

SHAPING THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC: IDEOLOGY, BIOPOLITICS AND THE QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY

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Abstract

The post-WWII development of international organizations, from the United Nations to the World Bank, has created a logistical and ideological framework within which weak states, though they may not fulfil the traditional requirements of sovereignty, are recognized as sovereign and provided with assistance by the international community. These states receive support including, but not limited to, consultative advice and financial assistance. However, this assistance is tied to a tightly woven network of controls, norms, and sovereignty-limiting mechanisms which seek to shape the weak states to conform to the ideology of the international community. This dissertation focuses on one such weak state in particular: the Kyrgyz Republic, which emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union as a fundamentally weak state with no history of self-governance. Employing Foucault's concepts of biopolitics as well as a reworking of Althusser's theories of Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses, this dissertation analyzes the narrative frames and ideology of the international community as applied to the Kyrgyz Republic. It then describes how the Kyrgyz Republic has resisted efforts to shape its behaviour, presenting the contrasting narrative frames and ideology underlying that resistance. The Kyrgyz Republic's resistances to international norms do not favour oppressed minorities, and are often instruments of oppression and justifications for governmental corruption, ethnic cleansing, and attacks on LGBT and other minority populations. It will be shown, however, that although the Kyrgyz Republic is accused of being "undemocratic," what is often meant is not that its democratic institutions are not functioning, but rather that they are in conflict with the liberal ideals of the international community.

Chapter I: Introduction

The massive post-WWII development of international organizations, from the United Nations to the World Bank, the IMF, the EU, the OSCE and many other institutions of other global governance, monitoring, and finance, has irrevocably altered the international community. One result of this alteration is the creation of a complex framework, both logistical and ideological, within which weak nation states, though they may have no history of self-governance and may not fulfil the traditional requirements of sovereignty, are recognized as sovereign by the international community, and can survive indefinitely. The United Nations, as the central pillar of the international community has, since its inception, done much to define and strengthen this ideological foundation, and to support weak states. This support includes formal recognition of weak nations' sovereignty and providing a forum (the General Assembly is just one example, though a central one) in which their voices can be heard and their concerns addressed. Further support, underpinned by the United Nations but engineered and delivered by a vast number of institutions, includes providing weak states with assistance. This assistance includes, but is not

limited to, consultative advice and financial assistance. However, this assistance goes hand in hand with a tightly woven network of controls, norms, monitoring and evaluation systems, and other sovereignty-limiting mechanisms which seek to shape the weak states into a certain form of statehood conforming to the ideology of the international community.

Weak states are, for the purposes of this essay, defined as “inherently weak because of geographical, physical, or fundamental economic constraints; basically strong, but temporarily or situationally weak because of internal antagonisms, management flaws, greed, despotism, or external attacks; and a mixture of the two” (Rotberg 2004, 4). This essay will focus on one such weak state in particular: the Kyrgyz Republic, which emerged from the Soviet Union a fundamentally weak state according to the above definition

In order to see how the international community has sought to shape the Kyrgyz Republic, attention must be given first to the historical particularities and peculiarities of the formation of the Kyrgyz Republic. As will be covered in Chapter II, “The Pseudo-State,” the Kyrgyz Republic (officially established within its present borders in 1936) was, under the Soviet Union, an ethnically based, resource poor nation state *never intended or imbued with the capacities to govern itself*. Throughout the entirety of its history as the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic, the Kyrgyz state was a pseudo-state – a “state” in name only, fulfilling none of the requirements for statehood, from actual control over its own territory to control of its foreign policy. Throughout the entirety of its existence under Soviet Power, the state was ruled from Moscow, with only perfunctory, largely symbolic power devolved to the republic level. Emerging in 1991 into a reluctant, turbulent independence riven by interethnic strife and economic collapse, the Kyrgyz Republic’s government found itself with limited capacity for governance, and occupying a territory with manufacturing, electricity, road, public service, trade and ethnic networks intended to function only in the context of open borders with other “pseudo-states” and unified, centrally directed cooperation with neighboring Soviet Republics.

Chapter III, “The Weak State,” will examine how, following this collapse of Soviet power, the international community and its institutions have used international treaties, international aid, capacity building, development strategies, systemic surveillance, regulatory norms, regulations and rhetoric, all of which together promote a specific ideology, in an effort to shape the weak state of the Kyrgyz Republic into what the international community considers a democratic, effectively governed state. Through this lens, the chapter will take a deeper look at what this international community’s ideology actually is – a question that has great bearing on what solutions the international community seeks for the Kyrgyz Republic.

Chapter IV, “The Weak Within the State,” will address some ways in which the international community’s efforts have sought to protect the weak within the Kyrgyz state. The weak within states are taken here to mean vulnerable populations, employing the following definition of vulnerable populations: “Vulnerability, the susceptibility to harm, results from an interaction between the resources available to individuals and communities and the life challenges they face. Vulnerability results from developmental problems, personal incapacities, disadvantaged social status, inadequacy of interpersonal networks and supports, degraded neighbourhoods and environments, and the complex interactions of these factors over the life course” (Mechanic and Tanner, 2007, 1220). This can include, depending on the particular set of physical and political

circumstances, women, children, the aged, ethnic and religious minorities, industrial workers, internal migrants, refugees, persons living with disabilities, or – in the case of particularly exploitative regimes – the entire population of a state.

The international community's focus on the protection of the weak within states has often been used as an interventionist pretext, and is a primary justification for impingement on the sovereignty of states. In examining this interventionist international approach in the Kyrgyz Republic and its impact on sovereignty, this essay makes use of Laura Zanotti's Foucauldian framework for understanding international organizations such as the UN and the international community. Zanotti argues that the production of responsible states is pursued through a variety of mechanisms. These mechanisms are disciplinary, administrative, and technical, "such as the prescription of administrative procedures, advice on an array of legal matters, scrutiny and assessment of results, [and] financial aid" (Zanotti 2011, 141). These methods seek to make states and populations "transparent to international agencies . . . similarly, full admission of states into the 'international community' is linked to their 'responsible behaviour'" (ibid). These methods are applied by international organizations to fledgling states to ensure the fledgling state's responsible citizenship in an envisioned international community, normalizing its behaviour just as, following Foucault, governments seek to 'normalize' the behaviour of their own citizens and subjects: "as with the patients of Foucauldian clinical institutions, disorderly states' individual performance (or path to sanity) is monitored and assessed in comparison to a given population, on a scale from normality to deviancy . . . the final goal is the achievement of standards of behaviour that are the same for all" (Zanotti 2011, 48).

A particular area of interest will be how the Kyrgyz Republic has resisted international efforts to shape its behaviour and protect vulnerable populations within its borders, the narrative frames and ideology underlying that resistance, and how these conflicting ideologies (the international community's ideology and that of the Kyrgyz Republic) have increased friction between the international community and the Kyrgyz Republic. However, there will be no romanticising this Kyrgyz resistance. As Zanotti states (Zanotti 2011, 10) "Scholars working from a variety of theoretical perspectives have tended to romanticize local resistance, solidarity, or local civil society as a benign alternative to international practices of security and development". What we often find in the case of the Kyrgyz Republic's resistance to international norms, as will be demonstrated below, is that they "do not necessarily favour oppressed minorities; in fact, contrary to romanticized images, they may very well be instruments of oppression in the hands of local constituencies" (Zanotti 2011, 11). This is certainly the case in the Kyrgyz Republic, where discourses of "sovereignty," "Kyrgyz solidarity" and "traditional values" have been widely used as justifications for governmental corruption, ethnic cleansing, religious persecution and attacks on LGBT and other minority populations.

Many theorists have argued that the Kyrgyz Republic is not a true democracy and have labelled it, instead, a "weak authoritarian" state or some other term. This essay, however, will use the framework provided by Chantal Mouffe's *The Democratic Paradox* and other democratic theorists to demonstrate that the Kyrgyz Republic is, in fact, already a democracy, though a fragile and nascent one, and to suggest some ways in which international organizations might be well served by disentangling their own notions of democracy from the universalist language of liberalism. It will be argued below that, when the Kyrgyz Republic is accused of being

“undemocratic” what is often really meant is that its democratic institutions are in conflict with the ideals of liberalism. Disentangling democracy from liberalism will help highlight some of the particular challenges being faced by the Kyrgyz state, its people, and the international community.

The challenges faced in reshaping the Kyrgyz Republic are historically unprecedented: though there were international multilateral structures in one form or another, no international structures comparable in scale or form to the United Nations existed in international relations prior to World War II. The situation in the former Soviet Union is, moreover, historically unique: no decolonization effort can be compared to the total political restructuring of 1/6 of the planet’s surface that occurred following the total collapse of Soviet power. Attention must be given to this historical uniqueness, and to the impact of the particular forms of national identity and ideology inculcated in the Kyrgyz Republic by the Soviet system, and by successive governments of the Kyrgyz Republic following the collapse of that system.

Having emerged from one ideology imposed from above and largely assimilated by local society, the people of the Kyrgyz Republic found themselves adrift in a new discourse and a new ideology: a new sea of terms, norms and systems imposed from outside, by institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, USAID, DFID, and an alphabet soup of other international organizations, as well as the international NGOs contracted to carry out their work and the local NGOs funded by the international community’s complex constellation of donors. This essay explores that system’s ideological structure, its application to the difficult case of the Kyrgyz Republic and the liminal space of interaction and reaction between the Kyrgyz Republic’s population and the international system seeking to push them toward a new, globally acceptable identity, both democratic and liberal in form. The essay will conclude with some modest suggestions for how the international community might more effectively support the rights of the Kyrgyz Republic and its people to determine, in lively, contentious and often antagonistic democratic debate, their own unique way forward.

Chapter II: The Pseudo-State

Channelling Nationalism

During World War I, Central Europe was shaken by nationalist movements which eventually contributed to the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and other multi-ethnic states. The Bolsheviks, having seized power from Russia’s Provisional Government in November of 1918, sought to turn nationalist movements that had taken hold within the boundaries of the former Russian Empire to their ideological advantage. Lenin did not, fundamentally, believe in the cause of nationalism. Rather, he – like many other Bolsheviks – believed nationalism to be a product of capitalist “false consciousness” and a creation, in large part, of the bourgeois elites (Roshwald 2002). Though the Bolsheviks officially supported the right of “self-determination” for the peoples of the former Russian Empire, this was a ploy allowing them to form strategic alliances with nationalist movements within the empire to undermine imperial power (Roshwald 2002, 174). Nationalism, for the Bolsheviks, was a tool to

be exploited in the larger class struggle, a “masking ideology” used to cover up underlying internationalist efforts at social revolution. Both Lenin and Stalin, however, also viewed nationalism as an integral part of progress toward internationalism, an “unavoidable historic phase that all people must pass through” (Martin 2001, 5). In this spirit, nationalism was viewed as something the Bolsheviks would be forced to both acknowledge and master for their own purposes: “We are undertaking the maximum development of national culture, so that it will exhaust itself completely and thereby create the base for the organization of internationalist socialist culture” (Stalin, quoted in Martin, 2001, 5).

The Bolsheviks sought to channel, control, and counter the splintering force of nationalism by demonstrating a respect for those elements of nationalism which would not threaten the cohesion of the USSR as a whole. These elements were: national territory, national language, national elites, and national culture (Martin 2001, 10). The hope was that demonstration of respect for these areas would defuse nationalist movements until they could be subsumed into the larger Bolshevik project. To this end, the Bolsheviks created a number of schemes for territorial division within the Soviet Union. In 1923, having largely won the Civil War and consolidated power over most of the area of the former Russian Empire, the Bolsheviks passed resolutions in which it was recognized that the Soviet Union would be subdivided into national territories, and that within these territories the language of the titular nationality would be the state language, and the titular nationality would be placed in positions of authority (Martin 2001, 10). At this point the territory which would eventually become the Kyrgyz Republic was a part of the Semirechensk Administrative Division of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Much of present day Kazakhstan, on the other hand, was part of the Kirgiz ASSR (Kirgiz, in an excellent demonstration of the fluidity of ethnic divisions and definitions at that time, being an ethnic designation applied both to the people who would later become Kazakh titular ethnicity and to the people who would later become the Kyrgyz titular ethnicity.) Central Asia was a mosaic of geographically and culturally overlapping ethnicities. Its territorial division during the period of 1924-1936 into the five ethnic republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, as well as a number of autonomous sub-regions, was based on the imposition of “ethnic labels on people whose cultural and historical heritages were so diverse, complex, overlapping, and intertwined as to defy simple categorization by any truly objective standard” (Roshwald 2002, 181). In line with this extraordinary project, each republic then “set about the task of propagating a standardized and homogenized ‘national’ language and an official historical myth that linked the recently created entity to an ancient state or ethnic group” (ibid). These identities did not, and were not intended to, reflect any sense of “actual” ethnic reality, though they did utilize elements of various groupings and tribal configurations (ibid).

The essential goal was not to reinforce nationalism, but rather to empty it of real content. The nationalities were to be “nationalist in form, socialist in content,” (Stalin, quoted in Martin 2001, 12). Since socialist content was considered internationalist and universal, this can be interpreted bluntly as a plan to hollow out the nationalities’ core values and beliefs, regarded as bourgeois, in favour of a nationally costumed socialist ideology. As a Russian student interviewed in a recent article for Gazeta.ru succinctly put it: “My first association with the Soviet Union is people in different national costumes embracing and dancing a *Russian* folk dance” [my translation and emphasis] (Gazeta.ru 2016). National “identities,” were a depoliticised costume for *homo Sovieticus* to wear. All national practices of any significance (social strata, traditional

structures of authority and power, religion and other belief systems, gender relations) were to be polished away into what Stalin called “universal human culture” (Martin 2001, 183).

Localising the Nation and Ethnogenesis

Local forces were often complicit in this process. The new national republics provided educational opportunities, advancement, power and prestige to titular nationalities. As part of the process of what the Bolsheviks called *korenizatsiia* (“localising”, or more literally “rooting,”) local elites were promoted to positions of leadership on a massive scale. However, this promotion of titular ethnicities also led to conflict: “in places such as Central Asia, where identities tended to be pre-national, the drawing of borders involved the consolidation of disparate local identities into a larger national identity. This had the effect of turning local conflicts into national conflicts on a local level” (Martin 2001, 73). It also caused minority nationalities which had lived on the same land for many generations to suddenly become “foreigners” on their own soil, as happened to the large number of Uzbeks living in what became the southern part of the Kirghiz SSR, as well as to the Dungan, Kalmyk, Meskhetian Turk, and many other minority populations.

The creation of the republics, with their nested autonomous oblasts and regions, massively increased ethnic conflict: “every village, indeed every individual, had to declare an ethnic allegiance and fight to remain a national majority rather than minority” (Martin 2001, 73). In Central Asia, where ethnically-based nationalism had been largely unknown (though tribal conflict was a historical reality), and ethnic divisions were often vague, overlapping, or undefinable, ethnic conflict suddenly erupted, caused by the “regime’s own practice of ethnically based agricultural resettlement” (Martin 2001, 312). Ethnicity in Kyrgyzstan henceforth would become tangled with the issue of territory, both on a macro and a micro scale, with popular ethnic cleansing, the “expulsion of national minorities from the majority’s national territory” (Martin 2001, 312) widespread.

As the Soviet Union crumbled, it would be along ethnic lines that the greatest violent unrest occurred in Kyrgyzstan. The Soviet government had, by the 1930s, consolidated an intertwined, multi-ethnic Central Asia into five ethnically based republics which greatly privileged the position of the titular ethnicity. Using censuses in the 1920s and 30s, the Bolsheviks had largely consolidated the blurry lines of Central Asian ethnicity into rigidly categorized groups (Gullette 2008, 275), eliminating mixed ethnicities (which were legion) as a category. Additionally, all over Central Asia, the Bolsheviks reinforced these ethnic identities with ideas of ethnogenesis, which “had been a popular theory since the 1930s and was the predominant theory in much Soviet research. Ethnogenetic studies focused on demonstrating the existence and stable development of ‘nations’ through language, customs, territory and economic life throughout history” (Gullette 2008, 264). Ethnogenesis also proposed that ethnicities were formed by surplus “cosmic energy” in the environment. (Gullette 2008). A popular theory since the 1930s, Soviet ethnogenesis in the 1990s mutated into a more viral form which was now used to “demonstrate the independence of new countries and separatist movements” (Gullette 2008, 265) as well as a way to express chauvinism and xenophobia (ibid). These theories distinctly privileged the supposedly “biologically inherent” superiority of one ethnicity over others.

Ornamental Republics

Politically, the republics were centrally controlled by Moscow, with a local elite drawn from the titular ethnicity of the republic holding government positions, almost always in tandem with Russian counterparts drawn from the center who held the real power. Though nominally self-determining according to the constitution of 1918, with the right to secede from the Union, at least on paper, the republics were in fact highly centralised from the start. After 1937, the constitutions of all sixteen republics became virtually identical with the constitution of the Soviet Union. (Guins 1950). Although the titles of Union Republic level ministers and other government officials gave the appearance of sovereignty, or at least participated in a certain discourse of sovereignty, “only the ministries of Municipal Economy, Social Maintenance, Motor Transport, and Elementary and Secondary Education remained within the jurisdiction of the Union Republics” (ibid, 344). The republics had no separate police or army, no ability to levy taxes or fees, and no independent financial means, their budgets being included with that of the USSR (Guins 1950, 342). They were, in fact, “ornamental” republics: pseudo-states, in which government and schooling was nominally conducted in the local language, as a nod to national character. However, even this linguistic independence was largely a sham. Although much attention was given to the titular ethnicity’s language on a formal level, the vast majority of both education and government were in fact conducted in Russian, and continued to be conducted in Russian, which was also the *only language of university-level education in the Soviet Union*, long after independence. Following independence, many government officials would struggle to begin conducting business in their “native” tongues, in which at best they had a secondary-level education.

Economically, Central Asia’s energy, transport, and manufacturing systems were never intended to function “nationally.” Since the republics were themselves ornamental pseudo-states, no attention was paid to whether electricity transmission lines, roads, or other infrastructure crossed their permeable, ultimately symbolic national borders. The dissolution of the Soviet Union created “new borders [which] carved up the region like a jigsaw puzzle. They interrupted trade and other human links, and weakened critical but vulnerable region-wide water and energy systems” (UNDP 2005, 2). This carving up resulted in “the severing of supply connections for industry and agriculture, the flight of many skilled Russians, the drying up of subsidies from Moscow, and the disappearance of the central administrative apparatus of the Soviet Union” (UNDP 2005, 2). Illustrating the weak nature of these pseudo-states, the loss of this centralized control led to a “dramatic economic collapse” (ibid). None of the Central Asian states were truly capable of standing on their own, precisely because none of the Central Asian states were, in fact, states.

As demonstrated above, the Kyrgyz Republic (officially established within its present borders in 1936) was, under the Soviet Union, an ethnically based state *never intended or imbued with the capacities to govern itself*. Throughout the entirety of its history as the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic, the Kyrgyz state was a pseudo-state – a state in name only, fulfilling none of the requirements for statehood, from actual control over its own territory to control of its foreign policy or even control over its own budget. The Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic was never in any way functionally autonomous, sovereign, or independent from the Soviet Union as a whole. Throughout the entirety of its existence under Soviet Power, the state was ruled in a centralized fashion from Moscow.

A Reluctant Independence

Emerging in 1991 into a reluctant, turbulent independence riven by interethnic strife and economic collapse, the Kyrgyz Republic had a number of immediate, overlapping problems. It found itself occupying a territory with, as outlined above, manufacturing, electricity, road, public service, trade and ethnic networks intended to function only in the context of open borders and unified cooperation with its neighboring Soviet Republics – republics which, having gained their own independence, would immediately become, at a minimum, self-interested and at a maximum, openly hostile to resource sharing or other cooperative effort.

Independent Kyrgyzstan also found itself without the internal capacity to efficiently govern, having always been governed from outside, and lacking the trained elites necessary to carry out the day-to-day business of government. In addition, the Kyrgyz state had a sense of self based on a peculiarly Soviet nationalism centered on, as illustrated above, territorial control and distribution of spoils by and to a titular ethnicity, as well as a xenophobic and chauvinistic sense of the nation state's "scientific" basis in "ethnogenesis", a pseudo-scientific theory of ethnic superiority rooted in biological difference and unified, biological destiny. This narrative would be reinforced by successive governments of the Kyrgyz Republic and, as will be illustrated below, would become a major stumbling block in the way of more cosmopolitan, multicultural visions of the state. The Kyrgyz Republic's independence was immediately preceded by an orgy of violence: the beating, rape, torture and murder of hundreds of ethnic Uzbeks in the Kyrgyz Republic's southern territories in 1990 – an event that would sadly repeat itself on an even larger scale twenty years later, despite two revolutions and two decades of the international community's attempts at shaping the Kyrgyz Republic's identity and dealing, alongside the Kyrgyz people and the Kyrgyz state, with the hand the Soviet Union had dealt.

Chapter III: The Weak State

From Subject to Sovereign

In a meeting at Minsk on 21 December 1991, the republics remaining in the Soviet Union (the Baltic States having already unilaterally declared their independence) officially declared that the Soviet Union had ceased to exist as a subject of international law (Blum 1992, 355). Four days later, in a politically expedient (but legally questionable) decision, the Russian Federation took over the Soviet Union's seat on the Security Council, as well as all of its rights and obligations as a member of United Nations. On 2 March 1992, along with eight other republics, the Kyrgyz Republic was admitted to the United Nations, formally attaining recognition as a sovereign state with full membership as outlined in the UN Charter. (Blum 1992, 356).

It is difficult to express the massive shift this entailed. Beginning with the failed putsch against Gorbachev in August of 1991 and ending with the USSR's total dissolution in December of the same year, the Soviet Union went, in a period of five months, from a world superpower to a historical entity with no legal status. The Kyrgyz Republic's status, on the other hand, changed from pseudo-state at the edge of empire to internationally recognized sovereign nation. Though the writing may have been on the wall, with widespread ethnic conflict and economic woes eating away at the Soviet Union for years, the swiftness and totality of the USSR's collapse was traumatic, unprecedented, and unanticipated. It left the former republics of the Soviet "East" with

newfound status that, as pseudo-states without a history of self-governance, most of them were unprepared for.

For the Kyrgyz Republic, it was a status largely thrust upon it: “Only a short time ago, the people of Kyrgyzstan did not dream of political independence . . . Despite the fact that many of their kinsmen lived dispersed in surrounding multi-national conglomerates like China, Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey and . . . the conditions of their own "statehood" within the Soviet Union, they were reasonably satisfied with their lives” (Otunbayeva 1993, 16). It should be noted here that Roza Otunbayeva, then Foreign Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, and later Interim President of the Kyrgyz Republic’s and the first Central Asian woman President following the revolution of 2010, places quotes around Kyrgyz ‘statehood’ under the Soviet Union, tacitly acknowledging its unreality. It is also worth noting – and related to Kyrgyz feelings about the nature of statehood itself – that Roza Otunbayeva refers to Turkey, China, Iran and Afghanistan as “surrounding multi-national conglomerates” rather than “nations.” It is a strange choice of terminology, and one that specifically reflects the “ethnogenetic” perspective she, and her fellow Soviet Kyrgyz, had been steeped in all their lives. It also reflects, as will be further covered below, the tangled concepts of “nationality” and “ethnicity.”

Into the Vacuum

Stepping into the massive vacuum following the collapse of Soviet power, the international community moved quickly to normalize a fluid situation. The first steps were taken by the UN, which recognised the Russian Federation as the successor state to the Soviet Union on December 25, 1991. The UN then admitted nearly all the former republics of the Soviet Union to the United Nations on March 2, 1992 (Blum 1992, 356). This ushered in a series of projects led by the international community, focused on aiding, shaping and influencing the new states which emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union.

This chapter will examine the ideological framework within which international organizations provide support to weak states, performing a close reading of the stated goals of the UN, the EU and other international organizations in regards to the Kyrgyz Republic, drawing on language presented in their strategy, security, and analytical documents. Through this analysis, this chapter will attempt to shed some light on what the international community sought and seeks to “do” in the Kyrgyz Republic. Woven in throughout this chapter, as well as the subsequent chapter, “The Weak Within the State”, are questions regarding sovereignty and how it is defined by the international community and international organizations, in contrast to how it is defined or envisioned by the government and other actors in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Not analysed here in the context of the international community is the language or activities of bilateral actors, such as the bilateral aid organizations of the United States, including USAID, IRI, et cetera, or the bilateral organisations of the Russian Federation and / or the PRC. China, Russia, the United States, Turkey and many other states have active bilateral relationships with the Central Asian states. To a large extent, the language of the United States, and especially of USAID, is similar to that of the international community, though its goals may not always be the same. China exerts a strong economic and Russia a strong military and political influence. Russia and China present different ideological frameworks as well. A separation must be made,

however, between the *multilateral* frameworks of the international community and *bilateral* relationships which, sometimes overlapping with the efforts of the international community, and sometimes opposed to it, have goals too diverse for analysis here.

The Language of the International Community

Beginning in 1992, a vast array of international organizations entered the newly opened spaces beyond the international borders of the former Soviet Union and went to work to shape the Kyrgyz Republic. While the organizations have different areas of expertise and focus, what is striking when reading their policy documents is the uniformity of their language, which exposes a consistent world view, consistent goals, and a strikingly homogenous vocabulary.

“Connectivity” and “Integration”

Some examples below illustrate this consistency across organizations. There is a unified language that emphasises the need for “connectivity,” for example: “In order to support better interconnections of the Central Asian countries with both their immediate neighbours and partners further afield, such as the European Union, the EU will take into account existing regional synergies and links with neighbouring countries” (Council of the European Union, 2015, 7). Nearly identical language can be found here: “The main objective of the Business Conference ‘Connectivity – for Commerce and Investment’ is to initiate a substantial dialogue between government officials and high-ranking business representatives about framework conditions for economic activity across the Euro-Asian region” (OSCE 2016). This language of ‘connectivity’ is mirrored across the spectrum of international organizations, and is used flexibly, to refer to transportation networks, trade agreements, border crossings, small and medium enterprise networks, energy networks, and even civil society and youth. It is nearly synonymous with another popular term, ‘integration,’ widespread in these documents. Particular attention is paid to connectivity and integration as an economic necessity: “We reaffirm the need to continue to support democratic countries in transition towards the establishment of market economy and the creation of the basis for self-sustained economic and social growth. . . We further underline the necessity of their increased integration, involving the acceptance of disciplines as well as benefits, into the international economic and financial system” (OSCE 2010, 46). “The EU has a greater role to play in promoting a reliable and attractive investment climate, together with stability of the legal framework, transparency, a functioning social partnership, interconnections with the international business community and regional integration, thus building on progress in WTO accessions” (Council of the European Union, 2015, 5)”. However, integration is also a key theme of security discourses, (discussed further below), and a key area of NATO interest, which sees “synergies” between economic integration and regional security: “As NATO looks to reduce its major combat presence in Afghanistan, Western officials are exploring how to promote greater economic cooperation between Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbours. Two recent initiatives – the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) and the “New Silk Road” (NSR) strategy – have been touted as important steps in fostering much needed regional economic integration” (EUCAM 2012, 4).

Another theme that occurs repeatedly in the discourse of international organizations is a particular view of ‘security’ which “considers everything that might do harm to the living

individual and to the good of civil populations as a threat” (Gros 2014, 26). Consistently throughout the strategy and development documents of international organizations, this is the manner in which security is framed. For example: “Proper attention to domestic dynamics is necessary for understanding and an adequate reaction to the non-traditional threats that largely emerge from a nexus of socio-economic and identity-based cleavages” (OSCE 2010, 46). Here, ethnic tension and socio-economic ‘cleavages’ are conceived of as a security threat. Or this example: “The region faces a number of emerging security challenges linked to foreign fighters and radicalisation towards violent extremism, which compound already existing threats to stability posed by water and border disputes, drug trafficking and organised crime and conflicts in the wider region, especially in Afghanistan” (Council of the European Union 2015, 6).

In the two examples above, what constitutes a threat includes: ethnic tension, socio-economic cleavages, foreign fighters, radicalisation, water and border disputes, drug trafficking and organized crime, as well as Afghanistan. The list, however, goes on: in the UNDP’s 2005 Central Asian Human Development Report, which is 268 pages long, the word ‘threat’ appears 191 times, and the word ‘security’ appears 546 times. Threats identified in that report include environmental disasters, the insufficiency of seasonal energy supply, drugs, diseases, environmental degradation, lack of access to freer markets, authoritarianism, food insecurity, and gender inequality (UNDP 2005). As Gros theorises, “This new definition of security produces a continuous stream of threats, whether these are economic, climactic, social, ecological, political, hygienic, medical, or nutritional . . . today all these threats are considered as risks to society understood in the broadest possible sense” (Gros 2014, 26-27).

As seen above, under the heading “connectivity and integration,” NATO and also EUCAM make clear linkages between economics and security issues, but in fact linkages are made at all levels. Everything is a possible threat, and everything must therefore be constantly monitored and evaluated by the international community, according to this framework. As Zanotti states, “in the new millennium, international security was reconceptualised in terms of risk management . . . since risk is always situated in the future, its management is knowledge intensive, and it increasingly relies on the possibility of garnering accurate information on a plurality of potential sources of danger” (Zanotti 2011, 32). Whether labelled as “threat” or “risk,” gathering information means being able to see beyond the bounds of sovereignty into the workings of the state in order to anticipate possible challenges to security.

Stakeholders and the Limited Role of Government

Another commonality in the discourse of the international community is the accent on the participation of all levels of society, with the state subordinated to the role of just one among many “stakeholders” in the process of success, subject to monitoring by NGOs, civil society, and the private sector: “Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other organizations of civil society and the private sector should work to see that the agreed rural development strategy is being implemented on the ground, the costs and benefits are being equitably distributed, use and management of natural resources are sustainable, all stakeholders and population groups are appropriately represented, and implementation is decentralized, with full participation by local governments and various interest groups” (World Bank 1998, 11). Civil society, explicitly mentioned by the World Bank above, is understood by the international community as something

it is good and appropriate to involve absolutely everywhere, with seemingly no exceptions: “It also helps to systematically involve local communities and civil society organizations in disaster preparedness and response initiatives as well as anti-drug campaigns, and in the design and implementation of anti-terrorism programmes” (UNDP 2005, 9). There are, according to the discourse of the international community, many stakeholders, from civil society to the private sector, from donors to policymakers. The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, on the other hand, must unlearn the lessons of centralised power taught to it by the USSR, and learn to play a much more limited role, as illustrated by a passage from the same World Bank planning document: “Government initiates the policy reforms, provides budgetary support, and enforces laws and regulations” (World Bank 1998, 11) but in the end, though it may play a role in the development of public infrastructure and a legal framework, “Government should stay out of decision-making on agricultural production and marketing, which should be left to farmers, traders, and other entrepreneurs” (ibid).

International and local NGOs

NGOs, though technically independent and sometimes even local, share in the ideology of the international community. Relying as they do on the international community for funding, and implementing projects or initiatives designed, prescribed, or shaped by the international community of donors, NGO language mirrors the language of the international community. In its reports, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other organisations ground their criticisms of the government of the Kyrgyz Republic in references to UN and other international norms: “Torture and other ill-treatment, and impunity for these violations, remained commonplace despite the introduction, in late 2014, of a programme of monitoring of places of detention under the National Preventive Mechanism and instructions on how to document torture issued by the Ministry of Health to medical personnel based on the UN Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol)” (Amnesty International 2016). Though they are often “non-partisan” and “financially independent”, the reporting done by international NGO watchdogs feeds back into the international community, serving an essential role in the system of surveillance, monitoring, evaluation, and critique through which the international community shapes its efforts in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Local NGOs in the Kyrgyz Republic are exclusively reliant on funding from the international community and from individual foreign governments who issues calls for proposals that narrowly define the scope of the NGOs’ work, such as this language from a World Bank call: “Strengthen capacity and the interaction of civil society and self-government bodies at the local level to hold the state/service providers accountable. The proposed activities will help the representative branch of the local governments -- local councils -- to improve their monitoring and controlling functions towards better service delivery by executive offices of local governments and state offices” (World Bank 2016). Internationally funded and shaped, the NGOs as an institution mirror the ideology of the international community and provide yet more levels of monitoring and “holding accountable.”

Ideology, Ideological State Apparatuses, Ideological International Apparatuses

What all of this similar language, these overlapping goals and these similar or identical worldviews espoused by different institutions of the international community constitute is an ideology. Because ideology is defined differently by different theorists, it is worth defining how it will be used here. I employ here the most basic of definitions, drawn from the Oxford dictionary: “A system of ideas and ideals, especially one that forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy” (Oxford 2016). There is no intention to assign a negative value to ideology, though it often carries with it a negative connotation.

Identifying that the international community has an ideology helps us to see how, as has been outlined above, ideological language shapes the solutions proposed to the Kyrgyz Republic, and shapes the type of result that means success to the international community. It also helps us see that, although these international organizations (the EU and its satellite organizations, the UN and its satellites, the World Bank, NATO, local and international NGOs, et cetera) do not always agree on everything, and though they may differ in the details of their policy, they do share a common ideology – that is, as defined above, a common system of ideals, identifiable in the discourse they use, that forms the basis of their political and economic theory and policy. The institutions of the international community are also deeply entangled with one another, as has been demonstrated above: examples have been provided of NGO – donor and international NGO – UN entanglement, but here is just one more of many possible examples: UNDP may be the author of the *Central Asia Human Development Report*, but explicit thanks are given to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, who were both “directly involved in its preparation” (UNDP 2005, V).

What this complex, overlapping, and thickly intertwined group of institutions form is, in fact, a set of ideological apparatuses. In his seminal book *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Althusser states that primary ideological formations are realized in and carried out by their secondary ideological formations, institutions (Althusser 2014, loc. 2456). A number of the discursive elements of the primary ideological formations of the international community have been sketched out above, through a close analysis of their language. The institutions formed out of these primary ideological formations are secondary ideological formations: they derive directly from those primary ideological formations, and they realize that primary ideology in their practice (ibid, loc. 2439).

This does not mean the institutions are always acting in unity with one another, or even, necessarily, in communication or coordination most of the time. A serviceable metaphor is the different Ideological State Apparatuses that function within a nation state: the police, the church, school, the Boy Scouts, the university system, Parent-Teachers Associations, Home Owners’ Associations, the Military, et cetera: all of them, though differing in a number of ways, share a common, overarching ideology – a largely overlapping set of values. Their individual, “secondary” ideologies may differ in their details, and the work they carry out is diverse, but together they reinforce the primary ideology. Althusser divides these state apparatuses into two categories. The first category is Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs), which largely use violence to accomplish their goals (the Police, the Military, et cetera). The second category is Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), which largely employ ideology (though some threat of violence, such as “humanitarian intervention” may be lurking in the background) to accomplish their goals.

Because we are not (or not yet) dealing with military intervention by the international community in the Kyrgyz Republic, only the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) concern us here. ISAs such as school, the Boy Scouts, and the PTA share a common, overarching goal: the replication, reinforcement, and expansion of the ideology of the state. This replication, reinforcement, and expansion of the state system is accomplished on the level of ISAs by shaping the individual subject, the citizen, into a “good citizen” – one who believes in the system and shares its values. Such a subject will not need to be controlled with violence executed by the RSAs, and will, once interpolated into the system harmoniously, work to propagate and expand the values of the system.

The international community seeks to shape states to its ideology and interpolate them into its system in much the same way as modern states seek to shape their citizens. Because the Ideological Apparatuses identified here are not at the level of the state and are not, properly speaking, state apparatuses, but rather are institutions of the international community, this essay will refer to them hereafter as Ideological International Apparatuses (IIAs). This is a necessary term: it demonstrates how these institutions are linked together by a common primary ideology which they propagate and expand through their practice, despite the difference between their immediate goals and incidental disagreements over methodology.

The shaping of the Kyrgyz Republic by IIAs is accomplished with distinctly biopolitical means. Biopolitics seeks to “reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it: (it is) a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them” (Foucault 1990, 33 via Zanotti 201133). In just this way, as we see above, the language of the international community and its organisations is focused on the (re)organisation of the Kyrgyz Republic into an optimized, orderly entity.

The International Community, Globalisation, Security, and Sovereignty

The ideology of the international community is also closely tied to narratives of globalisation: the international community, in seeking to shape outcomes in the Kyrgyz Republic, stresses, as demonstrated above, connectivity, integration, and deregulation. It explicitly prescribes a limited role for government in the economy. The World Bank and IMF, in particular, as central IIAs of the international community, stress market deregulation and the role of the government as a “service provider” with a limited role to play in the economic sector. However, this language of deregulation, connectivity, and other linking metaphors can be found across many organizations, including NATO, which sees economic integration as a security issue, and UNDP, which sees economic integration as a key to stability and the development of human capital. These metaphors shape the prescriptions given to the Kyrgyz Republic for economic success. The constraints are “economic,” but have serious repercussions for state sovereignty, limiting the methods the state may have for dealing with internal policy matters.

A second constraint placed on the Kyrgyz Republic’s sovereignty emerges from the concept of what constitutes a “threat” to the international community. The international community’s security ideology is organized around ideas of “risk management” and “threat”. The European

Union made this new concept of “threat” and “security” absolutely explicit in its European Community Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the period 2007-2013: “Europe faces new threats which are more diverse, less visible and less predictable, including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, organised crime; and . . . in contrast to the massive visible threat in the Cold War, none of the new threats is purely military, nor can they be tackled by purely military means. Each requires a mixture of instruments. In particular, security and law enforcement measures have to be combined with democratisation, rule of law, respect for human rights and poverty reduction” (EU 2007, 5). This quote demonstrates how the language of threat underpins and justifies efforts by the international community in shaping the Kyrgyz Republic. It calls explicitly for “a mixture of instruments” and directly calls for those instruments to work to ensure respect for human rights and poverty reduction *in Central Asia* in order to reduce threats *to Europe*.

Managing risk and threat demands massive quantities of information, and obtaining that information entails rendering the sovereign state as transparent to the international community as possible, so that threats can be subjected to monitoring. Watchdog organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International area form part of this mechanism, as do the embassies of the international community, UN organisations, the media, and other means. NGOs, frequently called upon to assist in (as quoted above) holding government accountable, also play an enormous role. This “monitoring and evaluation”, considered essential by the international community and its IIAs, is frequently cited by nationalist politicians in the Kyrgyz Republic as a violation of sovereignty, such as in this quote from Parliamentarian Yuliya Shamporova, interviewed by a pro-Russian, Kremlin-funded website: “A great number of non-governmental organizations financed from abroad play a role of Trojan Horse. With their help, the West achieves concrete political goals: forms [a] pro-western elite, exerts influence and, if it is required, puts pressure upon authorities” (Sputnik 2015).

This chapter has conducted an analysis of the ideology, and discourse of the international community. It has also proposed a theoretical framework for understanding the structure and relationship of the international community’s institutions, adapted from Althusser’s system of Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses. The chapter went on to demonstrate the biopolitical management of the Kyrgyz Republic, based on the international community’s rhetoric of threat or risk, and how that interpretation of threat causes the international community to seek a deep level of information, monitoring, and control within the state, bypassing sovereignty and viewing the government as only one of many “stakeholders”.

It is this direct intervention within the state, at the level of civil society, often aimed at both “threat reduction” and the protection of the “weak within the state” (these two concepts are often synonymous for the international community) which raises the most objection from the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, politicians, nationalists, pro-Russian elements, and a large portion of the Kyrgyz population itself. The next chapter will analyse this ongoing intervention and the reaction to it in greater detail.

Chapter IV: The Weak Within the State

This chapter examines some of the ways in which the international community envisions, and has sought to protect, the weak within the Kyrgyz state. The weak within states are taken here to mean vulnerable populations, as defined in Chapter I of this essay. By putting human rights, poverty reduction, global health concerns and global economic development at the forefront, the United Nations and other international organizations have created an international space in which the weak and exploited groups within states are put forward as deserving of international protection in a formalized, codified way they were not before, and abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against the weak within states is called attention to: “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains one of the United Nations greatest achievements, and we should all be proud of the Organization’s work in developing international human rights norms and standards” (UN 2005). This protection of the weak within states has often been used as the primary justification for intervention, especially following the end of the Cold War, and is one of the ways in which the international community rhetorically justifies impingement upon state sovereignty.

In examining this interventionist international approach, Laura Zanotti argues that the production of responsible states is pursued through a variety of mechanisms, disciplinary, administrative, and technical, “such as the prescription of administrative procedures, advice on an array of legal matters, scrutiny and assessment of results, [and] financial aid” (Zanotti 2011, 141). These techniques seek to make states and populations “transparent to international agencies . . . similarly, full admission of states into the ‘international community’ is linked to their ‘responsible behaviour’” (ibid). As was touched on in Chapter III, these methods are applied by Ideological International Apparatuses (IIAs) to fledgling states such as the Kyrgyz Republic to ensure the fledgling state’s responsible citizenship in an envisioned international community, ‘normalizing’ the states’ behaviour in much the same fashion as governments at the state level seek to ‘normalize’ the behaviour of their own citizens and subjects: “as with the patients of Foucauldian clinical institutions, disorderly states’ individual performance (or path to sanity) is monitored and assessed in comparison to a given population, on a scale from normality to deviancy . . . the final goal is the achievement of standards of behaviour that are the same for all” (Zanotti 2011, 48). This behaviour includes both the state’s behaviour toward other states, and its behaviour toward its own citizens / those within its borders.

The Kyrgyz Republic has resisted international interventionist efforts to shape its behaviour protect its vulnerable populations. This chapter will analyse the narrative frames used to justify that resistance. However, there will be no romanticizing of this resistance. What we often find in the case of Kyrgyz resistance to international norms, as with other cases of resistance to the international community, is that they “do not necessarily favour oppressed minorities; in fact, contrary to romanticized images, they may very well be instruments of oppression” (Zanotti 2011, 11). This is, as will be demonstrated below, certainly the case in the Kyrgyz Republic, where ideas of “sovereignty,”” and “traditional values” are used as justifications for interethnic violence, religious persecution, attacks on civil society, and attacks on LGBT and other vulnerable minority populations.

Akayev’s Narratives: Ethnogenetics and “Gothic Kyrgyzstan”

From the Kyrgyz Republic's independence in 1991 until his ouster in the 2005 "Tulip Revolution," the country was ruled by Askar Akayev, elected President of the Kyrgyz SSR in 1990. Akayev, an academic who led a regime notable for its liberality in contrast to other Central Asian regimes, nevertheless used the state to enrich both himself and his extended family. His ouster in 2005 was largely due to suspicion that, while he had promised not to run for another presidential term, he was setting up a "dynasty" system that would place either his daughter or son on the throne, allowing him to rule *de facto* from the shadows.

During his regime, Akayev helped solidify two narratives that would become important for Kyrgyz national identity: Gumilev's "ethnogenetic" ideas of ethnicity and Kyrgyz destiny, and a "Gothic Kyrgyzstan" (Karagulova and Megoran 2010) narrative of a country under conspiratorial threat from monsters both inside and outside. Askar Akayev was a loyal promoter of Gumilev's theories of ethnogenesis, in which an ethnicity does not simply arise due to sociological factors, but rather through a biological "primordial awakening". Filled with excess "passionate energy" arising from the surrounding biosphere, the ethnicity asserts its difference from ethnic groups around it, breaking away from those groups (Gullette 2008, 267). "These new groups assert that 'their' history has always existed, if previously under a different name. This was how former President Akayev described the Kyrgyz. Through a set of national ancestors . . . [Akayev] traced their history back through time, establishing a unique and independent nomadic people since time immemorial" (ibid). A physicist by education, Akayev likened this new coherency of ethnic 'passion' and ethnic unity to a laser beam organising photons in a chaotic system. "Ethnic systems result from the bifurcation of a state of chaos (homeostasis) and the reaching of a high internal organization through the charging of passion" (Akayev 2003, 342-3).

In particular, Akayev focused on the 'passionate' figure of Manas, the central figure of an eponymous Kyrgyz oral epic celebrating Manas's heroic defeat of the Kalmyk tribes and the Chinese, and his consolidation of the Kyrgyz tribes. The Manas epic is considered a founding document of Kyrgyz identity. Under Akayev, many government-sponsored festivals and ceremonies, statues and monuments celebrated the life of Manas and other ancestral figures (Gullette 2008). It should be noted that absolutely no monuments, on the other hand, have ever been erected by the state celebrating the identities or achievements of any minority ethnicity. In a state imagined narratively as mono-ethnic and united behind a single ethnic "destiny", there is no narrative room for minority ethnicities. While in reality they may form an important part of the fabric of the Kyrgyz Republic, ethnogenetic arguments rob minority populations of legitimacy and render them outsiders and a potential threat to the wholeness of the state.

Far from being an artefact of Soviet ethnology, Gumilev's theories became deeply entwined in the Kyrgyz Republic with a national sense of self. This mode of defining ethnic identity survived the downfall of the Akayev regime, continuing to be tacitly approved and even promoted by his successors. While the rapaciously corrupt Bakiev regime that succeeded Akayev after the Tulip Revolution of 2005 did not seem interested in offering a coherent ethnic vision of its own, it did not challenge Akayev's structures (Gullette 2008, 273), and President Atambaev, whose government succeeded Bakiev's in 2010 following a second, more violent uprising, has returned to a fully celebratory vision of Kyrgyz ethnicity centred around the figure of Manas and heroic Kyrgyz identity.

In many ways, the ideas of ethnogenesis have their roots in European nationalist movements, and particularly in the work of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), who outlined an idea for the construction of the German nation through education. He argued that not only would people see themselves as a separate ethnicity, but through education, they would train future generations to act in defence of this identity (Gullette 2008, 275). . . As Fichte argued: “it is only by means of the common characteristic of being German that we can avert the downfall of our nation which is threatened by its fusion with foreign peoples, and win back again an individuality that is self-supporting and quite incapable of any dependence upon others” (Fichte 1968, 3 via Gullette 2008, 275).

This narrative of ethnic consolidation, fear of ‘fusion with foreign peoples’ and external threat leads into the second thread of nationalist discourse elaborated by Akayev and exploited by his successors. This narrative, which accelerated in intensity as the Akayev regime weakened and neared collapse in 2003 and 2004, is centred on ideas of ethnic purity and cleanliness, and relies upon the depiction of any elements opposing the regime as monsters under the control of foreign powers, seeking the destruction of the Kyrgyz state. Like Gumilev’s ideas of ethnogenesis, the narratives of external threat expounded by Akayev’s regime have continued to permeate Kyrgyz political discourse, having been picked up and exploited by succeeding regimes.

In the waning months of its power, attempting to shore up support and damage its enemies, the Akayev regime “evoked a gothic fantasy of a gloomy Kyrgyzstan terrorised by monsters” (Karagulova and Megoran 2010, 1). Askar Akayev had previously been exceptional among Central Asian leaders in his relative openness to Western NGOs and Western ideas of market economies and good governance. However, as his increasingly beleaguered regime sought to cling to power in 2003 and 2004, the narrative shifted to one that viewed the “colour revolutions” sweeping through the post-Soviet space as “sinister Western-backed unconstitutional coups deceitfully dressed up as ‘democracy’, a crisis of statehood and national security” (Karagulova and Megoran 2010, 5). Akayev’s regime sought to paint forces opposed to his government as a danger not only to his regime, but to the survival of the Kyrgyz state as a whole. The dangers were portrayed as multiple and coming from many different sources, “from terrorists and religious extremists to those plotting anti-constitutional coups. These were all framed not as authentic domestic movements for change, but as threats inspired and backed by shadowy ‘outside forces’ who had seduced and perverted those Kyrgyz who were involved. Indeed, they were intrinsically opposed to everything that was authentically Kyrgyz” (ibid, 9). Indeed, individuals opposed to the Akayev regime were represented as not only seduced and perverted by outside forces, but as a particular kind of monster with its origins in Kyrgyz literary history – the “mankurt”, a literary invention from Chingis Aytmatov’s novel, *This Day Lasts One Hundred Years*, which has entered the everyday lexicon of the Kyrgyz. “According to the story, during Chingis Khan’s invasion of Central Asia, a tribe called the Naiman was enslaved. The Mongols tortured the captives and turned them into working ‘machines’. They ‘deleted’ the memory of men by putting a hot camel stomach on their head, which would then squeeze the head as it dried. . . This word is used widely today to designate somebody who is faithless and who has forgotten his national history” (Karagulova and Megoran 2010, 11).

This concept of “mankurts” enslaved to foreign powers was combined with another idea: the idea of “ideological terrorism, put forward by the pro-government press as an ‘ideological attack

against public order and security’ which involved the ‘aggressive circulation (by certain groups, organisations and media involved in the political fight) of their understanding of the country’s development, social justice, democracy, freedom of speech and demonstrations, which is projected onto society’” (Slova Kyrgyzstana 2004 via Karagulova and Megoran 2010). This ideological terrorism was carried out, according to the declining regime’s narrative, by “mankurts” controlled by the ideologies of the “outside forces” – sometimes loosely defined as the United States, sometimes as “The West,” but often left undefined. Whoever these outsiders are, their impositions are narratively linked to zombification and a violation of sovereignty through the imposition of ideology: “Imposing somebody’s will on others is a violation of sovereignty. In a wider sense, it is a method of turning people into mankurts. By imposing their own ideas on the people . . . outside forces are introducing, on a large scale, the creation of mankurts” (Kyrgyz Tuusu 2005, via Karagulova and Megoran 2010).

These two narratives paint a locally specific picture of who is “authentically” Kyrgyz and who is a “mankurt” or some other kind of outsider: i.e. a threat to Kyrgyz stability, sovereignty and the state. A “mankurt” is anyone who believes ideology introduced from outside the ethnogenetic Kyrgyz narrative, and anyone who does not agree with or protests the policies of the regime. Anyone who is not ethnically Kyrgyz is also, as clearly defined by ethnogenesis, an outsider (they can never be a part of Kyrgyz ethnic ‘destiny’), and a potential threat to the state. In a country only 70% ethnically Kyrgyz, where Uzbeks compose almost 15% of the population and the rest are a mix of ethnicities including Uyghurs, Tajiks, Turks, Kazakhs, Tatars, Ukrainians, Koreans, Dungans, Kalmyks and Germans (Cia World Factbook 2016) the Kyrgyz Republic, as the Akayev regime sought to depict it, was constantly under threat from ethnic outsiders, as well as Kyrgyz ‘mankurts’ who do not buy into the state-espoused national narratives, and instead seek a more inclusive form of national identity, becoming ‘ideological terrorists’ in the process who ‘aggressively circulate’ their ideas of ‘social justice’.

Ethnic Destiny, Ethnic Domination

There is a striking consistency of these narratives of ethnic destiny and ethnic Kyrgyz domination of the state across all the Kyrgyz Republic’s governments so far. After the violent revolution of April 7, 2010 and the election of an interim government headed by Roza Otunbaeva as President, The Kyrgyz Republic’s south exploded once again, in June 2010, into ethnic violence, this time on a much larger scale than the events of 1990. The widespread violence resulted in over 1,000 deaths – the majority of them Uzbek. President Otunbaeva invited an independent review, led by a Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (KIC), which, though lacking official international sanction, was assigned to review the events in regard to international law and recommend solutions to ethnic conflict in the country (Gullette and Heathershaw 2015, 6-7). The report contradicted official versions of events reported by parliamentary and national commissions. Its recommendations, which included restoration of the name “Republic of Kyrgyzstan” and special status for the Uzbek language at regional levels, were rejected (ibid). “The Government largely refuted suggestions that it was not doing enough to support pluralism, while at the same time implicating minority groups at the center of obstacles to further development. Its rejection of the report was so strong that Kimmo Kiljunen, the head of the KIC, was voted as *persona non grata* by Parliament” (Gullette and Heathershaw 2015, 7).

While sometimes paying lip service to cosmopolitanism, the government of the Kyrgyz Republic continued to stress the necessity of Kyrgyz ethnic domination, and to link Kyrgyz ethnic domination to the idea of sovereignty. After the events of June 2010, the mayor of Osh, where much of the killing took place, stated: “Uzbeks encroached on Kyrgyzstan’s sovereignty. But we repulsed them” (Karabekov 2010 via Gullette and Heathershaw 2015). Karabekov was a well-known Kyrgyz nationalist, but President Otunbaeva, traditionally representative of a more intellectually nuanced layer of Kyrgyz society, also affirmed a dominant role for the ethnic Kyrgyz (Pavlova 2010 via Gullette and Heathershaw 2015, 7). There is a consistent narrative that the Kyrgyz Republic is the land of the Kyrgyz people, whose dominance of the state as its titular ethnicity and carriers of the state’s “destiny” is essential and correct. As outlined above in Chapter II, ethnic identity was strongly linked to territory under the Soviet Union, with each territorial ethnic republic forming a piece of a larger multi-ethnic union, but with each ethnicity experiencing full ethnic rights (to national language, national elites, and national culture) only within their national (that is, ethnic) territory.

Strengthened by Gumilev’s ethnogenetic theories, this ideological construction of sovereignty as linked to both ethnic destiny and ethnic control of territory leaves little place for a cosmopolitan or multi-ethnic state with rights based on citizenship alone, and respect for “universal” human rights as envisioned and promoted by the IIAs of the international community. Both the elite and popular politics of the Kyrgyz Republic “rest on an imagined but intimate connection between the state and Kyrgyz identity.” (Gullette and Heathershaw 2015, 20). The events of 2010 presented a challenge to the Kyrgyz, “who for the years since independence had been told that they and their kind were sovereign in the new state . . . This crisis was in turn a challenge to the sovereignty of the Kyrgyz, and therefore to their own identities” (Gullette and Heathershaw 2015, 14-15).

Fighting the “Fifth Columns”

What appears clear to the governments of the Kyrgyz Republic is that there are two identifiable internal threats to Kyrgyz sovereignty, in line with the narratives first promoted by Akayev’s regime: the first threat is people who themselves hold ‘non-traditional’ values – that is, any values which fall outside the ethnogenetic Kyrgyz narrative. The second threat is NGOs and International Organisations (IIAs) operating inside the Kyrgyz Republic who seek to promote a way of life or a set of values that threatens the ethnogenetic narrative of Kyrgyz sovereignty, ‘destiny’ and ethnic dominance over territory. Two controversial bills introduced before the Kyrgyz Republic’s Parliament clearly illustrate efforts to target these two threats. These are the “Gay Propaganda” anti-LGBT bill and the “Foreign Agents Law”, which requires NGOs receiving foreign funding to register as “Foreign Agents” (the term in Russian, “*inostrani agent*” is virtually synonymous with “saboteur” or “spy” in its connotations). While both these bills resemble Russian legislation signed into Russian Federation law, the bills tap into a well of popular support and are underpinned by the locally specific ethnogenetic ideological foundation illustrated above.

Of the “Gay Propaganda” bill, which proposes criminal and administrative liability for “formation of a positive attitude to non-traditional forms of sexual relations” (nhc.no 2014)

Parliamentarian Kurmanbek Dyikanbaev stated: ““We defend traditional values of the family. This unit of society has the guarantee of protection of our laws and international conventions. We must honor our customs and traditions, which are alien to non-traditional relationships” (24.kg 2016). The appeal to “our” customs and traditions is clear, as is the depiction of the LGBT community as outside that set of “our” customs and traditions. The bill has in fact not been signed into law as of this time, despite enjoying enormous popular support and passing its second of three readings in September of 2015 with a vote of 90-2 (24.kg 2016).

External Interference

The massive amount of negative attention given to the LGBT community in the Kyrgyz Republic points to a politicization of the issue of sexuality which was not always present. “It was never easy being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in Kyrgyzstan’s patriarchal, Muslim-majority society . . . [but] while there were occasional attacks in the past, the LGBT community was mostly left to itself. Until recently there were even several gay clubs in Bishkek” (North 2016). However, this vulnerable group of “weak within the state” has been pulled into an ideological proxy war fought over who does and does not belong in the Kyrgyz state. Medet Tiulegenov, chair of international and comparative politics at the American University in Bishkek, states that internal and external forces have “dragged the LGBT community into a battle for Kyrgyz identity” (North 2016). The LGBT bill has been roundly condemned by the international community and its IIAs, from the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which in 2014 called for an abandonment of the draft law (UN News Service Section 2016) to the Norwegian Helsinki Commission, which stated that they are “concerned about the consequences that this bill may have for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans persons (LGBT) in the Kyrgyz Republic, if adopted” (nhc.no 2014). Ravina Shamdasani, a spokesperson for the OHCHR, clearly summarised the international community opinion: “[e]veryone is entitled to equality before the law, without any discrimination, and it is the State’s responsibility to protect all individuals from discrimination. We thus urge the authorities not to pass this law.” Shamdasani also noted the proposed law would violate rights protected by treaties Kyrgyzstan has ratified and that these rights include the rights to “liberty, security and physical integrity and to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association” (ohchr.org 2016 via loc.gov 2016).

The draft law has garnered a surprisingly large amount of attention, given the Kyrgyz republic’s relative obscurity on the international scene, from the international press, including articles in The Guardian and USA Today sounding the alarm against LGBT people “being singled out, discriminated against, even outright assaulted” (USA Today 2016) due to the draft law, and Public Radio International, which released a 6-minute long video on its YouTube channel (based upon reporting by the same Andrew North who authored the Guardian story, and pulled from another article at Coda Story (Coda Story 2016, 2016a) which characterises the LGBT bill and its repercussions as “a violent struggle over national identity” (Coda Story 2016).

Introduced at virtually the same time as the anti-LGBT bill, the “Foreign Agents” draft law has also not been signed into law as of this writing. There are currently over 4,000 NGOs in operation in the Kyrgyz Republic, working across a massive variety of fields from human rights and support to vulnerable groups to youth, culture and art (lcnl.org 2016). These organizations, by far the most robust civil society in Central Asia, rely almost exclusively on foreign funding to

remain operational (ibid). The bill, despite nationalist support and a similar bill that passed in 2012 in Russia, has faced robust political opposition: “on May 12, 2016, the Kyrgyz Parliament voted on the draft law formerly known as the ‘Foreign Agents Law (FA Law).’ 46 MPs voted in favour of the draft FA Law, and 65 MPs voted against it” (lenl.org 2016).

Conflict and Division

This vote is reflective of the Kyrgyz Republic’s functioning multi-party democracy which, while criticized by the international community has, in fact, proven to be a real forum for the spirited debate of contentious issues of identity, citizenship, rights and inclusion / exclusion. As will be suggested further in the concluding chapter of this essay, this is a conflict necessary and healthy for society, rather than one that should be automatically muzzled with a blanket appeal to “universal” human rights and calls for a country’s functioning democratic process to be short circuited, and for lawmakers’ constituents to be ignored in favour of international treaties and interventions that seek to homogenize and normalize the state. As Chantal Mouffe states: “conflict and division are not to be seen as disturbances that unfortunately cannot be completely eliminated, or as empirical impediments that render impossible the full realization of a good constituted by a harmony we cannot reach because we will never be completely able to coincide with our rational universal self” (Mouffe 2009, p33). Conflict is especially inevitable in a society caught between its own ethnogenetic / post-Soviet ideologies and the international community’s ideologies (and they are ideologies, as demonstrated above by the close reading of their texts in Chapter III) being pressed upon it.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Having emerged from one ideology imposed from above, the Kyrgyz Republic finds itself subjected to the imposition of a new ideology: a new sea of terms, norms and systems imposed from outside by the IIAs of the international community as that community seeks to “normalise” the Kyrgyz Republic by influencing its values and conceptual shape. As demonstrated above through a close reading of its own documents, the international community has an identifiable ideology which it imposes upon states through a complex series of mechanisms and apparatuses, defined here as IIAs. While the IIAs may have secondary ideologies, and may differ in the details of how to implement change, all IIAs essentially engage in the reproduction and expansion of the international community’s primary ideology. This ideology defines the international community’s vision of governance, frames its efforts, and pre-defines the solutions it suggests to complex problems of government and society. It shapes the prescriptions given to the Kyrgyz Republic for success and normalisation as a state, and sets the parameters inside which it must operate to be fully admitted into the international community. “Language is not secondary to government: it is constitutive to it” (Rose 1999, 28).

Largely due to a pervasive narrative of “threat” and “security,” as made explicit in, among other documents, the *European Community Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the period 2007-2013*, quoted above in Chapter III, as well as to an inclination toward “risk management” and a perceived need for management of state behaviour that is increasingly pre-

emptive, questions of sovereignty are secondary to the IIAs, and are bypassed when necessary and / or convenient. The Kyrgyz Republic's entrance into the community nations occurred in the 1990s, at a time when "[s]ecurity was reimagined as part of a holistic project aimed at managing risk . . . the borders between international and national spaces of governance blurred . . . and sovereignty came to be considered less an entitlement than a privilege dependent on performance" (Zanotti 2011, 2).

A number of theorists (Omalchieva, McGlinchey) have argued the Kyrgyz Republic is not a true democracy, labelling it a "weak authoritarian" state or some other term. However, robust debate around the 'Gay Propaganda' and "Foreign Agents' laws, resulting in the delaying of the former and the rejection of the latter, demonstrate the Kyrgyz Republic is, in fact, already a democracy. Often, when Kyrgyzstan is accused of being "undemocratic", what is really meant is that its democratic institutions and their populist tendencies are in conflict with liberalism, with its absolutist notions of universal human rights, good governance and the rule of (a particular kind of) law. Moreover, criticisms of the Kyrgyz Republic's *democracy* are often made before the fact: that is, before the *democratic process* has had an opportunity to play itself out – for example in the harsh international criticism of draft laws that have yet to be passed, treating laws up for consideration by the Kyrgyz Parliament as if they were already in force, and were *a priori* violations of international norms or human rights. This is the case with the above two draft laws. Though neither have passed, the Kyrgyz Republic has been widely criticised for both, with the European Parliament, as just one example, stating in a joint resolution on the "Gay Propaganda" draft law that it "[c]alls on the UN Human Rights Council to take into consideration, as part of the upcoming Universal Periodic Review of Kyrgyzstan, the disregard for the principles of equality and non-discrimination represented by this draft law" (Europarl.europa.eu. 2016). This statement was made despite the fact that the draft law had not, and so far has not, been passed into law, and was still in the process of being debated by Kyrgyz society and Kyrgyz lawmakers.

Pre-emptive statements made by the international community could be considered anti-democratic. They can be perceived as interfering in and placing pressure on the Kyrgyz Republic's democratic system to promote ideologies dear to the international community (and in the case of LGBT rights, only very historically recently dear to the international community) and privileging the promotion of these ideologies over the Kyrgyz Republic's sovereignty and its democratic process. This violates the Kyrgyz Republic's image of itself as sovereign and independent from undue outside influence. Additionally, as seen above, this often places individuals at risk. This is certainly the case with the LGBT community, which has been "dragged . . . into a battle for Kyrgyz identity" (North 2016). This pre-emptive, anti-democratic behaviour also erects a barrier to the establishment of strong democratic values. As Chantal Mouffe states, "[i]t is not by offering sophisticated rational arguments and by making context-transcendent truth-claims about the superiority of liberal democracy that democratic values can be fostered. The creation of democratic forms of individuality is a question of *identification* with democratic values, and this is a complex process that takes place through a manifold of practices, discourses, and language-games" (Mouffe 2005, 70).

The United Nations, the central pillar of the international community, challenged notions of an international politics based on "self-help and military insecurity" (Buzan, Little 1999, 90) with a system based on the idea of collective security. The adoption of documents such as the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Bill of Human Rights have further enunciated a system of international norms. The UN's High level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, made the statement that "whatever perceptions may have prevailed when the Westphalian system first gave rise to the notion of State sovereignty, today it clearly carries with it the obligation of a State to protect the welfare of its own peoples and meet its obligations to the wider international community." (UN 2004, 21). These norms and obligations are a challenge to the sovereignty of states, who must at the very least pay lip service to their enforcement within their borders, or face approbation and isolation – something a weak state like the Kyrgyz Republic, massively reliant on international assistance, quite literally cannot afford.

It could be argued that these limits do not, in fact, impinge on the sovereignty of the Kyrgyz Republic, as it has been a willing signatory to international agreements and covenants. However, as stated in Krasner's "Compromising Westphalia": "agreements that are voluntarily entered into by rulers . . . would never violate the international law definition of sovereignty, but could violate the Westphalian model if they compromised *the autonomy of the state*, whether in modest ways by altering domestic views of legitimate behavior . . . or in more decisive ways by subjecting domestic institutional arrangements, personnel, or policies to the scrutiny of or control by external actors" (Krasner 1996, 120) (my emphasis). This question of the autonomy of the state being threatened by views introduced from outside is, as demonstrated above in Chapter IV, a central one for the Kyrgyz. There is a well-developed narrative in the Kyrgyz Republic that presents those who are influenced by "external actors" as "mankurts" – zombies who have forgotten their traditional values. This is coupled with a Soviet tradition of viewing any organization with ties external to the state as a "foreign agent." Moreover, the suspicion the Kyrgyz Government, and nationalist movements, bear toward the work of NGOs may be in some part legitimate. These organizations are, in the Kyrgyz Republic, almost exclusively funded by the international community. They often serve as the front-line troops and watchdogs of the UN and other international organizations, and are therefore tied to entities with the ability to bring forward, or cause to be brought forward, resolutions in the UN, work to invoke sanctions, and otherwise inflict pain, pressuring the Kyrgyz Republic into compliance. They are IIAs, supporting the ideology of the international community, and are agents of a system that seeks to bind the Kyrgyz Republic in a web of international norms, policed by NGOs and a global civil society who demand adherence to "universal" human values as codified by the UN, the EU, and other actors of the international community.

Certainly, the Kyrgyz Republic can "choose" not to participate in the UN, the IMF, and other organs of the international political body – but to do so is to become a pariah state, an absolute outsider. More importantly – if sovereignty is "the recognition by other similarly recognized states that this entity is 'one of them'" (Bull 1977), then not participating in the international system totally negates the foundations of the Kyrgyz Republic's sovereignty. Just as "man is a political animal" whose place is as a part of the "polis", the sovereign state is only sovereign when recognized as such within a community of states. Outside the "polis" of the international community, sovereignty has no meaning. In the case of the Kyrgyz Republic, highly reliant on international aid and the support of the international community, there is no possible choice to

“opt out” of the system that seeks to control and restrain them – it is also the system that sustains them.

As detailed above, resistance to ‘international norms’ in the Kyrgyz Republic has often meant the victimisation of minority populations and their exclusion from the political process. This is at least partially a result of ethnogenetic narratives consistently promoted by the Kyrgyz Government and nationalist movements, as well as narratives of threat which, while mirroring other threat narratives to some extent, are specific to the Kyrgyz context, and even have a vocabulary (that of the ‘mankurt’) of their own.

These ideological constructs, deeply embedded in the Kyrgyz Republic’s narrative of self-identity, must be worked through democratically. Allowing space for the Kyrgyz Republic’s society to debate these issues without undue influence from outside before the fact may be more likely to support healthy development, and may be more likely to result in eventual acceptance of liberal values: “a liberal-democratic conception of justice and liberal-democratic institutions require a democratic ethos in order to function properly and maintain themselves” (Mouffe 2005, 69). Calls and pressure not to debate a draft law in the Kyrgyz Parliament violate the democratic ethos. The Kyrgyz Republic’s people cannot be expected to accept having external values forced upon them: they must be provided space to engage in debate and come to those values within the parameters of their own system. Values imposed from outside will always incur resistance, as they will be viewed as a threat to sovereignty. Far from being irrelevant in the 21st century’s globalised world, the question of sovereignty lies at the heart of the international system. It is directly relevant to the theories that seek both to expand and to contract the boundaries of international governance, humanitarian assistance and international intervention, as well as the ideologies of the international community.

There is a clear disparity of power in the international community. “Disparities of power are a fact of life in international politics and give powerful states de facto capacities that to some extent override their formal equality with other states.” (Wendt, Friedheim 1995, 721). This disparity is cemented into the international community due to the circumstances of the founding of the United Nations. The strong nations with the propensity of arms needed to fight and win World War II dictated the initial framing of the UN’s values and focus, even previous to the official chartering of the United Nations in 1945, and guaranteed their dominance in perpetuity by permanently assigning a primary role to themselves as permanent members of the UN Security Council, with veto powers no General Assembly member or temporary Security Council member enjoys. As Cox aptly puts it, “International government is, in effect, government by that state which supplies the power necessary for the purpose of governing” (Cox 1992, 167). The values put forward were, from the UN’s inception, the values of the strong founding states. Rather than being “universal,” though they were codified as such, they were in fact historically contingent and specific to the world view of the founding, and dominant, UN nations. It is difficult to imagine that a different set of nations, emerging at a different time in history and under different circumstances, would have put forward the same set of “universal” human values.

However, these dominant nations, while reserving large amounts of power for themselves, did create an organization which allows space for debate and input from weak nations, and for at

least nominal equality between sovereign states. This sovereign equality is enshrined in the Charter, in Article 2: “The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.” Viewed through these two lenses of formal equality of nations and real disparity of power, the UN and the international community of which it is a central pillar can be seen as a space for the recognition and support of sovereignty and some form of equality, and also as a space for the biopolitical normalization of state behaviour, where ‘normal’ is a term defined by the ideology of those allowed at the table and enforced by those with the power to do so. This biopolitical normalization, which constrains state sovereignty in a myriad of ways, and seeks to shape the state into a “good citizen” of the international community, can sometimes be used to protect the weak against the strong. It can also sometimes be used to justify the actions of the strong against the weak.

The UN is at the center of a hierarchical community, and ‘community’ is “a modality of liberal government, a field of inclusion/exclusion that fosters normalization” (Rose 1999 via Zanotti 2011, 17). This ‘normalization’ is likely one of the greatest current impediments to state sovereignty. What has happened is that “a system of global governance has emerged which involves both states and international institutions. It is not a single world state, but a system in which states are increasingly hemmed in by a set of agreements, treaties and rules of a transnational character” (Kaldor 2003, 590). This hemming in of sovereignty fundamentally binds states’ hands on a number of issues, but it does not do away with sovereignty entirely. Indeed, to do so would be to cut away the branch upon which the United Nations rests: The United Nations is united, in the sense that it is a community bound together around a set of stated values. However, the United Nations is, irreducibly, an organization composed of separate nations. This essential structure demands a recognition of irreducible differences between the individual members (if all differences were reducible, there would be no nations at all), as well as those nations’ fundamental sovereignty.

Rather than enjoying full power over its territory following its independence, the government of the Kyrgyz Republic found itself demoted to the role of manager, policymaker (though only of approved policies), service deliverer and custodian of the infrastructure necessary for the Kyrgyzstani population. They found sovereignty to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, UN recognition rendered their borders technically inviolate, and their government and control over territory legitimate in the eyes of the international community. On the other hand, entrance into the UN and the international community immediately bound their hands, locking them into an ideological structure designed to restrain, limit, and control the power exercised both within and between states, with direct implications for any grandiose, ethnogenetic Kyrgyz ideas of collective genetic destiny. The UN and the international community gave them sovereignty, and then immediately, in their eyes, took it away.

Lack of respect for state sovereignty – treating the government of the Kyrgyz Republic as a “pass-through” or just one of many “stakeholders” who must be carried along on the way to success is a dangerous practice. It increases the perception of NGO workers and international organisations as a “fifth column” of “foreign agents”, feeds into anti-Western narratives, and disenfranchises national governance, as well as risking increasing societal contempt for national governance at a time when these new, weak states are not yet fully on their feet or consolidated as strong, sovereign nations.

This does not mean resistance to the international order should be valorised, or human rights abuses ignored. For the minority in Kyrgyzstan with non-traditional sexual orientations, for example, Kyrgyz “resistance” to international pressure often takes the form of abusing vulnerable communities, and Kyrgyz nationalism often seeks to disenfranchise minority populations. Real oppression should be resisted by the international community. However, the international community should not expect more from the Kyrgyz than they do from their own countries, or pretend to rationalist infallibility or universality. Liberal governmentality puts itself most at risk when it seeks to eliminate ambiguity in the name of a “technocratic ideal of reason” (Best 2008, 363).

The Kyrgyzstani people recognize ideology when they see it: they are unlikely to be fooled by appeals to “universal” concepts. Such language, which mirrors the language of the Soviet Union, which habitually spoke its power in universals and immortal iron-clad absolutes, and then dissolved to nothing in less than half a year, risks inspiring contempt. In a democratic society, which the Kyrgyz Republic is, solutions must be justified through argument. Appeals to universals and technocratic absolutes are condescending, and close down the conversation, not allowing space for the Kyrgyz Republic to determine the form of its own destiny.

What the Kyrgyz Government may feel is that the essential goal of the international community is not to reinforce sovereignty and the community of nations, but rather to empty sovereignty of any substantive content. Stalin stated that the nationalities were to be “nationalist in form, socialist in content,” (Stalin, quoted in Martin 2001, 12). This was, as shown above in Chapter II, a plan to hollow out the nationalities’ core values and beliefs in favour of a nationally costumed socialist ideology. National “identities,” were a depoliticised costume for *homo Sovieticus* to wear. All national practices of any significance (social strata, traditional structures of authority and power, religion and other belief systems, gender relations) were to be polished away into what Stalin called “universal human culture” (Martin 2001, 183).

While speaking out against injustice and maintaining core adherence to its own ethics, the international community must be careful that it is not attempting to do the same as the Soviet Union did; that it is not attempting to create a Kyrgyz Republic that is “sovereign in form, international in content” in which all difference is polished away for the sake of “universal human culture”. This is best achieved through demonstrating more respect for Kyrgyz sovereignty. This respect includes working with, rather than beyond or past, the Kyrgyz Republic’s government. It also includes respecting the democratic processes of the Kyrgyz Republic by not seeking to interfere with or influence democratic decisions before the fact. There must be a recognition that, in a system based on sovereign nations, there will always be irreconcilable differences, there can never truly be ‘universal’ norms of behaviour, and there will always be some level of injustice in any society.

As Jameson said, “nothing is served by substituting one inert institutional structure (bureaucratic planning) for another inert institutional structure (namely, the market itself). What is wanted is a great collective project in which an active majority of the population participates, as something belonging to it and constructed by its own energies” (Jameson 2012, 295). To do otherwise – to fail to involve the Kyrgyz Republic’s government and its people in the collective project of their state’s development – is to fail to incorporate real difference or real local input. This

disenfranchises large segments of the population, and invalidates their deeply held beliefs rather than *actually altering them* by debating those beliefs openly. This lack of discussion increases a feeling, in the population, of being *subjected* to the policies of the international community through coercion, rather than participating in the international community as sovereign, equal partners.

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