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REASONS FOR THE “TULIP REVOLUTION” IN KYRGYZSTAN

***Annotation:** This article discusses the reasons that played a key role in the successful implementation of the "color revolution" in Kyrgyzstan. It analyzes both the internal factor and the influence of external factors on the course of events. The role of Western institutions for promoting democracy, as well as the influence of the media, is assessed.*

***Key words:** Kyrgyzstan, color revolution, tulip revolution, NGOs, media.*

ПРИЧИНЫ «ТЮЛЬПАНОВОЙ РЕВОЛЮЦИИ» В КЫРГЫЗСТАНЕ

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматриваются причины, которые сыграли ключевую роль в успешном проведении «цветной революции» в Киргизии. Анализируется как внутренний фактор, так и влияние внешних факторов на ход событий. Оценивается роль западных институтов продвижения демократии, а также влияние СМИ.

Ключевые слова: Киргизия, цветная революция, тюльпановая революция, НПО, СМИ.

The revolution in Kyrgyzstan took place from March to April 2005 in an extremely compressed and accelerated mode against the backdrop of internal socio-economic problems using information technology, manipulating the public opinion of the world media and other means.

One of the main internal causes of the protest movement in Kyrgyzstan has become socio-economic problems. They had a serious impact on the nature of relationships within the social hierarchy of Kyrgyzstan. Such public groups as the political elite, big business close to power, and bureaucracy showed a rapid growth in their well-being. Whereas other social groups (small business, youth, pensioners) could not materially correspond to the high standard of living available to officials and large businessmen, and foci of discontent with respect to the ruling regime flared up in them.

Arranging the economic and political redistribution in the interests of the "family" and destroying the system of inter-clan balance, the president himself played with fire. The number of offended turned into the quality of the protest, and since the figures pushed into the opposition really had powerful support and could quickly mobilize their supporters, in addition, there was more than enough "combustible material" in the form of poor migrants from rural areas inhabiting the outskirts of Bishkek, the result was not forced myself to wait a long time.

Speaking about the political aspect of the protest movements in Kyrgyzstan, it can be argued that the main reason here was the instability of the political system of

the state. By the beginning of the 2000s, Askar Akayev had built a system that provided control over the country's political life. Power was mainly concentrated in the hands of the president. When his rule began to come to an end, it turned out that the stability of the regime turned out to be imaginary and entirely dependent on the state of presidential power.

Among the other reasons leading to the revolution, regionalism should be mentioned. In Kyrgyzstan, the civilizational split was expressed in the confrontation between the North and the South. The period from the collapse of the Soviet Union to the “Tulip Revolution” was a time of dominance of the clans of the North; natives of them held leading posts in the state and accordingly prevailed in business. This caused discontent among the southerners, while the northerners did not trust them, suspecting the opposition, anti-presidential conspiracies, and in the end they were right. The consequence of strong regionalism was the fragmentation of the elites, the existence of clan groups and the contradictions between them [1].

An important role in the victory of the opposition was played by the weakness of the power structures and the unwillingness of the country's leadership to manage these structures. Neither the internal troops, nor the army, nor the special services came out actively in defense of the current government against the "people", predetermining the fall of the regime.

In addition to internal components, do not underestimate the role of the external factor during the events of 2005 in Kyrgyzstan. This includes the implementation of Western democracy promotion programs. Western aid was provided by supporting opposition political parties; actively sponsored "independent" non-governmental organizations involved in political processes; trainings were held for activists of the protest movement, etc.

Programs on promoting democracy on the eve of the “color revolution” were conducted and financed by such US government agencies and non-governmental organizations as: US Agency for International Development, Freedom House, Peace Corps, National Endowment for Democracy, Open Society Institute, J. Soros and a number of others. Mainly support was expressed in massive financing of the

opposition. The US Agency for International Development, for example, only according to its official data spent on “promoting democracy in Kyrgyzstan - \$ 68 million [2].

With the support of non-governmental organizations, two youth movements were created in Kyrgyzstan - Kel-Kel and Birge, which took an active part in the preparation and implementation of the Tulip Revolution — these were “field detachments of the revolution” that helped mobilize and solve such logistic tasks necessary for “revolutionaries”, especially at the initial stage of protests.

Kyrgyz opposition held an “internship” in the capitals of the victorious “color revolution” countries. In addition, the same activist instructors came to Kyrgyzstan who participated in the color revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, very effectively preparing the ground for the next transformation of the regime.

The Tulip Revolution was non-violent. The opposition claiming power, almost literally following the instructions of the author of the ideologist of the non-violent change of power, J. Sharpe [3], consciously and principally adhered to peaceful tactics.

An important institutional element in the final victory of the opposition in Kyrgyzstan was the presence of media funded from abroad. With their help, the opposition managed to convey to people the news about the falsification of the voting results and the development of mass protests. During the active period of the Tulip Revolutions, the role of the media was especially significant, as they became a significant obstacle for the ruling elites in their attempt to suppress protests and retain power.

In Kyrgyzstan, a whole network of Western “colleagues” worked with local media: Internews Network, Eurasia Foundation, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, etc. It was thanks to the financing of these structures on Kyrgyz television channels (for example, Pyramid) that came out the socio-political talk shows (“Our Time” and “Without Retouching”), which have become the real mouthpiece of the opposition deputies of the Kyrgyz parliament [4, p.176].

Some time after the victory of the opposition, Askar Akayev admitted in his interview that America played a key role in the coup in Kyrgyzstan: “Many articles

were published there, including leading political figures talking about their merits in the implementation of the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, WE Ambassador Stephen Young in Bishkek published a report on this subject. The Americans did a great job. Those who led the coup have visited the United States, Ukraine, and Georgia several times over the past year. Instructors from these two countries came to us and openly, without any disguise, prepared the “color revolution” [5].

Finally, the domino effect had a significant influence on the victory of the Tulip Revolution - examples of regime transformations that have already taken place in Georgia and Ukraine could not but influence the mood of the opposition. The combination of the above factors played a key role in the successful implementation of the "color" revolution in Kyrgyzstan.

About a month before the March events in Kyrgyzstan, President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov unexpectedly made a rather harsh and uncharacteristic rude attack on his colleague, then President of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akayev. He accused him of inaction, of failing to “strangle the opposition” in time, which means that he himself is to blame for the growing discontent.

Official Bishkek then did not react to the statements of Islam Karimov. Having already lost his presidency, Askar Akayev even admitted that the president of Uzbekistan was right. In his first post-revolutionary interview, on the air of Ekho Moskvyy radio station, answering the host’s question, what advice he could give to his colleagues, Askar Akayev complained that he “did not defend his democracy”. And he recommended that the rest of the CIS leaders do not hesitate to use force “if it is needed to protect democracy,” because democracy in the CIS is very weak and cannot protect itself [6].

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