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PREFACE

Kyrgyzstan is known in Central Asia as an oasis of democracy. Its reputation comes from a genuine attempt to change and reform in the economic as well as political domain, in the early years of independence, but also from its geopolitical context, being surrounded by other Central Asian nations that are particularly hostile to democratisation. Unfortunately, during in the last years all the vectors show in the opposite direction, and the democratic image of the country seems to be rather a pale reflection from the past than reality.

Kyrgyzstan has a population of roughly five million people representing different ethnic backgrounds such as Kyrgyz, Russian, Uzbek, Uighur, Korean, and other. Most of its territory is mountainous (94%), which effectively isolate the country's northern and southern population from one another. A rough road over two 3000-metre-plus passes links the Chuy valley in the North, with the capital city Bishkek, to the Ferghana valley in the South, with the remarkable Uzbek influence.

For a newly independent, ethnically and culturally diverse, mountainous country, the media and communication is of utmost importance. The media have a crucial role to play in the building of a nation and the functioning of a democratic system. The access to and quality of public information and debates is crucial to the development of a sense a national belonging and participation.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kyrgyzstan, like other Central Asian states, underwent over the last ten years political, economic and social changes that shaped the media landscape, moulded its ambivalent relationship with the political power, and led to the poor material conditions and limited professional freedom of journalism in today's Kyrgyzstan. However, for the two years of independence through late 1993, Kyrgyzstan's newspapers enjoyed the greatest freedom of publication in any of the Central Asian nations. Newspapers were able to discuss issues of public interest closely, in spite of the power of a state secrecy committee to require submission of materials in advance of publication. But since 1993, the government has moved increasingly to impose control over the access to news and production resources.

Moreover, one can observe a strong discrepancy in number and quality of newspapers and a lack of information exchange between the media of the capital city and the other regions within the country. The result is, that on the one hand, populations of far-remote regions receive only limited information from major media institutions based in the capital. On the other hand, events and developments in the regions are under-represented in the mainstream media in the capital city. But also the electronic media are unevenly developed in the republic, both because of the physical con-

straints imposed by the country's mountainous terrain and because of financial difficulties. Resources are concentrated in Bishkek, which is well supplied with television and with radio. But the penetration of more remote areas, however, is incomplete. These regional cleavages as regards the access and quality of public information can exacerbate already existing tensions between the capital and the South, where the inter-ethnic clashes in the early 90's still haunts the memories.

In order to identify the mechanisms limiting the information flow between the capital city and the regions and to gain a deeper understanding of the evolution since independence and the current underlying structures of the mass media in Kyrgyzstan, CIMERA¹ organised in the summer 2000 a joint open tender with the financial and logistical support of the Swiss Coordination Office in the Bishkek. The tender was open to public and private Kyrgyz research institutions and NGO's. In autumn 2000, an international ad-hoc committee² selected a joint research proposal from the American University in Kyrgyzstan and the Bishkek Humanities University. The research team started their work in November 2000, and completed it one year later, in November 2001. We are pleased to publish with this Occasional Paper the results of the first Kyrgyz large-scale research project on the Kyrgyz media. While the research report may not always satisfy "academic" criteria, especially regarding the use of quotations and the presentation of survey results, it gives a detailed and rich insight to the recent history and actual conditions of the media in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, through the interpretative work of the researchers, **the way the (????)** discuss the identified problems of the media, the normative basis of their discourses, one learns a lot about the struggles and debates surrounding the role of the media from a Kyrgyz perspective. And this is, in our opinion, a major force of this work.

With this project, we pursue three objectives: to gain a deeper understanding of the current state and role of Kyrgyzstan's print and electronic media, with a special emphasis on the growing news gap between the south and the capital; to support and strengthen local capacities in the field of media research; to stimulate in a follow-up phase the debate in Kyrgyzstan about the role of the media amongst the media community and political actors.

The fact that this research has been carried out by a competent team of researchers from Kyrgyzstan and not by foreign experts is of importance for several reasons. First, in Kyrgyzstan, like in other post-soviet countries, the state budget for research, especially for social science research, is negligible or non-existing. The production of knowledge about the social and political realities these "countries in transition" is mainly determined by the agendas of international organisations and foreign NGO's

¹ CIMERA is active in the field of media development in Central Asia since 1998, and implements the regional Central Asia Media Project (CA Media) funded by the Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation. In the framework of the CA Media project, CIMERA organises thematic conferences in which experts, public figures and academics discuss with selected journalists on current regional concerns such as the status of minorities in Central Asia, the regional distribution of natural resources, or the place of religion in society. Besides those conferences, the project also provides journalists from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan with vocational training, supports professional media structures and conducts research on the media in the region.

² The selection committee was composed by journalism professor Jean Widmer (University of Fribourg), Chris Schüpp (at that time director of Internews Kyrgyzstan), Esther Schaufelberger, (at that time responsible for Peace Promotion Program of the Swiss government in Kyrgyzstan), and Vicken Cheterian (Co-Director of Cimera)

who need to satisfy their information needs to set up and monitor their programs. These organisations frequently out-source very focused, short-term, and empirical research mandates to mostly private Kyrgyz research organisations. By launching an open tender, we tried to develop a complementary approach. First, with the organisation of an open tender, we wanted to stimulate the Kyrgyz research community to define themselves, by submitting a research proposal, the scope and methods of the research, as well as its organisational set-up. The call for proposal identified several general research topics³, but left it up to researchers how to address these topics. During the research process, the researchers had the freedom to develop their own interests and analysis in the course of one year. Second, the fact that this research was carried out by a Kyrgyz research team was also significant for the participants, especially in the far-remote regions of Kyrgyzstan. Journalists, chief-editors and owners of media outlets in the South were eventually expecting foreign or international organisations to be interested in their fate, if the question of regional media is part of their agenda, but were not prepared to be a subject of research for a Kyrgyz research team. The interviews and survey conducted in the framework of this research, and the expression of interest in the problems media are facing far away from the capital has been an encouragement for these participants. And third, the results of the research, also published in Russian⁴, are received differently by the Kyrgyz media community if they are produced by a Kyrgyz team. The report is certainly more subject to critical scrutiny and criticism than a report of an "outsider", but in the same time also more likely to provoke debates about the state and role of the media in Kyrgyzstan. And this is, besides the new insights, one of the major objectives of this project.

We would like to thank the authors of the research report for their commitment, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation for their financial and administrative support and all members of the selection committee for their participation.

Carine Bachmann,
CIMERA

3 The call for proposal specified the following topics of research:

- a) Development of the media (newspapers and TV channels) in Kyrgyzstan over the last decade and panorama of the existing institutions today, with a special attention on the following categories: capital vs regions, linguistic and ethnic minority media, pro-governmental vs opposition media, private vs state-funded media.
- b) Analysis of the structures of the major media, including ownership and loyalty of media outlets, internal organisation, audience, financial resources.
- c) Analysis of the major problems of the media as financial resources, censorship, legislation etc..

Based on the results of the overview, the researcher were asked to address the following topics from the perspectives of the regions:

- d) What kind of media are available for populations of the regions, especially in Southern Kyrgyzstan? And what kind of information do they provide?
- e) Which are the mechanism used to transfer information from the capital to the South and vice versa?

4 To order the Russian version of the publication, contact the CIMERA office in Geneva or order through our website www.cimera.org.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Kyrgyzstan's information networks in the era of globalization

Globalization is more and more becoming the determining factor of international development. Scientists are talking about perspectives for the development of a new type of statehood – networked and cosmopolitan¹ – which will replace the nation-states based on the industrial type of economy. New computer technologies and especially the Internet have become the “conductive” system for this globalization and the entire world is gradually turning into a “global village.” However, due to a number of objective and subjective reasons, both cultural and geopolitical, not all countries have so far been able to utilize these opportunities fully and now face these historical challenges.

Provincialism is a real fact of existence for Kyrgyzstan in terms of the technical development of its information networks. Although “in the number of computers, Internet users and telephone lines, a breakthrough was achieved that has not been matched by other CIS countries,”² it is impossible to suggest that the country's rural communities (which account for more than 70% of the population) have access to computer technologies today. Technical underdevelopment of computer networks may become a serious impediment to the general development of Kyrgyzstan. According to Ivan Zasursky, a leading journalism theorist from Russia, it is the criterion of development of the information networks which determines the status of various states since the information-poor countries are primarily economically backward ones.

The global world, consisting of individual nation states, is connected by an effectively functioning system of mass communications, which is included into the world information network. This is constantly receiving information on the most important events in the world and presenting information on domestic processes to the outer world.

The entry of Kyrgyzstan into international - or at least into regional - politics in the 1990s and its admittance as a member into a number of international communities fostered hope that coverage of external relations would gain space in the coming decades. In a practical sense, the domestic media were about to change their approach to coverage of Kyrgyzstan and the “world horizons”³. Based on this it is possible to single out several stages in development of international coverage during

¹ See P. Schedrovitskiy, “Who and what stands behind the doctrine of the Russian world. Thinking is a profession.” Mocsow, 2000, pages 80- 87.

² Askar Akaev. “The Memorable Decade.” Bishkek, 2001, page15.

³ Meaning which countries are included in the zone of closest (geopolitical and economic) consideration, how these countries build relations and how a country defines its own place in today's world.

the time of independence. Dragging out the existence of only a depressive periphery, a provincial appendage during its entire history, Kyrgyzstan at the dawn of sovereignty was trying to find new factors to increase its status in the world using the strategic geopolitical significance of the region. Openness and orientation to democratic development of the state in external politics at the beginning of the 1990s gave Kyrgyzstan an opportunity to enter the globalizing world community. The president of the country, Askar Akaev, was actively involved in world activities: tours of countries in Europe, Asia and the Atlantic and Arab regions – it seemed that the whole world welcomed the arrival of the country on the scene of international politics as a significant center in its region.

The national media of Kyrgyzstan during this period “opened up” the world, wrote articles “without bias” covering the life of faraway and unknown countries and people and explaining how Kyrgyzstan is perceived and accepted in the world community. As a rule, journalists who had been included in the President’s entourage did most of the coverage from distant countries. However, such dazzling opportunities lasted only until the mid-1990s.

By the end of the 1990s, the historical opportunities were lost (mostly due to the actions of the national elites), and the entry of Kyrgyzstan into the world community became indeed no more than political phraseology for domestic use.

Today it is possible to state with assurance that the circle of significant political actors of the region does not include Kyrgyzstan any more, and the center of struggle for supremacy in regional policy-making has shifted towards such countries as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Presidential visits abroad became rare, and consequently there are fewer reasons and opportunities for Kyrgyz journalists to cover the country’s image from different states. With the President and other officials not going abroad as often as they did, the circle of journalists who are given the honor of joining governmental delegations has become smaller. The general lack of financial resources does not allow them to purchase and use large volumes of information from foreign reporting agencies, and none of the existing media outlets, irrespective of the type of media and ownership, has its own foreign correspondents. Even the national news agency Kabar today has no network of correspondents in the neighboring countries of the region and is not a reliable source in terms of international information.

Due to this, coverage of external political topics, international relations and events has shrunk in terms of its absolute share in the media during ten years of independence. The analysis of the texts of modern media shows that today the share of international or foreign information is not large and comprises an average of 10-12% in each newspaper. (For example, in a 32-page (A3 format) Friday “Vecherny Bishkek” issue, international information takes a spread of two pages – “Kaleidoscope” and “Planet: events, facts,” and news pieces in the columns “Central Asia” and “In the world.”⁴) The obvious reason for such a small interest is the absence of their own

⁴ For comparison: purely advertising pages in the same Friday VB issue take 12 out of 32. About the same proportion (1:3) is characteristic for the regular daily issues of the paper.

channels to receive information: most of the messages on international topics are borrowed from Russian media or, to an even smaller degree, are received from the world information agencies.

Under these limited opportunities to receive constant information on world events, the media outlets have to select from the international news services the materials that, in the opinion of media heads, reflect Kyrgyzstan's interests. In this context it is worth noting how the journalists see today's geopolitical borders of Kyrgyzstan. Within the international topics, it is possible to identify absolutely clear orientations and self-identification of Kyrgyzstan in the world (and in this case, differences in the newspaper characteristics play practically no role). Some of the largest sections of the publications are devoted to features and events in American society – celebrities, both in politics and entertainment, political decisions, technical and economic innovations, education and show business. Despite the fact that in the diachronic perspective it is possible to note an obvious tendency towards some reduction of messages from America,⁵ in international coverage the events from this country remain the leading information reaching Kyrgyz media consumers.

There is a simultaneous reverse tendency – increase of information from China: cultural and economic news, political – especially in relation to the deepening US-China opposition and the shaping of the Russia-China alliance – the partnership intentions in the area of economic cooperation with the Central Asian region, etc.

Russia and other CIS countries, first of all from the Central Asian region, take up about 20% of information space, (in the regional aspect the absolute majority of information comes from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan). European countries and in particular Germany have the least coverage and less stable weight (about 5% of all international reports).

One of the most popular orientations in Kyrgyzstan's media of the post-perestroika times and the beginning of sovereign existence was connected with Turkey and the Arab world. This has now weakened. Information from these regions is quite fragmented and irregular. On the whole, there is now an opposite tendency to that of the period of the beginning of the 1990s, when the head of the state was leading quite an active external political life – going on visits all over the world, participating in both conferences and meetings. By the end of the first decade of sovereignty, the circle of countries regularly covered by the domestic media had significantly narrowed and the world seemingly became smaller and more tightly knit again.

During the last year (especially after the Shanghai Five Summit) this close circle, or if it can be called so, the zone of the closest geopolitical consideration, has included China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Due to possible investments, great attention is still being paid to the European Union and Germany in particular. The external factors threatening state security and regional stability have forced the

⁵ Due to the events of September 11, 2001, there is a sharp increase in articles concerning US topics. Because of the same events, the flow of information about Afghanistan and Pakistan and some other Arab countries has dramatically increased as well.

country to focus its information interest also on Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The coverage of the events in the "Fatherland of Democracy" naturally takes the largest share of all the messages for the time being.

Analyzing the reasons for the change in approach to coverage of Kyrgyzstan and international events, it is possible to state with certainty that the reason for decreasing coverage of international issues was not the low interest of readers to external political issues. Media users from various regions of the country who participated in focus group discussions in the course of our research repeatedly expressed high interest in international and foreign information. That is to say, the true reason for the reduction of amounts of information from abroad is the resource poverty of the domestic media. As for the position of the state on this issue, there are two levels of attitude towards the problem. At the highest level of the government, the country's commitment and course to globalization is declared, in reality though one can see an absence of protection and favorable policies in relation to both government and independent media. Whatever the reason is, in this era of globalization, Kyrgyzstan's journalism today is in reality going through the process of provincialization (in contrast to internationalization) of media interests, which will lead to greater information isolation of the state.

1.2 Research context and objectives

This report is the result of a nine-month project, "Mass Media Research in Kyrgyzstan", funded by the Swiss government and administrated by CIMERA, a Swiss organization working in the fields of civic development, media support, research and analysis⁶. A team of researchers from the American University in Kyrgyzstan and the Bishkek Humanitarian University won the opening tender and developed a project guided by general directions and goals set by the Swiss side. The researchers designed the project and, using both qualitative and quantitative methods,⁷ have collected an enormous amount of material, the analysis of which is presented in this publication. It should be noted from the outset that a considerable amount of material is not covered by this report, because the volume and scale of data collected in the field research would facilitate the writing of separate significant works. For example, on audience research, the study of professional consciousness and socialization of journalists and on the realization of the reasons for the existing information gap between the regions of Kyrgyzstan.

The subject matter of this research includes the study of the following aspects of mass media functioning in Kyrgyzstan:

- Preconditions and factors, as well as the main historical phases of mass media development in independent Kyrgyzstan,

⁶ For more information about the organization, see www.cimera.org

⁷ See Section "Methodology and methods of research."

- Distinctive characteristics and features of the modern condition of the media system (analysis of structures, mechanisms and the problems of functioning in the system and some aspects of professional consciousness of journalists),
- Media effects and the character of interaction with the media consumers, techniques of formation of information supply and demand,
- Degree of development of information networks in the regional aspect and information interaction and exchange among the regions, (causes and nature of information gaps and images of regions in the media).

1.3 Structure of the report

This report consists of seven sections, the first of which is this introduction. It also includes a chapter on "Kyrgyzstan's information networks in the era of globalization" which, in our opinion, sets the tone for the whole work and allows definition of the general geopolitical context in which the media of Kyrgyzstan operate at present. In the same chapter, some processes are described, which define the current conditions and developments of media in Kyrgyzstan, namely the orientation towards the closest surrounding countries and the "provincialization" of media.

Section 2, "Methodology and methods of research", presents the most important aspects of the research situation, which influenced the choice of methods and tools for the research. It also provides a detailed description of the approaches, methods, instruments and the step-by-step procedure of the research.

Section 3, "History of development of a sovereign mass media system in Kyrgyzstan", consists of three chapters considering various areas of media activities through a historical perspective. Chapter 3.1, "Historical phases of development of mass media in the independent Kyrgyzstan", looks into the history and preconditions for development of the media system in the country over the last 10 years through the prism of four main stages, singled out on the basis of the changing relations between the government and the media. Chapter 3.2, "Development of the information supply and demand", analyzes the development of relations between the media and their audiences in terms of defining the needs and use of feedback mechanisms for adjustment of supply. And finally, chapter 3.3, "External and internal assessments of democracy and freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan", presents assessments of the state of democracy and freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan by both international organizations and domestic NGOs as well as experts, most of whom express their concern with the recent events and tendencies in this area.

Section 4, "Legislative and legal environment for media activities in the Kyrgyz Republic", provides an analysis of the legislative and legal context for media activities in

Kyrgyzstan through looking at both passed and failed legislative initiatives.

Section 5, "Modern state of media in Kyrgyzstan", also consists of three chapters analyzing various aspects of media activities under modern conditions. Chapter 5.1, "Structural context of modern journalism", is devoted to various types of existing media structures with the help of a created typology. The functional framework of media activities is the subject of chapter 5.2, "Mass media as a social system", which looks into the main problems of a media system functioning through the concept of "structural censorship", the attributes of which, in the authors' opinion, are clearly visible in Kyrgyzstan. Chapter 5.3, "Professional consciousness and professional socialization in Kyrgyzstan", covers professional issues such as qualitative and quantitative composition of media outlets, sources of information, relations with the power structures, objectivity, news values and political orientation of journalists.

Section 6, "Causes and nature of information gaps in Kyrgyzstan", is based on the results of the project subcomponent studying the information gap between the northern and southern parts of Kyrgyzstan. Although the problem of a lacking information-exchange between the South and the North indeed exists, in the course of the research we found out that it is much deeper and that it is even possible to talk about insufficient information-exchange among all regions and subjects of the country. This section is divided into several chapters that look separately into the issues of state regional policy, lines of division between the regions, reflection and images of regions in the national press and coverage of regions by each other. For the purposes of this report, the section presents only the most important developments and conclusions, because the material collected on this issue during the research is so vast and significant that it may become the basis for a separate thesis or a book.

And finally, Section 8, "Conclusions and Recommendations", presents the main conclusions made by the researchers on the basis of the gathered data. This section also presents the recommendations formulated by the researchers based on advice by experts given during personal interviews and focus groups, as well as our own recommendations prompted by the research results.

SECTION 2

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

This research is aimed at studying the history of development and the current condition of mass media in Kyrgyzstan. It was initiated and supervised by the Swiss organization CIMERA and funded and administrated by the Swiss Agency of Development and Cooperation SDC. A team of researchers was selected during an open competition organized among educational and research-oriented institutions in Kyrgyzstan. The Swiss side developed the main framework and goals of the research, which were used as the principal guidance in implementation of the project. On the basis of these directions and goals the researchers designed a project consisting of two phases:

- Phase 1: "History, development and current structures of mass media in independent Kyrgyzstan" .
- Phase 2: "Causes and nature of the information gap between the south and north of Kyrgyzstan".

Each of the phases was divided into three components with the respective tasks and research methods (see annex C1 "Research methods").

2.1 Methodological aspects and peculiarities of the research situation

Historical development and the modern context in Kyrgyzstan predetermined the peculiarities of the research situation, which in turn influenced the course and the results of the research. From the very beginning of the project implementation, the researchers faced difficulties in studying the character of the functioning of the Mass Media System (MMS). These difficulties were caused by objective factors and preconditions and included the following:

- Unsurpassed, from the Soviet era, totality of society – totality of the state and its structural peculiarity – no clear-cut separation among the autonomous spheres of politics, economics, culture, etc. In this sense, autonomy of science and research fields in these spheres is also problematic.
- Scientific autonomy in the sphere of media studies is problematic for another reason: weak institutionalization of journalism (both as a science and an applied discipline) and the resulting deficit of domestic researchers of the real processes taking place in the media sphere.

- Due to the absence of scientific research in the media sphere, the real mechanisms of media functioning and their interaction with the political, economic, social and cultural processes remain non-transparent for the public and outside observers. This is why the poly-semantic, evolutionary processes in journalism over the last ten years may be described as a single and long-term “systemic crisis.”
- The researched situation itself is multi-layered, multi-framed and the functioning of the mass media system is an indivisible tangle of political, economic, cultural and other processes. Studying the reality of political, economic and cultural life in Kyrgyzstan, we have to take into account the processes of collapse, transformation and development that happen at the same time, overlapping with each other. It is not possible to talk about stability and longevity of any project on transformation and development – this phenomenon has been named by researchers and analysts “non-conceptuality” – of politics, economy, etc.
- The above-mentioned phenomenon of non-conceptuality of the development of various spheres of life is the reason for a general absence of the “image of the future”. This is why in practical journalism the absence of the “image of the future” with the journalists is one of the most important reasons impeding the development of the media system.

2.2 Theoretical foundations and approaches to the research

The above described context and peculiarities of the research predetermined the choice of methodological approaches, the foundation of which was a combination of certain principles of various theoretical concepts and traditions:

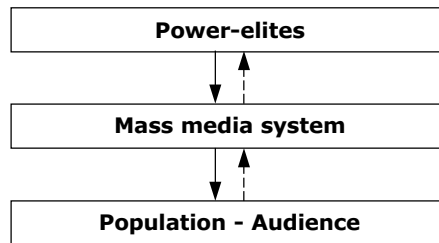
- The structural and functional theory which traditionally identifies the social and political system with the nation state and singles out the notion of institution as the key category, in accordance with which the normative, role, structural and functional aspects of media activities in the society are singled out.

Norms, structures and functions define the media system.¹ Norms have efficacy in the mass media system: historical and legal foundations, as well as less formalized professional and ethical standards of the professional journalistic activity. The structural context of journalism considers what institutions journalism is carried out through. On the whole, media institutions determine today how journalism work is taking place. “Functional context of journalism” defines achievements and the impact of journalism system. The central question in relation to journalism work is, finally, what are the effects of information supply on the opinions, predispositions and conduct of media publics and their reverse impact on emerging texts? The internal circle is made up of the media actors – journalists themselves.

¹ S. Weischenberg. *Journalistik/ Medienkommunikation: Theorie und Praxis*. Westdeutscher Verlag GmbH, Opladen/Wiesbaden, 1998 page 71.

Finally, autonomous in construction of reality, they are, however, included in the normative, structural and functional interrelations, which to a certain extent pre-determine their behavior. Under the modern mass communications conditions, the journalists' behavior is carried out in strict frameworks that are based on historically developed conditions. This is why the full description and analysis of the processes taking place in the media suggest detailed study of all these components. On the whole, journalism is subdivided into three different types of enterprise: an economic enterprise per se – production with all its market features; a creative collective of people who create news, form public opinion and its adjustment; a group of people within the framework of organizations establishing and observing the rules and norms regulating a large part of their activities.

- The theory of genetic structuralism, the concept of dual structuring of social reality identified by Pierre Bourdieu, as a balance to the structural and functional tradition submerging the social agents into the "objective structures" of the society. In accordance with this methodological assumption, the key groups of actors in the field of politics are identified. These possess various types of capital and interact in the situation of conflict and consensus in expectation of profits from the positions they occupy in the field. Based on this, the researchers looked into the position of media in Kyrgyzstan using the following three-level chart as a foundation:²



Despite the eternal striving of journalism at all times and in all societies to assign itself the task of serving the society – stating the superiority of the customers – mutual relations between these levels-structures during different periods formed in a different way. The determinant of these relations was the relation between the power structures and the media.

- Marxist and neo-Marxist theory, according to which the synchronic and diachronic analysis is utilized, as well as the concept of interests of various political groups, conflicts of interest and conflicts based on interests and globalization and world system function. This theory allows use of the scales of synchronic and diachronic relativity when studying the character of changes taking place in the media system.
- Post-modern tradition of looking at mass media as the means to create virtual reality, transfer of politics and governance into the informational and symbolic dimension.

² The thick arrows on the chart denote the main flow of information, while the dotted arrows symbolize the weak information flow in this particular direction.

- Virtualization of society is one of the global tendencies of the modern times, which has become possible through the mass media system. At the same time, since information reality is mirroring the processes taking place in various social spheres and institutions, the mass media system is the platitude of simulation not only of various structures of the society but also of itself.
- Theory of media globalization providing the framework of the world system where the media system of Kyrgyzstan, provincial in its essence, exists. In relation with this, the researchers singled out the following processes and concepts: influence of external information flows and denationalization of mass consciousness, collapse of national identifications and threat to the information security of the state.³ As a result, the status of the national media of Kyrgyzstan in the global context can be defined through the term "provincialism." Provincialism is understood in a wide sense: both as the technical underdevelopment of information flows and media themselves and as the special type of mentality in journalism environment.
- Geo-sophist tradition of politics analysis thanks to which the political processes and problems of media functioning are studied not in general but rather in terms of specific geo-economic and geopolitical conditions.

One of the key aspects of the research in this paradigm is the process of regionalization, which in Kyrgyzstan, being one of the background political processes, is strengthening and acquiring disintegrative tendencies. Among the factors that deepen regionalization dominate both the internal ones (such as weakness of the center, destruction of the vertical system of political, economic, ideological control of the Soviet time and the general social and political decentralization as a result of democratization of the country, economic difficulties of transition, ethnic, cultural, natural variety and many others) and the external ones (global and geopolitical processes, military and strategic determinants, territorial and ethnic conflicts and others). In the geopolitical aspect, the category of CCZ is used – the Closest Consideration Zone, i.e. the horizons of thinking and vision of both individual politicians and whole nations, which refers to the geopolitical self-definitions.

At a first glance, the theoretical traditions and approaches listed above, such as globalization and regionalization, Marxism and post-modernism, seem mutually exclusive and irreconcilable. However, the peculiarities of development and the modern context in Kyrgyzstan described above, their multi-facetedness, diversity, complexity and intertwining make the simultaneous development of contradictory tendencies possible. This is why such a diversified set of theoretical tools and approaches was utilized, which, in our opinion, allows to describe most adequately the reality of the media system in Kyrgyzstan.

³ The term "denationalization of mass consciousness", (as well as the term "information security of nation states") was introduced by Ivan Zasursky to denote the process whereby citizens lose their national and state identifications as a result of weakness in domestic national information flows and the expansion of foreign information flows. The consequences of such denationalization are weakening the information security of the state and "spiritual and intellectual immigration of citizens" – for more detail about this process see chapter "Structural context of modern journalism."

2.3 Research procedure

At the preparatory stage of the project as a basic tool for the research, a general questionnaire on media activities was adapted for the newspapers, magazines, and television and radio stations. An interview guideline containing a list of additional questions was developed for personal interviews with media managers, which were to be taken after the questionnaire was filled out (see Annex C2 "Questionnaire for media survey").

To study the regional media, the researchers chose a strategy of field research. Trips to the regions (on average one week long in each of the oblasts of Kyrgyzstan, excluding Batken and Chui oblasts) included identification of all current media outlets through requested information from post offices, kiosks and audience polls. Then the heads of all identified media were invited to fill out a questionnaire and 1-2 days later – to meet for a personal interview based on the additional questions. This strategy turned out to be quite effective – a total of 39 questionnaires were received and the same number of interviews conducted, most of which were tape-recorded.

During the trips, focus groups for media audiences were conducted, the main purpose of which was studying the patterns of media use. With the same purpose, as well as with the purpose of identifying the stereotypes on conceptions of northerners and southerners of each other, a questionnaire was developed, administration of which was contracted on the site (see Annex C3 "Questionnaire for audience survey").

In November 2000, the basic questionnaire was translated into Kyrgyz and printed at a print house (the same questionnaire that was used to collect the data on regional media in the field research). The questionnaire was sent out under a mail survey to the Bishkek and Chui media uncovered during the research trips.

With the purpose of receiving addresses and contact information for the mail survey and developing the database of media in Kyrgyzstan, in October 2000 an official request was made to the Ministry of Justice to provide the information on all media registered with the Ministry. Since registration in Kyrgyzstan has a mandatory permissive character (i.e. no media can start operation without registration⁴), it was logical to believe that the Ministry of Justice would have the most complete database of all existing media. In response to the request, the Ministry provided a list of 362 media, names of their heads and mailing addresses. After the correction of errors on the list and the exclusion from the mailing list of the media that had already been covered, a total of 232 media were selected for the mail survey and the questionnaires were sent to all of these selected media.

As a result of the first mailing, 23 questionnaires returned filled out, and 79 letters returned with the stamp "undeliverable" because the addressee had either moved out or did not exist at all. Although it was impossible to define what was the true reason for non-response – whether because this mass medium terminated its activities or

because it had changed its address, these media were excluded from the second mailing in which 130 questionnaires were sent out. After the second mailing, 24 letters were returned as undeliverable and 12 questionnaires were filled out. The results of the mail survey in terms of response are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. *Response to the mail survey*

	Radio and TV stations	Magazines	Newspapers (Kyrgyz)	Newspapers (Russian)	Total
First mailing (November 20-25, 2000)	37	48	74	73	232
Returns – as undeliverable (non-existent/moved out)	7	23	21	28	79
Returns – filled out questionnaires	0	6	11	6	23
Second mailing (January 28-31, 2001)	30	19	42	39	130
Returns – as undeliverable (non-existent/moved out)	2	0	3	4	12
Returns – filled out questionnaires	5	2	11	6	24

Thus, the return rate of the first mailing in November was 15% and of the second mailing in January – 11%. Therefore, the average return rate for the entire mail survey is 13%.

Table 2 presents the cumulative response results for the entire survey of Kyrgyzstan's media. It combines questionnaires received during the field research in the regions and as a result of the mail survey. The total number of questionnaires filled out under the written survey was 75.

Table 2. *Cumulative response to the survey (mail and personal distribution)*

	Radio and TV stations	Magazines	Newspapers (Kyrgyz)	Newspapers (Russian)	Total
Mail survey	2	6	22	5	35
Research trips in the regions, personal interview	9	0	19 (3-Uzb)	7	40

To carry out the content analysis component, Tursunai Chodurova, a student of the AUK Journalism Program, started to collect materials for the content analysis component on coverage of southern regions by the central press in October 1999. For the sample it was decided to use the issues of "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" (as a representative of a pro-government press) and "Delo #" (as an independent newspaper) for 1999-2000

4 For more detail, see Section «Legislative and legal environment for media activities in the Kyrgyz Republic. Registration.»

and to select all articles that included mentions of the Osh, Batken, and Jalal-Abad oblasts. Tursunai Chodurova used these materials for the basic content analysis included in her own graduation paper later published by Internews at the site www.internews.kg. The same sample was also used for the qualitative content analysis in this research.

In December 2000 and January 2001, students of the 2-4 year AUK Journalism Program participated in internships at the newspapers "Delo #", "Kyrgyz Tuusu," "Slovo Kyrgyzstana," and at the KOORT television station. In June three more students interned with the newspapers "Vecherny Bishkek," "Res Publica" and at the Pyramid television channel. These internships were organized as participatory observation to study the structures of major media. Initially, it was planned to organize internships on televisions KTR, NBT and VOSST. However, these internships were not carried out for various reasons. At the end of the internship the students submitted a report in the form of answers to the questions for the participatory observation. The data from the submitted reports was used to analyze the media structures.

In February and March 2001, preparations for the focus groups started: a design was developed (see Annexe C4 "Focus group design") as well as questionnaires for the participants. This was followed by the preliminary selection of participants. The focus groups were chosen as a method of qualitative research for studying the professional issues and problems of the media. Initially it was planned to conduct four two-day focus groups with media specialists (two with journalists – one with television and radio journalists separately and one with print journalists; another two with the media heads – one with chief editors of newspapers and one with TV/radio news editors) and two one-day focus groups with the financial managers of TV and radio companies and separately with financial managers of newspapers. However, in the process of recruiting participants it turned out to be impossible to gather the financial managers for two reasons. 1) Most of the media have no financial managers as such,⁵ and traditionally the financial management is carried out by accountants who are not independent decision makers and report directly to the media heads or founders. 2) Media heads or founders refused to allow the participation of their accountants and financial specialists in the focus groups justifying this by the fact that the financial specialists have no decision making power and that they would not provide more information than the media heads themselves.⁶ In the end, we failed to gather a focus group of financial managers and it was decided to instead conduct two more focus groups with journalists and media heads.

In total, during the period March-May 2001, six two-day focus groups were held for which we invited one media representative from each oblast and three/four experts from Bishkek. The composition of the conducted focus groups with a total of 42 participating experts was as follows:

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- 5 Some media do have financial managers who have a certain relative freedom of decision making, for example, in "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" and "Vecherny Bishkek" there is a position of a commercial director, as well as in many non-state electronic media.
 - 6 When trying to organize participation of the financial specialists, which had to be coordinated with the media heads or owners, they often expressed their bewilderment and suspicion through a question like "And why do you need an accountant? You ask me everything you need, I will tell you what I think is proper. We do have the right to keep a commercial secret as well, you know."

- Focus group # 1 (March 30-31) – 8 journalists - radio and television
- Focus group # 2 (April 6-7) – 8 newspaper journalists
- Focus group # 3 (April 20-21) – 5 heads of state television and radio stations
- Focus group # 4 (April 27-28) – 8 chief editors of oblast state newspapers
- Focus group # 5 (May 11-12) – 5 independent and free-lance journalists
- Focus group # 6 (May 25-26) – 8 heads of independent radio and television stations

Materials for the content analysis were collected and processed during the entire project. For the analysis of television news, all news programs of television channels KTR, Pyramid, NBT, KOORT during three months: November 2000, February and June 2001. Later, of all the news programs a sample of all news pieces relating to southern regions or mentioning them in one way or another were selected (a total of 244 news pieces). From the newspapers *Delo* # and *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*⁷ for 1999 and 2000 all the articles containing any information on the South were selected, while from the regional southern newspapers "Ush Sadosi," "Ekho Osha" and "Osh Janyrygy" – all articles with information on northern regions and Bishkek (a total of 561 articles) were taken into account. The subject of content analysis was the image of regions in the national media and the image of Bishkek and other regions in the southern media. The total number of analyzed texts was 805. Besides this, all articles in the "Vecherny Bishkek" newspaper on the subject of "politics and society" were studied in issues February 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 (a total of 79 articles). The task of studying the texts of "Vecherny Bishkek" was formulated in the following way: "To what extent do the regions act as subjects of politics on the pages of major national newspapers?" The research made use of both quantitative and qualitative content analysis (see Annexe C5 "Content analysis").

During the entire research, all publications relating to the situation of mass media in the country were monitored. A secondary analysis of information was also carried out, especially focussed on newsletters produced by organizations working in the area of media and communications. "Communication", (Internews), "Media Insight Central Asia MICA", former "CAMEL" (CIMERA) and «Media: Legislation and Practice» (Kyrgyzstan Bureau for Human Rights and Compliance with the Law). Also, a comparative analysis of results of earlier studies of media was carried out.

On the whole, the researchers used both qualitative and quantitative methods to study the research subject. The variety and diversity of methods and tools used for the research allowed us to build up a full picture of the mass media system in independent Kyrgyzstan.

⁷ All these media, first of all, from the beginning of the 1990s, were defined if not as quality, then in any case as the most popular ones and therefore representing the journalist standards of actual coverage. Secondly, they indicate various editorial policies and represent differing segments of journalism. Thirdly, they are believed to produce impact on persons making responsible decisions in the area of politics and economics. Therefore they have special significance in the mutual game between the media and politics.

SECTION 3

HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT OF A SOVEREIGN MEDIA SYSTEM IN KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyz perestroika meant a new radical reform of the political system, which brought with it a drastic change in various spheres of life. State and society were facing the most difficult task: To develop from a monistic structure of domination into a system of pluralism and to convert from a planned economy to a market-oriented one. The radical changes in journalism were no less important and the process itself turned out to be extremely difficult. We will consider the main factors, which laid the foundations for a new era of the media:

1. Degree of government control over media:

Up to 1988 the government totally controlled the media. Perestroika and glasnost brought democratic changes in the condition and status of mass media in society. An incredible rise of journalism started in the entire Soviet region. This process was accompanied by the appearance of new subjects in the field of politics, for example, science, having gained relative autonomy, became a topic in the field of politics (this process predetermined the rise of scientific publications). People in Kyrgyzstan at that time had great hopes for positive changes. This was the peak period of fame for journalism.

2. Absence of tradition of professional freedom for journalists:

Available was a broad hierarchical network of print media, from the central level to the lowest one of rayon, which unified journalists of the Soviet breed, who were capable of serving the party and were not accustomed to professional freedom. There existed a multi-decade tradition in the relations between the media and government, where the government communicated with the media in a monologue-style.

3. Communication gaps between official and unofficial channels of information:

For the media, the main characteristic was a tradition (inherited from the Soviet times) of communicating with the people in a totalitarian, antidemocratic mode where a gap and contradiction between official and non-official communication was inevitable. In the Soviet period, mass dissatisfaction and social discontent did not exceed quiet grumbles on the street and "intellectual criticism" in the home. The official channels of communication were full of optimism and placation:

great construction was carried out, five-year plans were achieved in three years, the workers and the party were united... However, outright disinformation and lies affected destructively both the population and the journalists, corroding the psyche and developing "strabismus of mind."

4. Absence of orientation towards commercial journalism:

The trade qualities and economic nature of the media had not been practically developed yet. The media was mostly working in the ideological space of political socialization and communication. The process of commercialization of journalism was just starting.

5. Resource poverty of journalism and institutionalization:

Both the print and electronic media suffered from poorly developed material and a weak technical base. The poverty in resources was enforcing another grave problem – the phenomenon of the peripheral consciousness of journalism. The roots of this consciousness went deep into Soviet history, when among the fifteen brotherly republics Kyrgyzstan was at the end of the line – unlike the "favorites" of the center – owner of the "white gold," Uzbekistan, and producer of golden wheat, Kazakhstan. This second-rate-ness was noticeable in everything – in the level of training of professional journalists, in the development of printing capacities and other professional and technical bases. It was evident that, despite indications of institutional training, (under the Kyrgyz State University there was a faculty of journalism), the quality was such that it was considered prestigious and even necessary for success to seek higher education in Russia or at the neighboring Tashkent State University.

6. Absence of analytical systems in the society and state:

Expectations from liberalization of the regime and in relations with the government were unjustifiably high in the people's consciousness. Naively, however, this seemed to be the only condition for the rise of truly free and highly professional journalism. A precondition of these high expectations became a good start for the democratic change that the young sovereign Kyrgyz Republic took.

The government itself also had illusions about the opportunity for quick development of the country under a liberal regime, and it was not by chance that Switzerland was taken as a role model. The system of the country's governance lacked the elements of analysis as well as social and political projection of development, which resulted in non-conceptuality of the internal and external policy of the young state.

3.1 Historical phases of media development in independent Kyrgyzstan

The media landscape in Kyrgyzstan has significantly changed, starting from the very moment the country obtained the sovereign status. But the rapid media growth in terms of figures during the post-perestroika period did not guarantee media stability or longevity. A large number of media outlets terminated their existence after only a brief period of operations.

The period of 1990-2001 was quite unequal and heterogeneous for the media. It included several mutually related and conditioned but different phases of Kyrgyz journalism activity. On the whole, up to the second half of the 1990s, the processes taking place in Russian journalism directly predetermined the information processes in Kyrgyzstan. Even today the phenomena and events in Russia in the information field influence Kyrgyzstan's experiences to a large extent. As researchers and analysts of journalism point out, Kyrgyzstan, as well as Kazakhstan, reflect mostly the Russian model in the information field, which is characterized by broad privatization of media and pluralism in the political sphere.

The first signal of change in the relations between the government and media in the entire Soviet region was the conflict between Mikhail Gorbachev, who was ruling the country, and the newspaper "Argumenty i Fакты" at the end of the 1980s. The conflict was initiated by the newspaper staff's desire to be rid of the government's surveillance and take the management of the newspaper into their own hands. For the first time in the history of the Soviet Union the government was unable to suppress media resistance and the newspaper staff managed to protect their interests. The newspaper practically opened an effective mechanism of protection – privatization through a joint-stock company. It is understandable that for all other regions this example was like a starting signal. In Kyrgyzstan, approximately the same scenario was used for the beginning of the "divorce" of the local daily newspaper "Vecherny Bishkek" with the local party committee at the end of the 80s. And although during this period there was no judicial opportunity to open new newspapers, the newspapers' staff obtained some freedom and started to change the style and format of their journals. But even these changes were only achieved with incredible difficulty and effort: for example, the staff of "Leninchil Jash" newspaper fought a six-month battle for the right to change from a four page format, published three times a week, to a two-color 16-page weekly. The system was resisting even the smallest challenge to its totalitarian rights. It was under these circumstances that the transformation of the media landscape started to take place.

On the whole, relations between the government and the media were often subject to change and determined the essence and character of media processes in different phases of development. Below are the main historical phases of transformation of the media landscape in Kyrgyzstan.

3.1.1 Phase 1 / 1991-1992 : Declaration and institutionalization of freedom of press

Kyrgyzstan's Law on Mass Media, which was adopted in 1992, was to a great extent oriented toward the liberalist Atlantic model of journalism. Despite a number of "threats of limiting activities" that are contained in the law, vagueness of implementation mechanisms and ambiguity of wording allowed the media outlets to develop relatively freely during that period.¹

A very important precondition during that period was the fact that there were still enough material resources left over from the Soviet period – for example, supply of paper – and the editorial portfolios were full of material now allowed for publication that previously had been written only "into the table". The media structures started to organize from the beginning, and access to the profession and functioning in it started to change their rules, in many ways the demographic structures of the profession were modified.

Shifts in the social positions of journalists started to take shape and from the real socialist journalism a democratic tradition started to develop. However, democratic pluralism was not present in all political spheres. After the coup of 1991 a new phase started (which in principle continues now) – the pendulum moved to the other side and the communist media outlets were practically ousted. For quite a long period of time the atmosphere in most media outlets of the country was of a transitional character. The "renewed" press was an alternative to the press of stagnation only in terms of external attributes and conscientious intentions, but not radically different in essence. The media was going through a striking metamorphosis: from the recent communist stereotypes – to anti-stereotypes of democratic coloring, i.e. in essence only the evaluation baselines changed, but the same political and ideological clichés of the Soviet journalism were reproduced – no matter how hard the journalists tried to deviate from them.

On the whole, the first wave of the new media that appeared during this time was represented mostly by politicized newspapers (*Res Publica, Aalam, Manas-Ata, Muras, Maidan, Erkin Too, Ene Til* and others).

On the wave of discrediting everything Soviet and communist, a campaign for media self-identification started. For the first time journalists had an opportunity to be directly involved in everything relating to the functioning of their media. A certain denationalization of the information sphere started. Very indicative of this period was the experience of the "peaceful divorce" of "Komsomolets Kirgizii" with its founder, the Central Committee of the Lenin Young Communist League of Kirgizia, at the beginning of 1991 when the founder did not care about the newspaper, when the highest party and the youth committee (komsomol) were going through a scary experience of disorientation and uncertainty and tried to save or acquire at least some valuables. Here there was no space or time for the newspaper management to think about their influence on the people.²

¹ For more details, see Section «Legislative and legal environment for media activities in Kyrgyzstan»

² See Zamira Sydykova, "Behind the curtains of Kyrgyz democracy," Bishkek, 1997

True intentions of the authorities in relation to the media were confirmed by the frequency of their change. During this period at the beginning of sovereignty, the press and the power elite tried to build the relations of partnership and constructive opposition, under the flag of ideal principles of democracy and propagandist clichés from American history of journalism and power. The lower layer – the population – was actively using the media, believing in their power as a mechanism of feedback and fed the media illusions about their power abilities (as the fourth estate). At that time media were surrounded by a special environment – intelligentsia that became the vanguard of perestroika and democratization, was coming out from the narrow kitchens, took its ideas and considerations out of the underground handwritten journals and was actively involved in legal information systems. Many of the intelligentsia came to the new joint stock and private media. Non-professionals started to become seriously involved in journalism and brought with them into the sphere not only the spirit of citizenry, (which partly explains the surprisingly large growth in politicized media), but also a stable spirit of commerce. This had been the domain of party ideology since the birth of Kyrgyzstan.

This paved the way for a short era of stars, revelations and disclosures, an era of remarkable cooperation between media and audiences. It was also the period in which the struggle for spheres of informational influence started, when many media outlets changed their status, defined and redefined their role in the information market and tried to capture and shape available advertising niches.

With this wave of denationalization and commercialization of the information sphere, journalism was flooded with various “alien” types of pulp, yellow journalism. Most of the newly appearing media was based on the exploitation of interest in destructive feelings such as criminality, pornography, and erotica. Together with yellow journalism itself, the stereotype of the professional consciousness that was very actively indoctrinated into the mass consciousness, was that the public is always interested in murder with bloody details, depraved and low passions and drama with broken hearts. The reality of such a construction was confirmed by an increase in the number of media with such topics and stability or growth in circulation of many of them. During the post-perestroika time there appeared the phenomenon of soap operas, mostly Latin American dramas, on local TV.

The researchers of Russian journalism, talking about such “preferences” of readers and viewers, believed that such a taste and structure of consumption was characteristic for the whole former Soviet Union. The decades of lifeless virtual information and the production of “inhuman” themes, when the television broadcasts or newspaper pages contained mostly happy citizens of the Soviet country, and reported great achievements and victorious prospects³, plus the subsequent collapse of this system, discouraged

3 *It seems to be very important here that ideologies that used to dominate in the minds of Soviet people oriented them into the future. This way, the tension created by the dissonance between the informational and real pictures was removed. That is, people knew for sure that their self-sacrificing work would be beneficial for future generations. The full results of such work could be seen, felt and utilized only from afar, which could be seen only by very few. But the motivation for creation and further work, built into the great machinery of the human system, was very high, despite empty shops and a lack of consumer goods. Today the picture is totally different. Many ideologies are either oriented towards the archaic past and aimed at the titular nation, (the idea of the Great Silk Road, the Seven Commandments of Manas or common house), creating the effect of a secondary experience of history, or are not clearly defined in the time dimension. Therefore the disoriented consciousness of the majority, having no sufficient substitute ideologies, regresses to nostalgia for the habitual old ideological constructs, or ideologies.*

and bored all those living in post-soviet societies. However, it seems that the roots of this "phenomenon" go deeper and they may be explained with the help of the "Maslow pyramid", performing in this various functions, such as compensatory, overcoming of fear, etc. But not everyone was able to write and live in a "free mode". For the largest part of the rayon and city newspapers, this period was in itself the beginning of the end as the historical window of opportunity for free self-definition and self-identification in life and death turned out to be quite small.

During this period, the seeds of new democratic virtuality were planted. Prior to dissolution of the legendary first Parliament in 1994, politics "spilled over" into the media, particularly television. The people could watch live broadcasts of parliamentary sessions where decisions on the most urgent and important issues of current life in the country were made. This was the era of emergence of public politicians, the birth of stars of political discussion such as Akimaliev, Akmatov, Baijiev, Usubaliev, Idinov, Sherimkulov, Amatov, Tekebaev and Masaliev. For the first time, politics in Kyrgyzstan had become clear and transparent. The Parliament, having swallowed independence and power, started to rule the country seriously, and the media started to think of themselves as opponents and disclosers of power. Even during the conflict between the Parliament and President Akaev over the "gold case", and others that became notorious "red folder" issues, television broadcast the President's explanations virtually unedited. The country was facing a situation where the Parliament could initiate the impeachment of the President. Full transparency of politics seemed to have been achieved, and democratic freedoms irreversible.

3.1.2 Phase 2/ 1993-95: Turning point in relations with the government and own roles and functions.

Shock therapy put many media outlets to the edge of closure. In the political sphere, the first thunderstorm for the media roared and the first heavy showers fell with the official demand by the President in his speech at the first congress of judges in August 1994 to shut down the newspaper "Svobodnye Gory" - and the obedient implementation of this order by the end of the year. During the same period the newspaper "Politika" appeared and was quickly shut down. The editor of "Politika" was the former Minister of Education, Chinara Jakypova, who today runs the IWPR office in Bishkek. Very likely, already at that time it became clear for the leadership of the country that democracy means dispersal of power, creation of many various centers of decision making, which inevitably makes power itself unstable. The more there were bright individual stars on the team, the more likely was the violation of the status quo and subsequent changes in the power structures.

In the struggle for real political power, the President's force deviated from the proper democratic image. It was in this historical period when the governance of the country and politics separated entirely and as a result of a quiet "revolution", the country turned from a parliamentary into a presidential one. Having mobilized his governors'

forces, the President, with the help of intrigues of regional authorities, then also sabotaged the Parliament's initiative from inside. The non-consolidated character of the Parliament, headed by deputies incapable of organizing and directing the political process, predetermined the outcome – Parliament was dissolved. The media was also hit in this opposition by a returning boomerang – the newspaper "Svobodnye Gory"⁴ was shut down in relation with this case. And it was at that time when the era of public television policy ended. Decision-making again disappeared behind the screens, into the quiet of the White House. On the screen only a few public politicians remained, and those in a reduced mode, and their numbers and quality declined dramatically.

However, the group of de-politicized managers, those people who established the dictatorship of the management team, who in reality do the routine managerial work in the "corridors of power", was growing. Their names only rarely "emerge" in the media. In one of her books, the editor of "Res Publica", Zamira Sydykova, mentions this in the following way: "I am absolutely sure that the opposition that later rose between our newspaper and the president is exclusively the deed of L. Levitin. As well

Case Study: Kamil Marklenovich Bayalinov

Born in 1959. Higher education: graduated from the Kyrgyz State University, history faculty. Key phases of activity:

Up to 1995 –	Correspondent for "Komsomolskaya Pravda" and "Moscow News" newspapers
1995-1996 –	Press Secretary of the KR President
1996-2000 –	Ambassador of the KR in Austria
2000-2001 –	KR President's Advisor for Public Relations
April 2001 –	KR Ambassador to the UN.

During the period of glasnost the articles of a young and then unknown research assistant of the Institute of CPSU History produced an effect similar to a bomb explosion. In essence they marked the coming of the perestroika era to the media of Kyrgyzstan. The audacity of the author struck the imagination of provincial (or "Kyrgyz") readers – to write so honestly about the first persons in the Politbureau of the CPSU, some of whom were still alive and well – such boldness was unknown to domestic journalism. Everyone remembered the articles about Andropov, Chernenko and the KGB, which were written by Bayalinov. Having rapidly exchanged scientific prospects for a journalistic career, Bayalinov became correspondent for the legendary newspaper "Komsomolskaya Pravda" which was in the vanguard of perestroika in the entire Soviet Union.

Later he changed the focus of his career towards politics, first by becoming presidential Press Secretary (his name is associated with the "rotation" of personnel in the state media in 1996, which prevented the "divorce" of "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" newspaper from its founder – the government), and then diplomat.

as (...) shutting down the newspaper "Svobodnye Gory" in 1994 (...) is also on his consciousness."⁵ The former editor of "Asaba", Melis Eshimkanov, also mentioned in an interview with the researchers "one evil genius," one of the main apparatchik-ideologists of the late Soviet times, Mr Soodanbekov. Eshimkanov recalled the causes and the beginning of the conflict between his newspaper and the Akaev family. In his opinion, the scenario was skillfully developed and professionally played out. As a result of this "court" intrigue, the general atmosphere for the media in the country changed dramatically.

It was the beginning of the era of cooperation with the representatives of Akaev's "team" in the persons of his Press Secretaries. This period demonstrated how changeable the moods and intentions of the power holders really were. The feeling of power instability was enforced by the personnel movements at the political Olympus. Gradually, power stops being

4 The processes of virtual democracy in Kyrgyzstan overlap with and repeat the phases of historical development of the media. See Section 3.2.

5 Zamira Sydykova, "Behind the curtains of Kyrgyz democracy", Bishkek, 1997, page 35.

perceived as a universal equivalent, this is why the emphasis in the semantics if “freedom” with journalists is shifted toward the notion of “ownership.” Journalists grew to understand that the obtained political freedoms mean nothing when there exists economic non-freedom. During this period, discussions on the role of journalism in society and state developed frequently, as well as those on the degree of interested support of the media by the state.

The economic difficulties during this period were speeding up the process of division in the advertising market, and on the whole the commercial essence of the information field started to develop impetuously. The Law on Mass Media, adopted in 1992, gave a powerful impetus for the process of commercialization of mass communications. The economic preconditions for this were created by the permissive and favorable legislation existing at that time – mass media did not pay 20% VAT (value added tax), and profit tax was at 15%. Many media outlets and newspapers appeared with a purely advertising character, others covered crime and erotica. The total number of media outlets grew constantly.

In Russia, this period (1994) was marked by the First Chechen War, which caused a storm of sharp criticism of the government. But here the government developed a certain immunity for criticism. Relations between the Kyrgyz government and the media gradually developed in the same direction.

On the one hand, during this period there were very few real limits and zones closed for criticism and the government tried not to react to “bites” coming from the media. Freedom of expression turned into freedom of empty talking, without the hope of being listened to or heard. Not only the journalists acquired an opportunity to write about what they wanted, but also the government acquired an opportunity not to read the media publications, and even if to read, then not to respond.

Case Study: Kabai Jabaevich Karabekov

Born in 1965. Higher Education: in 1987 graduated from Tomsk University, journalism faculty; in 1990 from Kyrgyz State University, philological faculty, department of journalism. Key phases of activity:

- 1989-1992 – correspondent and political columnist, «*Vecherny Frunze*» newspaper;
- 1992-1993 – press secretary of the KR President;
- 1993-1999 – political columnist, «*Vecherny Bishkek*»;
- 1999-2000 – chief editor, *Komsomolskaya Pravda in Kyrgyzstan*;
- March 2000 – elected a deputy of the Legislative Assembly of Parliament, Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on issues of state and media.

A young graduate of KNSU journalism faculty, having just started working at the newspaper, began to criticize vigorously inconsistency of the state policy. His articles were distinct in their criticism, irony and absence of fear. Scandalous stories about the parliamentarians, highest officials from the government, about the President himself – it seems that for the young talented journalist there are no zones closed for criticism. At the peak of his popularity, the journalist leaves for politics and becomes the head of the President’s press service. However soon he leaves this position and returns to Vecherny Bishkek. In the newspaper he becomes a leading columnist heading one of the key departments – political information – and continuing to write sharp criticizing articles. Critics in the journalism sphere were bewildered: why, they said, the journalist is not afraid of anything and, which is more important, has access to top secret information that is supported with documents and explained such access by the loyalty of Karabekov to the President. However, the journalist went through the period of “divorce”, when he cast the power of his talent not only on the second and tenth, but also on the first person of the country.

The second coming into power of journalist Karabekov happened after his resignation from *Vecherny Bishkek*: as a result of 2000 elections he became a deputy of the Legislative Assembly of the same Parliament heading the commission on the media issues.

It is not by chance that in this period a discussion on the effectiveness of the media started in the journalistic professional environment. In this discussion, the journalists split into two camps: one stated that the main task of journalists is to highlight a problem, attract public attention to it, and the task of the government is to resolve the problem. The representatives of the second camp believed that journalism should not only uncover the problems of society, but also actively seek their solution. The same moods were developing with the readers as well – «Previously, if some official had been “given a going over” by a newspaper, he would be fired the next day. Now, no matter how much they write about bribery and misuse of power, there is no point – they all safe are in their seats anyway» is just one of the many comments made by readers during that time.

On the other hand, the Kyrgyz government had extremely effective mechanisms for “curbing” the media – subsidies. These subsidies took various forms: for example, the government media was provided with direct monetary subsidies necessary to cover the operational expenses or targeted means to cover the printing costs or salaries and honoraria to journalists and other employees. Non-state media loyal to the government was given “presents” for anniversaries and holidays that in terms of amounts were comparable to significant monetary subsidies.⁶ The government proffered the subsidizing hand and state subsidies became a tool with which to engage the media. The media outlets that received subsidies from the state did not have another alternative except for becoming loyal to the government, and thus there appeared the phenomenon of selling loyalty.

Case Study: Oksana Alexandrovna Malevanaya

Born in 1968. Education – higher: in 1992 graduated from Moscow State University, Russian philology faculty. Specialty – teacher of Russian and literature. Main phases of activity:

- 1993-1995 – editor of «Pyramid» television;
- 1995-2000 – chief editor of «Pyramid» television;
- March 2000 – elected deputy into the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament.

The daughter of a well-known journalist and editor (currently chief editor of “Slovo Kyrgyzstana”) after graduating from MSU came to TV channel “Pyramid” among the first, from the very beginning of the station. She started as the host of a music program, was one of the initiators of a special news program. Worked as a reporter and anchor of the news program, chief editor of «Pyramid» television. Her first major professional success was the Presidential award “Altyn Kelem” received for coverage of the first Balken campaign in 1999.

In 1999 Malevanaya started her own program – the talkshow “Our Time,” which rapidly gained both reputation and popularity in the country and with the government. To the obvious professional success and popularity of a journalist, Malevanaya preferred a political career: in 2000 she was elected the deputy of the Legislative Assembly on the “My Country” party list.

However, subsidies were not the only tool used by the government. The most “fruitful” and popular journalists were “processed” to accept the fate of becoming confidants of the first person, the President. In a practical sense, for the owners of “gold pens”, it meant trips abroad in the President’s entourage, allocation of an apartment or promotion into the government ranks. Striking examples of such journalists are Kabai Karabekov, Kamil Bayalinov (see boxes with case studies) and Kanybek Imanaliev (“Asaba” journalist who became the presidential Press Secretary after he left the newspaper and later appointed the head of the printing plant “Uchkun”). It was clearly during this period when the tendency to change from journalism to

⁶ On modern practice of subsidies, see chapter “Problems of functioning of the media system.”

politics became popular, although such a shift in the journalists' careers was not always perceived adequately. For example, one of the participants of the focus group for media users in Naryn stated the following: «Previously, I trusted such journalists as Zamira Sydykova, Kabai Karabekov and Kamil Bayalinov. But life has proven that they all have their own price, there is no media and no journalist with solid beliefs and principles, unshakeable positions.» Another participant of a similar focus group in Osh said: "Many journalists that I liked went into politics, for example – Bayalinov, Karabekov. It's a pity because they were good journalists and since they became politicians we hear nothing about them. And now there are no good journalists at all." Another, later example of a journalist who left for politics at the peak of her professional popularity is Oksana Malevanaya (see box with case study). Her career shift, however, is not assessed negatively. One of the participants of the focus group for media users in Osh said: "I liked Oksana Malevanaya, especially when she hosted the talk-show "Nashe Vremya" ("Our Time") – sharp, criticizing, interesting. I hope that as a deputy she will be acting the same way, protecting the interests of ordinary people."

It was during this period that President Akaev paid more and more attention to the media, since the flow of foreign investments comes with the image of a democratic Kyrgyzstan and a progressive, liberal President – guarantor of irreversible democratic changes. He regularly met with journalists, both in private and at press-conferences, on all urgent problems of the country, obviously demonstrating the desire to make these processes transparent. These simple methods turned out to be safe – many journalists and media outlets became very loyal as a result of this strategy used by President Akaev (see Annexe B1 "Asaba"). Thanks to the success of this strategy, the image of the head of the state in some media outlets was very positive – smart, honest and open, a President of principle and democratic spirit.

However, the main bulk of the media still wrote critically about the country's No 1. As early as the end of January of 1993, at a national student ball meeting, Akaev, made his usual declaration of commitment to the manifesto of freedom in the spirit of Franklin Roosevelt. He listed the four human freedoms in the country – freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom from poverty and freedom from fear. Citing an example of existing freedom of expression he said: "If you open the newspapers each morning, everything starts with criticism of the President of the republic."⁷ But in the information field, members of his team played out scenarios against selected newspapers. They were selected on purpose, and an old strategy of "divide and rule" was used against them. The era of competition in the establishing information market, the fight for resources – printing, information resources, and the pluralization of media positions – all these factors did not consolidate, but on the contrary alienated the journalistic corps. It was not by chance that at the beginning of this repressive time in state policy towards the media, different Kyrgyz editors perceived and identified different periods of time. For example, for Zamira Sydykova this period is dated by the middle of 1993–1994, while for Viktor Zapolski – only by 1996, despite the fact that two years

7 «Askar Akaev. A man without a middle point». Editors: M.Eshimkanov and K.Imanaliev. Bishkek, 1993.

earlier "Politika," a supplement to the Delo Nomer newspaper, was shut down. To implement this repressive policy, various methods were used to separate journalists and different scenarios were developed to set various media to fight. For example, thanks to such a policy of disintegration of the journalistic environment over many years, malicious enemies were formed. Such irreconcilable political opponents to each other were the early pro-presidential "Asaba" and the opposing "Res Publica," presidential "Kyrgyz Tuusu" and "Asaba," State TV under Director Karypkulov and late "Asaba".

However, at the beginning of this phase a very important tendency was the division of the media on an ethnic basis. The politicized media of this period for the most part represented two fighting camps – Russian-language and pro-Russian media outlets and the nationalist Kyrgyz-language media. The opposition was carried out under the slogan, "The climate is bad for provincial Russians" – the problem of self-identification of the Russian ethnos in this changed historical situation was extremely painful and the media of one camp channeled the respective interests and moods. "Kyrgyzstan for the Kyrgyz people" – the ideas of national renaissance and the prospects of national prosperity overwhelmed the radicals of journalism. It seemed that the birthmark of opportunism was able to last much longer than the old journalistic cadres, because in their majority the militant nationalistic media outlets were represented by a younger generation, often with no professional education.⁸

The pages of these newspapers reflected the real problems of the population less and less. Life was becoming more and more detached from the politicized pages of militant journalism. Despite the orientation towards free access to information that was already rooted in people's minds, accompanied by the cognitive right to criticize own positions, three fifths of the population, as noted by public opinion researchers⁹, were growing socially apathetic and tired of the perestroika phraseology of this period. The general criticism of the economic situation subsequently grew stronger than ever. Specifically, high government officials were adhering to the nationalist side, vaguely rationalizing the necessity of national renaissance, return of the history to the people, etc. The matter was not the mistakes of governance – behind this opposition in the information sphere there was, most probably, one goal – definition of own position in the systems of political interest groups.

At that stage the President had no support from the strongly pronounced traditional institutions (clans/tribes). He had been nominated by the representatives of the intelligentsia, which never had a great weight in society and for these reasons the President was perceived by the greatest part of the rural population as a russified person without support who had lost his original roots. This is why the strategy of the President's policy included the creation of an image of a truly Kyrgyz president. To serve this purpose, a number of newspapers started a tactic of "closing blank spots," publishing mythical stories (sanjyra) about the Akaev clan. Particularly zealous and

⁸ See also the Chapter "Journalism functions and paradigms of activities"

⁹ Ä. Verkhovskiy, "Central Asia and Kazakhstan: Political Spectrum", Moscow, 1992, page 32

successful in this was the "Ala-Too" journal". According to these stories, the President was not a man without roots in the nation, but a direct descendent of a famous khan's clan. The culmination of this acquisition of genealogy was when during the first visit of Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbaev, the fact of blood relation between Akaev and the high guest was established. That is to say, the media directly participated in a public relations campaign aimed at reanimating elements of archaic mentality with the purpose of enforcing a steady perception of traditional legitimization of the current President's authority. This campaign in fact meant a turn towards traditional management techniques in the cadre policy of the country.

3.1.3 Phase 3 / 1996-1999: Final "divorce" with the government

The relatively favorable and peaceful era for the media finally finished in 1996. By this time it had become clear that the positive news coming from third countries was uninteresting in principle, i.e. the international community was not ready to provide significant financial support for a long time for positive relations between government and media in Kyrgyzstan.

Together with the advance payment for the democratic image, the tolerance of the government that had been putting up with the attacks of media has dried up as well. Logically, a new phase had started. The media had been cut off from the higher power and many journalists, either having fallen into a rush of disclosures and criticism or having become loyal in fear of prosecution, stopped writing and reporting about the real world in which the people, their audiences, lived and about their needs and demands. It is interesting, that the President's team, understanding and valuing the high educational and propaganda potential of media, tried to use the media for their purposes and resorted to the old methods. It is obvious that a non-critical, toothless media is doomed to die, and the audiences responded in the same manner that they had responded to the authorities – with distrust and loss of interest.

In such a situation the media becomes self-referent, or influential and reputable only for itself. The population withdraws to their own living rooms, only fragmentally and for a short period of time being integrated into the national community thanks to Latin American soap operas and the life dramas of all sorts of Marias, Joses and Pedros. The power holders, of course, could not dare to cut all connections with the people that are reached by the media, because no governance system is capable of functioning without input data from the outside environment.¹⁰ This is why they helped the media to create "virtual freedom of opposition" to the power, having targeted the arrows of criticism and fired them at journalists at the Parliament, which lost practically all its power. We have obtained remarkable virtual democracy, where the Parliament, de-jure ensuring all legislative environments in the country, was constantly under attack from the press and television. Besides, the "critical level" authorized by the leaders is in the interests of the President and those who surround him. Whenever the parliamentarians stop playing the roles given to them, loyal journalists are let loose at

¹⁰ See, for example, the cybernetic model of K. Deuch.

them¹¹. And vice versa: "break-away" journalists may be "fed" to the Parliament – this was the case with "Asaba", which was led to bankruptcy by Deputy Usualiev.¹²

The media that did not want to become politically loyal set new goals and developed a new game strategy: international organizations provided a lot more money for the image of media prosecuted by the government. There appeared opportunities to become famous in the world community not thanks to a high degree of professionalism, but due to the "brave fight" for democracy and professional principles. The media started to vigorously create the virtual reality of fighting for democratic achievements. Nevertheless, the period of total opposition between the government and the media was short-lived. Too great was the media potential in conducting political PR-strategies and forming the necessary public opinion through the start of virtual war between various positions and persons.

In Russia in 1996-97 for the first time during the presidential election campaign the media was being pumped up with money, a total "PR-ing" of media outlets took place and at the same time media holdings were being formed. A new form of media support was created – political loyalty. In Kazakhstan during this period the process of redistribution of property in the media sphere started in favor of the family clan of the country's President Nursultan Nazarbaev. IWPR regional director for Kazakhstan Rozlana Taukina says: "The process of absorption of independent media is carried out through the creation of a media holding headed by the President's daughter. Under these conditions, only the strikebreakers survive. The newspapers change their owner and consequently lose their popularity, turning into recycled paper and garbage. Instead of independent media outlets there appear "ersatz-television" and "ersatz-newspapers" whose journalists were forced to sign contracts on loyalty and non-participation in mass political actions."¹³

Although these tendencies usually reach Kyrgyzstan with a delay of three to four years, the Kyrgyz government undoubtedly added this media potential to its arsenal and started the preparatory work. Thus, after 1996 the media were equalized to industrial enterprises through heavy taxation: they had to pay value added tax of 20%, a 30% profit tax and other direct and indirect taxes of 8%. Besides that, a new wave of court cases, hearings and prosecutions of journalists swept the country. The government started to advance along the entire front with the purpose of curbing the media.

In this respect, very indicative is the conflict between the Naryn Oblast newspaper "Tenir Too" with its own founder – the Oblast state administration. The staff, which grew bold and forgot off whose hand it fed and survived, started to criticize (very moderately, though) the local authorities on the basis of information received from a meeting of the Oblast council. As a result, the Oblast administration turned off the

¹¹ For example, in 1999 the media basically "jalled" the former deputy, the director of Kara-Balta mining enterprise T. Kazakbaev. They were regularly criticizing and harassing the deputies Tekebaev and Masaliev and in 2001 the media was involved in the harassment of Deputy Tashtanvekov and Deputy Omurkulov. Particularly active in this were "Vecherny Bishkek" and KOORT.

¹² See B1 "Asaba."

¹³ Igor Grebenshikov. «Media: between engagement and information security.» www.burana.by.ru

financial tap to the newspaper and stopped the material support because of the publication "contradicting the views of the akimiat." The incident was exhausted according to the scenario of the authorities: the "gone-too-far" editor Rakim Asylbaev who had dared to oppose the authorities was forced to resign. His position was taken by another editor, who now denies existence of any censorship, or any forms of pressure on media and tries not to get into conflicts with the local authorities.¹⁴

3.1.4. Phase 4 / 1999 - present: Redistribution and concentration of media ownership through creation of media holdings

No political system can function effectively without sufficient information supply. Any power tries to usurp the information field, because this can ensure the smooth working of mechanisms for the processing of demands and turn the requirements of society into a ready-made public product for use in the decision-making system. "The leaders of democracy, no less than doctors, shamans, kings and dictators... control information with the same vigor with which they control armed forces."¹⁵ – writes Bagdikian. Since the field of politics in Kyrgyzstan suffers from a deficit of ideas - both in political parties, associations and from individual politicians, i.e. the field of politics itself is virtual in principle, then the external, formal elements of political institutions are very conveniently transferred into the virtual media field.

The first tests of wide utilization of PR-strategies were made during the pre-election parliamentary campaign of 2000. It was at that time when the techniques of creating heroes and antiheroes were developed. Television, radio and press in one powerful front developed long before the elections a campaign of bias coverage of history, "blackening" candidates for the President, especially the opposition candidate Felix Kulov. The response of spectators-voters was the mirror image: the "black PR" backfired. The population of the country and especially in the election district in Talas from which the harassed general was nominated, were determined to protect "the adversary" of the regime. The logical continuation, but on a new information phase, was the presidential election campaign the same year. The methods and mechanisms of curbing disobedient media that had been tested earlier were used quite effectively this time as well. An example is access to media during the election campaigns: in the course of the 2000 presidential race the current President Akaev, according to the media monitoring conducted by the Union of Journalists,¹⁶ received 90% of the air time on "independent stations", while at the state stations – 100%. The tactics of fighting the candidates in opposition to the current president was changed and this topic became either suppressed or hardly covered through feeding various contradicting facts, dosing and filtering the news on the presidential candidates. The technique of dosing and

¹⁴ It cannot be said that the newspaper became entirely "toothless" with the coming of a new editor. Rather, through trial and error the staff established the "zones and limits" for criticism. According to an unwritten law, it was possible to criticize anyone except for the highest Oblast level – the governor and the Oblast kenesha chairperson were beyond criticism. However, the leaders of rayon levels desperately wanted to join this "sinless" cohort. In March 1997, the newspaper staff had to fight for the right to criticize this level through court (there was a court action by a rayon head K. Kulenbejev against the chief editor of "Tenir Too" Taalai Duishenaliev and journalist K. Ismailova, the author of a criticizing article). The outcome was negative for the newspaper – it had to pay a fine and journalist Ismailova had to resign from "Tenir Too."

¹⁵ B. Bagdikian, "Monopoly of media", Moscow, 1987, page 39.

¹⁶ For more detail, see http://www.ifescntralasia.kg/Kyrgyzstan/ENG/jr_en/jr0_en.htm

concealing the facts was as usual quite effective: the newly grown hero Kulov disappeared; swallowed by the sea of flowing media virtuality. Although for the government such methods were associated with high 'moral costs,' nevertheless, the government assessed the media potential and started the process of concentration of information property in its hands. There were more than enough examples of techniques and methods to privatize and obtain current media into the private ownership of a limited circle of people. For example, in neighboring Kazakhstan the first family of the country slowly but quite openly obtained ownership of many popular media, both electronic and print. Today much is written about Nazarbaevs' media empire.

It turned out that media outlets are enterprises, which are profitable not only in terms of political strategy but also in terms of economics – they can produce quite significant profits and possess high profit-making potential. For example, according to some specialists' assessments, two years ago "Vecherny Bishkek" newspaper was relatively independent in terms of both finance and editorial policy. The newspaper's own advertising agency "Rubikon" ensured quite a significant inflow of advertising and the tax payments of the newspaper to the state budget sometimes superceded tax allocations from the gold-mining plant "Kyrgyz Altyn." The government didn't want to leave such a large sum in the hands of the growing "newspaper tycoons." A group of businessmen connected with the government started to make attempts of repartition of the Kyrgyz media market. Through financial inspections and accusations of violation of the tax legislation, the government managed to redistribute the shares of "Vecherny Bishkek." The former employees of the newspapers believe that they were simply robbed of their shares. Formally, the government through the Joint Stock Company "Kyrgyzzalko", manages the shares. However, opposition politicians claim that the true owners of the newspaper are the President's daughter Bermet Akaeva and her Kazakh husband Adil Toigonbaev. Parliament deputy Adakhan Madumarov confirms: "Now the President's family is behind this newspaper. No article is now published on the pages of the newspaper without prior approval by the Family."¹⁷ The Family's media empire is believed to includes also KOORT and NBT.¹⁸

It is impossible to talk about large profits and ownership facts, especially when it involves the property of first people in the country. The economic side of activities of informational press and channels is in the area hidden from the public eye. Even newspaper circulation data during the post-perestroika period has become secret information. For example, according to Osh Times data, in 1997 the leaders among the national newspapers were Vecherny Bishkek (100,000 copies), Delo Nomer (60,000-70,000), Paishamba (45,000), Asaba (30,000) KTR-OBO (130,000), Pyramid Plus (50,000) and Aalam (30,000). According to Asaba, the circulation of the same leaders of the print market of the country were split in a slightly different way: Vecherny Bishkek 40-80,000, Delo Nomer - 75,000, Paishamba - 55,000, Asaba - 50,000, Aalam - 25,000. Undoubtedly, these and other differences relate to the existence of a double accounting system and the hiding of real profits from the tax system.¹⁹

¹⁷ Igor Grebenshikov. «New repartition of the Kyrgyz media market.» www.burana.by.ru

¹⁸ See Section "Structural context of journalism in Kyrgyzstan."

¹⁹ See Section "Media as a social system (functional framework)"

Rumors – informal channels of information – persistently grow around the process of the formation of a media holding by the First Family of the country and discuss the schemes of connection of the Akaev family with unknown people, who have suddenly emerged in journalism as editors and founders of media. Indirect evidence that the Akaev family in fact owns various media and makes further efforts to expand its media company is the publication of a number of newspapers, which wrote about ownership by the first family of various media (on acquisition of stock of Vecherny Bishkek and KOORT, NBT). In these cases, usually very sensitive about its honor and reputation, the family did not demand any rejections of publications and still keeps silent, despite all the attempts by the journalists to highlight the owners of major media by connecting them with the Akaevs' name.

Other non-governmental media have quickly realized the dangers of the current situation. A threat to lose their media business forced the owners to change their political orientation. Thus, the television and radio company "Pyramid", following the last presidential election, became surprisingly loyal to the existing government and tried not to be "defiled by connections with the opposition." In response to statements by NDI and OSCE delegations, which pointed out insufficient coverage of candidates competing with Akaev, the TRK "Pyramid" President A. Biynazarov explained, "there were objective reasons, one of which was the lack of technical, material and human resources for the coverage of the campaign of each candidate. At the same time, the candidates themselves, despite our numerous requests, offered us no video materials or information on their meetings with the electorate. The refusal to air the ads of presidential candidates is explained by the fact that during the election campaign some candidates actively used improper information techniques of propaganda which contained unethical and sometimes illegal materials. Although the company's top management made a decision to air such ads, literally the next day after the first broadcast there followed a sharp negative reaction from the viewers who expressed their concern with the overly aggressive character of the ads capable of creating interethnic and social disturbances. In response to this, the council of the company's founders made a decision to stop broadcasting the ads in order to keep the channel's audience."²⁰

According to our observer interning at "Pyramid", the channel's editorial unwritten editorial policy can be described as following: "Do not tease the government, but do not please it either, try to balance carefully; if you criticize do it so that there is nothing to blame for." During the last six months the "Pyramid" journalists have been practicing a new strategy: under the slogan of objectivity, they demonstratively avoid analytical comments, strive only for stating the facts, allowing the viewers to make conclusions independently. A very important factor for explanation of "Pyramid" policy is the fact that the term of its broadcasting license expires in 2003. And if the company does not approach this deadline with a "good" reputation, the government may start seriously thinking if the company is indeed capable of continuing its information activity. Even in the case of a positive answer – it is indeed necessary to

20 See Statement by TRK "Pyramid," http://www.pyramid.elcat.kg/news/statement_r.html

issue a license for broadcasting in the meter range. Realizing these options, not only the founders and owners but also individual employees are naturally interested in survival, and consequently, in loyalty to the government.

Very important for the relations between the media and the government seems the decision on de-registration of 16 new media.²¹ According to Rina Prizhvoit, a journalist from one of the deregistered newspapers "Moya Stolitsa" ("My capital city"), this decision was predetermined by the government's desire not to give media outlets, "dangerous in terms of expected information policy", any chances of influencing the masses. If re-registration of the existing media continues till October 1st, 2001 and only then the documents of new media are considered for registration, it is obvious that these media outlets will not be able to "participate" in discussion of the issue of prolongation of the President's term of office up to seven years. It is suspected, that in the fall there will be a referendum on this issue. Someone is greatly interested in holding back the media that are capable of influencing public opinion."^{22 23}

On the whole, the ten years of existence of the mass media system in independent Kyrgyzstan were marked by frequent changes of character of relations between the media and the central power: the period of love and mutual adoration was replaced by the period of coolness and even opposition. In the end, having realized the uselessness of open repressive actions and measures against media and the danger of such actions in terms of undermining an already shaken and fading image of a democratic state, the government decided that it was much easier to control the media by subordinating it "from inside," with the help of the economic mechanism of ownership. Understanding the importance of mass media not only as the "carrier of messages for the masses" but also as a potentially profit-making business and having taken a number of actions and steps for redistribution of ownership of the major media for its own benefit, the government now possesses effective economic instruments for controlling the flow of information. Under the conditions where economic restraint multiplies political restraint similarly to a geometric progression, this may result in the final devaluation of all democratic achievements of Kyrgyzstan during the last 10 years and lead the country to an authoritarian regime.

3.2 Development of information supply and demand

The changes that took place in the relations between the media and the government during the last decade predetermined the changes in relations between the media and the audiences. The latter, as well as the former, by no means developed consistently and gradually.

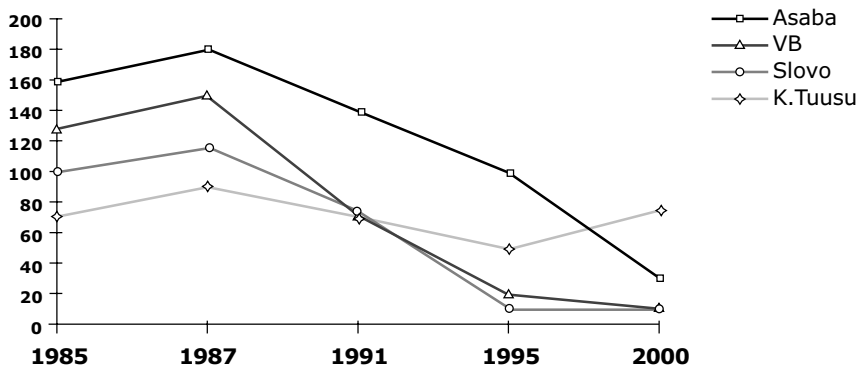
²¹ See Section «Legislative and legal environment for media activities in the Kyrgyz Republic.»

²² I. Grebenshikov. «New repartition of the Kyrgyz media market.» www.burana.by.ru

²³ From the time this report was written, some changes took place: the President officially declared that there would be no referendum on extension of his term, and the newspapers "Moya Stolitsa – novosti" and "Agym" started to come out after the deadline for media re-registration expired.

It is possible to single out several specific benchmarks in media use by the audiences and tendencies of interaction with the government. "Perestroika" and "glasnost" (1985-1987) marked the period of triumph for journalism, including that of Kyrgyzstan. Despite countless obstacles put up by the antagonistic state system, the editorial staffs of newspapers and magazines were able to breathe life and fresh air into their pages. This was the period when not only substantial, quality journals from faraway Moscow were changing hands, but each issue of the local *Literaturny Kyrgyzstan* also became a bestseller. *Molodezhnaya Gazeta* literally "reached out to the people" by opening public debate clubs on its pages, organizing a youth theater and going to remote villages with the political theater performance "Manekeny". Criticism became the "honorary guest" on the pages of any print medium. "Blank spaces" in history are discovered; bungling and embezzlement of officials are disclosed and real problems in the party and the youth communist organizations are discussed. Circulation of practically all capital newspapers and magazines sharply increase, and this happens when no coercive methods of subscription were practiced yet (see Graph 1 below). Subscriptions to a number of Russian newspapers and magazines become as problematic (and prestigious) as buying original Lancôme cosmetics or a Pierre Cardin suit.

Graph 1. Circulation of major newspapers in (thousand copies)



At the highest state and party level, the issue of press effectiveness is raised as never before. Officials of all ranks and types are afraid of the close attention from journalists. In the professional world of journalists (in the magazine "Journalist" and in discussions with journalists), demands to continue the movement towards the true democratization of the information sphere are frequently heard. Journalists in this period carefully watched their audiences, their needs and demands. For the first time in the Soviet practice of journalism, the reader becomes the main actor in the information process.

Growth in circulation of newspapers and the political press and an increase in a variety of publicist information happened due to well-known reasons but brought less obvious consequences. These reasons included an increase in the free time of the population (due to unemployment growth, increases in part-time working and other changes in

the workforce structure), and the era of universal politicization as a determinant of an intensive interest in important events (when an ordinary citizen realizes his/her ability to become a full-fledged actor in the political processes. eg – mass forms of protest as a popular and effective solution of problems). But the most important reason was that during the previous Soviet period behind the concept of controlled media there hid the essence of the relation of the power to its people – an attitude of distrust and a wish to impose strict control. In their turn, the people paid the media by the same token. And when finally during the perestroika period the media turned to the real world, the problems and needs of real people, the people answered with a high level of trust and affection to journalism.

During this period, journalism had a chance to understand and realize the real power of the media: the more people followed the important events through media coverage, the more significant became the media as a foundation to form political opinion. This also relates to those parts of the population that were following the coverage earlier but now they receive information more frequently and from a larger number of sources. This is true even more concerning those parts of the population that had previously not followed the political information provided by any media.

Television political information programs reached more and more people who were not interested in politics in principle. It was exactly at that time that television became a key to success for politicians and parties alike. One of the “driving forces” behind this was Mikhail Gorbachev who made his information image the key element of state policy. Akaev had such a period as well, when he was meeting with the people frequently and making speeches at various meetings and gatherings at different levels.²⁴

Broadening the target groups covered by important information, the growth of information taken in by the citizens, as well as the growing number of events important for the formation of political opinion moved the media from the periphery into the center of events. Thanks to this the media occupied a key position: their coverage became a determining factor for politics, economy and culture. It is exactly because of this that in the mid-90s the public discourse on degrees of media freedom, their power, influence, etc. reached its height. And the subjects, the makers of journalism, become more popular than the politicians themselves – and journalism becomes a starting field for a jump into big politics.

From the beginning and till the middle of the 1990s journalism in Kyrgyzstan was characterized by extreme instability: the popular sphere of journalism was flooded with non-professionals whose aim was to make name and money using the newly discovered potential of media as good producers. The movement in the media market was constant and headlong: many newspapers appeared, others died but on the whole the total number of media grew steadily. At the same time, the “giant mania” of the Soviet times in terms of circulations died: the real demand, the level of information

²⁴ Later, however, Akaev stopped appearing in the media so often. Now we witness Akaev's return to the media: he is a frequent guest on television and in the press. But this is a different return in terms of quality, because the quality of media themselves and the President's image have changed dramatically. For more detail, see Section “Role of media in construction of reality”.

consumption, predetermined the decline of the cumulative single-time circulation of newspapers (see Table 3). The tendency of declining circulation was also characteristic of individual newspapers, especially those with national coverage (see Graph 1 above).

Table 3. *Changes in Kyrgyzstan's press in the 1990s*²⁵

	1990	1996	2000
Number of newspapers	148	149	184
Total single-time circulation (thousand copies)	1622,0	1314,8	1122,1

Source: "Kyrgyzstan in Numbers", 2001

The structure of media use had changed significantly by the second half of the 1990s. The popularity of substantial journals among readers started to decline. Commercialization of media activity and media products changed the social composition of the users – the intelligentsia, and the targeting of it withdraws from the foreground. Pluralism of the users' taste starts to shift toward utilitarian journalism (advertising and reference press) and entertaining reading, including criminal and erotic newspapers. On the whole, television is dominant in the media-use structure. In major cities, however, the population preferred Russian television, which itself was going through a rapid professional growth from the period of perestroika. Domestic television, on the contrary, was going through the changes at a rather slow pace. (Changes on KTR related mostly to primitive commercialization due to the opening of advertising opportunities and an increase in entertainment programming in the form of concerts, congratulations by request and the growth of the number of pirated films shown).

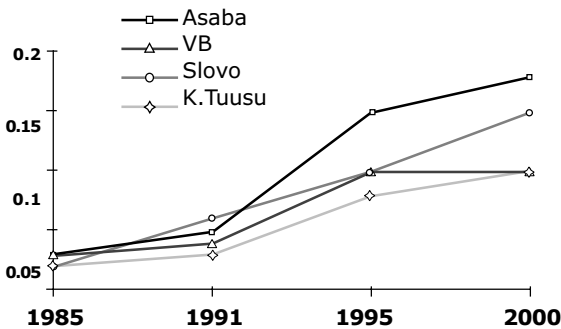
Particularly significant changes in media use structure took place in radio journalism. The radio programs of Soviet times sank rapidly into oblivion. Changes in this field started with the expansion at the beginning of the 1990s of new Russian (for the most part private) radio channels into Kyrgyzstan: Europa Plus, Russian Radio, etc. By the beginning of 2000, there were already more than 20 competing radio channels of national and regional scope on the Kyrgyz market. However, radio journalism per se, as it was understood during the Soviet times, with specific radio genres, does not exist any more. Modern radio, densely populated with DJs using slang and accommodating the tastes of the crowds, is a totally different phenomenon. Despite the fact that none of the radio channels or stations claim to have national coverage, it is possible to talk about certain groups of constant users that radio is acquiring. This type of communication media experiences the competitive struggle of various studios, stations and channels. However, in essence this competitive struggle is built not on the differences in approaches to broadcasting policy and concept, since most of the radio channels sound like twin brothers, but rather on differences in resources (including the ability to attract rich sponsors, possess a richer record library, etc.).

²⁵ 1990 is taken for comparison as the last year of the Soviet era.

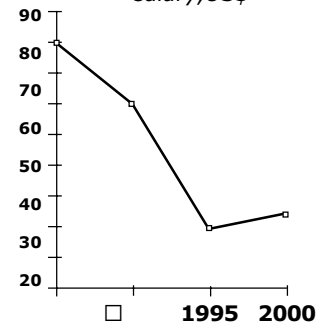
The landscape of the regional – that is Oblast, rayon, city – newspapers in Kyrgyzstan remain very homogeneous – these are the same, as in the old socialist times, driving forces, but now of local authorities with a different name. They maintain the same level of printing quality – very obsolete – but the main reason for the death of newspapers in the regions is the fact that the readers reject the “official” information, which seems to be strikingly “fallen out” of time and therefore particularly virtual. Very important in this respect is the initial competitive advantage of the renewed and upgraded national media compared to the smaller local ones.

And, perhaps, the decisive factor in the whole issue is the change of information use structure, due to a number of economic reasons the print media became unaffordable for most of the population (see Graphs 2 and 3 showing the growth of the price of newspapers copy and the changes of the average salary level in Kyrgyzstan).

Graph 2. Changes in prices perCopy, US\$



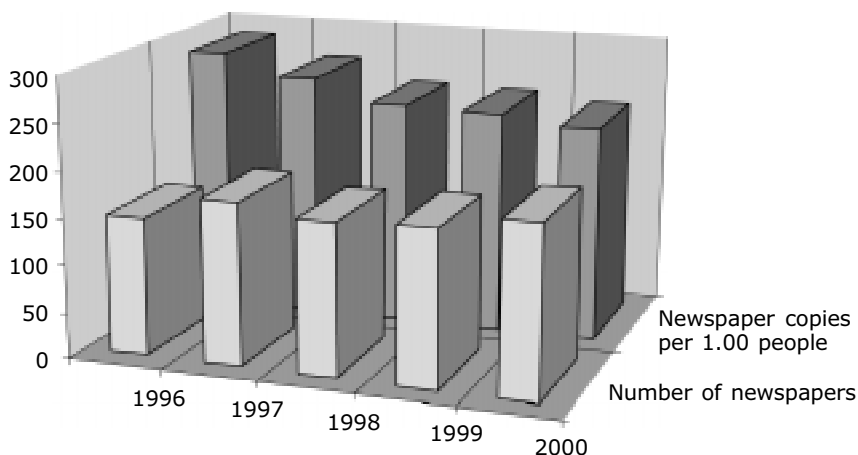
Graph 3. Average monthly salary, US\$



Source: National Statistic Committee

In general, by the middle of the 90s the number of people who watched more television and read fewer newspapers grew significantly. Such tendencies were behind hardly noticeable changes observed by state statistics in media use patterns in terms of the number of newspaper copies per capita (see the diagram below).

By the second half of the 90s, the quality Russian press practically disappeared from the newspaper market of Kyrgyzstan. If in the capital newspapers such as “Komsomolskaya Pravda” (there is even a Kyrgyz correspondent and respectively the supplement “KP in Kyrgyzstan”), “AiF” and others are still quite popular, they could not practically reach the Rayon and Oblast centers. The population, which had a tradition of reading the “central” press for many decades, now rejects it. The matter is not only in the purchasing power of the population that is going down, the problem is also that in their drive for sovereignty the Russian media themselves withdrew from the region more and more. And at this time there was practically no news from Kyrgyzstan in the leading Russian newspapers.

Graph 4. Newspaper copy/person from 1996 - 2000

Starting from the late 1990s, however, there was a tendency of "reverse movement" in the structure of consumption – decrease of interest of highly educated people who now watch less television and read fewer newspapers. Consequently, the difference in the information behavior of high and low educated people decreases.

By the end of the 1990s, Russian print media hardly played a role in the regions of Kyrgyzstan. For example, in the Kochkor rayon only four copies of "AiF" and 18 of "Komsomolskaya Pravda" were subscribed to in the second half of 2000, while the subscription leader – the newspaper "KTR-Obo" was subscribed to by 2101 readers, "Kyrgyz Karavan" had 695 subscribers, "Kyrgyz Tuusu" – 323, "Tagdyr" – 254, and "Aalam" – 168. The oblast newspaper "Tenir Too" is read by 148 subscribers in the rayon, although the pro-government newspapers ("Kyrgyz Tuusu", "Tenir-Too," "Aidenek," "Asylzat") use repressive methods and the akimiat's assistance in the subscription drives as they always did. However, the subscription list also includes newspapers that are chosen undoubtedly voluntarily, such as "Kyrgyz Karavan," "Tagdyr," and "KTR-Obo".

In the same rayon, in August 2000 only a little over 1,000 copies of newspapers were sold in kiosks and by private salespeople. And here again the leader is KTR-Obo with 300 copies. People's love for this newspaper can be among other reasons explained by the fact that it provides the full TV guide; it has a monopoly on national TV in this respect. "Asaba" sold about 80 copies, "Delo Nomer" and "Urkor" sold 60 copies each, and 50 copies of each of the newspapers "Zaman", "Tagdyr" and "Ukmushtu okuyalar" were sold. Thus, both the tastes and preferences of the population confirm, at first glance, the concepts of dominant mass consciousness that exist in socio-psychological studies.

According to our observers interning with the media, the only capital media that are constantly trying to trace the interests and needs of their audiences are "KOORT" and "Pyramida". Its management and editorial staff, as the intern reported, always orders sociological polls of the audience and analyzes telephone calls from the viewers. "TRC Pyramida", according to our intern, also frequently turns to various sociological research reports.

The *regional media* and journalists, as a rule, do not study this issue and point to blurred boundaries of the target groups of their media, providing quite contradictory pictures of the collective image of their reader or viewer. Half of the respondents (participants of focus groups for media leaders and participants of mail survey and interviews, for a total of 114 editors), said that they have a quite approximate, vague understanding of their audiences based on common notions of an average statistical resident of our country and their own life experiences and observations.

An exception to this rule is the new independent radio "Salam" in Batken oblast, the director of which said the following during a focus group for media managers: "We conducted a monitoring and studied the interests of the audiences. We serve the youth of 17-25. When we started our new radio station from zero, we did not know what this age category preferred. At the beginning we thought that we would be very different from the Bishkek stations because these people would listen to the hits of 1980s. However our survey showed that the youth in Batken is the same as in Bishkek. The only difference is that they know a little less. But they order the same songs and the programs they would like to have on the radio are the same as in Bishkek. Then we were lucky to participate in a workshop on branding. If other radio stations had to change a lot, shift their policies or re-create their image, we in contrast were fortunate to know from the beginning how to do it professionally. And what we have that you will not find here in Bishkek – we have huge support from the youth. We receive 100 letters a day on average, and from those letters we know what they would like to listen to and at what time. We have an opportunity to do audience analysis and using the results of such analysis we get to the proper level of programming quality."

About one third of all the respondents stated that their understanding of their target groups was verified during various research studies and through the process of feedback. However, the sincerity of these answers causes doubt. None of the editors and journalists responding perceived the issue of defining the specific needs of their target audiences as an actual problem of their media and only one respondent believed that the readers can really define the newspaper's policy. None of the focus group participants saw the connection between the demand, high sales rates or "non-liquidity" of media products and the consideration of target groups' needs. The only common feature was the complaint of journalists and editors of all regions and media types about the limited purchasing power of the population and therefore the potential audience. In the opinions of respondents-specialists, the solution of problems of material supply and technical equipment would result in automatic increases in popularity and circulation or coverage of the medium.

The answers to the questions of the mail questionnaire for editors do not show good knowledge of the target audience. Out of 35 respondents only three editors indicated specific groups in answering the question "Which audience is your newspaper oriented to first of all?" Responses included "imprisoned criminals" – the newspaper "Umut-Nadezhda" of the Ministry of Internal Affairs; "people who realise the value of their health and wish to eat healthy food" – the newspaper "Dastorkhan" and "disabled children, their parents and family members" – the magazine "Doroga Zhizni". Other newspapers, even such narrowly specialized as "Fermer," "Kyrgyz Tamekisi," "Science and New Technology" checked all categories of audiences except for children, and as a region of coverage named "the entire country" or even the territories of neighboring countries.

In Russia, with the formation of media holdings, the information tycoons such as Berezovsky started fully utilizing the new potential of the mechanism of media influence on government structures, demonstrating the symbolic capital and effectiveness of media power. In the media environment itself, there appeared the slogan undermining and threatening leadership: "We are closer to the people." Approximately the same process was taking place in Kyrgyzstan's mass media. The media were trying out "the power of public opinion." For example, during the election campaign for the position of Bishkek mayor, the newspaper "Delo Nomer" demonstrated media power at the fullest: After the publication of an article entitled "Who lives in the teremok?" candidate Kenenbaev, who had been leading in the election race, dropped out entirely.²⁶

As for the preferences of the people, more and more information opportunities lead to the preference of non-political programming in the end. Changes in media supply were determined not in the last turn by the development of a media use character. In the Soviet period, for decades the media were covering larger and larger parts of the population so that more people were close to the actual events. Print media and television covered almost all of the population. The single-day total circulation of newspapers in 1996 was about 1,5 million copies, and there was a broad network of both public-political and special print media – for women, children and youth.

Differentiation and an increase in media styles (diversity of specialized media for special target groups), was taking place against the background of a growing differentiation of lifestyles of the population. A special position was occupied for a long time by "Vecherny Bishkek," "Res Publica," "Asaba" and "Delo Nomer." From the time of political scandals during the era of the dying system, "Vecherny Bishkek" became a symbol of freedom of the press and it started to develop as an influential force in Kyrgyz journalism. The newspaper then initiated a new phenomenon – sensational journalism which is often not compatible with factuality and does not shrink from falsification and distortion of the facts.

²⁶ "Teremok" is a wooden tower-type house. In a famous Russian tale symbolizes a beautiful but modest house with not enough space for all inhabitants willing to leave in it. In a "Delo Nomer" publication, the notion is used in the ironic meaning since Kenenbaev's newly constructed house looked more like a palace. The newspaper questioned his ability to construct such a luxurious house on a government employee's salary (prior to nomination, he was the head of the state administration of Sverdlovsky district of Bishkek).

The flow of yellow, pulp press literally swept over the country (see the box with a case study below). Specialists believe that the appearance of such mass press is connected with the rehabilitation of “repressed” forms of feelings and world views that for decades had been pushed into the area of disdain and shame. Perhaps, this phenomenon is due to changes in chronology and the politics of work and leisure. After many years of political atrophy regarding leisure and the domination of economic, professional and production interests in the media under the implementation of technocratic policy, the holders of the information space realized that leisure was not only equal to work time in terms of the share, but may be more important than work in terms of social significance.

These and other changes in the media supply determined radical shifts in media demand as well. A number of researchers describe a new tendency, which started at the end of the 1990s – a “reverse” movement in the structure of consumption and a decline in interest of highly educated people who now watch less television and read fewer newspapers (the middle and poorer classes were always less active in media use). As a result, the differences in information behavior between highly educated

Case Study: Yellow, pulp press

In Kubat Sharshkeev’s enterprise, eight periodicals are issued by 19 employees. In the periodicals there is practically no journalism work per se. Journalists use as the main sources of information for their criminal newspapers “Prestuplenie i Nakazanie,” “Kylmysh Jana Jaza” (Crime and Punishment), “Prigovor” (Sentence) the criminal cases on which investigation is finished and which are submitted for court hearings. The information is bought “whole-sale” by the owner of the newspapers from constant “informants” from the law enforcement agencies. For other newspapers of the erotic, entertaining character factuality has no significance at all. The journalists use materials of other (as a rule, Russian) media, web-resources and resort to fiction. The phenomenon of demand for such newspapers requires deep analysis of changes in the tastes and needs of information users. Preliminary, it is possible only to state the shift of the structure of use of information products toward hedonism and gratification.

and less educated people faded away. This also shows that use of political information supply loses its differentiated character specific for various social strata (as it used to be initially).

Thus, the process of determination of information needs, the demand and supply is always mutual. Often the needs form a specific market supply, but no less frequently the media supply forms stable preferences in the population. And in any model or concept of media, relations between the people and the government are reflected, where the media play the role of an intermediary link (mediator).

3.3 External and internal assessments of democracy and freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan

There are many various organizations tracing status and development of democracy in the world and in the post-socialist countries in particular. The richest and most influential research in this area has been accumulated by the international non-profit organization “Freedom House,” whose assessments for Kyrgyzstan are presented below. For comparison, development of democracy in Kyrgyzstan is considered against the

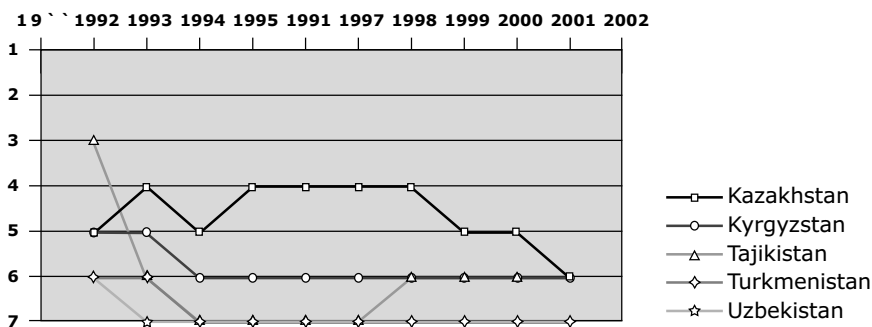
background of other Central Asian countries. Such a comparison helps to understand why Kyrgyzstan is often referred to as the "island of democracy", in Central Asia.

3.3.1 Assessment of freedom in the countries of Central Asia (by "Freedom House")

Starting from 1972, Freedom House publishes annual reports on the status of freedom, evaluating each country on two dimensions – the political rights and the civil freedoms. The average score on these two dimensions determines the country's status: countries that receive the score of 1-2,5 are considered to be free, the score of 3-5,5 corresponds to the status of a partly free country and countries with a score of 5,5-7 are defined as not free. The dividing line between the "partly free" and the "free" zone usually falls in the group of countries where the average score of which is 5,5. For example, the countries which receive a score of 6 for political rights and a 5 for civil liberties, or the countries with a score of 5 for political rights and a 6 for civil liberties may be either "partly free" or "non free."²⁷

Below are presented the results of the Freedom House evaluation of all Central Asian republics during the ten years after they obtained independence. All the five countries are shown in comparison to trace the tendencies of development and to demonstrate why during a number of years Kyrgyzstan was considered to be the "island of democracy", in Central Asia. Graph 5 shows the scores of the republics on the "political rights" dimension:

Graph 5. Political rights in Central Asian countries



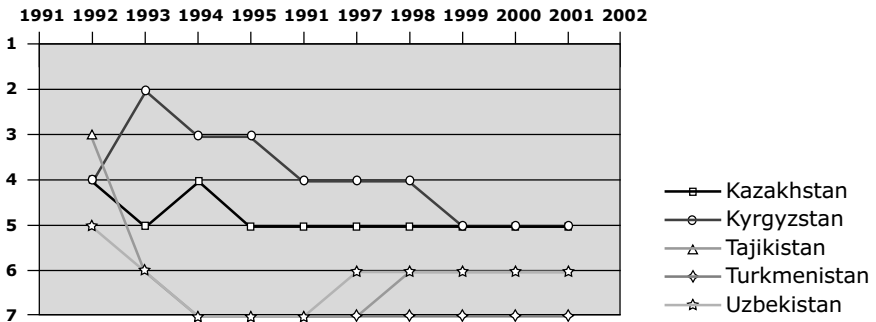
As it is seen from the chart, none of the countries of Central Asia during the ten years has been able to come out of the "partly free" and "not free" area. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan started at the same level (5), but later Kazakhstan came one level down where it remains till present. Kyrgyzstan, in contrast, went one level up, where it remained till 1998 (the temporary "fall" in 1994 related to shutting down the newspapers

²⁷ For more details on methodology and sources see one of the annual Freedom House reports (for example, *Freedom In the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties (2000-01)*, (Freedom House, 2001)), or visit the web-site of the organization: www.freedomhouse.org

“Svobodnye Gory” and “Politika” and some other actions by the government that were limiting political rights). However, starting from 1998, the country started to lose again in terms of the evaluation of political rights, having reached in 2001 the mark of 6 (“not free” area). In 1992, Tajikistan was closer than the others to the “free” area, but then the civil war of 1992-1997 threw the country back to the mark of 7-6, i.e. into the “not free” zone where it remains till present. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan demonstrate approximately the same pattern of movement in the “not free” area – from 6 to 7, with a difference of one year. On the whole, none of the countries has made true progress on the political rights dimension during the ten years considered, although Kyrgyzstan was maintaining a higher level than its remaining neighbors in the region for a considerably long period of time.

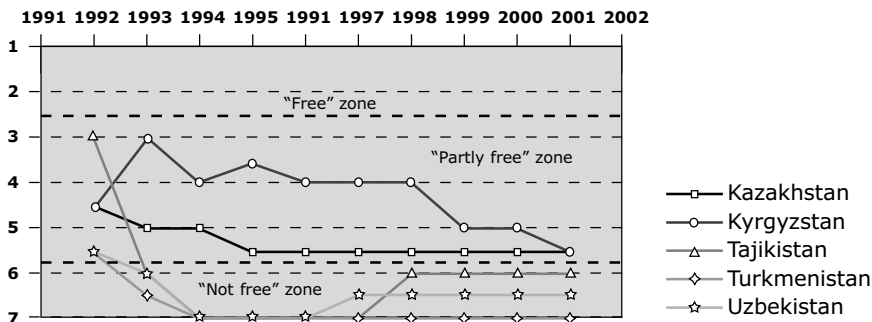
The following chart demonstrates the scores of the countries of the region on the second component of freedom according to Freedom House – civil liberties.

Graph 6. Civil liberties in Central Asian countries



In most of the reports by Freedom House on Central Asia, civil liberties are evaluated higher overall than political rights. But here the tendencies are approximately the same – all countries started out in the “partly free” area, and then practically all, with the exclusion of Kyrgyzstan, immediately gave in their positions, although Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were able to go one level up in 1998 and 1997 respectively. Kyrgyzstan, having reached quite a high level of 2 scores in 1993, in the subsequent years went down to the score of 5, where it steadily remains together with Kazakhstan. Similarly to the political rights, in civil liberties Turkmenistan is the most “not free” country in the region, steadily receiving the score of 7 starting from 1994. The general tendency, again as in the sphere of political rights, is that of decline, i.e. no country achieved real progress in development of civil liberties in the ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Graph 7 below shows the total average score on political rights and civil liberties for all the five Central Asian republics, allowing determination of their status in terms of freedom.

Graph 7. Status of freedom in Central Asia

Again, here we can clearly see the general tendency of “sliding down” (or sharp fall, as in case with Tajikistan) from the “partly free” into “not free” zone. As of 2001, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are still balancing at the last mark of “partly free” zone, but if the pattern of movements remains the same, in the future Kyrgyzstan will inevitably find itself in the “not free” zone together with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

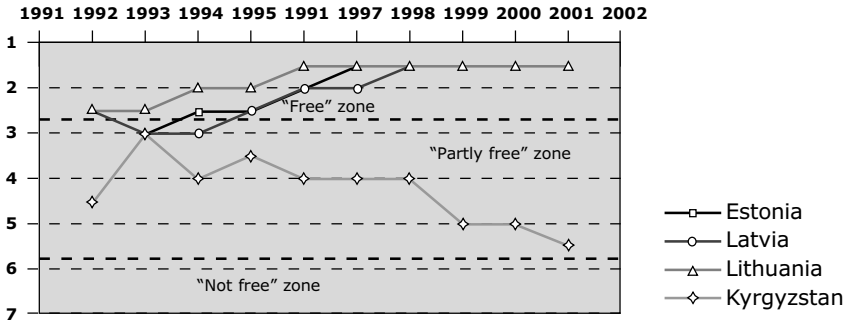
And still, the graph shows that after independence Kyrgyzstan earned quite a high mark and maintained it for seven years, which allowed it to define the country as an “island” of freedom and democracy in the region. Indeed, against the background of the other Central Asian republics, Kyrgyzstan had an obvious comparative advantage, which, although starting to decline, still by inertia presents Kyrgyzstan as a freer country. This is why the following statements have been made by many media experts, formulated during focus groups, interviews and personal conversations: “In Kyrgyzstan there is more freedom than in Uzbekistan or Tajikistan and Turkmenistan,” “Press in Kyrgyzstan has more freedom than in other Central Asian republics,” “Our system is more democratic if compared to our neighbors;” etc. This is explained by the fact, that these countries are located in the “closest consideration zone” and it is easier and more convenient to compare Kyrgyzstan with them.²⁸

On the whole, what is taking place is “convenient” in terms of the government substitution of notions. Instead of the diachronic relativity, the synchronous one is taken for the co-ordinates system, when we compare the evolution of democratic reforms not in the time perspective, but in comparison to other countries at each given moment of time. At the same time, the horizons of comparison are changing drastically. If earlier we “measured,” and oriented our democracy and freedom of expression with the Atlantic and continental school and achievements, at present we compare ourselves more and more with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Obviously, if democratic movements are compared with the nearest country surroundings, the overall picture for Kyrgyzstan will look if not favorable, then in any case more successful.

²⁸ See also Section “Causes and Nature of Information Gaps in Kyrgyzstan.”

However, if another base for comparison is taken, the conclusions made will be different as well. For example, if we examine Freedom House’s assessment of freedom in the Baltic Republics, which also used to be a part of the Soviet Union (therefore, similarly not free till 1991), and compare their movement with the pattern for Kyrgyzstan, the chart will look as follows:

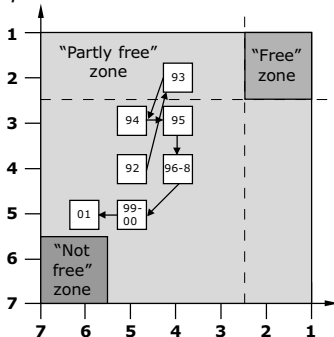
Graph 8. Status of freedom in the Baltic Republics and Kyrgyzstan



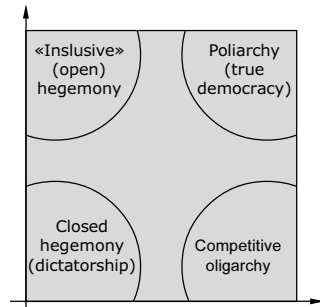
The trajectory of movement here is absolutely different – all Baltic Republics entered the “free” zone as early as in 1994-95 and kept in it steadily, reinforcing their positions, which is demonstrated by the movement up from a score of 2 to 1,5 in 1995-98. However, Kyrgyzstan, on the contrary, gradually loses its position, sliding down from a score of 3 in 1993 to 5,5 in 2001. It is obvious that such a comparison is absolutely unbeneficial for the Central Asian “island” of democracy and freedom.

For consideration of changes in the status of freedom in Kyrgyzstan in terms of democratic theory (see graph 10), it will be interesting to “match” the country’s movement with the theory of poliarchy, or true democracy, developed by a leading and influential political scientist Robert Dahl (Graph 10):²⁹

Graph 9. Kyrgyzstan’s movement in development of democracy during independence



Graph 10. Dahl’s Poliarchy Theory



²⁹ Dahl, Robert A. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (Yale University Press: 1971)

The graphs show that in 1993 Kyrgyzstan was at its all-time closest to poliarchy (4 on political rights and 2 on civil liberties), but then started to move first down and to the left (closer to open hegemony) in 1994, and then to the right and down, i.e. toward a competitive oligarchy, in 1995-98. Starting from 1998, the movement again changed its direction to the left, toward hegemony, and down. Any further movement down in the future (i.e. loss of positions on civil liberties at least by 0,5 points) will lead Kyrgyzstan into the "not free" zone, having turned it into a closed hegemony, or dictatorship.

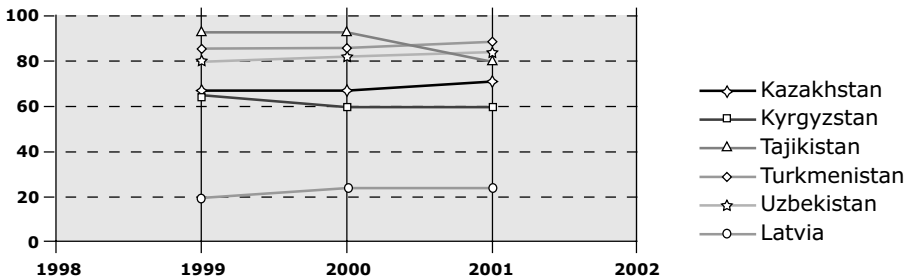
Since freedom of expression and freedom of mass media is a necessary precondition of democracy, it would be reasonable to present the data on freedom of media in Kyrgyzstan, both in the regional breakdown and individually. Below are the most influential and significant assessments of freedom of expression conducted in various years by both international and domestic organizations and experts.

3.3.2 External assessments of status of freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan: Freedom House

Freedom House conducts separate studies of freedom of mass media (Press Freedom Survey) in all countries of the world. Assessing the status of press freedom in 2000, for example, Freedom House concludes, that the situation in the world on the whole improved compared to 1999 and the number of free countries reached 72 (38.5% of the countries or 21% of the whole world population) – the highest indicator for the last ten years. The number of countries where there is no press freedom, decreased to 62 (33.2% of the countries, or 36% of the world's population) – the smallest number from 1997. Mass media in 53 countries at present is partly free. (23.8%).

For Kyrgyzstan, the report gives the following evaluation: "the 1992 law on the mass media prohibits the disclosure of government and commercial secrets; promoting war, violence or ethnic intolerance; desecration of national norms, ethics, and symbols; pornography; and insulting the honor and dignity of a person. All media must be registered, and libel is a criminal offense. CPJ reported widespread intimidation of the media, including threats, tax audits, and lawsuits, prior to the October presidential elections. There are some 40 to 50 independent local and national newspapers and magazines. There are also independent television and radio broadcasts for several hours a day. The state's printing house, Uchkun, is the only newspaper publisher in the country. In 2000 it shut down three newspapers by refusing to print them."³⁰

Evaluations of press freedom conducted by Freedom House during the last three years (1999-2001) show that, like in the democratic transformation evaluations, Kyrgyzstan has an advantage compared to other countries of the Central Asian region:

Graph 11. Press freedom in Central Asia

As it is seen in the chart, all Central Asian countries are in the “not free” area (the score of 61 or higher), although Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan show the tendency of moving down, i.e. into the “partly free” zone (31-60 points). Kyrgyzstan is included in the first group of “not free” countries (i.e. the closest to the partly free countries), which also includes Kazakhstan. Again, for comparison the data for Latvia is provided, which is located in the “free” zone (0-30 points), although it lost several points (on the chart – movement upwards from 21 points in 1999 to 24 in 2000) after the country introduced responsibility for libel and incitement of ethnic hatred into the criminal legislation.

3.3.3 Other external assessments of media freedom in Kyrgyzstan

Up to the middle of the 90s, the assessments of press freedom in Kyrgyzstan by various international organizations were either mainly positive or optimistically restrained – this was generally in line with the campaign for creating an image of Kyrgyzstan as the “island of democracy” in Central Asia and corresponded to the policy of donor countries and organizations providing grants and credits for democratic transformation. Despite the single negative assessment of shutting down the newspapers “Svobodnye Gory” and “Politika” in 1994 (as a “diplomatic” response to these events in December 1994 OSCE organized in Bishkek a seminar on press freedom and freedom of association), on the whole the international society still had hopes for improvement of the situation with press freedom. The first truly alarmed assessments appeared in 1996 (in relation with the presidential elections that year and more frequent cases of pressure of authorities on media), especially as a protest to “rotation” of heads of government media.³¹ At the same time there appeared the first negative assessments of the general situation, not just responses to certain events. For example, in relation to the “rotation” of heads of the state media, the Russian Foundation for Protection of Glasnost sent an address to President Akaev where it was stated that “multiple facts of violation in the republic of laws regulating legal relations between journalists and government are the evidence that the democratic process in the republic has been stopped - if not begun to reverse».³²

³¹ For more details see, for example, the letter-protest of the organization “Reporteurs Sans Frontiers” in relation to the events in “Slovo Kyrgyzstana” newspaper addressed to President Akaev and published in newsletter “Media: Legislation and Practice” of the Kyrgyzstan’s Bureau on human rights and in compliance with the law, Issue 2, July 1996.

³² *Ibid.*

Against this background of prosecution, the newspapers "Asaba", and "Res Publica," starting from spring 1999, international evaluations of press freedom started to acquire a more critical character. In April 1999 Kyrgyzstan was visited by F. Duve, representative of the OSCE Bureau on media freedom, who emphasized that the situation with freedom of speech in the country reminded him of the situation in Saudi Arabia. He also stated that he had seen that in the republic "there are forces that put pressure on press freedom."³³

In May 1999, representatives of the International Helsinki Federation (IHF) expressed their concern about the media situation, emphasizing that the actions of A. Karypkulov, head of the state television and radio company, aimed at firing journalists, created an impression of restoration of strict censorship, and they evaluated as unlawful his actions against the newspaper "Res Publica" « The decision imposing a fine of more than 200,000 som on the newspaper threatens its closure», the IHF reported.³⁴

With the conflict in "Vecherny Bishkek" in the summer of 1999 and the subsequent measures to "curb" the media in the republic ahead of the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2000, external assessments of the status of press freedom became more and more critical. Following in chronological order are some examples of such assessments:

- *September 1999* – Russian Foundation for Protection of Glasnost sends an address to President Akaev, where a supposition was expressed that actions of the authorities in relation to the newspaper "Vecherny Bishkek" were, "a response inadequate to the scale of the conflict" to the publication of materials by opposition politicians.³⁵
- *December 1999* – the international organization "Human Rights Watch" publishes its annual report which says the following about Kyrgyzstan: «in its attempts to shut down those who think differently, the government continued its attacks on independent mass media and used such methods as forced intrusions, libel claims and tax inspections»³⁶ It gave numerous examples of each of the listed techniques.
- *February 2000* – head of the OSCE mission on monitoring elections Mark Stevens states that despite "some freedom of media in the Kyrgyz Republic" the authorities were exerting pressure on the media and an atmosphere of self-censorship was created during the parliamentary elections of 2000.³⁷
- *September 2000* – International pre-election delegation, organized by the National Democratic Institution of international relations (NDI), following its visit on September 4-8, 2000, publishes a report, where the following was

³³ Cited in Internews newsletter «Communication», Issue 14, May 1999.

³⁴ Ibid, Issue 15, May 1999.

³⁵ See Internews newsletter «Communication», Issue 24, September 1999.

³⁶ For more detail, see http://eurasia.org.ru/2000/news/03_30_03NEWS5_rus/htm or Human Rights Watch web-site.

³⁷ Press release of OSCE Elections Monitoring Mission of February 21, 2000.

said: «On the eve of the presidential elections in Kyrgyzstan, some independent media were involved in court hearings or found themselves under pressure from the state officials in response to articles containing election material. Several journalists reported pressure exerted upon them by officials, which took the form of either an order, or a prohibition to cover certain topics relating to elections. *Recommendation*: State officials should postpone the court hearings against journalists and media till the end of the elections and call upon the state media to comply with the requirements of the election laws on equal distribution of time and newspaper space among all candidates.»³⁸

- *November 2000* – Delegation of NDI international observers on elections of the Kyrgyz Republic's president on October 29, 2000 publishes a statement, where, among other things, the following was said: «The months preceding the presidential elections were marked by a significant decrease in the number of political statements in the print and electronic media. The pressure on the part of state bodies in relation to public and private media was significant [and] forced a number of television and radio companies to reject the broadcasting of political advertising of the opponents of the current President. The budget television, radio companies and press were extremely well-disposed to the current President and offered limited information on his opponents...»³⁹
- *November 2000* – the CPJ annual report «Attacks on Press in 1999» says the following about Kyrgyzstan: «In 1999, expensive civil suits on libel and bureaucratic pressure were applied to two weeklies – “Asaba” and “Res Publica” – and a daily “Vecherny Bishkek.” Local journalists believe that these suits were a part of the government's strategy to weaken media opposition before the parliamentary elections in February 2000.»⁴⁰
- *December 2000* – international organization Human Rights Watch publishes its annual report which says the following about Kyrgyzstan: «actions of President Askar Akaev in 2000 destroyed illusions about Kyrgyzstan as an “island of democracy” in a repressive region. During the parliamentary elections in February-March and Presidential elections on October 29 the government violated the rights of citizens. The impudence with which the Kyrgyz government persecuted Akaev's potential competitors in the elections shocked seasoned observers... Brave messages of independent mass media caused bursts of anger from the government, ... which resorted to Internet censorship, closing the site “Politika.kg” up to the presidential election on October 29».⁴¹
- *January 2001* – The OSCE organization issues its final report on the 2000 presidential election which, among other things, says: “A distinct feature of mass media is an overwhelming tendency by the government-controlled public

³⁸ See the statement of the NDI International Elections Delegation in Kyrgyzstan “Press freedom and media access,” <http://www.ndi.org/>

³⁹ See Statement of the delegation of International Observers for the presidential elections, <http://www.ndi.org/>

⁴⁰ Full text of the report in English is available on the CPJ web site: <http://www.cpj.org/attacks99/europe99/Kyrgyzstan.html>.

⁴¹ Cited in Internews newsletter “Communication” (Issue 63, December 2000 ã.), by information of Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty.

media and pro-government private media to show a blunt bias in favor of the current president. The opposition candidates, when mentioned, were pictured mostly negatively. The media owned by the government did not manage to fulfill its legal duty in ensuring the balanced and objective presentation of candidates. Starting with the parliamentary elections, persecution and harassment of private media ended with self-censorship and notable decrease in the number of media issues capable or willing to offer an independent or critical editorial line. In the message issued on October 30, the European Institute of Mass Media (EIMM) which monitored media coverage of the election campaign, expressed its serious concern "in relation to the future of freedom of expression and independence of mass media in Kyrgyzstan".⁴²

- *February 2001* – US State Department issues the report on international human rights in 2000. In the part on Kyrgyzstan, in the section "Freedom of speech and media" it stated that legislation provides freedom of speech and the media, however the state limits these rights and gave numerous cases of media persecution and limitation of freedom of speech.⁴³
- *March 2001* – Internews Kyrgyzstan publishes an address describing harassment of the media across the country and expressing concern about "attacks on freedom of speech and rights of journalists in the Kyrgyz Republic." The address contained a call to foreign representatives, international human rights organizations, Kyrgyz deputies and local NGOs to provide support to Kyrgyz journalists and to bring these issues to the attention of the highest level of the Kyrgyz government."⁴⁴
- *March 2001* – CPJ report «Attacks on Press in 2000» says about Kyrgyzstan: "Although Kyrgyzstan enjoyed a reputation of the country where more press freedom is provided than in other Central Asian countries, starting from the middle of 1990s such freedom was to reduced. In 2000, the pressure on independent press significantly increased, especially before the parliamentary and presidential elections. The CPJ mission visited Kyrgyzstan before the presidential election conducted on October 29, and noted wide-scale intimidation of independent journalists and media with the use of official threats, tax audits, law suits and very high fines."⁴⁵

The events of June-July 2001 around the decision of the Ministry of Justice to re-register all media⁴⁶ allowed many international organizations and experts to conclude, that this requirement was one more form of large-scale attack on the freedom of expression, which resulted in a "paralysis" of media development in the country.⁴⁷ On

⁴² The report is provided by OSCE office, Bishkek city, 139 Toktogula St.

⁴³ For full version in English, see <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rs/hrrpt/2000>

⁴⁴ For more details see Internews newsletter «Communication», Issue 70, March 2000.

⁴⁵ See report in English at <http://www.cpj.org/attacks00/europe00/Kyrgyzstan.html>

⁴⁶ See also Chapter "Media Registration" in Section "Legislative and legal environment for media activity in the Kyrgyz Republic."

⁴⁷ For more detail, see Chris Schuepp "Paralysis of Kyrgyz Media," Internews newsletter «Communication», Issue 83, July 2001.

the whole, starting from March 2001 and till present, concern and anxiety about the worsening situation with freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan has been repeatedly expressed by such influential and established organizations as the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) and World Editors' Forum (WEF), the Committee for Protection of Journalists (CPJ), the US State Department, "Reporteurs Sans Frontiers," the Russian Foundation for Glasnost Protection, as well as other foreign democratic institutions. The main message of their statements is that particularly after the elections of 2000, the situation regarding freedom of expression and media in Kyrgyzstan has sharply worsened, which can threaten further democratic transformation in the country.

3.3.4 Internal assessments of press freedom in Kyrgyzstan

As for the assessment of media freedom in Kyrgyzstan by the domestic organizations, they have always been more realistic and less optimistic than the evaluations from outside. Among the organizations that constantly monitor the status of freedom in the republic, the following ones may be highlighted:

- *Kyrgyzstan's Bureau on Human Rights and Compliance with the law* headed by N.Ablova, a well-known human rights activist, who monitors the processes and events in the area of human rights. Starting from 1996, the Bureau issues a specialized newsletter "Media: Legislation and Practice" which is distributed among specialists and human rights activists of the republic, as well as placed on the Russian web-site "Law and mass media" of the Journalism Faculty of Moscow State University. The editors justified the necessity to issue this newsletter by the fact that freedom of expression takes a very important position among human rights and it was from 1996 that violations of and infringements upon the freedom of speech in Kyrgyzstan became more frequent. The quarterly newsletter provides the results of media monitoring and at the end of each year presents a cumulative report on freedom of press in the republic for the entire year. Violations of freedom of expression and media harassment are supported by facts that are classified into several categories: murders, arrests, attacks and threats to journalists; various forms of administrative, legal and economic pressure on media and their employees.
- Another active organization protecting the freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan is the public *Foundation "Glasnost Protection,"* which from April 2001 has been headed by an opposition leader, M.Eshinkanov (before that, the foundation was directed by R.Prizhivoit, a "Vecherny Bishkek" journalist and one of the initiators of the newspaper "Moya Stolitsa"). The Foundation was established in October 1999 for the protection of glasnost and the rights of journalists and press. It monitors the status of press freedom and media situation by regions and maintains an extensive database on violations of freedom of expression and media. The foundation cooperates actively with various international

organisations, including those in neighbouring countries, working in the area of protection of media and journalists.

- Very active in the protection of the rights of media and journalists is *Public Union "Journalists"*, headed by the well-known publicist and lawyer K.Mambetaliev. One of the tasks of the association is to react immediately to the government's repressive actions in relation to media. It also brings to public attention violations of freedom of expression and organizes training programs (seminars, training courses, conferences, etc.) in this area.
- *The Coalition of NGOs, "For democracy and civil society"*, conducts monitoring of freedom of expression and media access during election campaigns and elections. In particular, by the results of monitoring of the last presidential elections, the Coalition prepared a report, which stated that "state mass media did not comply with the principles of unbiased coverage of the election campaign and provided the electorate with tone-sided information only about the current president. The government exerted pressure on the independent mass media and used various methods to force most of them to follow the policy of an information boycott of the opposition candidates' campaigns. Government interference with media activities during the elections took place on a national scale. In Kyrgyzstan, where freedom of press continues to depend on the state monopoly for printing and distribution, during elections the government in fact introduced censorship. Strict censorship also took place when campaign materials were placed on television."⁴⁸ It was the principles and steady position of the Coalitions' observers during the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2000, that most likely ignited the development of a draft law (submitted to the Parliament for consideration) on changes to the current Elections Code, one of which prohibits "international observers and civil NGOs receiving grants from foreign donors to comment on the processes of elections. Thus, the elections will turn from open and transparent into secret and private ones, the truth about which will never be known either in the wider world or by the population of the country."⁴⁹
- Particularly active in 2000-01 in evaluating media status and freedom became the *Bishkek office of the British organization, "Institute for War and Peace Reporting,"* headed by the former Minister of Education and chief editor of the newspaper "Politika", which was shut down in 1994, and later the executive director of Soros Foundation/Kyrgyzstan Chinara Jakypova. The office provides an opportunity for leading journalists of the republic to publish on its web-site analytical materials on the most urgent and acute problems of today's Kyrgyzstan that are connected, in one way or another, with the security of the state. Most of these articles cannot be published in the print media. Lately, publications on

⁴⁸ See Conclusion of the Coalition of NGOs, "For Democracy and Civil Society" on the elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic published on October 29, 2000.

⁴⁹ See article by R.Prizhvoit "Kill all birds with one stone" in the newspaper "Advokat" of August 4, 2001.

freedom of press and the media situation in Kyrgyzstan appear in the IWPR web newsletter more and more frequently.⁵⁰ The organization also sponsors various conferences and round tables on problems of the media and protection of journalists. At the initiative of the organization in 2001, a regional Central Asian association was established to protect the rights of journalists working under conditions of limited freedom of expression in the media.

On the whole, the analysis of reports on media freedom monitoring conducted by local organizations, as well as of their analytical materials, shows that most of the repressive actions taken by the government in relation to the media took place in 1999-2001. This reinforces the conclusion that in the last 2-3 years freedom of expression in the media has been purposefully limited. Although these conclusions in general coincide with the assessments of external observers, they are expressed in a more open and critical form, most likely because the local specialists have always been quite sceptical about the idea of Kyrgyzstan as "an island of democracy" and a "second Switzerland" in Central Asia.

⁵⁰ See, for example, articles by I.Grebenschikov "Media: Between engagement and information security" (May 2001) and "New repartition of the Kyrgyz market" (July 2001) at www.burana.by.ru

SECTION 4

LEGISLATIVE AND LEGAL ENVIRONMENT FOR MEDIA ACTIVITIES IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

The mass media of Kyrgyzstan, being at the center of public life in the country, is regulated by the following fields of law:

1. *Constitutional law* (the right to freedom of expression as an inherent right of a human being and citizen; the right to freedom of media);
2. *International law* (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – the right to freedom of expression as an inherent right of a human being and citizen);
3. *Special legislation on media* (regulates the issues of establishment and activities of media organizations);
4. *Civil legislation* (regulates the issues of publication of media materials, such as libel, slander and insult, violation of dignity and reputation of citizens, compensation for moral damages, etc.);
5. *Legislation on elections* (includes the Elections Code and other statutory and normative acts regulating media access during elections);
6. *Criminal law* (media organization as a subject enjoying full rights with the process and bearing responsibilities);
7. *Labor law* (media outlet as an organization unifying employees on the basis of common interests, as well as trade unions and associations of media employees created for protection of labor, social and economic rights and the interests of their members);
8. *Tax law* (media organization as an economic unit subject to taxation);
9. *Customs law* (media organization as an entity with the right to be involved in economic activities and respective obligations, bearing responsibility for violation of tax rules associated with such activities);
10. *Financial law* (control by financial bodies over the sources of media revenue, amounts received and actual payment).

Below is a brief analysis of the main legislative acts regulating activities of mass media in the Kyrgyz Republic.

4.1 Legislative foundation for media activity

4.1.1 Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic

The foundation of media activity in Kyrgyzstan is laid down by the constitutional norms guaranteeing all the main rights and freedoms of citizens prescribed by modern international standards of democratic countries. In particular, the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic (adopted in 1993), guarantees the freedom of speech and expression establishing that each citizen of the country has the right «to free expression and spreading of thoughts, ideas and opinions, to freedom of literary, artistic, scientific and technical creativity, freedom of press, transfer and dissemination of information» (Article 16).

Further, the Constitution specifically establishes the freedom of mass media: «Culture, art, literature, science and mass media are free» (Article 36, p.1). Although this constitutional clause confirms that there is no clear-cut separation between these areas of human activities and places the media within the cultural¹ rather than political or social and economic sphere. In this particular case it is important that the media freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution. The same article obliges the state to create «conditions necessary for the development of literature, art, science, mass media and sports» (Article 36, p.2).

The clause on freedom of speech and freedom of mass media is enforced by a constitutional amendment adopted at the end of 1998, as a result of the national referendum, along with the other most important amendments which were to enforce democracy and further promote the economic reforms. This amendment was included into Article 65, p.8: «Adoption of laws limiting the freedom of speech and freedom of press is not allowed». Taking into account the fact that this article is included in the "Legislative Activity" section, a parallel may be drawn between this amendment to the KR Constitution and the First Amendment to the US Constitution, which is recognized to be one of the most significant achievements in the American democratic tradition. It should be noted that this amendment was introduced after several attempts by the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic to change the media law toward more limitations on media activity, although the amendment did not prevent further attempts in this area.²

4.1.2 Law «On Mass Media»

This is the main law regulating activity of mass media in Kyrgyzstan. The Law «defines the general legal, economic and social foundations of organization of messages through mass media» and is aimed at «free functioning of mass media, regulating their relations with the state bodies, public associations, enterprises, organizations and citizens.»

¹ Most probably, this is a remnant of the Soviet tradition of the state structure, where mass media was considered to be a part of the cultural sphere, and the media employees, specialists and trade unions were equal to culture employees, with the same privileges and benefits.

² See paragraph «Law on protection of honor, dignity and business reputation of citizens».

The Law defines as mass media all «newspapers, journals and magazines, supplements to them, almanacs, books, newsletters, one-time publications meant for public distribution with permanent title, as well as television and radio broadcasting, cinema and video studios, audio- and visual records and programs produced by state bodies, information agencies, political, public and other organizations, private persons». This broad definition lead to a situation where all mass media in the country were registered as separate legal entities. For example, the weekly supplement "V kontse nedeli" ("On the weekend"), to the newspaper "Slovo Kyrgyzstana", is registered as a separate publication although in terms of the editorial policy and personnel it is absolutely the same as its "parent" organization. Some newspapers had 3-4 weekly supplements, which were registered separately. This situation also explains the large number of existing mass media in the country and, partly, the contradictions in the data on their exact number.³

Adopted in 1992, the Law on Mass Media was considered one of the most progressive laws in this sphere in the entire post-soviet environment at that time. And indeed, the open prohibition of censorship and direct government regulation of or interference in media activity, as well as the quite broad and liberal rights of journalists were great achievements for a country that proclaimed democracy as its ultimate goal. One more positive novelty of the law was the permission for media to be involved in commercial activity (Article 3). This had a threefold effect. Firstly, this meant that media products were now considered to be goods that could be bought and sold freely, which gave a powerful impetus for development of the media market. Secondly, this permission encouraged development of independent mass media as a commercial activity able to renounce state subsidies and support. Another clause that encouraged the appearance of a larger number of diverse media was the right provided by Article 5 to establish mass media. Previously limited to state bodies, this was now extended to public associations, labor collectives and citizens of the republic, i.e. practically anyone wishing to do so.

However even with all its progressiveness, the law has a number of serious shortcomings and limitations in terms of established media theory. One of them is the requirement of obligatory registration of all media as legal entities with the Ministry of Justice. Although the representatives of the Ministry of Justice claim that the registration has only a recording character and is necessary to legitimize the existence of a mass medium and to know how many mass media exist in the country, the practice has shown that in some cases the procedure of registration may be used in order to prevent "undesirable" media from starting their activities.⁴

The second serious limitation of the Law is Article 23 is with the list of types of information not subject to public dissemination. The fact itself of existence of the list as a limitation imposed on media is a deviation from the principle of freedom of speech and press. In addition, most of the items on the list, according to the established practice of the

³ See also Chapter «Registration of mass media».

⁴ For more details see Chapter «Registration of mass media».

democratic media theory, are included either in the sphere of ethics (which means they should be regulated by ethical norms and codes rather than legislation prescribing punishment for violation), or in the sphere of media self-regulation. Here, again, the soviet tradition of a "paternalistic" attitude toward journalism took over: the state tells the journalists what is right and what is wrong and prescribes punishment for deviations from "correct" behavior. Quite interesting is the fact that when the law was adopted, and during the first years thereafter, many journalists and media specialists believed that the existence of this list was justified, that these limitations were necessary to prevent chaos and disorder in the society. It was their view that since neither journalists nor the society itself had "matured" enough, issues of pornography or the incitement of ethnic or religious hatred could not be self-regulated or fully referred to by the sphere of ethics. However even at that time many people understood that the item on protection of honor and dignity from the same list could be used against journalists when they were disclosing corruption or wrongful actions of government officials. Subsequently, this was seen to happen repeatedly in practice.

Another major shortcoming of the 1992 Law is that it was aimed mostly at regulation of print media, having left out the electronic media. The specifics of electronic media are such that they have to be regulated by a separate law. Although later attempts were made to regulate them with the help of a general law on licensing and various regulatory acts, the necessity of the introduction of a separate law on television and radio broadcasting was understood even at that time. In spring 2001 one more draft law was submitted to the Parliament which has not yet been adopted.

As for the general character of Media Law, many media specialists and lawyers emphasize its declarative character. «It proclaims the norms and the implementation mechanisms for which are provided neither by the law itself nor by the subsequent regulatory acts. Some articles of the law are not formulated clearly enough, which leaves space for their interpretation in application.»⁵ In addition, excessively broad wordings of the law provide vast opportunities for justification of the necessity of regulatory acts that may be issued practically on each individual case depending on what is convenient or desirable for the government. And although this refers to other laws of the country as well, mass information and journalism are so important for the public domain that all these shortcomings of the Law are seen more clearly than in other spheres.

During the eight years after adoption of the Media Law, several attempts were made to change the old law or to introduce a new one. The first amendment to the Law was introduced in 1993. It provided that «establishment of a mass medium by state bodies jointly with public associations. Working collectives and citizens shall not be allowed» (Article 5, p.3). This meant that such newspapers as "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" in fact became illegal as their founders were both the working collective of the newspaper and the state. This contradiction was resolved only in April 1996, after attempts by

⁵ Lev Bardin, newsletter «Mass media: Legislation and Practice» of the Kyrgyzstan Bureau on human rights and compliance with the law, Issue 1 (February 1996).

the staff of "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" to acquire full independence from the government. A "rotation" of heads of the media controlled by the government was made and a number of actions were taken as a result of which the government became the sole founder of the newspapers "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" and "Kyrgyz Tuusu."

Several years after the 1992 Media Law was adopted, a number of draft amendments to the law or new draft laws (a total number of about seven) were developed, which never made it through final adoption by the Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament). The first serious attempt to introduce a new law was made in 1996, when the Parliament received a draft law developed by the Legislative Assembly deputy Adakhan Madumarov (a former TV journalist). This draft law was not much different from the 1992 Law, however, it prescribed in more detail the procedure of registration which was obviously of a permissive character. It also contained an article on language, which many people understood as prescribing all media content to be produced in the state language and translated into other languages. The draft law also provided criminal responsibility for "abuse" of freedom of speech, which could be used against any journalist writing sharp, critical materials. The draft law has a number of other shortcomings that imposed on media even more limitations than did the 1992 Law. However it was not adopted by the Parliament and sent for revision.

After the revision, in November 1997, Parliament adopted the Mass Media Law which to all limitations of the 1996 Draft Law added the following ones: that journalists had no right to publish prior to the court decision any information on persons against whom criminal proceedings were initiated; media representatives not allowed to enter the premises of joint stock companies and private enterprises without special permission, neither to publish the facts of citizens' private lives; moral damage to be compensated by the court decision at the amount specified by the plaintiff; journalists to name their sources of information at first demand by any person; inadmissibility of use of media for instigation of class discord, etc. The reaction from media specialists and activists of human rights was universal – the adopted law was characterized as a rough violation of elementary legal norms for ensuring freedom of expression and press. The President of the republic used his right of veto, which Parliament could not overcome and the Law was never validated.

In 1998, there was another attempt to introduce a new Media Law. This new draft represented a hybrid of the current 1992 Media Law and 1996 Draft Law. However, this time it was not adopted by the Parliament either and the 1992 Law is still in force - although discussions on the necessity of a new law have never stopped.

Law «On Protection of State Secrets»

This was the first of a number of laws relating to mass media. Adopted in 1994, the Law «defines the legal foundations of the functioning of the system for protection of state secrets in all types of activities of state bodies, enterprises, associations, organizations, irrespective of forms of property, military units and citizens of the Kyrgyz

Republic in the entire territory of the country and in its institutions abroad». Although the law was characterized as limiting human rights (and especially the ones of journalists) to receive information, this law provided a definition of state secrets (with divisions between the state secret, military secret and office secret), and separated them from non-state secrets (commercial secret, information for office use, information not to be disclosed, investigation secret, doctor secret, personal secrets and other types of secrets). The advantage of this Law was that it established these lines of division, which had not been done by the 1992 Media Law that nonetheless prescribed responsibility for disclosure of state and commercial secrets (commercial and office secrets were not defined in the Law either). Subsequently, the Law on state secrets was effectively used by the military to justify non-provision of information on military events of 1999-2000 in Batken.

The Law «On the professional activity of journalists» and the Law «On guarantees and freedom of access to information» were adopted in November 1997 in the same package with the Media Law vetoed by President Akaev. Although media specialists note a number of shortcomings in both laws, in essence the wordings of the laws are so broad and of such a general character, sometimes just repeating the norms of the common legislation included into the Civil and Criminal Codes, that it is quite difficult to state that introduction of these laws made the activity of journalists easier or harder. However, during focus group discussions, newspaper chief editors pointed out an obvious contradiction in the Law "on journalists' professional activity." Article 9 «Investigative journalism» establishes the right of a journalist to conduct journalistic investigations, while on the other hand Article 7 «Journalist's obligations» prohibits the journalist to use "audio and video recording devices without the consent of the source of information or the author." This clause makes it difficult to receive credible and convincing evidence in conducting journalistic investigation. In general, as far as these two laws are concerned, many journalists do not even know they exist or their content, which was often confirmed in focus groups and personal interviews with journalists and heads of media.

The Law «On advertising» was adopted in 1998, when the advertising market began to develop, in order to regulate «relations emerging in the process of production, placement and dissemination of advertising in the markets of goods, works and services of the Kyrgyz Republic, including securities markets and the markets of banks, insurance and other services associated with use of monetary means by individuals and legal entities. The goals of this Law are protection from dishonest competition in the sphere of advertising, the prevention and blocking of improper advertising capable of misleading the consumers or harming health, property of individuals or legal entities, environment, or causing harm to honor, dignity or business reputation of the above persons and entities, as well as infringing upon public interests, principles of humanity and morale » (Article 1, p.1-2). On the whole it was positive in its wording, but the Law on Advertising has never brought the expected rapid growth of the advertising market.

This is due most probably to a hard general economic situation in the country rather than the character of the Law.

The Law «On information» was adopted in October 1999. One of the drafters of the Law, academic of the KR National Academy of Sciences, Valery Zhivoglyadov, justified its necessity in the following way: «We are striving to create an information society, and we need a legal foundation for this. This law will become the basis for this, protecting the information, copyright, ownership of information resources and certification of information resources and systems. It will allow us to avoid future situations causing damage. The computer virus "Chernobyl" caused damage worth hundreds of thousands of American dollars. Here no one is insured against this, but no one is protected by legislation either». ⁶ This law was adopted to implement the idea of the creation of an «Informational Silk Road» from Europe to China (a project, in which Georgia is participating as well), and reflects the state policy of creation of domestic information resources and the entry of Kyrgyzstan into the "world information space. Although it is necessary to point out that during discussion of the draft law the deputies excluded the article from providing a 10-percent funding from the national budget of information resources and systems, believing this to be too large an amount for this sphere.

The Law «On television and radio broadcasting», as it was already mentioned above, is still under consideration by the Parliament. It is expected, that at the fall session of 2001 a new draft law will be discussed, developed by the Ministry of Transport and Communications. In the absence of a special law, activities of electronic media are regulated by the Laws "on electric and mail communication," "on licensing" and since their adoption in May 2001, the general Regulations "on licensing of certain types of entrepreneurial activity." All these laws and regulatory acts suffer from the fact that they do not reflect the specificity of electronic media (procedure for closing the media, defining of responsibility of media officials, etc.) and do not specify the rights of electronic media or the procedure for their protection.

Besides these key laws, media activity is regulated by several "adjacent" laws, such as the laws "on the system of scientific and technical information," "on author and adjacent rights," and various presidential decrees and regulatory acts. These include resolutions and regulations of the Government on licensing of television and radio companies and accreditation of foreign journalists in Kyrgyzstan. As for media legislation on the whole, it is worth mentioning that practically all laws suffer from the fact that they are not properly applied because there are no effective mechanisms for their implementation. Media specialists often make comments such as, "the laws are good in general, but they do not work in practice." This was heard at focus group discussions and personal interviews. In addition, a constantly growing number of new laws only make the situation more confusing. As media lawyer Lev Bardin states, "first of all, in practice there may appear disputes about the superiority of some laws over others.

⁶ Cited in Internews newsletter "Communication", Issue 18 (June 1999).

Second, it is very difficult to avoid repetitions and contradictions of various laws. As a result, we may face even more conflict situations.⁷ As specialists point out, it is necessary to create either one law that would cover all aspects of media activities, or a Code of Laws on media and guarantees of journalistic activities which would simplify and unify all current laws and regulatory acts.⁸

Special attention should be given to a failed attempt of the Legislative Assembly of the KR Jogorku Kenesh to adopt the *Law «on protection of honor, dignity and business reputation»* in June 1999. Although, according to the Law developers, it was aimed at protection of honor and dignity of all citizens of the country (for example, it had special provisions on honor and dignity of children and the deceased), in fact it was drawn up to protect representatives of the government, officials and candidates to elected positions. It also included a special article (Article 6) protecting the honor and dignity of the President, deputies of the Jogorku Kenesh, members of the Government, Constitutional Court, Supreme Court and Highest Arbitration Court of the Kyrgyz Republic. Parliament adopted this Law after the Constitution was amended to prevent adoption of laws limiting the freedom of expression and media, which gave grounds to the President to denounce the law as unconstitutional and put a veto onto it which the Parliament was not able to overcome.

4.2 Other legislation relating to media

Libel legislation

This takes a special place in media activities. Responsibility for libel and insults is provided by both the Civil and Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic. Particularly limiting for journalists and often used against them for initiating multi-million court cases are Articles 127 and 128 of the Criminal Code put into force in 1998, which prescribe criminal punishment for libel and slander (part 3 of Article 127, for example, prescribes confinement of 3-6 months or imprisonment of up to 3 years). During the period 1999-2000, the number of the court cases and major claims of damage compensation increased so highly that in June 2001 the Parliament was considering draft laws on alteration of criminal responsibility for libel.

One of the draft laws was submitted by President Akaev with the proposal to exclude both libel articles (127 and 128) from the Criminal Code. The Parliament's own draft suggests to exclude only part 3 of Article 127, i.e. criminal libel, having preserved in the Criminal Code responsibility in the form of fines. Both drafts also provide introduction into the Law "on state fees", with a separate clause prescribing that a plaintiff claiming compensation of moral damages caused by libel and slander must pay a fee at the amount of 5% (President's draft) or 10% (Parliament's draft) of the claimed sum, which should discourage the number of cases initiated to receive compensations for

⁷ Newsletter «Media: Legislation and Practice» of the Kyrgyzstan Bureau on Human Rights and Compliance with the Law, Issue 10, 1998.

⁸ *Ibid*, Issue 8, 1997, commentary by lawyer Yuri Maksimov.

damages caused by media publications. These draft laws were discussed during the spring 2001 Parliament session, but were never adopted.

Tax law

Similarly to other units involved in economic activity, mass media in Kyrgyzstan is subject to taxation. Up to the middle of the 90s, taxation of media was beneficial: the media did not pay value added tax and profit tax was at 15%, which also facilitated impetuous development and the appearance of new mass media. However with the introduction in 1997 of the new Tax Code the media became equal to other profit-making enterprises which are required to pay all "commercial" taxes, namely 20% VAT, 30% profit tax and 8% direct and indirect taxes. This has complicated the situation with the media to such an extent that in February 2001, a number of heads of leading media addressed the President, Government and Legislative Assembly of the Parliament with a request to remove taxes impeding development of the media in the republic – both profit tax and VAT.⁹ However, if the draft law developed by the Government which introduces a 10-percent rate of profit tax is validated, as planned, starting from January 2002, this issue will be resolved for the benefit of the media and other commercial enterprises without giving the media a special status or provision of special benefits for the media.

4.3 Regulatory agencies

In Kyrgyzstan there is no ministry or agency directly and immediately regulating activity of mass media. Here is the proper place to note again too broad wording of the Media Law which does not specify which regulatory functions will be carried out by which agency and this is why the regulatory structure was and is subject to frequent change.

The Ministry of Information and Print that existed under the Soviet Union was abolished as early as 1991, as a result of restructuring of the Government initiated by President Akaev.

The functions of the former union *Ministry of Communication*, later put through various transformations and renaming, are currently carried out by two structures – the *Ministry of Transformation and Communications* and the *State Agency on Communications (SAC) under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic*. Here we should note the phenomenon of the Communications Agency which grew out of the former union ministry on the basis of the function of frequency distribution for broadcasting. For a long time this existed as an independent national technical service distributing frequencies and issuing licenses to electronic media with the right to control the condition

⁹ The full text of the address see in *Internews* newsletter "Communication", Issue 68, February 2001 or at the site <http://www.internews.kg/russian/bulletin/buls.htm>.

of technical means and equipment of television and radio companies. According to the former head of National Agency on Communications (NAC), if such technical means and equipment of electronic media did not comply with the requirements on electric and magnetic specifications and quality indications, the Agency initiated the procedure of "prohibition of exploitation" of the transmitter. But this should not be confused with the act of shutting down the electronic media, which can be done only through a court.¹⁰ After the recent restructuring of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic at the end of 2000, the NAC lost its status and is no longer an independent structure but instead comes under the government, which implies less freedom in decision making. The Communications Agency in no way influences the content or programming of the electronic media. The agency also requires from the electronic media re-broadcasting channels of other countries to produce an agreement permitting such re-broadcasting in Kyrgyzstan.

The Public Chamber of Mass Media Activities under the KR President was created in August 1994 as a non-governmental organization to solve the issues of morals and decency in media publications.¹¹ The Chamber was abolished by Presidential Decree in April 1996.

The Ministry of Justice carries out a very specific function in relation to mass media – their registration as legal entities, which should be paid special attention.

4.3.1 Registration of mass media

Registration of mass media deserves special consideration, especially due to the events of 2001 around re-registration of existing media and the registration of new media. In accordance with the Media Law of 1992, each mass medium must be registered with the Ministry of Justice as a legal entity: "A mass medium organization shall carry out its activity only after its registration" (Article 6), and the Ministry of Justice should consider the documents submitted for registration within one month. In fact, the Law establishes not an applicative and recording but a permissive procedure of registration.

Case Study: «Semeinaya Gazeta»

The editor of "Svobodnye Gory" newspaper, which was shut down by court decision (August 1994), Ludmila Jolmuhamedova registered a new newspaper – "Semeinaya Gazeta" with the Ministry of Justice and published a test issue on January 19, 1995. Despite the peaceful title, many materials of the issue were written in a politicized, critical manner, i.e. the editor made it clear that she was not going to deviate from the previous policy.

On February 6, 1995 the Ministry of Justice cancelled its own decision on registration of "Semeinaya Gazeta." Reason: allegedly, some violations were made in the registration process.

Source: Newsletter «*Media: Legislation and Practice*», Issue 1, February 1996.

Up to 2001 there were no cases of factual rejection of registration based on incompliance of documents. Even if the documents were returned to the founders, it was done usually because they did not meet the registration requirements and after revision and completing they were submitted again. However, there was a case when the registration of a newspaper was cancelled after its first issue came out (see Case study: "Semeinaya Gazeta").

¹⁰ From the interview of the NAC head İ.Kaiyikov for Internews newsletter "Communication", Issue 5, December 1998.

¹¹ See also Chapter «*Censorship*».

On April 5 2001, the Collegium of the Ministry of Justice issued a Resolution "on the issues of re-registration of mass media and political parties", on the basis of which all the mass media and political parties of the republic registered before January 1, 2001 were to go through re-registration prior to July 1, 2001. Internews lawyers¹² and other specialists characterized this Resolution as unjustified, since the requirements of re-registration and the termination of activity of legal entities are regulated by the Law "on state registration of legal entities." However, the rationale that the Ministry of Justice used was that there are many mass media in the republic that do not publish over long periods of time although still considered to be in operation. According to the Ministry of Justice, this resolution was to identify such "dead bodies." Despite protests on the part of Internews and other rights protection organizations and individuals, the Ministry kept the Resolution in force. Moreover, in his interview with a "Delo Nomer" correspondent, the Deputy Minister of Justice E. Mamyrov specifically pointed out: "This resolution is not aimed at filtering out opposition newspapers. We only want to identify and verify the number of operating mass media." He invited everyone who disagreed with the Resolution to appeal against it through the courts.¹³

On June 20, 2001 the Collegium of the Ministry of Justice issued one more resolution on cancellation of 16 media registered after April 5, referring to the resolution on registration of media issued also on April 5 and prescribing to suspend registration of new media till completion of re-registration of existing media. The 16 media whose registration was cancelled included the newspaper «Moya Stolitsa», established by former staff of the Vecheny Bishkek, who left after a change of ownership headed by the former VB chief editor A.Kim. Also the newspapers "Agym," "Techenie" and "Joltiken", which was initiated by "ex-candidate to president Melis Eshimkanov, whose most popular newspaper 'Asaba' was closed."¹⁴ What happened in this case is exactly what the deputy minister of justice denied so vigorously – the registration procedure was used by the government to prevent operation of "undesirable" and potentially dangerous newspapers.

Currently, the term for re-registration of existing media is prolonged till October 1, 2001, according to the Ministry of Justice, following the requests of those media that did not manage to prepare their documents. Only about 40 media were re-registered by July 1, 2001.¹⁵ At the same time, registration of new media is still not allowed until the re-registration is over, which, as the Internews Director Chris Schuepp notes, has paralyzed further development of media in Kyrgyzstan.¹⁶ The newspaper "Moya stolitsa" comes out on the pages of the newspaper "Advokat" and initiated a case in the Bishkek City Arbitration Court on cancellation of the Ministry of Justice resolution. Representatives of the Ministry of Justice either did not come or did not produce the necessary documents at the first two court sessions and the case was postponed. The

¹² For more details, see Internews newsletter "Communication", Issue 74, April 2001.

¹³ Cited *ibid*.

¹⁴ «Greetings, dear friends!» (Address of the newspaper "Moya Stolitsa" to the readers), newspaper "Advokat," July 24, 2001.

¹⁵ Internews newsletter "Communication", Issue 82, July 2001.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, Issue 83, July 2001.

three above mentioned newspapers – “Agym,” “Techenie” and “Joltiken” – also initiated a case against the Ministry at the city arbitration court.¹⁷

This example shows clearly that in certain situations the applicative registration procedure may be used as permissive in order to prevent appearance of those media that for one or another reason may seem dangerous or undesirable for the government. In this situation even more reasonable seems the proposal that had been formulated many times by various experts – to introduce into media legislation a change that would establish the truly applicative and recording character of registration carried out by statistics bodies rather than the Ministry of Justice.¹⁸

4.4 Censorship

In accordance with the Constitutional principle of freedom of expression and freedom of media, direct censorship of mass media in Kyrgyzstan is officially prohibited by the Law “on Mass Media” (Article 1, p.2) and Law “on Protection of Journalist’s Professional Activity” (Article 4, p.1). This also establishes that “no one has the right either to require from a journalist preliminary approval for messages and materials or to require to change the text or entirely remove from publication (air) materials or messages” (Article 4, p.2) and that “there must be no limitation for access of a journalist to information presenting public interest or relating to the rights, freedoms and lawful interests of the citizens” (Article 4, p.3). Article 9 also provides journalists with the right to conduct journalistic investigation which is an additional guarantee of a journalistic freedom, and the same article provides the right to “spread in mass media the results of the journalist’s professional investigation, voluntarily to provide them to the state bodies, self-government bodies, public associations, enterprises, organizations and officials. No one can seize or inspect materials and documents received by a journalist during investigative journalism, other than through a court procedure.” Therefore, the legislation provides sufficient mechanisms to protect both journalists and media as organizations from censorship.

However, in practice there are various forms of indirect censorship. For example, many journalists provide examples of phone calls from “the top” that earnestly request not to

publish or air already prepared materials. This is an especially effective way to affect state and pro-government media and in such cases threats of tax or financial inspections may be used, even inspections by firefighting services. All these forms of pressure are nothing but a certain form of preliminary censorship. Another effective way not to block information for publication (and therefore also a form of censorship in essence), is limitation of journalists’ access to information. In this area the Laws “on Protection

¹⁷ The described situation that existed at the time of report preparation has changed: after the official term for re-registration expired, the new newspapers were allowed to be issued and starting from November 2001 the newspapers “Moya Stolitsa – novosti” and “Agym” come out regularly.

¹⁸ These and other recommendations formulated by media specialists and lawyers for the changes in legislation are exhibited in Annexe A.

of State Secrets” and “on Guarantees and Freedom of Access to Information” have turned out to be effective in protecting state and other secrets which have never been defined clearly. In this way there exists a wide space for interpretation of what is a commercial secret, information with partial access, etc. Thus, through regulation of the issues of access to information and by protecting various types of secrets, the legislation provides sufficient opportunities for influence other than censorship and for the limitation of journalists’ actions in the absence of direct censorship.

At present there are no special “censorship structures” in the republic, however after shutting down the newspaper “Svobodnye Gory” in August 1994, a presidential decree established *The Public Chamber on Mass Media Issues* under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic. Its main function was to assist journalists in their work and not to allow use of mass media for creation of political instability and disturbance of national concord and civil peace.¹⁹ At the time of its creation, the Chamber consisted of one staff member – Chairperson K.Akmatov, a well-known Kyrgyz writer and several journalists, writers and media heads working for the Chamber on a voluntarily basis. The meetings of the Chamber were usually called after scandalous or non-conformist publications in the media, after discussion of which the Chamber published its statements in the state newspapers. One of such publications contained the mission statement of the Chamber, which was to “protect not only the President, but also any citizen from lies and insult. We are to sharpen the attention of juridical bodies, as passive sides, on these facts. We help the citizens of the Republic to defend their rights and freedom. We rank first the individual freedom; the liberty of press should not violate the freedom of an individual (...).The Chamber declares, that any fact of taking advantage or misusing of newspaper space, encroachment of people’s dignity, demagogic charges of any person by those who have an access to mass media, should not remain unpunished.”²⁰ Many journalists and media specialists assessed creation of the Chamber as an attempt to apply censorship on media, but the Chamber turned out to be a “toothless still-born agency with no real power,”²¹ which in the long run was abolished in April 1996 by a Presidential Decree under the pressure of public organizations and human rights organizations.

We should also note the existence of a half-mythical and virtual *Commission for Morals Under the Ministry of Justice*, the exact period of “life” of which is practically impossible to establish. According to some sources, it existed for about 1-2 years and was abolished in January 1999, and which in March 1999 appeared as one of the initiators of court cases against newspapers publishing erotic materials – “Paishamba,” “Limon” and “Kaptama.”²²

One could not but agree with the statement of the Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations (Moscow) lawyer E.Kandybina that in Kyrgyzstan “there is no censorship as

¹⁹ Decree of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic “On Establishment of Public Chamber for Mass Media Issues,” Slovo Kyrgyzstana, August 20, 1994.

²⁰ “Statement of the Public Chamber for Mass Media Issues,” Kyrgyzstan Madaniyaty, March 17, 1995.

²¹ S.Kulikova’s interview with the chief editor of “Asaba” newspaper on April 20, 1995.

²² See also the chapter on court cases and claims against media and Annexe B1 “Asaba.”

such, however each journalist, each editor of a mass medium has an understanding of the consequences that may fall upon his/her head in case of excessive (naturally, in the view of the government) indulgence in critical materials.²³ That is to say, simple self-censorship – each journalist knows exactly the line, the level which he/she can approach in criticism without risk of losing one’s job, and this is particularly characteristic of the government media. For example, heads of oblast media can criticize quite freely the rayon authorities and oblast structures, but not the governor himself, since he makes decisions on their funding. And the degree of criticism of the governor (where it is allowed) depends only on the governor himself, or to be more exact, on how tolerant he is to the criticism. Lately journalists often say that it is not advisable or is beyond their authority to criticize the President, leaving this for openly oppositional newspapers.

According to the former OSCE Bishkek representative Jerzy Wieclaw, in Kyrgyzstan there really exists so-called “structural censorship.” Among elements of such censorship he lists the monopoly of state for paper and printing services, control over the import of paper, increases of office rent payments, control over distribution of media products, channeling of advertising flows to friendly media and non-admission into unfriendly ones and the initiating of court cases for violation of honor and dignity with the requirement to pay incredibly high compensations. This type of censorship may also include tax inspections, creation of various committees on the protection of morals, claims related to non-compliance with ethical norms and other similar measures used for curbing the media.²⁴

All these measures and capacities together allow the government to ensure quite a high level of loyalty from most media outlets, in spite of the absence of direct censorship usually understood as an open demand by the authorities at various levels to coordinate with them in advance information published in the media. If all forms of practiced indirect censorship and self-censorship in Kyrgyzstan are considered, it becomes understandable how the authorities managed to achieve such a high level of media loyalty, while at the same time maintaining the legislative norms of a democratic system prescribing freedom of expression and absence of censorship of media. Various media experts and lawyers have repeatedly formulated recommendations, which, in their opinion, would help to improve the legislative foundation and practice of media activities. The most important of these recommendations are exhibited in Annexe A.

²³ E.Kandybina, «How to achieve media loyalty: Censorship in Kyrgyzstan», CAMEL, Issue 6, August 2000.

²⁴ See Internews newsletter “Communication”, Issue 50, July 2000, or “Slovo Kyrgyzstana” of May 12, 2000, article by U.Tesemnikov “Democracy and Media in Kyrgyzstan.”

SECTION 5

CURRENT STATUS OF MASS MEDIA IN YKRGYZSTAN

5.1 Structural context of modern journalism

In the process of social practice, a certain structure of mass media is created which reflects in structural and typological characteristics. Since one of the goals of this research was analysis of Kyrgyzstan's mass media system in the context of the globalizing information world it seems necessary to apply to the mass media of the Kyrgyz Republic the typology criteria established in modern media theory. At the same time, since the movement in media typology of any country takes place continuously in accordance with the changes of its social, political and economic system, it is impossible to apply only those typology criteria that would be universal for all societies and all times – it is necessary to introduce some criteria that would be unique for a particular country.¹ This is why in our approach to the description of Kyrgyzstan's media typology the authors of the report used both the universal criteria and those that are specific for Kyrgyzstan.

It should be noted from the outset that, similarly to other modern societies, in *the structural aspect* the system of journalism in Kyrgyzstan is represented by several groups of mass media, which are differentiated by the production technology and a number of other characteristics:

- electronic media (television, radio, Internet)
- print media (newspapers, magazines, almanacs, newsletters, digests, entertainment periodicals)
- information services – agencies, press services, public relations agencies
- professional associations, unions and clubs.

The description of the structure and system of mass media in Kyrgyzstan presented below includes analysis of these groups of mass media on the basis of typology criteria both universal and unique for Kyrgyzstan, first in the narrative form and then in the form of Table 4 illustrating the criteria used. Annexe D1 also illustrates these criteria presenting the cumulative data on newspapers and magazines obtained through a mail survey.

¹ Due to the changes in status and characteristics of media on the one hand and the absence of real mechanisms of monitoring these processes, the proposed classifications cannot claim absolute fullness and verification. Media are an activity, which is, in terms of its publishing characteristics, not transparent for the public. The self-identifications of newspapers and magazines that traditionally existed during the soviet period as printed bodies of specific bodies seem to have been entirely overcome. The newspapers believe it sufficient to identify themselves as just "daily newspaper," "public and political newspaper," etc. That is newspapers themselves do not give the public any understanding of their territory of distribution, with the exception of several newspapers that define themselves as "national". The same relates to circulation, audience covered, and other most important typological characteristics.

Publishing characteristics of newspapers

The complexities of *publishing characteristics*, including the differences in regularity of issues, circulation, format and volume suggests a number of typological groups of the print and electronic media (see Table 4 "Typology and System of Media in Kyrgyzstan). It should be noted that this criterion of classification is not just of a formal character: for example, the differences in periodicity of newspapers is associated with the ability to collect and process the information quickly. In the practical aspect, the differences in volume, format and concept of efficiency together define the differences between the journalism of news and the journalism of opinions.

As Russian journalism researchers² point out, the previously common division of media by *place of publication* – into national, regional, and local – today is not correct. The place of origin of a mass medium today in fact differentiates only between the foreign and domestic media. Considering the vertical principle of media organization, however, it is reasonable to single out the criterion of *the served area or region of distribution*. The issue is that the newspapers that are published in the province may be distributed in other regions of the country and sometimes claim coverage of the entire country. For example, such were the newspaper "Osh Press Vesti," a woman's NGO "Soopker" newspaper registered in Naryn, Jalal-Abad oblast newspaper "Akyikat," etc. Sometimes it happens that a local newspaper is distributed as a regional one and with time changes its status. A clear example of such a newspaper is "Vecherny Bishkek," which in the past was the city newspaper by definition. Due to this process, the status of a number of media becomes uncertain and in this classification it is possible to talk about the status as applied to the region of distribution. The same tendencies are present in the development of television and radio broadcasting as well.

The typology of Kyrgyzstan's media is also marked by a vivid shrinking of the market share of the national newspapers,³ since not every newspaper has distribution capacities in the remote areas. It is said that the following newspapers geographically "cover" the entire country: government mouthpieces such as "Slovo Kyrgyzstana," "Kyrgyz Tuusu," and private newspapers such as "Asaba," "Delo Nomer," "Aalam," "Kyrgyz Rukhu." But in the course of research we have found that not all of them are "consumed" everywhere in the remote areas. In the provinces the demand for Russian-language press is very limited, and the traditionally national newspapers – "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" and "Kyrgyz Tuusu" – do not enjoy a high reputation either. Some newspapers were reported to practice repressive forms of subscription, when with the help of the local authorities they are imposed upon heads of organizations and enterprises and employees of the state sector (teachers, doctors, etc.). However, it is not only the state newspapers that can enjoy such protection from the state. By the effort of the Ministry of Education the professional newspaper "Kut Bilim" also came close to becoming national – by the Minister's order subscriptions were imposed on the employees of educational, scientific and cultural institutions

² L.Svitich, A.Shiryayeva, S.Korkonosenko, and others.

³ The number of national newspapers is not large all over the world. For example, in the USA such status is enjoyed only by 3 newspapers (4 by other estimates), while all the newspapers circulation is about 3 million, and in Great Britain – 9, while the single-day newspaper circulation is 15 million copies, etc. (see S. Korkonosenko "Basics of Journalism Theory," St.Petersburg, 1994, p.34).

According to the surveyed news stands, sellers and employees of the "Kyrgyzbasmasoz" (kiosk) system, there was a decline (compared to 1996-1999) of interest in the newspaper "Asaba." The small circulation of "Aalam" and "Kyrgyz Rukhu" that reached the remote villages does not allow discussion of any real influence of these newspapers. At the same time, there are a number of specific periodicals, which reach the most remote areas and are in great demand. These include such newspapers as "Tagdyr," "Syrduu Duino," "Magiya," "Perishtem," etc. These periodicals' association with the newspaper genre is quite conditional: only periodicity allows categorisation of some of them as newspapers.⁴

State television and radio do not cover the entire country either, not to mention non-state electronic media, which are quite limited in their technical capacities.

The official statistics, however, provide quite favorable, albeit contradictory data on circulation. Thus, according to the National Statistics Committee, in 2000 a single-day circulation of newspapers only (in this category a striking stability is observed starting from 1996) is 1,122,000 copies⁵, and every 1000 people enjoy 229 copies from the single-day total circulation, i.e. every fourth resident consistently reads at least one newspaper.⁶ Taking into account the fact that almost half of the country's population is made up of children and teenagers, it means that practically the entire adult population is covered by the domestic print media.

However, audience studies conducted under this research, showed a different picture. Participants of focus groups for audiences were looking for the *first time* with great interest at some newspapers which had been bought for discussion of information needs at local kiosks or from private salespeople. For example, in Osh and Jalal-Abad many participants of focus groups did not even know about the existence of such newspapers as "Capitalism" or "Oschestvenny Reiting." At the same time, 95% of the participants stated that they did not remember the last time they bought or subscribed to a newspaper. Residents of the regions said that in the remote areas organizations and institutions are forced to subscribe for newspapers. Subscription is also imposed upon "budget" employees – teachers, doctors, etc. One of the participants of the focus group for media users in Osh shared the following information: "I am a teacher at a secondary school and the director of our school is forced to subscribe to all the three oblast newspapers. We, the teachers, have to chip in and subscribe to these newspapers. Or they just deduct it from our salaries (...)" Interesting is the fact that all three Osh oblast state newspapers showed in their revenue structure that subscription brings 40, 45 and 50 per cent of their total revenue, i.e. about a half. The same refers to the state newspapers in other regions and at other levels (rayon, city) – the share of subscription in their revenue structure comprises 30-50 per cent for the newspapers of local authorities at all levels, rising to 70-90 per cent for institutional and specialized newspapers.

⁴ See Chapter "Development of Information Supply and Demand."

⁵ Our approximate estimations allow to talk about 500,000 of single-day total circulation.

⁶ See diagram «Quantitative changes in the press" in Chapter "Development of Information Supply and Demand."

All participants of focus groups noted great demand for information but due to the low purchasing power of the population, newspapers have long ceased to be part of their "consumption minimum." One participant of the same focus group in Osh said, "Frankly speaking, if I had an opportunity to buy newspapers, I would buy a lot of them. I would consume newspapers with an incredible pleasure. But because I have no money to buy newspapers, I feel constantly information hungry; I just want to read something. It has just become a sort of a tradition, when you know where and what you can read. But now I have to suppress my interest because I cannot afford to buy newspapers."

Both journalists and editors expressed their concern about the inability of the domestic press to cover most of the citizens and provided them with information. For example, the owner of "Asaba," the newspaper that stopped its operation, Melis Eshimkanov in the interview testified, "I visited some Batken villages before the presidential election, the people there did not even know that the election campaign was underway. They surprised me by believing that the President of the country is Aibalaev, the governor." The latter was seen by the oblast residents as the head of the state, and the world for them was limited by the oblast borders while the oblast center Batken was perceived as close to the capital of the world. On this map of the world, only Uzbekistan was marked clearly and significantly.

Such informational "illiteracy" is not surprising – the oblast with the population of 380,000 has among local media only one weekly oblast state newspaper with a circulation of 4,100 and one radio station – "Salam." The flow of newspapers from the capital is insignificant as well – the costs of transportation are prohibitive.

The number of national media outlets that will remain and regularly come out in Kyrgyzstan will strongly depend on state policy in the media sphere and the media's technical and economic capacities. Today we should point out the main tendency – withdrawal of national printing and in many cases electronic media from the regions. This tendency is accompanied by the trend of "dying" local media – professional oblast television and radio stations, oblast and rayon newspapers (financial insolvency of local media presents a whole cluster of problematic symptoms. Disastrous conditions of material resources and technical equipment, low level of adjustment to professional activity under market conditions, paternalistic attitudes and journalists' expectations of the state, consequent low quality of the media product and its inability to sell at the local market, while the existence of such "low-demand" local media is still artificially supported by local authorities. Therefore, objectively there appears a situation where the residents of the remote areas are more and more alienated from the national political life and withdraw into their own small world of every-day life, reconstructing the reality in a totally different, negligibly small dimension.

However, in modern societies an information vacuum cannot exist for a long time and the residents of regions look to foreign media. As a result, in the northern regions and Bishkek the residents consume Russian and Kazakh media, and in the south – Uzbek

ones. In Bishkek itself, quite a unique situation is developing in this sense. According to "Ala-TV" corporation, about 6,000 residents in the capital are subscribers to its cable television network, i.e. every day 6,000 families of Kyrgyzstan submerge either into the realities of life in Russia, or, if they know a foreign language well enough, into the realities of life in the faraway France, Germany, America, etc. In this respect, an illustration is the example of an AUK student who participated in this research voluntarily: "I come home after classes and immediately turn on Ala-TV. As a rule I watch MTV or some other music or fashion channel. The television for me is like background, I cannot do anything without it. I watch news on BBC or Euronews, sometimes NTV. And of course my favorite channels are Star World and Star Movies. My parents yell at me, complain that I watch TV for days and that this western culture influences me badly and that I have even started to look like a foreigner. But I like it, especially because I know that life there is not so different from what they show on TV, not like here – there everything is much better." To a question about where she gets information on local events, the student said that this was not interesting for her, and if something serious happened, for example, like Batken events, she learns about it either from her parents or friends and teachers at AUK.

Founding and ownership of media

According to the legislation, there are now limitations on *founding mass media* in the country. If in soviet times the main owners and founders of the media were universally the communist party and state bodies, today there appeared media outlets of various forms of ownership. At present there is practically no party press in its strict definition, i.e. newspapers officially belonging to political parties. However the state still owns a powerful media arsenal. While in the capital and in Osh the situation in this sense has significantly changed compared to the soviet period, in remote oblasts and rayons, in small towns and villages there are virtually no non-state media.

It seems to be incorrect to classify private and joint-stock media as independent ones. The influence of certain political forces on them is obvious and therefore it is more reasonable to categorize them as non-state.

Non-autonomy of politics and economy⁷ does not allow to separate clearly certain interests in print media, television and radio that are pursued by the competing groups of businessmen from the respective interests of political groups and individuals. From this point of view, it would be reasonable to complement the analysis of media types by the "founder" criterion with the characteristics of groups of influence connected with the editorial staffs through sponsorship, personal relations, joint entrepreneurial and political activity. However, non-transparency of the information sphere in this particular aspect makes it difficult to conduct reliable analysis in this sense.

Very often, official founders (who frequently are not the same persons as the real owners) in no way participate in defining the media policies or orientations. This fact was underscored in personal conversations and interviews with journalists of many

⁷ See Section "Methodology and methods of research."

media, including "Vecherny Bishkek." The results of participatory observation in newsrooms of KOORT, "Pyramid," in "Vecherny Bishkek" newspaper allowed us to establish that even staff employees often have no verified information about the owners and founders of their medium. Ordinary journalists in these media have to rely only on rumors and unverified guesses. In friendly conversations the journalists of "Vecherny Bishkek" say that the unofficial owners of the newspaper are Bermet Akaeva and Adil Toigonbaev, the President's son-in-law, and that they own 75% of all shares of the newspaper. Allegedly, this is not the only media enterprise of the Akaevs' family. According to the rumors, they also own KOORT and quite recently acquired NBT. The latter, according to the information of some journalists, has changed ownership just this year and now this television channel is undergoing content reorganization, personnel and management changes.

It is indicative that the ordinary staff of the "Pyramid" television and radio company are not able to explain the issues of ownership and founding of their medium. The company is managed under a regime of information deficit and non-transparency of decisions taken. The management of the company always included one of the founders, owner of the main share Adyl Biynazarov. The founders' composition, according to the testimony of "Pyramid" journalists, has changed over the past 10 years. For example, among the founders at different times were Romanov, Gorodov and Vassel Khaldarov; besides, redistribution of shares among the founders took place: for example, B.Derbishev lost his "weight" in the company. According to non-confirmed data, a significant share of the company's capital belonged to Daniyar Usenov, at that time a well-known politician and businessman, who disappeared from the political scene after not been reelected in the 2000 Parliamentary campaign. Change of ownership is indirectly proven by the political and critical stance of the television channel at different times. For example, one of the participants of the focus group for electronic media experts said the following, "Criticism depends on whose money is invested in there and on the general character of the company. For example, if you take Pyramid – when there was Usenov... it seemed to me that Usenov's money was working there. Now the ownership has changed, and it's over – everyone's forgotten about Usenov now, and they say, 'Oh, Askar Akaevich went there (it's always the first news), then he went there...' – things that Pyramid would never have done before. Now that the money is different there, now some people are criticized, while others are untouchable. Previously it was vice versa."

The management structures of other television and radio companies and a number of print media are even more of a "dark" area closed to the public. There is no opportunity to read about the personnel and other more radical changes in any of the sources currently available, such as the periodicals of media monitoring institutions. The information on founders and ownership is not available from the Ministry of Justice either. The media themselves do not add to the transparency in this process. In this sense, the story of "Vecherny Bishkek" is remarkable. Before the conflict in the

newspaper's journalist family there was a certain clarity about its ownership: A.Kim and A.Ryabushkin were the owners of the largest packages of shares of the closed-type joint stock company "Publishing House 'Vecherny Bishkek'." But after Kim transferred his shares and authority to Ryabushkin, further developments in the publishing house took place in secret. "Vecherny Bishkek" journalists who gave interviews for our research either refused to answer the questions relating to the issues of founding and ownership of the newspaper or asked to turn off the recording devices and then referred to rumors stressing that their knowledge is neither credible nor reliable. However, one of the journalists prompted an idea that change of ownership and transfer of Vecherny Bishkek into the ownership of circles close to the President has been covered by independent opposition newspapers such as Res Publica, however there was no official rejection of this information on the part of Vecherny Bishkek, which may mean that this information is true. The participants of a focus group for media experts also saw the connection between the change of owners and the critical stance of the newspaper, "Vecherny Bishkek lately became toothless and comes out in print very late, it practically is not delivered in the evenings any more. This is just because it is proof read in the White House first, and then approved, therefore it is printed late in the evening. It is supposed to come out around lunchtime, but it is printed late in the evening. The readers complain, but what can be done about it – censorship by the owner."

In one way or another, change of real owners and/or founders directly affects the media content, therefore ownership should be considered a formal category characteristic.

Served audience

The *audience* criterion suggests consideration of specialized and general media outlets. Self-identification of many print media as "public and political" or "public and legal" indicates existence of politicized media. There are media purely commercial, entertaining or educational. On the whole, these media rarely present specific interests of specific groups of media users, all these segments of the informational supply are meant for any audience.

A specialized group of media is represented by outlets targeted first of all at the *social and demographic specific characteristics of the audience*. Specialization is expressed not only in the content of media texts but also in the format and design of the product.

For most current media, understanding of the audience still remains a theoretical abstraction. Our research has shown that the overwhelming majority of journalists and editors have either no idea, or a very illusory understanding, of their audiences' specifics and the limits and scope of their target groups.⁸

It is exactly this lack of knowledge of the media target groups' specifics and unclear image of the audience that are the factors determining the similarity of the media and

⁸ For more detail, see chapter "Development of Information Supply and Demand"

their low demand – they all are meant for an average, featureless user. As a rule, only the national media can claim that their audience is the entire country. But even such media have to take into account the specific categories of population and their interests. Tailoring is done through the issue of specific pages, specialized supplements, programs, etc. For example, “Clovo Kyrgyzstana” has a special supplement for youth. Special theme pages and columns are also regularly prepared by “Vecherny Bishkek.”

Quality mass media

This traditional Western characteristic of media in Kyrgyzstan’s system has only started to take root. As a rule, a characteristic dividing the press of views and the press of news that defines the types of media in this group in Kyrgyzstan takes place only within the media and in their practice.

Domination of weekly newspapers, as well as the soviet tradition of opinion journalism rather than factual news journalism, determines the leaning of domestic media toward the analytical tradition. But in practice there are also media devoid of clear typological features that are issued at the transitory level of qualification. Therefore, the dividing line between the quality and a mass “yellowish” paper is very blurred (a good example of this is “Delo Nomer” which combines both characteristics). It is possible to assess as leaning toward quality the new newspaper “Moya Stolitsa - novosti” currently published on the pages of “Advokat” newspaper.

Information agencies

The journalism system also includes *information and news agencies*, and this includes the national agency “Kabar,” local agencies, for example, “Aki-Press,” “Alliance-Press,” and the Central Asian information services of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). Certain print media, such as “Asaba” and “Vecherny Bishkek” had their own information services. Besides, local media use information from Russian (Interfax, ITAR-TASS, Ria “Novosti”) and international (Reuters, Associated Press) information services and web-resources.

Professional associations and unions

Another component of the journalism system is *professional associations and unions* of journalists existing in Kyrgyzstan today,⁹ which include the following:

1. *Public Association «Journalists»*, Chairman – Kuban Mambetaliev, set up in 1998, unifies more than 160 people.
2. *Union of Journalists of the Kyrgyz Republic*, Chairman – Abdykadyr Sultanbaev.
3. *Public Foundation «Protection of Glasnost»*, Director – Melis Eshimkanov, foundation exists from 1999.
4. *National Association of Users of Radio Frequencies*, which includes some television and radio companies; exists from March 2000. Chair of the Advisory Council – Nina Nashnitsina.

⁹ For more information on some of them see in Section “External and Internal Assessments of Status of Democracy and Freedom of Speech in Kyrgyzstan.”

5. «ANESMI» - branch of the Association of Independent Electronic Media of Central Asia, headed by Raisa Kulatova. Formed in 1995.
6. *National Public Foundation «ESMIK» (Electronic media of Kyrgyzstan)* operates from 1996.
7. PA «*Internews*», Director – Elvira Sarieva, operates from February 1998.
8. *Public Foundation "For Democratic Development and Media Support"*, Director – Baglan Mamaev.
9. *Central Asian Association of Journalists* working under conditions of limited freedom of speech, established in April 2001, headed by Chinara Jakypova.
10. *Osh Media Resource Center* founded in 1996. Unites 27 print and electronic media of southern regions of Kyrgyzstan. Director – Ernis Mamyrganov.

On-line journalism

It is difficult to determine, in which society operates online journalism¹⁰ in Kyrgyzstan. According to some data based on the sociological research of computer companies and information service providers, use of the Internet has reached a very high level. Other data says that the audience with Internet access is only about 10,000.¹¹ However, the analysis of Internet use (groups of consumers, density and quality of consumption), remains beyond sociological research. In the structure of information consumed in the global networks the share of domestic online journalism is negligibly small. Only a handful of Kyrgyzstan print media issue their electronic version. These include the following newspapers: "Vecherny Bishkek," "Delo Nomer," "Osh Press Vesti," "Res Publica," "Literaturny Kyrgyzstan," "Bankovski Vestnik," "Korporativny Vestnik," "Kabar," "The Times of Central Asia," magazines "Ekho Nauki," "Polisphera" and "Aki-Press."

Even if the majority of print media have electronic versions and information technologies become an everyday reality for the Bishkek residents, it is uncertain even whether in 10-20 years Internet will become a reality in remote areas. On the whole, the development of online journalism will depend on political strategies of the state. Online journalism may present a great problem for the government in the future since this is the area where it is practically impossible to control the flow of information from the producer to the user. Even today this is the zone of absolutely no control. Although on the whole the relations between the government and journalism in the country were not characterized by lack of thought and conceptuality, but rather were copied and tailored from other variants of development, one cannot exclude an opportunity that the experience of the faster development in the neighboring and post-soviet countries will prompt the methods and techniques to regulate online journalism that will undoubtedly benefit the government.

¹⁰ On the one hand, in the theoretical community it is acknowledged that communication technologies transform the world into the "global village," structure it (the world) into the "simultaneous/parallel fields" so that there appears one "world communication society" where journalism also carries out work for the society under the global formal framework." On the other hand, it is recognized that the modern society is geographically, nationally and economically limited and it is defined so. In the practical sense, this means that journalism research does not introduce "the world society" as a full-fledged, referent construct (for more detail, the works of McLuhan, Meckel), but continues to describe and classify journalism systems as connected with geographic, national and economic societies.

¹¹ T. Akimov, "Kyrgyzstan media in great expectation?», *Central Asia: Politics and Economics*, Issue 4, 2001.

The table below presents examples to illustrate the typology of Kyrgyzstan's media described above. For a fuller understanding of the media variety in Kyrgyzstan, see Annexe D2 «Kyrgyzstan media database 2001». This database was compiled on the basis of the list of 362 media registered as of November 2000 provided by the Ministry of Justice specifically for the research. Even in this officially issued information there were mistakes and faults: some media were listed several times under different founders and addresses and some of the operational media were not listed at all. Such inconsistency reflects the weakness of the recording system in the information area and lack of mechanisms to exit "dead" media from the system. Most probably, this is the reason why the official data on media operating in the republic varies from 2000, according to the statement of the former presidential press-secretary O.Ibraimov, to 500 according to the data presented on the government web-site "Mass media of Kyrgyzstan" (for more detail, see www.kyrgyzinvest.org/ru/news/media/).

Table 4. *Typology and System of Mass Media in Kyrgyzstan*

Criterion	Print media	Electronic media
Circulation/ Coverage of population¹²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low circulation (up to 10,000 copies) – most of rayon and oblast newspapers • mass (above 10,000 copies) – main national newspapers (including <i>Vecherny Bishkek</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • up to 100,000 people (Talas oblast television and radio company - TRC) • 100,000-500,000 people (Jalal-Abad oblast TRC, Ayan (Naryn), EMTV (Karakol)) • 500,000- 1 million people (Osh TV, KOORT, VOSST, NBT, Asman TV) • above 1 million people (KTR, Pyramid)
Regularity of issuance / Volume of own programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • daily – <i>Vecherny Bishkek</i> de-jure • 5 times a week - <i>Vecherny Bishkek</i> de-facto • 3 times a week – <i>Slovo Kyrgyzstana, Kyrgyz Tuusu, Advokat</i> • 2 times a week – major oblast newspapers • weekly – most of the operating newspapers: <i>Delo Nomer, Obschestvenny Reiting, Litsa</i>, oblast and rayon newspapers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • up to 6 hours a week (most of the oblast and small private TRCs) • up to 6 hours a day (Osh TV, EMTV-Karakol) • 6-12 hours a day (KOORT, NBT, Pyramid) • more than 12 hours a day (KTR)

¹² Official bodies (National Statistics Committee, Ministry of Justice, SAC) either do not have reliable data or provide contradictory information on coverage of the population by the electronic media. Here are presented approximate estimates on the basis of the data provided in the Report on Human Development in Kyrgyzstan (1999) and on the data received in the course of our research (survey)

Criterion	Print media	Electronic media
Locality – place of origin	<p>• biweekly – specialized and professional newspapers (<i>Kut Bilim</i> - education, <i>Chyndyk Tuusu</i> – law enforcement)</p>	<p>Foreign: VOA, "Liberty"- "Azattyk" "DW", BBC</p> <p>Russia Newspapers <i>SpidInfo</i>, <i>AiF</i>, magazines "Dengi", "Liza," etc ORT, RTR</p> <p>Kazakhstan "Karavan" Habar, NTK</p> <p>Uzbekistan TV and radio in the Fergana valley (Andijan and Namangan TV, TV-1, Eshlar Telekanali)</p> <p>Russian with local supplement (<i>Komsomolskaya Pravda v Kyrgyzstane</i> and <i>Moskovsky Komsomolets v Kyrgyzstane</i>) Kyrgyzstani broadcasting Russian channels (KOORT - TVC Moscow, VOSST - NVT, NBT - TV-6, Asman - TNT)</p>
Region of distribution	<p>National <i>Slovo Kyrgyzstana</i>, <i>Kyrgyz Tuusu</i>, <i>Aalam</i>, <i>Kyrgyz Rukhu</i>, <i>Asaba</i>, <i>Delo</i>, <i>Limon</i></p> <p>* <i>nominally</i> – newspapers describing themselves as national but not reaching remote areas (<i>Aalam</i>, <i>Slovo Kyrgyzstana</i>)</p> <p>* <i>factually</i>- newspapers accessible in all regions: <i>Delo</i>¹ (thanks to the local salespeople network), <i>Kyrgyz Tuusu</i> (due to the forced subscription), <i>Asaba</i></p> <p>Regional (covering several oblasts) Osh and Jalal-Abad newspapers available in other oblasts 7 (<i>Fergana</i>, <i>Osh-Park</i>)</p> <p>Local oblast, city and rayon media</p>	<p>National KTR – nominally, but in fact not available in many rayons of Jalal-Abad, Osh, Batken and Talas oblasts</p> <p>Regional Pyramid, Ekho Manasa Channel</p>

Criterion	Print media	Electronic media
Subject covered/ theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • criminal – from public-legal (<i>Delo</i>¹) to “pulp-criminal” (<i>Prigovor</i>) • porno-erotic (<i>Kattama, Paishamba, Perishtem</i>) • public and political (<i>Res Publica, Advokat</i>, recently - <i>Delo</i>¹), including political party newspapers • economic (<i>Biznesmen Kyrgyzstana</i>) • advertising and reference (<i>Kupi-Prodai, Korobeinik, Efir</i>) • institutional or professional (<i>Salyk Info, Kutbilim, Chyndyk Tuusu</i>) • scientific (<i>Vestnik Akademii Nauk</i>) • sport (<i>Futbol</i>) • entertainment (<i>Osh-Park, Rasslabsya, Zagadochny Mir, Syrduu Duino</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all television and radio companies provide various programs, however some TRCs have a certain emphasis in the programming (KOORT – educational TV channel)
Orientation to social and demographic characteristics of the audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children’s (<i>Ai-Danek</i>) • youth (<i>Limon</i>) • student (<i>Student, Jetigen, Vestnik Slavianskogo Universiteta</i>) • family (<i>Semia</i>) • women’s (<i>Asylzat</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • youth (EMTV-Karakol, Radio Salam in Batken)
Type of ownership and founders	<p style="text-align: center;">Private individuals</p> <p><i>Delo</i>¹, <i>Res Publica, Asaba, Osh Press Vesti</i> Asman TV, Radio Almaz, Maks-CN Keremet, Mezon TV, Osh TV, NBT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Private legal entities</p> <p><i>Absolyut</i> (real estate agency) VOSST</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Public non-profit organizations</p> <p><i>Salam Asia</i> (Tolerance Foundation - TF) EMTV (NGO “Green House”) <i>Potrebitel, Tyiynchik</i> (consumer rights group) Radio Salam (TF, UNICEF)</p>	

Criterion	Print media	Electronic media
	Joint-stock companies	
	<u>Closed-type</u>	
	Vecherny Bishkek	Pyramid
	<u>Open-type</u>	
	Kyrgyz Rukhu	
	State structures	
	national – KR Government	
	<i>Slovo Kyrgyzstana, Kyrgyz Tuusu</i>	KTR
	<u>Oblast</u>	
	newspapers founded by oblast state administrations	oblast TRCs in all oblasts except for Batken
	<u>city, rayon</u>	
	newspapers of city and rayon state administrations (where they survived)	
Language of the publication/ broadcasting	Tri-lingual	
	Osh TV, DDD (Kyrgyz-Uzbek-Russian)	
	Bi-lingual	
	<i>Zaman-Kyrgyzstan</i> (Kyrgyz-Turkish)	KTR, KOORT,
	<i>Kutbilim, Asaba</i> (Kyrgyz-Russian)	Pyramid (Kyrgyz-Russian)
	Kyrgyz	
	<i>Aalam, Kyrgyz Rukhu, Kyrgyz Tuusu</i>	Radio "Kyrgyzstan Obondoru"
	Russian	
	<i>Slovo Kyrgyzstana, Res Publica</i>	VOSST, NBT
	<i>Delo ¹, Litsa, Obsc.Reiting</i>	
Languages of ethnic minorities		
<i>Ush Sadosi, Jalolobod Tongi</i> (Uzbek)	Mezon TV (Uzbek)	
<i>Ittipak</i> (Uigur)		
English		
<i>The Times of Central Asia</i>	KOOPT news in English	
<i>The Sunday Observer, Bishkek Observer</i>		

The minority media take a special place in the system of journalism in Kyrgyzstan. Conditionally, it is possible to divide the ethnic minority media into three categories:

- 1) Print media of the ethnic and cultural centers united into the Assembly of Peoples of Kyrgyzstan. Similarly to the Assembly, they serve the interests of political circles of Kyrgyzstan performing the mobilization function during elections. It is not possible to talk about these media's influence even within the ethnic groups they target. All these media exist from the national budget financing and take a form of specialized newsletters devoted to certain political events and celebrations ("Soglasie," "Ittipak").

- 2) Media of the oblast state administrations and keneshes (“Ush Sadosi,” “Jalolobod Tongi”) come out as duplicates, are targeted at the Uzbek population in the south and serve the interests of the oblast state bodies. These are periodicals that enjoy certain real interest of the population, however the limits of state funding do not allow them to realize their potential as voices of the ethnic group.
- 3) Non-state media targeted at ethnic groups (Mezon TV, DDD, Osh-TV). They are forced to do the programming not only in Uzbek, but also in Russian and Kyrgyz. As a rule they have great difficulties interacting with the state bodies. All conflicts related to these media seem to have a covert character: the authorities deny any ethnic-based reasons for or implications of such conflicts, while media themselves seem to be interested in playing the “ethnic card” by transferring the economic and political conflicts into the ethnic dimension.

Foreign media, such as Russian (ORT, RTR), Turkish (television and newspapers serving the Turkish Diaspora in Kyrgyzstan) and Uzbek (television and radio stations in the south) are perceived by the audience members-speakers of these languages as truly ethnic media that express their interests and help them to maintain ties with their “historical motherland.”¹³

Thus, the foundations and criteria for the typology are changeable and relate to current social practice. The new era, on the one hand, predetermined appearance of media that had not existed in the country before, and on the other hand, adjusted the meaning of some typology-forming criteria.

At a superficial glance, the system of modern media in Kyrgyzstan demonstrates a variety of media outlets that represent very different tastes and information needs (for more information based on the results of the mail survey, see Annexe D1 “Publishing features of sample newspapers”). The range of print and electronic media includes both specific and general ones. However, this seeming variety and pluralism in reality leans towards limitation of types, unification and featurelessness in terms of political orientation, specificity of themes, types of ownership and character of founders. Today it is possible to talk about the practice of functioning of the media which are devoid of clear typological features and come out at transitory levels of classification. The traditional consideration, publishing characteristics of media as type-determining factors, no longer works. Circulation, periodicity and other characteristics in fact differentiate various models of journalism.

There is a clear tendency to decrease the share of national outlets, which consequently creates areas of high and low information density. The zones of low information density (with the information vacuum or deficit) are filled with foreign information flows. With time it is possible to project alienation of citizens from the national political

life, their withdrawal into own small worlds that reconstruct the reality on a totally different, negligibly small scale. On the whole, it will mark the tendency of denationalization of the information space and mass consciousness.

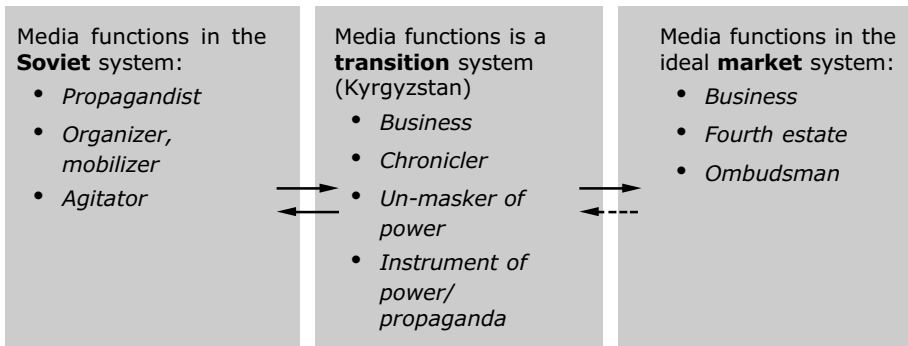
5.2 Media as a social system (functional framework)

Within the social system, journalism performs specific role functions, which are prescribed for it as for other participants of the processes taking place in this sphere. For example, in the economic sphere journalism becomes an element of the production system acquiring the qualities of the information product. In the social sphere, the most important is the media's ability to collect, accumulate, distribute and maintain information. In the spiritual sphere, media, as an ideological institution, carry out mobilizing and educational functions.

It is exactly this role approach which gives an opportunity to describe the complexity of functioning of the media system in society. Especially important is the fact that these are not universal functions that are characteristic of media systems per se as unique public institutions, but reflect objective laws and conditions that were formed not by the will or initiative of the media themselves. That is, the objective capacities and opportunities of the media are complicated by the subjective interests, will and other features of all institutions with which the media interrelate. And of course, the historical situation as well.

Thus, *during the soviet period* the characteristic feature of the media system was domination of the ideological function in the system of its social roles. The first and foremost functions of the mobilizer, propagandist and organizer suppressed all other media functions and roles. The media were practically devoid of their production-economic function, journalists acted not as producers of the information product but rather as "warriors" of the ideological front. The potential ability of the media to become profitable enterprises was considered depraved, not appropriate for journalism. As a result, the domestic press suffered enormous losses, while the material level and technical equipment accumulated in the past and the current financial status of journalism do not serve as a factor of the quality evolution, modernization in accordance with the demands of time and audience.

In the political and management dimension, the media were reduced to a role as assistant of the communist party and its instrument (see the chart "Peculiarities of media functioning in various public and political systems").

Graph 12. Peculiarities of media functioning in various public and political systems

Note: The columns provide not the exhaustive list of journalism functions but rather specific ones that make the totalitarian and market-oriented model different from each other. The arrows between the systems mean that the movement from the transitional system into the market one is not "automatic," there may be a movement back to the soviet system. However, the movement from the established market system into the transitional one is much less likely, which is shown by a dash arrow.

In the pluralist sea of media in *a democratic system*, a great many functions can be singled out, such as: "political guide," "moral and cultural mentor," "informer," "trustful interlocutor," "guide into the life of stars, celebrities and other famous people," etc. That is, media may be compared to omnibuses¹⁴, which, through neutralization of production, achieve maximum broadening of the audience. The latter are valuable as the source of income from sale of the information product, but they also have a complementary growing value in the eyes of the advertisers. This means that the economic strategy underlies all the media activity constructing the political field.

However, different categories of media, under the common economic intent, produce absolutely different attitudes toward politics. Dividing the print media into "news" and "views", i.e. the newspapers-sensations and newspapers-considerations, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu states that they reconstruct the opposition between those who make politics and those who are subject to it, between the acting opinion and opinion that is subject to action.

The ideal model of the market-oriented society suggests first of all development of the economic functions of the media, their transformation into the business enterprises producing and selling their products and the information market. The functions of media in the political and state sphere are also going through transformation: the classical functional and role characteristics obtain a different connotation to reflect the fact that in place of the monistic model there appears a whole range of various trends, opinions and models of behavior. That is to say that the media, while possessing a great symbolic capital, really participate in regulation of the political process and act as the basic element of the system of checks and balances against the power. Being a part of the self-regulating system, the media carry out monitoring of the state of civil rights and inform the society about all facts of all violations.

¹⁴ Metaphor by Bourdieu, see P.Bourdieu. «Beginnings». M.,1997

Kyrgyzstan is usually defined as a *country in transition*. As a rule such a definition suggests the transition from the totalitarian system, with a strict planned economy to a democratic, market-oriented system. However, non-conceptuality of developments, many setbacks and losses in terms of the development of democratic tendencies and political rights and civil liberties¹⁵ does not allow the clear definition of the character of Kyrgyzstan's transition. In the practical sense this means inequivalence of various phases of sovereign development of the media and the problem of functional and role self-identification of the media and journalists.

The focus groups, interviews and surveys of specialists conducted under this research facilitate the forming of conclusions on the disoriented status of the journalists' consciousness and vagueness of the role-functions and positions in real practice.

The pendulum of self-identification of journalists and media swings back and forth within the range, starting from the understanding of journalism as a business and finishing with recognition of its real power – the "fourth estate" or "un-masker" of power. From the concept of journalism as a transmitter of culture to the functions of chronicler – an outside observer. In the political and state subsystem, journalism tries to act not only as an instrument for satisfaction of various political groups and individual politicians in maintaining and reinforcing of power, but tries to "create" or make politics itself, literally understanding the effectiveness of media as an opportunity to participate in responsible state decision-making.

5.2.1 Problems of functioning of the media system

The truth of modern life circumstances of the media in Kyrgyzstan is that media outlets and journalists working in them try to realize the eternal "vanity" of domestic journalism – to become the "fourth estate." The first section below discusses the response to this, a policy of structural censorship, which includes law suits and prosecution of media, limitation of access to information, and other methods described in detail below. The same chapter presents a detailed analysis of the financial status and the problem of non-transparency of media activities since these are also the problems that impede effective functioning of the media.

Use of law suits

In Kyrgyzstan, during the last several years, various persons, for the most part officials of the highest rank, initiated more than 20 law suits in relation to individual media and specific journalists and the amounts of compensations claimed for the moral damages on the cases would shock any imagination (see Table 5 below). The government institutions also manage to limit the media claims for power with the help of various forms of political and economic harassment, such as searches and arrests for carrying out professional activities, imposing of fines and numerous financial inspections as well as suspension of printing (broadcasting).

¹⁵ See Section "External and internal assessments of democracy and freedom of word in Kyrgyzstan."

According to the experts, the fines imposed on media and journalists have become the criterion of freedom of expression. High officials and judges consolidate and force the media to pay off the million-som claims, driving the media into bankruptcy and stopping their existence. The journalists who have made several "visits" to the pre-court confinement cell believe that it is easier to serve a prison term than to pay the million-som amounts. "It is suggested that the introduction of a mandatory fee paid by the plaintiff at the rate of 10 percent of the claimed amount would put some limits on the appetites of the offended state officials and deputies. But even the initiators of such an amendment to the law do not believe either in the possibility of its adoption or its effectiveness. The General Director of the National Judicial Corporation "SHADE" Shamara Maichiev, believes that the fault is not with the article but rather with the law implementation and enforcement practice, under which a journalist may be prosecuted as an individual on any charge of every-day "common" crime. "Because we have no tradition of the *law*, the Soviet law continues to live as the will of the ruling elites raised to the status of law."¹⁶

Table 5. Law suits with monetary claims initiated against media of Kyrgyzstan on the charge of libel or insult of honor and dignity

Date	at	Deeat	eate a	t eat eete	tete ae
February	e ayr aae eebae	r e raa	be e are ue be bu by e uure ayr		u are by e aee e reur e
ar	ay a uuau	e er e ay	re aa ee reu		e ru e
ar	e ar ae	eaer e uba	re e a ue a ee ree		re yya yr aea year
r	ary a reur e	ura e uba	rbu eae aer ree ur e reea ee		ee re ur e
ar	uebe ary	ary ba eaer er	re e au e ary	ay a	e e a ea ree e uba
ar	rer aruura aery a aryura	ura ura uba	re raa e a u		ura e reur ee r ay
ay	ree yryay aryu	eaer e uba	ere are raa	r ea ura	yya yr eee ya yr eaeye re

¹⁶ See article by I.Grebenshikov. "Media: between engagement and information security," May 2001 at the web-site www.burana.by.ru

Date	at	Deeat	eate a	t eat eete	tete ae
September	ept ete emb Srbe	epper et	rte t rtm te re p emet	m m	mt
ebr	e rt r	epper e	rte brt mpper p met tereree	t m	e mpe pm
pr	e bt St	epper eremet be m	trt t rte bt te e	m	t rt e t e te e
	ept eebe	epper eer e	t r te rte p epte trt t	t m m t m m	mt
e	ept rt	rm prmm e rem	preett te ber r r tme ¹⁷	t m m m	mt
t	rt Stepe	eer retr e ept pretr e	t te e mr me ¹	m t e eet	e eme mt ee
r	reet te tte mp rp	epper e b	bt etter rmer empet rtm	m	Spreme rt rme te e e p
ebr	ept t be	epper eer e rt r	t te rte ppert t te t	epper m m	mt
e	e S r b bt mbe	brm epper t	bt brbe te b te pprte t met	epper m br m r mprmet	e t epper ee t brm ree t m
e	ept r r m rt mmttee Ste	epper e b S mr	bt t t	t m m ree t m	e erm rt m t epper m t S m t mr
	te t reet	epper b rt	bt mr me	epper m m e	St ee ter pb pe
	ept r ee be	epper b	er t etmet t reptt r er	m m m	tber e rt eterme te e m m

17 "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" of June 15, 1999

18 "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" of August 17, 1999

Date	at	D	eeat	ea te a	t eat eete	tete ae
September	ppt eer		epper tr e e et r ept mter t ert et	er t r te rret rt	r m m m et m	ermte ret te pre rt ettemet
tber	m b		be	term r t	m	e rt te te m
eember	e preet mtrt r		epper rt e etr p e etr r e	p e tere t rt t re rt repre t me	m m m p m m	m ree ebr
eember	ept m t ert et	ter	rt e e	rte pper eret r rm bt pper e	m mprmet r t rt p	rt tte te rt rp et
ebr	ept eebe		S epper rmet	rte t bt eebe ee teret S p	t m m	e m ree em e
pr	er Stbe		epper b e etr Sbr	rte be te er b	t t Sbr m m epper m m	e rt epper tr m e rmt
e	retr bt ept emeree e		ept e etr r r	rte t mr	m e rmt	t mpete

Sources: *Internews newsletter «Communication», newsletter «Media: Legislation and Practice» of Kyrgyzstan's bureau on human rights and compliance with the law, Foundation «Glasnost Protection» (Bishkek), Center for Extreme Journalism (Moscow).*

The table compiles the most indicative cases of court claims against journalists and media on the charges of libel and insult of dignity. The following tendencies of development of the repressive actions by the government in relation to media are clearly seen in the table:

Up to the end of 1997 the claims were mostly of criminal character, i.e. the plaintiffs demanded criminal punishment in the form of imprisonment. The charges were brought on the basis of Article 128 p. 2 of the Criminal Code "Printed libel," prescribing punishment in the form of imprisonment of up to 1.5 years and p. 3 "Libel accompanied by the charge in a specially dangerous state or another grave crime" prescribing imprisonment of up to 5 years. Even if any monetary amounts were paid off during that period, they were determined by the court in the form of a fine.

Starting from 1998, with the introduction of the new Criminal Code, there was a new wave of claims characterized by a new strategy: demand of damages compensation caused by the publication already at the phase of case initiation. It is interesting that at the beginning the claimed compensations did not exceed \$3,000 (50,000 som). However, starting from May 1998, the amounts desired by the plaintiffs exceeded the level of 1 million som (\$50,000). As a result of such a strategy of plaintiffs, the intended results were achieved: the newspaper "Asaba" terminated its activities, and the newspaper "Res Publica" prints such a small circulation (3,500) and so irregularly that it does not make sense to talk about its impact.

The wave of million-som claims became so overwhelming that it led to a necessity to adopt changes to the Criminal Code – the issue is to be considered by the Fall 2001 Parliament session.

Tax and financial inspections

A very widely used method of "clamping" down on media are tax inspections. It was exactly these tax inspections that became the repressive instrument in "dealings" of the power holders and organizations with the newspapers "Asaba" (1997) and "Vecherny Bishkek" (summer 1999). The government acts by the principle "if there is an economic unit, there will be always some violations done by it." Often this thesis is indeed confirmed in practice: under the pressure of unbearable taxes the media outlets themselves conduct "dual accounting," hide real revenue and expenditure.¹⁹ Even the publishing data of some newspapers became secret, for example exact data on the circulation. One of the most popular newspapers in Osh was temporarily shut down after the tax authority discovered that the circulation data provided by the newspaper (10,000 copies) was much lower than the production numbers of the printing house where the newspaper was published and the data on sales through the state system of distribution (25,000 copies).

Financial and audit inspections can be also used as methods of pressuring media, especially in retrospective, after certain publications. A leader of a television station in the south shared the following information during a focus group for media experts, "once we did a story on corruption in the KGB – they were illegally selling non-ferrous metals. The next day after the story was aired we had a financial inspection from the Counting Chamber." One more example was given by another focus group participant, "For example, we criticized the university rector who turned out to be the governor's relative. And the governor did not say a word, he just sent an inspector to us who was checking our financial matters for six months. This is how they can punish."

Sometimes financial and tax inspections are used as a measure of "prevention" in relation to the media when the actions of which displease the authorities for some reason. For example, a former director of a television channel who fell out of favor with the authorities, told the focus group the following, "A tax inspector was sitting at

¹⁹ *Dual accounting system is one of the main features and consequences of non-transparency in all spheres of economic activities. Unbearably high taxes make the economic units reduce their data on real profits for official reports submitted to the controlling and inspecting bodies. At the same time, the real profits and salaries are kept in the second, "secret" system of reporting.*

my station for four months, checking all the documents, and then said to me, 'I am sorry, but if you have some violations please tell me yourself because I could not find anything.' I responded to him, 'if you cannot find anything, what do I have to do with this? I pay the taxes regularly.' But at the same time, if the inspector came, even though all financial documents are in order and you are sure that he will find nothing – he is sitting there every day, writing something, this is unnerving for everyone. Not only for me as a director, but also for the whole staff – everyone becomes nervous." Another participant of the focus group for the electronic media managers confirmed that financial inspections may be used as a threat, having told that he received a financial inspection after he made an unflattering comment about a relative of one of the country's leaders. However, as he said, "the inspection did not find anything. During my many years of directorship I have learned how to do the financial reporting in such a way that no inspection could find faults." The fact that experienced media managers know how to keep the accounting system so that no financial or tax inspection finds any violation, indirectly confirms the idea that media, as many other economic units of Kyrgyzstan, have a dual accounting system.

Non-transparency and financial problems

At the background of non-transparency of economic activities, it is quite difficult to obtain real and reliable data on financial status of media. During the project there were cases when media managers refused to participate in the research only because they were asked to provide data on the structure of revenue and expenditure in percentages. In some cases such data were provided only under condition that they would not be disclosed or used in the reports and findings of the research. Below is the data on revenue and expenditure of newspapers and television and radio companies (mainly regional) which gave permission to use the data.

Table 6. *The structure of newspaper revenue (in percentages)*

Newspaper title	i	sripti	ales	siies	rats	pl atiit	ere	reits	lit r ps	si r ps	riate pers s	ter
<i>Oblast state newspapers</i>												
J-Abad Tongi	10					1						
Aia J-Abad		0	1									
Taa T	10	0	0									
i - a	0	0	10									
- abaa	0											
Tni-Too an	0		1	0								
Jang	1			0								
adol	10	0	10	0								
o a	0	0	10	0								
an Tan												
<i>enalnstate newspapers</i>												
Jan n J- Abad					100							

Newspaper title	i	sripti	ales	sies	rats		pl atiit	ere	reits	lit rps	si rps	riate perss	ter
Express Bayan s		40									0		
s	0	0	40										
s resses	0		0										
sar	40		0										
<i>it and raon state newspapers</i>													
es arysy		0											
e a		0		0									
asr arysy		0											
s raan		0											
Ee s ra						0							
<i>nstitutional newspapers</i>													
ay a n a		0											
enn s as ea ep													
ya s prrar		00											
Bay s ean													
yny s a a enr		0											
a as ean ep		0					0						
<i>Bishkek and national newspapers</i>													
yr yn			00										
r Bsea	0												
aa		40											
saa	0					0							

The analysis of the above data allows identifying some tendencies and characteristics in the newspapers' revenue structure:

- 1) **Limited number of sources** – the revenue of most state newspapers is concentrated in the first four categories, i.e. proceeds from advertising, subscription, sales and state subsidies; the revenue of the institutional newspapers – in the first three categories and only some of them have additional revenue from the publishing and commercial activities. Only two non-state newspapers receive insignificant (5 per cent) revenue from private persons (as a rule, the owners themselves or their friends and relatives). Also, two independent newspapers indicated business groups as sources of their revenue, the share of which is quite high (25 and 60 per cent), and one newspaper receives 5 per cent of revenue from political groups.
- 2) A large **share of subsidies** (at average 30 per cent) is observed in all state newspapers – oblast, city and rayon, and at the same time the share of subsidies varies from 70 per cent (Talas Turmushu, Batken Tany) to 6 per cent (Emgek Tuusu). As a rule, the subsidies are allocated from the oblast state budget to cover some category of expenses – employee salaries or payment for printing

services, for example. The Issyk-Kul newspapers have not indicated a share of subsidies in the structure of their revenue only because the subsidies allocated to them by the state to cover their printing costs exist only in the form of mutual settlements: on paper, the money is given to the newspaper to cover its printing costs, then it is transferred, again on paper, to the printing shop and is "written off" by the state from the printing shop toward its debt. Such an arrangement in reality is not satisfactory for anyone because neither the newspaper or the printing shop see the cash, "live" money.

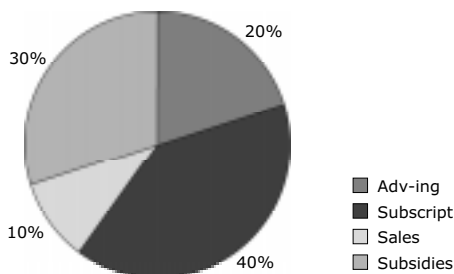
- 3) The share of **subscription revenue** is traditionally high in regional newspapers, including some non-state ones ("Express Bayan" – 40 per cent, DDD – 30 per cent). Interesting is the fact that the subscription share in the revenue of oblast newspapers (at average 40 per cent) is significantly lower than in the city and rayon newspapers (at average 60 per cent, with a wide distribution from 30 to 90 per cent), and in the institutional newspapers where subscriptions achieves 90-100 per cent. More than anything else, such subscription rates are kept due to the methods of forced subscription which is still widely practiced in the regions.²⁰
- 4) With the exception of two newspapers where the share of **advertising revenue** makes up 35-40 per cent (Aalam and Osh-Park respectively), the share of advertising in the revenue structure does not exceed 20-30 per cent, and it tends to decrease as the readership decreases. For example, while in Bishkek and oblast newspapers advertising brings at average 20-25 per cent of the revenue, in city and rayon newspapers it is 5 per cent, and in the narrowly specialized institutional newspapers - only – 3 per cent. This may suggest not only underdevelopment of the advertising market in general and in the regions in particular, but also underestimation by potential advertisers of the effectiveness of advertising in targeted media with clearly defined audiences.
- 5) There is also a significant difference in the share of **sales revenue** between the non-state and state newspapers: while for the former this indicator may reach 80 and 100 per cent (Osh Press-Vesti and Syrduu Dyino respectively), averaging at 40-50 per cent, the latter's sales do not increase 23 per cent (Osh Janyrygy), averaging at 5-10 per cent. One of the factors predetermining this situation is the traditional practice of subscription to the state newspapers described above, as well as the fact that the non-state newspapers, not relying on the state system of distribution use more their own distribution networks of private salesmen who sell newspapers retail.
- 6) Characteristic is **absence of credits** in the revenue structure of the newspapers. At the same time, the editors always complain about lack of financial resources for newspaper development and absence of credits for these purposes. It seems that the root of the problem is that there are no beneficial credit lines

²⁰ For more information on forced subscription see Chapter 5.1., "Publishing characteristics of newspapers".

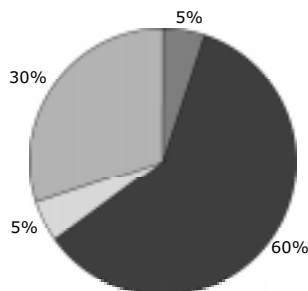
for development of the media business which requires intensive investments into the technology and does not return profits very soon. Besides, another impeding factor is the undeveloped general crediting policy and unfavorable investment climate in the republic.

To summarize, a typical structure of revenue of the state newspapers may be presented in the following way:

Graph 13. Revenue structure of oblast state newspapers

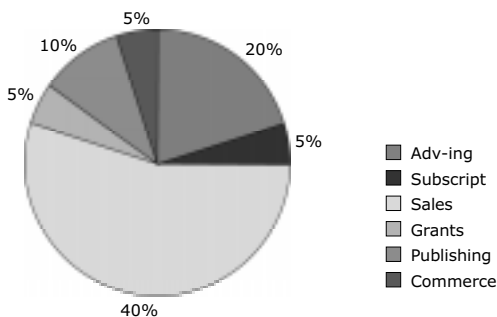


Graph 14. Revenue structure of city and rayon state newspapers



These charts demonstrate that differences can be seen only in insignificant changes in percentages of main revenue categories. On the whole, the structure is approximately the same. For a more indicative comparison, it is reasonable to compare it with the revenue structure of the private newspaper "Asaba":

Graph 15. Revenue structure of "Asaba" newspaper



As the pie charts show, here not only the composition of the revenue categories has changed ("Asaba" in this respect demonstrates more diversity and has no subsidies), but also their percentage share: in "Asaba" the main source of revenue is retail sales of the newspaper.

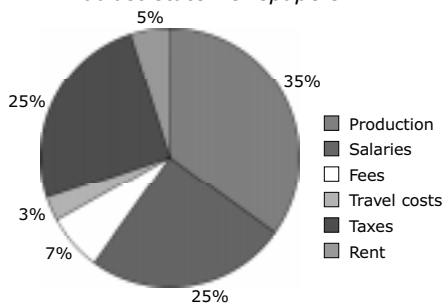
The analysis of the newspaper expenditure can be done on the basis of the data in Table 7.

Again, most newspaper expenditures are concentrated in the first five categories: production costs, salaries, honoraria, business trips and taxes as well as in the tenth category – distribution. Only eight of the represented newspapers indicated marketing costs; six newspapers included the costs associated with the purchase of information and photographs from information agencies (but these expenses do not exceed 1-3 per cent); and only five newspapers recorded payment for information received from the Internet, giving 1-2 per cent to this category in the structure of expenditure (with the exception of Osh Press-Vesti – 10 per cent). Exactly one third (10 out of 30) newspapers have expenditure for paying the rent of facilities and equipment, and these costs at average do not exceed 5-10 per cent.

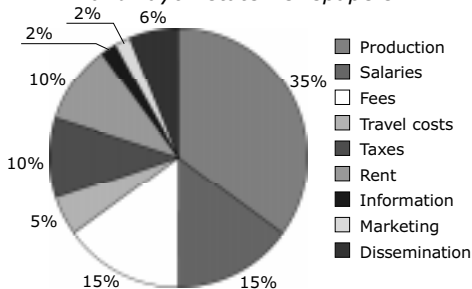
The largest share in the expenditure structure is *production costs*, at average comprising 40-50 per cent and varying from 17 per cent (Jany Muun) to 67 per cent and 80 per cent (Syrduu Duynoo and Chyndyk Tuusu respectively). The next largest category of expenses is *salaries* of journalists and newspaper staff. In this category, the average share of expenses is 20 per cent, and in some newspapers the salaries comprise 60 per cent of expenses (Salyk-Nalog Info), while in others – only 7% (Syrduu Duynoo). *Honoraria and business trip expenses* at average comprise 5 per cent in the typical structure of expenditure, varying from 0,1 to 10 per cent.

Discrepancies in data on taxes seem striking, varying from 2 per cent (Mezgil Jarchysy, Genofond and Bilim Shamy – all state or institutional newspapers), to 37 per cent (Osh-Park) and 39 per cent (Vesti Issyk-Kulya). Such differences are indeed incoherent since all newspapers are the same type of enterprise and should pay approximately the same tax rates. There may be several explanations to this: that tax expenses are included in production costs; not all newspapers pay the same tax rates as for some newspapers there may be benefits established and not all newspapers have the same figures of taxed profits; finally, that the editors do not know the real picture not only on taxes but also on expenses in general. The last explanation can also help us to understand the significant differences in indicators on costs of newspaper *distribution*, which in some newspapers do not exist at all, in some comprise only 1 per cent (“Vesti Issyk-Kulya”) and in some reach as much as 34 per cent (Dil). The average figure for distribution costs comprises approximately 10 per cent. Such a wide spread in the data may also be explained by the fact that some newspapers have a special beneficial arrangement with the distribution systems (state network “Kyrgyzbasmasoz”). The pie charts below compare the typical structure of oblast state newspapers with “Asaba”:

Graph 16. Revenue structure of oblast state newspapers



Graph 17. Revenue structure of city and rayon state newspapers



As in the case with the revenue, it is obvious that the state newspapers have fewer categories of expenses. With the same share of production costs (35 per cent), "Asaba" taxes (15 per cent) are much less with larger share of honoraria (15 per cent) and rent of facilities and equipment (10 per cent).

Table 8. Revenue structure of TV and radio companies (in percentages)

TV & Radio Company	din	idi	an	od o ommia	Com m	Cdi	oi op	in op	ia pon	
<i>Oblast state TV and Radio Companies</i>										
Jalal-Abad oblast TRC	7									
Talas oblast TRC										
s- oblast T										
ss-l oblast TRC										
<i>Reional non state TV and Radio Companies</i>										
J-Abad										
Ala-Too s										
T aool										
t s										
odsto s										
s										

As for the data on the structure of expenditure of television and radio companies, again we should emphasize that they are quite unreliable and suffer from inaccuracies in mathematics. On the basis of these data only several general tendencies may be described: the largest share of the revenue (65-90 per cent) of the state TRCs comes from budget subsidies, while other sources of revenue are practically undeveloped or nullified; the share of advertising revenue in the non-state TRCs is much higher (at average, 30-40 per cent), than in the state TRCs (5-7 per cent). Again, more diversified sources of revenue are observed in the sphere of non-state TRCs, where funding may come from various political groups, business circles and private persons.

Table 9. Expenditure structure of TV and radio companies (in percentages)

TV & Radio Company	od ion	aai	ono ala	in ip	Ta Rr nn		no om	a in	
<i>Oblast state TV and Radio Companies</i>									
Jalal-Abad oblast TRC	37	3	7						
Talas oblast TRC									
s- oblast T									
ss-l oblast TRC	7								
<i>Reional non state TV and Radio Companies</i>									
J-Abad		7	3						
Ala-Too s				3					

TV & Radio Company	od ion	aai	ono aia	in ip	Ta Rr nn		no om	a in	
EMTV (Karakol)	40	0		0					
Kr ()	0	0		40					
oro ()	40	0		0	0				
()		0		0		0			

It is even more difficult to see any tendencies in the data provided on expenditure of TV and radio companies, since some of them provided no data (Talas, Osh-3000) or provided the data where the math is not correct (Nur, DDD). On the whole, even on the basis of this data it can be said that in the expenditure structure of the non-state TRCs, the same tendencies dominate approximately as in the newspapers: concentration of expenditure in the first five categories (production, salaries, honoraria, business trips and taxes); 30-40 per cent of expenditure are production costs, 20-25 per cent – salaries, and 30-35 per cent – taxes.

A very indicative example in terms of unreliability and incoherence of the data is a Kyrgyz-language newspaper, the editor of which during the research filled out the questionnaire of the mail survey, specifying the revenue and expenditure parts of his newspaper, as well as changes in circulation. In a couple of months, in a focus group questionnaire, the same editor provided different data in the same categories. Among others, the editor provided the following data:

Table 10. Data on revenue and expenditure

Revenue (%)	e e	enue (%)	e e
Advertising revenue	5	rdutin eenses er rinting et	5 5
es trug susritin		r und r utie eees	5
eti ses		nrrius	5
vernent subsidies		usiness tris eenses	
nterntin gr nts	5	ents	
using series		ent ities urniture euient	
eri tivit		nternet nd ter utiedi unitins	
redits		urse intrin t nd lustrtins r genes	
iti grus		Advertising te ediu reting udget	
usiness grus		istriutin nd trnsrttin sts	
rivte individus	5	ter ese sei	
ter ese sei			

Table 11. *Data on circulation provided by the newspaper "Kyrgyz Rukhu"*

	1993	199	199	1999	
1	15,000	1,000	15,000	10,000	,00010,000
	5,000	,000	1,000	15,000	,000

Obviously, the discrepancies in the "testimony" do not mean that the editor does not know the real situation, but, most likely, prove that the editor is traditionally cautious in the sphere which is recognized to be a commercial secret. Practically in each media outlet, the top management "creates" convenient financial indicators, depending on where the data will be sent. It is quite certain that the financial bodies know about the system of hiding true information, but as a rule these agencies become involved only when it is necessary for certain political circles in relation to the media that are not loyal to the government.

Claims on non-compliance with the ethical norms

The wave of struggle with the "wild outburst" of pornography in the country broke in 1998-1999. The opposition of the Akaevs and newspaper "Asaba" and its owner M.Eshimkanov entered its new stage. The new strategy selected by the family was in the economic sanctions to the growing media empire belonging to Eshimkanov. At this time, not only "Asaba" was bothering with its caricatures and rumors – unpleasant publications aimed at the President and his spouse appeared in the associated supplements "Jungli Zakonu," "Paishamba," and others. After the tax inspections and fines "on Kumtor credit," attacks started on Asaba supplements with the purpose of shutting them down. The pretext that was selected was faultless – the noble struggle for maintenance of high morals. The initiator and actor was Mrs.Akaeva herself. According to the Pyramid news of February 26, 1998 "the President's spouse M.Akaeva, the chairperson of the Charitable Foundation "Meerim" addressed the Parliament with an appeal to take legislative measures prohibiting pornography and violence in media and in advertising." The outcome of such initiatives were court hearings and subsequent shutting down of the newspapers "Paishamba," "Jungli Zakonu," and "Kaptama." The latter one suffered only "for company" so that the court hearings did not seem to have any political connotation.

Limitation of access to information sources

The era of loud court hearings, heroic confinements in pre-court cells for the journalists and the editor of "Res Publica," as it seems, has finished. Zamira Sydykova has steadily taken the place of the "voice of freedom," "victim in the struggle for democracy" with the right of representation at international forums of all sorts and levels. And the government and first of all the strategic center for media management – the press service of the Presidents of the republic – chose a new method of dealing with the noisy and fearless newspaper. The government started to simply ignore the newspaper,

which resulted in the limitation of access to information for "Res Publica." Starting from 1998, the newspaper journalists were not invited or allowed to the press-conferences, meetings of the government or other official events. One of the former journalists of the newspaper testified in her interview the following: "Just as we became 'bad' for the government, i.e. after the court hearing with Sarygulov (who, by the way, was later accused on the same grounds we were writing about), we were immediately 'crossed out' from the journalism field – they stopped inviting us to official events, press-conferences, presentations. Of course, we were able to find information from other sources, but on the whole this demonstrates intolerance of any opposition." Since the main holder of information in the country is still the government, the declared boycott of the newspaper threatened its informative essence. This indeed happened – the newspaper lost its information value and position. Because the newspaper journalists now never have the information from the first hands, the newspaper has significantly lost its circulation as well. What the government had failed to achieve through imprisonment and monetary fines has been achieved now in such a "bloodless" way.

However, not only clearly oppositional newspapers faced difficulties with obtaining information from official sources. In one of the focus groups, the editor of a southern newspaper shared his experience in this respect, emphasizing that this is the problem of many independent and non-state media, "This is such a big responsibility, when you say 'independent newspaper' and 'independent journalist.' It is better not to concentrate on this, because... they (the authorities) perceive independent journalists, even if they come from a children's newspaper, as the enemy. Mind you, I am not a journalist of Res Publica or Asaba, these two newspapers cause allergy with the authorities, but just non-state newspapers – the authorities attitude to them is totally different, they constantly accuse us of non-patriotism. I had such an experience once: after the Osh-3000 celebration there was a meeting, all journalists were called to the governor, but they did not invite us. Later they said that we were invited but did not show up because we are so proud and arrogant, and neglected the event. But we simply did not know about it, otherwise we would have come because it was interesting for us. As it turned out, at that meeting they were talking for 15 minutes about our newspaper and about 5 minutes about me personally - that I do not like Osh, do not love my motherland and in general I am not a patriot, but a renegade. And all this simply because I wrote a couple of stories criticizing the Osh-3000 celebration and something else. That is I did not even write about Alcatraz or about who built a new luxurious house, in Osh it is just impossible to write articles like this. You see, even after such harmless information the relations with us are built in a totally different way. In practice, if you are a "non-state journalist," it means that you are a traitor, renegade and you will not be let close to official sources of information."

Another journalist described difficulties with obtaining information from official sources in the following way, "sometimes it becomes absurd – it is impossible to receive simple

information only because this is information for internal use and they use this cover for everything, even the chief's office hours, for example. They say 'go to the director for the permission,' the director sends you to his secretary, and she says 'I cannot give it without the director's permission.' And it is impossible to enter the building, because there is a guard there, it is impossible to receive information, even though the people who work there called us and said that there are some violations there and asked us to write about that but refuse to name themselves because of the fear of being punished."

The new page in the history of limitation of media in the access to credible information was the Batken campaign. The situation with the coverage of military events had a catastrophic effect. The local residents, as well as journalists, were receiving news on Batken... from the Russian media. The Ministry of Defense minimized the flow of information. "The vow of silence" was officially explained by the necessity to observe the law on protection of state secrets. It is exactly this law that became a pretext for the officials and the military not to let journalists into the combat zone and dosing of information messages from the press-service of the Ministry of Defense. One of the journalists of a regional TRC described her experience in such a way, "For example, when I wanted to do a report on Batken events, I went to the military for the information, but they gave me nothing. They said it was a state secret. Or they give you what they would like you to cover or what has already been covered." The hole in the silence tactic was made by the events surrounding the capture of Japanese geologists as hostages. The attention of the leading information agencies and world media was fixed on Batken. Capturing of hostages and all operations on their release became hot news number one. The military agencies were finally forced to provide information and host journalists on the "front line." Although precautionary measures were taken, "for the journalists' security" they were provided with special guards who indeed were guarding the "state" secrets about the real course of military operations from the curious journalists.

The same year, the policy of limiting information access was implemented at the fullest in relation to a law suit against Felix Kulov, an opposition leader and ex-candidate to the president of the republic. At the first stage of the struggle with the opponent, a wave of disclosures around Kulov's activities swept the state and loyal media. The news editor of one of the leading television channels in the capital described this situation. "At best, they (authorities) give such (unreliable) information, at worst – they give nothing. If you think about it, the information about Felix Kulov is also unclassified information. And I think it was disclosed by the permission of the White House. The man was sitting in such a high position, was responsible for national security, and now everyone has learned about his 'deeds.' Thanks to Kulov, we found out about bugs and other listening devices that everyone guessed about but then we got official confirmation. And if it had not been for Kulov, there would be no story and everything would stay the same." The huge flow of "blackening" articles on Kulov,

however, played an unpredictable role and produced the reversed effect: the prosecuted general rejected by the power was perceived by the people as a hero and the campaign against him turned in his favor. In store of the parliamentary and subsequent presidential elections, such a strong opponent was not desirable at all. According to the specialists, a Russian team of PR strategists that came to rescue the presidential team advised the tactic of silence. The fame and "victim" aura of Kulov's virtual image created by television and press faded away and were lost in the flow of information messages on urgent pseudo events.

Discord in the professional environment

In the policy of limitations and narrowing of freedoms of media, the state bodies and politicians counted first of all on discord and internal conflicts in the professional environment of journalists. Obviously, it was much easier to deal with an individual newspaper or television than with a consolidated group of media. The policy "divide and rule" turned out to be much longer lasting than its historical authors. The conflict among journalists was easy to initiate: subsidies and beneficial taxation, trips abroad in the President's entourage – there were more than enough grounds to envy a few "lucky ones." The conductors and puppet masters from the upper stores of the White House were very skillful in putting up the fire of conflicts among various media (See Annexe B2 "Delo Nomer").

State monopoly for printing services, paper and other resources

The printing base that had been formed during the soviet period in the capital and in the regions – oblast and rayon centers – still remains in the ownership of the state. In Bishkek the printing services are provided by the polygraph plants "Uchkun" and "Erkin-Too." The private printing companies do not have special equipment for producing multiple copies of newspapers, besides the capacities of all existing polygraph companies are very limited. On the whole, their services provided on a more modern and high quality equipment for printing are for the most part not affordable for the newspapers. They are not rational for use either since the costs of such high-quality production will be prohibitively high for newspaper readers.

In the remote areas there is no alternative to the state printing facilities. As a rule, the polygraph equipment in the oblast, and especially rayon centers is both physically and morally obsolete – these are the cost and labor intensive technologies of relief printing – the equipment which could be found in European countries only in technical museums together with Gutenberg's machine. The only oblast printing shop that has offset printing is in Jalal-Abad.

Around the world, publishing technologies have become so economically affordable and simple in use that it turned the production of small newspapers into a common matter, but in this country, while western consumption standards are adopted quickly, the archaic technologies of production still remain.

In the course of our research, the editors and journalists named the printing services as among the most important problems for the media. The monopoly ownership of the printing base allows the government to use it as a leverage tool and means of pressure. Thus, by the phone orders of court and executive bodies, the printing house "Uchkun" many times suspended or terminated printing of "uncomfortable," disloyal newspapers (the newspaper "Res Publica" has an extensive experience of this).²¹ For a long time "Uchkun" was also a monopolist in supply of paper. Absence of alternative markets for paper made it a strategic resource that could be used as a pressure tool as well. Today the situation in this sphere has changed for the better in the capital: despite high added (transportation) costs and customs and tax dues, the supply of paper (for the most part, from Russia) is done by such organizations and companies as JSC "Uchkun," "Lesbumpomplekt," private printing shop "Turar," JSC "Polygraphbumresources," and a private company – a media company belonging to the Sharshekeevs' family. The situation with the supply of paper to the regions still remains complicated. It is not by chance that the editors of Naryn and Issyk-Kul oblast newspapers named the cost and supply of paper as one of the most important problems. Further competition in the area of paper supply is contained by limited access to credits and high interest rates that in general impede entrepreneurial opportunities.

Due to the lack of financial resources, there are even fewer opportunities for entrepreneurs in the information sphere to purchase modern typographical equipment. It is obvious that only the state and state organizations have a competitive advantage in the sphere of printing services and other printing resources, having overcome the natural financial barriers. This situation is complicated by the fact that the power holders started to take entrepreneurial initiatives in the information sphere, which is quite in line with the interests of individual politicians and political institutions on the whole.

The most dangerous monopoly for electronic media is the monopolist right of the SAC (State Agency for Communications under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic) to issue licenses. It is exactly this agency that "decides," under the sensitive government guidance, whom to issue to or not, the scarce frequencies. Prolongation of issuance of the license by the SAC is the most effective tool to curb the media. For example, many times the White House officials making media decisions have indicated the upcoming expiration in 2003 of the license of Pyramid TV. Pyramid is working in the meter range, which provides an opportunity to broadcast not for a small part of the population with modern foreign television sets, but for the majority, irrespective of the type of receiving device. It is understandable that the government will be even more "selective" in provision of such a range of broadcasting, and receiving such a support will mean selling the political loyalty of the television or radio channel. Great problems with obtaining a license from the SAC (when it existed as the National Communication Agency) were faced by the television company Osh-TV.

²¹ For example, in her book "Behind the curtains of democracy Kyrgyz style", the chief editor of newspaper "Res Publica" Z.Sydykova recalls that during the election campaign (the 1995 presidential election) she had to literally cry at the office of the head of the polygraph complex "Uchkun," begging to print the newspaper. Since there were no financial or other grounds to reject printing, but the telephone order was to stop printing, the Uchkun President found a technical reason – absence of printing plates without which the technological printing process is impossible. But the plates were absent during the whole election campaign only for this particular newspaper.

Control over distribution of media products

Another “vulnerable spot” as identified by the journalists and journalism managers is the problem of distribution of media products. The monopoly of the state distribution system “Soyuzpechat” (currently “Kyrgyzbasmasoz”) that existing previously is gradually falling apart. The hole in the system of centralized distribution of newspapers has been made by unemployed citizens. The author of such a social project on overcoming the “Kyrgyzbasmasoz” monopoly dictatorship was the newspaper “Vechrny Bishkek”. The newspapers found it more profitable to sell the “fresh and hot” newspapers to the private salespersons at a price a little higher than the cost of production. For example, according to the intern from “Vecherny Bishkek,” the Friday issue of the newspaper which reaches 80,000 copies, is sold out “within minutes.” The readers get the benefit out of this as well: the mobile and timely market of the newspaper supply turned out to be more preferential than the inflexible system of sales through news stands, or kiosks as they are called. The salespersons have won as well: dozens of people managed to find a working niche earning money by selling newspapers.

However, the alternative markets for selling the newspaper products exist mostly in the capital. In this respect, there are fewer opportunities for consumers in smaller cities, such as oblast centers, and even fewer – in the villages. In the remote rayons or villages the authorities are still capable of prohibiting sales of one or another newspaper, forcing the employees of the press distribution system to sabotage the sales of some newspapers. This was related repeatedly during the focus groups by editors of capital newspapers and was confirmed by many editors of capital newspapers in the course of the interviews and focus groups. Here is one example given by the editor of a non-state newspaper in Osh, “We concluded an agreement with Kyrgyzbasmasoz for distribution of our newspaper. There are only three news stands in the city, so it is easy to trace the paper. My friends were asking me all the time, ‘Where is your newspaper? It is impossible to buy it. Does it really sell that quickly?’ I am saying, ‘No, half of the print run is returned to me almost all the time.’ I go to the news stand, and my newspaper is under the counter, no one can see it. I am asking the saleswoman, why is this. And she responds, ‘Oh, I just forgot to take it out.’ And later I found out that she was ordered to hide my newspaper so that the readers do not see it.”

The same way, by the authorities’ instruction, during the last 3 years “Kyrgyzbasmasoz” rejected distribution of the newspapers “Asaba,” “Res Publica,” and some others. And for the private salespeople, various obstacles were created in distribution of these media. As a “demonstrative” punishment for critical articles aimed at the highest leadership of the country during the last half a year “Kyrgyz Rukhu” was subject to harassment in terms of sales of the newspaper – the traditional print run that was based on experience of earlier sales suddenly failed to sell out through the “Kyrgyzbasmasoz” system, and in the remote areas the local authorities prohibited sales of the newspaper altogether.

On the whole, there are certain disadvantages of selling newspapers through private salespersons as well: in such cases only entertaining content will reach the most remote areas. Such a content, on the one hand, satisfies the dominating tastes of the public, have high "liquidity" rates, on the other hand, possessing no purely newspaper qualities such as timeliness and importance of information, they do not lose their actuality and can be kept for reference longer. Today, even in the most remote areas it is possible to buy from private salespersons such newspapers of entertaining content as "Syrduu Duino," "Magia," "Kylmysh jana Jaza," "Tagdyr" and others (see insert in Section 3 on pulp press). However, gradually the domination of such utilitarian and specific "pulp fiction," may result in a change of the taste structure and become a serious problem for the journalism system and society on the whole.

Control over advertising flows

From the modest niche of private announcements in certain individual newspapers and billboards, advertising grew and started to develop immediately after introduction of the 1992 Mass Media Law. The first wave of commercialized press was represented by a solid number of newspapers of the reference and advertising character (see chapter on typology of media in Kyrgyzstan in Section 3). All types of journalism, having realized the opportunities provided by advertising activity, started to utilize the new "genre" vigorously. The first attempts to monopolize the actively forming advertising industry were made as early as in 1994-1995. The corporation "Eridan," that "acquired" the exclusive right to place outside advertising, planned to build an advertising empire. Advertising activity of the newspaper "Vecherny Bishkek" was also developing and growing, new marketing strategies were probed by "Pyramid" TV (triple hit: television, radio and newspaper under the same name). Many new media outlets that acted "on the spur of the moment," without having studied the supply market, defined their own specific niches and entered the advertising press market. Many died soon as they had not estimated the needs.

The first signs of the interest displayed by state officials to media advertising activities clearly manifested themselves in the conflict "divorce" of the "Vecherny Bishkek" editorial staff. The desire to use placement of advertising as another mechanism of influencing the media grew in the White House officials' heads and hearts even more in store of the 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections. According to the owner of the newspaper "Asaba" and journalist M.Eshimkanov, during this period the government was putting pressure on all organizations and companies that placed advertising in the popular and national newspapers (for more detail on "Asaba" see also Annexe B1). Many major clients who had already paid for the advertising in advance, broke the contracts with apologies, explaining that they were forced to do so. "Asaba" had to look for other sources of funding.

On the whole, modern media seems to have developed two strategies for receiving the revenue. The first one represented by the experience of "Vecherny Bishkek" is to extensively grab the advertising niches, and increase its flow. The second strategy is

represented by such media as "Asaba" and "Delo Nomer," that count on selling the newspaper through subscription and retail sales. The causes that moved these newspapers to have chosen this strategy are, nonetheless, different – "Delo Nomer" is guided by a conscious rejection of advertising on the basis of principles and beliefs, while "Asaba" was forced not to count on advertising because it managed to receive its share of the pie when the advertising monopoly was being formed. Under the general underdevelopment of the advertising market and limited number of advertisers such a monopoly is killing for the development of mass media. The majority of advertisers – such major companies as "Coca-Cola," "Beta," tobacco corporation "Reemtsma" – place their advertising in the media controlled by the government, while for small advertisers placement of advertising in media is prohibitively expensive. One of the participants of a focus group for regional journalists confirmed this assumption, "Advertising of 'Beta,' 'Loto million,' 'Coca-Cola,' and other 'biggies' flows through the state administration, i.e. it automatically ends up in the state newspapers which print it on such obsolete equipment that they cannot even reproduce the Coca-Cola logo properly, because it is impossible for them technically. We (non-state newspaper) have such capacities, but these advertisers do not come to us because they all are connected with the government. And small companies do not advertise because they are afraid to do so."

Small and middle-scale enterprises, which should comprise the foundation of the advertising market, do not place any advertising in media because of the fear of "exposing" themselves to the tax and other authorities which usually act by the principle "if they advertise, they must earn good profits, therefore it is necessary to check where the profits come from." During the focus groups, some examples were provided of small enterprises that had placed advertising or even enterprises about which the newspaper published positive features, recalled their advertising or asked to publish rejections after the tax and other inspection authorities found various grounds to check their activities. One of the typical examples was provided in a focus group for independent journalists, "Not so long ago we write about a small bakery that makes cakes. Then we came to collect our advertising money from them – it would have been better if we hadn't – they were so upset with us, and said, 'you should not have published that story.' It turned out that after the article they had inspections by the firefighting services, sanitary control, tax inspectors from both rayon and the city. And they all wanted a cake or biscuits, which turned into a nightmare for the bakery."

Under the current circumstances and perspectives of development the mass media, most likely, will have to look for alternative sources of funding and earning profits for a long time ahead, since under today's general economic crisis, when most potential advertisers stand idle or barely survive, it is unlikely that the advertising market will start to develop very soon and rapidly.

In summary, it may be stated that difficulties of media functioning in society can be described most adequately with the help of the role approach. Such an approach

reflects not only the objective conditions and media capacities and opportunities, but also the subjective interests, wills, etc. peculiar to the media actors. It means that in each type of society there is a whole set of roles and functions of media, some of which dominate. As for the modern status of media in Kyrgyzstan, it is difficult to single out one dominating media function. Media actors themselves define their roles and functions in very different ways: for some the main task of the media is to inform the population, for others – to earn money, for the third – to be an opposition to power in everything, and for the fourth – to maneuver in the corridor of ideas provided by the state.

Analyzing the media as a social system, it is important to consider not only the main functions performed by the media system but also its dysfunctions. This is why in the functional aspect this report stresses the problems of media functioning, which allows us to understand why, despite the declared democratic values and opportunities, the media in Kyrgyzstan have not still reached the desired level of freedom and significance. Among the factors leading to media dysfunctions the most important are: limited access to information sources, tax and financial inspections, court claims, state monopoly for strategic resources, control over distribution of media products, control over advertising flows, setting conflicts in the professional environment, etc. Again, all these factors result from the relations between the media and the government which strives to control and regulate the media using various means and methods.

5.3 Professional consciousness of journalists and professional socialization in Kyrgyzstan

Representatives of all professions are oriented in their activity first of all to the image of relations and expectations of their colleagues in this respect. The professionally relevant points of view, opinions and practices represent the standard for relations and behavior of individual representatives of the profession. In no other profession is the orientation at colleagues is done so regularly and rapidly as in journalism:²² radio and television editors and print journalists start their work by reading the newspapers, while newspaper editors track the television and radio news, etc.²³

Because of this intensive orientation at colleagues, in journalism during a relatively short period of time, abusive media notions – ideas about character and importance of events – are formed, which are then considered as group norms. Here we mean the specific professional criteria for assessment of events importance and actuality, which determine how important is an event, to which aspects it is relevant and how it may be evaluated.

The behavior of individual journalists is oriented toward the behavior of their colleagues and produces the same effect of influence because the others act in the same way. As

²² H.M.Kepplinger, "Die Demontage der Politik in der Informationsgesellschaft", Muenchen, 2000, S.39.

²³ It is not by chance that during many years "Vecherny Bishkek" accuses television and radio editors in plagiarism.

a consequence of this cycle, the vision (mentality) of journalists, especially in crises and conflicts, strays from the perception, mentality of the specialists, experts and available statistics. Coverage of events in such situations is more an echo of the previous messages than a response to the actual events.

As a consequence of this, an impression of dramatic development of events may appear even if nothing significant is happening. Therefore – limited set of topics from one newspaper to another one, everyone is competing in beautification of the same event, and each week passes under a theme of Event # 1. It is typical, that as it is in the West, there is a number of media that have the right to introduce a fashionable or trendy topic of the day. During certain periods such media, undoubtedly, were “Vecherny Bishkek,” “Delo Nomer.” As a rule, the foundation of such a trendy topic was a scandal or negative sensation.²⁴

At present, the “fashion-makers” are becoming “Vecherny Bishkek” and KOORT. This tandem is not accidental: in the environment of curbing the media “the criticism license” and the permission for priority coverage of “hot” topics are issued to the media that are associated with the White House.²⁵

Qualitative and quantitative composition of media

Soviet journalism practices special “filters” for entry into the professional system. It was related to the role that the journalists were to play as the conductors of ideology and agitators, mobilizers and propagandists of the existing system. Such filters included obligatory higher (preferably journalism) education, length of service in media sphere (through the system of volunteerism and part-time work), membership in the communist party or komsomol as an indicator of ideological awareness and maturity.

Radical changes of the political and social system brought by Kyrgyzstan’s independence in fact meant the collapse of this system and practice. However, in the new type of state there is still no new system of entry into the journalism profession. Today Kyrgyzstan’s journalism has a huge number of non-professionals who bring with them lower standards, stereotyped understandings of the tastes and needs of the population. Absence of special education and preparation for the profession, which is in essence ideological, determines absence of ideas and the domination of the commercial stance of journalism. Besides, the people who enter the journalism profession from outside, require a lot more time to internalize corporate interests of journalists.

In our survey we made an attempt to analyze the qualitative and quantitative composition of the media. The table below presents the obtained data:

²⁴ For example, up to the moment when the non-governmental organizations shifted from the civic education sphere into the sphere of influencing the power authorities through monitoring of elections, writing about NGO movement in Kyrgyzstan was if not bad tone then in any case not the domain of talented or recognized journalists. But now the situation has radically changed. The struggling image of members of NGOs movement is close to its end: either the NGOs will be finally fully involved into the political sphere and substitute party structures, or most NGOs perceived as deliberately disloyal and oppositional to the power, will finish their activities and this institute of the civil society will be finished.

²⁵ For more detail on the founding and ownership of these media, see chapter “Structural context of modern journalism in Kyrgyzstan” in Section 3.

Table 12. Qualitative and quantitative composition of media outlets

№						
<i>last state newspapers</i>						
1	Jalal-Abad Tongi	1				1
	Aia J-Abad	1				
	Tala T	1				
	i -la	1				1
	-l abala	1		1		
	Tni-Too an	1				
	Jang					
	adoi	1		11		
	o a	1				
1	an Tan	1		1		1
<i>ditional nonstate newspapers</i>						
1	Jan n J-Abad			1		
	aan					
	-i					
	-a		1			
<i>it and raon state newspapers</i>						
1	gil Ja A-		1	1		
	ail-					
	Ta-o Ja					
	o Aaan				1	1
	g T oo			1		
<i>nstitutional news papers</i>						
1	al alog no J-Abad			1	1	
	noond -l obla al d			1		
	ia Jol -l o ao		1		1	
	ili a -l obl daion		1			
	nd T J -Abad la non		1			
	il J-Abad obla daion d					1
<i>Bishkek and national newspapers</i>						
1	d no	1	1		11	1
	o ia	1				1
	Aala	1	1			
	Aaba		1			1
	g	1		1		
<i>tate teleision and radio opanies</i>						
1	Jalal-Abad obla T					1
	Tala obla T					

№						
3	Osh-3000 (oblast TV)					
	ss-I oblast T					
<i>Regional non-state television and radio companies</i>						
	(-ba)					
	la-Too (Osh)					
3	TV (aaol)				3	
	t (Osh)		3			
	ohsto (Osh)					
	(Osh)					

Commentaries and summaries of the presented data should be done with a certain degree of caution since there is no certainty that this information is reliable. We can only talk about certain general tendencies among which the following are the most important: in the state media there are more full-time employees than in the non-state media; in the state media there are more journalists with professional education than among their colleagues in the non-state media; in the state regional media the number of female journalists is high which is explained by the lower level of salaries and falling prestige of the journalism activity; the state regional media have no accurate record of their part-time journalists and this is why the data, increased for "better impression" may vary from 200 (Osh Janyrygy) to 50 and 52 (Tenir Too and Talas Turmushu). At the same time, it is common knowledge that the story portfolio of the oblast and rayon newspapers are always empty and materials are published in a hurry without preliminary verification of information. For comparison: "Asaba," where many journalists would like to publish their stories, conducts selection of the incoming materials and has only 20 permanent part-time correspondents throughout the country.

The heads of regional media repeatedly complained during the interviews and focus groups about the low level of professional training of journalists, general decline of interest to journalism as profession and low educational standards on the whole. For example, one of the heads of an Issyk-Kul newspapers said, "We are representatives of a dying profession. In our oblast, we have two newspapers: one in Russian and one in Kyrgyz. If their employees die, the newspapers will have to be shut down. We have two vacancies that we cannot fill because there are no people to chose from, they all lost interest. Our circulation and salaries are embarrassingly low. The print run is only 2,000 copies and this is what we can hardly cover."

Sources of information

For the first time, the authorities fully succeeded in using the tactics of blocking the access to information with the newspaper "Res Publica." The same method was used by the regional Naryn authorities in opposition with the local newspaper "Tenir Too."²⁶ The unlimited power of the state over the media as the main holder of information

²⁶ See chapter "History and preconditions for development of the sovereign media system" in Section 3.

lately acquires special importance. And limitations in access to sources of information are becoming one of the most effective mechanisms to put pressure on the media. A certain media hierarchy is being formed where the media are differentiated by the degree of access to information. The priorities in this sense belong to the state media, the media that are owned by the ruling groups and clans.

On the whole, as the content analysis of electronic and print media text showed, the information flow is dominated by the official events and measures, the main actors of which are the official persons – state leaders and public figures. For example, in the newspaper Bishkek of August 10, 2001 (Friday issue, 32 pages) there were a total of 38 articles devoted to domestic topics. Of them 31 were news about various events. In the newspaper "Advokat" (issued by the agreement with the newspaper "Moya Stolitsa") of July 28, 2001 there is a total of 17 articles on 5 pages, 12 of them are news pieces. The comparative table below provides the data on sources of information, underlying events and actors of these articles:

Table 13. Comparative analysis of articles in "Advokat" and "Vecherny Bishkek"

Articles in "Advokat"		Articles in Vecherny Bishkek	
Sources and underlying events	actors and events	Sources and underlying events	actors and events
Based on media messages on the emergence of sadim and saemen o e sadim aa dieo soe e iim and aini oo	ai o ae omission on oism sos and o oi mao and enginee oo emooes o aa sadim	eeing i e deegaion o onness soe gsans massado o e and memes o onness	emes o onness and gsans massado goenmen oiias and deies
om e o eaing on a od mde edos o	emiss o deendans dge smonoa	megen in emi an source: Bishkek police record of eerecies	Ban emooes oie inesigaos
oneene o s oaiion o demoa and ii soie disssion o da a on amendmens o e egisaion	liiss om oaiion oe s eesenaies o inenaiona oganiaions onaiiss and goenmen	egigene in e inena aais ssem soe iien im	lien im and emooes o e asso deamen and oe inena aais ses
o eaing o e iaion o	esae oa oisa inis o sie and o emooes	aemen o e od Ban mission ead in gsan on oes on deemen o a inase source: oere pressserice	ead o e B mission an oo
ie in on o e oenmen ose source: picke pricip	niiaie go o aia oes oiias om e goenmen and ie o aia de mo	eeagaion o sinesseoe om ina in goenmen o gsan source: oere press serice	inese sinesseoe ime minise Baie
eeing o e inegoenmena g e omission on ooeaion source oere press serice	ommission memes om e goenmens o gsan and eisan	nomaion o e o ao eange and amdnd aon sae adminisaion	e nemoed and emooes o ao eange oiias o e aon aimia
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Articles in "Advokat"		Articles in <i>ecern iskek</i>	
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Articles in "Advokat"		Articles in Vecherniy Bishkek	
Sources and underlying events	sources of information	Sources and underlying events	sources of information
		5 pieces on preparation for sports competition in which the football fans are the main source of information on sports events and sports	athletic sportsmen and sports fans
		the case of robbery and murder source: <i>Jayil police dept</i>	the case of robbery and murder
		criminal case started on robbery source: <i>erdosy police dept</i>	robbery and the suspect
		suspect in fraud is arrested source: <i>tyarsy police dept</i>	robbery and the suspect
		information of police department press service on preparation for the anniversary of independence	robbery
		short pieces from the police department on various offenses	robbery and offenders

As the comparative table shows, there is a difference in sources of information of the two newspapers (which today are in the state of opposition due to the ownership change). "Advokat" stories are characterized by a tendency to increase the use as sources of information of the data from law enforcement agencies and court hearings, which gives the newspaper a certain "criminal" connotation, as well as more frequent use of private individuals as sources of information. "Vecherniy Bishkek" uses more extensively such sources of information as the government press-service, local authorities and law enforcement bodies. At the same time, in contrast to "Advokat," the sources of "Vecherniy Bishkek" tell about most timely and important events in the government's activities and the country's life as a whole. It is worth noting that all the three cases of government information in the newspaper "Advokat" do not contain the most important features of the news genre – specification of where, when, what, etc. For example, the article "Who is hiding behind the democracy shop window" is not a report from the conference organized by the President's press service and Ehbret Foundations, but a description of the event related to the conference – the epic of the journalist not being allowed to attend the conference. The article cites "the related opinion" by the head of the press service and the event (the conference in fact is just a ground for the author's personal assessment of the state of freedom of expression in the country).

A remarkable mirroring of "Advokat" stories took place on the pages of "Vecherka" in the selected issues. For example, "Advokat" published a report on the conference organized by the Coalition of NGOs "For democracy and civil society" and devoted to discussion of the draft law "On amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the Kyrgyz Republic." The reference of the 250-line article is the following idea: an attempt is made to curtail all democratic reforms, suffocate the democratic freedoms.

“Vecherka” has also devoted a small (50 lines) article to this; the main idea of the story is the statement of the NGOs Association leader on the right of NGOs to formulate and state their opinions on draft laws.

According to many journalists, preliminary data of a few certain agencies and numerous press-services are used as information sources. However, according to one of the participants of a focus group, the quality of such information is generally low, “there are press-services practically everywhere, but they provide obsolete information. Or they give such standard information, permitted by the authorities, on one page and in vague meaningless phrases. And what I really need, specific information, is just impossible to obtain, most often this is done through some friends or acquaintances.”

The soviet tradition of journalism activities did not include special procedures or techniques of working with the information sources. The totalitarian state simply provided the controlled media with the necessary information. The new time also meant new working conditions for the journalists. However, most journalists who had been working for the soviet media still cannot draw a dividing line between various sources of information, have no understanding of ethics of working with the information sources. During the focus groups, for example, the question about methods of protection of sources always caused confusion among the participants, misunderstanding the essence of the question. This, most probably, happened because under the traditional soviet system the state – the only source of information – did not need any protection. Because the social practice of journalism in this process did not change radically (the journalists very seldom use non-state sources, people as holders of information), most journalists still think of sources of information as mostly official bodies and their information. However, there are exceptions to this rule and some journalists understand not only the importance of people as sources of information, but also the necessity to protect them: “I believe that there should be some additional article (in the Media Law) on protection of rights of the sources. Since the state protects its secrets, limits the access, we should also have the right to protect our sources of information. Otherwise people will stop trusting us and providing information, even the most simple things,” said one of the focus groups a journalists from one of the southern newspapers.”

What is communicated has not changed radically either. For example, similarly to the recent past, the information flow contains mostly processes, numbers, masses of people. For the most part, the information is not personified.

As a rule, the canons of the old soviet paradigm of professionalism did not prescribe or require deep analysis of the information received, lest it should uncover its virtual essence or show the missing links in the chain of events. In the spirit of this tradition, the journalism of present time is dominated by official information and creative work is minimized. Newspaper and television journalists prefer to “follow the event,” without any deviation from the course and chronology of the event. It is exactly for this reason that the soviet era was characterized and determined by the chronological

concept of media publications, when the entire intrigue of a conflict is not in the counteractions and contradictions of the main actors, but in the course of time.²⁷

The state will not give up the monopoly for production and maintenance of information either. It still continues to be the main holder of all events in the media information flow. This partly explains why the genre of investigative journalism is so underdeveloped in the practice of modern media of the republic. The matter is not only that the journalists of "old training and experience" are not capable of learning new techniques and methods of work, or that the new generation is socialized by and strongly oriented toward the current standards of professional activity. *И́е а́а́у́д́а́е́и́и́и́д́е́.* The matter is that any investigation and expansion of the field of sources of information by the journalists will be perceived by the monopolist holders of information – state institutions and officials – as the challenge and resistance to the system and the regime.

The monopoly guarantees to the state that it will continue to manage the information and create a favorable image of the state. For this, the power authority may be used in different ways, for example, to dose the information, not to provide it at all or to provide the information that was selected in advance. The participants of focus groups with media specialists stated that the most closed sources of information are the structures ensuring the most important functions of the state – security bodies, courts, and military structures. This means that the most urgent problems and issues of the country's life and activity either remain totally uncovered by media, or are described in a fragmentary and "cut" manner. To legitimize the decisions on limitation of journalists' access to such sources of information, the Law on Protection of State Secrets is effectively used. The "workings" of this law were vividly demonstrated during the period of Batken campaigns, when the military events in the south were defined by the state officials as a secret of national security significance. The additional mechanism was assigning convoys to journalists in the battlefields under the pretext of providing the journalists' security.²⁸ Another fact from the same category was the prohibition for journalists to cover the court hearings on General Kulov's case.

In the practice of the above Law, ridiculous incidents happened as well when it was applied to limit the access to information and put pressure on the most active journalists. For example, a case was initiated against V.Nochovkin, a journalist of "Delo Nomer" and its chief editor V.Zapolsky based on the fact of disclosure of a state secret. The foundation for this charge was the journalist's professional activity – publication of an interview with a high-ranking official from the Ministry of National Security, in which, allegedly, a secret state information was "leaked." However, the case fell apart because a highly qualified and experienced lawyer of the defendants managed to prove that journalists by definition cannot be holders of state secrets and therefore cannot be responsible for their disclosure.

²⁷ For more detail about this, see the results of the content analysis part of research in Section 6 "Nature and causes of information gaps in Kyrgyzstan."

²⁸ However, the same methods are used all over the world. For example, during the Gulf War the American military chose and successfully used exactly the same style of media "cooperation."

According to the surveyed journalists, often closed sources of information include commercial structures using as a shield the legislative clause on non-disclosure of commercial secrets. This makes it difficult to conduct investigative journalism especially in relation to tax and financial violations. At the same time, this situation is beneficial for the media as well since it allows them to maintain the "dual accounting" system.

Relations with the government

Since the government is the key holder of information, and the main actors of the information flow are state officials and power holders, it is particularly important for journalists to be able to identify their position in relation to the power structures and individuals. Media influence at different stages of sovereign development in the country grows on the basis of state of affairs in two directions: *view of the majority that they inform and view of the minority about which they inform*. The way of thinking and behavior of these actors in the information sphere go through pendulum-like changes: at first the latter dominated, then the former started to grow more and more while the latter became dependent and finally the latter are now expanding again and the former withdraw to the background.

The practice of the soviet time suggested unwritten limits of criticism toward the state and certain holders of state power. Obviously, high officials on behalf of the state carefully filtered the information to be released by the media, and purposefully selected only the information that was potentially capable of creating a favorable image of the state officials of the highest level. Since criticism and self-criticism were de-jure the central features of the party construction, state officials and power holders welcomed "dosed" criticism.

This tradition of interaction between the power holders and media is still well and alive. For example, the journalists and editors from the regions were told during personal interviews and focus groups that in their newspapers they can and should publish criticism. The level and degree of criticism of publications depends on individual qualities of both the criticizing journalist and the first officials in the regions – governors (their tolerance to criticism). Typically, in the rayon, city and oblast government media there is the following rule: the criticizing materials should be preliminary coordinated with the head of the region and never aimed at the first persons of the region (oblast governors an rayon akims or heads of city administrations and heads of keneshes of the corresponding level). With such an arrangement, it becomes understandable why one oblast newspaper's editor said the following, "How does the authority react to such criticism? – Since the authority is educated and civilized, it understands criticism correctly, makes those who are responsible for such a situation correct it, ensures removal of shortcomings and fulfillment of tasks. If the criticism has been taken in a wrong way, tension between the newspaper and the oblast leadership would have appeared a long time ago."

Another rule from Soviet practices is still in force: it is allowed to criticize the levels of

power downwards: for example, the oblast newspaper can freely criticize the rayon akims and all the other structures below the oblast level. As an illustration, the editor of a rayon newspaper in the north described his boundaries for criticism in the following way, "We mainly criticize individual ayyl okmotu, as for rayon akimiat – we can do that as well, but in principle they don't give a reason to. Last year they (the rayon akimiat) won the first place in the oblast competition, this year as well. That is rayon authorities are trying to do their best. This is why there is no sense in groundless criticism. If the rayon were in a worse situation, we would have had to criticize the local authorities."

The journalists believe it impossible to criticize the state body which directly funds their media. During the focus groups, typical in this respect were statements like "only a bad dog will bite its master," "he who pays the piper orders the music," etc. And of course beyond any possible thinking would be criticism of any level higher than the regional one by the local media. In this rule there may be some exclusions, for example the editor of the Jalal-Abad oblast newspaper provided an example of criticizing of activities of the Ministry of Emergencies directly relating to the life of the region. The chair of the Jalal-Abad oblast television also talked about the criticizing materials on the structural unit of the Ministry of Trade which is based in Jalal-Abad oblast. But such exclusions are rare, and of course they do not touch upon the main strategies of the policies of ministries and other government structures. The typical illustration of such an attitude to criticism may be considered a statement by a journalist, a focus group participant, who said, "In the regions, almost all media are state ones. And this is why we, the employees of the state media, have a powerful internal censor – we know for sure what the state may not like and naturally try to avoid coverage of such issues."

The focus groups participants – editors of oblast, rayon, city newspapers – sincerely believed that it was beyond the competence of their newspapers to critically assess the activity of the President of the country, the head of government, etc. They assured each other that in fact such information would not be interesting for the local residents for whom the life and activity of the President is not within the closest consideration zone, is beyond their horizons. One of participants of the focus group for media managers said, "To criticize the President? Why? – This is beyond our competence. Besides, our viewers are not interested in this." Some editors believed that criticism of the President and government is the prerogative of such outright oppositional newspapers as "Asaba" and "Res Publica."

Some journalists are generally skeptical about effectiveness of criticism. For example, one of the participants of the focus group for electronic media managers said, "what is criticism for in general? – Usually criticism is a product aimed at a certain result. If we criticize someone (an official), we hope that either he will correct his behavior or that he will be fired from his position. But let's take the practice of the last five years: whatever the press criticizes, or to be more exact, whatever the press is allowed to criticize (if it was allowed to do so), there was no constructive result out of this. Take

the Prime-Minister's staff, for example – this is the most responsible economic body in the country. But people there are replaced like gloves, like the cards that are shuffled all the time. If this is an indicator, then it is useless to talk about the lower links in the chain, because when we criticize someone, we are not sure that he will be replaced by a better person. Of course, it would be ideal if the replacement turns out to be better – good economist, specialist competent in this sphere. But this does not happen. Instead, another bureaucrat steps in and we again have an opportunity to criticize him. One of the tasks of the media is to criticize, and in our case we have criticism for the sake of criticism. And we are pleased with ourselves that we can criticize.”

To identify the character of interrelation between the media and the government and the peculiarities of perceptions by journalists of such interrelations, the questionnaire (for the survey and focus groups) for editors and journalists included the following questions: presence of censorship in every-day life of the media and, in case the answer was positive, on subjects that carry out censorship; questions on the legitimate grounds to shut down a medium, on forms of media persecution by the government structures and on factors determining independence of the media.

Thus, only two of all the respondents – participants of the survey and focus-groups (a total of 75 experts) – believed that there is no censorship in the country. The subjects carrying out censorship were identified as follows: 20 respondents – state bodies, 16 – media owners, 15 – local self-government bodies, and 15 respondents believed that the most important censors are journalists themselves (self-censorship). 28 survey participants could not clearly decide for themselves who in reality carries out the censorship in the country.

In a hypothetical situation of media being shut down by a decree of the President or government, 65,3% (or 49 respondents) believed that this should not be allowed, 11 respondents expressed their opinion that such a course of events was quite legitimate and this practice could be allowed.

Among the main reasons for shutting down a certain medium on a lawful ground, 23 respondents named a court decision, 14 - the will of a founder or owner, 13 – bankruptcy (initiated by the owner) as a foundation for closure, 7 respondents specified insult of officials, propaganda of violence, and non-demand of the medium in the market, while 18 respondents did not specify any grounds.

On the whole, the criticizing materials in the regional, and, for the most part in the capital press appear from the “permission” of power structures and individuals. This is why, as a rule these criticizing materials have a form of campaigning and for each specific time period there are waves of criticism aimed at one sphere and level of power, and later – another wave aimed at a different one. In this respect, there are demonstrative examples of media coverage of fight against corruption after the government issued a resolution on media activities in this sphere. As a result, in 1998, a campaign started on disclosure of corruption within the Ministry of Agriculture

(the great exposure and arrest of Minister Akeneev), within the Ministry of Finance (the Deputy Minister Begmatov, department director Imanaliev and employee Bayalinov were charged with corruption and arrested), at present a campaign is being launched on disclosure of corruption at the Railway Department. On all these "facts," the government-controlled media take an attacking position with the permission of the power holders. In a confidential conversation during the interview, one of the "Vechrny Bishkek" employees told about the limits of criticism established by the owners and editor – it is allowed to get at anyone, except for the president.

Particularly active were the journalists in discussing the possible and real forms of pressure or persecution of journalists.²⁹ In the questionnaire, only 2 respondents noted that they had never faced any forms of persecution or pressure on the media. The overwhelming majority (40 people) marked as the most frequently used form of pressure financial penalties imposed on journalists and newspapers, 33 – court hearings as a pretext to shut the medium down, 31 – calls from "above" with the recommendation not to publish the material, 25 respondents marked prosecution through tax inspection and 16 – refusal of printing services.

Objectivity

When discussing this topic in the focus groups, it turned out that there is no clear concept of objectivity in journalism among journalists and editors. Practically in all focus groups, clear definitions of objectivity as unbiased, neutral coverage of the events of reality, and 20 respondents marked the option "non-party and unbiased coverage." However, when defining the function of journalism, many told that the media should play the role of controllers and "unmaskers" of the power, or believed that the function of journalism is to communicate only interesting news, which contradicts the notion of unbiased media coverage.

The thesis on unachievability of objectivity in journalism was clearly formulated: all journalists are people who by definition cannot be objective because everyone perceives the reality in a different subjective way. And this human subjectivism characteristic of all people does not allow journalists to be truly objective in their work. However, after the clear separation between objectivity as a phenomenon, indeed unachievable ideal of human perception and objectivity as a professional standard, the focus groups participants came to a conclusion that it is possible to achieve objectivity as a professional standard if the journalism professionals "agree" what are the objectivity components and which criteria should be taken to assess if and how objectivity is achieved. At the end, all participants concluded that objectivity should be the ideal that every journalist should aim at, and the degree of a journalist's objectivity increases in proportion to the growth of his/her professionalism.

Quite interesting was also the connection made between objectivity and freedom, especially economic freedom: one of the participants justified it as follows: "the more independent is a journalist in terms of finances, the more objective he/she is, because

²⁹ See chapter "Problems of functioning of the media system" above.

it becomes more difficult to pressure and influence him/her.” One of the respondents defined objectivity in this sense as “ability to write in such a way, so that the worst and most evil participant of the described events or processes could not sue you.” About half of the editors and journalists surveyed in the course of the research believe that if media are in private ownership and have stable advertising revenue, it is the most important factor for independent and objective media activity.

Coding (news criteria and values)

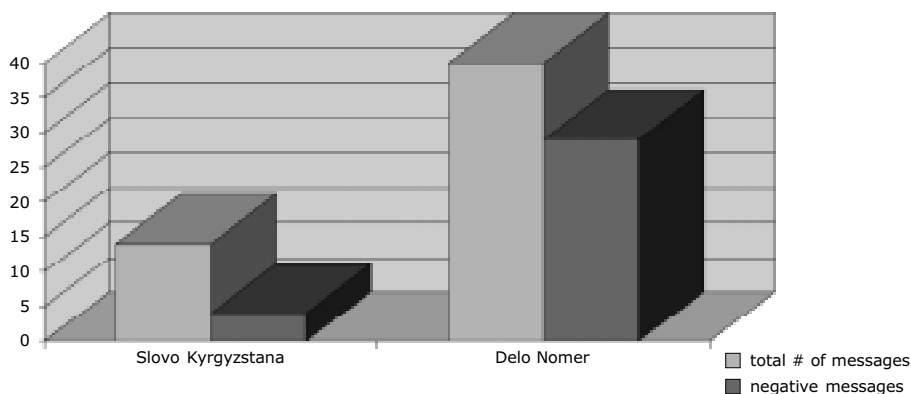
When discussing this issue in the focus groups, the participants were quick to name by heart the commonly accepted news values such as timeliness, public significance, proximity and sensational character of the event. When, however, the participants were asked to decide which of the proposed hypothetical news pieces they would publish without preliminary verification of information, the overwhelming majority marked such options as “well-known politician is about to leave his party” and “owner of a major company is to pay huge amounts of taxes for many years ahead.” Several (10) respondents noted that it is quite possible to publish the information that a well-known scientist is about to discover the medicine to treat cancer. These decisions were based on the assumptions that positive information does not need verification. Only a few editors decided that none of the proposed examples could be published without verification of the facts.

In this respect, there were interesting directions of various editorial offices in relation to news criteria that were identified by our observers during the internship at a number of capital media. For example, while the journalists of “Kyrgyz Tuusu” select the news material that show the ruling elites in a good light, the journalists of “Res Publica” know for sure that in their newspaper it is possible to publish anything except for the materials of pro-government character. When selecting the materials, “Res Publica” adheres to the following criteria and news values: the covered event should be important, large-scale, acute, and it is desirable that it in some way provides an opportunity to criticize the power holders. For the employees of KOORT television, the most important thing is that the messages have no negative content about Akaev, or at least should contain nothing that can spoil his image.

Oftentimes, criticism is one of the main news criteria in the oppositional or private media. The traditions of criticizing campaign survived in the domestic journalism from the soviet time. In the modern media criticizing materials are more than just news criteria.

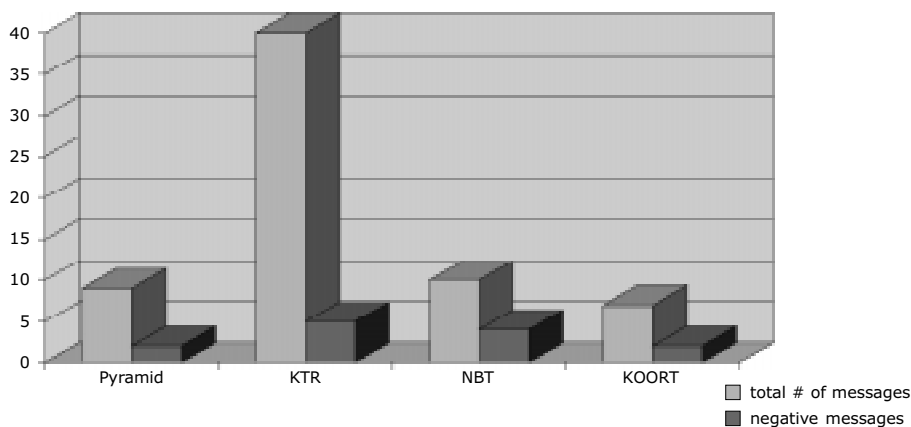
History of domestic media development proves: it is impossible to make journalistic name and earn fame, build the popularity of the newspaper (see diagrams on the share of criticizing materials in different newspapers on the examples of news covering regions).

Graph 18. Share of negative messages in the press
Sample: information on the regions



The same tendency is noted in the television texts: the messages on state television have no negative themes, criticism takes a large share in the messages of such television companies as Pyramid, NBT (for comparison, look at the share of criticizing materials on coverage of the regions – see diagram above on share of negative messages in the press).

Graph 19. Share of negative messages in the press
Sample: information on the regions



Practically all Kyrgyz journalists who have the status of if not the star of the republican significance, then at least of certain popularity among the population, built their careers on crushing criticizing materials. Quite demonstrative in this respect are publications by a leading journalist of "Vecherny Bishkek." As it is seen from the table below, all the articles, except for one – about the President – are sharply criticizing. And the focus

of criticism of the journalist was constantly narrowing down, at the end of his "Vecherny Bishkek" activity is was limited to practically only the Jogorku Kenesh (the Parliament of the country).

Table 14. Total number and character of articles by a leading journalist of Vechrny Bishkek in February 1998 and 1999.

Objects / actors	ota o artces	eate sta	oste sta
Publications in February 1998			
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Publications in February 1999			
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Talking about the necessity not only to reflect the negative sides of life, but also to create the adequate picture of the world, we mean not so much the creation of a new virtual reality, in which we, as it turns out, have already achieved the heights of democracy and prosperity, but rather the strategy of denial of nihilism and destruction and careful planting and cultivation of the images of a normal society with normal citizens.

A representative of a non-governmental organization shared his experience of dealing with the media and a very specific understanding of what is news. A young and now "productive" journalist of "Pyramid" was trying to take from him quite a tendentious interview. The questions were mostly about the conflict zones in the non-governmental movement and ecology, which was the mission of this NGO. To write about "small affairs" of NGOs, without a connotation of populism and politicizing intrigue seemed to her boring and not deserving the audience attention.

Thus, in every-day activities of journalists frequent are situations where their creativity is halted back not by the government dictatorship, but the dictatorship of professional stereotypes adopted in the course of professional practice. The set of stereotypes, including the requirements for all types of media in terms of news values are, nonetheless, different depending on how the interests of which groups and persons serves one or another medium.

Political orientations of journalists

The clarity of one-party system and totalitarian ideology of the soviet state is irreversibly gone together with the system. They have been replaced with the competitive political

programs and slogans. In the new system of the political coordinates many people still cannot find their orientation marks. On the one hand, in the current situation there is an objective reason for disorientation – absence of political ideas in the field of politics, loud names of the parties, political movements in essence have neither programs nor expressed system of principles, but only simulate institutes and processes of democracy. Another reason is that during the post-soviet period, the theoretical models and political terminology of the Western societies with the dual system of political parties were adopted practically without questioning. However, the understanding of the essence of the political spectrum has not been formed with the population and even with the journalists. The political orientations of most domestic journalists are very vague. This is exactly why the journalists and editors participating in our research were so contradicting in defining their own orientations and political positions of different parties. Thus, 16 focus groups participants identified themselves as centrist, 3 people share the program ideas of “My country” party, 2 are supporters of the party “Adilet,” 2 more – “Union of Democratic Parties of Kyrgyzstan,” and 4 people identified themselves as a little “rightish” from the center. Three people of all those surveyed under the focus groups identified themselves as radically right. The same number believes themselves to be a little to the left from the center (one of them is a member of “Arnamys” party). At the same time, the one respondent who defined himself as extremely left, correlates his ideas and principles with the program of “My country” party. One respondent communicated his commitment to the ideas of “Arnamys” party, but found it difficult to determine if the party was right or left. 18 respondents did not express their sympathy to any party, but did not show that they were not associated with any party either. Two journalists were quite categorical: the party that can be sympathized with does not exist yet. In the course of discussions with the journalists of problems of the political spectrum the following tendency has been identified: the field of activities of political parties, as well as the entire political space is personified, i.e. recognizable are faces and names but not the ideas.

In the situation of political diversity of existing programs and parties the journalists – both from the capital and regions – as well as simple citizens lose trust to all institutions and politicians. Thus, only 9 people trust to a certain extent the government, 2 respondents – local governments, 2 trust certain politicians (Akaev and Karabek), 2 – civil society and NGOs, 14 people trust no one except themselves, and 1 person – mass media. Most of the respondents – participants of the focus groups and survey define their media as politically neutral (21 respondent), 4 respondents believe that their “native” medium does not have a clear position, 2 respondents see their media as right. The remaining ones found it difficult to define, or identify their newspaper, studio or channel with any political position. One of the most important components of the political culture of journalists is the degree of elimination of old political ideologies and critical comprehension of the soviet past. The research, however, showed a clear tendency that this issue is one of the key aspects for solving the problems of professional consciousness.

In the regional media, the overwhelming majority of journalists and editors has a significant experience of working in the party soviet journalism. For example, the average length of service in journalism of focus groups participants is 15.5 years. Among the editors, the average length of services as media heads is 6.3 years. A significant number of respondents stated that they associated the post-soviet reform of the Kyrgyz society with the times of social hardships, loss of social guarantees and decline of living standards, loss of personal social status. Having adopted the general democratic phraseology and understanding of the current political values, most of the media employees (this relates more to the regional media, but the capital ones are not exclusion either. Here the age is not a determinant value, because the constraints of the totalitarian society are internalized rapidly by the young people through the traditional professional and general socialization) still cannot overcome the nostalgic evaluation of the soviet past. During the interviews and survey, very interesting "symptomatic" mistakes were being made: for example, the editor of the Jalal-Abad city newspaper "Mezgil Unu" still thinks in the categories and terms of the soviet times. He was constantly slipping in his language from the city administration to the city party committee, spoke of the meetings of the local authorities as party bureaus and decided to give us an interview only after a permissive call from the press-secretary of Governor Toktosartov.

The results of the focus groups show that 32% of the participants believe that the most characteristic feature of the soviet time was absence of causes for interethnic conflicts, life was flowing based on the principles of internationalism, and many remember the attractive image of the socially active and conscious society – 17%, while 35% believe that it is exactly in the soviet past when the fair and effective balance in development of the regions was achieved. The feeling of losses at present, the positive nostalgic evaluation of the past and the vague image of the future became the determinants of the current mentality of the citizens of Kyrgyzstan. The journalists are not an exclusion in this respect: they still are oriented toward the past, verifying all today's events in the totalitarian system of coordinates.

The characteristic of the past is the general atmosphere in the professional journalism environment in Kyrgyzstan. In the regions – rayon or oblast newspapers and radio and television stations – the eternal companions of the defective leveled consciousness –envy, intrigues, intolerance to dissent. Most journalists still operate with the same mental categories in relation to themselves and their colleagues. This is why it is so easy for the authorities to scour them and their media. It is not accidental that an editor from the Issyk-Kul oblast marked in the answer options to the question on distribution of working time during the day the option "reading the enemy press." The ideology "who is not with us is against us" is deeply rooted in the professional consciousness of journalists. This allows us to conclude that the process of true and complete elimination of the past has not happened yet, what has changed is the phraseology and the images that simulate changes of the state and society.

The above description of changes and processes in the professional journalism environment of Kyrgyzstan may be summarized as follows:

1. In journalism, orientation to colleagues happens particularly rapidly and newcomers very quickly adopt the standards of professional relations and behavior. Most of the subjects of media activity come from the totalitarian soviet system and were not able to completely eradicate that experience, in reality having just adopted the democratic phraseology and simulating the work of democratic media. Since the process of socialization is inheritable, all journalists newly coming into the system adopt the old technologies and group norms.
2. The power of the government as the main holder of information acquires particular importance recently. And the limitation of access to information sources becomes one of the most effective mechanisms of influencing the media. A certain hierarchy of media in terms of degree of access to information is being formed currently.
3. The social practice of journalism in use of sources of information has not changed drastically: the journalists very seldom use non-governmental sources, people as information holders. Under sources of information the journalists still mean mostly the official government bodies and their messages.
4. In journalists' daily activities, frequent are situations where their creativity and initiative is held back not by the dictatorship of the state, but the dictatorship of the professional stereotypes established within the framework of the editorial policy and practice.
5. The old political ideologies and non-critical realization of the soviet past, inability to eliminate its influence is another key problem of the professional consciousness.

SECTION 6

CAUSES AND NATURE OF INFORMATION GAPS IN KYRGYZSTAN

6.1 State Policy in Relation to the Regions and Their Media

The study of mechanisms of formulation of regional images in mass media is based on several determining factors:

In general, despite the optimistic figures showing a continuous growth of mass media in the country, a breakdown by regions demonstrates disproportion in the information network development. The overwhelming majority of mass media – print and electronic, are concentrated in the capital, Bishkek. All regional mass media include oblast newspapers and TV and radio companies, which are bodies of the oblast state administrations and oblast keneshes. In some regions there are two oblast newspapers – in the Kyrgyz and Russian languages which are duplicating each other (Issyk-Kul, Chui) and in Kyrgyz and Uzbek – Jalal-Abad. In Naryn, Talas and Batken there is a newspaper in Kyrgyz only, in Osh there are three oblast governmental newspapers – in Kyrgyz, Russian and Uzbek

The distribution of other media in the regions looks as follows:

Oblast TV and radio channel "Sary Ozon" and nine rayon state newspapers operate in **Chui Oblast**. The life of media outlets is artificially supported by the rayon akimiats, ensuring forced subscription and miniscule subsidies. The budget financing predetermines the problems of economic character: the subscription is ensured mainly at the expenses of ayil okmotu and other local self government bodies, which are not in possession of certain financial means. This means that the media have to accept "natural payment" and afterwards become involved in sales of grain, beets and other agricultural products. By no means, however, do these efforts cover completely the editorial and printing costs and the newspapers find themselves hardly able to make both ends meet. They have huge debts to pay to printing houses as a rule. The latter also are forced to continue to provide their services to newspapers. The polygraph base is quite adequate to the content of the printed materials themselves – relief print with a limited number of garnitures. The limitations of the political nature include absolute dictatorship by the rayon state government bodies, lack of urgent topics adequate to the reality and a sharp shortage of professional young personnel. There are but a few non-state mass media in Chui oblast: the newspaper of the Tokmak printing house; the joint-stock city newspaper "Business Chui-Tokmok"; the private newspaper "RIO Kara-Balta" (ceased the operations in 1998 due to the conviction of its founder and owner for fraud); the joint-stock newspaper "Inform-Kara-Balta", (closed due its financial non-viability in 1998); the youth newspaper "Vest" is issued on a

grant from "Soros Kyrgyzstan Foundation", "Mass media Center Tatina" with a founder joint venture "Tatina". Overall, the situation of Chui mass media is especially difficult due to their closeness to Bishkek. They face a high competition with the capital and national media while the polygraph and other technical conditions do not give any competitive advantages.

The mass media of **Issyk-Kul Oblast** are represented by five governmental newspapers (two oblast newspapers in Russian and Kyrgyz, two rayon newspapers and one city newspaper in Balykchy) and one oblast state TV channel broadcasting on the frequency of the state TV and radio channel KTR. Attempts to reanimate two other rayon newspapers are resumed from time to time, but all of them fail because of financial difficulties. There are professional newspapers such as "Bilim Shamy", issued by the oblast education department and "Genofond," newspaper of the city health department of Karakol. In the second half of 1990s there appeared several newspapers at once financed by international organizations: Winrock International project instituted a farmers' newspaper and GTZ assisted in the creation of an ecological newspaper "Biospheric territory of Issyk-Kul", Danida assisted in founding a TV and radio studio which then the city administration transferred to the Information and Advertising agency "KIRA". However, the "KIRA" project was a failure and the equipment disappeared. Also irregularly and in small circulation are distributed two private advertisement-free newspapers: "Factor" and "Besplatnaya Gazeta". Electronic mass media are represented by the Karakol branch of the "Almaz" radio station, which after getting independent legal status in 1998, has changed its name to "Radio LW". Since 1997 "Ecological Youth Television" is working, however, it is ecological by name only thanks to the founder – an ecological non-governmental organization. Currently, it rebroadcasts a Russian channel, TV-6, and its own programming, including a weekly news program "Results of the Week" and the daily music programmes "Music Orders of TV watchers" with advertisements and greetings. It is rather difficult to determine the status of a newspaper called "Myizam Jolu" ("Road of law"), as the newspaper was founded by an individual- editor- but certain financial and information support was and is provided by the oblast public prosecutor's office.

In **Naryn Oblast** actually functioning are three rayon newspapers, one oblast state newspaper and an oblast state TV and radio studio. Another two rayon newspapers are published in a "pulsing" rhythm: due to miserable financial conditions they are issued extremely irregular, whenever the money for the next issue becomes available. As a rule, rayon state governmental bodies make financial injections before important political events – such as elections. Independent mass media include TV studio "Ayan", radio station "Tenir-Too" and two newspapers: "Dil" and "Ayan" which ceased their operations.

In **Talas Oblast** in fact only the oblast state governmental newspaper "Talas Turmushu" is published and an oblast TV and radio station is operating. Recently "Talas Independent TV" started its operations. In general the information situation in oblast is poor

– the market mostly offers advertising and commercial newspapers and criminal reading, as well as some Russian and Kazakh mass media.

In **Batken Oblast**, radio "Salam" operates, founded jointly by UNICEF, the International Tolerance Fund and Internews and targetting young people of 17-25. There is also the oblast state newspaper "Batken tany" in Kyrgyz. In Lyailyak rayon there was a private (home commercial) television studio which was closed in summer 2000 as a result of the conflict with the rayon akim. An integral feature of the information situation in Batken oblast are propaganda religious sheets issued by Hisb-ut Tahrir and other extremist groups.

Jalal-Abad Oblast has 12 governmental print media including two oblast, two city and three rayon newspapers; three professional newspapers - "Salyk nalog info", "Dil" and "Chyndyk Tuusu" and specialized editions, such as the newspaper "Musulman". Jalal-Abad oblast is the only region with its own offset printing facilities, which could be the ground for economic independence of the polygraph base (numerous mass media even from Osh had printed their newspapers using these facilities), however, the oblast state bodies do not wish to release the printing facilities from their monopoly. Recently the printing facilities have been privatized and rumors say that they were bought by persons close to the family of Akaev. The coverage of broadcasting of the oblast TV and radio company is broad enough. However, the general atmosphere of work in the labor collective is determined by internal intrigues and split into groups, which are supported by different representatives of oblast government bodies. In reality the oblast TV and radio company has become a battle field in the struggle of local leaders for the political influence. Non-state electronic mass media include TV companies "Dastan", "Makhabat Jyldyzy", "Mars", "Nur-TV", "Nur-TV" and a new TV company "Echo of Manas, 7 Channel", created by a former founder of KOORT television Toktogaziev, who pursues not only commercial objectives, but also plans to extend the broadcast for the whole southern region with the purpose of integration of southern oblasts. Non-government newspapers are represented by NGOs' papers ("Law for al" – NGO "Justice"), advertising and commercial press (newspaper "Informburo", currently not published). Quasi-legitimate is the newspaper "Fergana" founded by a former editor-in-chief of the oblast state newspaper B. Orunbekov, which prior to the cancellation of registration by the Ministry of Justice had managed to publish two printed issues and is currently published on-line on a Russian web domain.

Among all regions only **Osh Oblast** represents a relative variety in mass media (at least a quantitative one). Osh mass media often have regional impact covering if not the entire Fergana valley, then at least partially Jalal-Abad, Batken and all of Osh oblast itself. Expansion of the area of broadcasting is perceived by the Osh editors-in-chief as the realization of the ambitions of Osh as a southern capital. Despite the fact that in the past decade a number of independent TV and radio companies were created, just a few managed to achieve the stability and the quality level higher than that

of home video, namely: "Osh-TV", "Meson-TV" and "Piramida-Osh,". These broadcast using their own channels with the time of own programming from 2 to 6 hours a day. Such companies as "DDD", "Keremet", "Erkin Ala-Too" and others rent the broadcasting frequencies from the oblast TV and radio company or TRC "Sodrujestvo". In Osh there are state newspapers (3 oblast newspapers, city paper "Vecherniy Osh", 5 rayon papers) and non-state mass media: "Demos-times (currently not issued)", "Jany muun", "Osh Park", "Meson" (published from time to time) "Rush time" and "Osh Press Vesti", currently published on the Internet.

The situation with the regional media described above can be summarized in the following table:

Table 15. *Informational resources in the regions*

Region	ein ei	onein ei	en Rionne	onen Rioio	e
Chui Oblast	9				
ssul Oblast					
a Oblast					
alas Oblast					
at Oblast					
alalba Oblast					
Osh Oblast	9				

Leading TV and radio companies and printed media based in Bishkek try to extend more to the south because this region in essence is a larger part of the country and is worth the effort at least from a commercial point of view. Besides, the current situation is such that the strategic objectives of the state, the destiny of the country is determined in the south. In this respect, the interest of the central mass media to expand their influence farther to the south is understandable. This is expressed not only in the creation of a distribution network in the south, but also in setting up correspondent's offices, the conclusion of agreements with own correspondents in the south and, if the financial resources are available, creation of newspaper southern supplements.¹

The print media in the capital are not in a position to say that they are able to influence the population in the south in a sufficient way and cannot realize their claims to integrate the regions into the life of the country. The circulation of all the

¹ Here we mean creation of a special supplement for the south – "Vecherniy Bishkek – Yug" was founded with the purpose of conducting a PR campaign for the Presidential elections. After fulfillment of its mission, the newspaper died in a natural way as its economic strategy had not been developed. It is not by accident that the head of the newspaper was Ella Taranova, one of the most loyal journalists to the Akaev's family who never left the northern capital to organize the effective activities of the southern supplement of "Vecherka." In essence, this was only an experiment with "implantation" of the capital press into the corps of the southern media. The radio and television companies are better in taking the southern information market.

newspapers is not stable and overall not high. The aggregate single-day circulation of the five popular newspapers of Kyrgyzstan varies from 370,000 to 405,000 copies. If the actual circulation covers only a small portion of the information needs, what kind of impact could the local mass media have? In other words, the era of the total population coverage by newspapers and magazines both in the south and north is long over. The time of traditionally high use of print media is replaced by the time of preferential TV and radio use.

But the shaped consumption structure of television, which is, undoubtedly, the leader in coverage of the entire population of the country, could hardly be referred to as journalism per se. The research done through the focus groups with media users has proved without doubt that the majority of the rural community watch feature films, serials, music and entertainment programs.

The newspapers that come out, let us say, in Osh or Jalal-Abad, have less opportunity to successfully enter the national market, at least up till now. Despite numerous start-up projects ("Osh-press", "Akyiat" and others), none have demonstrated stable success.

6.2 Lines of regional split

The characteristic feature of contemporary journalism in Kyrgyzstan has become a quite evident split in the mass media texts dividing the north and south. Analysts distinguish a number of objective reasons, which may deepen this split and facilitate its transfer from the area of social conscience to the area of practical actions, which will result in an irreversible development of the problem.

"Will the south and north meet?" – reflect publicists about the genesis of this division. Different scientists associate the following with the roots of this phenomenon: historical preconditions (specificity of clans and tribes), specific mentality due to labor traditions and way of life, closeness to Uzbekistan and the unequal aggrieved representation of southerners in politics. It is very important to determine the role of mass media in this problem. Can mass media influence public opinion in a certain manner by transferring informational formulas to the constructions of mass consciousness? And what are the mechanisms that could be used by mass media in doing so? Lastly, why and for whom could they fulfill such a mission: sewing discord among the regions of the country?

As it is seen from the brief overview above, the representation of mass media in different regions of the republic is quite irregular. For example, in Osh oblast there is a relative variety of mass media in terms of numbers and types of mass media, whereas in some regions, like Talas and Batken, the mass media situation is very poor. The state media dominates in all regions and the dictatorship of local authori-

ties makes the regional press faceless, stripped off its specific regional content. For example, publications of "Osh Janyrygy" could have been placed with the same effect in "Tenir Too" or "Issyk-Kul Kabarlary," having only changed the geographic labels and the names of officials. In such a situation the interests of the regions and the specific interests of the local population are not articulated in the media space and are not taken to the level of the whole society. Such an information policy is a reflection of the overall policy of the state in relation to the regions. This regional policy from the soviet system is still maintained in the form of strong centralization of power and a concentration of resources in the capital. The development of vertical connections is considered preferable. In some aspects the change of relations center/regions has a negative character, which is predetermined by a reduction of resources from the center to the regions.

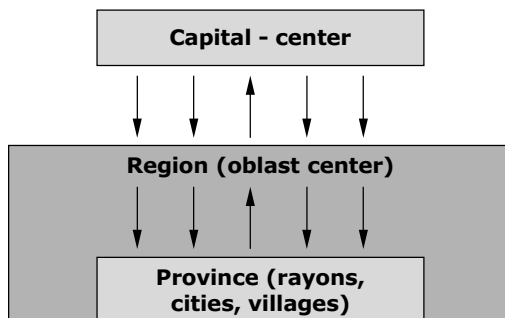
Center/region relations are often perceived as the relations of the capital and regional center. These relations may be not too far from each other – this may even be the relationship of competition (for example, the story with the second, southern capital of Kyrgyzstan which is trying to compete with Bishkek, with temporary success). However, to say this about the relations between the center and the regions is to say the truth. In fact, the distance of a huge, scary gap exists between the capital – center and the province – villages and small towns of the regions. This distance lies in all spheres of the life and activity of people, including the information one (see Graph 13 "Information exchange in Kyrgyzstan"). The character of direction of information flows, as in the old tradition, reproduces the system with a high degree of centralization of information flows and preference of vertical connections over horizontal ones.

Nevertheless, the center cannot ignore the difference in potential of the regions and for the purposes of preserving the whole system has to build specific relations with the regions. In the practical sense this results in the hierarchy of regions based on geopolitical, economic, ethnic and cultural specifics. But the absence or insignificance of horizontal information connections does not allow perception of this hierarchy in the regions. As a result, representatives of each region believe that it is exactly them who are aggrieved. At the same time, all participants of focus groups for audiences were certain that people in other regions knew nothing about them and that the news from their particular region was not interesting for residents of other regions in principle. In this sense, an illustrative example is provided by one of the participants of the audience focus group in Osh: "About the Osh events (1999 Batken campaign) last year: my daughter and I were on vacation at the Issyk-Kul lake at that time. I was surprised by the fact that they (Issyk-Kul residents) were sympathizing with the earthquake in Turkey more than with what was going on here and in Batken. And it was only when we came back that we found out everything, because there was better coverage here."

Inside the regions themselves, similar processes take place – the oblast centers also try to centralize the power and concentrate the resources that reach the oblast and do not facilitate development of horizontal connection among the subjects of the

regions. Centralization of power, coupled with the weak resource support of the regions, results in an escalation of the disintegration processes.

Graph 20. *Information exchange in Kyrgyzstan*



Residents of the regions are poorly aware even about what is going on with their closest neighbors, and even if they have this information they receive it mostly from capital sources. Many focus groups participants noted that a decade ago the connections between the regions and the north and south – people were bound by marriages, practically all layers of population could afford to fly to the south or north, friendly (professional or other) and blood relations were carefully maintained. But the last 7-8 years made these contacts among people nearly impossible. Informal channels of communication now can activate the multiplication of rumors and speculation.

Today it is possible to state with certainty that the population of the southern and northern parts of the country has developed a constant stereotype of “them, the strangers.” That is, the residents of Naryn or Talas or Chui displayed the same easiness in imagining and describing the southern region and its residents. Moreover, often this image carries only negative qualities – insidiousness and unpredictability of behavior, religion bordering on ignorance, groveling and conservativeness... Of course, many pointed out the “attractive” features and qualities of the southerners – they cook well and know how to show hospitality, however, these “instrumental” positive qualities were immediately crossed out by the strong meaningful, negative “insincere.”

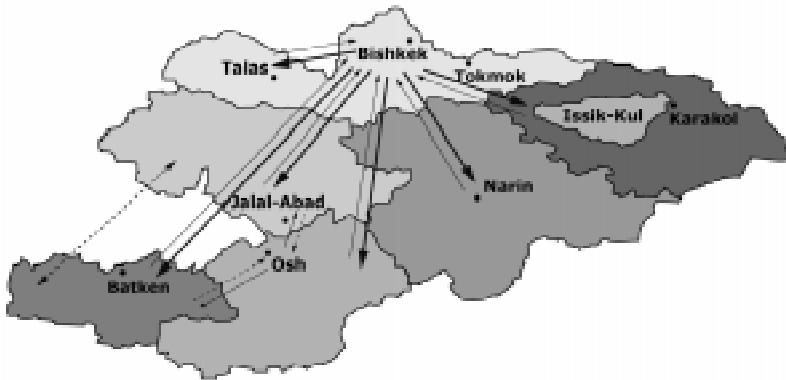
The focus group participants and respondents surveyed during the interviews, when asked about the boundaries of the southern region, clearly name three oblasts – Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken. For the residents of southern regions, the notions “north” and “northerners” also has quite clear definitions. The residents of the southern oblasts do not see a principle cultural or another difference between the residents of Talas, Chui, Naryn and Issyk-Kul oblasts.

With the definition of “us, ours”, almost all surveyed respondents had a difficulty. In such a territorial aspect self-identifications have not formed yet, and identity stereotypes have not formed in the mass consciousness either. The residents of Naryn,

Issyk-Kul, Chui and Talas were bewildered by the question about the northerners – how is it possible to unite such different oblasts into one notion of the “north.” And they started lengthy explanations of the differences in ethnic roots of one or another clan, differences in cultural traditions, and what makes them incomparable. Talas residents stated that they cannot be included into the northern or southern part of the country, that they are all by themselves, cut off. “Appendix, rudiment” – this is how they defined their geographic position, which in principle described their perception of the significance of the whole region as well. Issyk-Kul residents were wondering: where Bishkek is included? It cannot be in the north together with them, can it? Unification of the southern region is also problematic: the southerners, when asked to define themselves, noted that in the south there are no integrative connections or cultural homogeneity even within the so-called “southern region.” For example, a resident of Alai, who considers himself a true ethnic Kyrgyz, can argue for a long time about the possibility of any similarities with a resident of Uzgen rayon, where ethnic Uzbeks dominate, and the traditions and customs are therefore non-Kyrgyz. And where to place the residents of Toguz-Toro, which in the Soviet history territorially was a part of the Naryn oblast for a long time, and now is included into Jalal-Abad? Some residents of Osh, for example, were talking about the residents of this rayon in the same spirit as the ancient Chinese chroniclers described the people with dogs’ heads who lived far away behind the seas and mountains. That is for everyone it was much easier to define themselves through a number of exclusions, such as “what we are not.” We are not residents of Osh, Kara-Suu, or Myrzak. Thus, the perception of regions in mass consciousness clearly manifests the hidden potential of collapse, a centrifugal force as one of the transformation tendencies. In the mass consciousness, there is no integrative sense of inclusion into the unity of the Kyrgyzstan nation, there is no regional unity (south-north) and there is no sense of unity within the oblast, rayon. This disintegration process covers even the villages, tribes or clans, individual families, because the center has lost its cohesive power. The disintegrating processes described above resulted in the collapse of the collective identity of “Soviet people,” while the new era did not provide alternative identities. Today, the people have difficulties in identifying themselves within the rayon, and even more difficulties – within the oblast, and practically do not see themselves within the oblast. Even within small territorial formations, the divisions on ethnic, clan and social grounds are significant. In this sense, the image of the “north-south” split created by the media seems an artificial political mechanism. But this virtual division, exploited and exaggerated by the media, has all the chances of being implanted into the mass consciousness and becoming reality.²

If as a result of media activity covering the country’s regional split, the final transfer of these elements from the information texts into the facts of consciousness, indeed takes place, it will be manifested in regional self-consciousness, the identification of “we” and a mechanism of perceiving any ecological, social and political problem as a regional one will be started.

² See Section 5 “Role of Media in Construction of Reality.”

Graph 21. Map of information exchange between the regions of Kyrgyzstan

Note: Thick arrows mean an intensive flow of information; thinner arrows symbolize a less intensive flow and dotted arrows – a weak flow. Absence of arrows between the regions means absence of information connections. Arrow heads show the flow direction.

Regional journalists see the grounds and causes of the information split between the regions in the following way:

- The division of regions into south and north is seen, perceived as incorrect and inadequate to reality. In reality the oblasts united into these regions are very different in their development and strategic significance within the state;
- All oblasts, to a certain extent, are in an aggrieved situation in relation to the center – Bishkek. That is to say, the real line of division lies between the center and regions and in terms of information splits, it is possible to identify at least three types of problems: the information exchange between the capital and regional provinces; exchange between the regions (horizontal) and then lack of exchange between the southern and northern regions (see the map of information exchange above).

Thus, mass consciousness is subject to multi-level problems of self-identification. That is, there are three levels: the capital, regional (oblast) city centers and the province – everything local outside of the oblast center (see Graph 14 above).

During our research, the focus groups participants formulated the following reasons for the information split between the regions and their information networks:

- 1) Lack and quality of resources:
 - Concentration of main resources in the capital and Chui oblast (in the north)
 - Lack of finance in the regions
 - Concentration of human, intellect resources
 - General underdevelopment of communication and expensive services and means of communication (post, telephone...)

- 2) Historical differences and characteristics of the region:
 - Different historical past of the regions and as a result – differences in traditions and customs
 - Clan division of the Kyrgyz
 - Influence on the population's way of life in the regions by neighboring countries: Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan
 - High density of population in the south and as a result of inadequate allocation of resources – more pronounced economic backwardness of the south
- 3) Amount and quality of the transferred information:
 - Absence of mechanisms of communication and exchange – ways to transfer the information
 - Distorted or wrong information about the regions
 - Persistent superstitions and stereotypes, especially "center-periphery"
 - Insufficient work of the news agencies, such as Kabar
- 4) Ideology and state policy
 - Absence of a national idea
 - Absence of the state information policy and active information policy of other states (in the south – Uzbekistan)
 - Significant political division and different "weight" of the regions
 - Lack of interaction between local authorities
 - «Dirty» political interest in existence of the division
- 5) Opportunities and capacities of the media themselves:
 - Excessive centralization of the media (the most significant ones are located in the center)
 - Obsolete technologies and media equipment
 - No healthy competition among the media
 - Absence of cooperation, corporate spirit
 - Inability of our media to compete with Uzbek ones that are better equipped and capable of "interrupting" the local channels in the south
 - Low level of journalism in general and journalism education in particular
 - Lack of professional journalism specialists in the regions
 - Television specifics – the regions are not provided with enough air time at the KTR frequency
- 6) Objective, unsurpassable reasons:
 - Different climatic conditions
 - Distance, mountains
- 7) Absence of initiative, interests with both journalists and audiences.

Peculiarities of the state regional policy described above predetermine some basic processes in the informational sphere of the country:

- Since the regional media cannot cover the life of the regions sufficiently and adequately, this function is partially performed by some media coming out in Bishkek and leaning toward the status of national in terms of coverage;
- Interregional communication takes place indirectly through the center. That is that information from local sites is delivered to Bishkek and then returns to the regions again, but from the national media.³ Since the capital produces a large amount of information itself, and the number of distribution channels and networks is not high, it is inevitable that the information coming from the regions goes through the selection process again. As a result, the national media formulate only an outline of the images of the regions rather than the full picture.

As a result, it is possible to state that Kyrgyzstan is characterized by a high degree of centralization of information flows with obvious domination of vertical connections over the horizontal ones.

Thanks to the messages of own correspondents of various media, more or less stereotypical "pictures of the world" are being formed with the people in certain locations. But in reality, on site, own correspondents write for two or three media at the same time. Their messages are not published daily and therefore the picture has some "white spots" naturally appearing because one person, even the most professional one, is not able to capture the whole complexities of the processes in the region. This is why the image of the regions in reality is focused on very few major centers (see the map of information exchange).

Let us take, for example, the messages from the regions published in "Vecherny Bishkek" in the column, "in the country." The newspaper readers have more information about Naryn oblast not because it is more advanced or interesting than Talas or Issyk-Kul oblasts, but because it has a more active own correspondent. Another important aspect is selection at different levels of local materials and messages. The initial selection is done by the own correspondent, and the reasons here may vary from direct pressure by local authorities, with the purpose of prevention of undesirable disclosure of circumstances of a particular case, to peculiarities of perception and the professional mentality of the correspondent who determines the news value and suitability of the message for one or another mass medium.

During the content analysis research, a task was set to study the images of the regions as they were being formed by mass media. The aggregate sample was compiled from all operative information (news, sometimes in one telegraph line) which was published in the issues of "Slovo Kyrgyzstana," column "One piece of news from

³ In this sense, very important is the article published in newspaper "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" on Batken events in autumn 1999: "Glance at the south through the north" (by Egemberdy Kabulov) from Jalal-Abad. The main ideas of the article are: suppression of the southern problems in the information program "Ala-Too", national newspapers do not reach the remote areas. The Russian media that cover all southern region are first of all interested in coverage of their own war in Dagestan but nevertheless provide more information than the official Bishkek does. The information deficit was filled up by Uzbekistan, whose media provided various colorful "strange" details. The information "break-through" in Kyrgyz media took place only at the end of August, when the rumors grew unlimited and residents in the south started to panic. Reasons for the media silence were the fear of government, which was capable of repressing the media both economically and legally and absence of resources for the network of own correspondents. Media did not fulfill their role in coverage of Batken events.

each oblast” for 1999 and 2000 (total 153 messages) and operative information (only short, up to 70 lines, messages) of the newspaper “Vecherny Bishkek” relating to the regions (total 257 messages). The topics and event causes of the analyzed messages allowed the identification of several most often spotted topics and images specifically characteristic for the regions:⁴

Naryn:

- Border with China, border problems
- Torugart customs and free economic zone
- Design and construction of the century – railway road “Kochkor-Kara-Keche”
- Pre-election scandals (K.Ishenbekov – elections to Parliament in 2000)
- Development of sports
- Cattle breeding as the main branch of the region and poverty of the population

Talas:

- Motherland of Manas, celebration of 1000 years of the epic
- Motherland of public politicians and famous personalities (C. Aitmatov, M.Akaeva, the Sarygulovs, etc.)
- Pre-election scandal around candidate to Parliament F.Kulov
- Tobacco growing as the main agricultural branch of the region
- Near border problems (Kazakstan)

Issyk-Kul:

- Health and tourist area
- Archeological findings, ancient land of the Kyrgyz
- Scandals related to the construction of the road Cholpon-Ata-Almaty (non-state decision – approval of the projects – and corruption in construction)
- Kumtor – environmental disaster in Barskaun

Jalal-Abad:

- National reserve areas, relic nut forests
- Suzak earthquake tragedy, avalanches and other natural disasters
- Suzak tragedy and embezzlement of humanitarian aid
- Cotton, tobacco, rice growing as the main agricultural branch
- Pre-election scandals around deputy O.Tekebaev
- Scandals around media – arrest of journalist Ibraimov
- Drug trafficking
- Enforcement of the religious factor

Osh:

- Second capital, southern residence of the President
- Interethnic conflict – Osh events in 1989
- Drug trafficking

⁴ A lot of information was devoted to “great achievements,” such as opening of the office on ideological work (!) under the akimiat structures at all levels in Osh oblast or training of Naryn farmers in selection work in cattle breeding. In such cases these publications were taken for analysis, grouped into the “cause” clusters. For example, information on farming was characteristic for the Naryn region as the most agricultural one, and reanimation of propagandist methods from the recent soviet past is characteristic of the south in relation with the strengthening and extending exposure of the population to alternative, religious ideologies.

- Celebration of Osh-3000
- Strong regional authorities
- Enforcement of the religious factor, Islamic fundamentalism
- Construction of Bishkek-Osh road
- Reconstruction of Osh airport – corruption of authorities

Batken:

- Border, war, terrorism
- Poverty
- Undeveloped region, lack of resources
- Enclaves, land conflicts
- Problems of the dying mining cities
- Enforcement of the religious factor, Islamic fundamentalism

Chui:

- Kemin – motherland of the President, homeland of his relatives
- Problems of small industrial towns
- Appendix to Bishkek, oblast-servant
- Industrial enterprises
- High level of crime
- Developed agriculture

Bishkek:

- Political center
- Zone of economic development - FEZ
- Center of culture, education
- Political and economic scandals
- High crime rate, prostitution, other social diseases of the society
- Concentration of all resources
- Concentration of all strategic property in the hands of the First Family.

6.3 Regions in the national media

The topics raised in the national media do not necessarily reflect the most painful and urgent problems of the regions. On the whole, formulation of a public problem – be it in the life of regions or other spheres – takes a long period. In different societies and at different periods of time the same state of affairs may be perceived as accustomed and acceptable, not beyond the reality, or as a significant public problem that needs to be resolved urgently. For example, during soviet times the relations between the regions were not considered problematic, which did not mean that in real life the interrelations between the various administrative components of the country were balanced, proportional and beneficial. That is, publicly recognized problems were

formulated as a result of a multi-step communication process which included setting the problem and assessment of the unsatisfactory state of affairs by certain individuals, then expansion of the circle of individuals recognizing this state of affairs as unsatisfactory and requiring a solution and finally attraction of attention of everyone in the society.

In formulating a state of affairs in the society as a problem, the media naturally play a key role. The more often the media cover a specific problem, the more important and problematic this state of affairs is perceived by the population. At the same time, media may take either a passive role, habitually covering only the positions and attitudes of public actors to the problem, or provide unbiased statistical data in this sphere, or become actively involved, directing the information exchange of opinions on this topic.

To what extent are the problems of the regions (using southern oblasts as an example) actualized in Kyrgyzstan's society, to what extent do the national media formulate the interests and needs of the southern regions in the media texts, what role do the media play in this? Which sides of public life in the southern regions are recognized as problems in the modern national information flow? – These and other questions were addressed in our research.

For this purposes, under the content analysis segment of the research we studied the texts of television news programs of KTR, Pyramid, NBT, KOORT for November 2000 (N=64), February (N=70) and June (N=110) 2001, as well as newspapers Delo # (N99= 156; N2000=86), Slovo Kyrgyzstana (N99 = 97 è N2000= 72)⁵, and regional southern newspapers "Ush Sadosi"(11), "Ekho Osha(67)" and "Osh Janyrygy"(72) for 1999 and 2000.

The subject of content analysis was the image of regions in the national media and the image of Bishkek and other regions in the southern media. The total number of texts was 806 messages. Besides, all publications of "Vecherny Bishkek" newspaper on the subject "politics and society" were studied in the issues of February 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 (a total of 79 articles). The task for studying the texts of "Vecherny Bishkek" was formulated in the following way: "To what extent do the regions act as subjects of politics on the pages of major national newspapers?"

Specific topics and events that provided content for the analyzed texts are summarized in the following table:

⁵ All these media, first of all, from the beginning of 90s were defined if not as quality, then in any case as the most popular ones and therefore represent the journalist standards of actual coverage. Secondly, they indicate various editorial policies and represent differing segments of journalism. Thirdly, they are believed to produce an impact on persons making responsible decisions in the area of politics and economics. Therefore they have special significance in the mutual game between the media and politics.

Table 16. Themes and topics of events in TV texts (sample – information programs of KTR, NBT, KOORT, Pyramid channels)

Channel	Thematic heer	em	et cae	ct	Te aati	eth i mite
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	eeloent o iclte	nli o et	eion o lient etie	etie inite o iclte oeno	netie	
	ite	elation o nnie o it	elt o te coetition nnonce n nee	neent o n eloe o n nee coetito	oitie	
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Channel	Thematic hee	em	et cae	ct	Te aati	eth i mite
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	rime an aet o itien	etion o rime rate in te oiet	rieing o olat roetor or te roetor oia	lat roetor	oitie	
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	eeloment o itie an illage	1. I o reient it energ . ealt erie alit . loal ator . aitane to rral itien in eeloment o arming . oling o eating rolem	1. meeting at et goernor on rearation to eating eaon looling at or o ealt intition . it to a illage goernment an ting eeriene o arm . meeting o eialit an roeional	et goernor an et. ea ta o ol at tate aministration ea o illage goernment ta o eating erie an mniaalit	negatie oitie oitie oitie	11 1
	eeloment o intr	1. meto o rial o intrial enterrie	1. ting te or o eating tation . or o roenerg ontrtion . or o ie roa ontrtion nit . or o otton ator . or o tr nit	n all ae te laor olletie an ea o enter rie	n all ae oitie	1 1 1
	letion amaign	ranaren o eletion an enorement o image o te rrent reient	inion orting reient	reient ort	oitie	
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Channel	Thematic heer	em	et cae	ct	Te aati	eth i mite
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KOORT	etn mn	entn evement m stentenn te esents me	meetns t ee n n vsts tn te nt te te eetns ess neene n tests esents t te eetn ests	ev n ttes ee nes en et esents ess seet	stve stve	
	nement set te stte	mtn tesm etn nte tesm ente	sve nteve esent n smmt ests	esent	stve	
	Investment n ets	Ineetve se nvestments n venment ets	eetn t te Investments mmttee ess neene mnst st en	nste tns mmn I snstts st	netve netve	
	te evement	etve se te eses	nst te eses mmttee	nst st eves stve		
	te e	tn n ntetn te se nt te set	s estv t te etn ente te se te n ente	e se n mmnt	stve	

The data summarized in the table allows us to draw several conclusions:

6.3.1 Actors

To get into the media focus, it is not necessary to be in the center of a significant public event, at least not for the President. In 12 of 40 news pieces the actor is President Akaev. Most often the electronic media cover his trips within the country. During the analyzed period (November 2000 – the President was again elected for the new term and election activity was just starting to decline), some channels created “pseudo events” such as the President’s birthday (as a pretext to sing an ode to his great achievements) or

provision of an opportunity for a specific functionary to talk on behalf of all young people of Kyrgyzstan, voluntary voices of other people for the support of the President. Undoubtedly, these publications and news pieces should be considered within the theme "elections and election campaigns" because this is exactly their origin. Because there appeared messages in the Russian and some domestic media – at a level of rumors – on falsification of election results and mass upheavals organized by the supporters of other candidates to the president's position, KTR started an action according to the good old tradition – coloring of the reality into the palette of unrestrained approval and unlimited support of the entire country. Especially of its southern part, where, according to the Russian media, the opposing tendencies were spotted. These recipes are not new, but today they are called PR strategies and if they are not perfectly executed they rarely achieve the expected outcome. The news pieces devoted to the President's activity were the lengthiest ones on KTR and KOORT. During the whole month, the journalists of KTR information program mentioned the President 53 times, while on NBT he was mentioned only twice.

The figure of the prime-minister was presented in a quite different light in the texts of this period: all channels, without exclusion, broadcast multiple twin messages from the meetings of the government devoted to most slashing topics, such as corruption in the government projects, ineffective use of investments etc. Pyramid television shows the prime minister three times in relation with such negative events, and three times he acts as the main character on KTR. Although the news pieces do not say anything about the fault of the prime minister himself, on the whole the work of the government under his guidance is subject to criticism. Such "courage" of all channels becomes understandable if we remember that in less than a month Prime Minister Muraliev was dismissed from his position. In this case it is more appropriate to talk not about the effectiveness of media messages but about fulfillment by mass media of "preparatory" work for "right understanding" among the people of the reasons for the upcoming officials rotation.

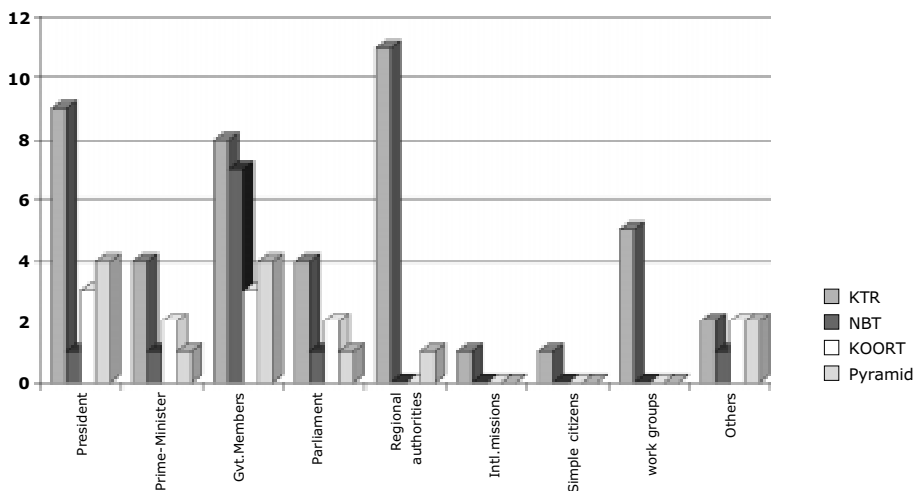
As for individual representatives of the executive power – ministers, heads of agencies – their appearance and disappearance in many ways is tied up with certain campaigns. For example, if the President declares the year of the village – one should be ready for a huge wave of messages from and about the Ministry of Agriculture, if it is the year of the mountains – correspondingly, the messages will come from the State Agency on Development of Tourism, Sports and Youth and the Minister of Ecology. Thus, as soon as the President announced the start of a fight against corruption, economic crime, etc., the messages on wonderful work of the law enforcement bodies and individuals of all levels started to flourish in all colors on the pages of the newspapers and in television and radio programs.

In the table of television texts above the news pieces, "production" topics are undoubtedly connected with just another "campaign" on developing the energy sector. The rise of the wave of messages on this topic could be observed at this time not only on KTR, but also in other media ("Slovo Kyrgyzstana," "Kyrgyz Tuusu"). At the same time, the waves of this and other campaigns remarkably coincide with various resolutions, decrees and other regulatory acts.⁶ In one of the news pieces of the KTR information program on June 18, 2001 the

author – G. Kenjeeva – makes the following comment at the background (the piece on “improvement of cultural and social items of Kadamjay rayon of Batken oblast): “Remembering that this year is declared as the year of support and development of tourism, the rayon pays attention to restoration of the relaxation facilities and sites.” And the journalist is not at all embarrassed by the fact that all these “relaxation facilities and sites” are located next to the holy religious places – mazars..

Graph 20. Main Actors in TV-texts

Sample: coverage of regions



The parliament of the Republic is another frequent actor in TV texts and programs. The deputies zealously carry out their mission through hearing the reports of ministers and heads of departments. Typical for KTR are “news pieces” where deputies teach the minister of agriculture and governors of regions how to sow and how to harvest and blame them for an easy and careless attitude to work. The programs are made in the best soviet traditions of reprimand in front of everybody during the meetings of party bureaus or departmental collegiums. One can notice that deputies appeal very rarely to public opinion through mass media, they do not mention the electorate’s expectations and demands, they just make their judgments on the basis of their daily experience. They believe that the status of a deputy provides them with a clear understanding (sufficient for officials) and capacity to make decisions related to problems at any level and in any sphere. It is worth noting that, compared to the period of the beginning of the 1990s, deputies are represented like a monolith group in KTR programs. There are no famous names and no distinguished individual behavior. Journalists do not give names while reporting about the activity of the Parliament. Only personal initiatives of a deputy (such as calling a press-conference, making an official announcement or statement) could make journalists speak about individuals in the politics.

TV texts are characterized by the lack of or very small number of programs where ordinary citizens participate as actors in the information flow. There are some programs on TV, where journalists describe problems of particular labor collectives or work groups. However, it is impossible to see the real people and their lives in the flow of the “mandatory” professional vocabulary such as person per hour, cubic meters and kilometers.

In some newspaper articles “faceless” people play the role of the ‘background’ for the public politicians during meetings, presentations, or act as the subject of a positive, socially important activity (like *ashar*⁷ or another initiative action), but only as a mass.

In the information flow for the whole month, ordinary people were shown only once (the news piece by Kenjeeva G. about the objections of pensioners in connection with the relocation of the bus station in Osh city). The presentation style of the material is very specific: having started with a description of the conflict’s essence, having shot close-up several real people waiting for the officials to resolve the problem, the author finishes with the following comments: the government knows better, but perhaps the “fathers of the city” could divert their attention from the global problems and focus on the problems of simple people. The author does not consider it necessary to find out the opinion of the “competent” party, or to study the possibilities of the problem solutions. The traditional paternalistic mentality is demonstrated here: we see it from the vocabulary used (dichotomy such as: “fathers” of the city – small people, global problems solved by the power holders, and the concern of elderly people). The question-appeal to officials at the end of this text sounds natural.

6.3.2 Event locations

Event locations are most impressive in the information about the regions. Those are the geographical points where the described events take place. The information provided in the table allows us to note that the overwhelming majority of publication events take place in Bishkek, Osh is in the second place and Jalal-Abad is in the third. The chances that the important event takes place in Naryn, Talas, Tokmok or Karakol are even less.⁸ Thus, 5 out of the 7 selected news pieces made in November (2000) were shot by KOORT in Bishkek (although the pieces were about the regions), 6 out of 9 news pieces were filmed by Pyramid in Bishkek, 21 out of 40 were made by KTR in Bishkek and all 10 selected releases by NBT were filmed in Bishkek as well (this is logical, because this is an independent Bishkek TV). In 2001, the situation did not change in this respect: in June, 14 of 16 NBT news pieces about regions were filmed in Bishkek, 21 out of 25 Pyramid pieces related to events of the provinces were shot Bishkek, in 23 of 40 KTR news episodes were made in Bishkek, as well as 18 out of 29 KOORT news pieces.

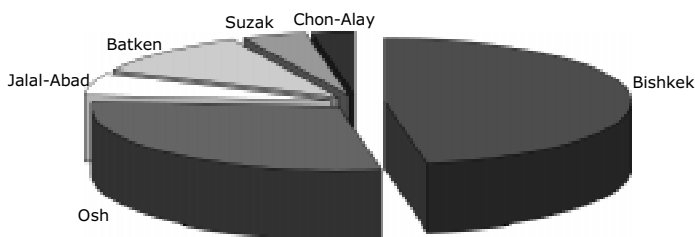
The diagram “Event locations in regional coverage” represents the locations, from which “Slovo Kyrgyzstana” received information for its publications in 1999. At the

⁷ Translator’s note: “*Ashar*” is a method of construction or other major work where all the neighbors gather together and help each other out taking turns.

⁸ The latter is understandable in principle: the sample was focused on information relating to the southern region.

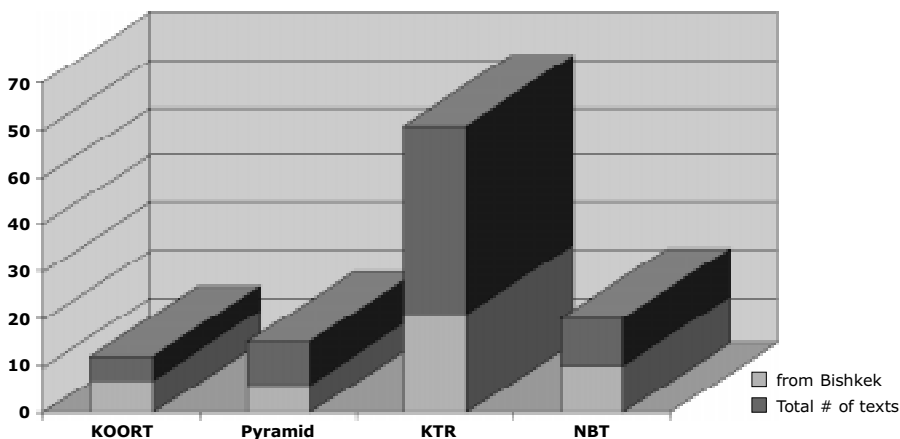
same time the samples include only the information about the southern region. However, as the diagram shows, the majority of the articles about the south were written in the capital, and the information sources are the press-services of ministries and departments.

Graph 21. Event locations of regional coverage



One can observe the disproportion between the number of messages and reported facts in the current information provided to population. If the total sample is taken it becomes obvious that one third of all the materials is related to the Batken war and consequent situation on the southern border. But the amount of information provided in those publications and mass media texts is very limited. While during the immediate combat and other war operations there was at least a small percentage of factuality in the publications. During the period between the war actions, attention is focused on the condition of the army, the war spirit and morale of soldiers, the state of affairs in the border – all these are themes which are described often without any facts. Messages and publications like this frequently include the opinions of experts in the area.

Graph 22. Event locations in TV-texts
Sample: coverage of regions



The disproportion between the center-Bishkek and the regions is obvious in both diagrams. The first diagram represents the texts of print media, the second diagram – electronic media. At the same time, the most important fact is that the sample included information related to the life of the southern region. Most probably, the domination of the capital as a location for coverage of events in the regions is explained not only by the inability of different mass media to have own journalists due to the lack of financial means and by concentration of all ministries and other power institutions in the capital and the centralization of power there. In our point of view, this tendency reflects the deficit of autonomy in governance of the regions. All the important decisions are taken and the fates of the regions decided in the capital.

In spite of the evident interest of mass media to the southern region, residents of the south consider this flow of information as not at all representative (this opinion is confirmed by the results of focus groups, interviews with editors, and surveys of media users). The reason for this opinion could be found after the analysis of the quality of messages. During the Soviet times the huge Osh region was represented by only Osh and Djalal-Abad cities, all the rest of the oblast province was homogeneous and not interesting for the mass media. In any case, this oblast was not frequently shown by TV and photo reporters. One could not say that no information came from the oblast, but those separate episodes did not play an important role and were easily lost in the news current (as a rule, it was information about the hard work of agricultural workers). The remote areas of the southern region took such a small share in current of news, that in general those areas stayed in the shadows. The Osh events produced the effect of an exploded bomb. The people memorized very well the names of the small cities and towns like – Kara-Cuu, Uzgen, Myrzaki. When after the perestroika period, “suddenly” far away towns, cities and regions appeared as if from nowhere, showing social activity and readiness to protect the democratic principles. For the majority of residents in the Kyrgyz Republic it was a discovery compared only with the discovery of America. “Suddenly” appeared a region of Bazar-Korgon, where the fearless residents of a small village such as Ahman (the motherland of the most active deputy, the ex-candidate for the post of the President – Tekebaev) could confront the local authorities insisting on conducting fair elections. The towns of miners appeared all of a sudden, where the people were demanding to resolve the urgent economic problems.

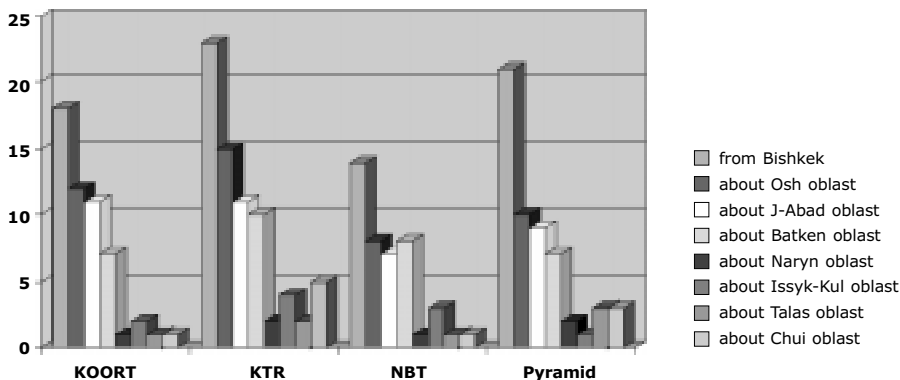
But the south became really “interesting” for mass media because of the dramatic Batken events. Today almost 85% of the total information about the region is connected to the Batken events. If earlier the information about life of the whole region was concealed, now provided information is distorted, presented only through the prism of the terrorism and vahhabizm threat. But the life of the ordinary southern residents is still in the shadow. The facts could even be real, but abundant, negative information about one sphere of life does not allow the creation of an adequate information image about the whole southern region.

As a result of such interpretation of events, one can witness a schematization of image about the regions.⁹ As a rule, the images are stereotypes built on the basis of negative

⁹ See description of images of the regions.

information. Thus, abundant information about the Batken campaign, feeding of materials, which do not have a clear event cause, feeding of information, which is not supported by the facts, concealment of certain facts (about which the informal channels inform the population anyway), emphasizing of other facts – all these aspects allow to strengthen the image of the south as the region of numerous threats: Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism, drug trafficking.

Graph 23. Shares of regional news and location coverage



The residents of the region, since they do not receive information about everyday life or urgent issues of their own social practice, legitimately make a conclusion that the national mass media do not give the real picture of events in the southern part of the country. Obviously, with such “coverage” of life in the regions, ordinary citizens living there have a feeling of being excluded from the information image of the region, express their bewilderment and dissatisfaction with such coverage. Since no user in the regions studies the share of coverage from the other regions, the residents from every region have the impression, that the reality of their particular region did not receive adequate attention, and an inadequate understanding of local events of social life is formed. It is not by accident that the respondents in focus groups for media users, journalists and editors often indicated that the coverage of other regions was quite adequate and sufficient and gave a completely opposite opinion regarding coverage of their own region. Such opinions have been expressed by the residents of Naryn, Issyk-Kul, Jalal-Abad. For the majority of regional residents, the national mass media are the main source of information on the situation in their own region, city, oblast, that is to say that information passes the following scheme before it reaches the consumer: province-center-province.

However, there are some differences in assessment of fullness and regularity of coverage of local life in different regions. Thus, by the assessment of Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts’ residents, the incompleteness and inadequacy of information reality in the national mass media has the connotation of conscious lowering and the discrimination of importance of the biggest region in the country. The residents in the northern

regions very often have an understanding that truly important events take place in the center. In the province there are no events, and people live at the periphery of history and development. Thus there are no actual causes for coverage.

6.3.3 Sources of information

1. All the channels have one and the same source of information. As a rule, those are the official structures, specifically working with mass media such as: press services of the President's Administration, government and parliament, press services of ministries and departments, the information agency Kabar.
2. Practically one and the same type of message passes from one information program to another, at the same time journalists as a rule follow the chronics of the event development, without making too many efforts in application of their creative and analytical approaches. However, depending on the character of the message (if the event has a positive or negative connotation), some channels (like KTR) prefer to make the messages either very long, providing all details and accompaniments of they are positive or very short, ascertaining a fact of event itself, without giving the details if they are negative. Thus, for example, in case with presentation of the memorable medals to the ambassadors of foreign countries and representatives of international missions in Kyrgyzstan in honor of 3000-year anniversary of Osh, the NBT channel decided 25 seconds is sufficient for such official event. KTR, however, managed to stretch the same event to 2.07 minutes, by including into the piece an effusive "ode" praising President A. Akaev for all his activities, and by inserting a message from the Russian ambassador, who expressed his high opinion of the activity of A. Akaev and who congratulated him on his election victory. And on the contrary, in the case of the meeting of the government on ineffective expenditure of investments and on careless execution of the terms of project on reconstruction of Osh-Bishkek road, the KTR allotted only 37 seconds to state the fact of the government meeting. The essence of the matter – a conflict in major investment design – was not covered by the message. The KOORT produced a news piece on this event lasting 2.03 minutes, Pyramid – 2.15 minutes, NBT – 2.25 minutes, while only channel followed the development of events quite coherently. NBT was the only channel which produced a news piece on the criminal activity of officials engaged in food provision to the army in Batken, (the only popular newspaper that covered this event was Delo Nomer). Thus, using mainly official information, mass media are directed by the power bodies, obediently covering only what has been pre-selected for coverage. Even the Pyramid channel, which always tried to highlight its independence, follows the precisely shaped way and does not show any zealotness in criticizing the state of affairs in the regions. Unfortunately, the quality of presentation of material, profundity of coverage of a problem and the character of information sources allows us to state that investigative journalism does not exist as a genre. Selection of "comfortable" information, its provision in doses or its complete absence (system of concealment of information), aimed at power entity – all these

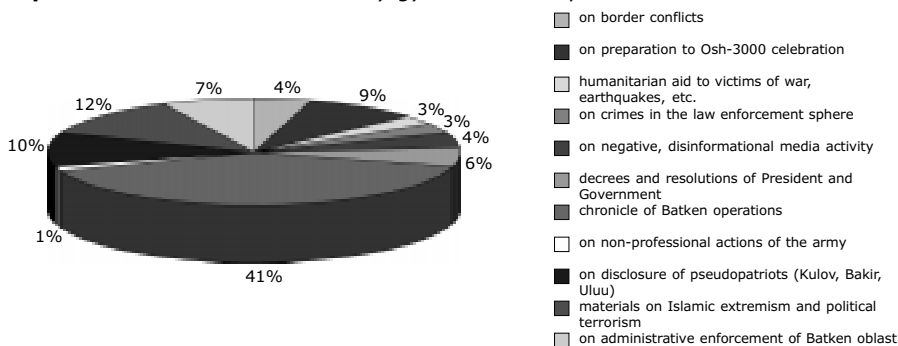
factors result in the making of wrong decisions, the deformation of power. At the same time, as a result of such conformist behavior, journalists create conditions for virtualization of the information and political life. When the information channels provide only the information that is filtered or dozed by the government bodies themselves, "the government hears only its own voice, it knows that it hears only its own voice, but nevertheless it continues to deceive itself that it is the voice of people, and demands from people to support this illusion. The people, however, partly fall into political superstition, partly – to total political distrust, or, having absolutely turned away from political life, become a crowd of people, who lead only their private lives."¹⁰

It is not by accident that during the analyzed period the genre of investigative journalism was practically absent. And it was exactly during the period when the activity of government was allowed to be criticized and the curtain of confidentiality related to corruption and embezzlement in government projects was partly opened - journalists had plenty of opportunities to conduct such kind of investigations. But the style of Kyrgyz journalists' work was still tied with following events, a non-creative approach to study of every case while preparing material. And in the scandal situation, with the violation of the contract on Osh-Bishkek road construction, the journalist's curiosity did not go further than visiting the press conference, organized by the government structures (State Investments Committee and Ministry of transport and communications).

6.3.4 Event causes

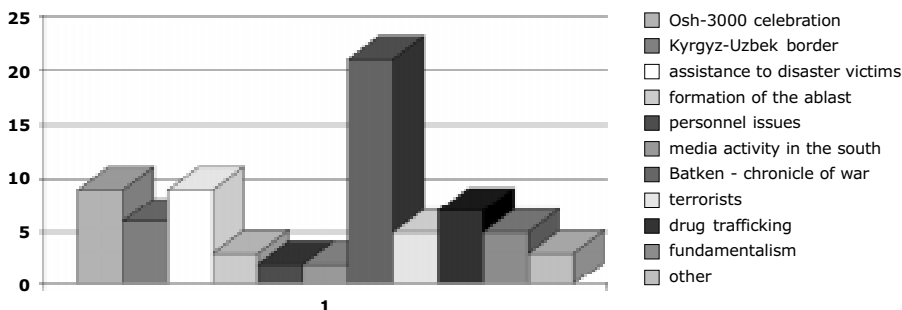
The messages are mostly based on official events and measures taken by the government. As it was shown above, journalists use a limited set of sources of information, for the most part the state bodies. Since at the "exit point" from the management system the information is already selected and presented as it is suited for the government, the spectrum of themes raised and event causes are practically the same for all mass media irrespective of their type. Different media allow only slight differences in the theme. Below are two diagrams, which visualize the differences of segments and themes of messages. The diagrams reflect the publications of the newspaper in 1999 and 2000.

Graph 24. Event causes of "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" 1999 publications



¹⁰ G.Dilligensky. "Search for meaning and goal: problems of mass consciousness". Moscow, 1998. p.237.

Graph 25. Event causes of "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" 2000 publications

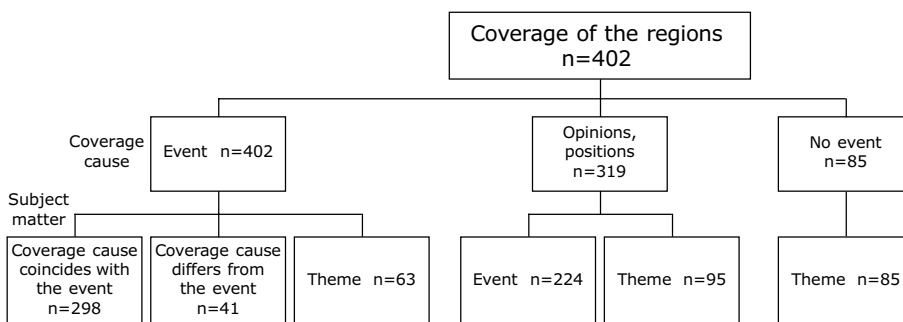


In general, the analysis of the events' structure in the coverage of the regions is the most important issue. There were three aspects, which became the causes for news in our sample: events and urgent topics, opinions and positions, and some messages did not have any real manifested cause. The analysis of texts in the total sample (806 publications) showed that almost 50% (402) of messages were devoted to events and urgent topics, 319 messages or about 40% were written on the basis of opinions and positions of various individuals, most often officials. And about 10% (85) messages did not have a clearly expressed event behind them. Most often these were devoted to the topics considered by the society as problem, (see Chart 2 "The structure of events in regional coverage").

6.4 Regions about the regions

As it is shown on the map of information exchange among the regions, and as the results of the content analysis research demonstrate, the horizontal connections and information exchange among various regions (oblasts) are practically nonexistent. Information from one region to another comes indirectly through the center and Batken events made the problem of no information exchange between the regions even more serious.

Chart 26. Structure of events in the regional coverage



Since Batken events are in the area of common state interests, every rayon or oblast medium, irrespective of its type, considered its duty to cover them in one way or another. Absence of own correspondents network, limitation of journalists' access to the combat area, prohibition for local journalists to transfer information – all these served as obstacles for coverage of Batken media by media of other regions. As the editor of the Issyk-Kul newspaper "Myizam Jolu" has told in the interview, it was impossible to obtain information on the recruitment of the reservists or contract soldiers from the local military recruitment offices. This is why the regional media were left out of such an urgent event and while the soldiers were fighting the militant terrorist groups, media of other regions were reporting celebrations, agricultural routine, about life which had nothing to do with the military events. Thus, in the situation of coverage of Batken events there was an absolute information gap among the regions.

The focus group participants – editors of oblast media – expressed their opinions that the everyday, routine life of the regions is of no interest for residents of other regions. It is exactly this understanding which dominates the journalism practice of Osh oblast newspapers selected for content analysis – "Ush Sadosi," "Osh Janyrygy," and "Ekho Osha." During the two years of the sample, the newspaper "Ush Sadosi" published 28 articles devoted to other regions. Out of these, only one article related to Issyk-Kul oblast, one article was on the events in the Chui oblast (Sokuluk) and three articles – events in Batken. All other articles were oriented to events in the capital, wherein the capital and power holders are raised to the rank of the do-gooders who are very concerned about the development of the regions. The tone of the newspaper is that of an unrestrained optimist.

The situation with the publications in the newspaper "Osh Janyrygy" is even stranger. In 1999, it published 37 articles about other regions, and 22 in 2000. A significant part of the published articles are reprints from the national press, such as the interview by Ella Taranova in "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" with Governor Muraliev on celebration Osh-3000. A large number of articles are letters from different regions with congratulations for the 3000th anniversary of the city of Osh. One more group of reports are historical articles about legendary natives of Osh or the south who work in the north.

"Ekho Osha" – 49 articles in 1999 and 33 – in 2000. The overwhelming majority of the articles contained commercial information on the prices of various types of agricultural produce in different regions. The rest of the articles are decrees, resolutions and other legislation relating to the life of the regions.

Thus, while the national media present the information on regions inadequately, schematically, and irregularly, the regional media are at the zero level of informational interaction. The situation with information exchange is dissatisfactory to such extent that even the state bodies formulate the problem of absence of reliable channels of communication. A good illustration of this is a statement by the chief editor of one of the southern newspapers: "Not so long ago we, the editors of oblast state newspapers,

were called to the office of the President's press secretary O.Ibraimov. And we started to talk about the fact that we have very limited channels of communication among the regions. There are no fax machines, computers or Internet connections. Many regional media have large debts for telephone services, etc. By the way, he was very surprised to learn that we don't even have computers and called *eje* (*Mairam Akaeva – note by the report authors*) with a request to help us. As a result we now have a computer in our newspaper. We also agreed then that we will issue and exchange the pages devoted to oblasts."

A project of special issues devoted to the life of each oblast was offered by the President's press secretary O.Ibraimov in 2000, at the meeting of editors of oblast state newspapers. According to the plan, each oblast newspaper was supposed to prepare a special issue which later could be published in all other oblasts. However, even such one-time action of cooperation did not happen. The population of the regions receives no information on the life of other regions from their local media.

This situation has a huge destructive and disintegrating potential and requires immediate attention and solution. Some of the focus group participants formulated quite pessimistic scenarios for the development of the situation if the problem was not addressed urgently. The formulated scenarios included the following:

- «Even deeper economic and information gap among the regions, as the economic situation is getting worse and worse»
- «There may appear a person or organization which will demand either a system of federation (with south and north as the components) or separation of the south»
- «As a result of military operations and the deteriorating economic situation in the south, migration and flow of refugees to the north will increase»
- «Obvious economic advantage of Bishkek and Chui oblast in comparison to other regions resulting in an increase of internal migration to the capital»
- «Influence of Uzbekistan and new religious movements may result in a factual split of the country into two parts and separation of the southern regions»
- «Inattention to the regions and their neglect may result in a reduction of investments and an outflow of highly qualified specialists».

As for the ways to resolve the problem, during the focus groups the participants were asked to think what specific steps might be taken today to improve the information exchange between the regions. The following *recommendations* represent the combined list of proposed possible solutions:

1. Increase the interest among journalists themselves through discussion of the problem at seminars, round tables, meetings and media publications:
 - project aimed at researching a cause or problem in the society with invitation of experts for discussion of the information gaps among regions under a wider problem, such as security of the state;

2. Attraction of society's attention to the problem through increase of civil self-consciousness:
 - Work in the regions for education and destruction of the most destructive stereotypes;
3. Attraction of the attention of the state to the problem of absence of the national integrating policy:
 - Assistance in creation and promotion of the created ideology;
4. Development of the corporate spirit and cooperation among journalists:
 - Recreation of active professional associations and unions;
 - Independent media should protect each other and participate in decision-making together with other independent organizations (such as NGOs);
5. Removal of confrontation and development of cooperation between the state and non-state media:
 - Not to oppose the independent and state press, since this does not facilitate the dialogue between them;
 - "Educate" the officials so that they do not doubt the credibility of information, trust the media more and are more tolerant to criticism;
 - Organize practical seminars for heads of state press-services and journalists of non-state media so that they can develop mechanisms of cooperation;
6. Creation of joint regional programs similar to programs "Open Asia," "Door," creation of the studio "Kyrgyzstan" (similar to the studio "MIR") which would be working for the entire country and in each region;
7. Development of connections between the regions:
 - Restoration of the network of own correspondents of the national newspapers in the regions;
 - Improvement of cultural exchange among regions (festivals, competitions, days of culture);
 - Restoration of broadcasting of the KTR channel to the full coverage of the entire republic;
8. Development of connections and exchanges among the journalists:
 - Seminars, focus groups similar to the ones conducted under the project, congresses and meetings;
 - Internships and exchange among journalists and companies;
 - Connections with journalists from other countries (for example, Russia);
9. Technical and financial support for the media (especially regional ones) by donors and investors:
 - Consultations, training, scholarships for upgrading of qualifications and training of new personnel;
 - Grants for the media and projects implemented by the media;

- Grants and investments for development of the printing base and upgrading of equipment;
 - Opening of branches of Bishkek printing enterprises in the regions;
 - Printing of central newspapers in the regions (the result – cutting of expenses for delivery and better access to information from the center in the regions);
10. Creation of resource centers for media support (similar to the one in Osh) in each region:
- At least 1-2 computers in each oblast;
 - Internet communication for information exchange;
 - Base to conduct workshops, meetings, practical seminars;
 - Organize telephone reports between companies for news exchange.

SECTION 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions

This report presents the stages of historical development of media in sovereign Kyrgyzstan during the 10 years of independence. The existing media are classified into different categories and the evolution of each type of domestic media was described. The multi-sided analysis of the media system of the republic included the study of journalism within the framework of the systemic paradigm, structural and functional methodology and other theoretical positions. The work also widely used various specific sociological methods and quantitative methods (traditionally dominating in the set of instruments of the specialists in the region) were combined with qualitative ones. Such a combination allowed us to generalize the experience of media activity in the region and assess the role of the media institution in current social practice.

Among the main factors determining the model and character of development of modern journalism in Kyrgyzstan the following were singled out:

1. High degree of government control over the media;
2. Lack of experience of professional freedom with the journalists;
3. Resource scarcity in journalism;
4. Discrepancies in information supply and demand;
5. Inadequacy of information exchange within the country and information gaps between the regions.

7.1.1 High degree of government control over the media

The historical development of interaction between the government and media is similar to a pendulum movement. It swings from the totalitarian dictatorship and control of the Soviet times to liberalization and sovereignty in the first years of formation of the independent democratic state and later swings back to centralization of the relations and tighter control by the government toward the 10th anniversary of independent Kyrgyzstan.

Type of ownership and loyalty. Today the government possesses a divaricate media structure which includes newspapers in Russian and Kyrgyz at the national level, national television and radio companies and corresponding oblast and rayon structures. The character of the government's interaction with these media outlets has not changed in essence during the 10 years of independence, therefore many regional journalists and editors have not changed their professional terminology from the communist times and the domination of Soviet self-identifications and notions in them is still palpable. But

current government support is in no way comparable in size with that of the Soviet system of full financial provision for the needs of the media. The amounts of today's state subsidies (in their diverse forms and varying sizes) are more the means to maintain government control over the media. However, these media are given a "framework"¹ of rights and freedoms, which creates an illusion of independence and even allows most of the media heads to deny their being under control.

It is not only the above squadron of the media that comes under government control. On the whole, there are several levels or degrees of dependency of the entire media system on the government. The factor already described – state control over the government and non-state newspapers of any level – is also connected with the state monopoly for strategic information resources. It is this factor that predetermines dependency of absolutely all the media on the state. The strategic information resources include: access to printing services at affordable prices (the state still keeps the monopoly in the publishing and printing sphere), access to paper markets at adequate prices (here the existing economic barriers to the import of raw materials and high transportation costs determine the limitations, especially in the regions, of paper markets), access to sources of information (the state is the main source of information and initiator/manager of all events in the country thus retaining the monopoly for information). In general, it is impossible to single out the autonomous fields of politics and economy and similarly to the Soviet era there is a merger of the spheres "state" and "society." Power is the universal equivalent and everyone who has the power has a share in the interest while every non-state media owner strives to obtain support from the power holders.

The government, or rather its highest leaders, strive to control *non-state media* through redistribution of property in them and acquisition of the control share into personal ownership by their closest circles. At the same time, the strictest secrecy about real owners is maintained. This is why today the media ownership sphere is absolutely closed, non-transparent for the public, which naturally creates rumors and hearsay (according to the rumors, a powerful private media system is being formed which is associated with the First Family of the country). The reliability of these rumors is indirectly supported by the unwritten internal staff instructions not to criticize certain individuals and government structures.

Non-transparency is characteristic not only of the media ownership sphere but also the entire sphere of its financial and economic activities. Irrespective of the media type, all media outlets have a closed financial system. In the current economic environment (especially under the existing tax regime), it is not for the benefit of the media to show their real revenue and expenditure and therefore they are forced to conduct "dual accounting." In a paradoxical way, it is beneficial for the state to have closed systems with financial infringements because if such media outlets decide to stray away and conduct an independent information policy it can be used as an additional instrument of pressure.

¹ This means within the allowed framework. For example, today the pro-government media may be involved in commercial activities and manage the earned profits at their discretion, the control over the media content is not as tight as it used to be under the Soviet times, etc.

Control over media diversity. In the field of interrelations between the government and the media there are other players – international organizations. If the government earlier allowed certain media to orient themselves toward these new players and occupy the niche of the *opposition media*, at present such opportunities have significantly reduced. The media that used to be in opposition are now forced to become either loyal (Vecherny Bishkek, Pyramida TV) or radical, irreconcilable opponents (Res Publica) that sacrifice objectivity and other professional values in the struggle with the government. This is why the term “opposition” as applied to journalism has acquired a negative connotation (became the symbol of ungrounded “unbridled” captiousness, loss of connection with the real situation or serving foreign interests). The recent tendency in the professional community is that the journalists reject identification of themselves or their media as “oppositional” and “independent” and prefer the term “non-state.”

In Kyrgyzstan, there are no *public media* in the traditional understanding. KOORT TV channel, which is public by definition, is in fact a joint-stock company where the main shareholders are the people close to the ruling elite. The opportunities to establish private electronic media today are much more limited than several years ago. The state, taking into account the changes in the consumption structure (domination of electronic media in media use patterns), tries to control fully all the existing television and radio companies. In the regions (Jalal-Abad, Osh oblasts) there still exist several non-state electronic media, which the government “allows” to stay at the level of “home” television with no information policy.

Although there are many ethnic groups living in Kyrgyzstan, *ethnic minority media* are not a visible or influential force in the country. According to the government’s vision, the ethnic groups’ press shall perform the function of simulation of the national accord and democratic and ethnic tolerance. Since not all the representatives of the ethnic minority media are ready to follow these guidelines. Such media experience conflicts when interacting with the government. The methods used by the government to resolve such conflicts are quite limited and are all in the area of “force demonstration.” Accordingly, the reaction of the conflicting ethnic media may include the threat of “playing the ethnic card,” which has a significant destructive potential.

Means of control and pressure. The government uses a wide range of methods and means of pressure: criminal libel and other court cases, tax inspections, fines, denial of access to information sources, etc. An important tool assisting the government to maintain control is the setting of different types of media to fight with each other which results in the formation of fighting camps, splits and the absence of solidarity in the journalism sphere as a whole. As a rule, the foundation of such staged conflicts initiated by the government is unfair distribution or inadequate access to scarce resources. In the existing system of opposition within the media environment the following should be highlighted:

- a) *Pro-government vs. opposition media.* At different periods of times, the arch enemies and political opponents to each other were the early pro-presidential

"Asaba" and "Res Publica"; the government "Kyrgyz Tuusu" and "Asaba"; the national state TV under Karypkulov and lately "Asaba" as well as the national state TV of the same period and "Res Publica."

- b) *Capital vs. regional media.* There is a disproportionate concentration of functioning media in the capital; media concentration is tied to infrastructure opportunities rather than the size and needs of the audiences. The most underdeveloped regions (Naryn, Talas, Batken) have the least developed media. The degree of editorial and journalistic freedom, as well as the skills level and quality of information etc, is higher in the capital than in the regions. The research has discovered zones of "low information density," where the deficit of information is obvious. The existing national media are not capable of covering the whole country. In the regions there is still a major disproportion between state and non-state media in favor of the former. On the whole, the information exchange within the regions is as complicated and problematic as it is among the regions. The professional community lately constantly articulated concentration of all resources in the center. The survey showed the very poor state of the regional, especially rayon and city (small cities) press. As a rule, all human and financial resources are concentrated in the capital. But the position of the capital media is still not better, since under the conditions of continuing monopoly of the government on information, provision of printing services, the advertising market, they have to "sell" their political loyalty as they have always done.

7.1.2 Lack of experience of professional freedom with the journalists

A relatively short period of the country's independence has not produced full liberalization of the media as declared in the Constitution. The mechanisms of implementation of freedom of press provided by the legislation have not yet been developed in practice. Absence of public discourses on the notion of freedom of speech and the media role in society has created a situation where media actors understand professional freedom in very different ways and use it respectively. For some this is the freedom of (many times groundless) criticism and political intrigues, for others it is the freedom to earn money with no professional and ethical limitations, for yet others this is the freedom to maneuver in the "corridor of ideas" provided by the government.

The research has shown that the level of knowledge of media legislation among journalists is extremely low. The reason for such functional illiteracy is the fact that most of the journalists have not changed their mental paradigm of professional activities dominating from the Soviet times. Many journalists still rely on the regulating role of the executive power seeing the legislative base as something declarative and symbolic. Only those journalists who had to face the court and justice system start understanding the importance of legal awareness and ability to use the laws for their own protection.

The models of entry into the profession that changed in the 1990s have not taken deep root and were not supported by the changing type of professional socialization. The new generation of journalists, orienting themselves to their colleagues, quickly adopt the old, Soviet in essence, professional techniques. This problem has been enforced by the absence of a strong journalism education and reproduction of old techniques in the existing journalism educational institutions. Objectively there is a situation where the old Soviet models of journalism with its subordinated relation to the government has been reanimated, supported and reinforced.

One more symptom of lack of professional freedom is the fact that there are no horizontal lines of communication in the professional environment. This is why up to this moment there have not been developed common group norms and standards in journalism and the government takes advantage of the absence of understanding of corporate spirit and interests manipulating the media for the purposes of management and control. The instruments utilized for this are setting various media and journalists to fight and a reduction in the level of sympathy, support and solidarity with those who are persecuted.

7.1.3 Resource scarcity of journalism

Unprofessional management. Similarly to the state structure and institutions, it is impossible to separate policy-making and the management of media. The editorial system is centralized and editors have always been, and continue to be, the persons who individually make responsible policy decisions. In the case of private media, the sphere of editorial policy and management is, naturally, the domain of the founder/owner, and in the joint-stock media – the holder of the control share package. These people usually openly carry out the editorial functions of their media. As a rule, there is no designated position of a manager in media outlets. The management is done unprofessionally which in many cases is a factor of resource scarcity of the media. Many editors do not trace the balance of revenue and expenditure, however it is among these editors that we saw those who arbitrarily managed accounting of their medium at their own discretion.

Deficit of financial resources. Private and other non-state media represent two types of economic strategy: 1) the monopolist capture of existing limited advertising niches (it is impossible to talk about the existence of a full-fledged advertising market because there are very few steady economic units in the country), as it is practiced by Vecherny Bishkek and KOORT TV with the permission of the power holders; 2) reliance on sales of the newspaper as an information product – some media choose such a strategy consciously (Delo Nomer), while others are forced to do so (Asaba). Most state media are maintained only thanks to budget means. As a rule, such media outlets are lingering in half-beggary conditions. All the media that possess printing facilities try to earn additional revenue through provision of printing services. However, the technology and equipment that are both morally and physically obsolete do not allow them to make such revenue

significant and the economic entrepreneurship brings in no visible "side profits."

Thus, the deficit of sources of funding, the lack of foreign investment and the absence of crediting opportunities are objectively the main reasons impeding media development. The experts – media employees and editors – believe that the most urgent problem causing all non-freedoms is lack of financial resources. Many believe high revenues to be a prerequisite for freedom and independence. (The reality, however, shows that such understanding is illusory. Not only the information policy but also the state economic profitable activity is a potential threat for the media because in both cases such media fall within the zone of interest of the state and certain politicians).

Absence of foreign investments and difficulties with receiving credits were also formulated as very important problems. However with the existing closeness of the financial system and the unclear potential for media profitability, as well as the absence of successful examples of media business, it is doubtful that the flow of foreign investments will increase in the near future.

Underdeveloped infrastructure. The extremely poor situation of all state media continues and even worsens, while there are fewer and fewer opportunities for the private and other non-state media to obtain high quality technological equipment to produce media products. This is why "Uchkun's" monopoly for printing services will be an impediment for development for a long time ahead. Although in the regions the process of privatization of state printing facilities has begun, their obsolete technologies and equipment will be a serious obstacle for their competitive ability as private enterprises. The problem of distribution is solved by private media with the help of individual salespeople who were able to undermine the monopoly of the state post service. However there are political nuances in the distribution of media products: local regional authorities have a capacity to block sales in their territories. These political techniques were repeatedly used in various regions, especially during elections.

7.1.4 Discrepancies in information supply and demand

In the chain of information exchange and interaction (government-media-population) the population is not a link determining media activities. Therefore journalists and editors usually do not pay due attention to studying the real needs of the audiences, being guided instead by stereotypes. These stereotypes, as a rule, portray an average statistical consumer with lowered intellectual abilities and cultural needs. Although the audiences are a lot more sophisticated and complicated than the typical understanding (which was obvious in focus groups with audiences), the low information consumption standards imposed by the media do influence the reality constructing the needs of tomorrow. The journalists, however, kept repeating during the focus groups and interviews, widely spread myths about insolvency of the population as one of the main reasons for the poor media financial situation and about the perverse, unsophisticated taste of the audience leading to the poor quality of media content. Most of the editors

and journalists cannot admit that by failing to consume certain media products, audiences are make a conscious choice rejecting the low quality and virtual content of the media products.

Today the media consumption structure is dominated by television and print media use has a tendency to shift toward entertainment, advertising and commercial content. Most radio stations are located in cities and their broadcasts cover only the limited neighboring area. Most radio stations are concentrated in the capital and its localities. In the regions, radio channels are practically inaccessible. The exceptions are the powerful radio stations of the neighboring countries (Uzbekistan) that have the capacity to cover the whole southern region of Kyrgyzstan.

No nation can live in a social, cultural and informational isolation. With inadequate development of own information networks the media reproduce reality in a reduced way, reflecting only a small part of the real information interests and needs of consumers. That is, the information supply does not cover or saturate the information demand in the market. In such an informational situation the urge of the information needs is directed outward, into the zones of abundant information supply. In their turn, the zones of more developed information networks expand their information flows into the zones of low information supply or specific information vacuum. Therefore, not only the cultural colonization by alien models and standards is taking place, but another threat is the "migration" from the national spiritual environment into a foreign one, with gradual loss of national identifications. It is exactly this process that is taking place today in the south of Kyrgyzstan, where many television transmitters in remote rural areas are either out of operation or close to breakdown. This is why KTR, which is a national television network by definition, has long seized coming to certain villages and even rayons. Instead, six television channels and numerous radio stations from Uzbekistan cover the entire Osh, Batken and Jalal-Abad oblasts. In Bishkek, there has been the forming of a zone of "refuge" for the citizens as well – the television "window" into Europe and Russia provided by the cable company "AlaTV". As a rule, the subscribers of this company do no longer watch national television and do not read the national press since they live in a totally different reality and satisfy their information needs through foreign broadcasting. Those people who have no opportunity to subscribe to cable TV watch national television only in between the Russian and private Kyrgyzstan channels.

Inaccessibility or low demand for the national media, caused by gaps with the real life, gradually result into denationalization of mass consciousness, denationalization of information interests and denationalization of the media.

Therefore the information potential acquires a growing significance in the national defense system. Here we mean first of all the information that fills people's leisure time, forms the moods of the nations, forms the directions for its younger generation. The "breakthrough" in national defense depends in many ways on the status of journalists and other professional groups employed in the information industry. If they enjoy enough freedom, are used to the cultural traditions under democratic conditions they

will produce authentic ideas, ideas that are taken seriously and inspire people. If, however, the regime demands compliance, conformism and working for the power and authorities the social and cultural field of the society is filled with the surplus non-demanded information (when the media broadcast optimistic trivia) or disinformation (when the media lie through the mouths of the nation's leaders). Both variants inevitably lead to breakdown of the population in accordance with the status in the system of the spiritual production – into the groups that are actively involved in the process or are passive in terms of information. The former direct their information needs outward, into the foreign information channels. The latter, not consuming enough information, lock themselves in their own little worlds alienated from the bigger social world.

7.1.5 Inadequacy of information exchange within the country and information gaps between the regions

In the course of research it was established, that the division of the country into South and North is an artificial political move; a PR-technique utilized by various political groups in Kyrgyzstan. In reality, the dividing line determines the following levels and types of splits: center-region-remote areas and south-center-north. It is obvious that the division between the South and the North is not in the interests of the state, but the government, having no clear regional policy, does not pay proper attention to the regional information policy. As a result of self-removal of government, there is a tendency toward denationalization of the media space. The centralized vertical system of state management and control does not facilitate any development of horizontal connections or interregional information exchange. The interrelation and communication among the regions is done through the center. Coverage of the regions is done mostly by the national media. Due to a number of professional, political and economic circumstances, the national media cannot create an adequate image of the regions and there appears a substitute in the form of the schematic, most frequently negative, image of the regions. As a result, the disintegrating processes are gathering their potential and this is why the information image of the division into South and North has a chance of becoming a fact of real life.

Interaction between the regions and the center are characterized by a hierarchical structure: with some regions significant than others. The special status of the Osh region in this sense facilitated better and more rapid development of media in the south. Only in Osh are the number of regional media comparable and proportional with those in the Capital. However, a poorer resource base limits the quantity and quality of the southern media.

On the whole, the development of the media system in independent Kyrgyzstan is determined by changes in the system of relations between the media and the state. The stages of evolution of these interrelations resemble a pendulum. In the foundation of these relations, under a more detailed analysis, it is possible to see the underlying

economic interests. The disproportion between the created democratic image of Kyrgyzstan and the social practice leaning towards the authoritarian model of state governance predetermines the formation of virtual information reality. There are threats and risks for the state connected with this formation of such a virtual reality. On the one hand, the withdrawal of citizens from state interests into their own little worlds (total distrust in authorities and all subjects of politics, depolitization, social apathy, etc.) as a consequence of ignoring the real interests and needs of the population; on the other hand the state, through facilitation of simulation of democratic information activity, stops receiving the real information from the society, which predetermines the taking of wrong state decisions. Thus, the media in Kyrgyzstan – represented by the government media, politically loyal ones or oppositional media – performs the system-destructive function to the same degree as the system-supporting one.

7.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed by the researchers on the basis of their results and findings:

1. The changing context of the functioning of Kyrgyzstan's media requires an urgent reform of the legislation in the information sphere. It is important to note here that there is a need for a system of measures and mechanisms, not individual and occasional changes to improve the legislation. This is why this report summarizes the opinions of specialists and media law experts which are presented in the form of recommendations to improve the legislative foundation for media activities (see Annexe A).
2. The researchers believe that real democratic changes may be achieved through a number of special measures and activities such as: creation of a special beneficial credit system for the regional media; creation of media support resource centers in each oblast.
 - The existing and future resource centers shall become the locations for continuous education programs that will be developed to educate and train journalists, not only in professional skills and techniques (reporting, advertising, etc.), but also in understanding basic values and categories of a democratic public development. They will also provide training in management skills and social dialogue between the press-services of state institutions and journalists.
 - The main tasks of such media support resource centers could be information exchange among the regions, provision of a technical base and resources for the

regional media, organization of round tables and focus groups to facilitate the exchange of ideas among journalists on the most urgent and important professional issues.

3. To create a foundation for real independence and sustainable development of media in Kyrgyzstan, it is necessary to provide the regional journalism structures with non-state printing facilities, which will break down the state monopoly in this sphere. The project to create printing facilities could be carried out, with the help of international organizations, by local non-governmental organizations such as the existing media support resource centers. Today, the capacities to implement such a project are there at the resource centers in Osh and Kara-Balta.
4. To enforce the information networks in the regions and re-establish information exchange it would be advisable to create a national newspaper that would be produced by regions on a rotation basis. Such a newspaper could be managed as a corporate structure, with membership of all regions as main founders.

ANNEXE A

Recommendations for media legislation initiatives

Although the authors of this report are not lawyers and do not claim to fully understand all aspects of media legislation, it seems reasonable to summarize some recommendations and suggestions. These indicate the most obvious and urgent changes needed in the sphere of media legislation, and have already been repeatedly formulated by media specialists and lawyers at various levels:

- 1) Urgently revise the 1992 Media Law, which is obsolete and does not meet modern realities. Revision could be:
 - Adoption of a new law, or
 - Adoption of amendments to the 1992 Law.
- 2) Eliminate confusion created by multiple laws adopted at different times and for different purposes by:
 - Ordering and unification of all current laws into a single Code of Laws on Media and Journalists' Activities
 - Adoption of a new Law covering all spheres of activity of all types of media.
- 3) The main changes in legislation should include the following:
 - Clear definition of the concept of "a mass medium"¹
 - Broadening of rights of journalists and media allowing to establish the constitutional principle of freedom of expression and freedom of media in practice
 - A clearer description of interrelation, activity, rights and obligations of all law subjects
 - Clear description of regulatory functions in the media sphere and what agencies should carry them out
 - Exclusion or elimination of limitations on types of published information taking into account application of ethical and self-regulating mechanisms
 - Exclusion of journalists' responsibility for disclosure of any types of secrets – their protection should be a concern of those for whom such secrets are important
 - Effective protection of sources and journalists in conducting journalistic investigations

¹ For example, in the current law books what are defined as a mass medium would in many countries be considered to be a one-time (albeit mass) product. The most important aspects of a mass medium are regularity and periodicity of publication.

- Ensuring a truly applicative and recording character of registration through elimination of the term for document examination and transfer of the registration function to the statistics bodies
- Elimination of criminal libel.

4) Journalists should unite and use their right of legislative initiative for development of a draft media law that would best meet their professional needs and interests. Such a draft law may be presented to the Parliament through the appropriate committee headed by Chair Kabai Karabekov, a former journalist.

5) Develop and apply clear mechanisms for implementation of adopted laws in practice.

ANNEXE B

B1 Case study: Newspaper "Asaba"

The largest and the most popular mass weekly in the Kyrgyz language 'Asaba', grew from the republican youth newspaper "Leninchil Jash" ("Young Lenin's follower"), and during the 1990s considered itself to be the natural successor to this journal. In 1993 Asaba celebrated its 70-year anniversary.

With the collapse of the party system, a "Leninchil Jash" employee M.Eshimkanov managed to obtain independence from the highest komsomol body and to create out of the newspaper a joint stock company of a closed type, the founders of which were the newspaper staff. Eshimkanov became the editor-in-chief.

At the beginning of the 1990s the newspaper became the voice of the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (DMK), having taken the radical and democratic tone. Starting from 1992, when the main political figures of the DMK were ousted from the political scene, the newspaper and editor-in-chief Eshimkanov started to move closer to President Akaev and his team. The high point of this closeness was the book "Askar Akaev. A man without middle." The authors were the chief editor of Asaba and its leading correspondent K.Imanaliev, later appointed the President's press-secretary. At that period, Asaba was the most influential newspaper in the political field of the country. According to many officials close to the President, Akaev started his working day by reading Asaba. Eshimkanov often went on foreign visits with the President and not just as a simple journalist - Akaev repeatedly introduced him as his successor. In the 1995 presidential election Eshimkanov headed Akaev's election staff.

The split between the newspaper and the President and his family took place after the elections, because, as Eshimkanov states, he was disillusioned about the President as an individual and about his policy. However, outside observers believe that the conflict happened because Eshimkanov did not accept the positions offered to him by the President. He had been expecting much more and this offended Akaev.

After a short period of calm, Asaba declared open "war", with a half-mythical publication suggesting that the country was unofficially ruled by the President's wife, Mairam Akaeva. The article was accompanied by a picture of the ___Сикстинская___ with the First Lady's face holding the infant with Akaev's face. After this first "shot", the newspaper published critical articles about the President and his team regularly.

At this point, opposition to the newspaper sharpened with the appointment of the former Asaba correspondent Imanaliev as the President's press secretary. He would

continue to condemn the newspaper for a number of years. For example, on Sept.29, 1997 he stated at a briefing for journalists: "this should be stopped: in one issue only 8 articles against Akaev," referring to the 38th issue of the newspaper. The press secretary was particularly outraged by the photographic collage accompanying the article "Akaev and his team," which he defined as "pornographic."

At the end of 1997, dissatisfaction with the power of the newspaper was expressed through specific actions: on Nov.28 the tax service sealed the newspaper facilities, allegedly for non-payment of taxes. Again for tax violation and under the pretext that the rent resolution signed by Prime Minister Jumagulov was illegal, the newspaper was "smoked out" of the building in which it had been for 30 years. As a result of the same tax inspection, a "written off" credit was uncovered, the one provided to Asaba by the company "Kumtor Operating Co.," for publication in 1994 of the book "Askar Akaev. A man without middle". This fact became a foundation for the lawsuit initiated in 2000 against the newspaper, as a result of which it was issued a court order to pay back the credit and a fine at the amount of 1.072,000 som (US \$21,000).

At the beginning of 1999, with a move by the Commission on Morals under the Ministry of Justice, a court resolution shut down Asaba's supplement "Paishamba" because it allegedly published pornography. A second supplement "Jungli Zakonu", was also shut down.

However, opposition reached a climax in summer 2000 when the oldest deputy of the Jogorku Kenesh, T.Usubaliev, sued the newspaper for regular insult and violation of his honor and dignity over an eight year period, requiring 50 million som (US \$1 million) as compensation for moral damage. In the context of the coming 2000 presidential election in which Eshimkanov participated as a candidate, many considered this lawsuit as the White House's attempt to curb and streamline the oppositional press. Both cases (on Kumtor's credit and Usubaliev's claim) were resolved not in the newspaper's favour - despite appeals, Asaba was ordered to pay a total of 5 million som.

This unthinkable amount actually drove the newspaper into bankruptcy. It ceased publication following the court decision of March 6, 2001 and from that time Asaba journalists were published on the pages of "Respublica." At present Asaba does not come out, and when its founder tried to open three new newspapers, all registration was cancelled (see Section "Registration") in June 2001. This has given a certain "aura" of sacrifice to newspapers that have not yet been seen, which may become a determinant of their future popularity if they are eventually permitted to publish.

On August 16, 2000, chief editor Viktor Zapolsky, deputy chief editor Svetlana Krasilnikova and journalist Vladimir Nochevkin of the weekly private newspaper Delo Nomer were summoned to the Ministry of National Security. They were interrogated in relation to a criminal case against them on the grounds of a state secret disclosure. The MNS insisted that the Delo Nomer newspaper violated the secret of pre-

trial investigation and state secret. According to the journalists, the interrogation was conducted with the violation of norms established by Article 189 (2) of the Criminal and Procedural Code. After the 8-hour interrogation session, the deputy chief editor Krasilnikova was taken to hospital with a severe heart condition.

The newspaper journalists and independent observers associate the beginning of the campaign against the newspaper with its editorial policy and activities. In particular, with the article "Sensational discoveries are made behind closed doors!" (July 26, 2000), which covered the details of the closed court hearing against Felix Kulov, leader of Ar-Namys oppositional party. According to the newspaper's chief editor Zapolsky, the newspaper's problems with the government started with the beginning of the second round of the 2000 Parliamentary elections, i.e. all the elements of structural censorship were applied to the newspaper for political reasons.

B2 Case study: Newspaper "Delo Nomer"

On August 17, the journalists of Delo Nomer organized an urgent press conference where they told their colleagues from other media outlets about the case on "state secrete disclosure" initiated by the MNS against the newspaper.

On September 19, 2000, between 3:00-6:30 pm, 30 MNS employees conducted a search authorized by the Deputy Procurator General K.Kojonaliev in the offices of the newspaper's chief editor, deputy chief editor and journalist Nochevkin. The houses and apartments of these newspaper employees were subject to search as well. During the time of the search in the newspaper office, all the staff was isolated from the outside world – the office was closed for visitors, all telephone conversations and contacts of the suspects with the rest of the staff were prohibited. As a result of the search, written archive and official government documents were withdrawn from the newspaper safes as well as personal documents belonging to the journalists.

The newspaper staff decided to publish in the newspaper an address to President Akaev with a demand to stop the harassment. They threatened possible political actions if the demand was not met. The address had no response from the White House.

The lawyers of the charged journalists declared rejection of the MNS investigation department as an inherently biased agency, and formulated a demand to put forth criminal charges against the MNS investigator M.Abduhalykov (who was in charge of the search in the newspaper office) based on Articles 27, 322 (Part 1) of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic (preparation for a crime, putting forth charges against an innocent person).

Several days later, on November 29, 2000, the chief editor Zapolsky, the deputy chief editor Krasilnikova and journalist Nochevkin were charged under Article 300 of the KR CC (disclosure of a state secret). On January 13, 2001 the newspaper's Chief Editor Zapolsky announced that the MNS intended to prolong the term of investigation into the criminal case against the newspaper.

In all, the MNS Investigation Department worked on the "state secret disclosure" case for almost seven months. The criminal prosecution of Zapolsky, Krasilnikova and Nochevkin on the charges of Article 300, Part 1 of the KR CC was stopped on February 15, 2001 "due to the changed situation." The prosecution measure – a written statement not to leave city – was removed. The General Prosecutor's Office notified the newspaper staff about this seven days after the decision was made, following the newspaper's inquiry.

Almost at the same time as the "case on state secret disclosure" against the "Delo Nomer" newspaper, a court case against the newspaper's journalist Vladimir Nochevkin was initiated. On December 1, 2000 the judge of the Pervomaysky Rayon Court of

Bishkek City, E.Abylkasymov, acquitted the Delo Nomer reporter due to absence of corpus delicti. The essence of the case was the claim against reporter Nochevkin put forward by an individual – the MNS Deputy Minister Colonel Poluektov – based on Article 127 Part 3. of the KR CC (libel associated with the charge on a grave crime or a very grave crime). The foundation for the claim was the article “Copper Secrets of Boris Trofimovich.” The plaintiff, the MNS colonel, demanded to sentence the article author Nochevkin to any term provided by Article 127 Part 3. of the KR CC as well as to impose on him a compensation for moral damage at the amount of 100,000 som. Initially the claim had a more “substantial” amount – 2 million som (about \$40,000) – as compensation for the moral damage of the dignity and reputation of the MNS deputy minister.

On January 23, 2001, a joint session of two Parliament Committees, the Security Committee and the Committee on Information Policy, – took place. The Committees refused to consider the demand of the MNS Deputy Minister Poluektov to interpret the laws with the purpose of charging the journalists of the Delo Nomer newspaper with disclosure of state secrets.

Again in January 2001, a new case against the newspaper was initiated by the claim of Misir Ahirkulov, a former MNS minister and the chief of the Presidential Administration at the moment of the claim. The newspaper won the case.

The chief editor of Delo Nomer, Zapolsky made the following comment on that case and the work of the MNS and its leaders, both former and current: “They have turned their agency into the generator of criminal and political processes that fabricate criminal cases and successfully take them to court.”

B3 Case study: Newspaper "Res Publica"

Created at the beginning of 1992 and one of the first private non-state newspapers in the sovereign Kyrgyzstan, the newspaper Res Publica flourished up to 1993. Its popularity and readership grew, and Res Publica's ratings and profits were among the highest in the media sector. The newspaper also managed to get along well with the government. There was even a period of obvious favouritism from the President with all the resulting perks – trips abroad for the editor with the Presidential entourage, eloquent declarations of mutual appreciation, etc. To support its popularity and prestige, the newspaper tried to be sharp and critical. But if certain high officials got into the field of criticism, the newspaper's policy and practice was not as harsh.

The first serious contradiction of the newspaper with the government took place in December 1993, when following disclosures in Parliament, Res Publica published its article "Kyrgyz Watergate". Here it raised questions on the gold affair and the involvement of the President in suspicious economic deals. As a result, the chief editor Sydykova was called to the General Prosecutor, "for persuasion and warning," as Sydykova was to recall later. Immediately after this the Financial Inspector, sent by the Government, conducted a thorough inspection of the newspaper's accounts and bills. According to Sydykova, all this was accompanied by threats of physical assault from individuals who "did not identify themselves."

By January 1994 the newspaper had moved to the opposition camp and started to fight with the government structures. On the eve of the national referendum on extension of the President's term of office, printing of the newspaper was suspended for two weeks. Since there were no legal or economic reasons (all the bills were properly paid) to reject printing the newspaper, the director of the state-printing house Uchkun, was forced to explain the decision. A.Stamov said that there was a lack of printing plates necessary to print the issue. However, the plates were absent only for this particular newspaper and the deficit was short-lived.

Immediately after publication of the referendum results the newspaper was published regularly. Later, the monopoly on printing services was to be used many times as a tool to put pressure on Res Publica. According to the newspaper's editor and journalists, another monopolist was also used to exert force – the state distribution network Kyrgyzbasmazoz.

By summer 1994, the newspaper had finally and firmly moved to the camp opposing the President. Following the publication of a three-line story commenting on President Akaev's alleged homes in Switzerland and Turkey, the President initiated a civil case against the newspaper for libel. As a result of complicated court proceedings the verdict was that the chief editor, Zamira Sydykova and deputy editor, Tamara Slascheva were found guilty of the crime prescribed by Article 128 p.2 (libel) of the

KR Civil Code and sentenced to imprisonment. They were also banned from all professional activities as journalists.

The next attack on the newspaper was associated with the main gold enterprise of the country, Kyrgyzaltyn. A number of critical articles on its activities and those of the President of the gold enterprise Dastan Sarygulov appeared in 1997. He answered with a claim against the newspaper. Despite a very professional defense, (the paper's lawyer Maximov was reputed to be one of the best in the country), the decision of the rayon court was that editor Zamira Sydykova and author of the articles Alexandr Alyanchikov should be sentenced and imprisoned in the temporary confinement cells in Bishkek. The international community voiced its concern that human rights and other democratic norms in Kyrgyzstan had been violated and that there was a real threat to the freedom of speech. Nevertheless, editor and owner of the newspaper Sydykova spent two and a half months in the cells and journalist Alyanchikov – 11 days. It took a decision by the Supreme Court to acquit both journalists.

Another journalist of Res Publica, Yrysbek Omurzakov, was also arrested in 1997. 'Libel' about bad conditions in a dormitory of one of the factories "cost" the journalist 74 days imprisonment. In essence, the following formula became the norm for the newspaper's relations with the government: the newspaper criticizes the government while the government represses the newspaper and puts its journalists in jail.

One more benchmark in the history of the newspaper was a court hearing, which almost led to its collapse. On January 14th 2000, Res Publica lost its libel case against the President of the National TV and Radio Company, A.Karypkulov. The court determined the compensation for moral damages at the amount of 200,000 som. From March 2000, based on a letter received from the court, the printing house Uchkun suspended printing of Res Publica. This was despite the fact that the term of contract between Uchkun and the newspaper had not yet expired and the newspaper had not violated the requirement to pay the fine to Karypkulov according to the court decision. It took a great deal of time and effort for the newspaper to defend its right to print and only full payment of all fines helped the newspaper to resume printing.

Besides this form of (economic) pressure in relation to journalists, other forms of pressure were imposed on the newspaper. For example, on March 10, 2000 the newspaper's reporter Abdrasulova was arrested and charged with "participation in an unauthorized demonstration." In essence, the journalist was accused of performing her professional duties, i.e. covering the event that really occurred. The trial took place over seven days and on March 18, after paying the fine of 1,000 som, the journalist was freed. The list of harassments against the newspaper continued to grow. At the same time, the international status and reputation of the newspaper and its editor Sydykova in the battle for freedom of the press was enforced as its

relations with the government worsened. Thanks to the image of fighters for truth and fairness that had been created with the help of the government structures, the newspaper was able to obtain long-term grant support from international agencies and sustain the pressure of economic structural censorship.

Then the government utilized a new mechanism. It isolated the newspaper from the official sources of information. Since the state still remained the main producer and carrier of information, the limitations on access of Res Publica journalists to main sources of information was a disaster for its content. The newspaper gradually lost its factuality, timeliness and adequate coverage of current events. The editor and journalists tried to revive the newspaper and with the hope of keeping his journal, the editor took on some of the staff and creative potential of Asaba, another opposition newspaper that had been driven to bankruptcy. But even this symbiosis has not been able to save either Asaba or Res Publica so far.

ANNEXE C

C1 Research methods

Phase 1 «History, development and current structures of mass media in independent Kyrgyzstan»

Duration : 6 months (September 2000 – March 2001²):

Component 1. Development of mass media in Kyrgyzstan during 10 years and panorama of current media

Methods: field research – interview, polling and focus groups with audiences, processing of statistical information: comparative analysis

Research questions:

What are the preconditions and distinct characteristics of the development of mass media in independent Kyrgyzstan? What determines development of the mass media system? What is the legislative and legal framework for media activities in sovereign Kyrgyzstan? What are the differences between the capital and regional media? What characterizes the work of the language and ethnic minority media? How are the relations between the state and media built – both the pro-government and the oppositional? How are the state media different from private ones? What are the audiences of various media? How do audiences use media? What are the relations between media and audiences? etc.

Component 2. Analysis of the structures of major media (based on a representative sample)

Methods: questionnaire-based survey, interview, participatory observation, and secondary analysis of information

Research questions:

What is the organizational structure and ownership pattern of the selected media? What determines their popularity? To what extent is the medium organization transparent for its employees and the public? Are there differences between the “declared” and the actual owners of the medium? Do the owners define the policy of their media? Is there a clear-cut separation of the management structures and the

² The period of approximately one month, from December 15, 2000 till January 15, 2001, «fell out» of the research because in general this is quite a difficult season in terms of holidays and the overall decline of activities.

editorial/news structures? How well do the media know their audiences and how to they set up feedback with them? What are the sources of funding and information? etc.

Component 3. Analysis of the most important media problems

Methods: survey, focus groups with specialists, internships (participatory observation)

Research questions:

Is the most important problem lack of financial resources and weak advertising base? How do the media resolve the problem of lack of financial resources? What is the degree of state interference into the media activities and what forms does it take? What are the main infrastructure problems in terms of the material base and resources? What are the main problems in the area of human resources? (For example, training needs) Is it necessary to change the current legislation and if so, how? Is there a difference between what is declared on paper and what is done in practice? (For example, the Constitutional amendment on freedom of expression) What are the most important problems in terms of ethics and how can they be resolved? Is the quality of information high enough and if not, how can it be improved? What are the most important problems of distribution and delivery of media products and how are they resolved? etc.

Phase 2 «Causes and nature of the information gap between the North and South of Kyrgyzstan»³

Duration : 3 months (April-June 2001.)

Component 1. Analysis of media and information available in the South

Methods: survey, interview, content analysis, focus groups with media specialists and audiences

Research questions:

What media serve the population living in the South of Kyrgyzstan (including foreign and Bishkek-based media)? What kind of information do they supply? What is the share of national news and news from Bishkek in the local media? To what extent do residents of the South have access to information on what is going on in their regions and in Bishkek? Do they agree with how the national media portray the South? If not, what are the main shortcomings in coverage of the South?

³ Phase 2 of the research was based on the results and materials collected during Phase 1, with the main focus on analysis of local media in Osh, Jalal-Abad and Batken oblasts.

Component 2. Information on the South provided by the central media

Methods: survey, interview, content analysis, focus groups with media specialists and audiences

Research questions:

What information does the central media on the South provide? Is there a relation between the intensity of coverage and the emergence of negative events, such as the threat of war, terrorist attacks, local conflicts and drug trafficking? How do the audiences assess objectivity of coverage of the south (are events presented as negative, positive, or neutral)?

Component 3. Mechanisms of transfer and exchange of information between the South and the North

Methods: survey, interview, focus groups with media specialists and audiences, participatory observation, secondary analysis of information

Research questions:

What mechanisms are used for transfer of information about the South to Bishkek media? How is information transferred from Bishkek into southern media? How effective are these mechanisms? To what extent do the physical and infrastructure barriers (for example, the mountain range between the South and the North and the bad conditions of the roads), influence communication and exchange of information? What is the role of new electronic technologies (Internet and email) in the process of information exchange?

C2 Questionnaire for media survey

Newspaper title _____

1. When was your newspaper created? _____ By whom? _____
2. What is the regularity of your newspaper? _____
3. Who owns your newspaper? _____

4. What was/is your newspaper's circulation in

1993?	199?	199?	1999?	?

5. What is the area of your newspaper's coverage? (*check the appropriate answer*)

- city oblast other _____
 rayon republic (please specify) _____

6. Where do you print your newspaper (facility)? _____
7. What is the cost to produce one copy of the paper? _____
8. What is the retail price of the copy? _____
9. How many full-time staff do you have? _____
Including journalists _____ Including graduates of journalism schools _____
10. How many part-time staff do you have? _____
Including journalists _____
11. Among the staff journalists, what is the percentage of women? _____
12. What is the main function of your newspaper (why was it created)? _____

13. Please estimate the percentage proportion of main revenue sources of your newspaper:

- advertising revenue - _____ %

- subscription - _____ %
- retail sales - _____ %
- state subsidies - _____ %
- international grants - _____ %
- paid printing services - _____ %
- commercial activities - _____ %
- credits - _____ %
- political groups - _____ %
- business groups - _____ %
- individuals - _____ %
- other (*please explain*) _____ - _____ %

14. Is it possible for your newspaper to become profitable? (*check the appropriate answer*)

- yes no hard to say

15. Can your newspaper increase its advertising revenue? (*check what applies*)

- yes no

16. If it is not possible to increase the advertising revenue, what are the main obstacles (*please select all appropriate answers*)?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> limited number of advertisers | <input type="checkbox"/> lack of advertising specialists |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lack of understanding by potential advertisers of newspaper advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> advertising rates unaffordable for small and middle-scale entrepreneurs effectiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> unattractiveness of the newspaper due to small circulation | <input type="checkbox"/> other (<i>please specify</i>) _____ |

17. Please estimate the approximate percentage proportion of your newspaper's expenditure:

- production costs (paper, printing, etc.) - _____ %
- payment of staff - _____ %
- honorariums - _____ %
- business trips expenses - _____ %
- taxes, fees and dues - _____ %
- rent of facilities, furniture and equipment - _____ %
- Internet and other multimedia communications - _____ %
- purchase of information, pictures from news agencies - _____ %
- marketing costs - _____ %
- transportation and delivery costs - _____ %
- other (*please explain*) _____ - _____ %

18. Is there media censorship in Kyrgyzstan, including indirect censorship
(check what applies)?

- yes no hard to say

19. If censorship exists, who are the censors (check all that applies)?

- state bodies media staff themselves (self-censorship)
 media owners business people and advertisers
 local self-government bodies other people (please specify who) _____

20. Who determines the policy of your newspaper? _____

For questions 21-25, please check one appropriate answer:

21. In your opinion, journalism is business or politics?

- business both business and politics
 politics other (please specify) _____

22. Are there free, independent media in the republic?

- yes, they are (please name) _____
 no, because _____
 other (please specify) _____

23. How freely can your newspaper criticize national/local state power structures?

- quite freely to some extent cannot criticize at all

24. In your opinion, your newspaper is perceived as

- opposition neutral
 pro-governmental minority

25. A newspaper can be shut down by a Presidential or Governmental decree.

- agree do not agree hard to say

26. If you agree that a newspaper can be shut down, on what grounds can it be done?

- 1) _____
 2) _____
 3) _____

27. In your opinion, what forms of media prosecution or pressure exist in Kyrgyzstan (please check all applicable options)?

- assault of journalists
- fines for journalists and media
- refusal of printing services
- shutting down of media
- killing of journalists
- phone calls "from above" recommending not to publish the material
- court hearings as a pretext to shut the medium down
- threats to media staff and their relatives
- prosecution through tax inspection
- other (*please specify*) _____

28. A medium can be considered independent when it (*please check all that applies*)

- represents different opinions
- is linked to a political party
- is not linked to a political party
- criticizes the government
- is in private ownership
- has a high percentage of revenue from advertisers
- has access to diverse sources of information
- other (*please specify*) _____

29. Please check all main channels through which your newspaper receives information:

- information from own reporters
- information found on the Internet
- government bodies' press services
- advertisers/business
- news agencies: national, Russian, international (*please underline what applies*)
- reprints from the central/Russian press
- other (*please specify*) _____

For questions 30-34, please select all applicable answers and rank them in the order of importance on the 1-10 scale, where 1 is most important and 10 is least important

30. What topics are on the highest priority list in your newspaper?

- _____ domestic and foreign policy of the state
- _____ information on crime
- _____ political/economic reforms
- _____ social issues
- _____ cultural issues
- _____ legal issues
- _____ local/regional issues
- _____ entertaining materials
- _____ investigative journalism pieces
- _____ foreign news
- _____ other (*please specify*) _____

31. What criteria are used to select the material for publication in your newspaper?

- timeliness
- factuality
- analytical character of commentaries to facts
- emotionality
- sensationalism
- satisfaction of tastes of those who order the material
- compliance with the newspaper's position
- satisfaction of readers' interests
- credibility of the author
- other (*please specify*) _____

32. What materials are most liked or preferred by your readers?

- crime reports
- political information
- economic articles
- horoscopes
- jokes
- spiritual materials, articles on arts and culture
- sports coverage
- crossword puzzles
- article on beau monde
- other (*please specify*) _____

33. What is the main audience toward which your newspaper is oriented?

- entire country
- residents of a region (*specify which one*)
- children
- youth
- elderly people
- destitute, low-income layers of population
- business representatives
- politicians
- people from the sphere of arts, culture and science
- females
- males
- representatives of a certain ethnic group (*specify which one*) _____
- other (*please specify*) _____

34. What are the problems that are most urgent for your newspaper at present?

- obsolete technologies and equipment
- inaccessibility of credits
- ineffective management/leadership of the newspaper
- low professionalism of journalists
- lack of marketing strategies
- limitations of the advertising market
- lack of political freedom
- reader's inability to pay for the copy
- uneventful life in the provinces
- other (*please specify*) _____

Information on the respondent (will be used only for statistical purposes):

Name _____

Position/year started _____

Year of birth _____ Education _____

Previous employment _____

May we refer to your newspaper in the official documents of the research?

Would you like to participate in expert focus groups to be conducted in November in Bishkek with the purpose of discussing the problems and challenges faced by Kyrgyzstan's media today? _____

WE GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR COOPERATION!

C3 Questionnaire for media users

1. Do you read newspapers?

- Yes
- No

2. If yes, what newspapers do you read? (*please name*)

- Local _____
- National _____
- Other _____

3. Why do you read these newspapers?

- They are affordable
- Other papers are not delivered here
- I like these newspapers, because _____
- Other _____

4. How often do you read newspapers?

- Every day
- 2-3 times a week
- once a week
- from time to time

5. What information do you read in the newspapers first of all?

- Brief, informative (news)
- Analytical stories (political, economic, cultural – *underline what applies*)
- Reports on crime
- Horoscope
- Jokes
- Crossword puzzles
- Other (*specify*) _____

6. If you do not read newspapers, why?

- No money to buy/subscribe
- No time to read newspapers
- Because all newspapers are bias, corrupt and I do not trust them
- Other (*specify*) _____

7. What TV channel do you mainly watch?

- KTR
- ORT
- Cable TV (*name*) _____
- Other (*specify*) _____

8. Why do you prefer this channel?

- This is the only channel in Kyrgyz
- I trust this channel's information, they tell the truth
- This channel shows more interesting films and TV series
- Other _____

9. For how long do you usually watch TV?

- less than 2 h/day
- 2-4 hours/day
- 4-6 hours/day
- more than 6 h/day

10. What do you usually watch on TV?

- TV series
- Feature films
- News
- Other (*specify*) _____
- Sports programs
- Crime reports
- Entertaining programs

11. When do you usually watch TV?

- Early morning, before work
- During the day (or while doing housework)
- After work (after 6 pm)
- Late evening and night

12. What radio stations do you listen to?

- Kyrgyz state radio
- Russian radio
- Local (*name*) _____
- Other (*specify*) _____
- Pyramida
- Evropa +

13. When do you usually listen to the radio?

- Early morning, before work
- During the day (at home or work)
- On the way to and from work
- Evening and night

14. What do you like to listen to on the radio in particular?

- Music
- News
- Entertaining programs (talk shows, jokes, greetings, etc.)
- Other (*specify*) _____

15. What do you think of ads in the media?

- I don't like ads, they distract and irritate

- I like ads, they give me aesthetic satisfaction
- I am indifferent
- Other (*specify*) _____

16. What comes first to your mind when you hear the phrase "south of Kyrgyzstan"?

17. Do you agree with the following statements about the southern region on Kyrgyzstan?

- There is a war there
- Lawlessness rules there
- The power of money and connections is very strong there
- It is an epicenter of inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts
- It is a region of ancient and rich culture and history
- This region is more agriculturally developed than the north

18. How do you picture a typical resident of the southern regions of the country?

19. Do you agree with the following statements about the people living in the south?

- They are skilled culinary experts and cooks
- They are hardworking, love and know how to work on the land
- Mostly, they are more religious than the people living in the north
- People in the south are richer than in the north
- People in the south are poorer than in the north
- Most of them are Uzbeks
- Most of them are Kyrgyz

20. How would you describe a typical resident of the northern region of Kyrgyzstan?

Data on respondent (only for statistical purposes):

Gender: _____ Ethnicity _____
 Age: _____ Education _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR PARTICIPATION!

C4 Focus group design for journalists

TOPICS OF DAY 1:

- Sources of information
- Perception of interrelations with power structures and authorities
- Freedom and professionalism in journalism
- News (news values) and objectivity in journalism. Audiences
- Journalism ethics
- Membership roles in the staff

Moderator's introductory remarks

- Reasons for the meeting
- Topics to be discussed, main goals and objectives
- Contexts of the desired discussion
- Rules of discussion in focus groups.

Introduce all focus group assistants to the participants.

Ask the participants to fill in the general questionnaire that has 2-3 questions on each of the topics to be discussed to probe the attitudes and perceptions.

1. Ask the participants to start the first topic «Sources of information». Distribute the three Kyrgyz laws relating to journalism – Mass Media Law, Law on Access to Information and Law on Protection of Journalist's Professional Activities – and ask the participants to find all articles relating to sources of information. What do they say? How can they be compared with the tradition of the working and protection of sources in the US and Western Europe? Then start discussing the following issues:
 - What sources of information are accessible to you in your daily activities?
 - What sources of information still remain closed for journalists?
 - Are there any rules of working with the sources (professional techniques)?

2. In previous discussion, the participants will most probably name different levels of government as one of the sources of information. Ask to discuss the next topic, «interrelations with power structures and authorities».

Offer the participants the chance to watch 3 news pieces from different TV channels on the same event (declaration of 2001 as the Year of Tourism). Ask them to define which channel produced which piece.

- How can this be defined?
- What are the relationships of these channels with the government?
- What are their companies' relations with the government?
- What defines or influences these relations?
- Forms of government influence on media.

3. «Freedom and Professionalism in Journalism». When discussing this issue, the following aspects should be highlighted:

Is there still the unwritten rule of “Criticism competence levels” according to which the media may criticize only the power structures of a lower level (for example, the national media – oblast authorities, oblast newspapers – rayon state administrations, rayon newspapers – village governments, i.e. there is a niche that is untouched by criticism – the Republic’s government which under Soviet times was criticized only by the all-Union and now is not covered by any media?)

- Who and what defines the degree of freedom?
- What are the relations between notions of freedom and professionalism are they inversely proportional to each other?
- Define the degree of media freedom in Kyrgyzstan with the help of *scale questionnaires*.
- Offer to the participants a set of major national newspapers available at news stands and ask them to choose those that they believe are the most professional and independent. Ask them to explain their choices.

4. “News (news values) and objectivity in journalism, audiences”

Ask the participants to choose articles to read and to explain their choices. The following questions should be discussed after debate of the motives:

- What creates the most audience interest in media messages?
- To what extent do the media follow these ideas?
- How does it become known what is interesting for the audiences (forms of feedback)?
- Ask to fill out the scale questionnaire on objectivity and news values.
- What news values are significant for you?
- Can interesting news be objective?
- Do you know objective journalists?
- To what extent is it possible at all to be objective in journalism? Why?
- Ask to read the selected articles and evaluate their objectivity

5. “Journalism ethics”

Issues to be discussed:

- What ethical rules must be obligatory for all journalists (refer to issues discussed earlier, for example, non-disclosure of sources)
- Ethics of internal relations in the media outlet

6. “Membership role”

- What is the understanding of the membership role?
- What does it mean – to work in a certain media outlet?
- Are there any unwritten rules and norms for the staff?
- Does the personnel hierarchy mean inequality of membership roles?
- Membership role and participation in decision-making.

TOPICS OF DAY 2:

- Levels of acknowledgement of conflicts in society
- Lines of division: south-north, center-periphery
- Images of regions in the media

Start with questionnaire to test the "south-north" line of division.

Summarize the work of the previous day and ask those who were not actively involved in the discussion to participate more actively (without referring to anyone by name)

Offer to discuss the first topic – "conflicts in the society." Ask to list all problems our society is facing at present. Identify the most important and significant among them. Apply the exercise "Wheel of problems" to analyze the reasons. Discuss the role of media in prevention and resolution of these conflicts.

Lines of division:

1) South-north

- Identify understanding of consolidation and integration of society.
- Define the individual degrees of consolidation and integration. Perception of the "South-north" division (*suggest some projecting method – either sentences completion test or the caricature method*)
- Possible scenarios and perception of people's future behavior in the south and in the north.
- Identification of measures necessary to enforce the integrative factors to connect the regions and identification of roles and actions of the government.

2) Centre-periphery

- What is the centre's role in integration processes?
- How can the differences between the centre and the periphery be removed?
- What are the perceptions of those who live in the center and in the provinces of each other?

3) Images of regions in the media

- Discuss how regions are presented in the media: who gets more attention and why, is coverage positive or negative, is there any consistent media policy in relation to coverage of various regions of the city, etc.

Develop an action plan – what media can do to remove the information gap between the north and south, the capital and peripheries and to integrate society in general. What needs to be done to implement this action plan (needs and recommendations)?

C5 Content analysis

Sample:

- 1) Television news programmes of KTR, Pyramid, NBT, KOORT channels for three months: November 2000, February and June 2001. All news items relating to the southern regions or mentioning these regions in any context were selected, with the total numbers as follows:
 - November 2000 =64
 - February 2001 =70
 - June 2001 =110
- 2) Central newspapers (articles mentioning southern regions):
 - *Delo Nomer*: 1999 =156; 2000 =86
 - *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*: 1999 =97; 2000 =72
- 3) Regional southern newspapers for 1999-2000 (articles mentioning northern regions and Bishkek):
 - *Ush Sadosi* =11
 - *Ekho Osha* =67
 - *Osh Janyrygy* =72

The total number of all content analysis texts is 805.

Subject of content analysis:

- Image of the regions in the national media
- Image of Bishkek and other regions in southern media.

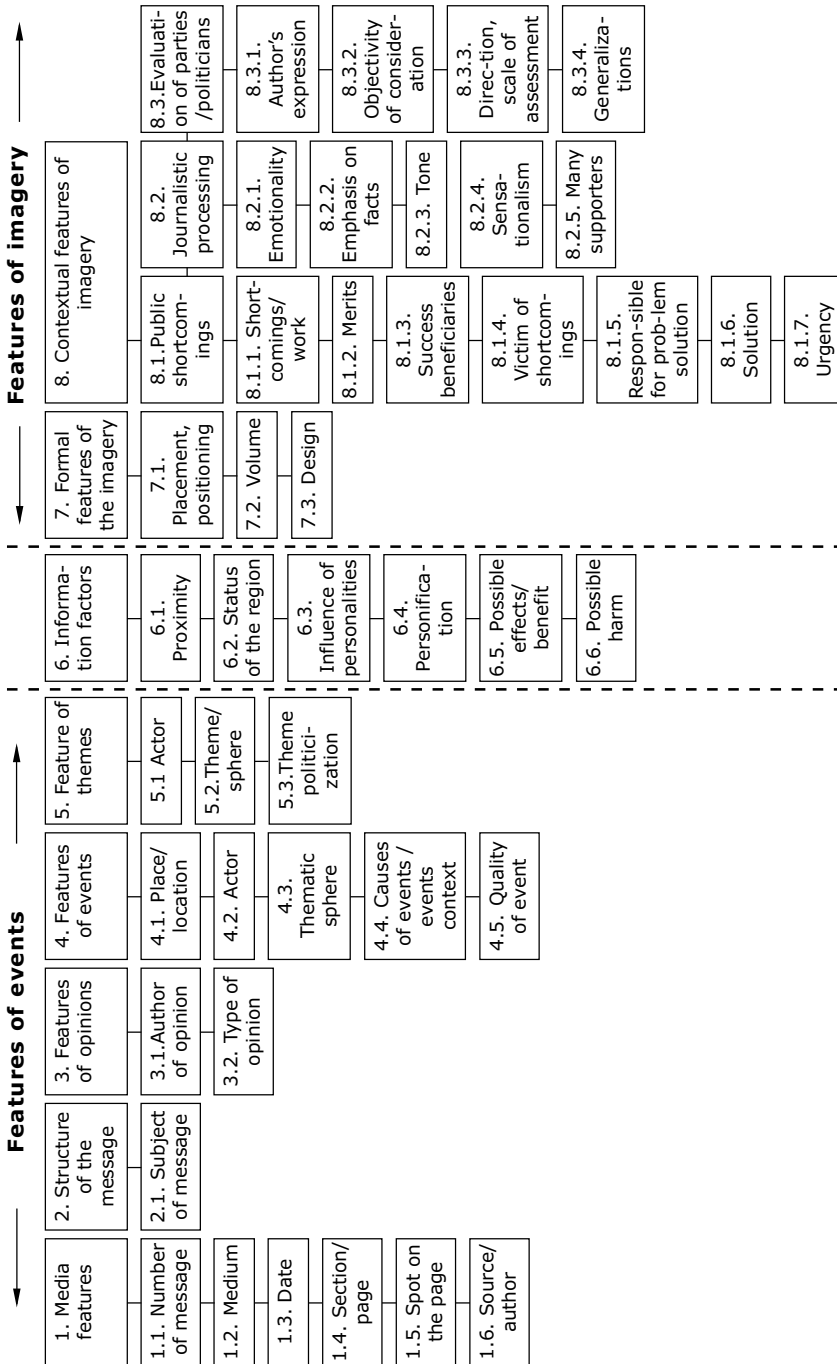
In addition, all articles in the February 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 issues (a total of 79 items) of the "Vecherny Bishkek" newspaper's "politics and society" column were content analyzed as well. The task for content analysis of Vecherny Bishkek articles was to answer the question, "To what extent are the regions the subjects of political coverage in a major national newspaper?"

The research used both *quantitative* and *qualitative* content analysis techniques. *Quantitative* content analysis was based on the inductive strategy and included the following components:

- Absolute frequency of texts devoted to the subject (i.e. how many times the subject appeared in the texts of the analyzed period)
- Absolute frequency of key words and word groups (the following key words and groups were identified: 1. north or south; 2. Batken and events/war/conflict; 3. terrorism/ vakhabism/ Islamic fundamentalism; 4. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan/Russia/ Kazakhstan/ Central Asia / China; 5. Government/authorities and citizens/population/populace)
- Cumulative frequency of appearance
- Structural and grammatical complexity, lexical variety
- As well as other formal features: newspaper issue, date and weekday, number of pages, publisher.

For *qualitative* content analysis (based on the deductive strategy), a special card (see below) and relative coding sheets were developed.

QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS CARD



NEWSPAPER										
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armr from	s a farmrs of a ars as a sola rous	roaaa of farmi ioaios a assisa osuaio o farmrs	o issu	o issu	o issu	o issu				
r amisi from	s a aaAa aas ass a a ars of ouatio io i oao roli	Assis a o farmrs	o issu	o issu	o issu	o issu				
mu sari from	riso imas i ir our	o roaa ri a of if amo imas								
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D2 Kyrgyzstan media database 2001

This database represents the sample of the mail survey that was conducted in the framework of this research. The sample is based on a list provided to us in October 2000 by the Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic. The list contained 362 registered mass media, with the names of their directors/founders and mailing addresses. The registration of mass media is compulsory in Kyrgyzstan.

Already at the first glance we realized that the list contained a number of mistakes: some media were listed several times under various founders and addresses, while other media outlets were not listed at all. We corrected these obvious mistakes and excluded those regional media from the sample that had already been surveyed during the field trips in the regions. We also excluded all the media that have no independent editorial policy (i.e. institutional newsletters). As a result, 232 media were selected to receive the mail questionnaire (see Annexe C2).

The compilation of the media database continued in the following way: the letters that were returned to us by the post, respectively the unknown media organisations, were marked with an asterik (*). The numbers in the second column were introduced by the research team and refer to the media that, according to our own knowledge, come out regularly or with some breaks. The database was completed with data on electronic media, gathered on our trips to the regions and from an already existing database on electronic media compiled by Internews. Although the list provided by the Ministry of Justice requires additional verification (more exact data may be obtained after the media re-registration is over in November 2001), we can say with certainty that all the media in the lower part of the database (# 347-392) exist and operate as of today.¹

¹ Newspapers "Vecherny Bishkek-Osh" and "Litsa" existed at the beginning of the research, but later they were shut down - the former ran out of funding and the former was too active during the presidential election campaign.

KYRGYZSTAN MEDIA DATABASE
(as of August 2001)

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	Title	iete	e
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	6		
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6			6
	5		
			5
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5			
6		6	

	Title	iete	e
109			
110	9		
111		101	
11	11		
11			
11	1101		
11	11		
11	10		
11	0		
11	11		
119	9		
10	9		
11	1		
1	1		
1	1		
1	91		
1		0	1
1	0		
1			
1	9		
19	9		
10	9		

	Title	iete	e
131	1		
13			
133	1		
13			1
13			
13			
13		11	
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13			
1	31		
11	1		
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	Title	iete	e
153	155		
15	5		
155	3		
15	115		
15	1		
15	1	11	
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11	15		
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13	31	153	
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22	9		
221	9	22	
222		222	
22	9		
22		9	
22	9	2	
22	9	11	
22		9	
22		121	
229		11	
2		91	
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22	9	12	
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2	12	1	
29	1		
2	1	1	

		Title	iete	e
241	1	11		
242				
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244	1	1		
24		2		
24	1			
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24		42		
24	1	12		
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21		11		
22		11		
2		11		
24	1			
2	1			
2	1		41	
2	1		141	
2			124	
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21		12		
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	Title	iete	e
263	233		
26	2		
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26 3	2		
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		Title	iete	e
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288			52	
28		52		
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25			828	
2	2			
2		2		
28	25			
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3 1 1			
33 1			
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35 1	5		
3 1	3		
3 1			
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31 1	11		
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