



TEN YEARS GONE: THE LEGACY OF THE 2010 REVOLUTION AND ETHNIC VIOLENCE IN KYRGYZSTAN: A ROUNDTABLE

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Anniversaries of communal events matter. On 4 May 2020, around 100 scholars and practitioners from Kyrgyzstan and beyond came together in an online event hosted jointly by the University of Oxford's Society for the Caspian and Central Asia (TOSCCA) and the University of Exeter's Central Asian Studies research group (ExCAS). We met to reflect on tenth anniversaries of the "7 April revolution," which removed President Bakiev from office, and the riots and ethnic violence in the southern borderlands of the Kyrgyz Republic in May and June 2010, which led to the loss of over 400 mainly ethnic Uzbek minority lives. These events themselves took place on anniversaries of events to which they bore remarkable resemblance. The "Tulip Revolution" of 2005, which removed the previous president Akaev, took place almost exactly 5 years before and involved many of the same participants. Meanwhile the twentieth

anniversary of the ethnic violence of 1990 was marked during the crisis of 2010. The two episodes of violence were remarkably similar in the locations of violence, the volume of lives lost, the pattern of violence, the protagonist groups and the fact that they both took place in the context of a wider political unravelling.

Since our online roundtable, events in Kyrgyzstan once again took centre stage when disputed elections of 4 October, 2020, led to a political crisis, inter-factional fighting in the centre of Bishkek, the ransacking of the White House once again, and the eventual resignation of President Sooronbai Jeenbekov. After a week of turmoil and struggle Sadyr Japarov, having been forcibly released from prison, emerged as the new Prime Minister and President. Japarov postponed the previously promised re-run of the parliamentary elections and proposed a new super-presidentialist constitution – a choice which would move Kyrgyzstan closer to its more authoritarian neighbours. As a convicted kidnapper presides over fast moving events, the shadow of organised crime remains despite the high-profile arrest of the kingpin Raimbek Matraimov and a new anti-corruption drive. Unsurprisingly Japarov was elected on 10 January, winning 79 percent of the vote, although turnout was just 39%, the result of a lack of the customary vote-buying, the general expectation that it was a foregone conclusion and freezing weather. More than 80 percent of voters backed constitutional amendments to overturn key parts of 2010 constitution and return to presidential rule.

These dates – 1990, 2005, 2010 and now 2020 – and their mathematical sequence invite speculation that there is some cosmic order to Kyrgyzstan's politics. With Jeenbekov's resignation, the rule of 61, where Presidents of Kyrgyzstan are all ousted or resign close to their sixty-first birthday was widely discussed. Such pseudo-science is intriguing – and can play out in politics in the extent to which there is a psychological desire for certainties in an uncertain world – but of more significance are surely the material, symbolic and affective consequences of these events. They establish precedents and initiate new pyramids of power. They leave memories and scars, while also prompting some more constructive legacies such as constitutional reform and all-too-rare moments of inter-ethnic reconciliation and restoration. The greed and grievances which provoked the upheavals of 2005 and 2010 remain all-too-visible in Kyrgyzstan and, in 2020, are being played out not just in the current crisis but in the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in the corruption allegations against former customs official Raimbek Matraimov (OCCRP, RFE/RL & Kloop 2019).

The roundtable brought 'insiders' and 'outsiders' came into conversation

before an audience which was even more diverse. Roza Isakovna Otunabeva, the interim President of Kyrgyzstan in 2010, opened our discussion with a reflection on the dramatic events in which she was a leading protagonist. She was followed by Edil Baisalov, now Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Kingdom and briefly Otunbaeva's chief of staff. Then followed five scholars who have made major contributions to our understanding of the before, during and after of 2010 events (Botoeva 2015, Dzhuraev et al 2015, Huskey & Hill 2013, Huskey 2018, Lewis & Sagnaeva 2019, Megoran 2017). Further important contributions may be found in issues of this journal and elsewhere over the last decade (Toktomushev 2015, Kutmaniliev 2015, Kupatadze 2014, Ismailbekova 2017, Laruelle & Engvall 2015, Reeves 2014).

What follows is not a dissection of research but a reflection on events and their aftermath from four of the speakers. Huskey outlines two legacies of 2010 in progressive constitutionalism and regressive inter-ethnic relations. Dzhuraev considers the stalled progress to rule-based order in terms of its failures of political communication and departs somewhat from Huskey in noting that dictatorship is yet to be vanquished from the Kyrgyz Republic. Botoeva reflects on the widespread illegality and illegitimacy of the state before the crisis and which has continued after. Megoran closes our collection by tying the international back to the national in the intertwined local politics of the borderlands of the south where the ethnic violence took place. Contributions are made with a passion borne of first-hand participation in events and/or through the eyes of relatives, friends and research participants who have endured the instability and corruption in Kyrgyzstan before and after 2010. But there is hope too in the clarity with which defects and dilemmas are presented. This openness – to the market and to political insurgents, to researchers and to debate – continues to mark out Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia.

The Two Legacies of the April 2010 Revolution in Kyrgyzstan

Eugene Huskey

As in many new states which emerged from empires in the 20th century, Kyrgyzstan's first decades of independence witnessed intense political rivalry among members of an elite inherited from the old regime. Until the rise to power of President Kurmanbek Bakiev and his family from 2005 to 2007, this rivalry was governed by formal and informal rules that, while favoring the incumbent, still allowed vigorous political competition. The rules changed under the Bakievs. By the spring of 2010, Kyrgyzstan was on the verge of an authoritarian consolidation that would have aligned it with neighboring regimes in Central Asia. It was at this decisive moment that the April Revolution intervened to spare

Kyrgyzstan a descent into a prolonged repressive era. As the work of Barbara Geddes and her colleagues has established, and the recent history of Central Asia has confirmed, personalist rule is far more resistant to regime change than military dictatorships or one-party rule (Geddes et al, 2014).

Besides preventing the onset of a full-fledged dictatorship, the April Revolution of 2010 put in place institutional foundations designed to inoculate the system against the re-emergence of a Big Man, or family rule, in Kyrgyzstani politics. Among the features of the new constitutional order were a single six-year presidential term; a strengthened role for parliament vis-a-vis the executive; safeguards against the emergence of a “party of power,” including a prohibition on any single party gaining more than 65 out of the parliament’s 120 seats; and the allocation of the chairs of two key parliamentary committees to opposition parties. Although the June 2010 Constitution produced a semi-presidential rather than a true parliamentary system, over the next decade it helped to restrain powerful forces intent on introducing a form of super-presidentialism in Kyrgyzstan.

In the wake of the popular rebellion of October 2020, these forces, led by Sadyr Japarov, gained ascendance in Kyrgyzstan. Long a foe of the institutional legacy of the 2010 revolution, Japarov has made the removal of the constitutional checks adopted in 2010 the central feature of his governing vision for the country. Reinforcing orientalist interpretations of Kyrgyzstani political development, Japarov claims that his countrymen and women do not yet have a political culture that is sufficiently mature to sustain a form of parliamentarism, and therefore a strong presidency is essential for effective governance (Aljazeera English 2020). Moreover, he has insisted on introducing a traditional Kyrgyz popular assembly, the kurultai, as a checking mechanism on the parliament and president, an assembly whose composition and flexible procedures would almost certainly allow it to be bent to the will of the incumbent president. In a word, then, the aftermath of the October 2020 popular rebellion poses exceptionally serious challenges to the institutional legacies of the April 2010 revolution.

As the events of 2020 remind us, the constitutional checks established in 2010 were not an inevitable outcome of the popular protests and change of regime that year. They emerged because the Interim Government, which assumed power in the wake of the April Revolution, had within its ranks a number of politicians, among them Roza Otunbaeva and Omurbek Tekebaev, who were deeply devoted to a rules-based order in Kyrgyzstan. April 2010 did not represent, then, just another reshuffling of the usual

cast of characters in Kyrgyzstani politics, as some have argued.

Just as it mattered that the April Revolution brought to power a number of decidedly reformist leaders, it also mattered that the president who succeeded the Interim Government in 2011, Almazbek Atambaev, was far less committed to the principles of the 2010 Constitution, a document that he found himself frequently—and frustratingly—constrained by. Although he often lived by the letter of the constitution, most notably by stepping down after a single six-year term, he frequently violated its spirit, whether in the prosecution of his political enemies or in the use of every rhetorical, financial, and administrative resource available to ensure that a compliant ally, Sooronbai Jeenbekov, would succeed him. To build on the criticisms of President Atambaev advanced by Edil Baisalov at the roundtable, one could argue that the rebellion of October 2020 was due in no small part to Atambaev’s willingness to install a successor with a weak mandate and weak leadership skills in order to maintain his position as a dominant force in Kyrgyzstani politics.

If one legacy of the April Revolution is associated with the overthrow of a repressive regime and the introduction of new and more progressive institutional arrangements, the other is linked to the scourge of inter-ethnic violence, which began on a small scale in the north of the country in the days after the April Revolution and exploded into an orgy of bloodshed in the South on June 10. Unfortunately, the inter-ethnic conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks has been, in many ways, the more consequential legacy of the April Revolution and its immediate aftermath. It fundamentally altered the nation-building project in Kyrgyzstan and deepened the political, economic, and cultural marginalization of the country’s Uzbek population.

In the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan’s first president, Askar Akaev, had championed Kyrgyzstan as the common home of multiple nationalities, noting that “a polyethnic alloy was part of the Kyrgyz heritage” (Akaev 2003: 32). However, the inter-ethnic violence of June 2010 brought an insular Kyrgyz nationalism from the fringes of public life to center stage. Playing on popular fears of the loss of sovereignty over Kyrgyz lands from within and without, nationalist politicians—for the most part unassociated with the Interim Government—used the June events to help delegitimize the previously dominant discourse of ethnic inclusion.

This decisive turn in identity politics in 2010 was particularly detrimental for the country’s Uzbeks, whose representatives now hold only 2.5 percent of seats in the national parliament and almost no positions in law enforcement and judicial institutions, even though they account for

over 14 percent of Kyrgyzstan's population. Uzbek language education in Kyrgyzstan has declined precipitously since 2010, and by as early as 2012 the number of pupils in Uzbek-language schools in 2012 had dropped by over 60 percent (Eurasianet 2013).

Viewed a decade on, then, the legacy of the April Revolution is indisputably mixed, as its unintended consequences for identity politics threaten to overshadow its contributions to the institutional foundations of a competitive, if messy, political order under Presidents Otunbaeva and Atambaev. In addition, as noted above, under the leadership of Sadyr Japarov or like-minded politicians, this promising institutional legacy from the 2010 Revolution may itself be superseded by a toxic mixture of super-presidential structures and easily-manipulated traditionalist institutions.

October 2020 as a Legacy of April 2010: the April Revolution's Failure to Prevent Dictatorship

Emil Dzhuraev

Before the ink dried on this essay, reflecting on the question of whether April 7, 2010, in hindsight, may have prevented a slide to dictatorship, Kyrgyzstan tumbled into another capital make-over following the problematic parliamentary elections on October 4, 2020. The latter events produced an all-too-evident answer to the question. Indeed, October 2020 may be viewed in important ways as the legacy of April 2010.

Putting the finer details of the most recent events aside, three dominant leitmotifs emerge: assertion of people power, demand for constitutional reform, and the perceived stagnation of the past 30 years. People power in 2020, marked by evident nationalism, coarse language, and a sort of class identity (opposing the wealthy, intellectuals, urbanites, Russophones, etc), is arguably more intolerant and dangerous than in 2010 (see Reeves 2014). Demands for constitutional reform – a mainstay of Kyrgyz politics – reinvoked the hope for quick and wholesale solutions for the country's problems (see Beyer 2015). But they actually reveal issues resulting from strategic institutional instability (see Huskey and Iskakova 2011). The reference to the disappointments of the past 30 years speaks to a public discourse where neither March 2005, nor April 2010 is viewed as any different from the rest of post-independence history. These three factors, combined with an opportunist de facto leadership, have opened up the gates to dictatorship. But how are these three developments linked to April 7, 2010?

While all three phenomena need to be traced to the entire independent history of Kyrgyzstan since 1991 and not just be pinned to April 7, 2010,

arguably the April revolution was the most important watershed moment that promised to remake Kyrgyz politics. Ten years on that promise failed to materialize.

The failure has been a failure of the communicative task of politics, or of political meaning-making. Instead of signifying the country's new course toward democracy, rule of law and inclusion, as was promised (see, e.g., Otunbayeva 2011), the April revolution – as a signifier – became caught up in contradictions and confusions.

There are many indications of contradictory or confusing ideas taking over public discourse in Kyrgyzstan's post-April 2010 politics. From lopsided pro-Russian and anti-Western views consistently captured in many opinion surveys, to generally observable admiration for figures such as Vladimir Putin, Nursultan Nazarbaev and Lee Kwan Yew, to widespread public expressions of disapproval of liberal NGOs as “grant-eaters” and agents of foreign (Western) influence, to rise of intolerant nationalist groups. There is also serious confusion in the constitutional context, where April 7 had ushered in a commitment to parliamentary democratic government but introduced only a malfunctioning mixed system (as Huskey discusses above). This has led to popular skepticism toward parliamentarism as a system. Relatedly, there has been a disorienting process in terms of political leadership. A decade after the revolution, with many erstwhile revolutionaries sidelined, many previously discredited figures returned to the political arena. Many of them had little taste for democracy. Lastly, disillusion stemmed from the ways in which the potential gains from April revolution were channelled instead to personally benefit Almazbek Atambayev.

Either inadvertently or for political expediency, April 7 was caught up in a series of popular interpretations which were uncondusive to mobilization against dictatorship and for democracy.. Here, the problem was both of articulation and of delivery of ideas. In terms of articulation, April 7, 2010 did not develop to signify any compelling substantive ideas, such as an inclusive and inspiring concept of public good and public interest, or some specific policies to develop a good regime. All that emerged were a series of superficial promises, such as reforming the justice system, fighting corruption, and building parliamentary democracy – which were generally not delivered. In terms of delivery, communication suffered from contradictory messaging, divisive and agitating rhetoric, and was often captured by subversive or uninterested messengers.

As a result of this general failure of the April revolution to become a signifier for the development of an inclusive constitutional democracy,

all the political wrongs against which April 7 happened remained alive. Because of its perceived failures, April 7 now stands to have been the harbinger for a renewal of centralized strongman politics in the aftermath of the crisis of October 2020. Championing the idea of party-based parliamentary democracy in Kyrgyzstan – the central political promise of April 7 – is surely more of an uphill battle now than it was before 2010.

'Revolutions' in Kyrgyzstan and the Vacuum of Law

Gulzat Botoeva

Since October 5, 2020, Kyrgyzstan has been undergoing a period of political crisis as politicians look to change the constitution (Putz, 2020) for the eleventh time in the country's short independence. This crisis was triggered by protests against vote buying and use of administrative resources by groups loyal to the incumbent President Jeenbekov and his allies during the parliamentary election. Sadyr Japarov, who was released from prison on the night the protests started, was appointed prime-minister on October 14 and acting president shortly after. He has since made promises to fight corruption and return money to the state budget. In his view, constitutional reform is required to fight corruption as it would allow a change in governmental structures (Shambetov, 2020).

On October 20, former customs official Matraimov was detained as part of the investigation into corruption in the customs service. On that same day, he was ordered by the Bishkek district court judge to be placed under house arrest since he agreed to cooperate with the investigation and compensate about 2 billions soms (\$24.7 million) in damages to the state by the end of the month. According to the Ministry of Finance, by November 16 Matraimov had paid 494.8 million soms (Djamankulova, 2020).

On the October 28, Japarov also introduced changes to the Criminal Code of the country, proposing an amnesty for individuals charged with illegal practices such as contraband trafficking of goods, corruption and tax evasion in cases when they cooperate with the law enforcement and agree to repay in full all the money within 60 days. He requested that the parliament quickly pass the changes. On November 12, Japarov acknowledged that he was making a political decision by putting Matraimov under house arrest and ignoring the procedures outlined in the law by allowing him to make agreements with the head of the security services Kamchybek Tashiev (Djumashova, 2020).

But the current processes of dismantling the state and the rule of law, started much earlier than October 2020. The two revolutions that occurred

in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and 2010, despite ousting the sitting presidents, each time saw a new president begin an anti-corruption campaign. But in each case this was merely a smokescreen as officials from the new regimes looked to consolidate their own control over the licit and illicit sectors of the economy. This took place in tandem with the suppression of political opponents, civil society activists and journalists. However, the illegal activities and forms of suppression carried out varied both during and after 2010.

Bakiev came to power as a result of anger and frustration with the corruption of the previous regime built by Akayev and his family. However, instead of eliminating corruption, Bakiev and his family designed more lucrative schemes for family enrichment, directly profiting from protecting drug trafficking, illegally selling hydropower, selling off the telecommunications network and putting all the money into offshore accounts owned by family members and close allies (Marat, 2015). Bakiev's regime criminalized the state (Kupatadze, 2014).

After Bakiev's regime, state actors continued to seek revenues from the illegal economy. It was during Atambayev's regime that Matraimov, a senior customs officer at the time, was able to create a smuggling "empire" of goods without paying state taxes and being allowed to launder money out of the country to invest into other businesses (OCCRP et al, 2019). According to the journalistic investigations conducted by three media outlets - OCCRP, Radio Freedom and Kloop - Matraimov was able to launder at least \$700 million out of the country.

If Bakiev's regime used political violence such as assassinations, the killing of journalists, and political opponents to cover up the state involvement in illegal economies, Atambayev's regime used different mechanisms of suppression: taking the media outlets and journalists to court and having them face crippling fines (Kurambayev, 2016) and launching criminal investigations against the political opponents (Aljazeera, 2017).

In conclusion, these practices of infiltration of the state by criminal groups, such as the development of corruption schemes by state officials to turn themselves into kingpins of shadow economy, and using the legal system for their own benefits to either achieve power or wealth are not new to Japarov. Most importantly, they have paved the way for a vacuum of law, in which neither the state officials nor many ordinary people see it as problematic to break the law and bend it for their own desires and needs. As I have argued elsewhere (Botoeva, 2019), such actions lead to delegitimation of the state itself.

There is No Such Place as ‘Southern Kyrgyzstan’: Avoiding the Territorial Trap in Analysis of Inter-ethnic Relations.

Nick Megoran

In 1983 Anthony Smith decried what he called “methodological nationalism”, whereby “social data are always collected and evaluated in terms of large-scale entities called ‘nation-states’” (Smith, 1983: 26). A decade later John Agnew built on this by arguing that conventional international relations theory relies on three geographical assumptions – that states are fixed units of sovereign space, a domestic/foreign polarity, and states as ‘containers’ of society (Agnew, 1994: 53). This, he suggested, has led thinkers into a “territorial trap.”

Scholars of Central Asia should be well-placed to side-step this trap. In their 2017 book *Dictators Without Borders*, Cooley and Heathershaw showed the way by demonstrating that it is impossible to understand corruption, elite formation, foreign policy and political contestation and revolutionary change within Central Asian republics without grasping how deeply embedded they are within global financial architectures. However, one of the most striking shortcomings of analysis of inter-ethnic relations in the Osh and Jalalabat regions is that much of it falls into this territorial trap of methodological nationalism. That is to say, it seeks to understand, diagnose and inform useful political interventions simply by analyzing social processes within the boundaries of the Kyrgyz Republic alone. This is a fallacy. The June 2010 violence was in part a product of a broader political geography, and its legacy needs both understanding and addressing in a region-wide context.

The political geography of the Ferghana Valley is crucial to understanding contemporary inter-ethnic relations. As is well known, the Soviet Union institutionalized ethnicity in creating a new set of territorially-based social relations during the period of national territorial delimitation (1924-1936). We see here that geography was not the inert stage for the real dramas of political and social processes, but rather was an active ingredient in them. Under these new arrangements, Uzbek minorities in what became the Kyrgyz SSR and Kyrgyz minorities in its Uzbek counterpart could be schooled in their own languages, cross the boundary to the neighbouring kin-state for further or higher educational training, and return for work. Over their lifetimes they might have moved many times for work, education, and marriage, without their loyalty to the overarching Soviet state and the dominant socialist project being questioned. Indeed, the coexistence of multiple ethnic groups in the same space was seen as a positive ideological good (Abdullaev, 1959: 237).

The breakdown of the federal political geography of the Soviet system dramatically changed this (Troschenko, 2020). Current ethnic policies in Ferghana Valley states are the attempted fusion of two models. The first is that of independent nation-states, whereby the titular majority's language, history, and culture are adopted and actively promoted as those of all citizens of that state under the supposedly-unifying ideology of nationalism. The second is the Soviet-era system of minority-language schooling, attempting to preserve the culture and language of a select few ethnic minorities in very limited spheres.

We see this in both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. But it is unlikely to work in the long-term for a number of reasons. It is a fusion of two policies based on contradictory premises and ideologies. The quality of education and thus opportunity is lower for minorities, who have demonstrated continued out-migration from all Central Asian republics over the period of independence. Minorities themselves may be viewed with suspicion precisely because they have maintained the dual loyalties and identities that the Soviet and post-Soviet systems cultivated. It is always vulnerable to sudden crises, as 2010 showed.

Yet because it falls into the 'territorial trap' of 'methodological nationalism,' scholarly research that focuses on "Southern Kyrgyzstan" or "Kyrgyzstan" alone misses, obscures or underplays the importance of these factors. Likewise, commissions of inquiry, government frameworks, or the proposals of international bodies that simply work on or in Kyrgyzstan do likewise.

What of the future? How to move beyond the unjust and uneasy post-conflict 'negative peace' that characterises the political economy of inter-ethnic relations in cities like Osh (Lewis and Sagnayeva, 2020)? It is vital to remember that the crises of 1990 and 2010 also played out on the soil of the Uzbek SSR/Uzbekistan. Further, the fates of co-ethnic minorities in neighbouring states are keenly watched and supposedly-differential treatment is used by ethnic entrepreneurs to stir up xenophobia, as happened in 2010 (Megoran, 2017). Although no two places are identical, the example of similar ethnonational disputes emerging under nationalising regimes and involving stranded minorities on either side of a shared border suggests that, rather than tinkering with the laws and structures of just one state, bilateral approaches to safeguarding the rights and futures of minorities are most effective (Megoran, 2011). The destinies of all ethnic groups of the Ferghana Valley are inextricably and symbiotically interlinked. For analytical and policy purposes, there is no such place as Southern Kyrgyzstan.

Postscript: The Rise of the Kyrgyz Trump

Edward Lemon

Three months to the day after the storming of the White House in Bishkek in the early hours of 6 October, over six thousand miles away similar scenes were playing out. A rabble of disaffected Trump supporters, riled up by the president and his surrogates at a rally, stormed the U.S. Capitol, breaking windows, ransacking offices and making off with souvenirs in an attempt to stop Congress from formally accepting Joe Biden's election as president. The social media was quickly abuzz with photos of both incidents side by side. Many American commentators, adherents to the doctrine of American exceptionalism, seemed genuinely shocked that such a brazen attack on one of country's primary institutions of democratic rule had taken place. This sort of thing only happens in the "Third World," or in "Banana Republics," they claimed.

But the events called for humility on the part of the United States, and other established democracies, on how fragile democracy can be and how events such as these are not restricted to the so-called "Third World." But they also call on us to situate events in Kyrgyzstan within a global rather than purely local context. Just four days after shocking events in Washington, Kyrgyz citizens went to the polls to vote in a new president and to approve a new constitution, dubbed the Khanstitution by detractors, that will expand the powers of the president. Japarov won comfortably, and despite some irregularities, it seems he genuinely won the election. Like Trump, Orbán and other populist leaders, he is openly anti-establishment, tapping into widespread disillusionment with the country's political elite and the false promises of past revolutions, especially among those in rural and semi-urban areas. Like Trump, he is openly authoritarian, valorizing stability through strength and touting presidentialism as the best way to root out corruption in the country. The views of Japarov by his supporters correspond with what Morgan Liu observed in his study of the views of ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan towards Islam Karimov, concept of he termed a "khan-centered imaginary" (Liu 2012, 180-188). Sitting above society, the "khan" has the authority to discipline his people for the benefit of society as a whole. In his ethnography of the Pamir, Till Mostowlansky observed similar attitudes towards "father of the nation" Emomali Rahmon (Mostowlansky 2017, 136-141). These narratives are gendered and patriarchal. Like Trump, he has no clear ideology and does not appear to stand for anything, frequently shifting his political positions. While his rapid rise was conditioned by the specific context of Kyrgyz politics, as Georgy Mamedov has argued, it can also be understood as part of a global trend in more confrontational forms of right-wing anti-establishment politics (Mamedov 2021).

Japarov's rise and rebuke of parliamentarism, arguably the crowning achievement of the 2010 revolution, can be explained by a number of factors within Kyrgyzstan as well. As Emil Dzhuraev argues above, there has been no attempt to generate a consensus about the achievements of the 2010 revolution, no significant public discussion or educational program in schools. This in part explains why people were so quick to reverse the democratic gains of 2010. Corruption remains a consistent and endemic problem, undermining the legitimacy of the entire political class, even those who are not corrupt, and generating apathy and anger towards the "establishment." The mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused the economy to contract by a shocking 10 percent in 2020, also fed into this disillusionment and anger against the elite.

Japarov is viewed by many as a man of the people, someone who speaks their language and knows their problems. He is genuinely popular, with few people caring about his criminal record, authoritarian leanings or that the new constitutional amendments were pushed through by an illegitimate parliament. But the honeymoon period may not last forever. Japarov's popularity may be tested once it becomes clear that he is not sincere in his promises to clean up politics, as Gulzat Botoeva illustrates above. Conversely, the state-crime nexus looks set to become much stronger under Japarov. The new president also has to contend with the ongoing effects of the pandemic and devising new policies to appease the masses. As foreign debts begin to be called in, the economy continues to falter and Japarov is unable to deliver on his promises to raise people's standard of living, he could face growing challenges to his power.

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