attending. Proceedings were transmitted onto screens so that Akmatbaev's supporters could watch. Prior to the session, Speaker Omurbek Tekebaev met with a delegation of the anti-Kulov protestors and subsequently reported their demands to deputies.[94] President Bakiev also held a meeting with parliamentarians and government officials, including Prime Minister Kulov, that day. The President noted that "[u]ntil now I have not given my verdict on what happened, since on my orders an investigative group from the General Procurator's Office are conducting an investigation into the triple killing" but did not say any more. He did,

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[90] *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* (2005) "Strana – odna. Narod – odin. Chto delit?" ["The country is one. The people are one. What's to divide?"], 107 (21868), 25.10.2005: 1.
[91] Shepelenko, A. (2005) "Spros po gamburgskomu schetu" ["Demand for a Long-Term Values System"], *Slovo Kyrgyzstana,* 107 (21868), 25.10.2005: 3.
[92] Reported in Mambetov, Kurmanbek (2005) "Kriminalnaya volnitsa" ["Criminal Freemen"], *Slovo Kyrgyzstana,* 108 (21869), 28.10.2005: 7. The resolution was published the following day, as noted.
[93] Kulov, Feliks (2005) "K zdravomu smyslu. Postanovlenie pravitelstva Kyrgyzskoi respubliki O neotlozhnykh merakh po stabilizatsii obshchestvenno-politicheskoi situatsii v stolitse Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki – gorode Bishkeke" ["Towards Sense. Order of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic about immediate measures for the stabilisation of the socio-political situation in the city of Bishkek, the republic's capital"], *Slovo Kyrgyzstana,* 107 (21868), 25.10..2005: 2.
[94] Slashcheva, T. (2005) "Pozitsiya sozreet cherez 20 dnei" ["The position will develop in 20 days"], *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 108 (21869) 25.10.2005: 6.

however, say that he would meet with a delegation of Akmatbaev's supporters on 27 October.[95]

In addition to the continuing protest led by Ryspek Akmatbaev on the Old Square opposite the Jogorku Kenesh on 25 October, an estimated 600 people joined a protest on the central Ala-Too square until early afternoon led by the political party Ar-Namys in support of Feliks Kulov.[96] The day's final development was the appearance of two open letters to the President and Prime Minister, one from deputies of the Bishkek Municipal Kenesh,[97] the other from civil society and political party leaders,[98] calling for immediate action to deal with the situation and "ensure the preservation of civil order and the safety/security of citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic".[99]

The two protests on 26 October continued in the same vein as the previous day, with Akmatbaev's anti-Kulov protest on the old square and an Ar Namys-led pro-Kulov demonstration on Ala-Too square.[100] President Bakiev, meanwhile, finally held a press briefing, which was reported in *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* under the headline "President Trusts the Prime Minister".[101] Bakiev's claim, however, was less than convincing, as *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*'s own report seemed to imply in the contrast between the article's concluding sentence and the President's quoted response to a question concerning whether or not a decision had been taken regarding Kulov's resignation should he be proven guilty of involvement with the assassination:

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[95] *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* (2005) "Chto pokazhet sledstvie": 2.
[96] Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project (2005) *Weekly Bulletin* 17.
[97] Reported in Mambetov, Kurmanbek (2005): 7.
[98] Sasykbaeva, A.A., E. Aliev, D. Nusupov, E. Baisalov, A. Abdrasulova, A. Alisheva, N. Sydykov, Sadyk Sher-Niyaz, K.S. Moldogazieva, B.M. Baikojoev, T. Baltabaev, Rakiya Jusupova, Kuban Junushaliev, O. Malevanaya, J. Jeksheev (2005) "Zayavlenie" ["Announcement"], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 123 (314), 25.10.2005: 1.
[99] Sasykbaeva, A.A. et al. (2005) "Zayavlenie": 1.
[100] Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project (2005) *Weekly Bulletin* 18, 02.11.2005. Received by email.
[101] Vladimirova, L. (2005) "Prezident doveryaet premeru" ["The President Trusts the Prime Minster"], *Slovo Kyrgyzstana,* 108 (21869) 25.10.2005: 3.

> 'As President of Kyrgyzstan, I should above all ensure that the Constitution is observed, that the interests and rights of every citizen are observed, regardless of whether he is the Prime Minister or a common man. A decision will be taken on the basis of the conclusions of the investigative commission, which is being headed by the General Procurator. An adequate decision will be taken in relation to any person holding office, regardless of his position.'
>
> At the same time, the President noted that he has no grounds for not trusting F. Kulov.[102]

Following a meeting between Bakiev and representatives of Akmatbaev's protesters on the morning of 27 October, the anti-Kulov protest was "suspended until the completion of the investigation" and Akmatbaev and his supporters cleared the old square.[103]

5. A Meta-Securitising Move: A Protest About Protests

> Many have already understood that if we will just stand by and passively watch how representatives of power themselves are merging with criminals, then civil war will be unavoidable.[104]

Despite the formal end of the protests on Thursday evening, Saturday 29 October saw the holding of a protest organised by the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society under the slogan "Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan Without Criminality" on Ala-Too square, with an estimated 600 people attending. The Early Warning for Violence Prevention project reported in its weekly bulletin that

> Participants were mainly representatives of civil society - youth movements "Kel-kel" and "Birge", and also political parties such as "Ata Meken", "Ar-Namys" and the "Committee on [the] Protection of the People's revolution". The head of the Commission of Human Rights under the President, Tursunbek Akun, and ex-candidate for president, Toktayim Umetalieva, also attended the meeting [sic]. The participants demanded that authorities not admit criminal persons to state positions, and not break up the "tandem Bakiev-Kulov". They held posters with slogans as: "We are for Kulov", "Hands off from Tekebaev", "Ar-Namys members for Bakiev+Kulov tandem", "People against criminals", "Do not confuse civil society with organized crime", and "Gangsters should be in prison".[105]

This demonstration, which was one of 35 organised nation-wide, marked the culmination of a week of protests that had gradually grown in scale from being a largely personal dispute

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[102] Vladimirova, L. (2005) "Prezident doveryaet premeru": 3.
[103] Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project (2005) *Weekly Bulletin* 18.
[104] Zolotareva, L. (2005) "Dve ploshchadi, dva mira" ["Two squares, two worlds"], *Dlya Vas*, 43 (405), 29.10.2005: 1.
[105] Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project (2005) *Weekly Bulletin* 18.

between individuals to one where claims were being made in the name of the people of Kyrgyzstan and the country (not the state) by civil society. As one newspaper concluded, by the eve of the protest there was "an understanding of the necessity of unity amongst all Kyrgyzstanis in the face of internal and external threats."[106]

As such, it is an example of a rare case in which the theoretical outcome of the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of 'security' – namely a meta-security narrative or a meta-securitization – arguably accurately reflects the dynamics on the ground. Just as a successful securitization presents an abstracted, distilled version of events, so the protest of Saturday 29 October was a meta-protest in that it was in effect a protest about protests. The key difference between this protest and those that had preceded it was its immediate coherence and non-dynamic nature: roles had already been assigned, arguments rehearsed, developed and arguably even accepted by the audience. It was simply a question of performing the securitization as a separate coda to the events that had led up to it. It was this distinctness that was especially striking; when reference was made at all to the eight days of protests prior to the "Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan Without Criminality" protest, it was no longer in terms of threats and insecurity, but rather as a mobilising factor. Vyacheslav Timirbaev, reflecting on the Saturday protest, opined that

> One of the undeniable positives of the protests held by those demanding Kulov's resignation that must be acknowledged is that thousands of Kyrgyzstanis have shaken laziness and social apathy from themselves, banished passive indifference and come out into the squares in order to oppose criminals and raise their voice in defence of law and order.[107]

I arrived at Ala-Too Square soon after people had started gathering and immediately noticed the large square banner with the protest's logo emblazoned on it that had been hung above the main stage, as well as the stickers than many people were wearing proclaiming "No fear!" in both Kyrgyz and Russian (figures 3.9 and 3.10). The ethnic diversity of those

[106] Cherikov, S. (2005) "Khudoi mir luchshe khoroshei voiny?" ["A poor peace is better than a good war?"], *Dlya Vas*, 43 (405), 29.10.2005: 2.
[107] Timirbaev, Vyacheslav (2005) "Bezvlastie vlasti ili vlast bezvlastiya?": 3.

present also distinguished the protest from previous protests, there being a noticeable Slavic presence, as did the broad age range of those present. Judging by people's more western-style clothing, as well as the fact that Russian was being widely spoken, I got the impression that many of the people who had come to Ala-Too Square for the protest were from Bishkek itself, rather than having come into the capital to protest – a factor that would most probably have increased the social legitimacy of the protest for urban residents since it could not be explained as the "uncivilized" actions of rural (and by implication, poorly educated and backward) Kyrgyz; as Cherikov of the *Dlya Vas* newspaper commented, the protest had attracted the support of Kyrgyzstan's Slavic and Russophone population, who represented "the intellectual layer of the population".[108]

It was difficult to hear what was being said by speakers on the stage as I walked through the crowd, but the numerous banners and placards left one in little doubt about people's – or at least, civil society's – opinions: "the people are united against criminals" (to the right of Edil Baisalov in figure 3.11), "we need peace", "we don't want to lose the motherland" (figure 3.12), "don't let civil war happen", as well as the more political "do the people have a president?" and "we support Feliks Kulov!" (figures 3.13 and 3.14). A number of bright yellow KelKel flags were also being waved energetically by members of the youth movement (figure 3.15), further adding to the sense of this being a more formal expression of concerns on behalf of the people due to KelKel's reputation as having been prominent in the March events.

[108] Cherikov, S. (2005) "Khudoi mir luchshe khoroshei voiny?": 2.

Figure 3.9: Participants in the “Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan Without Criminals” protest with banners and stickers, Bishkek, 29 October 2005.

Figure 3.10: Close up of sticker distributed to participants of the “Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan Without Criminals” Protest, Ala-Too Square, Bishkek, 29 October 2005.

Figure 3.11: Edil Baisalov speaking at the “Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan Without Criminals” Protest, Ala-Too Square, Bishkek, 29 October 2005, flanked by banners. The one to his right reads “The People are United Against Criminals”.

Figure 3.12: The banner on the left reads “We don’t want to lose the motherland” and featured in photographs published by *Moya stolitsa novosti* and *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* on Monday 1 November, 2005. The banner on the right reads "Kyrgyz-British College [a private educational establishment] for Peace!". Ala-Too Square, Bishkek, 29 October 2005.

Figure 3.13: “Does the people have a president?” banner displayed at the “Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan without Criminals” protest, Ala-Too Square, Bishkek, 29 October 2005.

Figure 3.14: Banner reading “We support Feliks Kulov!” displayed at the “Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan without Criminals” protest, Ala-Too Square, Bishkek, 29 October 2005.

Figure 3.15: Three yellow KelKel flags are waved above the crowd. Ala-Too Square, Bishkek, 29 October 2005.

The protest ended after an hour and people dispersed peacefully and quickly. I was surprised by the rapidity of the entire event and was left wondering if I had missed something or hadn't quite understood the purpose of the protest. It had seemed like a formality, a pre-prepared performance in which everyone already knew what would happen. All of a securitization's constituent elements were already in place – the protest acted as the means of expression, chosen due to the common perception in Kyrgyzstan that speaking alone was ineffective given the local socio-political conditions. If we review the protest from the perspective of securitization, we can see how this meta-securitization was acted out.

Firstly, civil society, represented by the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society and the youth movement KelKel, acted as the securitization's initiator. In addition to organising the protest, various leaders, such as Edil Baisalov, spoke explicitly of why they had done so during the protest:

> We have gathered here because our civic conscience demanded it! We say 'no' to the criminals and bandits who are holding the whole country in a state of fear and threatening the first figures of the state. We are not just for the Bakiev-Kulov tandem; we are for order and *bezopasnost*.[109]

They were also keen to highlight the damage already done to Kyrgyzstan's reputation by Akmatbaev's protests at home and abroad. Alisher Mamasaliev, leader of KelKel, portrayed the protest as a first step towards "rehabilitating" the country, its people and its reputation.[110] Their position built on the open letters and appeals that had been issued by various NGOs and published in newspapers earlier in the week calling for the government to take measures to stabilise the socio-political situation in Bishkek. Organising a protest, rather than simply repeating their calls strengthened their credibility considerably, since it demonstrated that they were able to *act* as well as *speak* – a distinction to which Kyrgyzstanis had become extremely sensitive in light of perceptions of government inaction and indecisiveness.

Secondly, the narrative presented was already familiar to the public and the anecdotal evidence – most prominently Bakiev's meeting with a delegation of Akmatbaev's supporters – seemed extremely convincing to many who already felt that corruption was a major hindrance to their chances of living normally; as one student commented about Tynychbek Akmatbaev's death, "[o]f course a murder is a murder. And one does feel truly sorry for the relatives. But if my parents were murdered, no-one would organise a protest. Because we don't have such money."[111] The claim that the government was becoming criminalised and that if it was allowed to continue it would lead to the demise of Kyrgyzstan's future did not seem far fetched to many, especially six months after the "revolution" had started and with no sign of life improving for the population. To add insult to injury, the government's leaders – the tandem of Bakiev and Kulov – appeared to be "deaf and

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[109] Malevanaya, Darya (2005) "Narod skazal net kriminalu!" ["People say no to criminals"], *Moya stolitsa novosti* 126 (317), 01.11.2005: 9.
[110] Alisher Mamasaliev, head of KelKel, quoted in Nichiporova, Nina & Aleksandr Tuzov (2005) "Svobodnoe grazhdanskoe slovo: mneniya liderov" ["Free civic speech: Leaders' opinions"], *Vechernii Bishkek*, 208 (8882), 31.10.2005: 4.
[111] Vzhesinskaya, Alla (2005) "Demokratiya, kak ona est, ili kak ona – nas…": 5.

dumb"[112] to the seriousness of the situation and dismissive of people's fears. As Edil Baisalov argued during the TV programme *Zloe pero* ("Sharp Quill") on 1 November 2005:

> They say that we're all very emotional, we're scared, and we've started demanding harsh measures. But both the head of the state and Niyazov spoke emotionally, saying that people were grieving and we should understand them venting. So who's emotional? They [the government] don't understand that as a result of the events of these two or three days there's been an irreparable blow to our international reputation. The authorities have been humiliated, sovereignty has been if not broken then severely shaken, and the people's spirits have fallen. What's more important?! A certain person giving vent to their grief?[113]

The potency of the narrative was highlighted by the fact that the securitization's third element – audience acceptance – was assured at the outset of the protest, i.e. when the securitizing move was launched. Moreover, people's endorsement of the threat narrative was not only expressed physically, by attending the protest, but also in word-based forms such as holding banners and placards, as well as shouting slogans. Many, if not the majority, of those who attended were already in agreement with the securitising narrative presented and wished to demonstrate their endorsement of it; there was little need to try and convince them, making the progression from securitising move to successful securitization seamless and almost instantaneous.

The result of the securitization was a meta-narrative that differed in certain key ways from the securitising moves that had paved the way for it. Most crucially, criticism of President Bakiev's and the law enforcement agencies' handling of events at the protest was muted and replaced with loud declarations of support for the Bakiev-Kulov tandem, as Edil Baisalov demonstrated, and even declarations of support for the usually much-maligned police, as Darya Malevanaya described:

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[112] Maripov and Baiguttiev (2005) "Tandem, chto glukh i nem" ["The tandem that is deaf and dumb"], *Obshchestvennyi reiting*, 41 (263), 02-05.11.2005: 1.
[113] Orlova, Tatyana (2005) "Kriminal i poteri tandema" ["Criminals and the Tandem's Losses"], *Moya stolitsa novosti* 126 (317), 01.11.2005: 7.

> 'We will join forces with the police and help them fight bandits with our common efforts,' said human rights defender Mikhail Korsunskii. Those present answered the speaker with applause and good naturedly chanted the slogan 'Police, we're with you!'[114]

This editing of securitizing moves into a coherent and cohesive meta-narrative was further demonstrated by reactions to the voicing of dissenting opinions about President Bakiev at the protest. At one point, reported *Vechernii Bishkek* journalist Andrei Oreshkin, "cries of 'Down with Bakiev!' were heard from amongst the crowd. These were immediately cut off and called a provocation".[115] Alternative interpretations of why Ryspek and his supporters halted their protest so promptly following their meeting with Bakiev by some people, including Jogorku Kenesh deputy Iskhakh Masaliev, who described how "[u]ntil the final day I had supposed that the authorities were powerless, but having seen how the whole group [of Ryspek's supporters] packed up and left after its representatives had met with the President, I lost my certainty. In my opinion the authorities are far from powerless".[116]

Such speculative reassessments, however, further reinforced the overarching meta-securitization, suggesting implicitly that the criminalisation of the government was too advanced to be easily undone, and that the future of Kyrgyzstan depended on fragile relations between criminals and those in power. Despite one commentator arguing that the eventual outcome of the protests was positive in that the situation was "solved on the basis of consensus, albeit a poor one" and that "all parties showed a healthy instinct for self-preservation and reason in the interests of peace and progress in the country",[117] most people were far less optimistic and remained suspicious. Even the government-owned newspaper *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* acknowledged that the lack of transparency surrounding the curtailment of Akmatbaev's protest gave cause for unease:

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[114] Malevanaya, Darya (2005) "Narod skazal net kriminalu!": 9.
[115] Oreshkin, Andrei (2005) "Afgantsy vnov gotovy k voine. S kriminalom" ["Afghan veterans ready for war again. Against criminals"], *Vechernii Bishkek*, 208 (8882), 31.10.2005: 4.
[116] Orlova, Tatyana (2005) "Kriminal i poteri tandema": 7.
[117] Cherikov, S. (2005) "Khudoi mir luchshe khoroshei voiny?": 2.

> it would be a mistake to say that society breathed a sigh of relief after this fact [the end of Ryspek Akmatbaev's protest on the Old Square on 27 October]. Mainly because of what remains unknown: what on earth so miracle-working did the head of state promise to make people who had harshly and uncompromisingly stated their position before over the course of several days disperse? […] It remains once more to complain that we do not live in a European state or the USA, where the contents of a head of state's meeting with the participants of a confrontation into which more or less the whole country has been dragged would most likely not remain behind seven stamps.[118]

The article below *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*'s headline coverage of the 29 October protest went further, openly stating that "Kyrgyzstan is facing difficult times. Once again it is gripped by all-encompassing wave of destabilization".[119] Even with the protest crisis over, the meta-narrative of existential threat to Kyrgyzstan's future continued to take root, as will be elaborated in the following chapter.

This final protest was striking for the apparent separateness from the protests that preceded it of the threat narrative presented. In contrast to the fractured nature of the threat narratives presented in the anti- and pro-Kulov protests, Saturday's protest demonstrated a logic far more consistent with the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of how securitization occurs. However, if the protests that preceded the "Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan Without Criminality" are not considered, the socio-political dynamics that created the conditions for it to occur are erased. The result is that while we are still able to say *what* happened, we are far less able to understand *how* it happened and how different securitising moves affect each other and the relations between actors.

[118] K.A. (2005) "'Mirnye grazhdane protiv kriminala' - tak nazyvaetsya novoe dvizhenie" ["New movement called 'Peaceful Citizens Against Criminals'"], *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* 109 (21870), 01.11.2005: 5.
[119] Ishimkanov, K. (2005) "Pervoe uslovie" ["The first condition"], *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* 109 (21870), 01.11.2005: 5.

6. Conclusion: Connecting Multiple Securitising Moves

Over seven days of protests, a series of securitising and counter-securitising moves were made that were closely intertwined and mutually constitutive. They were subsequently distilled into a distinct meta-securitization that portrayed the government as a threat to Kyrgyzstan's future due both to its inaction and criminalisation. This meta-narrative was expressed both via and at the "Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan without Crime" protest on 29 October 2005. Crucially, the meta-narrative overwrote the preceding securitising moves, as well as the government's efforts to contain and deal with the situation procedurally and legislatively and resist protesters' attempts to securitize it.

I have argued that in order to understand the significance of these protests as expressions of security it is not enough to focus on process instead of outcome. While this change of focus is necessary and does to a certain extent increase securitization's utility for empirical studies, it is still insufficient, for it does not necessarily challenge the normative assumptions inherent in the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security, nor does it permit the inclusion of non-verbal forms of expression. In order to address these shortcomings, I have proposed the adoption of more radical measures: firstly, that the notion of *implied security* is extended to directly include physical actions as well as verbal expressions, and secondly, that the researcher should seek to actively decentre securitization's normative assumptions by explicitly considering multiple interpretations of the situation. In this way it is possible to look beyond, or perhaps more accurately, beneath, the meta-narratives that an orthodox application of securitization creates and explore specific local meanings and understandings that are inherently situated and often experiential.

As previously noted, in contrast to the account of events given in Section 4.iii, the public appeared to be unaware that the government had in fact responded to Akmatbaev's protest. This is likely to be partly because of the relative lack of popularity of *Slovo Kyrgyzstana,* the government newspaper in which the decrees and orders issued in

response to the crisis were published, due to its perceived pro-government bias. As a result, few people will have read the decrees and so simply not know that they have been issued, contributing to the perception of government inaction. This perception was undoubtedly exacerbated by articles in independently-owned newspapers that made frequent reference to President Bakiev's failure to speak publicly about Akmatbaev's murder and subsequent protests. Similarly, as the Kyrgyzstan office of the international NGO Internews noted, the high levels of coverage given to Ryspek Akmatbaev in the media also contributed to increased public concern:

> Internews Kyrgyzstan calls the country's media to ensure balance and objectivity in released materials, which is especially important at this time.
>
> The majority of the population receive news from journalists, and the biased and one-sided coverage of recent events to the advantage of one party leads to the possibility that people may form certain opinions and understandings that are not always correct, says the press release.
>
> Sensational materials contribute in part to the unprecedented high profile of criminals. The media must clearly understand that it could be used as an instrument to influence public opinion. This is why the utmost reliability and balance of materials is so important.[120]

These two factors – the portrayal of events in the media and Ryspek's reputation – played a significant role in creating the threat narrative then fuelled the protests, yet there is little room for their explicit consideration within an orthodox application of securitization theory. In effect, the analyst remains at least one step removed from the contradictions and subjectivity of etic interpretations, striving for "balance" even as local perceptions reject it based on their local knowledge: which newspapers are to be trusted, who possesses social capital, what actions are deemed necessary? Truth, balance or objectivity are of limited relevance for those *living* and *experiencing* the events in question, as *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* concluded: "even if the truth is not spoken completely [about events], the enlightenedness, the observational powers of the public forces it to draw conclusions itself, to compare details, statements, actions."[121]

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[120] Orlova, Tanya (2005) "Ne boites skazat pravdu!" ["Don't be afraid to tell the truth!"], *Moya stolitsa novosti online,* 28.10.2005, http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/11740 [last accessed 11.06.2008].
[121] K.A. (2005) "'Mirnye grazhdane protiv kriminala' - tak nazyvaetsya novoe dvizhenie": 5.

Crucially, however, people's conclusions and perceptions of events and their meanings alter over time. We see this in the development of competing narratives over the course of the nine days of protests, particularly in relation to the pro-Kulov and then anti-crime protests. At the start the protests were concerned primarily with expressing support for Feliks Kulov and calling upon President Bakiev to express his personal support for his tandem partner (threat narrative 1). As the protests continued, this theme was incorporated into consecutive wider narratives; firstly, dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the protests and especially Bakiev's public silence (threat narrative 2), and subsequently demands for immediate action to counter the perceived criminalisation of the government (threat narrative 3), which was seen as posing an existential threat to Kyrgyzstan's future not only as a state, but more importantly as a people and homeland.

Securitization theory is in principle capable of analysing this final meta-narrative of threat, but in doing so it provides at best a largely decontextualised "snap-shot" of the dominant public narrative at that point in time. Even if the analyst seeks to "embed" this narrative in its local context via more explicit consideration of facilitating conditions, as Stritzel proposes, undertaking this task retrospectively risks creating an account that bears little relation to how people experienced events as they took place due to the presumption that events are understood in the same way and have the same meaning in (for example) Kyrgyzstan and Copenhagen. In the case of the protests, for example, it would be possible to create a "comprehensive" chronological account that included government actions alongside protests. That these actions and measures took place is not in question, yet the analyst's reading of the situation could be very different from a *first-hand* and *experientially-based* interpretation of the situation, altering its apparent "security-ness".

The issue of an analysis' situatedness and its potential consequences raises ontological as well as epistemological questions. Two issues warrant particular mention: first, the Copenhagen School's normative assumptions about society and political processes, and

second, the basic conceptualisation of security as a speech act. Both are challenged by the case of the October 2005 protests.

The Copenhagen School, operating within the Westphalian straitjacket, presupposes not only a democratic state, but also that society supports this form of governance. Without this assumption, Wæver's definition of securitization as a move that takes an issue out of the realm of normal politics[122] becomes problematic: what, after all, is "normal"? In Western terms, Kurmanbek Bakiev's refusal to make any statements before the conclusion of a formal investigation – i.e. to defer to due legal and constitutional process – would be seen as normal and proper. Indeed, one could argue that Bakiev's stance was in keeping with an attempt to address the situation within the bounds of "normal" political procedures. Yet in Kyrgyzstan it was not only highly unusual, but met with a great deal of public opprobrium, strengthening perceptions of the President and government as passive, incompetent and weak. Indeed, people's demands for extraordinary measures – implicitly meaning actions not sanctioned by the Constitution or existing legislation, such as the summary removal of people from their posts or arrest of suspected criminals in the absence of sufficient evidence – grew in parallel with perceptions of the degree of threat posed by Akmatbaev and his supporters and the government's helplessness to address it. From local perspectives, therefore, one could argue that securitization is the more "normal" form of politics. Although this line of argument does not lead directly to new theoretical insights or refinements, it does open up space for reflexive consideration of the subject of study, and paves the way for consideration of the limitations posed by the conceptualisation of security as a speech act that is at the heart of the Copenhagen School's framework.

This narrow ontological stance results in other expressions of "security" having to be mediated via words in order for them to be incorporated into the proposed framework, denying the direct and immediate expressiveness of physical actions. Thus, for example, protests only gain "security-ness" once a securitising actor has verbally interpreted them. Yet

[122] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 23-24.

few would argue that mass protests are not an expression of “security” concerns on the part of the protesters. Indeed, in the case of the pro-Kulov and “Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan without Criminals” protests, the form of expression was chosen due to the perceived inefficacy of verbal expressions; the protesters wanted visible and tangible physical actions, not speech-acts of any sort, be they legislative (such as Kulov’s decrees on measures to stabilise the socio-political situation in Bishkek) or assurances that the situation was being addressed by the government through its normal activities and procedures. For those involved in all the protests words were seen as empty and powerless on their own, leading to the choice of a form of expression that did not require explication and which was directly accessible to, and understandable by, all.

CHAPTER FOUR

SPATIAL SCALES OF SECURITIZATION: VIEWING SECURITY FROM BIRMINGHAM, BISHKEK & OSH

Distance has the same effect on the mind as on the eye.[1]

One of the things that had remained very noticeable since arriving in Bishkek in September 2005 was the disjuncture between what I was reading about events in Kyrgyzstan and what I was experiencing in Bishkek. To some extent this mismatch is inevitable and was certainly useful, permitting me to consider a wide range of interpretations of the socio-political situation in Kyrgyzstan and especially Bishkek. Nevertheless, I frequently found myself wondering about the partial coverage and particular agendas that seemed to be presented by various media outlets. The extent to which the described situation and my experiences of it did not match up was highlighted by the publication in December 2005 of the International Crisis Group's report "Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering State".[2] While based on local media sources, interviews and observations, the initial tone of the report sounded alarmist as I read it in a local café:

> Kyrgyzstan's post-revolution government lurches from crisis to crisis in the face of worsening political violence, prison revolts, serious property disputes and popular disillusion. There is a growing sense that it is barely less corrupt than its predecessor and perhaps less competent. The security services are slipping out of government control, raising the prospect of more chaos and criminality. If Kyrgyzstan is not to become a failed state whose fate reinforces the views of its neighbours that the path to stability lies not in dictatorship but in democracy, the U.S., European Union and other donors need to give the shaky government more political and financial backing. […] Otherwise, there is a real risk that the central government will lose control of institutions and territory, and the country will drift into irreversible criminality and permanent low-level violence.[3]

Undoubtedly, there was – and still is – cause to be concerned about Kyrgyzstan, and after the Akmatbaev protests few people felt optimistic about the country's short-term future. But wasn't it

[1] Samuel Johnson.
[2] International Crisis Group (2005b).
[3] International Crisis Group (2005b): i-ii .

too negative, not to mention polemical, to use terms like “faltering state” and “failed state”? And even if Kyrgyzstan was labelled a “failed state”, what did it mean for Kyrgyzstan’s inhabitants? After all, most people would still have to live there, so life would continue, however inconvenienced by political upheaval.

While these musings probably seem more relevant to the process of research rather than the final presentation, it is worth recounting them here. For, although Buzan and Wæver explicitly rejected the notion of “objective” criteria for assessing security perceptions in their exchange with McSweeney,[4] researchers seeking to apply securitization theory to empirical situations are often left trapped uncomfortably between ontologies with securitization’s "objective constructivism". As Eriksson explains, since ‘security’ is socially constructed, and the decision to invoke ‘security’ is a political, rather than analytical decision, “the role of the analyst cannot be to observe threats [as with ‘traditional’ realist security studies], but [is] to determine how, by whom, under what circumstances, and with what consequences some issues are classified as existential threats but not others.”[5] The problem is that “[i]t explicitly chooses, however, not to go all the way to a discursive, post-structuralist mode of analysis.”[6] This in turn, concludes Eriksson, creates an inherent contradiction: one can adopt a securitization perspective while at the same time ignoring one’s own responsibility for and role in shaping the security agenda.[7]

Reflecting upon the ‘who’ of security – who gets to speak security and to whom – it was increasingly apparent that one of the problems of any empirical study of ‘security’ is that securitization does not operate well across spatial scales and levels. What is deemed an existential threat on the international level, (for example, state failure), is not necessarily viewed the same way by local populations that have been living with a dysfunctional government and

[4] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (1997): 246. See also McSweeney, Bill (1996): 87.
[5] Eriksson, Johan (1999): 315.
[6] Eriksson, Johan (1999): 315.
[7] Eriksson, Johan (1999): 315.

state for a considerable time already. Indeed, in many ways, the further away the analyst is from the situation geographically, linguistically and culturally, the more straightforward it is to adopt a "securitization perspective" – that is, to apply securitization theory to a particular setting and situation. Wæver has asserted that one of the advantages of securitization is that it opens up the political and ethical implications of invoking 'security',[8] and that, although the actor makes the decision to designate something as an existential threat, "[t]his does not make analysts hostage to the self-understanding of actors for the duration of analysis".[9]

In theory both of these statements can be supported, but my attempts to maintain a cohesive "securitization perspective" on the situation in Kyrgyzstan highlighted certain empirical difficulties as I physically moved between locations during my fieldwork. As mentioned in chapter two, this reflected the changing nature of "the field" as it expanded and took on new qualities that were not solely spatial. It was also a reflection of the transitory and "freak" nature of the processes and events that were under investigation – there was no "normal" cultural or political background against which to compare the events of 2005 and 2006 in Kyrgyzstan,[10] making interpretation far more difficult even when I had as many sources of information as possible.

Crucially, in each of the three locations that I will discuss below – Birmingham in the UK, Bishkek and Osh in Kyrgyzstan – the "knowledge field", or, in other words, the information available that I could use to "make sense" of events differed greatly. In Bishkek and, to a lesser extent, in Osh, I could triangulate international and national accounts with local material in the form of interviews, observations and my own experiences. However, back in Birmingham for six

[8] Wæver, Ole (1999): 334.

[9] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 34.

[10] Malkki discusses this issue in relation to her experience of not being able to eye-witness events as they occurred, noting that she became dependent on "journalistic ways of knowing" and also realised that "it had a significant effect in forming [her] views and question about historical processes" in the region she was studying. Malkki, Liisa (1997) "News and Culture: Transitory Phenomena and the Fieldwork Tradition" in Gupta, Akhil & James Ferguson (eds) Anthropological locations: boundaries and grounds of a field science Berkley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press: 95

weeks in early 2006 and therefore lacking the experiential knowledge on which I had grown to depend, it was far more difficult to get a sense of how to interpret events. At a distance the analyst becomes, if not completely, then certainly to a large degree, hostage to the self-understandings – *or those understandings that are presented by various information sources* – of actors. In other words, one has little choice but to accept what actors are saying.

Working at one remove from events, I felt far less able to challenge narratives that jarred with my interpretations. I found myself reverting to a more orthodox securitization stance, merely observing actors' securitising moves as they were reported, rather than using securitization as a referent point for interpretive enquiry. The analytical utility of securitization theory seemed to be far greater when used at a distance, not least as issues of positionality seemed more distant; analysis was less personal, less contingent, more coherent and tidy, and, as a result more 'authoritative' and definite. At the same time, inevitably, I felt frustrated at not being able to compare and contrast the accounts I was reading, which seemed largely to be based on a continuing meta-narrative of Kyrgyzstan's existential insecurity in the wake of the March events of 2005, with my own first-hand experiences and interpretations. The Internet was invaluable for staying abreast of events, but it lacked sensory completeness, bringing to mind the analogy of the blind men and the elephant, where each man bases his conclusions solely on what part of the elephant he is touching.

Considering this apparent contradiction – that securitization theory is less problematic to utilise when at a greater distance from the event or situation being studied, positionality became far less a question of identity than of geography. Specifically, how does the researcher's physical location impact on analysis using securitization theory? As discussed in chapter three, one of the problems of attempting to engage with securitization theory empirically is that it does not travel well. However, here the obstacles are not just conceptual (the Westphalian straitjacket, the narrow focus on speech), but also the disjunctures and contradictions that occur when

securitization is operationalised on multiple spatial scales, reflecting the fragmented nature of the "security" field.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, orthodox securitization analysis creates what I have called *meta-narratives* of security. Such meta-narratives are formed from securitization narratives occurring within a specific setting, but, crucially, can exist *discretely* and *separately*. In this chapter, I argue that these meta-narratives are most persistent at the international level due to the absence of local knowledge that can effectively challenge it. Furthermore, there is the potential for them to become self-sustaining by drawing on “expert” knowledge for credibility rather than critical direct engagement with events on the ground. At the national level meta-narratives are less comprehensively sustainable, but the local context, as we shall see in the case of Osh and how residents viewed the Spring 2006 protest season in Bishkek, still exerts a powerful influence. Finally, at the local level, meta-narratives show considerable fragility and are often difficult for securitising actors to sustain beyond the short term.

This chapter will explore these processes on their respective levels in relation to events surrounding the Spring 2006 protest season, and specifically two large scale protests that took place in Bishkek on 29 April and 27 May respectively. Following a brief discussion of the locations of my fieldwork in the first half of 2006, I provide an overview of the international (from Birmingham) and national perspectives (from Osh) on events happening in Kyrgyzstan, and specifically in Bishkek, between January and June 2006. These meta-narratives are then contrasted with a detailed case study of two key protests held in Bishkek that I attended. Despite the persistence of securitizing meta-narratives internationally and nationally, I argue that the Spring 2005 protest season resulted in the collapse of the Opposition’s securitising moves, representing an unintended but *de facto* desecuritization of protests as an expression of “security” on the local non-elite level.

In contrast to the Akmatbaev protests discussed in chapter three where actions replaced speech acts as the dominant mode of expression, the April and May 2006 protests illustrate that the study of actions *per se* is not any more an effective way to consider expressions of "security" issues than are speech acts, since an actor's words and actions may present increasingly contradictory narratives. In this case, the April protest demonstrates that what securitising actors say should be weighed carefully against how they behave to avoid exaggerating the "security-ness" of a situation – a common feature of pre-existing meta-narratives, as illustrated by many accounts of security in Central Asia for example. The subsequent May protest further highlights the necessity of examining both words and actions and, most crucially, their interrelationships on multiple levels: in this case actions undermined a local-level conventional speech-based securitising move. The inconsistencies evident between words and actions rendered it unsustainable in the eyes of local audiences, but the rhetoric of securitization persisted as a meta-narrative outside of Bishkek and internationally, despite possessing little resonance with local understandings and interpretations of events.

1. Spring 2006: Three Perspectives

After four months in Bishkek, I returned to the UK in mid-January 2006. My original reasons for planning my fieldwork this way were a combination of wanting to avoid being in Bishkek if fuel cuts or shortages occurred,[11] leaving apartments either unheated or at best partially heated with temperatures potentially as low as -25°C, and knowing that after four months I would want a break from dealing with an environment that often felt if not outrightly hostile, certainly not

[11] As was my experience in December 2000-January 2001, when Uzbekistan temporarily stopped supplying gas to Kyrgyzstan due to a payment dispute and then a pipeline accident. See *GlobalSecurity.org* (2005) "Kyrgyzstan Military Guide: Energy", http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/centralasia/kyrgyz-energy.htm [last accessed 18.12.2008].

friendly and comfortable.[12] Moreover, from a logistical perspective, January was not the ideal time to attempt relocating to Osh either by car or by plane due to the freezing weather conditions. It was with these 'justifications' in mind that I arranged to return at the end of March 2006 to spend three months based in Osh.

Although my concerns about fuel problems turned out to be unfounded, the break from being 'in the thick of it' was extremely beneficial, providing a change of perspective and a chance to reflect upon the previous months without the pressure of needing to react immediately to new events. At the same time, I was surprised to find myself painfully aware of not being there and wanting to know what was happening in 'real time' as far as possible. Yet as I trawled through the Internet, I was struck by the relative homogeneity of the presentations of the socio-political situation in Kyrgyzstan that I was reading. It was rare to read anything from English and Russian sources, including academic ones, that did not conform with the verdict of ICG's December report. Indeed, as is discussed in the following section, *Eurasianet*'s initial coverage of ICG's report accurately summarised the general plot of the international securitising meta-narrative in relation to Kyrgyzstan over the following six months: "Some international experts are concerned that Kyrgyzstan is in danger of being caught in a downward spiral".[13]

I returned to Bishkek at the end of March, a couple of days after the one year anniversary of the "People's Revolution" as the government dubbed it. Spending just a couple of days in Bishkek while making final arrangements to fly to Osh was enough to make me more aware of the different narratives operating on separate spatial scales. A friend talked excitedly about how she and other members of her NGO were going to take part in a forthcoming "peaceful march"

[12] This is certainly not to imply that many of the people I met and with whom I spent time in Bishkek were not friendly and incredibly hospitable. The discomfort I felt was very much due to my own awareness of often not complying or having to consciously conform with social norms and conventions, as discussed in chapter two.

[13] *Eurasianet* (2005) "Rampant Corruption Makes Kyrgyzstan a 'Faltering State'", 21.12.2005, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav122105.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].

scheduled for 8 April, and rather than being a state of crisis, as I might have expected based on my reading material for the previous two months, there was sense of there being the potential for positive change that had been noticeably absent in the wake of the October 2005 protests. The question that remained for me, therefore, was what impressions I would form of events when based in Kyrgyzstan's southern capital, Osh, which I had frequently been told was the "real" Kyrgyzstan. Would it confirm or refute my impressions and interpretations so far? What would the implications for securitization theory be if it seemed that different narratives of threat were being simultaneously expressed in different locations?

1.i. Back in Birmingham: An International Perspective on Kyrgyzstan

This section provides an overview of the main themes and overall tone of "international" coverage of events in Kyrgyzstan between late December 2005 and June 2006. In practice, it charts the persistent continuation of an English-language, largely "expert"-generated securitising meta-narrative of Kyrgyzstan being in a state of existential crisis that, if not addressed, could result in the country being classed a "failed state". Subsequently it will be compared and contrasted with the accounts and meta-narratives present in Osh (representing the non-Bishkek, or national view) and Bishkek (local perspectives) in order to demonstrate how the meta-narrative of Kyrgyzstan in crisis was increasingly stable and difficult to challenge the further away one was from Bishkek. Yet in the capital there was much evidence to suggest that the crisis was not as severe or all-encompassing as people outside of Kyrgyzstan or even outside Bishkek thought. Despite protests still being seen as a symbol of crisis in the international media and in Osh, their meaning for people in Bishkek was changing. Rather than being viewed as a call for immediate and urgent action, protests began to be seen in more benign terms as an entertainment than an expression of security concerns. Away from Bishkek, however, this

change of interpretation was not generally noticed, allowing the meta-narrative of crisis to continue to dominate perceptions of Kyrgyzstan's socio-political situation.

The meta-narrative began forming as early as June 2005, when Canadian analyst Charles McMillan asked rhetorically if the March events meant Kyrgyzstan was a "Failed State or Democratic Revolution?"[14] ICG's use of the term "faltering" to describe the Kyrgyz state in December of the same year caught analysts' imaginations in January 2006, fuelled by incidents that many were quick to link to Kyrgyzstan's impending collapse as a sovereign state. *Eurasianet* opened with an article entitled "Kyrgyzstan Appears Set for Continued Uncertainty in 2006", listing problems ranging from corruption, organised crime and "simmering" regional tensions to "an intensification of an already evident geopolitical struggle between the United States and Russia."[15] The same day, Erica Marat discussed a number of incidents involving Kyrgyz and Uzbek citizens and border guards in December 2005, asserting that these incidents were "indicative of Bishkek's weak control over law-enforcement agencies, as well as the protracted economic crisis in southern Kyrgyzstan".[16]

Despite this inauspicious start to reporting on Kyrgyzstan in 2006, which seemed only to continue the crisis thematic that had featured for much of the eight months since March 2005, there were some signs that certain commentators were trying to take a fresh view. In particular, Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) avoided alarmist statements in their coverage, possibly reflecting the then-Country Director's stated aim of "making sure that local voices are heard on the international level", in contrast to much international coverage, whereby "some

[14] McMillan, Charles J. (2005) "Kyrgyzstan – Failed State or Democratic Revolution?", *Policy Options* 26(5), June 2005: 43-46.
[15] Schimdle, Nicholas (2006) "Kyrgyzstan Appears Set for Continued Uncertainty in 2006", *Eurasianet,* 03.01.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav010306.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[16] Marat, Erica (2006) "Kyrgyz Government Unable to Regulate Crossings Along Border with Uzbekistan", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 03.01.2006, http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2370621 [last accessed 17.10.2008].

correspondent or other comes in from abroad, spends two or three days in the Hyatt, files his report and quickly leaves."[17] IWPR's opening coverage of Kyrgyzstan recognised the disjuncture between words and potential actions in the subheading to Orozbekova's article "Calls for a Second Revolution in Kyrgyzstan": "Tough talk from the new revolutionaries, but can they deliver?"[18] Similarly, IWPR maintained a distinctly moderate tone reporting the murder of Raatbek Sanatbaev, a wrestler and prospective candidate for the chairmanship of the Kyrgyz Olympic Committee, on 8 January. Commenting that "discontent is high over the government's inability to root out organised crime figures and their insidious connections with business and politics", IWPR was careful to provide specific contextual details: in addition to mentioning the links between business and crime, it was noted that it was the third death linked to the Olympic Committee in several months[19] – a detail that suggested that the murder was the result of in-fighting with limited consequences, rather than a further sign of the state's imminent collapse. In contrast, Anara Tabyshalieva preferred to situate the murder firmly within the dominant discourse of post-March 2005 crisis. Sanatbaev was "the ninth victim of contract killings of public figures since the March upheavals", providing further evidence that "mass political violence in 2006 could destabilize the fragile situation in the country and bring criminal bosses and their representatives to power" if the government and international actors failed to address the situation.[20]

Although there were a couple of authors who attempted to challenge the dominant international securitising meta-narrative, as will be discussed further on in this section, the line

[17] Interview with Country Director of IWPR, Bishkek, 06.12.2005.
[18] Orozbekova, Cholpon (2006) "Calls for a Second Revolution in Kyrgyzstan", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* No. 429, 09.01.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=258921&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[19] Saralaeva, Leila (2006) "Unsportsmanlike Behaviour in Kyrgyzstan", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 430, 12.01.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=258957&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[20] Tabyshalieva, Anara (2006) "Political Violence on the Rise in Kyrgyzstan", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst,* 7(2), 25.01.2006: 3.

taken was remarkably consistent overall. Even IWPR's efforts to take a neutral stance and allow readers to draw their own conclusions were challenged by the opinions voiced by their interviewees, who often endorsed the international meta-narrative rather than offer any alternative views, as Jalil Saparov's article on the dismissal of Jusup Jeenbekov, then governor of Jalalabad Oblast, illustrates:

> But is this merely a local dispute or is it, as some believe, the latest sign that Kyrgyzstan is in deep crisis?
>
> Edil Baisalov, head of the NGO Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, takes the latter view. "This situation needs to be seen as unpredictable and unstable," he told IWPR. "Clearly, the political situation in Kyrgyzstan at the moment is much more dangerous than it was at the beginning of 2005."[21]

The publication of national elites' views in international fora – as with Edil Baisalov's comments above – both reinforced the international meta-narrative that had formed and obscured the disjunctures between local "non-expert" interpretations and those of non-local (geographically, if not by nationality) "expert" commentators, lending credence to the international meta-narrative sometimes at the expense of critical consideration of events. For example, at the end of January, in an authorless article about efforts led by Prime Minister Feliks Kulov to dismiss the head of the National Security Service and his deputy due to corruption allegations, *Eurasianet* cited warnings from unidentified parliamentary deputies that "Kyrgyzstan is at risk of becoming a failed state unless President Kurmanbek Bakiyev takes immediate steps to address governmental dysfunction."[22] There is no reason to doubt that some deputies really did think this, but what of other opinions? In the absence of access to other information on which to base one's interpretations, political commentator Nur Omarov's comment that the conflict

[21] Saparov, Jalil (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: Trouble Down South", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 431, 23.01.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=259119&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[22] *Eurasianet* (2005) "Political Showdown Brews in Kyrgyzstan", 27.01.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav012706a.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].

between the Prime Minister and the head of the National Security Service "is damaging the state as a whole, and only strengthens the image of Kyrgyzstan as an unreliable, criminal and scandal-ridden country"[23] was extremely apt: outward appearances, often having more basis in stereotype and fitting with existing accepted opinion, formed the basis for the mainstream international view of Kyrgyzstan. Significantly, as Pannier observed in relation to comments by US National Intelligence Director John Negroponte, "[i]ncreasingly international commentators have linked domestic instability and upheaval in Central Asian countries to more global threats", quoting Negoponte's statement that

> In the worst, but not implausible case, central authority in one or more of these states [in Central Asia] could evaporate as rival clans or regions vie for power, opening the door to an expansion of terrorist and criminal activity on the model of failed states like Somalia and, when it was under Taliban rule, Afghanistan.[24]

Returning to focus on the Kyrgyzstan-specific securitising meta-narrative, Pannier concluded that "[m]any analysts now consider Kyrgyzstan the least stable country in a volatile region."[25]

February saw the return of one further stereotype in the international discourse, which added a further plot to the narrative of threat and danger posed by post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan: ethnic conflict. As discussed in chapter one, the potential for interethnic violence in the Central Asian republics has been a recurrent theme since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Kyrgyzstan, 1990's Osh events continue to inform attitudes towards interethnic relations. Thus, while the "Tulip revolution" and its aftermath had temporarily moved commentators' attention away from ethnicity, it returned as a motif following a brawl between two gangs of teenagers in the village of Iskra, some 70km east of Bishkek.

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[23] Saralaeva, Leila (2006) "Crime Fighters Fall Out in Central Asia", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 432, 28.01.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=259224&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[24] Pannier, Bruce (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: President Warns Parliament Over 'Course of Confrontation'", *Eurasianet,* 04.02.2006 http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp020406.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[25] Pannier, Bruce (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: President Warns Parliament Over 'Course of Confrontation'".

The incident in the first week of February, which rapidly escalated to the point that many Dungan families fled their homes fearing further reprisals,[26] was frequently described in "ethnic" terms, despite mention (if not discussion) of pre-existing socio-economic tensions by authors. *RFE/RL* presented coverage under the title "Tensions Ease After Ethnic Violence in Northern Kyrgyzstan",[27] while *Eurasianet* asserted that "[r]ecent interethnic unrest in Kyrgyzstan has local observers worrying that prolonged economic and political uncertainty is ripping apart the country's delicate social fabric."[28] Despite the welcome fact that the role of long-term underlying socio-economic tensions was considered in several articles, the implication that the outbreak of "interethnic" conflict was a further sign of crisis was difficult to ignore, even in more scholarly publications. *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* carefully avoided reference to 'ethnic conflict' in the headline of Erica Marat's report, "Teenage fight sparks violence between Dungan and Kyrgyz villagers",[29] but subsequently focused on providing a brief ethnography of the Dungans and reactions to the clash in Bishkek, where many people, apparently, "rushed to compare Kyrgyz-Dungan tensions with the Kyrgyz-Uzbek conflict in the early 1990s in southern Kyrgyzstan". Significantly, even when the underlying socio-economic issues were explicitly considered, as Marat went on to do, the ethnic dimension loomed large, especially in light of public comments by some local officials, such as Vice-Prime Minister Adakhan Madumarov, who was frank about the perceived link between socio-economic issues and ethnicity during a TV interview, stating that "[i]t is not a secret that Uzbeks, Uyghurs, Dungans are more enterprising people than

[26] Dungans are Muslims of Chinese, or more specifically Hui, extraction. Orozbekova, Cholpon (2006) "Government Intervenes After Kyrgyz Village Violence", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 434, 10.02.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=259499&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[27] Pannier, Bruce (2006) "Tensions Ease After Ethnic Violence in Northern Kyrgyzstan", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,* 06.02.2006, http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1065480.html [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[28] *Eurasianet* (2006) "Interethnic clash causes Kyrgyzstan's 'common home' to tremble", 16.02.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav021606.shtml [last accessed 18.10.2008].
[29] Marat, Erica (2006) "Teenage fight sparks violence between Dungan and Kyrgyz villagers", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst,* 7(3), 08.02.2006, http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3726 [last accessed 02.12.2008].

Kyrgyz".[30] The overall effect was that, despite Feliks Kulov's timely reminder that "If one person hits another, that doesn't mean it has to turn into an interethnic conflict,"[31] the portrayal of the gang brawl and subsequent feud added a further strand to the international securitising meta-narrative of Kyrgyzstan in crisis: "interethnic conflict" could be added to the list of problems facing Kyrgyzstan, and, even if analysts examined the situation more closely, the fact that long-standing socio-economic problems had not been resolved and had spilled over into violence was in itself cause for increased alarm.

In addition to the renewed focus on potential ethnic violence, February saw the narrative of state crisis continue largely unabated with a series of stormy exchanges between the President and the Jogorku Kenesh, which resulted in the Speaker, Omurbek Tekebaev, resigning on 8 February after remarking that President Bakiev "should hang himself" as the last honourable action he could take.[32] Reporting what had happened and its implications, analysts focused on the government's denial of a state of crisis and opinions to the contrary. *IWPR* cited political analyst Aleksandr Knyazev, author of *The Coup d'Etat of 24 March 2005 in Kirghizia,* who saw the dispute between Tekebaev and Bakiev as "an external manifestation of a more profound crisis".[33] International commentators echoed this opinion. *RFE/RL*'s Daniel Kimmage concluded that since March 2005, the atmosphere had been one "of tenuous calm punctuated by high-profile killings and flaring political tensions. In recent weeks the strains within the ruling elite have increased to a level suggestive of systemic crisis."[34] Meanwhile, Erica Marat's

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[30] *IRINnews* (2006) "KYRGYZSTAN: Economic disparities driving inter-ethnic conflict", via *globalsecurity.org,* 15.02.2006, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2006/02/mil-060215-irin02.htm [last accessed 17.12.2008].

[31] Orozbekova, Cholpon (2006) "Government Intervenes After Kyrgyz Village Violence".

[32] Saralaeva, Leila (2006) "Kyrgyz Speaker Resigns in Row with President", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 435, 15.02.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=259587&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].

[33] Saralaeva, Leila (2006) "Kyrgyz Speaker Resigns in Row with President".

[34] Kimmage, Daniel (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: Hardball Politics With No Winners", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,* 20.02.2006, http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1065964.html [last accessed 17.10.2008].

conclusion towards the end of the month reflected the continued strength of the international securitizing meta-narrative that was shaping perceptions of Kyrgyzstan:

> Today in Kyrgyzstan the state is not only undergoing a political crisis, but Kyrgyz society is suffering from an ideological void. In this environment, out-migration of Russian [sic] has increased, several inter-ethnic clashes have unraveled [sic] in Kyrgyz villages, and neo-nationalist feelings are on the rise.[35]

The following month, March, two events were the subject of particular international attention. The first was the first anniversary of the 2005 March events. Reviewing the previous year, emphasis was on what had or had not actually changed in Kyrgyzstan, as well as the government's efforts to promote 24 March as Day of the People's Revolution. The vast majority of coverage was negative, citing details from "normal" people's lives and their fears, such as those of Daniel Matkasymov, who was interviewed by the BBC:

> Some politicians say that the Kyrgyz people are approaching a crisis. I'm afraid of tribalism and divisions. Kyrgyzstan is not united, there are divisions between north and south, between various tribes. Some people talk about civil war.
>
> And I have other fears. We all sense an invisible power hiding under the water, behind government. We fear that there is a third force at work in the country.
>
> Some people say the ex-president and his allies are working to de-stabilise things. Others say it is a mafia allied to him. There are people hungry for power out there. Stability may not last long.[36]

The inclusion of local people's views lent further weight to the international notion of Kyrgyzstan's existential crisis and increased its pervasiveness. Now, it appeared that the international view was consistent with that of local people, further reducing opportunities to challenge the crisis narrative as alternative perspectives were all but silenced. The apparent

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[35] Marat, Erica (2006) "Kyrgyz Government Unable to Produce New National Ideology", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst,* 7(4), 22.02.2006, http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/126 [last accessed 21.10.2008].
[36] *BBC* (2006) "One year on: Daniel Matkasymov", 17.03.2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4802822.stm [last accessed 17.10.2008].

bridging of international and local interpretations of events was exemplified in an op-ed piece by the U.S. Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic, Marie Jovanovich, that was published on the NGO resource website *Development Gateway*:

> Around the country, people have painted a grim picture for me: prices increasing, while wages and employment opportunities mostly remain the same. Corruption runs rampant and gangsters are intimidating the Parliament -- and now even running for Parliament. Many Kyrgyz are concerned that ethnic tension is on the rise.[37]

Many commentators' examinations of events since March 2005 represented the consolidation of the international meta-narrative from securitizing to securitised. One year after the storming of the White House in Bishkek, there were few positive evaluations of the "revolution" by analysts, with some portraying it as a catastrophe. Aleksandr Knyazev commenced his newly published book with the contentious statement that "[t]he March events destroyed the most democratic country that ever existed in the Central Asian region".[38] Internationally, analysts were no longer talking about *possible* crisis; it was widely accepted that Kyrgyzstan was in a state of crisis following "the most violent" of the colour revolutions,[39] which was, as Askar Akaev pointed out, being described with increasing frequency as something closer to a coup d'etat than a popular revolution.[40]

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[37] Yovanovich, Marie L. (2006) "Ambassadors [sic] Op-Ed on One Year Anniversary of 24 March "Tulip Revolution"", *Kyrgyzstan Development Gateway,* 28.03.2006, http://eng.gateway.kg/news/kyrgyzstan/society/632 [last accessed 23.10.2008].

[38] Knyazev, Aleksandr (2006): 7. This quotation also featured in an article in *Central Asian-Caucasus Analyst* (Baltabaeva, Aida (2006) "Disputes about the role of the March 24 events aired in Kyrgyzstan", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst,* 8(5), 22.03.2006, http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3842 [last accessed 22.10.2008]), providing another example of how the international security meta-narrative was reinforced using selected material from local (geographically and/or in terms of the source's citizenship) sources.

[39] Pannier, Bruce (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: First Anniversary of Akaev's Ouster Marked", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,* 25.03.2006, http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1067071.html [last accessed 17.10.2008].

[40] Panfilova, Viktoriya (2006) "Askar Akaev: revolyutsiya glazami eks-prezidenta" ["Aksar Akaev: Revolution through the eyes of the Ex-President"], *Nezavisimaya gazeta,* 21.03.2006, http://www.ng.ru/ideas/2006-03-21/1_akaev.html [last accessed 12.12.2008].

By the time I returned to Bishkek at the end of March, the international view of Kyrgyzstan as a failing state seemed to be fixed. This impression was further confirmed by the release of the Fund for Peace's 2006 *Failed State Index* in May, in which Kyrgyzstan was placed 28th – the last country in the 'warning' category.[41] Whilst trying to remain abreast of events and their possible meanings between January and the end of March 2005, it became apparent that there were two important cross-level dynamics that required consideration in relation to the different meta-narratives and how they sustained themselves. Firstly – and understandably given the relative international obscurity of the region – the roll of names providing published analyses of events in Kyrgyzstan was (and largely still is) very limited, with the same authors appearing on a regular basis. Although this phenomenon is not in itself undesirable, it was not entirely welcome to be able to predict with reasonable accuracy the content of coverage based on the combination of publisher, author and, where applicable, the local expert quoted in the piece. In the absence of references or biographical details, some authors' authority and credibility was seemingly founded more on the authenticity afforded them by their recognisably Kyrgyz/Central Asian names. Ironically, given the frequent dismissal of the role of prior and experiential knowledge for socio-political analysis by many practitioners, in this case the *presumed* experiential knowledge apparently implied by a nominally 'local' name created "instant authenticity" for western publications and readers alike.[42] I found this problematic, knowing that at least one author has lived primarily in the US for several years and having no biographical information about others. Especially where their accounts differed markedly from what I had seen at protests, I wondered if I had cause to doubt whether they actually witnessed the events

[41] See http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=104&Itemid=324 [last accessed 23.12.2008].
[42] Field reports published in *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* and articles in the Jamestown Foundation's *Eurasia Daily Monitor* are generally published with few, if any, references to sources of information and the biographical information provided about author is at best minimal and often absent entirely.

about which they wrote.[43] It seemed that rather than serving to challenge or supplement the international meta-narrative of Kyrgyzstan, these "local" authors merely provided an additional source of legitimacy that further fixed it.

The notion that the international securitising meta-narrative exists separately not only theoretically, but also spatially insofar as it is created outside of Kyrgyzstan on the basis of published media accounts in Russian and Kyrgyz that are not accessible to most English-speaking readers is, as is often the case, by two notable exceptions to the rule: firstly, Tom Wood challenged the conventional perception that organised crime posed an existential threat to Kyrgyzstan in the face of government helplessness:

> Organized crime in politics is nothing new in Kyrgyzstan, however, and dates far back into the Akayev era. What is new is the unravelling of deals once held between major criminal groups and the former regime; much of the recent violence is related to mafia families settling internal disputes and jockeying for position.
>
> While such fights are more visible amidst the greater transparency of post-revolutionary Kyrgyzstan, they do not represent a sudden upsurge when seen as part of a larger trend. Nor are they a threat to the state, as the ease with which the authorities suppressed a recent series of mafia-inspired jailhouse protests demonstrates.[44]

While this interpretation is certainly not positive, it does highlight the importance of not forgetting to consider the context in which processes take place and resisting the temptation to leap to snap interpretations.

Secondly, as noted earlier, there was a consistently more measured, less definitive tone taken by IWPR in comparison to other "international" analytical sources.[45] This stance was exemplified by Kumar Bekbolotov in an article for IWPR that strongly challenged the prevalent international narrative about Kyrgyzstan. Writing at the beginning of February 2006, he offered a

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[43] I originally wrote about the discrepancies in some reporting of the April and May protests on the *neweurasia Kyrgyzstan* blog: CXW (2006) "Problematic Protest Reporting", *Kyrgyzstan.neweurasia.net* 07.06.2006, http://kyrgyzstan.neweurasia.net/2006/06/07/problematic-protest-reportage/ [last accessed 01.01.2009].

[44] Wood, Tom (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: Too Early to Pass Judgement on Revolution", *Eurasianet,* 20.01.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav012006.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].

[45] *Eurasianet, RFE/RL, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst.*

far more nuanced and reflective analysis of the situation that recognised the poor socio-political state of affairs, but drew quite different conclusions from most analysts:

> Turning to the potential for violent political conflict, that actually seems unlikely given the current picture of multipolar power, since the very existence of numerous centres of influence make concession more of a possibility. When no one political grouping has sufficient power to dictate its own conditions on the rest, the mechanism of compromise and agreement naturally comes into play. […]
>
> It thus seems more appropriate to see these conflicts as the unavoidable, and even positive, concomitants of social change. They are inevitable because destroying existing institutions of power to create more democratic ones always entails a re-examination of values, a division of spheres of influence, and the loss of a degree of effectiveness. The positive aspect is that people in Kyrgyzstan are learning the art of living in a situation in which multiple interests collide.[46]

Many would likely argue that this is merely finding a silver lining amongst the chaos, but few could refute his argument that "[i]n a society striving for democratic forms of government, any conflict of interest will take centre stage. But it is important to remember that even the most extreme conflict of interest does not by itself mean bloodshed, and bloodshed does not mean war."[47]

In the case of both exceptions, it was notable that the authors were Bishkek-based but writing primarily for an international audience.[48] In contrast to the analyses presented by "local" but non-Kyrgyzstan-based experts, which created and maintained the international securitising meta-narrative, these two articles (and, to some extent, IWPR's coverage more generally) presented local-level critiques of the international meta-narrative and, implicitly, its reliance on pre-existing "expert knowledge". Once I arrived in Bishkek and then Osh, I continued to come across further indications that the version of events presented in the international security meta-

[46] Bekbolotov, Kumar (2006) "End of the Beginning in Kyrgyzstan", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 434, 10.02.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=259497&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[47] Bekbolotov, Kumar (2006) "End of the Beginning in Kyrgyzstan".
[48] Tom Wood was Kyrgyzstan programme director for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). His views expressed in the article do not necessarily reflect those of IFES.

narrative was a very partial and situated interpretation not only of events, but also of Kyrgyzstani society.

1.ii. In Osh: The View from the South

Having spent four days in Bishkek, I flew to Osh on 31 March 2006. I spent the first few days exploring and meeting up with various acquaintances and contacts to help orientate myself. Most significant – and reassuring – for me was the fact that it was possible to communicate with the vast majority of people in Russian, contrary to the impression I had been given in Bishkek. Undoubtedly it would have been beneficial to speak Kyrgyz and/or Uzbek on occasion, but the benefits were far outweighed by the range of people for whom Russian acted as a lingua franca.

In many ways the city was less different from Bishkek than I had been led to believe, especially in terms of the people. At the same time, my awareness of Osh's distance from the north of the country, the imposing mountain ranges that separated the north and south of Kyrgyzstan and the proximity of the border with Uzbekistan made it feel geographically remote and disconnected from the rest of the country. This sense was borne out as I began searching for news sources: of the four or five television and radio stations I could fuzzily receive, only one TV channel was solely Russian-language (the Russian RTR), with the others broadcasting in Uzbek or Kyrgyz, with occasional programmes in Russian. Access to the Internet was possible, but frequently slow or curtailed prematurely by power cuts – and contained little coverage of happenings in Osh.

In Bishkek I had chosen to focus on print media, and intended to do the same in Osh. However, there were far fewer newspapers available in the southern capital. Often copies of newspapers from Bishkek appeared on vendors' stalls several days to a week after publication. After a few days of searching, I found that there were two local Russian-language newspapers:

the government-owned *Ekho Osha* and the privately-owned independent *Itogi nedeli*, both of which were published weekly. Both newspapers were normally available, but I rarely saw people reading them – possibly due to preferences for Uzbek- or Kyrgyz-language media or the cost.[49]

In addition, there was a sense of there being a lack of reliable locally-produced information.[50] People were mistrustful of media outlets, seeing them as having their own agenda to promote. In these circumstances, it was very much a question of keeping an open mind and an open ear. Talking to people, I gained the impression that word of mouth functioned as an important source of information for many people, a view supported by the results of the question I added to the social survey I arranged to be carried out: 22.4 percent of respondents said that they got news from sources other than (but often including) TV, newspaper, radio and the Internet, with 19.4 percent indicating that family, friends, colleagues, university or "rumours" were a news source for them.[51]

The centrality of word of mouth for disseminating news about events highlighted the influence of pre-existing local knowledge on the local securitising meta-narratives about events in the country. Interestingly, there was an overlap between elements of the international meta-narrative and local people's perceptions insofar as there was frequent reference to the potential for ethnic conflict. However, there was significant divergence between local opinions about what was happening in Bishkek and how Osh was perceived to view the events by international commentators. In March 2005 southerners were portrayed as the driving force of the protests that eventually drove Askar Akaev to flee. The idea of the south as a "hotbed" of revolutionary

[49] 47.0 percent of social survey respondents said that newspapers were a source of news for them. However, this option was usually chosen in combination with other news sources. See appendix 3 for full details.

[50] One Peace Corps Volunteer told me that the NGO where he worked had arranged for a copy of *Vechernii Bishkek* to be sent to Osh every day. Personal conversation, 05.05.2006.

[51] n = 253. Within this 19.3 percent, 11.1 percent specified "friends", 2.0 percent specified "family", 7.1 percent specified "university" or "colleagues" and 2.4 percent specified "rumours", "gossip". Multiple responses were possible. See appendix three.

discontent and potential violence was subsumed into the narrative of conflict potential in the Ferghana valley that has existed since the late 1980s and early 1990s following interethnic clashes in Uzbek and Kyrgyz areas of the valley, often obscuring local voices who actively wanted peace rather than conforming to the international stereotype of sabre-rattling and fractious southerners. One unusually tangible sign of the desire for peace and stability amongst Osh's residents, in contrast to the frequent but fleeting comments I heard on the street whenever there was news of the political situation in Bishkek, was a sign reading "We're for Peace" that appeared on a wall outside a clinic on ulitsa Kurmanjan Datka behind the oblast administrative building (figure 4.1). No-one appeared to know anything about its origins when I asked, but the sign remained in place for several days and those I questioned about it apparently saw no need for further explanation, answering me only with a quizzical look.

Figure 4.1: Handmade sign reading "We're for Peace", 121 ulitsa Kurmanjan Datka, Osh, 26.04.2006. The sign remained up for several days.

At the same time, the prominence of the "Osh events" in local people's discourses about the danger of continued protests and unrest was immediately noticeable. Several people to whom I spoke referred to rumours that Uzbeks (if the speaker was Kyrgyz) or Kyrgyz (if the speaker was Uzbek), or both (if the speaker was of a different ethnicity) were stockpiling weapons in case tensions escalated.[52] Nonetheless, many Osh residents were keen to point out that it was "those in the north" who were causing instability by continuing to push their own agenda despite the risks.[53] The south, I was told, in contrast to the north, was multinational and people knew how to coexist.[54] Despite local Opposition members occasionally trying to hold protests, their actions found little much support amongst a population suffering from protest fatigue and disillusionment with the "Tulip revolution", fearful of further destabilisation and its possible consequences.[55]

In contrast to the international security meta-narrative of Kyrgyzstan in crisis that saw the south as a problem that was likely to be exacerbated, the dominant securitising meta-narrative in Osh during spring 2006 was one of protests and "those in the capital" threatening the lives and wellbeing of the Kyrgyzstani population with rash actions and crude attempts to defend their interests. Moreover, those taking part in the protests were not necessarily condemned, but their participation was viewed as foolish and misguided. A local female politician explained:

> those who keep on calling people to protest, calling people to be against the authorities, against the President who was elected by the people, it's still obvious that they want to fulfil their personal ambitions. That's their main aim. And I think that all the people see that. I don't think they'll be able to deceive the people, but some people are mistaken, they're just

[52] Personal interviews, Dom druzhby, Osh, 22.05.2006 and 24.05.2006.
[53] Interview with local female politician at the filming of an episode of *Ploshadka vstrech* [*Square of Meetings*], a TV programme introduced by the local authorities as a forum for people to express their opinions on anything they wished to. Osh, 26.05.2006.
[54] Interview with members of the Youth NGO Golden-Goal, Osh, 20.04.2006.
[55] *BBC* (2006) "One year on: Daniel Matkasymov".

> thinking "oh, it's a peaceful march, it's like a public holiday"… Our people mustn't make mistakes like this.[56]

This narrative drew additional legitimacy from people's memories of the Osh events – and more recently the Andijan massacre of May 2005, which affected many locals' families. The end result was a very strongly localized meta-narrative that incorporated ongoing events as a source of threat, and which portrayed the Kyrgyzstani population outside Bishkek as more rational, less hotheaded and as not being dangerously politicised. After three weeks of relative peace and quiet in Osh, I did wonder for a moment if it was wise to go to Bishkek for the second mass protest of the spring, which was scheduled for 29 April, as I booked my plane ticket. At the same time, my awareness of the extreme situatedness of my impressions and interpretations gained in Birmingham and Osh meant that I wanted to be present at the protest in order to be more fully able to interpret it.

2. The Spring 2006 Protest Season

While 2006 saw a significant reduction in the number of public protests, it also saw the political opposition lend weight to the protestocracy phenomenon as it took up the tactic of mass rallies and protests, first used on 29 October of the previous year to demand immediate action from the government to prevent the criminalisation of the country and safe-guard the President-Prime Minister tandem of Kurmanbek Bakiev and Feliks Kulov.[57] One particular cause for concern

[56] Interview with local female politician at the filming of an episode of *Ploshadka vstrech* [*Square of Meetings*], a TV programme introduced by the local authorities as a forum for people to express their opinions on anything they wished to. Osh, 26.05.2006.

[57] Kurmanbek Bakiev stood for president on a joint ticket with Feliks Kulov as his nominated prime minister in the July 2005 elections and was elected with a landslide majority of more than 88 percent of the vote. The tandem was widely supported as it was seen as a guarantee of unity and balance between the north and south of the country due to the partnership of the southerner Bakiev with the northern

locally, nationally and internationally was the activities of Ryspek Akmatbaev, instigator of the October 2005 protests. Following the death of his brother in October 2005,[58] Ryspek made good his intention to stand for election as a replacement Jogorku Kenesh deputy. His efforts, however, were thwarted by the Central Election Committee on 30 March 2006, when it was ruled that he was ineligible to stand due to not meeting residency requirements.[59] The decision, however, brought Akmatbaev's supporters out onto the streets of the town of Balykchy and later Bishkek with demands for Akmatbaev's reinstatement and the resignation of Feliks Kulov.[60] *Eurasianet* reported that many businesses in the capital shut up shop to minimise the risk of looting.[61] Meanwhile, the authorities responded to the marchers by deploying riot troops and cordoning off streets, causing fears that violence could erupt.[62] However, Bakiev defused the situation when he come and spoke directly with protestors, after which they ended their protest.[63]

This sequence of events, particularly given Bakiev's criticism of his government's choice to "go into crisis mode" rather than talk with Akmatbaev,[64] was enough to increase unease about possible links between criminals and politicians in the wake of the October protests in all quarters, but not outright condemnation. The announcement of Akmatbaev's reinstatement as a candidate in the by-election on 3 April provoked international outcry, not least as the parallels with the October 2005 protests and March events of 2005 were unmistakable. *Eurasianet* observed that Russia appeared to have been "unnerved" by the news and quoted comments by

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"people's general" Kulov. Until the tandem was announced there was concern that rivalries between supporters of the two politicians could further destabilise the country and lead to violence.

[58] See chapter three for full details of Tynychbek Akmatbaev's murder and the protests that Ryspek Akmatbaev subsequently held in Bishkek.

[59] *Eurasianet* (2006) "Protest Concerning Parliamentary By-election Unsettles Kyrgyzstan", 31.03.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav033106a.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].

[60] Saralaeva, Leila (2006) "Tense Stand-off Ends Peacefully in Kyrgyz Capital", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia,* 441, 01.04.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=260690&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].

[61] *Eurasianet* (2006) "Protest Concerning Parliamentary By-election Unsettles Kyrgyzstan".

[62] Saralaeva, Leila (2006) "Tense Stand-off Ends Peacefully in Kyrgyz Capital".

[63] Saralaeva, Leila (2006) "Tense Stand-off Ends Peacefully in Kyrgyz Capital".

[64] *Eurasianet* (2006) "Protest Concerning Parliamentary By-election Unsettles Kyrgyzstan".

a Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman that the usually taciturn Kremlin was "closely watching the situation in Kyrgyzstan".[65] Concerns were also expressed that this event could finally push the international community to take action, such as downgrading activities in the country.[66] As *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* reported, diplomatic concern over Akmatbaev's involvement in politics had been considerable since October 2005, and his candidature was seen as yet one more sign that, in the words of the Russian Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, the situation was "loosing [sic] its predictability".[67]

It was against this background that the opposition's "spring protest season" began on 8 April 2005, with the holding of a peaceful march under the slogan "Citizens for Law and Order" in Bishkek in which an estimated four thousand people participated.[68] Akmatbaev's involvement in the forthcoming Balykchy by-election functioned as a catalyst for mobilization, a fact clearly evident in a statement distributed by the NGO Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society:

> Stop associating with criminal bosses; live up to your oath and take measures to ensure the public safety; place everyone facing criminal charges in custody; take tough measures against people who encroach on private property; provide guarantees to all businessmen that they will be protected from rackets and banditry.[69]

Furthermore, the protest also served as an expression of dissatisfaction with President Bakiev in its later stages, as noted by the Early Warning for Violence Prevention project.[70]

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[65] *Eurasianet* (2006) "Court Decision Prompts Stability Concerns in Kyrgyzstan", 05.04.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav040506.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[66] *Eurasianet* (2006) "Court Decision Prompts Stability Concerns in Kyrgyzstan".
[67] Ababakirov, Nurshat (2006) "Forthcoming Kyrgyz Parliamentary By-Elections Become Unpredictable", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst,* 8(7), 05.04.2006, http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3874 [last accessed 21.10.2008].
[68] Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project (2006) *Weekly Bulletin* 36, 12.04.2006. Received by email.
[69] Saralaeva, Leila & Gulnura Toralieva (2006) "Kyrgyz Premier Orders Mafia Clampdown", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 443, 14.04.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=261093&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[70] Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project (2006) *Weekly Bulletin* 36.

Maybe somewhat surprisingly, given the instability that protests were often seen to represent, with the danger of events "getting out of control", international coverage was largely sympathetic, if understandably cautious. Erica Marat even found cause for optimism, noting that "[t]he event came off with a rather optimistic, holiday-like mood amid a general dissatisfaction with the current government", concluding that "the demonstration showed that the revolutionary changes that began on March 24, 2005, are an ongoing process not only in the state system, but also in Kyrgyz society. The Kyrgyz NGOs' active mobilization against organized crime and in support of political reforms brings hopes for development of a stronger legal system."[71]

Such cautious optimism evaporated and was replaced by headlines such as "Civil Society in Danger" only days later.[72] Not only did Akmatbaev win the Balykchy by-election on 9 April with 79 percent of the vote[73] – described in polemical terms as being "symbolic of the criminal world's triumph over Kyrgyzstan's official state structures, including the judicial system" by Erica Marat,[74] but civil society leader Edil Baisalov was attacked in Bishkek on 12 April. The attack was presented as a politically motivated assassination attempt by opponents wishing to silence a vocal critic of both Akmatbaev and the government.[75] Many commentators implicitly and explicitly linked the attack to criticism of the socio-political situation. Erica Marat began her article by noting that Baisalov had "been an outspoken critic of the dangerous fusion between crime and politics in the country since the March 2005 Tulip Revolution", before explaining that "[t]he assault … shows that, with the government unable to curb the activities of civil society,

[71] Marat, Erica (2006) "Kyrgyz NGOs Call on Government to Fight Organized Crime", *Eurasia Daily Monitor,* 11.04.2006, http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2370966 [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[72] Ababakirov, Nurshat (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: Civil Society in Danger", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst,* 8(8), 19.04.2006, http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3911 [last accessed 22.10.2008].
[73] Saralaeva, Leila & Gulnura Toralieva (2006) "Kyrgyz Premier Orders Mafia Clampdown".
[74] Marat, Erica (2006) "Kyrgyz NGOs Call on Government to Fight Organized Crime".
[75] Pannier, Bruce (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: Attack on NGO Leader Highlights Climate of Fear", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,* 13.04.2006, http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1067643.html [last accessed 17.10.2008]; Saralaeva, Leila & Gulnura Toralieva (2006) "Kyrgyz Premier Orders Mafia Clampdown".

organized criminal groups are mobilizing against local non-governmental organizations."[76] This appears to have been the international community's verdict as well, as evidenced by the reported concerns by Adrian Van der Meer, Head of the European Commission Delegation to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, over recent events in general and the attack on Edil Baisalov.[77]

The 8 April march was followed by another mass protest on 29 April in Bishkek, which was attended by between five and 17 thousand people.[78] This second April protest was billed as the "Kyrgyz Maidan" and officially featured the same demands as the 8 April march. Prior to the protest, leaders of the newly-formed For Reforms! movement announced their intention to set up yurts on Bishkek's central Ala-Too Square and stay there until they got an undertaking from the President to do what they wanted. In the event, the protest lasted all of two hours – until just after a brief address from the President and Prime Minister – as organisers gave in to heavy rain and people dispersed.

Against the background of Akmatbaev's election, the opposition attempted to remobilise people on the basis of the meta-narrative of organised crime as a threat to Kyrgyzstan's future that was one of two local (and, to a lesser extent, national) securitising moves resulting from the October protests. However, as will be discussed in the next section, this was less successful than they might have hoped. While opposition leaders were keen to blame the torrential rain for the relatively low turnout,[79] a closer examination of the situation and the actors involved suggests that the strengthening of the second local/national meta-narrative of protests being a

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[76] Marat, Erica (2006) "Leading Kyrgyz Activist Attacked", *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 14.04.2006, http://www.jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2370987 [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[77] Saralaeva, Leila & Gulnura Toralieva (2006) "Kyrgyz Premier Orders Mafia Clampdown".
[78] Official estimates put attendance at 5-7 thousand, the protest leaders claimed 15-17 thousand. My own estimate would be no more than 7 thousand. See Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project (2006) *Weekly Bulletin* 39, 03.05.2006. Received by email.
[79] Temir Sariev, cited in Ababakirov, Nurshat (2006) "A Rally for Democracy in Kyrgyzstan", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 8(9), 03.05.2006, http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3940 [last accessed 22.10.2008].

threat to Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyzstanis curbed popular enthusiasm for physical expressions of security concerns. In addition, there was a growing sense amongst the public evident from my conversations with contacts in Bishkek and Osh and reading comment and opinion pieces in newspapers, especially in urban areas, that those leading the protests were pursuing personal agendas rather than acting in the interests of the country, which significantly eroded the Opposition's social capital.

The final protest of the season was held on 27 May and saw the same demands made by the Opposition. This time, however, the effect was to delegitimise the act of protesting due to both low turnout[80] and the Opposition's failure to develop their narrative beyond empty threats and repeated statements that next time their demands would be more harsh. The public and the government were unconvinced by their argument, leading to the collapse of the For Reforms! movement's securitising move.

By the end of June in Bishkek there was continuing debate but little sign of any particular security meta-narratives. Protests, despite the disruption to everyday life, had become more of an entertainment than either a threat or a way to express concerns. In Osh, where protest fatigue had set in far earlier and concerns that the situation could "get out of control" were far more acute due to memories of the Osh events, the meta-narrative of political instability "there" (i.e. in Bishkek) had faded slightly, but was still evident, having started to take root in people's experiential knowledge of Kyrgyzstan's history. Finally, on the international level the security meta-narrative of Kyrgyzstan in crisis persisted, despite the changing dynamics nationally and locally. The reasons for and implications of these changes at the three spatial levels will be discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

[80] Estimates ranged from 6,000 (official) to 30,000 (the For Reforms! movement). My own estimate would concur with the official figure of approximately 6,000 people.

2.i. 29 April 2006: The "Kyrgyz Maidan"

> Representatives of NGOs and civic organisations have announced that the President of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiev, has agreed with all of the steps voiced during the April 8 protest, and is ready to meet with the Opposition to discuss them and define a time scale for the realisation of the For Reforms! movement's demands.[81]

In contrast to the 8 April march, there appeared to be less support for the forthcoming 29 April protest amongst both Bishkek's residents and the media. Reporters writing in the newspaper *Vechernii Bishkek* increasingly pointed out that the public nationally were fed up of protests and wanted calm, with headlines such as "Where do we live, in Kyrgyzstan or in Proteststan?"[82], "Isykkul residents want calm…"[83], "…as do southerners"[84], as well as ambivalent articles about the protest's organisers noting that "they have stayed the most 'rated' people in the country. Virtually no news story on local TV escapes without their commentary", even as they remained undecided about whether to take up the government's invitation to negotiations.[85] The fact that the popular *Moya stolitsa novosti* (*MSN*) newspaper, which positioned itself as a staunchly anti-government publication in the March events of 2005,[86] sounded a more cautious note in the fortnight preceding the protest was particularly noticeable. Karybai Turusbekov's article "Hysteria

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[81] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Bakiev soglasitsya obsudit trebovaniya oppozitsii" ["Bakiev agrees to discuss the Opposition's demands"], 28.04.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/04/28/bakiev/ [last accessed 05.06.2008].

[82] Mukashev, Kubanychbek (2006) "Gde my zhivem – v Kyrgyzstane ili v Mitingstan?" ["Where do we live – in Kyrgyzstan or in Proteststan?"], *Vechernii Bishkek* online edition, 77(9001), 27.04.2006, http://members.vb.kg/2006/04/27/panorama/6.html [last accessed 16.06.2008].

[83] Aleksandrov, Yurii (2006) "Isykkultsy khotyat spokoistviya…" ["Isykkul residents want calm…"], *Vechernii Bishkek* online edition, 77(9001), 27.04.2006, http://members.vb.kg/2006/04/27/tema/2.html [last accessed 16.06.2008].

[84] Urumbaev, Makhamadjan (2006) "…i yuzhane tozhe" ["…and southerners as well"], *Vechernii Bishkek* online edition, 77(9001), 27.04.2006, http://members.vb.kg/2006/04/27/tema/3.html [last accessed 16.06.2008].

[85] Temir, Elvira (2006) "Im kreslo ne nuzhno, slavu davai" ["They don't need a [government] seat, give them glory"], *Vechernii Bishkek* online edition, 78(9002), 28.04.2006, http://members.vb.kg/2006/04/28/panorama/3.html [last accessed 16.06.2008].

[86] Kim, Aleksandr (2005) "Freedom of Speech in Pre- & Post-Revolutionary Kyrgyzstan", Lecture by Aleksandr Kim, editor-in-chief of *Moya stolitsa novosti,* American University of Central Asia, 30.11.2005.

of the Militant Democrats" went far beyond sounding a note of caution about further protests and openly called for action to be taken to curtail the protesters' actions since "they are scaring us with ourselves. As they put it: 'The simple people want dramatic changes, if it doesn't happen then the people will take to the streets and storm the White House'."[87] He continued:

> It's interesting: who gave them the right to speak on our behalf against us ourselves, against the government and the President? Why are they poisoning us against each other? What's the aim? As you know, we already said our piece on 24 March and 10 July 2005. Like it or not, that's a fact. How you interpret or explain that fact is your own problem. But we do not want any sudden changes or shake-ups; we want to live calmly and work according to the logic of the rational life of civilised people.
>
> I think that the time has come to use the force of the law in relation to those people who are today preventing us from working and relaxing peacefully, from living and raising children for the good of our families, relatives and those close to us, as well as of our friends and of all people of Kyrgyzstan.[88]

Turusbekov's call was a little too draconian for most, not least as Bishkek's mayor had recently been widely condemned for trying to restrict protests in Bishkek.[89] Furthermore, protests were still seen by many as a democratic right (as well as a legal constitutional one), subject to certain conditions as *Vechernii Bishkek* noted under the title "Join the protest, but don't push it".[90] Nevertheless, the day before the protest, a group of 14 associations and 12 political parties, formed a forum for reconciliation, speaking out against the For Reforms! movement: "We wish to put Kyrgyzstan on the path towards flourishing economic development through democratic reforms, but they are preparing to stage a coup d'etat and seize presidential power. That's the main difference", explained forum leader Topchubek Turgunaliev. Referring back to the October

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[87] Turusbekov, Karybai (2006) "Isterika voinstvuyushchikh demokratov" ["Hysteria of the militant democrats"], *Moya stolitsa novosti online*, 26.04.2006, http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/13791/ [last accessed 11.06.2008].

[88] Turusbekov, Karybai (2006) "Isterika voinstvuyushchikh demokratov" ["Hysteria of the militant democrats"].

[89] Interbilim (2006) "Godovoi otchet" ["Annual report"], Interbilim International Centre: 5, http://www.interbilim.org.kg/doc/report_interbilim_2006_ru.pdf [last accessed 07.01.09].

[90] Malikova, Bermet (2006) "Sobiraites, no ne naryvaites" ["Join the protest, but don't push it"], *Vechernii Bishkek* online edition, 77(9001), 27.04.2006, http://members.vb.kg/2006/04/27/tema/1.html [last accessed 16.06.2008].

protests, members of the forum claimed that, in contrast to the protests led by Ryspek Akmatbaev, which was a "one-off", the public was more wary now that "talk is of unlimited protests, moreover throughout the entire republic."[91]

Levels of concern about the possibility of the protest turning violent, as well as about the organisers' motivations for staging the protest, despite their own admission that President Bakiev was willing to discuss the Opposition's demands and had already taken steps to address the issues raised,[92] were demonstrated by the decision of two national youth movements not to participate in the 29 April protest. KelKel, which played a prominent role in protests leading up to Akaev's ousting in March 2005, issued a statement that "for us it is unacceptable to join calls to give preference to one form of state governance, for a change of authorities, and for the resignation of certain officials." The statement noted that:

> Young people think that Kyrgyzstan should not turn into a country of endless pickets and protests. In their opinion, constructive dialogue taking into account the interests of all parties and the reaching of a consensus is the most effective way to protect society's rights and promote its interests.[93]

The liberal youth alliance Free Generation also announced that they "had decided not to support the event, and not be used by the opposition". In contrast to Kel-Kel's moderate statement, however, Free Generation's appeal saw how events were developing as far more dangerous:

> The country is in danger! The threat is coming from two sides – from the President's team and from the radical opposition. […] Your [the Opposition – CW] unconciliatory position could be the start of a new uprising that you will not be able to stop. Your opponents will be forced to bring their supporters, of whom there are also a not inconsiderable number, on to the

[91] Malevanaya, Darya (2006) "Miting – ne roskosh, a sanitarnaya obrabotka" ["A protest is not a luxury but a sanitation treatment"], *Moya stolitsa novosti online,* 28.04.2006, http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/13811/ [last accessed 11.06.2008].
[92] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Bakiev soglasitsya obsudit trebovaniya oppozitsii".
[93] Malikova, Bermet (2006) "…a Kel-Kel mitingovat otkazalsya" ["…but Kel-Kel decline to protest"], *Vechernii Bishkek* online edition, 78(9002), 28.04.2006, http://members.vb.kg/2006/04/28/glas/3.html [last accessed 16.06.2008].

> streets. What then? […] Destroying the peace is now very easy, but who will then gather up the pieces of Kyrgyzstan?[94]

This open warning consolidated an earlier appeal by the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan, which claimed to speak on behalf "of those people who are sincerely disturbed by the excessive politicisation of society, which brings with it anxiety and a hidden threat to stability and peace."[95] This counter-securitising narrative was given further emotive resonance thanks to media references to Opposition leaders as contemporary "Father Gapons", alluding not only to the danger of violence but also the Opposition's allegedly self-serving nature.[96]

Against this background, concerns about ensuring order at the protest were uppermost in many people's minds. While the For Reforms! movement were keen to stress the peaceful character of their actions, "in the words of the protest's initiators, they cannot give a guarantee of Bishkek's safety". *Vechernii Bishkek* opined that the organisers were thus "passing on responsibility for the security of the capital onto the Mayor of Bishkek and also several politicians and journalists." The government's response came from the Minister for Internal Affairs, Murat Sutalinov, who promised protesters "a surprise" and invited them to "come to Ala-Too Square and see for yourselves" on 27 April.[97] *Gazeta.kg* reported what the "surprise" was – the

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[94] Djumadilde uluu, M., T. Ishekeev & T. Shaikhutdinov (2006) "Esli nachnetsya bunt, ego ne ostanovish! Obrashchenie alyansa liberalnoi molodezhi Svobodnoe pokolenie k obshchestvu" ["If an uprising starts, it will not be possible to stop it! Appeal from the liberal youth alliance Free Generation to society"], *Vechernii Bishkek,* 77(9001), 27.04.2006: 3.

[95] *Moya stolitsa novosti* (2006) "Obrashchenie Assamblei naroda Kyrgyzstana" ["Appeal from the Assamblea of the People of Kyrgyzstan"], 26.04.2006, http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/13794 [last accessed 11.06.2008].

[96] Jolmukhamedova, Lyudmila (2006) "Idti ili ne idti za popami gaponami na glavnuyu ploshchad?" ["To follow or not to follow these Father Gapons onto the main square?"], *Moya stolitsa novosti online,* 28.04.2006, http://www.msn.kg/ru/news/13815/ [last accessed 11.06.2008]. Father Gapon was the priest who led demonstrators out to protest against the Tsar on Bloody Sunday in 1905. The peaceful protestors were massacred by the Imperial Guard and it is alleged that Father Gapon had collaborated with the Okhrana.

[97] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Militsiya Bishkeka podgotovila syurpriz dlya oppozitsii" ["Bishkek's police prepare surprise for the opposition"], 27.04.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/04/27/surprise/ [last accessed 11.06.2008].

deployment of a women's police battalion – the following day,[98] but it was evident that few had heard of the plan judging by people's surprised reactions, including my own, on the day of the protest.

Given the amount of conflicting information I heard and read once in Bishkek on the Friday, I was unsure what to expect, not least after reading how the For Reforms! protest on 26 April in Osh had been disrupted and then forcibly dispersed.[99] Certainly, as I walked along Prospect Chui in the rain, watching protesters make their way towards Ala-Too Square past the White House, the atmosphere did not feel particularly welcoming and I felt tense: although there was little police presence on Prospect Chui itself before the White House, there were soldiers as well as military and police vehicles parked down streets running perpendicular to Prospect Chui (see figure 4.2 below), making it difficult not to think about the potential for trouble. *Gazeta.kg*'s first report on the protest's progress did nothing to dispel my concerns:

> The square in front of the building of the Republic's government has been closed from its furthest approaches to traffic since yesterday. The Republic's Minister for Internal Affairs, Murat Sutalinov, personally supervised the forming up of MVD divisions on the central square. As *Gazeta.kg*'s correspondent reports, there are many technical vehicles around the House of the Government: fire engines, armoured cars with machine guns, [as well as] a lot of policeman with dogs.[100]

[98] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Poryadok na mitinge budet okhranyat zhenskii batalon" ["Women's battalion will ensure order at protest"], 28.04.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/04/28/surpris/ [last accessed 05.06.2008].
[99] Jusunova, Aidai (2006) "Militsiya podavila miting" ["Militsia suppress protest"], *Itogi nedeli,* 17(49), 28.04.2006: 1 & 3.
[100] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "V Bishkeke nachalsya sbor manifestantov dlya uchastiya v massovom miting" ["Gathering of protesters to participate in mass protest begins in Bishkek"], 29.04.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/04/29/meeting1/ [last accessed 02.06.2008].

Figure 4.2: Military and police personnel stationed at Panfilova-Chui, Bishkek, 29 April 2006.

My sense of the protesters' unpredictability was added to by noticing that many participants seemed to be from places other than Bishkek, judging by their clothes and complexions (darker from being outside more, suggesting that they were from rural areas), as well as the frequency with which I heard Kyrgyz, rather than Russian, being spoken. I recalled one journalist's claim the previous day that many protesters had been hired by the organisers, "just as in the past the rich hired the poor to go and fight wars for them".[101] This comment left me contemplating how far the protesters were prepared to go to make a point and whether they might try and provoke a reaction from the police. I also recalled comments by Bishkek residents about those involved in protests being largely "Kyrgyz who have come down from the mountains", with a clear distinction being implied between "civilised" urban residents and rural dwellers whose behaviour was described by one informant, herself originally from a village, as "wild".[102] The media also played on this perceived urban-rural divide, as an illustration advertising an article entitled "To kill a

[101] Jolmukhamedova, Lyudmila (2006) "Idti ili ne idti za popami gaponami na glavnuyu ploshchad?"
[102] Informal conversation, 28.03.2006.

dragon: a new spectre is haunting Bishkek – the spectre of our own Maidan" on the front page of *Vechernii Bishkek* a week before the protest demonstrated (figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Cartoon used to illustrate a leader entitled "Kill the dragon within yourselves, brothers!" for an article about the threat of further protests on page three of *Vechernii Bishkek* on 21 April 2006.[103] The sign hung on the shovel (suggesting manual work) reads "Gone to the protest" and shows a figure in simple clothing and a hat resembling the traditional Kyrgyz *ak kalpak* hurrying from a yurt (signifying rurality) towards a crowd heading for blocks of flats (signifying urban life).

At this point it was easy to see how many people, especially Bishkek residents who had lived with land seizures on the outskirts of the capital and almost daily protests and pickets in the city centre since March 2005, could have felt extremely fearful about how the protest would progress. The physical evidence of military vehicles and soldiers with riot shields did nothing to assuage 'worst case scenario' interpretations. Although President Bakiev talked of maintaining order "within the bounds of the law", the government's actions in deploying troops and equipment seemed to imply that force would be used if considered necessary, as Bakiev made clear: "Our reaction [to the attempt to seize the White House] on June 17 [2005] was still very soft. This time it will be harsher."[104] Even if participants of the 'official' protest did not pose a

[103] Denisenko, Evgenii (2006) "Ubit drakona. Novyj prizrak brodit po Bishkeku – prizrak nashego otechestvennogo maidana" ["To kill the dragon. A new spectre is haunting Bishkek – the spectre of our own Maidan"], *Vechernii Bishkek,* 73(8997), 21.04.2006: 3.

[104] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Bakiev poobeshchal zhestko presekat vozmozhnye besporyadki 29 aprelya" ["Bakiev promises to put down possible disorder on 29 April harshly"], 26.04.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/04/26/bakiev1/ [last accessed 02.06.2008]. Significantly, the attempt to seize the White House was seen by many as "one of the first experiments" in what journalist Yulia

threat and could be "fully controlled" as one of the For Reforms! leaders claimed,[105] many people nonetheless concluded that there was potential for provocateurs to disrupt the protest and trigger clashes. Indeed, the Opposition appeared to come to the same conclusion, as *Gazeta.kg* reported:

> According to Deputy Sariev, the build-up of armoured vehicles along the perimeter of the central square is 'a preventative measure by the official authorities in case of provocation on the part of third forces'. The Deputy is certain that the unprecedented security measures that have been taken by the law enforcement agencies 'are directed not at protesters, but against the possible appearance of separate criminal groups'.[106]

However, by the time protesters, bystanders and journalists, as well as the lines of female police cadets – described jokingly as his "special forces" by the Minister of Internal Affairs[107] – who greeted the marchers with red carnations, had congregated on Ala-Too Square, the atmosphere felt far less charged, especially away from the tribune. Looking around, it was noticeable that the steps in front of the Ilbirs complex flanking the square's southern side were occupied by large numbers of people, many of whom showed no sign of being active participants in the protest. While it is possible that they were primarily sheltering from the heavy rain, their calm behaviour, which was in contrast to that of those people standing near the stage on which opposition leaders were speaking, and lack of flags, banners, scarves or armbands suggested that they were more observers than supporters of the protest (outlined in green in figures 4.4 and 4.5). It was also noticeable that they stood quite separately from the mass of

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Savchenko called "buying civic activism", thus potentially inadvertently heightening people's concerns and perception of insecurity further. Savchenko, Yulia (2006) "Reporter's Notebook: Kyrgyz Republic", *2006 Global Integrity Country Report*, http://www.globalintegrity.org/reports/2006/Kyrgyz%20Republic/notebook.cfm [last accessed 14.06.2008].

[105] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Almazbek Atambaev: Ya storonnik kompromissov" ["Almazbek Atambaev: I'm a supporter of compromise"], 28.04.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/04/28/atambaev/ [last accessed 11.06.2008].

[106] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Militsionery daryat mitinguyushchim tsevty" ["Police give protesters flowers"], *Gazeta.kg,* 29.04.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/04/29/meeting2/ [last accessed 02.06.2008].

[107] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Kyrgyzskaya militsiya opasaetsya provokatsii vo vremya mitinga oppozitsii" ["Kyrgyz police fear provocations during opposition's protest"], *Gazeta.kg*, 29.04.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/04/29/meeting/ [last accessed 02.06.2008].

protesters, as illustrated in figure xii. In addition, a considerable number of overwhelmingly female police and army cadets were also present on the square (blue group in figure 4.4), with male members of the law enforcement agencies in evidence only around its perimeter (figure 4.6).

Figure 4.4: Annotated photograph showing location of “bystanders” (green) and female police cadets (blue) on the east side of Ala-Too Square during the For Reforms! protest. Bishkek, 29 April 2006.

Figure 4.5 Annotated photograph looking south east across Ala-Too Square showing how many "bystanders" (green) stood quite separately from "active" participants in the For Reforms! protest. Bishkek, 29 April 2006.

Figure 4.6: "Policemen wait for the columns of demonstrators". Policemen and troops at Chui-Erkindik (east side of Ala-Too Square) by Elena Skochilo.[108] Male law enforcement officers were not deployed on Ala-Too Square itself. Bishkek, 29 April 2006.

[108] Skochilo, Elena (2006) "Militsiya zhdut kolonny demonstrantov" ["Police await columns of demonstrators"]. *Gazeta.kg*, 29.04.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/photo/2006/04/29/miting/13_Jpg.htm [last accessed 04.03.2008]. Reproduced with permission.

The presence of so many 'spectators' seemed to confirm my sense that curiosity about the opposition's "latest entertainment", rather than political conviction, led many people to come to the main square – including myself. Indeed, one newspaper commented wryly that "they [the protest's organisers – CW] didn't need to warn the 'officers and soldiers' about the protesters' intentions, but rather thank the Minister of Internal Affairs for the free PR: he intrigued even those Bishkek residents who were not intending to attend the protest with his promise of a surprise."[109] Newspaper reports about the protest reflected this impression, with one journalist citing the comments of a group of women to whom she spoke: "'Oh really? We thought it was the same as 8 April, only against crime. So it's for reforms... can you tell us what reforms?' animatedly asked incidental protesters having ended up in the maelstrom on the basis of 'I was passing by'."[110] I spoke to a group of men who had travelled from Karabalta (62km west of Bishkek) to attend the protest. They were in high spirits despite getting soaked in the rain and told me that they'd come "for the entertainment", though one of them was also wearing an armband identifying him as a *druzhinnik* – a member of the "people's patrol" organised by the protest's leaders.[111] They were far more concerned with having their photographs taken than with answering questions about whether or not they supported the For Reforms! movement.[112] Even many of the 'active' participants in the proceedings seemed to acknowledge that the protest was as much about "making life a bit more interesting" as about supporting the opposition's demands, as journalists noted:

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[109] Temir, Solto & Tatyana Popova (2006) "U prirody est plokhoi pogody, ili O tom, kak nam obeshchali kyrgyzskii maidan, no pomeshali vesennii liven" ["Nature does have bad weather, or How we were promised a Kyrgyz Maidan, but a spring downpour got in the way"], *ResPublica*, 14(626), 03.05.2006: 4.
[110] Malevanaya, Darya (2006) "Promokshaya tsel, ili prodolzheniya sleduet?.." ["A soaked-through goal, or a continuation follows?.."], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 47(389), 03.05.2006: 8.
[111] See figure 1 in appendix 3. *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Uchastnikov mitinga budut okhranyat 1,5 tysyachi druzhinnikov" ["Protest's participants to be protected by 1.5 thousand *druzhinniki*"], 27.04.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/04/27/security/ [last accessed 11.06.2008].
[112] See figures 2 and 3 in appendix 4.

> But a resident of the village Belovodskoe [40km west of Bishkek – CW] was in an entirely decisive mood. He intended, if necessary, to stand on the square until the victorious end, although he had travelled in just for the day and taking part in the protest was not his main aim; the main thing was catching up with friends. When else would one be able to make it to the capital?[113]

The other feature of the protest that made me question how people understood it was the wide range of topics to which placards and banners referred. While political parties and some NGOs involved in the protest provided "official" banners and placards, such as those held by members of Ar-Namys and the Social Democratic Party,[114] as well as caps and t-shirts,[115] there were also signs that people were using the demonstration as a forum for their own opinions and demands. As I walked around Ala-Too Square, certain groupings and the issue about which they wanted to express an opinion were immediately noticeable. Behind the fountains on the west side of the square was a group displaying banners against the proposed reform of Kyrgyz National Television (figure 4.7), while employees of the private television company Piramida, who were protesting the seizure of the company in an ongoing ownership dispute, formed a distinguishable yellow- and red-capped group in the centre of the main crowd with their banners displaying the channel's logo (figure 4.8).

[113] Malevanaya, Darya (2006) "Promokshaya tsel, ili prodolzheniya sleduet?..".
[114] Figure 4, appendix 3.
[115] Figures 5, appendix 3.

Figure 4.7: Protesters holding banners expressing dissatisfaction with proposed reforms of Kyrgyz National Television during the For Reforms! protest. Bishkek, 29 April 2006.

Figure 4.8: Employees from the TV company Piramida in red and yellow caps holding banners with slogans “Return Piramida to the staff” (left) and “Freedom of speech for Piramida” (bottom right) during the For Reforms! protest. Bishkek, 29 April 2006.

Meanwhile on the west side of the square, in stark contrast to the message of national unity coming from the tribune, some young men held up homemade banners reading “We’ve lost faith in everything" and "No to the expansion of the north” (figure 4.9). The theme of regionalism and geographically-determined loyalties was also indicated by a sizable and cheerful group from the village of Sokuluk, who had come to support their local deputy, opposition member Temir Sariev (figure 4.10).

Figure 4.9: Protesters with homemade banners proclaiming “We have lost faith in everything!” and “No to the expansion of the north!”. Bishkek, 29 April 2006.

Figure 4.10: Protesters from the village of Sokuluk [Chui Oblast, 70km east of Bishkek] with banner proclaiming their village's name and the green scarves worn by some 'active' participants in the demonstration, supporting Sokuluk region parliamentary deputy and opposition member Temir Sariev. Bishkek, 29 April 2006.

The presence of the not inconsiderable number of people from Kyrgyzstan's regions did not go unnoticed in the media either, and was interpreted by some commentators as an attempt to increase the credibility of the demonstration's leaders, rather than being in support of the official rhetoric. Darya Malevanaya wrote that

> In contrast to the first, real march against crime [on 8 April], where NGOs acted as the organisers, at the second protest not only Bishkek residents but also supporters of the opposition leaders from the regions were present.
>
> These people were brought in as a support group: their responsibilities were to shout, whistle, cat-call, to express their hatred of the existing authorities and their adoration of the protest's organisers.[116]

As the rain set in and people began to disperse, there were two further indications that people were utilising the protest as a forum in which to voice their own concerns, rather than necessarily directly supporting the securitising move that the opposition was attempting to launch. First was the presence of a large banner that had been fixed near the base of the

[116] Malevanaya, Darya (2006) "Promokshaya tsel, ili prodolzheniya sleduet?..".

Erkindik statue, away from the main crowd of protestors (figure 4.11). Despite being in Kyrgyz (in itself a probable indication of the non-Bishkek origins of the protestors), the message was evidently, going on the few words I recognised, about the Jerooy gold mine in Talas. I knew from local and international media coverage that the mine had been closed down by the government following alleged operational irregularities by the licence holders, the British company Oxus.[117] The result was that miners were left unpaid, their dissatisfaction exacerbated by popular perceptions that the true reason for Oxus' licence being revoked was a property grab by politicians allegedly still close to the Akaev family.[118]

Figure 4.11: Banner placed at the foot of the Erkindik statue on Ala-Too Square about the situation at the Jerooy Gold Mine. Bishkek, 29 April 2006.

The final voice of the chorus that made use of the forum offered by the For Reforms! protest was a one-man anti-Russian protest (figure 4.12). He appeared with a placard covered in dense

[117] Shah, Saeed (2006) "Kyrgyzstan President's attack sends Oxus shares crashing", *Independent* 04.02.2006, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/kyrgyzstan-presidents-attack-sends-oxus-shares-crashing-465553.html [last accessed 07.01.2009].

[118] Edigeev, Jenishbek (2007) "Bolot Sherniyazov, eks-deputat JK KR: My porodili Bakieva, Bakiev nas i ugrobil" ["Bolot Sherniyazov, ex-deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic: We gave rise to Bakiev, and Bakiev has buried us"], *Tazar.kg* 08.11.2007. http://www.tazar.kg/news.php?i=6831 [last accessed 07.01.2009].

text once the majority of people had dispersed, but succeeded in gaining a small audience of mainly foreign photographers as he marched across the square with his demand for and apology and compensation of “100 billion US dollars” from Russia for the “destruction of the historical Kyrgyz state, the Kokand Khanate, and for the shooting of as many as 1000 000 [sic] Kyrgyz during its colonial rule from 1861 until 1917”.[119]

Figure 4.12: Man holding an anti-Russian placard who came onto Ala-Too Square at the end of the protest when people were already dispersing. Bishkek, 29 April 2006.

In light of this diversity of issues, it was unsurprising that many were left confused about the protest and its implications. As an *MSN* journalist asked,

> What exactly was it there on the country’s main square on 29 April? And, more importantly, why? Without knowing our most recent history, without knowing ourselves, worn down as we are by the harsh events of the last decade, it is impossible to understand it.
>
> This is why foreign journalists were by turn irritated, amused, tormented, not knowing how to react to what was happening. […]

[119] See figures 6 and 7 in appendix 4 for the full text of the demands and translation.

> The protest did not correspond with the notion of a 'new revolution', nor with that of 'another coup', and not even with that of a 'confrontation between the people and the authorities'. What was it? Why and for what? [120]

It appeared that while the opposition was continuing to engage in a straightforward securitizing move, claiming that the government's lack of action posed an existential threat to Kyrgyzstan's future, other actors were seeing the protest in far more nuanced terms. Indeed, as one journalist reflected, "society is now noticeably different", meaning that "if one looks at the situation with an unblinkered eye, from the position of the new era and society, then it turns out there's nothing terrible about it. All of society wants reforms."[121] In effect, even if the securitising actor was sticking to their script, the audience was interpreting the narrative quite differently now.

Crucially, the presence of so many contradictory physical expressions at the protest – from the Ministry of Interior's careful show of power, to the various interest groups that made use of the protest to air their own concerns and the presence of large numbers of bystanders – further undermined the opposition's efforts to maintain a coherent and credible narrative as a securitising actor. Despite the inconvenience caused by the protest and concerns about possible disorder beforehand, which might have indicated that a securitization had already occurred, the protest suggested that the situation was far less critical and more fluid; at best a complex series of securitising moves and counter-moves could arguably be discerned, but the overall effect was to retard the development of any coherent meta-security narratives by any actor in Bishkek. Some newspapers rushed to declare the protest a success,[122] while others were convinced that it had been a failure, illustrating only that the For Reforms! movement's

[120] Jolmukhamedova, Lyudmila (2006) "Kak otorvatsya ot svoego yakorya?" ["How to break free of one's anchor?"], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 47(389), 03.05.2006: 3.
[121] Jolmukhamedova, Lyudmila (2006) "Kak otorvatsya ot svoego yakorya?"
[122] Temir, Solto & Tatyana Popova (2006) "U prirody est plokhoi pogody, ili O tom, kak nam obeshchali kyrgyzskii maidan, no pomeshali vesennii liven": 4-5.

argument did not have the public resonance they had anticipated.[123] Overall, as one newspaper summarised, "Balance has been maintained in the middle game".[124]

Perhaps in light of this it was unsurprising that international commentators did not pay much attention to the protest itself, concentrating on more dramatic events of the preceding month discussed earlier in this chapter, which added fuel to the existing international meta-narrative of crisis. Against this background and contention about the meanings of the 29 April protest, the international security meta-narrative appeared as fixed as ever, with little consideration given to alternative interpretations of events, despite President Bakiev's comment "that Kyrgyzstan's crime situation was no worse than that in other former Soviet republics."[125]

Back in Osh there was little coverage of April's events in Bishkek. The attack on Baisalov went unreported in both local newspapers, as did Akmatbaev's by-election win, both of which I read about online. Similarly, the 29 April protest rally in Bishek was not mentioned at all by *Itogi nedeli*, while *Ekho Osha* provided a two-column report that gave an account of the protest devoid of any opinion, positive or negative.[126] People seemed uninterested or even dismissive of events in the capital, but were instinctively wary of anything that could cause instability and make their already uncertain lives feel even more tenuous. The Osh securitising meta-narrative of hot-headed and corrupt politicians in the north threatening the country's existence waned somewhat in April, but was still evident in people's comments about the dangers of protests.

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[123] Timirbaev, Vyacheslav (2006) "Chto pokazal miting" ["What the protest showed"], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 47(389), 03.05.2006: 2.
[124] Biyalinov, A. (2006) "V mittelshpile sokhranolos ravnovesie" ["Balance maintained in the middlegame"], ResPublica, 14(626), 03.05.2006: 1-2.
[125] Saralaeva, Leila & Gulnura Toralieva (2006) "Kyrgyz Premier Orders Mafia Clampdown".
[126] *Ekho Osha* (2006) "Belomu domu otpushchen mesyats" ["White House given a month"], 33(14768), 03.05.2006: 2.

2.ii. 27 May 2006: Looking Beneath Meta-Narratives

> We are the free citizens of the free Kyrgyzstan. We know that some people have done everything possible and impossible to portray us as political radicals and extremists. But it is not for them to deceive the people of Kyrgyzstan. Everyone who stands today in the square knows the truth. That we have come here with a good goal and pure intentions. We wish no-one harm and do not wish to oust or offend anyone. Our protest is not against the authorities. It is for the worthy future of our country. We have not come here because of living well. We have come to say to the authorities that we cannot live like this anymore.[127]

Almost immediately after the 29 April protest there were reports in the local media that the For Reforms! movement was intending to intensify its demands at the next protest and demand the resignation of President Bakiev and Prime Minister Kulov. *Gazeta.kg* ran the story on 3 May under the headline "For Reforms! HQ intend to demand resignation of Bakiev-Kulov tandem on 27 May".[128] The impression of continued confrontation and emergency was further heightened by media reports of For Reforms! movement leader Almazbek Atambaev's comment that "I don't need Akaev to come back; I need Bakiev to leave",[129] and an inflammatory warning from another For Reforms! member, Jogorku Kenesh deputy Dooronbek Sadyrbaev, that "If necessary, the President has promised to personally take up a machine gun and defend his White House".[130] Such comments were taken as an indication of the movement's desire to stage another "revolution" by fanning the flames of public discontent both in Bishkek and internationally.

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[127] Excerpt from the For Reforms! movement's ten-point manifesto entitled "Ten Steps" that was read out at the protest on May 27. It had been delivered to the government the previous day. *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Spisok trebovanii uchastnikov mitinga" ["List of demands from protest's participants"], 12.58, 27.05.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/05/27/spisok [last accessed 23.04.2008].

[128] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Shtab "Za Reformy!" nameren trebovat 27 maya otstavki tandema Bakieva-Kulova" ["For Reforms! HQ intend to demand resignation of Bakiev-Kulov tandem on 27 May"], 03.05.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/05/03/movement/ [last accessed 30.05.2008].

[129] Samartseva, Nataliya (2006) "Miting budet – stavka na zero" ["There will be a protest – stakes at zero"], *ResPublica*, 16 (628), 24.05.2008: 3.

[130] *Agym* (2006) "Nadezhda na blagorazumie (beseda pisatelya Sabyra Kuruchbekova s deputatom Jogorku Kenesha Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki Dooronbekom Sadyrbaevym)" ["Hope for Good Sense (Discussion between the writer Sabyr Kuruchbekov and deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic Dooronbek Sadyrbaev)"], 38 (422), 26.05.2006: 7.

In the immediate aftermath of the 29 April protest, some international coverage noted that the government had begun challenging the opposition's securitising move and was attempting to continue to do so. *Eurasianet* also pointed out that two of Bishkek's major newspapers, *Vechernii Bishkek* and *MSN* had adopted a definitely pro-government, anti-protest stance in their coverage.[131] However, the apparently increasingly confrontational stance became a further source of anxiety as the scheduled 27 May protest drew closer. News that the authorities were planning to stage a military parade on Ala-Too Square to mark Armed Forces Day two days before the official holiday, on the same day as the protest, caused a flurry of concern before the authorities changed their plans.[132] Similarly, the other major change in the Kyrgyzstani political landscape in May – the murder of Rysbek Akmatbaev, the instigator of the October protests discussed in chapter three, on 10 May – only provoked greater anxiety. Commentators were quick to predict that political tensions would soar,[133] noting that Akmatbaev's supporters were quick to take to the streets, blockading the Bishkek-Issyk-Kul road, only ending their protest following an invitation to meet with President Bakiev on 16 May.[134] While Zainidin Kurmanov's assessment that Akmatbaev had become a liability even to his political allies due to his real potential to challenge for power in the Jogorku Kenesh, not to

[131] *Eurasianet* (2006) "Kyrgyz Government Wants Peace with Protestors", 01.05.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav050106.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[132] Chadova, Elena (2006) "Kyrgyzstan's Leaders Face Pressure from Multiple Sources", *Eurasianet,* 26.05.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav052606.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[133] *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: Alleged Crime Boss Killed As Political Tensions Soar", 10.05.2006, http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1068300.html [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[134] In contrast to previous protests, Bakiev subsequently refused to meet Akmatbaev's supporters, sending Adakhan Madumarov, Secretary of State, instead. *Eurasianet* (2006) "Crime Boss Murder and Government Shake-up Impact on Kyrgyzstan's Political Scene", 15.05.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav051506.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008]; Saidazimova, Gulnoza (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: President Refuses to Meet With Slain Candidate's Supporters", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,* 16.05.2006, http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1068432.html [last accessed 17.10.2008].

mention the negative attention his election had drawn from the international community,[135] is entirely plausible, the very fact that he had been murdered, possibly with government involvement according to many rumours (denied by the government),[136] gave international analysts no grounds to change their view of the situation.

In Osh, the ongoing events in Bishkek received little special attention. The sense of people's concerns in Bishkek and Osh being worlds apart was highlighted by a series of attacks on Tajik and Kyrgyz border posts on 15 May by unidentified gunmen that left three border guards and one civilian dead.[137] International media sources covered the incident, but significantly linked the incursions, thought to have been carried out by members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, primarily to Kyrgyzstan's domestic socio-political situation, rather than to any sudden resurgence of Islamic terrorist activity. *Eurasianet* quoted an unnamed commentator in Tajikistan who explained the connection:

> The attack was possibly linked to Bakiev's government reshuffle in the opinion of one commentator based in Khojand, northern Tajikistan, as he explained: "The personnel changes that took place in the Kyrgyz government may have paved the way for those events," he said. "Also, a number of criminal groupings have divided the region among themselves, and that kind of [unstable] situation suits them very well. It helps them protect their own interests and even try to seize [effective] power."[138]

The Kyrgyz government, however, asserted that the real aim of the allegedly Tajik insurgents had been to aggravate the situation in the aftermath of the Andijan massacre of May 2005 in

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[135] Orozbekova, Cholpon & Leila Saralaeva (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: Controversial Figure Meets Bloody End", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 447, 10.05.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=261727&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].

[136] *Eurasianet* (2006) "Crime Boss Murder and Government Shake-up Impact on Kyrgyzstan's Political Scene".

[137] *Eurasianet* (2006) "Central Asia: Fighting Erupts on Tajik-Kyrgyz Border", 15.05.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp051506.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].

[138] Editing in original. *Eurasianet* (2006) "Central Asia: Fighting Erupts on Tajik-Kyrgyz Border".

support of former Hizb-ut-Tahrir activists from Uzbekistan.[139] Yet IWPR's report emphasized that there were a number of possible scenarios regarding who was responsible for the attacks, asking if the perpetrators were "Islamic radicals or gangsters?"[140] Likewise, the usually decisive *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* remained cautious about suggesting an increased Islamic terrorist threat, concluding that neither radical Islamists nor narcotics smugglers had any obvious motivation to attack the border posts.[141]

Regardless of the reason for the attacks, the impact on Osh was noticeable. *Itogi nedeli* led on the front page with a photo of people grieving over the bodies of the two Kyrgyzstanis who were killed in the attacks and the headline "Bandits penetrate into Kyrgyzstan – the first sign of forces of international terrorism?"[142] The author's opening paragraph expressed anxiety about the failure of the armed forces to protect Kyrgyzstan and the implications:

> The security forces, which have recently received more and more material and technical support, when called upon turned out not to be ready for a real combat situation. Is this is a joke? Twenty terrorists penetrated deep into the territory of a sovereign state and made it to all of 200km from Batken having mobilized 400 soldiers around them. What if tomorrow there are 50 bandits? Or 500?[143]

As well as illustrating the personal human cost of the incident photographically, the article focused on criticism of Kyrgyzstan's government, with the deaths being blamed on "the entire

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[139] Valiev, Bakhtiar & Cholpon Orozbekova (2006) "Kyrgz-Tajik Border Raid Stokes Fears", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 448, 19.05.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=262000&apc_state=henh [last accessed 13.01.2009].

[140] Valiev, Bakhtiar & Cholpon Orozbekova (2006) "Kyrgz-Tajik Border Raid Stokes Fears".

[141] Jibladze, Kakha (2006) "IMU Accused of Attack on Tajik, Kyrgyz Border Posts", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 8(10), 17.05.2006, http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3974 [last accessed 22.10.2008].

[142] Jusunova, Aidai (2006) "Bandity, pronikshie v Kyrgyzstan – "pervaya lastochka" sil mezhdunarodnogo terrorizma?" ["Bandits penetrate into Kyrgyzstan – the first sign of forces of international terrorism?"], *Itogi nedeli* 20(52), 19.05.2006: 1 & 3. See figure 8 in appendix 4 for a scan of the front page.

[143] Jusunova, Aidai (2006) "Bandity, pronikshie v Kyrgyzstan – "pervaya lastochka" sil mezhdunarodnogo terrorizma?": 1.

Kyrgyz top brass" in Bishkek.[144] Osh's government newspaper, however, put a more positive spin on the incursion, leading with the headline "Bandits didn't manage to get through" and concentrating on the allegedly successful operation carried out from the army, which "helped to prevent terrorist acts".[145] People in Osh seemed less convinced than *Ekho Osha*'s anonymous journalist: people to whom I spoke voiced heightened concerns about the potential for internal conflict and the inability of the authorities to ensure people's safety. Despite the events of Andijan and the repressive reputation of the Uzbek authorities, one Uzbek seamstress with whom I spoke was adamant that she would rather live in Uzbekistan than Kyrgyzstan since "at least they have order there; here we have nothing".[146] This was an extreme sentiment by any standards, but certainly people appeared to become increasingly against any form of socio-political upheaval. Most of all, however, was a sense of being deserted by the North as they continued their political games.

In the face of media-fuelled alarm about the implications of the planned protest and considerable public suspicion, For Reforms! was at pains to point out the peaceful and lawful nature of their protest. Some members of the For Reforms! leadership explicitly denied having any revolutionary intentions for the forthcoming protest, as Kubatbek Baibolov made clear: "If anyone thinks that something similar to March 2005 is going to happen and that there will be a coup, then they are mistaken. It won't happen, we will act strictly within the bounds of the Constitution and the law."[147] At the same time, they were keen not to sound too peaceful; Baibolov explained that their future actions depended largely on the government's response,

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[144] Jusunova, Aidai (2006) "Bandity, pronikshie v Kyrgyzstan – "pervaya lastochka" sil mezhdunarodnogo terrorizma?": 3.
[145] *Ekho Osha* (2006) "Banditam proiti ne udalos" ["Bandits didn't manage to get through"], 36(14771), 19.05.2006: 1.
[146] Personal conversation, Osh, 06.06.2006.
[147] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Shtab "Za Reformy!" nameren trebovat 27 maya otstavki tandema Bakieva-Kulova".

warning that "If the authorities remain completely deaf, as they are at the moment, then the demands of the protest will be far harsher."[148]

Notably, much of the opposition movement's threat narrative – that the President wasn't with the people and must be made to listen if the country and its people were to have a future – were incorporated into a direct counter-securitization by the media: arguments centred on the idea that the opposition did not have the best interests of the Kyrgyzstani population at heart and was using the protests to pursue personal interests. As Vyacheslav Timirbaev asked in retrospect, "The protest's organisers have been strenuously emphasising that the mass actions they have initiated are of an exclusively peaceful nature. But why, in this case, are provocative and inciting slogans being heard throughout the protests?"[149] This argument was backed up with reminders of the gap between politicians of any creed and the "common people" with assertions that "everyone is addressing their personal issues [via protests]. Politicians wish to solve the issue of power via the protests, the simple toilers of the protest season [i.e. the mass of protesters] – the simple matter, putting it figuratively, of a piece of bread for their hungry offspring."[150]

The public seemed receptive to this counter-securitization, as a phone-in involving For Reforms! leaders Omurbek Tekebaev and Kubatbek Baibolov, held by the Bishkek-based newspaper *Vechernii Bishkek,* illustrated. Several callers openly questioned the Opposition politicians' motives:

> *Oleg Ivanov, entrepreneur*: I'm a person far from politics, but I want to know why you think that the country's problems should be solved via holding protests and marches? Surely there are other ways?

[148] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Shtab "Za Reformy!" nameren trebovat 27 maya otstavki tandema Bakieva-Kulova".
[149] Timirbaev, Vyacheslav (2006), "Kogda izmenyaet chuvstvo mery" ["When the sense of measure fails"], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 57 (399), 30.05.2006, Bishkek: 2.
[150] Biyalinov, A. (2006) "Anarkhiya – mat poryadka, no chtoby ona rodila ego, nuzhen otets – zakon" ["Anarchy is the mother of order, but, so that she gives birth to order, a father – the law – is needed"], *ResPublica*, 16 (628), 24.05.2008, Bishkek: 1-2.

> *Omurbek Tekebaev*: As is known, our protest began as a popular movement for law and order. Because people were tired of lawlessness and property grabs. Unfortunately similar tendencies are continuing. It is precisely because of this that the people are compelled to come out to the square and demand the law be observed. And it should be noted that this is only the second protest that we've decided to organise.[151]

Ivanov's question echoed a common sense of "protest fatigue" amongst Bishkek's residents. "As a citizen of Kyrgyzstan, I want to say that I hate protests, because they cause only disquiet and inconvenience for the city's residents, making them fret and worry until the passing of the protest," explained journalist Elena Skochilo, who covered the protests for *Gazeta.kg*.[152] Tekebaev's response appears to recognise this in his reminder that it is only the second protest organised by For Reforms!, perhaps trying to counter the impression that their protests are the same as all the others in terms of being all show and no substance.

Another caller challenged Tekebaev about his comments regarding needing Bakiev to go, echoing the view that the opposition's motivations were not as lofty and patriotic as they would like to suggest. As she explained, "After you announced to journalists that you, apparently, want Bakiev to quit, I've come to the opinion that you've got personal counts to settle with the President".[153] The issue of motives was also implicit in caller Fedorov's questioning about the funding of the protest:

> *Fedorov, hydroenergy specialist*: I'm interested in what money you're using to run your large-scale protests? – after all there are cars, placards, food there.
> *Tekebaev*: The money is the participants' themselves. Holding a protest like this doesn't require huge means. People can simply bring a sandwich and bottle of water with them.[154]

Tekebaev's response seeks to counter the implication that the organisers may be acting in the interests of whoever is paying for the protest by claiming that it is effectively a shoestring-budget

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[151] Temir, Elvira & Gulchekhara Karimova (2006) "Pryamaya liniya: Na piket s buterbrodom i butylkoi vody": 4.
[152] Personal email exchange. 23.04.2008.
[153] Temir, Elvira & Gulchekhara Karimova (2006) "Pryamaya liniya: Na piket s buterbrodom i butylkoi vody": 4.
[154] Temir, Elvira & Gulchekhara Karimova (2006) "Pryamaya liniya: Na piket s buterbrodom i butylkoi vody": 5.

grassroots-led movement. This argument seeks to bridge the gap between the public and politicians by implying popular ownership of the protest and its demands, as well as distancing the politicians from any suspicion of corruption.

The protest itself, however, gave reason to think that considerable resources were used in the organisation of the protest, as I observed. As the photographs in figure 4.13 show, many participants wore matching hats and coloured scarves; banners, placards and flags were produced and distributed amongst demonstrators before being collected in at the end of the protest; mineral water was distributed free of charge from the back of a lorry; two blocks of portaloos were set up on the square; balloons were distributed and released; and, last but not least, the organisers had arranged for a concert to be held after the speeches had ended.[155] Given that this scale of organisation in a country in which an estimated 39.9 percent of the population was classed as living in poverty in 2006,[156] Tekebaev's assertion that the protest was to be held solely using resources from the participants themselves seems disingenuous.

[155] Karimova, Gulchekhra (2006) "Utomlennye solntsem, zhazhdushchie mineralki i reform" ["Exhausted by the sun, thirsting for mineral water and reform"], *Vechernii Bishkek*, 29.05.2006, http://members.vb.kg/2006/05/29/panorama/1.html [last accessed 25.05.2008].
[156] National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic (n.d.) *Uroven bednosti v 2006* [*Poverty levels in 2006*], http://www.stat.kg/Bednota/Default.html [last accessed 12/05/2008].

Figure 4.13: Notable features of the 27 May For Reforms! protest[157]

Protesters in matching hats & green scarves

Protesters with printed paper flags

Protesters with balloons, banners and flags

Ata-Meken supporters with placards and printed paper hats

Protesters with banners, matching hats & pink scarves

View of the many banners and placards displayed at the protest

Handing out free mineral water to protest participants

Two sets of portaloos were set up on Ala-Too Square

Placards were collected in at the close of the protest

[157] All photographs taken by the author. Images cropped from originals.

In general the atmosphere felt far less tense than the April protest, and even if the demands were the same, the format was different: "the May protest was significantly different from the preceding one. Evidently the "For Reforms" movement learnt from their April experience and therefore did not announce this time that the protest could be for an unlimited time."[158] However, I would argue that there is significant reason to disagree with one reporter's assertion that "[t]here is also no doubt that thanks to this protest civil society has taken a substantial step forward, having fixed in the majority if Kyrgyzstanis' consciousness what protests mean in the country's political life and how they can influence and determine events in the country".[159] A more cynical view would be that people felt that they could not influence political events to any great extent, so they might as well gain whatever benefit they could from the protests, whether by using the protest as a forum to voice their own concerns or simply as a distraction from the mundanities of every day life.

Several people at the protest referred to it as "entertainment" and a "performance", with one youth activist joking that protests could even become an attraction for tourists, "you know, extreme tourism!"[160] This perception was reflected in media coverage, with one reporter observing that "the protest [was] more like a celebratory meeting, people have brought a lot of flowers with them."[161] Arguably the most concise summary of the protest was provided by the caption to a photograph featured in *Gazeta.kg*'s photoreport, "Like at a May demonstration" (figure 4.14).

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[158] Kalymbaev, Kuban (2006) "Oppozitsiya ushla v ten" ["The opposition has moved into the shade"], *Gazeta.kg,* 27.05.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/articles/2006/05/27/meeting/ [last accessed 23.04.2008].
[159] Osorov, Zamir (2006) "Oda v chesti maiskogo mitinga i oppozitsii" ["An ode in honour of the May protest and the opposition"], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 57 (399), 30.05.2006, Bishkek: 2.
[160] Personal conversations with demonstrators, Ala-Too Square, Bishkek, 27.05.2006.
[161] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Miting nachalsya s minuty molchaniya v chest pogibshikh 12 maya" ["The protest bagan with a minute of silence for those killed on May 12"], 11.33, 27.05.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/05/27/meeting3 [last accessed 30.05.2008].

Figure 4.14: "Like at a May demonstration"[162]

The composition of the photo, with its careful diversity by age, sex and ethnicity, suggests that the caption could be interpreted as drawing a parallel between the political insignificance of Soviet May demonstrations and parades for the public, who appreciated the event as a day out and a break from everyday life rather than as a political statement that was intended by the political elite.

The idea of there being a dual interpretation of the event's meaning being acted out is supported by further disparities between words and actions of the opposition leaders. Despite the emotive rhetoric voiced by various For Reforms! members during their speeches, their performance did not convince the public of their seriousness. For example, Dooronbek Sadyrov's speech about the need for an end to clannism seemed ideal to stir the crowd to more active endorsement of the Opposition's demands in light of ongoing concerns about the negative

[162] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Maiskaya zhazhda reform" ["May's thirst for reform"], 27.05.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/photo/2006/05/27/miting/07_Jpg.htm [last accessed 17.04.2008]. Reproduced with permission.

impact of clan loyalties on politics: "I want to confess here, on the Kyrgyz *maidan*, and speak about what no-one has yet spoken about. I'm not *Solto,* not *Sarybagysh*, not *Bugu*. I am simply Kyrgyz! I am everywhere, because Kyrgyzstan is my homeland."[163] Yet it was greeted with cat calls and hoots at the time, and interpreted even more negatively by one commentator:

> While loudly proclaiming the absence of nationalism and unacceptability of clannism, regional and kin loyalties, the "Ciceros" of Kyrgyz democracy nevertheless reminded people that Kyrgyzstan is the country of the Kyrgyz, and everyone else are only brothers and sisters to them, are still guests of the Kyrgyz and are slightly abusing their good nature.[164]

The For Reforms! movement also did not help its credibility and social legitimacy by making directly contradictory statements regarding whether or not it had demanded that the President and Prime Minister appear and speak to protestors.[165] The impression of disunity created by this incident as well as others, as well as the fact that many participants identified with a particular party or politician,[166] was that the For Reform! movement would be no more capable of carrying out reforms than the current government.

Perhaps most problematic, however, was that the opposition themselves seemed reluctant to follow up their words with corresponding actions. Although they were prepared to organise mass protests, they did not want to take responsibility for actually taking action that would force the government to either commit to their demands or reject them outright. There was a perceived risk of violence in either action. It was as if their attitude was "Well, it's not like we really want to, but what else can we do…",[167] as one journalist put it when the intention to

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[163] Karimova, Gulchekhra (2006) "Utomlennye solntsem, zhazhdushchie mineralki i reform".
[164] Malevanaya, Darya (2006), "Beloe solntse MAIdana" ["The white sun of the MAYdan"], *Moya stolitsa novosti,* 57 (399), 30.05.2006: 8.
[165] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Omurbek Tekebaev: My ne budem trebovat vykhoda k narodu Bakieva" ["Omurbek Tekebaev: We will not demand that Bakiev come out before the people"], 12.26, 27.05.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/05/27/conversation [last accessed 23.04.2008].
[166] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Kolonny manifestantov vydvinulis k ploshchadi Ala-Too" ["Columns of demonstrators moving towards Ala-Too Square"], 10.44, 27.05.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/05/27/meeting1 [last accessed 30.05.2008].
[167] Samartseva, Nataliya (2006) "Miting budet – stavka na zero".

demonstrate was announced. Largely as a result of this disinclination, For Reforms! concluding statement at the end of the protest on 27 May, sounded more like an attempt to save face than a real ultimatum:

> Today we are once again giving the authorities notice. However, if real steps towards the realisation of these demands are not made on their part, then we reserve the right to insist upon the resignation of the tandem.[168]

As a result of this poorly managed attempt to confront the government and gain wide public support, the opposition's securitising move faded, not so much through being desecuritized as simply disintegrating.

3. Interpreting Securitising Moves: Unspoken Words, Inactive Actions

Following the muted end of the second protest, some commentators were quick to conclude that the For Reforms! movement had failed in its efforts to hold the government accountable and force immediate reforms. In particular, the huge disparity between the For Reform! movement's attendance estimate and the official one was seen to further discredit the opposition; while the protest's organisers claimed attendance of in the region of 30,000 people, official estimates suggested a more plausible 6,000.[169] *Eurasianet* concluded that the low turnout had left the opposition "exposed as not having strong public backing" and argued that this "could have a boomerang effect on reform advocates: instead of forcing Bakiev to embrace an accelerated reform pace, the president's [sic] resolve may harden, and he may well press for constitutional reforms that strengthen executive branch authority at the expense of the

[168] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Spisok trebovanii uchastnikov mitinga".
[169] Karimova, Gulchekhra (2006) "Utomlennye solntsem, zhazhdushchie mineralki i reform".

legislature".[170] At best, as IWPR concluded, the opposition could expect its standoff with the government "to drag on over the summer months".[171] Opinion in Bishkek seemed to reflect the waning of the opposition's influence, with one local analyst commenting with little apparent concern that "[i]f nothing changes in the coming three months, then the same kind of demonstration will probably take place in September, only on a smaller scale, with fewer participants, and less impact."[172]

However, others felt that the protest had had significant impact on the socio-political situation. Edil Baisalov, leader of the NGO Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, which was allied with the For Reforms! movement, felt that *Eurasianet*'s assessment of the protest missed the point: What difference does it make if there were 6,000 or 30,000 people there? The most important thing is that the protest took place![173] Indeed, some local analysts took exactly the same view on the basis that the very incidence of mass demonstrations is an indicator of socio-political instability and crisis. 'Normal politics' in Kyrgyzstan had become paralysed and events were taking place in "emergency conditions". Writing after the protest in *ResPublica*, journalist Timirbaev explained the risk involved: such a state of affairs "is dangerous since in emergency conditions it is extremely difficult to observe moderation and keep oneself within the bounds of common sense, the possible and the acceptable. States of emergency and excess do not live without each other."[174]

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[170] *Eurasianet* (2006) "Low protest turnout hampers reformers in Kyrgyzstan", 30.05.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav053006.shtml [last accessed 25.04.2008].
[171] Saralaeva, Leila (2006) "Kyrgyz Opposition Defers Ultimatum", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 450, 02.06.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=321362&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[172] Saralaeva, Leila (2006) "Kyrgyz Opposition Defers Ultimatum".
[173] Baisalov, Edil (2006) "Miting 27-ogo: My-kyrgyzstantsy mozhem soboj gorditsya!" ["Protest on the 27th: We Kyrgyzstanis can be proud of ourselves!"], *baisalov* Live Journal, 31.05.2006, http://baisalov.livejournal.com/78358.html [last accessed 23.04.2008].
[174] Timirbaev, Vyacheslav (2006), "Kogda izmenyaet chuvstvo mery".

These contradictory interpretations reflected the almost complete divergence of the local (Bishkek) and international security meta-narratives. Yet what was explicit on the international level – i.e. that protests and continuing socio-political upheaval threatened Kyrgyzstan's viability as a state and as a country – was also implicit in the local narrative and helped to deconstruct the opposition's securitising move. Specifically, the local media's narrative that events could spin out of the opposition's control effectively undermined the For Reforms! movement's securitising move. Media commentary referring to the possibility of revolution in conjunction with the government's almost total lack of public reaction created an *implicit* counter-securitising narrative through what *wasn't* said or done. Nevertheless, the message was clear: protests are a threat to Kyrgyzstan's future and could cause further socio-economic instability and even violence. The persuasiveness of this argument was not lost on the protest's organisers, judging by their caution in issuing ultimatums and efforts to reassure the public of their good intentions.

However, the tactic depended on knowing not just the context of events (local knowledge), but also how people were likely to interpret them, i.e. the local way of knowing. The media depended on making allusions to the possible consequences of the protest and the opposition's "real" motivations, as well as simply presenting their mainly Bishkek-based and protest-fatigued readers with quotations from various opposition figures without any commentary, as in the case of the *Vechernii Bishkek* phone-in.[175] Similarly, the government did not attempt to publicly engage with the opposition's demands, instead focusing on presenting itself as the provider of order and security for Bishkek's residents and their property.[176] Central in this respect was the sensitive deployment of police and security personnel, with virtually no uniformed presence on Ala-Too Square throughout the protest by prior agreement with the

[175] Temir, Elvira & Gulchekhara Karimova (2006) "Pryamaya liniya: Na piket s buterbrodom i butylkoi vody".
[176] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "MVD KR: Za poryadkom v Bishkeke budut sledit bolee trekh tysyach militsionerov".

organisers.[177] The avoidance of direct engagement or countering of the For Reforms! rhetoric was vital for the creation of this implied narrative, since it caused contradictions between the opposition's claims and what people experienced: specifically, although the protest took place and people attended (action), its socio-political significance was considerably reduced by the incoherence of the security narrative presented (words). The end result was that the For Reforms! movement as a securitising actor was unable to convince people to accept their point of view – that its demands would lead to improvements in their lives – with either words or actions.

The situation at the end of May demonstrated how the various meta-narratives, which had existed entirely discretely from each other in the preceding months, could be appropriated for securitising moves in other contexts. In this case, there was a clear cross-level dynamic, with the "Birmingham" meta-narrative influencing the Osh and Bishkek meta-narratives in different ways. Firstly, in Bishkek, the international security meta-narrative of crisis arguably assisted the government and media in eroding support for the opposition's confrontation with the government. Not only did it – to some extent – confirm fears about the physical danger posed by large-scale protests, it also made the country's elites aware of the damage being done to Kyrgyzstan's international reputation at a time when the government needed external support more than ever both to enhance its legitimacy and also to offer material and financial assistance. In this way it acted as a "stick", pushing the government to take a stronger stance when faced with the prospect of continued public protests.

This change in handling opposition did not go unnoticed internationally, but did not garner the approval for which Bakiev had possibly been hoping. Despite the discernible change in the balance of power in the government's favour by mid-June, the international security meta-

[177] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "MVD: Na ploshchad Ala-To prishlo 6 tysyach mitinguyushchikh" ["Ministry of Internal Affairs: 6 thousand protestors have come to Ala-Too Square"], 12.13, 27.05.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/kgnews/2006/05/27/militia [last accessed 23.04.2008].

narrative of Kyrgyzstan in crisis and a potentially failed state remained essentially unaltered. Speaking after an EU-Kyrgyzstan summit meeting just under two months later, EU delegation leader, the Finnish Secretary of State Pertti Torstila described Kyrgyzstan as "an exception in the [Central Asian – CW] region" and praised the government's "responsible handling" of protests, but noted that "we on the European side emphasized continuing engagement which is needed to stabilize the political situation" during the meeting.[178]

One of the reasons for the continued persistence of the international view of Kyrgyzstan as a potential failed state at this time was the disjuncture between international and local interpretations of a rally held by ethnic Uzbeks in Jalalabad, in the south of Kyrgyzstan, at the end of May 2006. The protest was initiated by Uzbek activists to call for greater official cultural and linguistic autonomy, apparently fuelled by a sense of being constantly marginalised by the government in Bishkek.[179] Rather than strengthening the Uzbek activists' position, however, the chief outcome of the protest was increased concern on all sides about the potential for inter-ethnic conflict between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. Yet beyond this common concern, opinion about the protest's implications was divided. In Osh, the protest was strongly condemned by many in the local Uzbek community who feared it could exacerbate existing tensions.[180] Once again, the Osh events were invoked as reminder of the possible consequences, [181] with the preservation of even a negative peace being the priority even if there was a degree of sympathy towards the

[178] Lobjakas, Ahto (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: EU Supportive, but Cautious", *Eurasianet,* 19.07.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp071906.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[179] Khamidov, Alisher (2006) "Ethnic Uzbeks Intensify Civil Rights Advocacy Effort", *Eurasianet,* 07.06.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav060706a.shtml [last accessed 17.10.2008].
[180] Personal conversations, Dom druzhby and with acquaintances, Osh, 06.06.2006 & 07.06.2006.
[181] Sadybakasova, Astra (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: How Real are Uzbek Minority Concerns?", *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 451, 07.06.2006, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=321476&apc_state=herirca2006 [last accessed 17.10.2008].

demands.[182] This view very much chimed with the Osh securitising meta-narrative, in which protests were seen as a greater and more immediate threat than the potential inter-ethnic conflict, but which at the same time was to a great extent dependent on the 1990 Osh events as a source of credibility, despite, paradoxically, the other keystone of the narrative resting on local self-perception of southerners as being more conflict averse and more committed to maintaining peace in comparison to rash and self-serving politicians in Bishkek.

Meanwhile in Bishkek, the government reverted to state-centric arguments to dismiss the Uzbek claims in the face of potential international support for them in the form of a visit by the OSCE High Commissioner for Ethnic Minorities to Kyrgyzstan.[183] At a meeting with the OSCE High Commissioner for Ethnic Minorities, Rolf Ekeus, on 2 June, State Secretary Adakhan Madumarov said Uzbek could not be granted official status because Kyrgyzstan is "a unitary state, not a confederation" and that such a move could spur other ethnic minorities to make similar demands.[184] Madumarov commented pointedly that "It would not be right if the OSCE High Commissioner on ethnic minority issues aggravated the current situation while trying to help to solve the problem", demonstrating the government's apparent surge in confidence concerning its control of the situation.

Domestically, the authorities sought to quash the new potential source of unrest by focusing on the need for stability. Here the local Osh security meta-narrative was drawn upon to underpin the government's stance and challenge the notion that the protesters' demands had

[182] Interview with member of the Uzbek National-Cultural Association Orzo, Dom druzhby, Osh, 06.06.2006.
[183] http://www.osce.org/hcnm/item_6_19962.html [last accessed 13.01.2009]. The OSCE provided details of his itinerary: "The then High Commissioner, Rolf Ekeus, visited Kyrgyzstan between 31 May and 2 June 2006. During his stay in the capital, Bishkek, he met with a number of MPs of Uzbek ethnicity. The High Commissioner then travelled to the southern town of Uzben [sic] which has a predominantly ethnic Uzbek population. In Uzgen, Rolf Ekeus met with the Mayor of the city as well as with the representatives of the town's Uzbek community and ethnic Kyrgyz leaders from the neighbouring villages." Contrary to the implication in some media reports, he did not visit Jalalabad. Personal email, 15.01.2009.
[184] Sadybakasova, Astra (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: How Real are Uzbek Minority Concerns?".

enjoyed much support. Reports of the parliamentary debate about the matter on May 30 referred to Uzbek community leaders from Osh who were against the protest and feared the consequences,[185] and the initiator of the protest, Kadyrjan Batyrov, a Jogorku Kenesh deputy and President of the Uzbek National Cultural Centre, was accused of destabilizing the situation.[186]

Ironically, the government's approach to the Jalalabad Uzbeks' protest arguably contributed to the persistence of the international security meta-narrative of crisis. Firstly, the incident provided a further example of the government's refusal to engage in dialogue with its opponents and take an increasingly harsh stance in dealing with challenges to its authority. Secondly, recalling Edil Baisalov's opinion quoted earlier, there was the fact that the protest happened at all; rather than seeing it as a positive sign – the peaceful and "democratic" expression of concerns – many international commentators preferred to interpret it as a further indication of Kyrgyzstan's instability, especially in light of the location of the protest in the south, commonly viewed as being at high risk of violent conflict and at odds with Bishkek.

[185] Sadybakasova, Astra (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: How Real are Uzbek Minority Concerns?"; Osmonov, Joldosh (2006) "Uzbek Community in Kyrgyzstan Want [sic] Uzbek as Official Language", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 8(12), 14.06.2006, http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4020 [last accessed 23.04.2008].
[186] Osmonov, Joldosh (2006) "Uzbek Community in Kyrgyzstan Want Uzbek as Official Language".

4. Conclusion: A Comparative Geography of Analytical Mono-Perspectives

> The holding of protests is not an extreme measure, but rather the basic form of the appearance of civic activity of any democratic society! That mass protests have become the norm of our lives since the start of April is witness to the normalisation of the situation in the country.[187]

Edil Baisalov's interpretation of Kyrgyzstan's post-Akaev outbreak of "protestocracy" might be seen by some as simply an effort by a known anti-government figure to put a positive spin on a disruptive protest phenomenon that various interest groups exploited for their own gains. Certainly, as has been charted in this chapter, international opinion did not generally concur with Baisalov; rather, the frequency of protests about a wide range of issues was taken to be an indication of Kyrgyzstan's fragile state and the government's inability to deal effectively with the situation it inherited when seizing power. Yet, as demonstrated in this chapter, the credibility of this interpretation relies considerably on the observer's positionality – in this case not only in the abstract sense, but also geographically. For people in Osh and outside of Kyrgyzstan, the claim that protests are part of "normalisation" in the Kyrgyz Republic is directly contradicted by their own interpretations of events. In their understanding, protests are an indication of instability and a potential source of insecurity and danger. From where they are standing (literally), there is little evidence to challenge this conclusion. In the continued absence of credible evidence to cause a change of interpretation, commentators often fall back on their prior knowledge in order to make sense of new events. In cases where a securitising/security meta-narrative has previously formed, it is likely to become a key source of prior knowledge, not least as frequently it possesses the additional credibility of "expert" knowledge.

However, the nature of such meta-narratives is inherently problematic for two reasons. The first is that in conjunction with securitization theory, they produce accounts of "security" that are meta-securitizations, as explored in chapter three, representing at best an edited account of

[187] Baisalov, Edil (2006) "Miting 27-ogo: My-kyrgyzstantsy mozhem soboj gorditsya!"

the loudest “voices” in a situation. Secondly, the persistence of meta-narratives and their self-perpetuating nature potentially means that despite her best efforts, the observer may find that she is unable to effectively look beneath any security meta-narrative regarding a particular situation that exists in the same location as the one in which the researcher is. Take for example the differing accounts and opinions of the April and May protests in the three locations considered in this chapter: the more I was able to observe events directly, the greater the number of contradictions and details I encountered as I was exposed to multiple interpretations of what was happening. While there were intra-level contradictions evident in each location, the most striking feature became the stability of international understandings of Kyrgyzstan, the speed at which meanings changed in Bishkek, and the presence of a combination of both processes simultaneously in Osh.

In the previous chapter I proposed that empirical studies utilising securitization theory would be enhanced by reflexive consideration of local situated knowledge, especially regarding people’s chosen form of expressing their concerns about “security”. Explicitly seeking to incorporate such perspectives into analyses permits us to focus on specificities, ambiguities and the disjunctures between theory, method and the field. For the study of social phenomena – including security – this approach is likely to be far more revealing and sensitive to details than the positivist focus on finding empirical commonalities using a supposedly universal theory. The consideration of multiple locations is a further step that can be taken to inform our understandings of security in a given empirical situation by facilitating the exploration of the congruence, or incongruence, of “security” on different spatial levels, thus adding an additional set of interpretive layers to one’s study. While the Copenhagen School’s theoretical conceptualisation of security suggests that it can be identified by the analyst through careful study of actors’ pronouncements, in practice “security” is often more difficult to locate: within a setting where there has not been wide spread or large scale outbreaks of violence, but where

the socio-political situation is in an extreme state of flux, everything or nothing is potentially a matter of “security”. An empirical study of security in these circumstances becomes a matter of building up layers of multiple (socio-culturally and spatially) situated meanings via which a more comprehensive but less clear-cut picture of “security” emerges, revealing the various dynamics that exist at each individual level and how they do – or do not – interact with each other. In this respect, it is worth recalling Brubaker and Cooper's concern about the analytical utility of identity discussed in chapter two; rather than starting out with a predetermined analytical category such as "identity" that is then deconstructed into non-existence, it is a question of trying to gradually build up a sufficiently thick description to allow relevant social phenomena to become evident to the researcher.

CHAPTER FIVE

FUNCTIONAL ACTORS: SECURITIZATION'S MISSING LINKS?

While the previous two chapters have focused chiefly on a series of specific events with a view to considering how better to utilise securitization theory for an empirical fieldwork-based study of "security", this chapter takes a step back to consider the wider construction of "security" and the actors involved in this process. I address this issue through an interrogation of the concept of functional actors in securitization theory. Unlike most other aspects of the Copenhagen School's theory, which are extremely narrowly defined, the role of a functional actor has been left almost completely undefined beyond the statement that a functional actor "is an actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security"[1] and who is not the securitising actor or the referent object.

Yet beyond this, the actual function of this category of actors is unaddressed, as is the question of how they influence "the field of security". In practice, therefore, it can be quite difficult to ascertain if an actor meets the criteria for being classed as a functional actor in a particular securitization, even before multiple levels are considered. In the absence of any precise definitions about who is, and is not, a functional actor, this chapter takes as its starting point the question of how a functional actor affect security and securitising dynamics. Due to the complete lack of conceptual clarity regarding functional actors, I have chosen to approach the topic initially by considering how a range of actors not yet accounted for by securitization theory influence understandings of security in Kyrgyzstan. As such, they can be viewed as potential functional actors. Firstly, I examine the role of the media in shaping perceptions of security. Beginning with the idea of the media as a functional actor, I reflect on the media's involvement in reporting the Akmatbaev protests and the spring 2006 protests and its influence on the various securitising

[1] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 36.

moves that were presented by different actors. Specifically, I focus on the differing identity of “the media” in different contexts and levels and the impact of wider media agendas on the role of media actors in security dynamics. I then consider the influence of a number of actors who, even when not in the role of a securitising actor, nonetheless still have the ability to significantly influence Kyrgyzstan’s security dynamics and outcomes. The influence of other states and international organisations on perceptions of Kyrgyzstan’s security situation is considered with reference to Kyrgyzstan’s relationship with the US and its place in the international system. Finally, I consider how Kyrgyzstan’s donor-driven civil society influences security in Kyrgyzstan, highlighting how the third sector’s cross-level dynamics (local-international, internal-external) challenge the sovereignty of the "weak" state and its ability to control the field of security domestically and internationally.

On the basis of these case studies, I reflect on the theoretical under-conceptualisation of functional actors in securitization theory. In doing so, I explore how the spatial scales discussed in the previous chapter are interlinked by functional actors who frequently operate across different analytical levels and spatial scales to situate interpretations of “security” in relation to meta-narratives that exist at local, state and international levels. I argue that adopting a ground-up approach to identifying functional actors is especially fruitful in situations where theoretical normative assumptions do not reflect local conditions. Kyrgyzstan offers a relatively extreme but far from unique case in this respect: the Westphalian assumptions of state sovereignty and a clear political and territorial demarcation between the domestic and international spheres that are inherent in securitization have at best limited applicability in states classed as “weak”, “failing” or “failed”. I use the term “weak” in this chapter as an analytical shorthand to describe a state that lacks the capacity to assert and/or protect its sovereignty independently in the domestic sphere, often giving rise to multiple loci of socio-political power as other actors gain legitimacy and authority at the expense of the government. The result of this change in the

domestic balance of power has implications for security dynamics at all levels, as will be discussed. Most significantly, it is evident that in fragile states the influence of functional actors is far more pervasive and powerful than in stable ones due to the porosity of the boundary between the domestic and external spheres of the state.

I argue that in some cases the distinction between being a securitising and functional actor is blurred to such a degree that it is necessary to completely reassess the role of such actors: rather than being actors, entities such as the media become active gatekeepers of security narratives. In this role they redact, promote, suppress and generally shape multiple securitising moves, determining to some extent how security is understood locally, nationally, regionally and internationally. I propose that the inclusion of a "gatekeeper" category would enhance securitization theory, both helping to address criticism of its narrow focus on the speech act and enabling consideration within the framework of how actors other than the securitising actor influence interpretations of security at all levels and frequently across levels, I conclude by considering how the issues raised in this chapter surrounding the under-conceptualisation of functional actors point towards a further theoretical and empirical research agenda to more comprehensively account for the role of functional actors.

1. Potential Functional Actors in Kyrgyzstan

As noted in the previous section, in "weak" states such as Kyrgyzstan, the government is reliant on external actors for its legitimacy and credibility – as well as for material and financial support – to a far greater extent. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, there is an extremely sizable number of potential functional actors, including supranational organisations such as the United Nations and

its various agencies that have a presence in the republic,[2] other state or state-affiliated actors,[3] international and local NGOs and agencies. Their potential influence on domestic politics has been enhanced not only by the government's dependence upon their support, but also by the post-Soviet context. The collapse of the USSR has meant the wholesale discreditation of the Soviet system in many people's eyes, not least as the state has increasingly retreated from involvement in ensuring the welfare of its population as budgets and capacity have shrunk. In Kyrgyzstan the gaps left by the contraction of state services have been at least partially filled by the so-called third sector – a wide range of NGOs, development agencies and charities – that has been created and sustained using funding from foreign donors.[4] Approximately 800 NGOs were registered in the republic in the first five years of independence alone, with the number rising to more than 8,000 registered NGOs by 2007, although only around six per cent of these were thought to be active.[5]

In combination with high levels of corruption and the legacy of a culture that emphasised the personal benefits of public office, non-local actors and their representatives are often perceived as more credible and trustworthy than local state institutions by the public. Consequently, information they provide is often given greater weight in local interpretations of events. Thus, for example, a water engineer working on a water sanitation project funded by the UK's Department for International Development was surprised that during a site visit villagers insisted on asking her, rather than the local project leader, whether the water supply was safe to

[2] A list of the twelve United Nations agencies that currently operate in Kyrgyzstan can be found at http://www.un.org.kg/index.php?option=com_resource&view=list&category_id=4&Itemid=18 [last accessed 20.01.2009].
[3] Russia and the US are both examples of functional actors in securitizing moves in Kyrgyzstan.
[4] Kasybekov, E. (1999) "Government and Nonprofit Sector Relations in the Kyrgyz Republic", in Holt Ruffin, M. & Waugh, D. (1999), *Civil Society in Central Asia* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press), 71–84.
[5] *CentrAsia* (2007) "'DW' > O kirgizskikh NPO i 'mertvykh dushakh'" ["Deutsche Welle: About Kyrgyz NGOs and 'Dead Souls'"], 27.06.2007. http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1182889380 [last accessed 24.01.2009].

drink.[6] In addition, their behaviour is also scrutinised closely for any indications of their position or what's "really" going on in relation to a given matter by a public used both pre- and post-independence to having to "read between the lines" in order to accurately understand social and political developments. The perceived importance of the third sector as an information source amongst the public has been compounded in post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan by President Bakiev's reticence in times of high tension, which has created an environment in which silence is the cause of as much speculation as any commentary. The effect, to paraphrase Mikhail Gorbachev, is that everything and anything has – or is perceived to have – political meaning, if only by its absence, and sometimes regardless of an actor's intentions.

A key characteristic of many actors in Kyrgyzstan is their operational heterogeneity, with actors often possessing relationships with other actors not only at the unit level (i.e. with the state or society as a whole) but also at the supra-unit (regional, international, global) and sub-unit (communities, geographical locales) levels. However, as is explored in the subsequent sections, the level(s) on which an actor's relationships are analysed can determine their status in a securitization – that is, whether an actor is a securitising actor, a referent object, a threat referent or a functional actor. This phenomenon means that status as a functional actor cannot be assumed. Rather, it is necessary to ascertain if an actor exerts influence on security and only then how this influence manifests itself. The case of the media, which is often assumed to be central to our understandings of security issues, demonstrates this necessity.

[6] Personal conversation, Bishkek, 03.11.2005.

1.i. The Media & Security

Michael Williams has previously noted that "as events in the world of security seem daily to demonstrate, modern media is a central element of security relations".[7] As such, securitization's exclusive focus on speech-acts is deemed to be excessively narrow and analytically limiting. Focusing on the role of televisual images in political communication, he observes that "[d]ifferent mediums […] are not neutral in their communicative impact. The conditions of the production and reception of communicative acts are influenced fundamentally by the medium through which they are transmitted"[8], concluding that "it seems clear that any theory that is premised on the social impact of communicative action must assess the impact that different mediums of communication have on the acts, their impacts, and their influence on the processes of securitization."[9] Williams' solution to this issue is to call for the employment of "broader techniques for 'reading' the rhetorics of securitizing acts, techniques attuned to the rhetorics of visual representation and reception, and their contextual aspects."[10] Significantly, he asserts that

> a securitization research agenda requires an expanded field of institutional analysis. The institutional locus of effective securitization cannot be restricted to traditional organizational sites, such as Defense departments and foreign ministries. It must also account for the ways in which these acts are mediated through communications institutions ("the media") that are organizationally distinct from the site of securitization, that are bound up with competing logics (commercialization, market share, audience attraction), and yet that are central to the securitizing act. This does not mean that the traditional institutions of security are losing their power (quite the opposite may be the case), but it does mean that the relationships among the different institutions (and their–often different–imperatives and strategies) are of central importance in understanding contemporary securitization practices.[11]

Yet the role of the media in securitizations has remained sorely neglected by scholars until very recently. Lene Hansen has taken up Williams' call to focus on visual mediums with her

[7] Williams, Michael C. (2003): 524.
[8] Williams, Michael C. (2003): 526.
[9] Williams, Michael C. (2003): 527.
[10] Williams, Michael C. (2003): 527.
[11] Williams, Michael C. (2003): 527-528.

ongoing exploration of the "Danish cartoon controversy" and how the cartoons came to be securitized.[12] Meanwhile, Ciaran O'Reilly has explored the role of the US media in the securitization of Iraq, conceptualizing the media as a functional actor.[13] Considering the securitization of Iraq in the aftermath of 9/11, O'Reilly argues that the media became "a temporary government mouthpiece", thus contributing to a successful securitization in conjunction with prevalent local "facilitating conditions".[14] Finally, and most importantly, Philippe Bourbeau has begun to address the nature of the media's influence in securitizations. As he observes, the notion that the media influences perceptions of security has become axiomatic, but little effort has been made to explore the veracity of this seemingly common-sense statement, nor to "unpack" it.[15] Exploring the impact of print media on the securitization of migration in France and Canada, Bourbeau finds that the precise role of the media varies considerably in different cases, indicating that the media can fulfil a range of roles from being a key securitising actor to having no direct role in a securitization other than to convey a securitising actor's threat narrative – that is, a default functional actor.

In Kyrgyzstan the media can be seen at different times to have fulfilled all of the roles suggested by Bourbeau and O'Reilly, as the country director of IWPR explained, outlining the three main functions of the media in the country: a "whistleblower" that reports on violations of law and order, an information provider, and a propagandist.[16] However, the ways in which it carries out these functions, and how they are understood, varies considerably, especially at the sub- and supra-unit levels (i.e. locally and internationally). The media's heterogeneity as an institution means that different elements of "the media" influence securitising moves or security

[12] Hansen, Lene (2008).
[13] O'Reilly, Ciaran (2008) "Primetime Patriotism: News Media and the Securitization of Iraq", *Journal of Politics and Law* 1(3): 66–72.
[14] O'Reilly, Ciaran (2008): 68.
[15] Bourbeau, Philippe (2008).
[16] Interview with the country director of IWPR, Bishkek, 06.12.2005.

meta-narratives in different ways and at different levels. The impact depends not only on the local context, but also on the composition of the securitising move to which "the media" is linked. In some instances journalists or individual media outlets may be capable of taking on the role of a securitising actor in their own right, often performing a counter-securitising move. For example, Bishkek-based newspapers were instrumental in the failure of the For Reforms! movement's attempt to securitise the Bakiev government and thus cause a "second revolution", as explored in the previous chapter.

However, the media's involvement in a particular securitising move is determined not only by its relationship to other components of that and other securitising moves, but also by the broader media agenda, not least the need to engage with its target audience, as Williams recognises. In this regard, there are quite specific factors to be considered: not only what does the audience want, but how does it want that information presented. Particularly in market economy conditions, working out what a media outlet's readers want is largely a question of what sells. At times, this can lead to a focus on news that is perceived as unimportant or irrelevant elsewhere, since, as Hans-Henrik Holm points out, what makes the front page is determined by the "local" (which is not necessarily geographically bounded) cultural, historical and ideological context.[17] Cogent in this respect was the response of the chief editor of the independent newspaper *Itogi nedeli* in Osh to my question about how he selects what stories to cover: what will sell the most copies. For example, a recent issue uncovering the awarding of incorrect degree certificates by a local university[18] sold very well, but "when there is a political theme, there are far fewer copies sold"[19], he told me. Similarly, IWPR's country director commented that "we [IWPR] are orientated towards an international audience. […] we want to

[17] Holm, Hans-Henrik (2002) "Failing Failed States: Who Forgets the Forgotten?", *Security Dialogue* 33(4): 464.
[18] Jorobekova, Nargiza (2006) "Nenuzhnyj diplom stoit 50 000 somov" ["A unnecessary diploma costs 50,000 som"], *Itogi nedeli* 15(47) 14.04.2006: 1.
[19] Interview with chief editor of *Itogi nedeli*, Osh, 05.05.2006.

cover those topics that are understandable for an international audience, but that we cannot cover in a great deal of detail, [so] this might sometimes be topics that may be exotic and interesting for the international reader".[20]

Such an audience-focused approach does not of course solely reflect the interests of that audience, be it a readership in Osh or one that is global. However, it is likely to increase the persistence of security meta-narratives on these levels, since the role of the audience's *"cognitive bias"* and the impact it has on their interpretations of events is often going to be more pronounced. Hughes explains:

> This condition [of cognitive bias] relies on the proposition that humans generally accept arguments which confirm their pre-formed beliefs about 'reality' while tending to reject those arguments which contradict existing beliefs. This matters fundamentally to discussions about securitization attempts because the exact same material and ideational phenomena (e.g. an argument's logic, the securitizing actor, and external references) can then be interpreted with dramatically different meaning depending on the audience's pre-conceived views of 'reality'.[21]

In other words, information that is not congruent with their pre-existing understandings is likely to be evaluated as possessing a lower degree of credibility than information that confirms the audience's existing views. This effect, as discussed in the previous chapter, is exacerbated when there are restrictions on other sources of information that present possible alternative interpretations and conclusions, with physical proximity exerting a significant influence, i.e. the closer the audience is to a news story spatially, the greater the amount of "information" available on the basis of which the situation can be interpreted. Thus, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, during the spring of 2006 the idea of Kyrgyzstan being either on the verge of crisis or in crisis was a far more prominent discourse in Osh and in international coverage of events than in Bishkek.

[20] Interview with the country director of IWPR, Bishkek, 06.12.2005.
[21] Hughes, Bryn (2004): 16.

Supporting this suggested dynamic is the more event-reactive approach to coverage described by the chief editor of one of Bishkek's main independent newspapers. With the pressure to boost circulation lessened by having a wider potential readership, reflecting the relatively wealthier and more highly educated demography of Bishkek's inhabitants, as well as the capital's larger population, the media is less directly beholden to the reader. Rather, the media is likely to focus on whatever the big breaking story happens to be, as *ResPublica*'s chief editor described:

> We publish once a week and that has a great deal of influence in defining our coverage. Our life is so unpredictable and rich in events that it possible that by the time that we must go to print all the materials that we've prepared in advance end up in the bin. For example, when we did the latest edition, the situation was normal, we were doing a standard edition, and then suddenly there were horrific events in the prisons and it was necessary to redo literally everything taking into account these events. […] So life itself dictates [the topics], we don't particularly choose themes, although of course when it is quieter we orient ourselves towards what's going on. So, for example, yesterday I released an edition, and today I know that I want to meet with our HIV/AIDS programme head. There are many reasons for this, but I don't know if the topic will be relevant, it depends what else happens. We're a societal-political newspaper, so political topics are the most important.[22]

This is not to say that their coverage is not still subject to audience preferences. In comparison to the broadly rational choices that determine what subjects are addressed by the media, such as what sells or what is currently the "big story", the "how" of information is governed by more subjective criteria, determined by how audiences wish to engage with information. Talking about domestic print-based media, IWPR's country director provided the following reader typology:

> There are three sorts of reader. There are readers who want to pick up a newspaper and read what they should do. They say, "tell me what I need to do". These are people who want propaganda, there are state newspapers that still fulfil this function for them. There are readers who say "tell me simply what happened". And there are media that simply give all the information objectively and give the reader the right to decide what he wants and what decisions to take on the basis of the information. And the third… it's something between these two. It's not propaganda, not just factual information, but analysis. That is,

[22] Interview with the chief editor of *ResPublica*, Bishkek, 09.11.2005.

> they, the readers, say "tell me about it, help me understand what's going on, what's being talked about".[23]

Whether or not the second function – that of the media as an entirely "objective" chronicler of facts – is actually possible is open to debate. *Itogi nedeli*'s editor chose to describe journalists as "parts of a big mirror" that reflects events in society "with maximum impartiality".[24] Similarly, *ResPublica*'s editor took the position that while she agreed that the media influences public opinion, "with time the media's function has become that we should simply, disinterestedly and objectively cover reality without thinking about whether its influence will be positive or negative". Her logic for this rejection of the media having any further responsibilities was simple: "people are not so stupid, the society for which we work is not that simple nor that stupid, they understand by themselves".[25] If this characterisation of the media were correct, then there would be little need, if any, to consider its impact on "security"; it would be, true to its name, merely a medium for securitizing actors' messages.

Yet both of my interviewees acknowledged that viewing the media in this way is problematic: "it's extremely complicated, because even when one writes about a simple topic, that a shop's being built somewhere, for example, one already has some sort of perspective, already it is not possible to be impartial."[26] Furthermore, just as what news reaches the front page is determined by the local context, neither can the media as an institution be viewed in isolation from its environment. In keeping with Hughes' idea of cognitive bias, audiences are therefore likely to consider the identity of the media outlet itself (implicitly if not explicitly) in deciding how much weight it exerts on their interpretation of an issue. If, for example, the government-owned *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* presents the holding of mass protests and rallies as a

[23] Interview with the country director of IWPR, Bishkek, 06.12.2005.
[24] Interview with chief editor of *Itogi nedeli*, Osh, 05.05.2006.
[25] Interview with the chief editor of *ResPublica*, Bishkek, 09.11.2005.
[26] Interview with chief editor of *Itogi nedeli*, Osh, 05.05.2006.

threat to the country's stability and calls for a moratorium on the holding of protests, people may be more circumspect about endorsing the securitising move than if newspapers aligned either independently or against the government presented the same narrative.

This situation points towards the idea that in practice the media is *at the very least* a contextual functional actor, since what it reports and how it reports it is a reflection of the interrelationships between actors and referents, as well as the broader socio-political conditions, in a given locale. Yet this conceptualisation of the media as a conduit or, to borrow O'Reilly's term, a "mouthpiece" for securitizing actors presents "the media" as subordinate to the state. Indeed, the chief editor of the Bishkek independent *ResPublica* explicitly rejected the notion of the media working in opposition to the state. Rather, she described the media's role as being

> to shed light on sensitive issues that exist in our society, so that the country's leadership knows where its weak points are […]. I've never felt that if one criticises, for example, the country's leadership or some other object that it's some sort of opposition. It is simply an attempt to shed light on those sensitive issues to which it is vital that someone turns their attention – in this case the executive branch [of the government].[27]

This role suggests that the media may act as a functional actor in relation to societal issues, helping groups (deliberately or not) to draw attention to their concerns, or, in some cases, voice their securitising narrative. Once again, the protests of October 2005 and spring 2006 provide numerous examples of this. Indeed, in October 2005 *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* reported that Ryspek Akmatbaev had taken umbrage at the media for not showing interviews with him on television, a view disputed by the article's author, who noted that "certain TV channels, despite it being the weekend, went on air with special news broadcasts and presented the points of view of the protesters, of Ryspek and of representatives of the authorities".[28]

[27] Interview with the chief editor of *ResPublica*, Bishkek, 09.11.2005.
[28] Karateeva, T. (2005) "My budem stoyat do kontsa" ["We'll stay until the end"], *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* 107(21868), 25.10.2005: 4.

Yet this characterisation of the media as a functional actor neglects the wider systemic impact of the media at all levels and across multiple spatial scales. Thanks to the active pursuit of audience approval in terms of content and style, the media has significant potential to act as a copy editor for securitising moves both on and between each level, determining which ones get heard and potentially amplified to reach other levels. In this way, the media becomes an active contributor to the meta-narratives that exist on different levels, filtering the information that creates them. While some local level securitising moves will be given coverage, thus widening the audience that the securitising actor can reach, the media may also act to silence actors, either by ignoring a story or by turning the tables on the actor in question and securitising it as a threat. A representative of the NGO Oazis, which worked with men who have sex with men, gay and bisexual men until its closure in 2008, described what happened when the media found out that the NGO was running a drag show:

> It happened that we were staging a drag show and decided to hold it in the Palace of Sport [one of the few big venues in Bishkek]. But the venue was booked up for a long time. Eventually we were given the venue on 15 April, which coincided with Russian [Orthodox] Easter. Our show's title was 'We're not angels'. And then a newspaper article with the same title was published [in *Vechernii Bishkek*], suggesting that our 'Sabbath' had been deliberately staged on same the day as Russian Orthodox Easter, that the Russian Orthodox church was against it, as were the Cossacks, and arguing for the show to be banned. But since all priests are 'us' [i.e. gay or gay-friendly] and they get along very well with the Cossacks, I met 'our' priests later and asked them if they were against it. They said they were unaware of it and that nobody had talked to them about it. It was journalists themselves who had decided to create a scandal out of nothing.[29]

Given that similar events would cause controversy in many parts of the world, it may be easy to dismiss the media's role in this case. But throughout my time in Bishkek and Osh people referred to the defining role that the media played. Despite many people expressing scepticism about the media's truthfulness,[30] people were aware of how the media could shape perceptions

[29] Interview with representative of the NGO Oazis, Bishkek, 26.11.2005.
[30] For example, a vox pop in Osh conducted by *Itogi nedeli* asked "do journalists write the truth?" Answers ran the full gamut from "they distort some facts, I don't know who to trust" and "they write the truth only 50

of events, particularly where sub-level or "minority interest" actors are involved.[31] The representative of the Uighur national-cultural organisation Ittipak whom I interviewed was clear about the media's impact on the Uighur community in Kyrgyzstan:

> [The position of the Uighur community] is, as it were, unstable, meaning that tensions rise and fall. Tensions usually rise after some part of the media somewhere publishes some sort of anti-Uighur, let's say "Uighurphobic", material. Then problems begin to occur a bit for us. […] As soon as any government source visits China or any material or humanitarian aid is provided to Kyrgyzstan, then I know that if I wait a couple of days or a week there will be some article published somewhere which talks about Uighur extremism or terrorism. […] A lot of political scientists and some journalists have looked at the media and looked at Uighurs, and then they're already writing that there are these organisations posing a danger to the whole world, they're Islamic terrorists or something, and then it's off and running. *And then prove that you're not a camel* [emphasis mine – CW].[32]

With the media effectively securitising Uighurs, the ability of the Uighur community to counter this perception or to express concerns about being portrayed as a threat to Kyrgyzstan, as well as regional and international stability is vastly reduced. The same is true of other minority groups. The situation is exacerbated by the weakness of the state, which often eliminates the possibility of asserting one's rights legally, resulting in an extension of Lene Hansen's "silent security dilemma":[33] not only are some groups denied a voice due to fears that speaking out will decrease their security, but on occasion such groups, such as the Uighur or LGBT communities in Kyrgyzstan, may find themselves securitized as a threat to state or society by the media with no way to defend themselves against a "trial by media".

The power of the media to influence interpretations and understandings of events is demonstrated particularly clearly when images and words are combined. Most simply, careful

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percent of the time" to "yes, they do. They objectively reflect reality". *Itogi nedeli* (2006) "Litsa Osha" ["Faces of Osh"], 17(49), 28.04.2006: 4.

[31] I use "sub-level" in preference to "sub-unit" since the key feature is the power imbalance between the securitizing actor and the level at which the threat narrative is presented, not the securitizing actor's position relative to the unit (i.e. state) level of analysis. Examples of "minority interest" actors in Kyrgyzstan include variously some ethnic minorities, sexual and gender minorities, land squatters, Ryspek Akmatbaev's supporters, or ethnic Kyrgyz converts to Christianity. The key feature is that the identity that defines the group is, in the given context, in contrast with the identity of the majority of society.

[32] Interview with representative of the Uighur National-Cultural association Ittipak, Bishkek, 19.12.2005.

[33] Hansen, Lene (2000).

editing or selection of photographs can be used to enhance the apparent authority to a written report – such as inflated claims of attendance at a protest, for example. However, it is when words are directly combined with an image, offering the reader/viewer an interpretation of the moment captured in the image, that the influence is greatest. The photograph and its alternative accompanying captions in figure 5.1, below, by journalist Elena Skochilo demonstrates how the same image can be used to very different effect.

Figure 5.1: Alternative interpretations: "White doves as a sign of peace"[34] or "The doves also flew away. Protest 27 May 2006." Followed by the comment "Well then. Absolutely no more protests until September. They've taken away our last entertainment :("[35]

The first caption appeared in Russian with the image as part of a *Gazeta.kg* photo essay. The second one appeared on Elena Skochilo's LiveJournal blog, which combines professional and personal materials, on the same day. The first caption reflects the author's reporting of the

[34] *Gazeta.kg* (2006) "Beliye golubi kak znak mira" ["White doves as a sign of peace"], 27.05.2006, http://old.gazeta.kg/photo/2006/05/27/miting/15_Jpg.htm [last accessed 23.04.2008]. Photo reproduced with permission.
[35] Morrire [Elena Skochilo] "04:41 pm – Basta". http://morrire.livejournal.com/171099.html [last accessed 23.04.2008].

"official" (i.e. intended by the protest's organisers) meaning of the act of releasing doves at the start of the demonstration: it was a gesture indicating the For Reform! movement's peaceful intentions and (possibly) their conciliatory stance towards the government, as they stated. It also arguably highlights the association of protests with instability and "security" via the implied interpretation that those involved in the protest felt it necessary to demonstrate their commitment to avoiding conflict with this symbolic gesture. This reading echoes the Copenhagen School's point that in a given context a particular phenomenon can become a security signifier even in the absence of the word "security". Thus, as argued in the previous chapter, in Kyrgyzstan protests have become an expression of existential security concerns. In addition protests have also been securitised as a threat to Kyrgyzstan's existence, with this narrative being reflected in the international securitising meta-narrative of "Kyrgyzstan in crisis". Within this context, the image of opposition releasing doves serves as a reminder of the perceived danger of the situation even as it confirms that the immediate danger to Kyrgyzstan's future has passed, at least until the autumn, with the conclusion of the protest.

In contrast, the second caption suggests a different meaning for the protest: it was an interesting and entertaining event that people enjoyed as a theatrical performance rather than a political statement. It was posted on the journalist's personal blog, to which she regularly posts both professional and personal material, and garnered 23 comments in the 24 hours after it was first posted. Understanding the event as entertainment rather than as an expression of security concerns is suggested by the tone of the caption and subsequent comment: "Well then. Absolutely no more protests until September. They've taken away our last entertainment :(". Rather than expressing relief, as might be expected given the perceived danger of continued instability caused by mass protests, the tone is slightly ironic and regretful, as indicated by the inclusion of the unhappy smiley at the end of the blog entry. The significance of this reading of the photograph and caption is in the contrast it presents with the majority of formal media

coverage and the apparent lack of urgency in the protest; the author of one comment asked, "so there wasn't any action???" only to receive the response "As such, protests here have been being held without any action for a long time already… they just change the slogans and number of people."[36]

The two different readings of the photo in many ways reflect the different target audiences and their respective pre-existing cognitive biases. *Gazeta.kg*'s main audience was educated Russophone Kyrgyzstanis living both in Kyrgyzstan and abroad. This demographic is, by virtue of location as well as education and profession, likely to be particularly aware of international perceptions of Kyrgyzstan and share concerns about portrayals of an apparent state of "crisis" in the country. David Mikosz explains, citing the case of Kyrgyzstanis who have been on foreign exchange programmes:

> It may seem like a small amount [of people], but they are in a fairly significant…, they usually occupy fairly significant positions in business, in academia, in the government, at lower levels. They read what others in foreign presses say about Kyrgyzstan and that influences how they want to be perceived and act in the future. I've noticed a huge depression amongst a lot of the academics, for example, about how they're portrayed, and they're a little at a loss, and they're searching for answers.[37]

For this audience, the international security meta-narrative of Kyrgyzstan in crisis is likely to carry more weight than the more relaxed, almost flippant, interpretation of the protest provided by Elena Skochilo's blog post. However, the blog post offers a useful insight into how some residents of Bishkek understood events, providing an alternative interpretation that sees protests not as a sign of crisis and danger but rather as an entertaining aspect of the local socio-political culture; it is no longer seen in terms of "security", indicating that on the local level the efforts of actors to securitise the situation are being rejected by sections of the audience. As azzik, a fellow Bishkek-based journalist, commented "I didn't like it there today [at the protest] at all,

[36] Thread between boursorama and morrire. Morrire [Elena Skochilo] "04:41 pm – Basta". http://morrire.livejournal.com/171099.html?thread=3918171#t3918171 [last accessed 23.04.2008].
[37] Interview with David Mikosz of IFES, Bishkek, 22.11.2005.

starting with the weather and ending with the speeches of certain 'armchair warriors'. I've lost my respect for some of them."[38] While this latter presentation of the protest will not have found a particularly wide audience beyond the author's online social circle, which is largely comprised of people living in Bishkek, it offers an insight into how media presentations can affect interpretations of a situation both directly and indirectly on different levels and the consequences of its influence. In the case of the 27 May protest, this meant that even as the opposition's securitizing move disintegrated in Bishkek, the media continued to consolidate the state- and international-level securitization meta-narratives rather than presenting less dramatic and more pragmatic interpretations of events.

The examples above suggest that the media may be far more influential in determining the security agenda than the concept of functional actors presumes, bringing into question how the role of the media is understood and the utility of conceptualising it as a functional actor. Yet how can the analyst conceptualise the influence of the media on/in securitizations? Like members of the LGBT community to whom I spoke, Ittipak's representative openly acknowledged that it was impossible to prove the media's effect on events and how certain communities are treated:

> Today I cannot, unfortunately, prove this effect with facts, but intuitively we sense that… The lawyers who were involved in the trials after the explosion in Osh[39] […] It was all unanimously presented as there being some sort of mythical Uighur terrorist organisation, but I heard from the defence lawyers that those people were convicted for being Uighurs, that they were in the wrong place and it was possible to frame them, as it were.[40]

[38] Thread between azzzik and morrire. Morrire [Elena Skochilo] "04:41 pm – Basta". http://morrire.livejournal.com/171099.html?thread=3916635#t3916635 [last accessed 23.04.2008].
[39] On May 31, 1999 a passenger bus in Osh exploded, killing three women. The incident was taken to be a terrorist act, with three Uighurs allegedly belonging to the separatist movement Free Turkestan subsequently tried and found guilty of the attacks along with two other men. Soltobaev, Aziz (2000) "International Terrorists Bomb Osh, Kyrgyzstan", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 16.08.2000, http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/497 [last accessed 15.02.2009].
[40] Interview with representative of the Uighur National-Cultural association Ittipak, Bishkek, 19.12.2005.

In many, if not most, instances the analyst is unlikely to be able to ascertain the precise nature of the media's agency in securitising moves due to its heterogeneous nature, dependence upon the cognitive bias of actors and audiences and inherent situatedness. Nevertheless, there is undoubtedly value in seeking to consider not only whether in fact the media influences securitization (as Bourbeau did), but also *how* it may do so. On occasion it may indeed be a "mouthpiece" for the state or another securitising actor (as per O'Reilly's conclusion) but in other situations and locale its involvement is far more complex, multifaceted and multi-levelled.

1.ii. State Level Actors: US Influence in Kyrgyzstan

In many ways, the media may be seen as an exception to the rule regarding the influence of functional actors due to its presence at all analytical levels. At the unit and supra-unit levels, meanwhile, the state remains the central unit of analysis for the Copenhagen School. As such, individual state sovereignty and territoriality provide the underlying principles according to which inter-state and state to supra-state organisation relations are conducted under non-exceptional circumstances. This status quo is reflected in diplomatic protocols and the rules and regulations of supra-state organisations such as the United Nations, which recognise the primacy of the state. Given the Copenhagen School's preference for analysis at the unit level, it is unsurprising that identifying unit-level functional actors is arguably unproblematic. Even if, as I have previously proposed in relation to societal security, the stipulation that analysis is undertaken at the unit and supra-unit level is discarded, [41] the state-based nature of many actors operating on this level governs their interactions with other actors; the "rules of engagement" for traditional unit-level actors' (that is, states') interactions with each other are dictated by international law as

[41] See pages 26-27 of chapter one.

well as norms in the form of charters, declarations, conventions, protocols and other formally-recognised documents founded on the principle of the inviolability of state sovereignty.

Even allowing for the development of the idea of conditional sovereignty, which has been most strongly promoted in relation to human rights and human security,[42] the traditional notion of sovereignty serves to curb a unit-level functional actor's influence in all but the most extreme cases by giving states a virtual carte blanche to reject criticism or other behaviour by external actors aimed at having significant influence over that state's "security". The "national interests" argument demarcates the domestic political sphere from the international, placing it implicitly out of bounds to other states and making all actors in the domestic sphere subordinate to the state. Incidents where this demarcation is seen to have been challenged in some way offer one way of "tracking down" functional actors in a securitising move, as diplomatic friction between Kyrgyzstan and the US in 2005 and 2006 illustrates.

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, Akaev was extremely careful to maintain good diplomatic relations with other states, especially the US, who had provided aid totalling nearly $500 million by 2005,[43] as well as paying not inconsiderable sums relating to the hosting of the Manas Air Base that was established in December 2001.[44] Yet in the months preceding March 2005, it was evident that the beleaguered Akaev suspected the US of supporting opposition groups in Kyrgyzstan in order to increase the possibility of a third "colour revolution". These suspicions appeared not unfounded in light of an offer of financial aid for free and fair elections

[42] Luke, Timothy W. (1996) "Governmentality and contragovernmentality: rethinking sovereignty and territoriality after the Cold War", *Political Geography* 15: 491-507.
[43] Kazakpaev, M. (2006) "U.S.-Kyrgyzstan: Partners in Different Weight Divisions", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 39:3, http://www.ca-c.org/online/2006/journal_eng/cac-03/05.kazen.shtml [last accessed 28.12.2008].
[44] The initial agreement allowed for the payment of a landing fee of $7000 per flight, and subsequent renegotiations increased "total assistance and compensation" to Kyrgyzstan to $150 million in 2006. Nichol, J. (2008) "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for US Interests" CRS Report for Congress, Order Code RL33458, http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL33458_20080806.pdf [last accessed 20.12.2008]. Particularly in light of Kyrgyzstan's recent decision to order the closing of the Manas Air Base, it is increasingly difficult to find accurate figures for how much was paid for the hosting of the base; Kyrgyzstani sources have frequently quoted figures far lower than those of US sources.

by US Ambassador Steven Young, who commented in November 2004 that "if a peaceful transfer of power takes place in Kyrgyzstan, it could inspire the citizens of the neighboring Central Asian states".[45] Young again publicly voiced criticism of the Kyrgyzstani government at a press conference in March 2005, accusing the authorities of preventing free and fair elections.[46] His comments sparked accusations of interference in the republic's internal affairs and of trying to incite a revolution. While it is impossible to prove that the US had any direct involvement in the "Tulip revolution" that took place shortly afterwards, it is certainly possible to argue that the US facilitated the process via the funding of opposition groups and activities. Indeed, Americans and opposition groups have portrayed internationally-funded democracy and civil society development programmes as being crucial in creating the conditions that made Akaev's ousting possible: A *New York Times* article entitled "U.S. Helped to Prepare the Way for Kyrgyzstan's Uprising" describes the ways in which opposition actors were supported, concluding that US "money and manpower gave the coalescing Kyrgyz opposition financing and moral support in recent years, as well as the infrastructure that allowed it to communicate its ideas to the Kyrgyz people".[47]

The US's support of the Kyrgyzstani opposition in the months preceding March 2005, as well as its longer-term active involvement in promoting civil society, suggests that it was a functional actor in the opposition's securitization of the Akaev regime as a threat to Kyrgyzstan's future described in chapter one. Yet in the aftermath of the March events, it became increasingly apparent that US influence was seen as being potentially more than that of a functional actor in

[45] Quoted in Blagov, Sergey (2005) "Kyrgyzstan fears blossoming tulips", *Türksam*, 02.02.2005, http://www.turksam.org/en/a130.html [last accessed 26.02.2009].
[46] *Eurasianet* (2005) "US envoy offers critical assessment of Kyrgyzstan's parliamentary election", 16.03.2005, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav031605.shtml [last accessed 26.02.2009].
[47] Smith, Craig C. (2005) "U.S. Helped Prepare the Way for Kyrgyzstan's Uprising", *The New York Times,* 30.04.2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/30/international/asia/30kyrgyzstan.html?pagewanted=print&position [last accessed 25.02.2009].

matters of national “security”, with the US perceived by the Kyrgyzstani government as something more akin to a securitising actor that posed a threat to its domestic and international authority and sovereignty. The US’s role as a functional actor in the March events meant that relations with the new government, which was formed from the opposition that had led Akaev’s overthrow, underwent a fundamental change. Whereas previously the opposition was happy for the US to facilitate a successful outcome to their securitization, now the US was a potential threat to their rule and was increasingly treated accordingly: US Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch received a public rebuke from the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry in April 2006 for comments that Kyrgyzstan should join the World Bank’s Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative. As *Eurasianet* reported, a statement by the Foreign Ministry described her comments as “interference in [Kyrgyzstan’s] internal affairs and pressure on the Kyrgyz leadership” and “concluded by asking Yovanovitch and the heads of other diplomatic missions to refrain from public statements ‘bordering on interference in Kyrgyzstan’s internal affairs’ not only on the issue of HIPC, but on ‘other current domestic issues of a political and economic nature’.”[48]

The situation was exacerbated by the formation in the latter half of 2005 of the international meta-securitization narrative about Kyrgyzstan, as discussed in previous chapters. The meta-narrative of "Kyrgyzstan in crisis" was founded upon frequently extremely negative evaluations of the Bakiev government’s capabilities, which arguably aggravated the government’s existing sense of its hold on power being far from secure. In David Mikosz’s opinion, the Bakiev government seemed unnerved by its own awareness that it did not know exactly what was happening in the third sector, leading to an “obsession with security” and a desire to control activities more closely. This "hands on" approach was in stark contrast to Akaev’s "laissez faire" approach to the activities of international organisations, whereby he

[48] *Eurasianet.* (2006) "Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry Protests Statements by U.S. Envoy", Kyrgyzstan Daily Digest, 19.04.2006, http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/kyrgyzstan/hypermail/200604/0027.shtml [last accessed 21.01.2009].

"would trust that they would fix things and would focus on other issues",[49] - an approach commonly interpreted as a sign of Akaev's confidence in his control over the republic

The Kyrgyzstani government became increasingly pro-active in dealing with perceived threats to its rule as 2006 progressed, often justifying its actions in reference to national security: in January 2006 an audit of all NGOs in receipt of foreign funding was proposed in order, as Minister for Justice Marat Kaipov explained, "to determine which NGOs funded from abroad might threaten Kyrgyzstan's national security" and "fight 'religious extremism'".[50] This was followed in March by a suggestion from the Ombudsman to prohibit foreign NGOs from operating in the republic and ban domestic NGOs from receiving foreign funding.[51] Neither of these initiatives was acted upon, but these attempts to securitise foreign influence and the third sector was symptomatic of the government's desire to demonstrate that it was seen to be in control of the situation. In relation to the opposition's activities, this manifested itself as substantial shows of physical power at the For Reforms! protests in April and May 2006, where large numbers of troops and law enforcement personnel were deployed on the pretext of ensuring order, but which simultaneously sent a strong message to anyone wishing to challenge the government for power. Similarly, at the unit level, while in April the government stopped short of any action against the US Ambassador, by July they felt confident enough to expel two US diplomats for "inappropriate contact" with NGOs,[52] suggesting that the US was felt to have exceeded its role as a functional actor in Kyrgyzstan's national security.

[49] Interview with David Mikosz, IFES, Bishkek, 22.11.2005.
[50] Cartner, Holly (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: Government Takes Measures Against Civil Society", *Human Rights Watch*, 02.02.2006, http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2006/02/02/kyrgyzstan-government-takes-measures-against-civil-society [last accessed 26.02.2009].
[51] Human Rights Watch (2007) *Human Rights Watch World Report 2007 – Kyrgyzstan,* 11.01.2007, http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/45aca2a116.html [last accessed 28.02.2009].
[52] *BBC* (2006) "Kyrgyzstan 'expels US diplomats'", 11.07.2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/5169222.stm [last accessed 28.02.2009].

Despite the clear limit of influence suggested by the case of the US's involvement in Kyrgyzstan's domestic sphere, the degree of tolerance shown towards a functional actor varies considerably depending on the particular relationships involved and the wider socio-political context. Where there is a greater perceived congruence between the interests of actors, it is less likely that a functional actor will find itself being securitised. Thus, for example, in contrast to the US, Russian involvement in Kyrgyzstan has been actively courted by both the Akaev and Bakiev governments and portrayed as a "natural" partnership based on shared history, culture and values. Crucially, despite the fact that its huge influence on Kyrgyzstan's economic and military security has led to some analysts expressing fears that Russia is turning Kyrgyzstan into a client state, the Kremlin has been consistently careful to avoid actions that could be construed as unwanted interference in domestic affairs. Maintaining this balance has been made far easier by the government's pro-Russian orientation. Kyrgyzstan's tolerance of Russia's influence within the republic has been motivated by elite awareness that it is in the interests of the ruling regime. In addition to being a major investor and providing financial aid to the republic, Russia espouses a version of Westphalian sovereignty as the basis of inter-state relations in its concept of "sovereign democracy" that offers Kyrgyzstan legitimisation of its efforts to limit the influence of states such as the US which are seen to promote democratisation over regime stability.[53]

This dynamic, whereby one actor is used as a foil for another actor's influence, points to the second, more complex, key role that external actors can assume as a functional actor: a referee or mediator between competing securitising actors and securitising moves. Both on the sub-unit and unit levels securitising actors in Kyrgyzstan have often made use of the presence of non-local actors to strengthen their security narratives. Significantly, this process has often created cross-level dynamics in a securitization as a sub-unit or unit level actor seeks to

[53] Krastev, Ivan (2007) "Russia vs. Europe: the sovereignty wars", *open Democracy*, 05.09.2007, http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/globalisation/institutions_government/russia_europe [last accessed 27.02.2009].

enhance its credibility and legitimacy by appealing to a "higher" actor for endorsement. In the case of the Kyrgyzstani government, for example, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation provides an additional supra-state source of legitimacy for the assertion of the primacy of individual state sovereignty, as was made clear in the SCO's 2001 founding declaration, which states explicitly that SCO member states shall "respect independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, [and] not interfere in each other's mutual affairs".[54] At the supra-state and state levels, Kyrgyzstan, in keeping with other states that have found themselves the target of criticism from other governments over non-democratic or authoritarian behaviour, have invoked this principle to rebuff criticism of their handling of matters such as protests or minority rights. Significantly, the argument that something is a purely domestic matter is often reinforced with references to national security: the matter is either of secondary importance in comparison to the need to guarantee national security (for example, the human rights of alleged Hizb-ut-Tahrir members who are arrested or harassed as terrorist suspects despite the absence of evidence[55]) or if the criticism was addressed, then it could threaten the existence of the country – as in the case of calls from sections of the Uzbek community for Uzbek to be granted official language status in May 2006 referred to in the previous chapter: State Secretary Adakhan Madumarov was quoted as saying that Kyrgyzstan is "a unitary state, not a confederation", while other people cited the danger of interethnic conflict.[56]

It would therefore seem that on the unit and supra-unit levels international agents can effectively be conceptualised as functional actors within a securitization even when there are cross-level connections. Kyrgyzstan's government has maintained a broadly Westphalian

[54] SCO (2001) "Declaration on Establishment of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation", 15.06.2001, http://www.sectsco.org/html/00088.html [last accessed 24.12.2008].
[55] Informal interview with a former Hibz-ut-Tahrir member who took steps to disassociate himself with the movement having been arrested on several occasions in the preceding year as well as being harassed at work by police, Osh, 14.04.2006.
[56] Sadybakasova, Astra (2006) "Kyrgyzstan: How Real are Uzbek Minority Concerns?"

understanding of sovereignty, which, in combination with the support of states such as Russia and China and the securitization of any challenges to that sovereignty, serves on the state level to make the role of functional actors in securitization seemingly unproblematic: as Kyrgyzstan's diplomatic relations with the US and Russia demonstrate, external state actors can exert influence on securitising moves, but the structure of the international system, which privileges the state as the basic unit in the political sphere, confines them in to the role of a functional actor in all but the most extreme cases. Even in the case of the US directly supporting the opposition in the months preceding March 2005, it was the opposition that was the securitising actor and driver of the events. The US was instrumental in the long term insofar as it actively promoted democratisation, and in the short term by providing funding and resources for opposition organisations, but its influence on Kyrgyzstan's "security" was not defining. In other words, the US's role was necessary but not sufficient for a securitization to take place, giving it the status of a functional actor.

What this conclusion neglects, however, is the increasingly multi-faceted nature of non-local actors and the fact that they often possess differing degrees of influence on different levels and amongst different actors. Once again, the effect of the Westphalian straitjacket and the Copenhagen School's insistence on states or state-like units looms large: not only is the state assumed to be Westphalian and "strong", but the sub-unit level, both spatially and analytically, is assumed to be of secondary importance. However, even in the most conservative and formal spheres of international politics and inter-state diplomacy, the assumption of state sovereignty's inviolability has been increasingly challenged as the "new" notion of conditional sovereignty gains currency. The shift has been particularly evident in relations between "developed" states

and "developing" and/or newly independent states, including Kyrgyzstan,[57] where the development and aid industries have established a strong presence, creating an extremely large and diverse pool of potential non-state functional actors in the so-called third sector.

1.iii. The Glocal Third Sector in Kyrgyzstan

While funding provided by states is an irrefutably central driver of aid and development programmes in countries such as Kyrgyzstan, the interactions between donor states and organisations and the recipients are considerably more diverse than those in the diplomatic sphere. Not only is funding frequently provided via agencies and subcontractors who then implement projects, but funds may be channelled directly to target organisations and groups without the involvement of the recipient state's government, creating a powerful sub-unit level dynamic that is connected to states but is implemented largely independently of state-to-state political relations on an everyday level. In such instances, the recipient state's ability to control the domestic sphere may be perceived to be subject to challenges, threatening the state's moral, if not legal, authority. In relation to securitization, this may mean that a functional actor is able to exert far greater influence than allowed for according to the current conception, if only because the state is not able to counter or remove its influence rapidly enough.

This is especially evident in relation to the state- and sub-state level in Kyrgyzstan, as US involvement, both direct and indirect, demonstrates. If one considers the US's influence in Kyrgyzstan via agencies such as USAID, which had administered programmes worth approximately $200 million alone by the end of 2005,[58] as well as the scale of funding provided

[57] Kyrgyzstan was ranked 122nd of 179 countries on the UNDP's Human Development Index in 2008, which classifies it as a developing country according to a range of economic and progress indicators. See http://hdrstats.undp.org/2008/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_KGZ.html [last accessed 25.02.2009].
[58] Kazakpaev, Marat (2006).

via other agencies and subcontractors, then its influence appears far more powerful than diplomatic relations would suggest. Indeed, domestically the US's influence could be said to have been more than that of a functional actor insofar as its actions arguably went beyond significantly influencing the field of national security to defining it as a necessary condition for the "Tulip Revolution" to occur – as suggested by civil society leader Edil Baisalov, who claimed that without the assistance provided by the US the ousting of Akaev and his government would have been "absolutely impossible".[59] Certainly subsequent responses from the Kyrgyzstani government suggest that the US as a unit-level actor was seen to have tried to exert influence beyond that acceptable for a functional actor, challenging the Kyrgyzstani state's sovereignty domestically, if not internationally.

Yet despite diplomatic tensions, it is not in the Kyrgyzstani government's interests to completely shut out external influence. On the contrary, the rapid growth of the third sector in Kyrgyzstan was very much in the interests of the state, a fact that former president Askar Akaev recognized until early 2005 when his attempts to rig the forthcoming parliamentary elections highlighted the extent to which President Akaev had made effective use of the third sector to shore up the state even as his government sought to avoid active co-operation with "real" NGOs that could reduce their power. David Mikosz of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) explained how Akaev had co-opted foreign donors for his own benefit and how the collapse of his regime in March 2005 had impacted on civil society:

> [Civil society is like] a tango team that's lost its big partner. Akaev was very good at playing the NGO game, so there was this very long impression of a dialogue where a government organised NGO would say one thing and then a real NGO would say something else, and it gave the NGOs something to deal with, some place to direct their energies. The real challenge is for them to learn how to be constructive and work with the government. There's a huge suspicion in the NGO sector about working with the government, and from my perspective some of the NGO leaders have gone into areas that are at best political and in some ways polemical that might damage their own stated goals. […] It's a very active sector, but under the Akaev regime the reward system was set up so that NGOs

[59] Smith, Craig C. (2005).

> could seek a large amount of foreign donors and do what they wanted and Akaev was very very smart at allowing international donors to solve his most pressing poverty problems. […] You basically had Akaev structuring things so that international donors were willing to fund NGOs that would fix a lot of the problems that many states fix, but you had an NGO sector that didn't know how to talk to the state; they only know how to talk to international donors.[60]

The Kyrgyzstani state's transition from being a broadly "strong" state in terms of political stability and a state monopoly on power to a "weak" state with a government forced to repeatedly fend off challenges and assert its authority fundamentally altered the perceived balance of power in favour of societal actors and referent objects. Whereas under Akaev the state had been able to use civil society to enhance its own position (and hence sovereignty), perceptions that the new government was unable to impose law and order and that consequently the state could not guarantee the security of its citizens endowed actors not associated with the government with greater social capital.

Despite the predominantly sub-unit nature of this phenomenon, its repercussions are evident at all levels of analysis due to the ways in which local non-state actors utilised their enhanced status in society. In the case of the Opposition, the public legitimacy gained by being in opposition to a distrusted government and having the support of key NGOs such as the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society (and other functional actors) was sufficient for it to temporarily become a securitizing actor in its own right, rather than being a functional actor with limited influence. Prior to the rally in Bishkek on 8 April the Opposition had been a functional actor in two unit-level securitizations: firstly, it had contributed to the international meta-narrative of Kyrgyzstan in crisis by providing local endorsement of predominantly Western-based commentators' views, thus helping to strengthen and perpetuate the meta-narratives credibility. Secondly, it was a functional actor in the Kyrgyzstani government's counter-securitising move, this time serving as a key component in the threat narrative presented by the government that

[60] Interview with David Mikosz, IFES, Bishkek, 22.11.2005.

sought to securitise protests as the "real" threat to the country's survival. The protests, however, marked the commencement of the Opposition's own local level securitising move. For the duration of the Spring 2005 protest season, therefore, the Opposition fulfilled multiple roles: locally, it was a securitising actor; nationally, both a securitising actor and a functional actor in the form of a threat referent; and internationally, it was a functional actor in the meta-securitization of Kyrgyzstan.

In contrast to many other sub-state securitising actors, the Opposition had a direct relationship with the state on a formal level thanks to its merging of the societal and political sectors of security: while the referent object was "Kyrgyzstan" as a homeland and its population, the threat narrative drew primarily on events and actions in the political sector, which were then endowed with greater urgency via the invocation of a societal referent. This bridging of sectors was vital in that it created a sense of the issue being of personal relevance to the audience. It is unlikely to have been possible for the securitising move to have progressed as far as it did if the state had been the referent object due a lack of any significant sense of active loyalty to the government, or in Ruget and Usmanalieva's terms "weak citizenship",[61] amongst large sections of the population. The public's lack of trust in the government further exacerbates the state's weakness, causing people to view the government – the official manifestation of the state – as either irrelevant to their security/safety or even as a source of threat to their and their homeland's survival rather than the guarantor or provider of security that is assumed by state-centric paradigms.

Indeed, in cases where a societal or sub-societal securitizing actor cannot access political institutions due to a lack of status or "voice", actors may choose to ignore formal domestic political processes completely by addressing their narrative to either an external or

[61] Ruget, Vanessa & Burul Usmanalieva (2007) "The impact of state weakness on citizenship: a case study of Kyrgyzstan", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40(4): 441-458.

independent unit-level or supra-unit-level actor who is perceived to be able to endorse their securitizing move in some way. In doing this, they effectively bypass the state as an entity capable of approving their narrative and accepting the action demanded. The central motivation is likely to be gain sufficient "voice" for their security concerns to be heard on "higher" levels, thus increasing the possibility of a successful securitization. On an individual level, the extent to which formal institutions are seen as ineffective is evidenced by the vast number of letters received every year by the Ombudsman from individuals: Tursunbai Bakir uulu, who held the post of Ombudsman since its establishment in 2002 until 2007, was quoted in November 2005 as saying he received between 14,000 to 15,000 letters and appeals annually.[62] For comparison, the United Kingdom's Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman received approximately 16,000 complaints, enquiries and requests for information in 2004-2005,[63] despite the UK population being approximately twelve times larger than that of Kyrgyzstan. While these figures are not directly comparable, they give an indication that for many people, pursuing one's concerns via political institutions through formal mechanisms, as due process requires, is seen as ineffective, so going directly to the "top" of the system is a logical response and a final attempt to make their concerns heard within the country's political system.

In cases where even this step is felt to have inadequately addressed people's concerns, the result, as an open letter from the NGO Interbilim addressed to President Bakiev circulated by email on 30 November 2005 made clear, is protests:

> If the courts worked, and citizens' problems were solved by competent state administration system specialists who were not indifferent, then there would not be any need to go out onto picket lines, demonstrations and protests. People decide to do this only when all other methods have been exhausted – letters, meetings, dialogues, appeals to the mass media.[64]

[62] Presidential Press Service, 25.11.2005, via *Kyrgyz News* listserv, English edition, 20-26.11.2005, item 51, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/KYRGYZNEWS/message/1570 [last accessed 10.03.2009].
[63] 4,189 new cases were accepted for investigation and 11, 689 enquiries and requests for information were handled in 2004-2005. Parliamentary & Heath Service Ombudsman (205) *Annual Report 2004-2005* London: TSO, http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/pdfs/ar_05.pdf [last accessed 10.03.2009].
[64] Sasybekova, Asya & Natalya Ablova (2005) "Pismo Prezidentu po povodu mitingov" ["Letter to the President about Protests"]. Distributed by email 30 November, 2005. Received by email.

As argued in chapter three, protests have often acted as performances of securitising moves in post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan. As such, protests permit a wider spectrum of voices to be heard in relation to issues felt to pose an existential threat to a group or community, particularly in situations where other forms of expression have been either unsatisfactory or inaccessible. President Bakiev explicitly recognised this in refusing to ban protests: "Protests and marches are one form of dialogue between the people and the authorities and we should learn to conduct such a dialogue in a civilized manner", he asserted during an interview on November 28, 2005.[65]

Some groups of people, however, do not find the state a willing conversation partner. In order to try to attract the state's attention, some groups have addressed their securitizing narrative to a non-local actor in the hope that they can prevail upon the state to engage in dialogue with groups unable to generate sufficient "voice" or "performance" independently. This strategy is particularly likely to be employed by minority groups that have found little domestic political or societal support, or whose narrative may be perceived to cause even greater insecurity if a response is forthcoming from the government. For example, I encountered a group of land protestors outside the White House in Bishkek at the end of October 2005. Land seizures on the outskirts of Bishkek began shortly after Akaev's ousting at the end of March 2005, with outbreaks subsequently occurring sporadically.[66] Given that the participants were known to be from rural areas and were talking predominantly in Kyrgyz, I was surprised to see that one of their banners was written in English (see figure 5.2).

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[65] n.a. "Kurmanbek Bakiev: Tandem s premerom Kulovym monoliten. Intervyu agenstvu 'Interfaks'" ["Kurmanbek Bakiev: The tandem with Prime Minister Kulov is solid. Interview with the Interfax news agency"], http://old.president.kg/press/inter/661/ [last accessed 03.03.2009]. This stance is also consistent with the government's tactic of treating protests as a "normal" phenomenon, rather than as a last resort to call for urgent action (i.e. a securitising move), that was seen in chapter three.

[66] See Table 3.1 on page 128 of chapter three.

Figure 5.2. Land protestors on Prospekt Chui, Bishkek, 26 October 2005.

I was even more surprised that the two women in the photo moved away from the main group of protestors when I asked if I could take a photograph, seemingly to ensure that I got a clear shot free from passers-by. Reflecting on this incident, I wondered if my obvious Westernness had played a role in their cooperation; had they seen my interest as a potential way to gain access to an audience outside of Kyrgyzstan, such as human rights organisations, who might take up their case? Had they thought that I could be a journalist or an employee of an NGO? Certainly, a slogan in English would be a far more accessible message for a Western audience than one in Kyrgyz or even Russian. In addition, it seemed likely that they were attempting to capitalise on the increased media presence in the centre of Bishkek in connection with Ryspek Akmatbaev's anti-Kulov protest, and Ar-Namys's pro-Kulov protests that were ongoing that day–a fact not lost on journalists, as Leila Saralaeva observed in an IWPR article:

> Whenever Kyrgyzstan goes through a bout of political turbulence, people take advantage of the chaos to grab a piece of land in the capital Bishkek. […]
>
> The current round of illegal seizures has been more or less continuous since a couple of weeks after the March revolution that toppled President Askar Akaev. But the grassroots land actions took a new turn on October 26, when a group of squatters in Karajygach, an area of Bishkek where there is a lot of new – and legal legal [sic] housing development, took

> hostage the governor of Chui region, Turgunbek Kulmurzaev. They let him go after he promised to solve their problems, and then sent a delegation to the government to press their demands for land.
>
> This protest action took place at a time of heightened political instability, as supporters of Tynychbek Akmatbaev, a member of parliament murdered while visiting a prison, were demonstrating to call for Prime Minister Felix Kulov to resign.[67]

As it turned out, while the Akmatbaev protests may have provided an opportunity to take action, they also almost completely overshadowed the land protestors' attempt to get the attention of a non-local audience: there was little national media coverage of their protest and virtually no international media coverage, nor did there seem to be any interest from non-local actors in Kyrgyzstan in advocating on behalf of the squatters in this case. Nonetheless, this strategy has been employed by local securitising actors to attract international support for their cause, which most often features the violation of human or civil rights.[68] Although it is often difficult to assess the efficacy of this approach in the absence of formal responses from the government, global advocacy programmes play an important role in broadening the security agenda at all levels at the local and national levels by offering a way for groups caught in the "silent security dilemma", such as the LGBT community, journalists and human rights activists to address their concerns while seeking to minimise the risk of speaking out.[69]

Actors operating in the third sector cannot be satisfactorily accommodated within the unit level prescribed by the Copenhagen School: they are inherently multi-level and heterogenous and, most significantly, “glocal” – that is, they operate simultaneously globally and locally. In

[67] Saralaeva, Leila (2005) "Land Rights and Wrongs in Kyrgyzstan" *IWPR Reporting Central Asia* 419, 11.11.2005, http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=257787&apc_state=henircaa8c10c6fe3da973188a1e852 [last accessed 03.03.2009].
[68] Labrys, for example, has become increasingly adept at recording and sending details of incidents with the militsia to organisations such as Human Rights Watch in an effort to draw attention to violations by the authorities. Human Rights Watch (2008) "Kyrgyzstan: Halt Anti-Gay Raids", 16.05.2008, http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/04/16/kyrgyzstan-halt-anti-gay-raids [last accessed 03.04.2009].
[69] Details of incidents involving human and civil rights violations by the Kyrgyzstani authorities can be found in reports and bulletins by Human Rights Watch (http://www.hrw.org/en/search/apachesolr_search/Kyrgyzstan), Amnesty International (http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/Kyrgyzstan), Freedom House (http://www.freedomhouse.org), IFEX (http://www.ifex.org/kyrgyzstan/) and others.

addition, their relationship with states is not one of automatic deference to sovereignty, giving third sector actors far greater autonomy of action; in the case of NGOs, for example, they may cooperate with states, but at the same time one of their strengths is that they are not directly controlled by governments. The result is that their influence is often more diffuse but at the same time far more wide-ranging and pervasive, affecting perceptions of "security" in a diverse – and sometimes even contradictory – number of ways. Assessing their role in a securitising move is not simply a matter of "tracking" their moves in relation to the securitising actor and the narrative presented. Certainly, this is still necessary, but in addition the researcher must explicitly situate the potential third sector functional actor along spatial and analytical axes and pay particular attention to the nature of their interrelationships with other actors. Regardless of the eventual outcome of this exercise (i.e. is a particular organisation a functional actor or not), undertaking this process offers a further way to loosen the Westphalian straitjacket and gain insights into the dynamics of the "security" field in and surrounding a particular locale by challenging the centrality of the state in favour of a broader consideration of "security".

2. Functional Actors & Securitization Theory

As the previous sections have shown, the range of actors and ways in which they can influence the field of security in Kyrgyzstan is considerable. Yet which of them would actually be classed as a functional actor by the Copenhagen School and with what implications? Further to the basic definition of a functional actor as "an actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security" but "who is not the referent object or securitizing actor",[70] the Copenhagen School offer as an example a company that is responsible for pollution, asserting that it can be a "central actor in the environmental sector" despite being neither a referent object nor a securitising

[70] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 36.

actor.[71] Implied in this explanation is the recognition that securitization is not a self-contained process and that the formation and development of a securitising narrative is inherently dependent upon not only the audience but also the actions or words of other actors in relation to the security narrative being presented. The Copenhagen School, however, does not pursue the implications of including functional actors in the securitization framework, leaving the concept almost completely undeveloped in *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* with only four references to this sort of actor in the entire work. The most detailed discussion of the role of functional actors in a securitization occurs when, writing about the military sector, the authors speak of the need to potentially spend a greater amount of space "tracking down" functional actors in comparison to ease with which securitising actors can be identified.[72] The potential role of functional actors in sectors other than the military one is not explicitly addressed.

Arguably unusually in light of their very strict criteria about referent objects and the logic of securitization, no explicit guidance or criteria are given to aid the analyst in this search, only some limited examples in the military sector.[73] At first glance this would appear to create a way to situate securitising moves in relation to the wider context and, more importantly, consider the interactions between securitising moves, since a securitising actor may be a functional actor in the securitising move launched by a different actor. As such, the category of functional actors presents the prospect of cross-referencing discrete and seemingly self-contained securitizations or securitising moves to reveal patterns of interactions and dynamics. Unfortunately, however, if the analyst proceeds with an orthodox securitization analysis, this is unlikely to happen due to the constraints imposed by the Copenhagen School's underlying state-centricism: despite their efforts to widen the scope of security to include referent objects other than the state, they nevertheless maintain that the level of analysis must remain on that of the state or other "units"

[71] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 36.
[72] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 42.
[73] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 56-57.

that "are sufficiently cohesive and independent to be differentiated from others and to have standing at the higher levels (e.g., states, nations, transnational firms)".[74] Implicit in this stance is that a functional actor should be comparable to a unit-level actor to warrant inclusion in an orthodox securitization, with actors operating at the sub-unit level – i.e. within a state – edited out of the meta-narrative that is the end result of such an analysis.

This ontological and methodological insistence on the centrality of "limited collectivities" in the form of units that are comparable to the state[75] once more tightens the Westphalian straitjacket around securitization theory. In conjunction with the basic criterion that a functional actor can "significantly influence" decisions in the field of security, but does not define the dynamics of "security", the overall effect is that only the most "state-like" entities that have a direct effect on the basic securitization triangle of securitising actor-referent object-audience can be granted the status of a functional actor. Other actors who have a more diffuse or indirect (both no less significant) influence on the development of the securitising move are excluded at the periphery of the framework, unable to breach the closed system of analytical meta-securitizations.

The situation is further compounded by the artificially clear distinction that is drawn between the behaviour of securitising and functional actors. Securitization theory presents the roles of the various actors involved as having remained fixed throughout the duration of a securitization, in keeping with its emphasis on outcome rather than process. Yet prior to the presentation of the final securitization meta-narrative that is the result of analysis, actors' roles and their interrelationships are likely to have been fluid. This raises the possibility that a securitising actor may have originally been involved as a functional actor or in some other more incidental capacity.

[74] Buzan, Barry, Ole Wæver & Jaap de Wilde (1998): 6.
[75] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (1997): 245.

Yet there is no way to consider this possibility within securitization theory in its conventional presentation, further reducing the utility of the functional actor category to little more than a *deus ex machina* for cases where the influence of a suitable (i.e. state-comparable) actor cannot be distilled out of the final account of security presented by securitization. In effect, the category of functional actor is a continuation of securitization theory's "scripting" of security, meaning that the analyst ends up finding what his theoretical approach prescribes – which does not necessarily reflect the local dynamics – in keeping with the meta-narrative of "security" created during analysis.

The current state-centric conceptualisation of functional actors means that securitization theory could be interpreted as confirming the account of Central Asia offered by the New Great Game paradigm discussed in chapter one. Undeniably, the example of US involvement in Kyrgyzstan demonstrates, it is possible to find elements of "Great Game" dynamics in American-Kyrgyzstani relations insofar as Kyrgyzstan is not in a position domestically or internationally to operate without supportive international partners. At the same time, it is vital to look at the other dynamics that exist in the country at different levels (sub-state, national and supra-state). This is especially necessary in the case of third sector actors, which may in effect "bypass" the state to operate independently and glocally.

In its current format, the category of functional actor further exacerbates the one-way and linear conceptualisation of the relationships between actors that is inherent in securitization theory. Even more seriously, the conceptualisation of functional actors as inherently subordinate to the securitising actor (which the Copenhagen School insists must be a unit-level actor) further constricts securitization theory in its orthodox form to mono-level static analyses to produce meta-securitizations. Yet the range of functional actors and the strategies they use to influence the "field of security" in Kyrgyzstan demonstrates far more complex, multi-directional dynamics. Reconceptualisation of functional actors is therefore vital both to make securitization theory

empirically relevant and operationable – that is, able to accommodate multiplicities of actors, levels, spaces and securitizations, as well as changing circumstances, and to further loosen the Westphalian straitjacket of assumptions about the nature of sovereignty and, by extension, security.

2.i. Sovereignty, Security & Functional Actors: The Effect of State "Weakness"

In countries where the socio-political system is basically stable, as in so-called "strong" states, the under-conceptualisation of functional actors is unlikely to be particularly problematic for two interlinked reasons: firstly, in keeping with the notion of Westphalian sovereignty, the state's monopoly on power exists in practice as well as in theory, and secondly, there is a functioning system that regulates the interactions of actors at all levels. Securitization, in keeping with its Westphalian European genealogy, assumes the presence of these conditions, as previously discussed in chapter one. The Copenhagen School further supposes that the system will be a democratic one in which interactions are regulated by the rule of law, thus facilitating the "speaking" of security by multiple actors and the possibility of securitising referent objects other than the state. In cases where this assumption is correct, the potential role of functional actors in any securitizing move or securitization is in principle limited to a greater extent by the necessity of observing the "rules of the game", which can be legally enforced. Thus, for example, the polluting company used as an example of a functional actor by Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde certainly has an agenda of limiting the damage to its corporate reputation that is likely to conflict with a securitising move that has the environment as its referent object, but in theory the company's ability to prevent the securitising move is regulated by legislation regarding what it can or cannot do and what it must do (releasing data, for example), as well as by other indirectly related areas of legislation. The net effect is that while there will still undoubtedly be inequalities

and exceptions, the influence of such actors on securitising processes is likely to conform with the Copenhagen School's presentation of a functional actor.

It should be noted, however, that it is not necessarily the *type* of system that regulates the influence of functional actors (as well as the behaviour of other actors), but rather the ability of a central authority to ensure compliance with the system that exists, i.e. is the state "strong" enough to maintain its political and territorial monopoly. Indeed, the influence of functional actors in strong states that are non-democratic is likely to be far less than in broadly democratic ones. The greater the extent of authoritarianism in a state, the greater the likelihood that any rivals to the ruling regime that arise are likely to be suppressed or excluded, as the cases of Turkmenistan under Saparmurat Niyazov and Uzbekistan under Islam Karimov demonstrate. Until recently Turkmenistan remained almost entirely isolated from the international system by severely restricting the presence of international actors in the country by refusing to grant them entry. Uzbekistan has increasingly adopted a similar approach to international actors who are critical of the ruling regime, placing severe restrictions on NGOs to the extent that many, including the BBC and the US Peace Corps, have been forced to leave the republic. In both cases the governments have also sought to control the population's access to information domestically and internationally, further asserting their hold on power against newer and more ephemeral challenges to their sovereignty that cannot be directly physically excluded or eliminated. The key factor in determining the possible influence of functional actors on security in a given location is the degree to which conformity with the basic principles of "Westphalian" sovereignty is present, regardless of the way in which this is achieved.

The situation is quite different in a weak or "faltering" state where the government's grip on power is shaky at best and is regularly and openly challenged, with significant implications for all aspects of the concept of securitization, including the role and conceptualisation of functional actors. The implications are made doubly significant by the fact that classification as a "weak"

state rests on a new post-Cold War understanding of sovereignty that focuses considerably more on a broad assessment of state capacity. Until 1989 statehood rested upon the principle of political and territorial sovereignty preventing interference in domestic politics, regardless of the human cost. State capacity was therefore measured in terms of a state's ability to protect and maintain control of its borders and territory.[76] Post-1989, statehood became a far more relative concept, with an increasingly broad set of criteria used to measure state capacity and hence the degree of a country's statehood.[77] In comparison to the Westphalian criteria, state capacity is no longer just about the defence of territory and regime, but about the ability of the state to provide a good overall quality of life for its citizens and hence the legitimisation of the state by society.[78]

This shift in understandings of statehood has resulted in a blurring of the boundary that separates the national and international spheres. Especially in states classed as "weak", it has been used to justify a far greater degree of external involvement in domestic affairs than most developed states would tolerate. In cases where there is still a ruling regime, this external involvement and assistance is often vital for their survival, causing a fundamental shift in traditional balances of power. Once the sovereignty of the state and the primacy of the unit-level is no longer viewed as axiomatic and absolute, a great deal of potential for sub- and supra-unit level actors to influence "security" at all levels in a variety of ways, both directly and indirectly, is opened up. In relation to domestic security there are two basic key dynamics of functional actor influence, both of which are cross-level:

1. non-local unit or supra-unit level actor influence on the domestic security sphere
2. sub-unit level actor influence on the domestic security sphere

[76] Luke, Timothy W. (1996).
[77] Clapham, Christopher (1998) "Degrees of Statehood", *Review of International Studies* 24: 143–157.
[78] Cummings, Sally & Ole Nørgaard (2004) "Conceptualising State Capacity: Comparing Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan", *Political Studies* 52: 685–708.

In terms of how a functional actor can influence “security”, there is a wide range of possibilities. The presence of multiple loci of socio-political power leads to a situation in which the support of a functional actor can play a crucial role in ensuring that a securitising actor has sufficient social and/or political capital to be capable of presenting a narrative of securitization and convincing the audience to endorse the move. Alternatively, functional actors can act as “referees”, calling on actors to observe international norms (such as the protection of human rights, for example) or conduct themselves in a particular way or risk incurring consequences ranging from opprobrium to sanctions or even external intervention. In these scenarios it is important to remember that a functional actor has its own agenda and interests that will shape its interactions with other securitising moves. Indeed, it may well be a securitising actor in another context or level, linking securitizations that may usually be viewed in isolation due to differences in the analytical levels or spatial scales of the respective securitizations. In addition, securitising actors may also seek to manipulate functional actors, exploiting inter-level differences. A securitising actor may frame their narrative in such a way as to encourage a functional actor to support them in convincing the target audience of their securitising narrative, for example, or even try and co-opt a functional actor into becoming a securitising actor in its own right. This latter process is particularly pertinent when considering how some securitising moves travel across the different levels as security meta-narratives, having sometimes huge impacts on how “security” is interpreted, as we shall see in relation to the media later on in this chapter.

Alternatively, some actors may choose to become more actively and directly involved with domestic politics by, for example, speaking out against an event or decision. At this point there is a fine line between remaining a functional actor (influencing the development or outcome of a prior securitising move) and becoming a securitising actor who either actively takes on an existing securitising move and becomes its chief driver, or who launches a competing or

counter securitising move in response to a previous securitising narrative. A case in point is the differing reactions of Russia, the US and the European Commission to the Akmatbaev protests of October 2005 and then the Spring 2006 protest season. While Russia went so far as to express concern about the situation in Kyrgyzstan in April 2006, the government spokesman was clear about the limits of the Kremlin's interest: Moscow was "closely watching the situation in Kyrgyzstan, but would by no means will interfere in the internal affairs of this country."[79] The EU similarly took a careful stance, not giving any comment until April 2006 and then limiting itself to a carefully worded statement that "it remains concerned about certain aspects of [Kyrgyzstan's] public and political life."[80] In comparison, US Deputy Ambassador Donald Lu edged closer to becoming a securitising actor in describing the Akmatbaev protests as "scandalous" due to the open challenging of the government by an alleged gangster.[81] The strong tone of his comments arguably started to shift the US from being a functional actor to being a securitising actor on the international level. Due to the interaction of the different levels whereby actions are interpreted differently by different audiences, it is possible to argue that the US was a securitising actor on the international level who actively developed the international meta-narrative of Kyrgyzstan in crisis. At the same time, it remained (at this stage) a functional actor on the domestic politics and the Kyrgyzstani government was very clear that this was the correct role for it to fulfill at the national and sub-national levels.

In addition to the two categories of potential functional actor outlined above, this chapter has considered the role that the media plays in shaping interpretations of "security" in Kyrgyzstan. As I have demonstrated in the previous two chapters, the media is an integral feature of both expressions and interpretations of security in Kyrgyzstan, not least as the

[79] *Eurasianet* (2006) "Court Decision Prompts Stability Concerns in Kyrgyzstan".
[80] *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* (2006) "EU Concerned About Democracy in Kyrgyzstan", 02.05.2006, http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3964 [last accessed 20.02.2009].
[81] *Moya stolitsa novosti* (2005) "Situatsiya nazvana skandalnoi".

reporter of expressions of security concerns. This observation per se is not new; as noted, Williams has previously argued that securitization theory needs to take account of televisual communication,[82] while a 2005 OSCE Concept Paper went so far as to assert that "in a world dominated by mass communications it is increasingly the media that determine the political agenda".[83] Yet the ways in which the media impacts on perceptions of "security" and its role in securitising moves and securitizations has not so far been the subject of more than one or two academic papers, despite the fact that, as Philippe Bourbeau observes, the argument that the media is a "highly significant actor" in securitising issues such as migration by "fostering a sense of threat and insecurity" has become ubiquitous.[84] There are certainly examples of media outlets behaving in this way in Kyrgyzstan, in relation to both the Akmatbaev protests and the Opposition's spring 2006 protest season presented in the previous two chapters. Moreover, the existence of persistent meta-narratives at the international and national levels in Kyrgyzstan suggests that the media can indeed significantly influence security perceptions in and of the country. However, as demonstrated, it is necessary to examine the precise ways in which the media affects securitising moves and their development more closely in order to ascertain whether the media can be usefully classed as a functional actor or whether its role is more complex and central to the concept of securitization.

Overall, the result of Kyrgyzstan's "weak" statehood and correspondingly weaker ability to control the domestic sphere is that potential functional actors, be they other states, international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), commercial entities or the media, can play a far more central role in shaping perceptions and interpretations of a fragile state's "security" than the Copenhagen School allows for. In addition, the ways in which their

[82] Williams, Michael C. (2003).
[83] OSCE (2005) "Media Support Programme", *Concept Paper,* OSCE Centre in Bishkek, 14.04.2005, http://www.osce.org/documents/cib/2005/04/13981_en.pdf [last accessed 27.01.2009].
[84] Bourbeau, Philippe (2008).

influence manifests is likely to be more complex and multi-faceted, exhibiting both inter and intra-level relationships. Given this dynamic, it is essential that the role of functional actors in a specific locale is considered in any analysis of "security" not as a peripheral feature, but as a central feature of the "security" landscape.

3. Security Gatekeepers

In this chapter I have examined how so-called functional actors can be conceptualised. My starting point has been the Copenhagen School's idea of functional actors, a category that covers any actor present in a securitization who can exert significant but not defining influence in the field of security. However, the current under-development of this category, which appears to view functional actors only in terms of their relationship to the securitising actor and its narrative, vastly limits securitization's empirical analytical potential; rather than providing the researcher with a way to link up individual securitizations on different levels by focusing on how functional actors affect both intra- and inter-unit relationships, the category becomes a convenient repository for actors whose presence cannot be ignored, but also cannot be accommodated by securitization theory due to its exclusive focus on the unit-level and the continuing ubiquity of the Westphalian straitjacket in the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of "security".

The bias introduced by the presumed primacy of the state over other actors in the field of security is especially, though far from exclusively, problematic in states classed as "weak" or "failing". In the absence of a strong, or Westphalian, state, functional actors assume new significance, since the domestic sovereignty of the state is no longer assured. State weakness leads to a blurring of the boundaries and limits between the domestic and international spheres in the case of countries such as Kyrgyzstan as non-local actors provide services and support to the population and state alike, supplementing the state's limited capacity. One of the

consequences of this dynamic is that functional actors may gain a far greater degree of influence on every analytical level and spatial scale. In extreme cases, a functional actor may for a time effectively be able to set the security agenda even at the unit level: in the months preceding the March events of 2005, for example, the US's actions arguably went beyond significantly influencing the field of national security to being a necessary (albeit far from sufficient) condition for the "Tulip Revolution" to occur – as suggested by civil society leader Edil Baisalov, who claimed that without the assistance provided by the US the overthrow of Akaev and his government would have been "absolutely impossible".[85]

At the unit- and supra-unit levels, however, international recognition of state sovereignty, both normatively and legally, serves even in weak states to curb the overall influence of functional actors in all but the most extreme cases (such as invasions or peacekeeping interventions). It is when the domestic sphere is considered in an analysis of security that the agency of functional actors becomes more complex and less state-regulated; the ways in which they can affect security – either through their relationships with securitising actors or with audiences – are far more diverse and extensive than securitization theory suggests.

In particular, functional actors may operate across multiple levels and spatial scales, providing a mechanism by which securitising moves can expand beyond the level of the securitising actor to become intra-level or even multi-level. Assuming that the state accepts the presence of such functional actors, be they businesses or so-called third sector entities, it is far less able to directly and immediately regulate interactions between internal and external actors that may impact on the field of security on any level. At best, regulation is likely to be reactive, designed to curtail or eliminate existing perceived influence, such as the Kyrgyzstani government's proposals to ban the foreign funding of NGOs in early 2006. Yet in the case of a "weak" state such as Kyrgyzstan, seeking to securitise the domestic presence of external actors

[85] Smith, Craig C. (2005).

can in itself have a significant impact on the field of security by altering the relationships between units and actors at all levels. Rather than being interpreted as a demonstration of state strength and sovereignty, attempts to control the third sector or business can create greater insecurity through the further loss of government legitimacy amongst the population, as state capacity is likely to be reduced and international reputation as an open, liberal state tarnished.

A second factor that renders the influence of functional actors that bridge the sub-state and supra-state levels and spaces all the more complex is the pre-existing cognitive biases of audiences. Here, once again, the weak state is at a considerable disadvantage in comparison to strong states: the effect of reduced state capacity is to reduce the state's legitimacy amongst its populace. Not only does this affect their loyalty to the state, creating "weak citizenship", but it increases the chances that the state will be seen as a hindrance to the security of societal groups. This may be due to its inability to respond satisfactorily, as in the case of land protestors, where initial efforts to allocate land led to a rush of new applications that far exceeded available land, or because of the state's refusal to recognise the validity of a societal group's claims, such as the Jalalabad Uzbeks' demands for Uzbek to be granted official language status. In these circumstances, the involvement of functional actors facilitates the expression of security concerns, amplifying the group's "voice" and potentially enhancing the securitising move's credibility and legitimacy.

The absence of consideration of the media's impact on security is especially conspicuous in the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation. Williams' call for the consideration of images as expressions of securitising narratives in addition to speech-acts was an important step in developing securitization theory's applicability by recognising the limitations of focusing solely on speech, but it is only recently that the precise agency of the media in relation to security has begun to be addressed. O'Reilly's study of the US media and the invasion of Iraq conceptualises the media as a functional actor that was used by the US government to present and legitimise its

securitising move against Saddam Hussein. Here the media is given agency, but it is still seen as a secondary, subordinate actor. In contrast, Bourbeau chooses to address whether or not media influence on "security" is as axiomatic as opinion frequently suggests. His conclusion that the media's influence on security at the unit-level is not constant, emphasises the need for the grounded and reflexive reconsideration of the role of functional actors in securitizations in relation to specific empirical examples.

Building on the issues raised by Williams, O'Reilly and Bourbeau, I have explored the role of a range of functional actors beyond the unit-level. If adherence to the unit-level of analysis is maintained as the Copenhagen School demands, then there is little scope for anomalies and alternative understandings to be considered, since the domestic sphere is edited out of the analysis as a discrete and separate "sub-unit" entity. Yet as the case of Kyrgyzstan shows, a fundamental feature of security dynamics in weak states is that the domestic and international spheres are no longer discrete; states have little option but to accept greater external influence on internal affairs. Writing about Kyrgyzstan's relationship to the international community in April 2006, Muratbek Imanaliev of the Institute for Public Policy in Bishkek noted that,

> Governments present their interests through the discourse of "international standards," which some of the current nation-states are able to manipulate in clever ways, while others, which have not yet been able to construct their national interests and sort out their internal role, remain the objects of various Great Games and other political schemes.[86]

Placing Kyrgyzstan in the latter group of states, Imanaliev is clear about the implications, arguing that the domestic situation has directly impacted on Kyrgyzstan's international relations, creating a vicious circle of state weakness:

[86] Imanaliev, M. (2006) "Does the International Community Need Kyrgyzstan to the Same Extent as Our Country Needs the International Community?", Institute for Public Policy, 22.04.2006, http://www.ipp.kg/en/analysis/170 [last accessed 24.12.2008].

> …Kyrgyzstan [is] gaining an image as a semi-criminal, degenerating state. It was very unpleasant to hear from a close strategic ally – Russia – an official message that Kyrgyzstan should seriously engage the issues of promoting political stability and struggling against criminal elements penetrating governmental structures. Not to mention other state positions. Only one thing must be added here: the inactivity of the authorities on these matters breeds distrust and disbelief, resulting in a vacuum (in the context of international interaction) not around the country, but around the country's leadership. Permanent expansion of this vacuum may lead to international isolation.[87]

This fundamental interrelationship between intra-state and inter-state security has been sorely neglected by the Copenhagen School. While imposing analytical boundaries at the unit-level is undoubtedly helpful for ensuring that securitization theory is "interoperable with classical security theory"[88], once the scope of analysis is widened to consider multiple levels and the politico-historical contexts of each level, it is evident that the influence of actors such as the US, NGOs and the media on Kyrgyzstani "security" cannot be adequately described by the concept of a functional actor within an orthodox application of securitization due, to the autonomy of their actions independent of the Kyrgyz state. In the absence of a strong state, functional actors have become gatekeepers for security, shaping both content and form.

The concept of functional actors – if it is developed to be a more integral part of securitization theory – has the potential to dramatically unbind analyses by revealing multi-level socio-political dynamics that may not otherwise be evident. I argue that this can principally be achieved by relaxing the requirement that a functional actor be a unit-level entity and proposing that any actor that "significantly influences decisions in the field of security" but who is not *at that point* a securitising actor or audience be considered as a functional actor. On a purely theoretical level such a departure from unit-level methodological collectivism may be seen as unacceptable in that it considerably broadens the range of potential actors who may be classed as functional actors in a securitising move. However, it is vital to reduce the risk that the theoretically-led

[87] Imanaliev, M. (2006).
[88] Buzan, Barry & Ole Wæver (1997): 242.

researcher is simply finding examples of the dynamics that are presumed by the theoretical approach to be present while ignoring evidence that suggests other more complex or contradictory accounts of “security”.

In conjunction with the researcher’s reflexive engagement with securitization theory as a reference point for an empirical investigation of “security”, as has been discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis, then the freedom to allow the situation to define who or what is a functional actor (rather than it being predetermined by the theory) significantly expands securitization theory’s analytical and explanatory capacity. Furthermore, from the point of view of the field-based researcher this loosening of the theoretical framework offers a middle-ground between the outright rejection of theory or submitting to the editing process that is often the result of the application of theory to empirical settings; rather, he can situate his analysis of “security” not only culturally and geographically, but also in relation to other securitizations/securitising moves and actors across multiple levels, allowing both similarities and differences to be considered.

4. Conclusion: Towards a Future Research Agenda

Although the under-conceptualisation of functional actors, like the other theoretical issues that have been explored in previous chapters, can be addressed by choosing to use securitization theory as a reference point for interpretation, rather than as a framework for analysis in relation to a specific empirical case study such as Kyrgyzstan, the wider implications for the study of security using securitization theory are considerable. For countries such as Kyrgyzstan, failing to acknowledge the relatively greater degree of influence that functional actors have on the field of security risks creating a situation in which the impact of state weakness on security is neglected. Yet in weak states such as Kyrgyzstan, the effect is to move the field of security from “positive”

to “negative”. Attaining “positive security” would seem to be the aim of securitising moves insofar as it is the neutralisation or elimination of threats that would otherwise prevent the continuation of existence in its current form. While “positive security” hinges on increasing state capacity to ensure an adequate standard of living for the populace, “negative security” retreats to the assertion of national sovereignty politically and territorially as prerequisites in the field of security. Since the events of March 2005, both domestically and internationally Kyrgyzstan’s government has been more focused on ensuring “negative” security – i.e. asserting sovereignty in the form of regime stability in the face of internal and external criticism. The end result is that “security” in Kyrgyzstan remains a concept that is being continually contested due to ongoing tensions between the traditional Westphalian understanding of sovereignty and new notions of conditional sovereignty. Currently in Kyrgyzstan the various definitions of security used by actors reflect different understandings of statehood. While the third sector often views sovereignty in relation to state capacity, the Kyrgyzstani government’s understanding appears far closer to that of traditional sovereignty, which presupposes complete control over the domestic sphere.

The case of functional actors in Kyrgyzstan demonstrates how the Westphalian straitjacket manifests itself in a way that is fundamental to the study of security: despite the Copenhagen School’s attempt to reconceptualise “security” using the speech-act, the result has been a fixing of security’s meaning that is inherently linked to the state and its politico-territorial sovereignty. In weak states, the consequence is that “security” often has a fundamentally different meaning at all levels since the threshold at which issues become urgent and existential is reached far more rapidly: everything belongs in the sphere of security, since almost any problem threatens the continued existence of either the state, society as a whole or a group within society. A careful and reflexive re-examination of functional actors reveals how different actors are contesting “security” in relation to Kyrgyzstan on multiple levels, and also provides a way to begin considering the relationships and interactions of competing understandings of

“security” from the perspectives of a far more diverse range of actors than securitization theory accommodates in its current form. It is to be hoped, therefore, that both theoreticians and empirically-orientated scholars will turn their attention to functional actors in the near future, not least as it is in many ways a natural progression from the recent attention paid to questions such as that of securitization's context, the conceptualisation of the audience, the interrelationships between actors at the different analytical levels and the media, as well as how to address them, as is briefly outlined in the final section of this thesis.

CONCLUSIONS

LOOKING BACK AT COPENHAGEN: REFLECTIONS FROM KYRGYZSTAN

> What we have missed hearing are the indigenous people's *own* knowledge about themselves and the world–knowledge that opens new possibilities for thinking about security, sovereignty, and selves.[1]

In this final section, I wish to reflect back on the process of investigating security in Kyrgyzstan, the issues that have emerged and their implications. As discussed at the beginning of this thesis, dissatisfaction with portrayals of security in Central Asia provided my initial motivation. From that starting point I have explored interpretations of security in post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan conceptually and empirically, adopting an interpretivist approach to facilitate critical engagement with both aspects, which have frequently been decidedly uneasy and unwilling bedfellows. At the same time, the tensions between the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security and my interpretations of security in Kyrgyzstan, which are informed by situated and experiential forms of knowledge, have been crucial to my investigation. Most importantly, this has provided a focal point for my thinking as I compare the accounts offered by securitization with those rooted in local understandings and interpretations.

Issues of disciplinarity and methodology have been central to this endeavour. Writing in 2005, Beier and Arnold argued that when studying security, "we must begin with the assumption that security cannot be adequately and unproblematically theorized with the confines of disciplinary boundaries–*any* disciplinary boundaries".[2] This is undoubtedly easier said than

[1] Beier, J. Marshall & Samantha L. Arnold (2005) "Becoming Undisciplined: Toward the Supradisciplinary Study of Security", *International Studies Review* 7: 59.
[2] Beier, J. Marshall & Samantha L. Arnold (2005): 59-60.

done. Nevertheless, as I have demonstrated, methods and strategies do exist to help us begin to think about security "outside the Westphalian box".[3]

Throughout this thesis, I have emphasised the necessity of explicitly situating our research and ourselves in order to create more nuanced accounts of security. Directly addressing issues such as positionality, contextualisation, praxis (what we "really" did to create our data or materials) and terminology (security? safety? *bezopasnost*?) and how it impacts on our research means that our knowledge claims are less hubristic that those often made by traditional positivistic approaches. In addition, reflexivity permits us to decentre so-called "expert" knowledge by engaging with emic understandings of phenomena such as security.

Rather than addressing the shortcomings in the Copenhagen School's empirical utility with the aim of moving closer to a truly universal theory, I have aimed in this thesis to make use of the shortcomings themselves to inform my study. At points this has meant choosing to depart from more orthodox interpretations of securitization theory and proposing theoretical extensions or redefinitions in order to allow the context of securitization to be explicitly addressed. I have largely focused the sub-state level of analysis, which the Copenhagen School excludes due to their insistence on methodological collectivities. This stance is problematic theoretically, and unworkable in the case of field-based studies. Widening securitization's focus to include multiple analytical levels is a relatively straightforward first step in its own right, but, as McSweeney rightly noted, opens up a theoretical and methodological can of worms that must be then dealt with by the researcher. Identity, as explored in chapter two, becomes a far more complex concept and referent object, with the notion of "societal" identities unable to capture how people experience their identities even on the most simple level. In contrast to the Copenhagen

[3] Acharya, Amitav & Barry Buzan (2007a) "Preface: Why there is no non-Western IR theory: reflections on and from Asia", *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7(3): 286.

School's prescriptive approach to identity, the *who* of securitization (and there may be more than one) is allowed to emerge via study of the context and specific circumstances.

A second point of departure from the Copenhagen School has been over the issue of the speech-act on which securitization is founded. I have argued that extending the notion of "implicit security" facilitates the inclusion of actions as well as text-based expressions of security concerns. This is a further step towards situating our understandings of security by shifting the analytical focus from outcome to the processes involved in securitising moves. As the chapters on the Akmatbaev protests, spring 2006 protest season and so-called functional actors show, there are far more actors, forms of expression and interrelationships that securitization can accommodate when used as a conventional analytical tool. However, when used interpretively, as I have endeavoured to do, shortcomings can be put to good use, permitting the researcher to explore not only empirical settings but also disciplinary ones, as demonstrated by the theme of how knowledge is produced that runs through this thesis.

This is not to say, however, that adopting an interpretive or ethnographic stance towards the subject of study is the solution to all of IR's shortcomings. Like any methodology, it has both advantages and drawbacks and is, it is important to remember, only one way of pursuing investigation. It is certainly no "magic bullet" against unquestioned normative assumptions, Western- or Euro-centrism or the inherently flawed nature of fieldwork. Vrasti is clear about what such approaches can and cannot do for scholars of IR:

> Critical ethnography may not be able to provide us with a glimpse of authentic ways of life, let the subaltern speak, produce knowledge uncorrupted by power and desire, or make any guarantees of emancipation, but it can help us read and write global politics differently.[4]

This thesis is a step towards this goal. Perhaps inevitably, given the nature of this project and how it developed, more questions have been raised than answered. In many ways this

[4] Vrasti, Wanda (2008): 300-301.

thesis is the first step of a new and wider research agenda that has been gradually developing in relation to securitization theory over the last ten years. Scholars are at last beginning to move on from theoretical critiques of the Copenhagen School – an exercise made Sisyphean by the ongoing refinement of the concepts by their authors – and consider issues of empirical utility, policy relevance and the different methodological ways that securitization can be used.[5]

Similarly, in relation to Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia more widely, this thesis does not offer any firm conclusions, but rather a number of points for further consideration and investigation. Most centrally for Central Asian studies, this thesis questions dominant IR discourses about and of the region, and of Kyrgyzstan in particular, as I discuss in the following section. Throughout the thesis, I have argued that studies of security must be thoroughly contextualised and grounded in the study of the country, rather than seeking simply to apply a theoretical framework. However, it also raises other questions about the study of Central Asia in terms of who speaks for whom and what the politics of doing research is and should be.

In this respect, the inclusion of interviews with LGBT people in Bishkek about their understandings and experiences of security has seemed essential. As Kamp observes, discussions of "gender" in Central Asia (and many other parts of the world) usually means talking about "women",[6] and, more specifically, heterosexual and cisgender women. However, if LGBT and other gender variant people continue to be at best ignored and at worst forcibly silenced, then prospects for creating queer-friendly space is very limited. This thesis could be read as a tentative first step towards including queer voices in mainstream Central Asian studies, and specifically in Central Asian gender studies. However, the potential danger to LGBT persons in Kyrgyzstan of becoming more visible are considerable, as friends' and acquaintences' experiences have unfortunately shown time and time again and it is vital that

[5] Balzacq, Thierry (2009).
[6] Kamp, Marianne (2009) "Women's Studies and Gender Studies in Central Asia: Are We Talking to Each Other?" *Central Eurasian Studies Review* 8(1): 3.

they are not harmed either mentally or physically by their inclusion in our studies, meaning that a degree of caution is required; once again, our actions must be guided by careful and reflexive engagement with the context and our informants rather than any political agenda.

1. Understanding *Bezopasnost* in Kyrgyzstan

Q: What, in your opinion, does the word *bezopasnost* mean?
A: The government has in mind the absence of war with neighbouring countries, we have more in mind…[7]

Paradoxically, considering the apparent ubiquity of security, or perhaps more accurately insecurity, in discourses about post-Akaev Kyrgyzstan, it is an extremely elusive phenomenon once on the ground. Even if, to repeat Eriksson's words one final time, the researcher is in principle content to "observe how others advocate" via securitization theory, this position becomes untenable in practice due to the inherent situatedness of the concept and its multiple meanings. As discussed in chapter two, theoretical criteria in Kyrgyzstan were of little help in trying to understand *bezopasnost.* The criteria of a narrative of existential threat and urgency in taking action to remove the threat that the Copenhagen School use to define a securitizing move suggested that virtually all issues in Kyrgyzstan were matters of security – a situation that is more revealing about the limitations of securitization theory than about conditions in Bishkek and Osh.

In contrast to the universalist definition of security offered by the Copenhagen School, people in Kyrgyzstan automatically situated their explanations of *bezopasnost*, distinguishing between the meanings used by different actors. Their replies were often personal, referring to individual safety as well as security, since security appeared to be seen as a more abstract and impersonal concept. Significantly, the absence of violence was seen as an insufficient criterion

[7] Interview with representative of the Osh branch of the Uzbek National-Cultural Association “Orzu”, Osh, 05.06.2006.

for *bezopasnost* by many people with whom I spoke. Rather, the presence of *bezopasnost* was about the viability of their future and that of Kyrgyzstan, as well as what sort of future it would be. The notion of being able to live "the good life" in terms of improved socio-economic conditions was often evident. Merely carrying on with one's present way of life was seen in negative terms and evidence of the absence of *bezopasnost* in the republic – a view that very much chimes with the emancipatory agenda of human security whereby security is a positive value to be cultivated. In contrast, the Copenhagen School's theory, like traditional positivist approaches, conceptualises security in negative terms – i.e. the presence of a threat to survival that must be addressed urgently. By this logic, security is undesirable, symbolising a threat to the status quo in some way. This view of security is a further restriction on the Copenhagen School's empirical and normative utility that must be challenged. Both understandings of security are evident, and explicit consideration of how they interact and what the implications are would increase securitization's sensitivity to understanding how security is constructed.

The tension between these two logics of security was evident in the protests discussed in chapters three and four, providing an example of why it is necessary to look further than just "negative" constructions of security. The Akmatbaev protests of October 2005 began as an expression of "negative" security in that Ryspek Akmatbaev perceived an immediate threat to the lives of his family and associates following his brother's murder and claimed that the immediate dismissal of Prime Minister Feliks Kulov would remove the threat. Similarly, the pro-Kulov protest that followed displayed the same logic, but this time presenting Akmatbaev as the threat that should be immediately neutralised to assure the political future of Kulov. The "Peaceful Citizens for Kyrgyzstan Without Organised Crime" then built on the narrative of Akmatbaev as a threat to Kulov, developing a broader and more abstract securitizing narrative: organised crime and the government's failure to oppose it was a threat to the very future of Kyrgyzstan (seen here not as a state but a *rodina* or motherland) and its people. At this point,

there appeared to be a common understanding of insecurity in Kyrgyzstan, with the international community, government and the public all agreeing on the urgent need to resolve the situation.

However, the spring 2006 protest season saw this common view fracture. Internationally, Kyrgyzstan had become securitized in a meta-narrative of possible state failure due to domestic instability that the government was apparently unable to prevent. In Osh, meanwhile, people remained concerned about the potential for conflict, but this was expressed via the securitization of opposition leaders in Bishkek as a threat to Kyrgyzstan. In both cases, the meta-narratives maintained a negative understanding of security insofar as events were viewed as a sign of crisis and government weakness and/or corruption. In contrast, there were signs of a switch to a more "positive" understanding of security in Bishkek, even as the Opposition clung to its efforts to securitise the Bakiev-led government. People attending the 29 April and 27 May protests continued to make demands, but now these were far more diverse and were mainly not accompanied by the sense of urgency that had been evident in October. Furthermore, when there were more radical claims, such as the Opposition's initial promise to force the government to bow to their demands by staging a "Kyrgyz Maidan", there were not actions to back up the words. Yet while the disjuncture between words and actions undermined the Opposition's actions locally and shifted power back towards the government (a desecuritization), in Osh and outside of Kyrgyzstan the very fact that protests were continuing to take place was interpreted as further evidence of crisis (continued securitization). This is not to imply that security concerns suddenly disappeared in Bishkek, only that from the Copenhagen School's "negative security" perspective the situation lost its "security-ness" and was thus removed from analytical consideration. Bishkek's residents, meanwhile, would most likely continue to rank security as an important value in a repeat of the IRI's April 2005 survey, since their understanding of security is founded in the idea of it being a positive and potentially emancipatory value.

One of the major problems I have faced throughout this thesis is how to reconcile these competing understandings of security. In this respect, the Copenhagen School is correct that the decision to designate something a matter of security is always political. What has been overlooked, however, is that this fact applies as much to our research as to the actors whom we study, since how we choose to construct our research has political implications. As I discuss in chapter four, the disparities in between interpretations of the protests and their implications reflects the influence of the types of knowledge to which we have access and how they shape our perceptions. The absence of local knowledge considerably increases the apparent explanatory power of securitization theory, as well as increasing the credibility of "expert" sources of knowledge – a paradox that was particularly striking between periods of fieldwork. Contradictions and alternative points of view are far harder to find and explore, leaving us reliant to a far greater degree on second-hand knowledge, but often in a weak position to critically evaluate it. Ironically, as I have shown, it is under these circumstances that securitization theory works best, unhindered by the minutiae, ambiguities and multiplicity of the social world.

Yet, as the spring 2006 protests illustrate, as researchers we must not ignore what is beyond the scope of theoretical approaches, for what theory omits is as important as what it includes. In Kyrgyzstan, the absence of local experiential knowledge means that the "security-ness" of situations is likely to be exaggerated, since assessment is made using criteria and normative assumptions that are at best partial and at worse spurious. Local knowledge helps refine our interpretations by allowing us to triangulate the accounts presented by theoretical approaches (securitization theory, in this case) and those of other actors, often by revealing alternative understandings. Thus, for example, while protests can be viewed as an example of an institutional securitization within the Copenhagen School's framework, sources such as Elena Skochilo's photographs and the accompanying captions suggest that the protests did not have this meaning for everyone at all times.

The contingency of the concepts and frameworks we use in our research is too often either forgotten or ignored. While this has been a recurrent theme throughout this thesis, its importance cannot be overestimated. In the case of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia more generally, the result has been the dominance of popular and academic discourses about security and identity in the region that instead of asking *how* these concepts are understood, merely map outsider understandings on to the locale, finding suitable actors and events to confirm theoretical and normative assumptions. The Copenhagen School's treatment of functional actors is a case in point for Kyrgyzstan. Unless the researcher consciously disregards theoretical constraints, this category would appear to confirm the account of security dynamics in Central Asia offered by the New Great Game paradigm. While I do not deny that certain elements of this paradigm can be found in Kyrgyzstan's relations with countries such as the US and Russia, my point is that it is not the full story. Rather, much like this thesis, it needs to be understood as only one of many possible accounts of the region.

The eventual adoption of an interpretive methodology provided the answer to my working question about how to conduct a fieldwork-based study of security in Kyrgyzstan. While my conviction that interpretivism and, in the field, ethnographic methods, can, to paraphrase the slogan of a certain beer, "reach the parts that other methodologies cannot reach" has become firmer as I have written this thesis, I am nevertheless still cautious about how much of these approaches' potential will actually be realised in IR. Vrasti argues that currently ethnography has been given a "temporary 'workers' visa" into IR that is largely dependent on it not asking questions about the politics of research and the discipline too loudly.[8] Certainly, within the business of academic research it is not always easy to justify the detail and intensity demanded by many interpretive approaches. Similarly, many in IR (and other disciplines) would argue that it is unrealistic to expect researchers to spend prolonged periods of time in "the field" and to

[8] Vrasti, Wanda (2008): 298 & 294.

acquire language skills adequate for independent research, or even that the development of such specific country expertise becomes an excuse to reject theorising on the grounds of that country's exceptionalism.[9] But these arguments are distractions from IR's central limitation: the continued presence of the Westphalian straitjacket.

Despite the evident shortcomings of the Copenhagen School's conceptualisation of security, in common with a considerable number of scholars, I believe it can still be utilised to produce new insights into how security is understood conceptually and empirically. Beyond a broad consensus that a more sociological approach is required,[10] there is considerable divergence in how we think this can be done. As such, the explorations presented in the previous five chapters are only a starting point, while the use of an interpretive methodology provides a way to sustain critical engagement with a view to continuing to interrogate received wisdom about "how things are" in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan.

As I previously noted, far more questions than answers have emerged from my research. Although in some ways this is a frustrating position to be in, it is perhaps inevitable given the nature of the investigation undertaken. There was never going to be any hard and fast answer to the question of what security is, and isn't, in Kyrgyzstan – or anywhere else in the world for that matter. Nevertheless, further consideration of a number of issues that have been beyond the direct scope of this thesis would further enhance understandings of security in Kyrgyzstan, as well the wider Central Asian region and beyond by continuing to loosen the Copenhagen School's Westphalian straitjacket.

[9] Acharya, Amitav & Barry Buzan (2007b) "Why is there no non-Western international relations theory? An introduction", *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7(3): 291-292.
[10] C.A.S.E. Collective (2006); McDonald, Matt (2008): 582; Balzacq, Thierry (2009).

2. Where Next? A Further Research Agenda

> Precious little attention has been devoted to questions about the adequacy of the field [of security studies], as presently constituted, as an intellectual terrain upon which to (re)envision security–that is, of whether the field of security is, by itself, possessed of the conceptual tools and the empirical range necessary to either reconceptualize security or reconfirm traditional conceptions.[11]

The Copenhagen School provides a clear illustration of the Westphalian straitjacket's effects, starting from Buzan and Wæver's decision to try and generate a theoretical approach that remained interoperable with traditional state-centric IR theory at the same time as creating space for alternative referent objects. Despite claims that the "objective constructivist" conceptualisation of security presented by the Copenhagen School allows the analyst to consider the politics of designating an issue one of security, in practice applications and critiques of securitization theory have highlighted the unquestioned presence of normative assumptions about the nature of the world and people's experiences of it. The result is that a close examination of the Copenhagen School reveals as much, if not more, about IR as a discipline and its preferred "ways of knowing" as it does about Kyrgyzstan or any other object of study.

Currently, mainstream IR remains largely reluctant to recognise that taking local, situated, experiential, "non-expert" knowledge seriously can help to relativise "academic constructions of referent objects of security",[12] in the process beginning to loosen the Westphalian straitjacket. Yet there are signs that scholars are beginning to recognise the value of at least trying to think "outside the Westphalian box", as Acharya and Buzan put it.[13] Encouragingly, the Copenhagen School appears to be providing fertile ground for this still fledgling enterprise. The theoretical flaws, ambiguities and contradictions that have been the subject of extensive critiques for the last ten years are now beginning to generate insights into

[11] Beier, J. Marshall & Samantha L. Arnold (2005): 42.
[12] Acharya, Amitav & Barry Buzan (2007b): 291-292.
[13] Acharya, Amitav & Barry Buzan (2007a): 286.

different ways of "doing" security. McDonald summarises the case for pursuing this line of enquiry, of which this thesis is a part:

> Analytically we need to recognize and explore the range of ways in which political communities and their values are positioned by different actors, and explore the contexts in which particular security visions "win out" over others. We should also focus more on the understanding or discourse of security underpinning particular representations and practices rather than the act of "securitizing" or "desecuritizing".[14]

Returning to Campbell's analogy of IR's "large North American car" and "continental sportster", I propose that it is time to trade in the cars and perhaps even re-examine the disciplinary maps that we use. By this I have in mind an approach to security that has been described as "supradisciplinary"; as well as drawing on different disciplines and critically engaging with disciplinary assumptions, the question of how we study security is explicitly addressed. Beier and Arnold explain:

> A supradisciplinary approach […] enjoins us to find and foreground ourselves in our work. We must identify and account for the choices we make about what is and is not worth including in our work and, equally, our choices about how best to approach that which we include. This process, too, is something that must be practised in a sustained way, such that the supradisciplinary study of security is less an end than a means–it is something we can aim only to move *toward*.[15]

In this respect, there are several lines of enquiry for further investigation. First and foremost, there is a need to contextualise and situate not only the concept of security, but also practices of security. This thesis has demonstrated one way to address the issue of context in securitization. The same approach now needs to be applied to Security Studies in order to enable the discipline to not only recognise the complex and multiple ways in which security is constructed, but also capable of critical engagement with them, rather than editing them to fit

[14] McDonald, Matt (2008): 582
[15] Beier, J. Marshall & Samantha L. Arnold (2005): 59.

disciplinary limitations. An added advantage of such a study, I believe, is that it could assist scholars in starting to be more explicit about the knowledge claims made in our research.

Secondly, more work is required to understand how security translates across analytical levels. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, for example, we see that individuals wish to see security as a positive value that can enhance their lives, a view shared by many working in the third sector. Yet the state and international community frequently seem to view it in negative terms and a problem to be solved and eliminated so that things can return to "normal". While this phenomenon was noted by a number of my respondents,[16] the full implications of these different understandings have not yet been explored. How do the two understandings interact and with what effects for securitization dynamics at each level? Can the more emancipatory concept of positive security gain a foothold at levels above the individual and the local? What are the politics of such research, especially in relation to groups such as LGBT people who are caught in a "silent security dilemma"?[17]

Finally, following on from the need to consider multiple analytical levels rather than focusing on the state and regional levels to the exclusion of the sub-state level, there is a fundamental need to reconsider, both theoretically and empirically, the interrelationships of the actors and objects involved in securitising moves and securitizations. Further exploration of the role of the media – work that has already been started individually by Vultee, Bourbeau and O'Reilly[18] – is particularly important given its pervasive, but not always predictable, influence on audiences as well as actors and the socio-political context in which securitising moves occur. I suggest in chapter five that the media is better thought of as a gatekeeper through which narratives of security move to reach audiences on other levels. But how exactly does it fulfil this

[16] See page 90 of chapter 2.
[17] Hansen, Lene (2000).
[18] Vultee, Fred (2007) *Securitization as a Theory of Media Effects* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Missouri; Bourbeau, Philippe (2008); Salter, Mark (2008); Balzacq, Thierry (2009).

function and how is it different from the role of a functional actor? Both questions have still to be addressed.

These questions point to a research agenda that is no longer about the creation of a universal theory, but rather one that seeks to balance the Copenhagen School's analytical and normative utility, as well as enabling the scholars to more fully engage with the research process both personally and politically. The potential benefits are considerable, not least because it presents the possibility of understanding security from multiple perspectives taking into account the realities of the people and places being studied.

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APPENDIX ONE

List of people and organisations interviewed

Bishkek

Representative of the Slavic Foundation
Representative of the Uighur National-Cultural Association Ittipak
Country Director, Institute for War and Peace Reporting
Representatives and members of LBT NGO Labrys
Representative NGO Oazis
Representatives of youth activist NGO KelKel
Representatives of youth activist NGO Birge!
Chief editor, *ResPublica*
David Mikosz, International Foundation for Electoral Systems
Director of NGO Foundation for Tolerance International
National Consultant, United Nations Development Programme
Sabine Machl, OSCE
Craig Lampton, US Peace Corps
Representative of Soros Foundation
Representatives of youth educational NGO Peremena

Osh

Representatives of youth NGO Golden Goal
Representatives of NGO Podruga
Representative of Central Mosque
Representative of Soros Foundation Osh
Local director of NGO Foundation for Tolerance International
Jerome Bouyjou, OSCE
Representatives of New Life mission
Representatives of Uzbek National-Cultural Association Orzo
Representatives of Association of Ethnic Russian Sodruzhestvo
Chief editor, *Itogi nedeli*

APPENDIX TWO

MAIN MEDIA SOURCES USED

Vechernii Bishkek	http://www.vb.kg
ResPublica[1]	
Delo No.	http://delo.ktnet.kg/
Moya stolitsa novosti	http://www.msn.kg
Gazeta.kg[2]	http://www.gazeta.kg
Slovo Kyrgyzstana[3]	http://www.sk.kg/
Komsomolskaya Pravda Kyrgyzstan	http://www.kp.kg/
V kontse nedeli	
Belyi parakhod	
Litsa	
Limon	
24.kg	http://www.24.kg
Ekho Osha	http://www.echoosha.narod.ru/
Itogi nedeli	
Izvestiya	http://www.izvestiya.ru/
Eurasianet	http://www.eurasianet.org
IWPR Reporting Central Asia	http://www.iwpr.net/
neweurasia	http://neweurasia.net
Eurasia Daily Monitor	http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/
Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst	http://www.cacianalyst.org/

[1] *ResPublica* was closed down in August 2006 and the website is no longer available.
[2] Previous versions of the site are no longer available. Currently it is unclear if the site is active.
[3] Accessed via Eastview (http://www.eastview.com) electronic subscription. The site has not been active since August 2008.

APPENDIX THREE

SOCIAL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE & RESULTS

1. Original Survey

Число: Место проведения опроса:
Пол респондента: Возраст:

Соцопрос

1а. Какое у вас гражданство/Гражданином какого государства Вы являетесь?
1б. Хотели бы Вы иметь другое гражденство? Почему?
1в. Есть ли необходимость для Вас получения другого гражданства?

2а. Какой язык Вы считаете родным?
2б. На каком языке Вы чаще всего общаетесь?
2в. На каком языке Вы думаете?

3а. Какая национальность у Вас по паспорту?
3б. Какой национальной принадлежности Вы сами себя считаете?
3в. Что думают окружающие о Вашей национальной принадлежности?

4а. Место Вашего рождения (область)?
4б. Ваше настоящее место жительства?
4в. Знаете ли Вы ваше происхождение?

5. Какая у Вас религиозная принадлежность?

– мусульманин/мусульманка – протестант/–ка
– православный/–ая христианин/–ка – атеист
– другое

6. Вы житель города или села?

7а. Какое у Вас образование?
7б. Какая у Вас профессия?
7в. Где Вы работаете?

8. Вы за демократическое общество или за сильную власть (или другое)?

9. Что наиболее важно для Вас в определении Вашей личности?
(обозначьте номерами по порядку)

– Мужчина/Женщина – Профессиональная принадлежность
– Национальность – Гражданство
– Место жительства – Горожанин/селянин
– Место рождения – Религия
– Политические взгляды – Возраст
– Другое (какое?)

10. Как Вы определяете уровень своего дохода?

– Высокий – Средний – Низкий – Другое/Ответа нет

[Additional question used in Osh only]

11. Откуда вы получаете информацию и новости?

– Газеты – Телевидение – Радио – Другое (что?)
– Не получаю

2. Survey in English

Date: Location:
Sex of respondent: Age:

1a. What citizenship do you have/Of what state are you a citizen?
1b. Would you like to have a different/other citizenship? Why?
1c. Do you feel any necessity to receive a different/other citizenship?

2a. What language do you consider your native tongue?
2b. In which language do you most frequently communicate?
2c. In what language do you think?

3a.What is your nationality according to your passport?
3b. What nationality do you consider yourself to be?
3c. What do those around you think about your nationality?

4a. Place of birth (oblast)?
4b. Place of permanent residence?
4c. Do you know your origins?

5. What religion are you?

-Muslim -Protestant
- Orthodox Christian - Atheist
- Other

6. Are you an urban or rural resident?

7a. What is your education?
7b. What is your profession?
7c. Where do you work?

8. Are you in favour of democratic society or for strong power (or something else)?

9. What is most important for you in defining your personality? (Number in order.)

- Man/Woman
- Nationality
- Place of residence
- Place of Birth
- Political views
- Other (what?)
- Professional status
- Citizenship
- Rural resident/Urban resident
- Religion
- Age

10. How would you describe your level of income?

- High
- Average
- Low
- Other/no answer

[Additional question used in Osh only]

11. From where do you receive information and news?

- Newspapers
- TV
- Radio
- Other? (What?)
- I don't receive information and news

3. Survey Results

Table 1: Population and Samples by Age (Percent)

	National*	**Bishkek***	**Bishkek sample**	**Osh***	**Osh sample**
19 & under	42.3	28.6	19.6	39.4	8.7
20 – 29	18.2	21.3	25.8	22.5	37.9
30 – 39	14.1	19.5	15.5	14.4	17.8
40 – 49	11.9	14.0	20.6	12.5	20.6
50 – 59	6.7	8.4	8.2	6.1	10.7
60 & over	6.8	8.2	7.6	5.0	4.3
No answer	-	-	2.7	-	0

*2006 figures. Adapted from "Tablitsa 1.11: Chislennost postoyannogo naseleniya po polu, vozrastu, gorodskoj i selskoj mestnosti, i territorii na nachalo 2006g." in (2006) *Demograficheskii ezhegodnik Kyrgyzskoj Respubliki* Bishkek: National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic: 67-69 [National figures], 91-93 [Bishkek *gorkenesh* figures], 94-96 [Osh *gorkenesh* figures].

Table 2: Population and Samples by Sex (Percent)

	National*	Bishkek*	Bishkek sample	Osh*	Osh sample
Male	49.5	47.8	38.5	48.0	46.0
Female	50.6	52.2	57.0	52.0	53.8
No answer	-	-	4.5	-	0

*2006 figures. Adapted from "Tablitsa 1.3: Chislennost nalichnogo naseleniya po polu, gorodskoj i selskoj mestnosti, i territorii" in (2006) *Demograficheskii ezhegodnik Kyrgyzskoj Respubliki* Bishkek: National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic: 19.

Table 3: Responses to Questions about Wanting and Needing Other Citizenship (Percentages)

	Location	Yes	No	If dual citizenship is permitted	No answer / Other
Do you want other citizenship?	**Bishkek**	35.7	52.2	10.3	1.7
	Osh	36.8	60.9	0.4	2.0
Do you need other citizenship?	**Bishkek**	23.7	61.2	n/a	15.1
	Osh	34.4	61.7	n/a	4.0

Table 4: Reponses to Questions About Native Language, Language of Communication and Language of Thought (Percentages)

	Native Language		Main language of communication		Language of thought	
	Bishkek	**Osh**	**Bishkek**	**Osh**	**Bishkek**	**Osh**
Kyrgyz	36.4	54.2	13.4	28.9	17.5	44.3
Russian	41.9	14.2	73.9	26.5	67.0	24.9
Uzbek	2.7	19.4	0	9.5	0.3	15.8
Uighur	8.2	0.4	0	0	1.4	0
Tatar	1.0	5.1	0	1.2	0.7	1.6
Dungan	1.7	0	0.3	0	0.3	0
Korean	0.3	0	0	0	0	0
Turkish	1.0	0	0.3	0	0.3	0
German	0.3	0	0	0	0	0
Kazakh	1.0	1.2	0	0	0	0
Tajik	0.3	0	0	0	0.3	0
Turkmen	0.3	0	0	0	0	0
Kyrgyz & Russian	n/a	n/a	7.6	22.5	n/a	n/a
Uzbek & Kyrgyz	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.2	n/a	n/a
Uzbek & Russian	n/a	n/a	n/a	3.6	n/a	n/a
Uzbek, Kyrgyz & Russian	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.0	n/a	n/a
More than one language specified	2.1*	4.7*	4.1†	2.4‡	8.2	11.1
No answer	0.3	0.4	0.3	0	2.7	2.4

* All language combinations.
† Excluding Kyrgyz and Russian.
‡ Excluding any combination of Kyrgyz, Russian and Uzbek

Table 5: Ethnic Groups in Kyrgyzstan as a Percentage of Population / Sample

	National*	Bishkek*	Bishkek sample (2005)	Osh*	Osh sample (2006)
Kyrgyz	68.4	60.1	37.8	47.6	56.5
Uzbek	14.3	1.7	4.5	45.0	20.1
Russian	9.5	26.9	30.2	3.3	8.3
Tatar	0.7	1.8	3.4	1.3	10.7
German	0.2	0.4	1.7	<0.1	0
Kazakh	0.8	1.5	2.1	<0.1	1.2
Tajik	0.9	0.2	0.3	0.4	0
Uighur	1.0	1.7	7.6	0.4	0.8
Dungan	1.1	0.5	1.4	<0.1	0
Korean	0.4	1.6	2.4	0.2	1.2
Turkish	0.7	0.3	0	0.5	0
Ukrainian	0.6	1.4	2.4	0.2	0
Other	1.4	1.8	4.5	1.0	1.2

*2006 figures. Adapted from "Tablitsa 1.13: Raspredelenie postoyannogo naseleniq po otdelnym natsionalnostyam" in (2006) *Demograficheskii ezhegodnik Kyrgyzskoj Respubliki* Bishkek: National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic: 102 [national], 106 [Bishkek *gorkenesh,* Osh *gorkenesh].*

Table 6: Passport & Self-defined Nationalities in Bishkek & Osh (Percentages)

	Passport Nationality		Self-defined Nationality	
	Bishkek	**Osh**	**Bishkek**	**Osh**
Kyrgyz	37.8	56.5	35.1	51.0
Uzbek	4.5	20.1	3.1	18.2
Russian	30.2	8.3	32.6	7.9
Tatar	3.4	10.7	3.4	10.3
German	1.7	0	1.7	0
Kazakh	2.1	1.2	1.7	1.2
Tajik	0.3	0	0.3	0
Uighur	7.6	0.8	8.9	1.2
Dungan	1.4	0	1.4	0
Korean	2.4	1.2	1.7	1.2
Ukrainian	2.4	0	0.7	0
Kyrgyzstani	n/a	n/a	0.3	0.4
Other	4.5	1.2	1.0	0.4
Other (same as passport)	n/a	n/a	2.7	0.8
Other (different from passport)	n/a	n/a	2.1	2.8
No answer	1.0	0	2.4	4.3
Don't know	0	0	0.3	0.4

Table 7: Responses to Question
"What do others think about your nationality?" (percentages)

	Bishkek	**Osh**
Positive response	13.4	7.5
Negative response	1.4	0.8
That is the same nationality as self-identification	14.8	48.6
That is a different nationality from self-identification	3.8	24.1
Doesn't matter / Don't care	19.6	4.3
Don't know	25.8	5.9
Other	2.7	0.8
No answer	25.8	7.9

Table 8: Respondents' Place of Birth (percentages)

	Bishkek	**Osh**
Bishkek/Frunze	36.4	1.6
Osh city	2.4	30.1
Chui oblast	21.6	1.6
Issyk Kul oblast	4.5	0.4
Jalalabad oblast	1.0	12.1
Osh oblast	5.8	39.8
Naryn oblast	3.4	0
Batken oblast	0.7	3.9
Talas oblast	3.4	0
Russia	7.9	3.1
Other CAR	5.8	3.5
Other CIS excluding Russia & CARs	3.4	0
Other excluding CIS	2.4	0.4
No answer	1.0	3.5

Table 9: Respondents' Place of Permanent Residence (percentages)

	Bishkek	**Osh**
Bishkek	78.0	1.6
Osh city	0.3	92.1
Chui oblast	13.7	0
Issyk Kul oblast	0.3	0
Jalalabad oblast	0	1.2
Osh oblast	0	3.5
Russia	2.1	0.4
Other CAR	0.3	0
Other excluding CIS	0.7	0
No answer	4.5	2.4

Table 10: Responses to Question "Do you know your origins?" (percentages)

	Bishkek	**Osh**
Yes with clan/tribe name	10.3	35.5
Yes with social/geographical information	7.6	2.3
Yes with no additional information	34.7	23.8
No	42.6	34.4
No answer	4.8	3.9

Table 11: Religious Confessions in Kyrgyzstan as Percentage of Sample

	Bishkek sample	Osh sample
Muslim	57.0	86.2
Orthodox Christian	26.8	8.7
Protestant	1.0	1.2
Atheist	8.2	2.8
Other	5.8	0.8
No answer	1.0	0.4

Table 12: Response to Question "Do you consider yourself to be an urban or rural resident?" (percentage)

	Bishkek	**Osh**
Urban	73.2	82.0
Rural	23.0	14.5
No answer	3.8	3.5

Table 13: Levels of Education (percentage)

	Bishkek	**Osh**
Higher	41.6	55.5
Middle	27.8	23.4
Basic	0.7	0.4
Unfinished higher	12.7	10.5
Unfinished middle	2.7	1.2
Middle technical/vocational	13.1	5.9
None	1.0	0.4
No answer	0.3	2.8

Table 14: Profession of Respondents (percentage)

	Bishkek	**Osh**
Education	8.2	18.8
Armed forces/Services	1.0	0.8
Law	6.2	3.5
Economics, accounting	7.9	10.5
Medical	5.8	8.6
Private business	1.0	0
Administration, management	3.4	1.6
Language-based	3.8	1.2
IT, telecommunications	2.1	4.3
Trade-based	1.7	1.2
Agriculture	1.4	0.8
Skilled worker	10.0	4.3
Student	6.9	12.9
Other professional	4.8	1.2
Unskilled worker	0.3	1.2
Science professional	4.8	11.7
Transport	0	1.2
Media	0.3	1.2
No answer	25.8	15.2

Table 15: Place of Work (percentage)

	Bishkek	Osh
Educational establishment (professional)	6.2	15.6
Education establishment (support)	1.4	6.6
NGO	1.0	4.3
Retail	2.1	4.3
Private firm/company	16.8	6.6
Farm, agriculture	1.7	0
Bank, financial organisation	0.7	3.5
Café, restaurant, bar or entertainment venue	1.4	7.0
Studying	6.5	10.5
Legal firm	1.7	0
Medical establishment	2.7	9.0
Factory	2.1	0
Taxi, transport	0.7	2.7
Construction	1.4	0.4
Bazaar, trading	11.7	0
Housewife	2.4	2.7
On pension	5.2	4.3
Government	2.4	9.0
Telecommunications, postal service	0.3	3.5
Journalism, media	0.3	0
Not working	10.0	4.3
Other	1.7	0
No answer	19.6	6.5

Table 16: Responses to the Question “Are you for a democratic society or strong power (or other)?” (Percentages)

	Bishkek (November 2005)	Osh (May 2006)
For democratic society	25.4	71.9
For strong power	48.5	17.8
For both	19.2	0.8
Other	5.5	3.6
No answer	1.4	5.9

Table 17: Most defining aspect of one's personality responses (percentages)

Characteristic	Bishkek	Osh
Man / Woman [sex]	31.3	26.1
Nationality	7.6	9.9
Place of residence	2.7	1.2
Place of birth	0.7	2.0
Political views	4.5	1.6
Professional affiliation	28.9	9.1
Citizenship	7.2	2.0
Urban / Rural	2.4	0.4
Religion	4.8	17.8
Age	3.8	1.2
Other	4.1	17.8
No answer	2.1	11.1

Table 18: Level of Income (percentages)

	Bishkek	Osh
High	4.8	2.0
Average	56.7	37.5
Low	23.7	50.8
Other	8.2	4.3
No answer	6.5	5.5

Table 19: Sources of information and news in Osh (percentages)

Newspapers	56.2
TV	86.8
Radio	45.0
Internet	10.2
Other	23.4
No answer	0.4

Multiple responses possible – percentage shown is proportion of respondents indicating that they receive news and information from that source.

APPENDIX FOUR

ADDITIONAL IMAGES

29 April 2006 Protest, Bishkek

Figure 1: *Druzhinnik* from Karabalta.

Figure 2: Men from Karabalta at the 29 April 2006 protest in Bishkek.

Figure 3: Two of a group of men from Karabalta posing with a journalist at the 29 April 2006 protest in Bishkek.

Figure 4: Official placards distributed to protestors at the 29 April 2006 protest in Bishkek.

Figure 5: Protestor holding up a t-shirt printed with the slogan "Where's the order?" in Kyrgyz and Russian at the 29 April 2006 Protest in Bishkek. Other slogans included "We're waiting for change" and "Where is the power?" The front of all the t-shirts had a large red question mark printed on them.

Figure 6: Part one of a close-up of the placard carried by a lone protestor at the end of the 29 April 2006 protest in Bishkek. The text (which continues in figure 7) reads:

Russia should apologies to the Kyrgyz people for the destruction of the historic Kyrgyz statehood, the Kokhand Khanate, and for the shooting of up to 1000 000 [sic] Kyrgyz during its colonial rule from 1861 until 1917. For the genocide of the Kyrgyz nation, Russia should pay compensation of US$100 billion to Kyrgyzstan! The Russian military air base in Kant is here despite the national interests of the Kyrgyz Republic and violates its sovereignty. If the Russian military presence is justified in the same way as the US presence in Kyrgyzstan, then Russia should pay the same as the US for the use of our country's territory! Fairness should be the same for everyone!

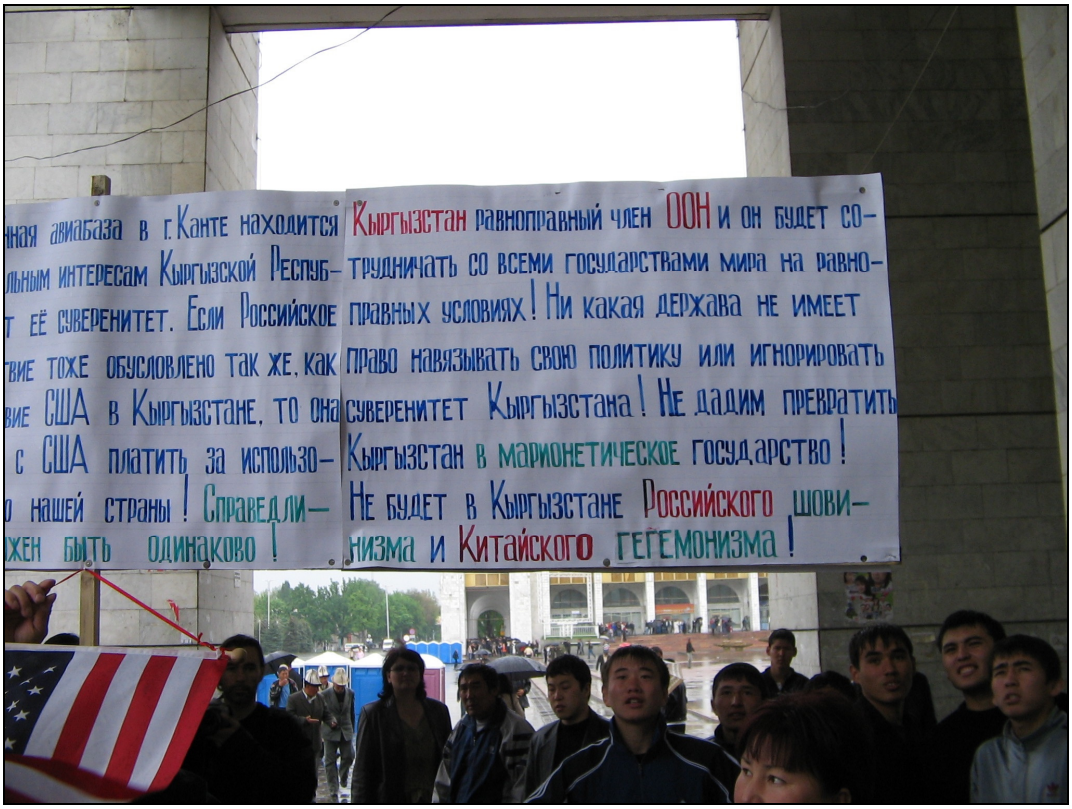

Figure 7: Part two of a close-up of the placard carried by a lone protestor at the end of the 29 April 2006 protest in Bishkek. The text of the third panel reads:

Kyrgyzstan is an equal member of the UN and will cooperate with all states of the world on equal terms. No power has the right to impose its own policy or ignore Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty! We will not allow Kyrgyzstan to be turned into a puppet state! There will not be Russian chauvenism and Chinese hegemony in Kyrgyzstan!

БАНДИТЫ,
ПРОНИКШИЕ В КЫРГЫЗСТАН,
- «ПЕРВАЯ ЛАСТОЧКА» СИЛ
МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО ТЕРРОРИЗМА?

"Первая ласточка" от сил международного терроризма явились, по сути, сильным испытанием для новой власти Киргизии. Силы безопасности, получающие в последнее время все большую материальную и техническую поддержку, на поверку оказались не готовы к реальной боевой ситуации. Шутка ли? Двадцать террористов проникли вглубь с территории суверенного государства и всего 200 км не дошли до Бишкека, активизировав вокруг себя четыреста солдат. А если завтра бандитов будет полсотни? А пять сотен?

(Окончание на 3-й стр.)

Figure 8: "Bandity, pronikshie v Kyrgyzstan – “pervaya lastochka” sil mezhdunarodnogo terrorizma?” [“Bandits penetrate into Kyrgyzstan – the first sign of forces of international terrorism?”]". Scan of the first page of *Itogi nedeli,* 19.05.2006.

Timeline of Key Events

March 2005 – July 2006

This timeline includes not only key events referred to in this thesis that occurred in Kyrgyzstan shortly prior to and during the fieldwork on which study is based, but also other relevant information, such as the author's main locations and movements during in fieldwork. Details of protests in the three months preceding 24 March 2005 are not included here, but a detailed account can be found chapter 1.

March 2005

24 March	White House stormed; Akaev and family flee Kyrgyzstan. Rioting and looting in Bishkek overnight.
30 March	Interim government appointments made by acting President Bakiev.

April 2005

4 April	Akaev formally resigns as President of the Kyrgyz Republic
14 April	Bermet Akaeva returns briefly to Bishkek

May 2005

13 May	Andijon massacre in Uzbekistan
15 May	First variant of Constitution presented for discussion

June 2005

	Azimbek Beknazarov appointed Chief Prosecutor
10 June	Deputy Jyrgalbek Surabaldiev assassinated in Bishkek
17 June	White House temporarily seized by supporters of Urmat Baryktabasov, a potential presidential candidate demanding his registration, which was denied on the grounds of holding Kazakh citizenship.

July 2005

10 July	Presidential elections held; Bakiev wins landslide victory running on a joint ticket with Feliks Kulov. Kulov nominated as Prime Minister.

August 2005

11 August	Inauguration of President Bakiev
31 August	Independence Day

September 2005

17 September Author flies to Bishkek from UK

19 September Azimbek Beknazarov sacked as Chief Prosecutor
21 September Murder of deputy and businessman Bayaman Erkinbaev

October 2005

20 October	Murder of deputy Tynychbek Akmatbaev
21 October	Start of protests in Bishkek by Ryspek Akmatbaev and supporters
25 October	Start of protests in Bishkek by Ar-Namys and supporters of Prime Minister Feliks Kulov
26 October	President Bakiev finally expresses his support for his Prime Minister, Feliks Kulov
27 October	End of protests in Bishkek by Ryspek Akmatbaev and supporters following talks with President Bakiev
29 October	Nationwide protest held under the slogan "Peaceful Citizens for a Kyrgyzstan Without Crime"

December 2005

15 December	Armed take over of BiTel mobile phone operator in Bishkek
16 December	ICG report labels Kyrgyzstan a "faltering" state

January 2006

8 January	Murder of Raatvek Sanatbaev, candidate for the presidency of the Kyrgyz Olympic Committee following the murder of the previous post holder.
9 January	Author returns to UK
24 January	Ryspek Akmatbaev acquitted of all charges against him
26 January	Jogorku Kenesh calls for resignation of Teshtemir Aitbaev, Chief of the National Security Service, and his deputy
31 January	Brawl between Kyrgyz and Dungan teenagers in the village of Iskra, Chui oblast

February 2006

4 February	Kyrgyzstani government revokes Oxus' licence to operate the Jeeroy gold mine
8 February	Resignation of Jogorku Kenesh Speaker Omurbek Tekebaev Protests

March 2006

24 March	First anniversary of the "People's Revolution"
27 March	Author returns to Bishkek
30 March	Central Elections Committee rules Ryspek Akmatbaev ineligible to stand in forthcoming Balykchy by-election
31 March	Author flies to Osh

April 2006

3 April	Ryspek Akmatbaev reinstated as candidate in the forthcoming Balykchy by-election
8 April	Anti-Criminal Protest in Bishkek
9 April	Ryspek Akmatbaev wins Balykchy by-election
12 April	Attack on Edil Baisalov in Bishkek
27 April	Author flies to Bishkek
28 April	Jogorku Kenesh passes vote of no confidence in all government ministers except Prime Minister Kulov
29 April	Protest organised by For Reforms! movement in Bishkek

May 2006

1 May	Author travels back to Osh
2 May	18 ministers submit their resignation to President Bakiev, who refuses to accept them
10 May	Assassination of Ryspek Akmatbaev
10 May	Resignation of Teshtemir Aitbaev, Usen Sidikov and Dastan Sarygulov
15 May	IMU incursions in Batken oblast resulting on several deaths
26 May	Author flies to Bishkek
27 May	For Reforms! Protest in Bishkek Rally of ethnic Uzbeks in Jalalabad demanding greater cultural and political rights in Kyrgyzstan
29 May	Author travels back to Osh
31 May	Start of visit to Kyrgyzstan by Rolf Ekeus, OSCE High Commissioner for Ethnic Minorities

June 2006

2 June	End of visit by Rolf Ekeus, OSCE High Commissioner for Ethnic Minorities
18 June	Author departs Osh for Bishkek
22 June	Author departs Bishkek for UK.

Dramatis Personae

Key Figures and Connections in Kyrgyzstan 2005-2006

Figures are not listed alphabetically, but rather have been loosely grouped to reflect their connections to other individuals and groupings. This list is not exhaustive and is intended only to provide some initial background about key figures. The biographies only include events and details before June 2006, which was the end point for the study.

Askar AKAEV: First president of the Kyrgyz Republic. Fled the country to Russia along with his family on March 24, 2005. Alleged to have amassed assets estimated to be worth several hundred million US dollars during his rule,[1] which was seen to have become increasingly authoritarian and corrupt since the mid-1990s.

Bermet AKAEVA: Daughter of Askar AKAEV and leader of the pro-presidential Alga! Kyrgyzstan political party. Successfully stood as a candidate in the February 2005 parliamentary elections in the universitetskii district in which leading opposition figure Roza OTUNBAEVA was deregistered, but subsequently fled the country in March 2005 and her mandate was revoked in May of the same year.[2] She returned briefly to the republic on 14 April 2005, apparently to take up her seat in parliament and was met with localised protests. Another trip to Kyrgyzstan in April 2006 resulted in her detention and questioning by the National Security Services for three hours before she was released.

[1] Aslund, Anders (2005) "Economic reform after the revolution in Kyrgyzstan", *Demokratizatsiya* 13(4): 481

[2] *RFE/RL* (2005) "Arrest Warrant Issued for Son-In-Law of Ousted Kyrgyz Leader", 19 August. http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1060808.html [last accessed 01.10.2009].

Aidar AKAEV: Businessman and son of Aksar AKAEV. Elected as a parliamentary deputy in the February 2005 elections for Kemin district, but, like the rest of his family, fled in March 2005 and has not returned since. He was stripped of parliamentary immunity in September 2005 and in March 2006 was removed from his parliamentary post, which he had never taken up due to criminal investigations as well as the possibility of physical attacks against him.

Adil TOIGONBAEV: Kazakh businessman and husband of Bermet AKAEVA. As part of the Akaev "family" he owned holdings in a vast number of companies and businesses, including a lucrative contract to supply fuel at the US's Manas Airbase. Discontent at his wealth has been cited as a contributing factor in the March events of 2005 and a warrant for his arrest on charges of fraud, embezzlement and tax evasion was issued in August 2005,[3] but has not been served.

Kurmanbek BAKIEV: Current President of the Kyrgyz Republic, elected on 10 July 2005, having held the post of Acting President since 24 March. Entered politics in 1990, when he was elected as first secretary of the Kok-Yangak (Jalalabad oblast) municipal council. Subsequently appointed governor of Jalalabad oblast in 1992 and then the northern Chui oblast in 1997. In December 2000 he was appointed to the post of Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic by Askar AKAEV, but resigned following the Asky tragedy in May 2002, remaining a parliamentary deputy. A southern politician, he was involved in the opposition-led protests in the first quarter of 2005 that culminated with Askar AKAEV's overthrow. Crucially in the presidential elections that were subsequently held, he ran on a joint ticket with northern politician and long-time opposition figure Feliks KULOV, lessening fears of the country's north-south political divide worsening. Rumours of connections with the criminal underworld were fuelled in October 2005 when he met with a

[3] *RFE/RL* (2005) "Arrest Warrant Issued for Son-In-Law of Ousted Kyrgyz Leader", 19 August. http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1060808.html [last accessed 01.10.2009].

delegation of Ryspek AKMATBAEV's supporters, after which they agreed to halt their protest in Bishkek.

Feliks KULOV: Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic from July 2005 until his resignation in December 2006. From a military family who originally trained as a policeman, he held a range of posts in the Kirghiz Ministry of Internal Affairs between 1971 and 1980. In 1987 was appointment First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, a post he held until 1990. Between 1990 and 1999 he held a range of posts – Minister of Internal Affairs, Askar AKAEV's Vice President (1992-1993: he was forced to resign following a scandal over missing gold reserves), Governor of Chui oblast – before becoming Mayor of Bishkek in 1998-1999. Co-founder and first leader of the political party Ar-Namys in 1999.

He stood unsuccessfully in the February 2000 parliamentary elections in the Kara-Buurinskii district and in the same month announced his intention to run in the forthcoming presidential elections. However, on 22 March 2000 while undergoing treatment at the National Cardiological Centre in Bishkek, Kulov was arrested on charges of abuse of power – an event that was widely interpreted as an attempt by Akaev to prevent him standing in the elections. He was acquitted and freed in August 2000, but this decision was overturned and a new trial started in September 2000. Also in September 2000, a Language Commission was founded with the aim of ensuring that presidential candidates met the constitutional requirement of knowing Kyrgyz, the state language. As with Kulov's initial arrest, this move by the White House was seen as being politically motivated, since in common with many ethnic Kyrgyz from the north of the country, Kulov's native language is Russian and his grasp of Kyrgyz less than fluent. Kulov protested the arbitrariness of the Commission's founding and refused to undergo testing, thus becoming ineligible as a presidential candidate. Following open criticism of President AKAEV in January 2001, Kulov was found guilty of power abuses between 1997-1998 while serving in the

Ministry for National Security. He was sentenced to seven years imprisonment and the confiscation of property.[4]

He remained in prison until the night of 24 March 2005, when he was freed following the storming of the White House and subsequently helped to restore order in Bishkek following overnight looting. Kulov initially announced his intention to stand in the presidential elections scheduled for 10 July 2005 against Kurmanbek BAKIEV. However, citing fears for stability in the republic, he later withdrew his candidacy in order to stand as a "tandem" with BAKIEV on the understanding that if Bakiev was elected president, Kulov would become his prime minister. He duly took up the post of Prime Minister following Bakiev's victory.

In October 2005 Kulov became the subject of controversy in the protests that took place after the murder of Tynychbek AKMATBAEV. Akmatbaev's brother, criminal authority Ryspek AKMATBAEV, alleged that Kulov had ordered his brother's murder via the imprisoned Chechen crime boss Aziz BATUKAEV, a sworn enemy of Ryspek. These allegations were unsubstantiated and the public showed strong support for the "People's General", especially in absence of explicit support for Kulov from Bakiev. Despite declarations of the strength of the Bakiev-Kulov tandem, rumours persisted about disagreements between Bakiev and Kulov throughout his term as Prime Minister.

Tashtemir AITBAEV: Head of the National Security Service from 30 March 2005 10 May 2006. Aitbaev had previously served under AKAEV as Minister of National Security in 2000-2002. An associate and close relative of President BAKIEV, he was seen as a political enemy of Feliks KULOV,[5] especially after Kulov called for his sacking in January 2006 for incompetence. His

[4] http://www.ar-namys.org/party/persons/kulov [last accessed 30.09.2009].
[5] Juraev, Shairbek (2006) "Top-Level Resignations and the Akmatbaev Murder: Implications for Kyrgyz Politics", *Institute for Public Policy* 12 May. http://www.ipp.kg/en/analysis/181/ [last accessed 02.10.2009].

eventual sacking was seen to strengthen Kulov's position in the alleged power struggle between the two members of the "tandem".

Daniyar USENOV: Political opponent of Askar AKAEV and parliamentary deputy from 1995 until 2000. His declared opposition to Akaev's policies from 1999 onwards resulted in tax inspections and eventually he declared bankruptcy. He was also barred from standing the February 2000 parliamentary elections due to undeclared property and over the next few years was arrested and held several times, but never charged. These arrests have been attributed to his "complex relationship" with AKAEV.[6] He was appointed to the post of Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Issues by Kurmanbek BAKIEV on 30 March 2005 and held it until 4 October of the same year. He was appointed by BAKIEV to head the commission investigating the Akaev family corruption.[7] Parliament refused to approve his nomination as Vice Prime Minister in November 2005.

Almazbek ATAMBAEV: Chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan since 1999 and candidate in the 2000 presidential elections. He was a member of the Opposition that formed in the months preceding the March events of 2005, supporting Kurmanbek BAKIEV. Served as Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism from 20 December 2005 until he resigned on 21 April 2006. He subsequently participated in the Spring 2005 protest season with the For Reforms! movement, with the Social Democratic Party showing a strong turn-out at the anti-government protests.

[6] Iskender, Bektour & Aziza Akmatova (2008) "Nariman Tyuleev – i.o. mera Bishkeka" ["Nariman Tyuleev is acting Mayor of Bishkek", *kloop.kg* 7 July. http://kloop.kg/blog/2008/07/07/nariman-tyuleev-—-io-mera-bishkeka/ [last accessed 01.10.2009].
[7] Radnitz, Scott (2006) "What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?", *Journal of Democracy* 17(2): 141.

Azimbek BEKNAZAROV: Opposition politician who was appointment to the post of General Prosecutor after 24 March 2005. His arrest following criticism of AKAEV in 2002 over border delimitation agreements with China sparked protests in the south of Kyrgyzstan, including the infamous Aksy tragedy on 11 May 2002 that resulted in five deaths and led to the resignation of BAKIEV as Prime Minister. Prominent in the protests leading up to AKAEV's overthrow, he was subsequently appointed Chief Prosecutor by President BAKIEV, a post he held from March 2005 until September 2005 when he was removed from the post. Successfully stood for election to parliament in the Aksy district in November 2005 and is co-chair of the political party Asaba along with Roza OTUNBAEVA.

Omurbek TEKEBAEV: Opposition politician and founder of the socialist party Ata-Meken in 1992. He held the post of Deputy Head of the State Administration of Jalalabad oblast between 1992 and 1994, and became a parliamentary deputy in 1993. Tekebaev stood unsuccessfully in the 1995 and 2000 presidential elections. In 2000 he was elected Vice Speaker of the Jogorku Kenesh and took part in constitutional reform as a member of the opposition. He played an active part in demonstrations over the conduct of the February 2005 parliamentary elections that led up to AKAEV's ousting, renouncing his parliamentary post on 25 March 2005 and declaring that he was "with the people".[8] He was subsequently elected Speaker of the Jogorku Kenesh, a post he held until February when his position became untenable due to an increasingly personal and public conflict with President BAKIEV and he was replaced by Marat Sultanov. Tekebaev became a central figure of the For Reforms! movement that organised two of the main protests of spring 2005.

[8] *Lyudi* (2009) "Omurbek Chirkeshovich Tekbaev", 4 April. http://www.peoples.ru/state/politics/omyrbek_takebaev/index.html [last accessed 02.10.2009]

Dooronbek SADYRBAEV: Three-time parliamentary deputy for Nooken district, film director and actor. Political opponent to President AKAEV, he was an outspoken critic of the incumbent president's tactics in the run up to the 2000 presidential elections. He initially stood as a candidate in the 2000 presidential elections having passed the language test, but then withdrew his candidacy. A member of the For Reforms! movement that formed in early 2006, he was known for his passionate and at time hyperbolic speeches (including claims against BAKIEV and KULOV), which received mixed evaluations in the press. He controversially defended Ryspek AKMATBAEV's reputation on the even of the Balykchy by-election, stating that he had "a clean biography" and arguing that there were already criminals in the government so Akmatbaev's election was not the awful event many felt it to be.[9] Member of the political party Asaba.

Rosa OTUNBAEVA: Briefly Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic in 1992, before being appointed Ambassador to the United States and Canada. She took up the post of Foreign Minister once more on her return to Kyrgyzstan in 1994 and held the post until 1997. She then served as Ambassador to the United Kingdom between 1998 and 2001, before becoming deputy head of the United National special mission to Georgia. Otunbaeva returned to Kyrgyzstan in late 2004 and co-founded the opposition political party Ata-Jurt. She attempted to register as a candidate in the February 2005 parliamentary elections, but her candidature was rejected on the grounds that she did not meet the requirement of having been resident in the republic in the preceding five years. Many saw this as a politically-motivated decision, especially since she was standing in the same district as Bermet AKAEVA, and she and her supporters were amongst the first to start holding protests over the conduct of the elections in January 2005. Over the next three months she became a leading figure in the Opposition movement,

[9] Goncharuk, Semyon (2006) "Mandat ili zhizhn?" ["Mandate or life?"], *lenta.ru* 11 April. http://lenta.ru/articles/2006/04/11/ryspek/ [last accessed 02.10.2009].

leading to her being dubbed the "Locomotive of the Revolution" in the aftermath of the March 2005 events. Despite her leading role in AKAEV's overthrow and international profile, she was quickly sidelined by the new government; having served as Foreign Minister in BAKIEV's interim government, parliament refused to approve her candidacy in September 2005, leaving her sidelined, especially after an unsuccessful attempt to run in the Tunduk district (Bishkek) by-elections in November 2005. Co-chair of the political party Asaba with Azimbek BEKNAZAROV, she was critical of the Bakiev-Kulov government during the first half of 2006, but did not actively participate in the protests organised by the For Reforms! movement.

Tynychbek AKMATBAEV: Parliamentary deputy from 2005 and head of the parliamentary committee on defence and security who was shot dead on 20 October 2005 during a visit to Colony 31 to investigate recent riots at the prison. He had previously been arrested on suspicion of involvement in a 2004 contract killing, but was released without charge. Nevertheless, his appointment to a committee concerned with law and order provoked "hollow laughter",[10] not least due to the reputation of his brother, Ryspek AKMATBAEV, as a leading figure in Kyrgyzstan's crime world.

Ryspek AKMATBAEV: Criminal authority with his power base established in the early 1990s in Issyk-Kul oblast. Allegedly enjoyed the patronage of AKAEV in the early 1990s and was involved in ousting Akaev's opponents and keeping control of the criminal world.[11] Along with rival crime boss Aziz BATUKAEV was popularly thought to be responsible for the majority of hired murders

[10] Lewis, David (2008) *The Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia* New York: Columbia University Press: 150.
[11] Kupatadze, Alexander (2008) “Organized crime before and after the Tulip Revolution: the changing dynamics of upperworld-underworld networks”, Central Asian Survey 27(3-4): 290.

in Kyrgyzstan in 2002-2003.[12] Became prominent on Kyrgyzstan's political scene following the murder of his brother, parliamentary deputy Tynychbek AKMATBAEV, which he accused Prime Minister Feliks KULOV of orchestrating in conjunction with rival crime boss Aziz BATUKAEV, who was being held in Colony 31 where T. Akmatbaev was shot dead at the time of the murder, staging a five-day protest demanding the immediate sacking of KULOV and Omurbek TEKEBAEV, whom he also believed was involved in the murder. The following year he announced his intention to run for the post of parliamentary deputy in the Balykchy district (Issyk Kul oblast) that had become available due to this brother's death. His candidacy was annulled on 30 March 2006 by the Central Elections Commission on the grounds that he did not meet the five-year residency requirement,[13] and having an outstanding criminal conviction, leading to his supporters holding protests and blockading the Bishkek-Balykchy road. However, he was reinstated as a candidate on 2 April and won the election on 9 April, causing much consternation nationally and internationally about the criminalisation of Kyrgyzstani politics. He was shot dead a month later (10 May 2006) in a drive-by shooting presumed to be a contract killing.

Aziz BATUKAEV: Chechen crime boss with a power base in the eastern part of the Chui valley since the early 1990s and rumoured to control the majority of prisons and colonies in Kyrgyzstan. Batukaev was being held on remand in Colony 31 at the time of T. Akmatbaev's murder on 20 October 2005 and was subsequently sentenced to 16 years, eight months and 15 days of imprisonment for the murder of Tynychbek AKMATBAEV in August 2006.[14]

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[12] *TsentrAzia* (2005) "Aziz Batukaev vs. Rysbek Akmatbaev: kto kogo? Borba podlinnykh 'khozyaev' Kirgizii" ["Aziz Batukaev vs. Ryspek Akmatbaev: Who to Whom? The Battle of the real "lords" of Kirgizia"], 22 October. http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1129973340 [last accessed 02.10.2009]

[13] *RFE/RL* (2006) "Kyrgyz Election Commission Removes Controversial Candidate, Sparking Protests", *RFE/RL Newsline* 31 March. http://www.hri.org/news/balkans/rferl/2006/06-03-31.rferl.html#25 [last accessed 03.10.2009].

[14] Abubakirov, Nurshat (2005) "Criminals break into politics in Kyrgyzstan", *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 16 November. http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/3554/print [last accessed 15.05.2009]; *For.kg* (2008)

Bayaman ERKINBAEV: Businessman and parliamentary deputy who was assassinated in Bishkek on 21 September 2005. The murder was assumed to be connected with his illegal business interests. Erkinbaev was reputedly the leading criminal figure in the south of Kyrgyzstan and allegedly enjoyed the support of the Akaev government due to his ability to balance Uzbek organised crime groups operating in southern Kyrgyzstan.[15] Erkinbaev's business interests were funded by his involvement in narcotics smuggling and included ownership of one of Osh's major bazaars as well as hotels. He provided significant material support to the Opposition in March 2005,[16] reflecting his position as a local "Robin Hood" figure who possessed large amounts of social capital that he used to mobilise his supporters. He was elected to the Jogorku Kenesh in the February 2005 elections with 95.45 percent of the votes in his district despite his criminal reputation.[17]

Jirgalbek SURABALDIEV: Parliamentary deputy and alleged northern criminal boss, described as "one of the most successful businessmen in Kyrgyzstan and owner of two car markets".[18] The first parliamentarian/underworld figure to be assassinated, he was shot dead in the centre of Bishkek on 10 June 2005.

"V Kyrgyzstane izvestnyi 'vor v zakone' Aziz Batukaev, otbyvayushchii 16-letnee nakazanie v kolonii usilennogo rezhima, khodatajstvuet o predostavlenii emu rossijskogo grazhdanstva" ["In Kyrgystan infamous crime lord Aziz Batukaev, who is serving a 16-year sentence in a strict regime colony, is lobbying to be granted Russian citizenship"], 7 April. http://www.for.kg/goid.php?id=62076&print [last accessed 02.10.2009].

[15] Kupatadze, Alexander (2008): 290.

[16] Ibid: 286.

[17] Ibid. 290.

[18] Ibid: 289.