

Russia in the Media and Public Space of Modern Kyrgyzstan

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Abstract. The article was prepared on the materials of a scientific discussion held by the National Communications Development Research Institution, dedicated to the study of the communication regime in Kyrgyzstan. The authors examine the decline in the level of knowledge of the Russian language and interest in the Russian-language media, talk about the need to develop cooperation between the Kyrgyz and Russian media and civil society institutions, and develop the infrastructure of Russian schools, especially in rural areas. The question is raised about changing approaches to the choice of an event series to preserve the common historical memory of peoples. Noting the great positive significance of cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Russia for the development of Kyrgyz society, the authors talk about important problems: the development of an anti-Russian infrastructure in Kazakhstan (supported by Western investors) and its impact on public opinion, especially Kyrgyz youth. The article was based on the results of a scientific discussion held at the National Communications Development Research Institution (NIIRC), Moscow, Russia in 2022.

Keywords: Communication regime, Republic of Kyrgyzstan, political regime, information sovereignty, information space, media sphere

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Introduction

During the 30 years of Independence each of the post-soviet republics initially set to forming their national identity, proceeding from their concept regarding the future prospects of the state and the nation. This process started with conceptualizing the national idea, reinforcing and further developing the official language, establishing their status in the regional and the global system of international relations. The social and cultural context formerly unique, loses its unity, and by the current moment each of the former soviet republics has established its geopolitical milestones and the vectors for their further development.

Migration processes provoked by economic and political changes have brought about changes in the community of the post-soviet republics. Various non-commercial funds have actively entered into the process of social and political reorientation of the local communities with a view to getting rid of “harsh” soviet heritage. First and foremost, it was concerned with the university education system, since tertiary education institutions are to educate prospective members of national political elite. Highly efficient instruments were employed to involve local communities into organization and implementation of various grassroots initiatives. Special attention was paid to mass information propagation channels and to creation of internet-based mass media, to act as alternative sources as opposed to the government-owned mass media.

Materials and Methods

The authors applied various methodological approaches and methods for their research work. Concept exchange in the course of scholarly discussion made it possible to single out the most efficient and promising ones, which include the following: systematization method, historical-genetic procedure and statistical method.

The function of the empirical basis was accomplished by the information provided by the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and the Russian Federation mass media as well as electronic media, non-commercial organizations’ websites.

Results

Regarding conservation of social and cultural unity potential (G.D.Junushalieva)

Over the past decades the national community has seen several generations, which have a vague idea of what the soviet era was, being their notion based on the stories told by

the senior generation. They mainly consist of stereotypical clichés, their essence depending on what exactly they were narrated. It would be positive if told by nostalgic parents and grandparents or negative if the narrator was possibly prosecuted in the Soviet times for this or that reason (civil war, political repressions, the Great Patriotic War, larceny, etc.). Such a heterogeneous social medium appears to be a rewarding area for applying political technologies and public opinion manipulation. Images of a super evil-doer and a super-hero begin to get generated in the media space, which are to demonstrate what the societies were liberated of. The effect of such manipulation, if not quick, turns out to be prolonged and stable.

The attempts to reduce the political and economic influence of the Russian Federation yield fruit. In the Republic of Kirgizstan there have grown several generations of young people, who got university education in eastern, middle-eastern and far-eastern countries. When returning to their motherland they become propagators of the ideologies and concepts that they absorbed. They currently occupy top and middle ranking leadership posts in public institutions.

State policy regarding the development of the official language in the Republic yields fruit. For example, bilingualism, which was common in Kirgizstan in the late Soviet period, according to our reckoning, has lost its positions. Nowadays the young aimed at personal fulfilment speak three or four languages, which might not include Russian language. Among the most common languages in Kirgizstan today are English, Turkish, Arabic, Chinese, German. Russian language is increasingly losing its position, and its range of application narrows down (in some regions, for instance, people do not speak Russian language at all).

Mass media took active part in estranging Kirgizstan community from Russia. In the political game the dissident mass media defending national ideas raise the question of a historic trauma, inflicted to the national pride and independence. Seems demonstrative the example, provided by a former employee of “Azattyk” agency in Bishkek (“Radio Svoboda” subsidiary office)¹. From the very beginning the of their existence they broadcast in Kirgiz language. Journalists, who created texts, when they had to use borrowed words searched meaningful equivalents but not in Kirgiz language itself, but in Turkic language sources or in Sinzyan Kirgiz language. What makes this case notable? It is the fact that those printed or verbalized texts were hardly understandable by the general public, as the borrowed words from Russian language (although they were borrowed by Russian language from European ones) were substituted with words from other scarcely sources. In the thirty years Kirgiz language has grown much stronger, and such occurrences are rather perceived as jokes.

Russian educational environment includes projects, providing dialogue-based and project-based spaces to maintain and preserve historically formed social and cultural unity. One of these projects is the one carried out by Altay State University, called “The Turkic

¹ The Ministry of Culture of Kyrgyzstan appealed to the court to stop Radio Svoboda broadcasting. Available from: <https://rg.ru/2023/01/24/ministerstvo-kultury-kirgizii-obratilos-v-sud-chtoby-prekratit-veshchanie-radio-azattyk-svoboda-chem-mozhet-byt-obuslovljeno-takoe-reshenie-minkulta.html>

World of the Greater Altai: unity and diversity in history and modernity”. This project aims to recover collaboration in scientific and research areas as well as student mobility².

In 2021 and in 2022 National Research Institute for the Development of Communications published friendliness rankings of the neighboring countries’ communicational regimes (4). I suppose Kirgizstan entered the top five most friendly countries among the post-Soviet republics due to the fact that it preserved certain potential of social and cultural unity. But I believe it will soon exhaust its supply.

From my point of view, it is of utmost importance to estimate the level of communication friendliness demonstrated by the regimes of post-Soviet states. Such researches might help to adjust the information strategy in the regional foreign policy of the Russian Federation, to establish the guidelines for working with media channels and institutions in order to increase loyalty to the image of the Russian Federation as a state.

Ways to Enhance Russia’s Presence (P.I. Dyatlenko)

Firstly, the fact to consider is the existing specific situation in Kirgizstan’s information ecosystem, which abounds with western and private pro-western media, social networks and messengers, which form a single network structure.

To my mind, to create a more balanced information ecosystem we need to expand cooperation between Russian and Kirgizstan mass media, move on to regular collaboration between Russian companies and those mass media, social networks, messengers, create and promote media which support Eurasian integration.

Secondly, to understand the reason why the cooperation level between Russian and Kirgiz non-commercial organizations is insufficient, we need to estimate the total number of Russian and pro-Russian civil society organizations in the republic, the amount of funding and lack of interaction within the same network infrastructure. A noticeable fact is that there are very few non-commercial companies in the republic that are related to Russia, they have insignificant budget, which is incomparable with that of the non-commercial organizations representing other global and regional players (1:45–48).

In such a situation it seems reasonable to increase the presence of Russian non-commercial organizations in the republic and largely expand contacts between Russian civil society organizations and Kirgizstan non-commercial organizations, which are ready to foster cooperation between both countries. Kirgizstan might become a Central Asian space for Russian civil society organizations and their interaction with all post-Soviet Central Asian countries.

Thirdly, I suggest paying special attention to youth communications. To enhance successful, stable and long-term development of relations between our countries we need

² The international project “The Turkic World of the Greater Altai”, realized in the scientific and educational Center of Altaic Studies and Turkology “Big Altai” AltSU with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation summed up the results of the outgoing year at the final press conference in the press center of MIA “Rossia segodnya”. Available from: <https://www.asu.ru/science/news/press/47168/>

to work with various youth groups in our republic. For example, young businessmen, rural youth, persons with disabilities³, religious young people, and others. I should point out, that various groups of Kirgizstan young people have long been systematically attended by other external players (West, Turkey, Arab countries, China, etc.).

Fourth, when studying communications, we should single out as a separate direction international contacts between clergy and various religious congregations. This aspect is highly important in the context of growing interest to religion in our social communities.

Fifth, while analyzing various official documents we should keep in mind the fact, that due to social and cultural peculiarities, there is a substantial gap between a subscribed document and its practical implementation. The factor of importance for a successful and efficient implementation of the subscribed treaties is the choice of particular executives and the general condition of relations between the states.

Sixth, while arranging activities to maintain and preserve common historical memory we should not reduce the whole joint activity in this field to the Great Patriotic war, that is no longer of particular relevance for post-soviet generations of young people.

I consider appropriate to expand the thematic range by adding promising and interesting themes from our common past, which demonstrate positive sides of contacts between our people. By way of illustration, I might name the themes related with the history of studying Central Asian peoples and territories by Russian scholars, the participation of the USSR in Afghan civil war between 1979 and 1989.

In conclusion I would like to point out that the power in the republic gradually oases to the generation that actively communicates through social networks and messengers. This process significantly increases the influence that social networks and messengers exercise upon the society and the political circles in Kirgizstan.

Specific Features of Work Realized by Russian Mass Media in Kirgizstan Against the Background of Technological Innovations (A.I.Kulikovskiy)

In the whole course of its development Kirgizstan's journalism has been transforming under the influence of a number of factors. During the soviet period the branches to develop were electronic mass media, including radio ("Kirgiz radios") and television ("KTRK"). Despite the popularity of these mass communication media, the press remained an equally popular way of obtaining information, being regularly published a number of popular newspapers ("Soviet Kirgizia", "Vecherny Frunze" and others). In 1937 there appeared the first news provider on the territory of Kirgizstan, "KirTAG" (currently "Kabar"), which formed part of the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) until 1992, the one I previously positioned as a prototype of contemporary news provider, Sputnik. Today TASS keeps operating in Russia as a local state funded news provider (bearing the former name since 2014, previously known as ITAR-TASS).

³ persons (students) with disabilities

Close contacts between Kirgizstan and Russia have perdured in the post-soviet era for a variety of reasons, the main ones being those of common past history and geographical location. Despite a number of difficulties and controversies that arose between some of the former USSR member countries in the last 20 years, Kirgizstan and Russia keep maintaining exceptionally close friendly relations (1). Today the Sputnik is news provider broadcast in Kirgizstan, as well as a subsidiary office of the inter-state TV channel "Mir". Sputnik representative office is one of the most popular network information sources in Kirgizstan, which tends to be ranked among the top five most popular online information sources in the country. "In Kirgizstan there operate representative offices of well-known Russian newspapers: "Rossiyskaya gazeta", "Moskovsky Komsomolets", "Argumenty y Fakty" (2).

A significant feature to be highlighted is that Russia uses both soviet and international experience. For example, the TV channel Russia Today makes a response to American colleagues from CNN, Sputnik concept resembles that of TASS. Therefore, the approach adopted by Russia in creating media resources for international broadcasting, including Kirgizstan, may be estimated as balanced. Russia has rich experience in developing international broadcasting, accumulated during approximately one hundred years, which produces positive effect on creation and promotion of mass communication media of the type under scrutiny.

Editorial policy adopted by Russian mass communication media in Kirgizstan is rather obvious and reasonable, being that of propagation of positive image of Russia. In general, this is proper to any Russian international broadcast organizations of mass communication media, which have news offices abroad. Special attention is paid to Russian and international events, nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the majority of stories are dedicated to Kirgizstan, as the audience's interest tends to be provoked by local news and high-quality presentation of materials. The information is provided in two languages, in accordance with the country's legislation for mass communications media.

Russia actively assimilates new technologies, modern editorials are fully completed and equipped with all necessary devices, which makes them highly competitive on international media marketplace. Russian mass media are widely represented in various countries, including post-soviet space and are often qualified by local mass media as successful. For example, during the celebration of Sputnik Kirgizstan news provider's fifth anniversary in 2019 in Kirgizstan, the guests highlighted high level of their equipment and the agency's financial state⁴. An important fact to mention is that this agency is one of the key mass media organizations in Kirgizstan, despite being an international organization. The personnel are represented by local high-ranking professionals, which is also considered a positive factor.

Technological factor has always played a defining part in the development of journalism. People, intended to create information product, have always faced the need to transmit information as fast as possible. This is the way, the internet replaced

⁴ We are happy for every new reader – an interview with the head of Sputnik Kyrgyzstan. Available from: <https://ru.sputnik.kg/20191011/kyrgyzstan-elena-chermenina-informagentstvo-intervyu-1045938413.html>

postal services. The need to visualize information made popular such technological innovations as photographs, cinema, television. Today while preparing information content in order to gain maximum visual expression journalists use all the possible multimedia potential.

Science and technologies have largely contributed to the life of humankind, but there are also potential threats to consider (3). Introduction of technological innovations digital technologies, and artificial intelligence potential, automatic information processing systems, systems for automatic creation of news content may lead within the nearest 5 or 10 years to a decrease in the number of journalists, disappearance of certain genres from their professional scene. The work on preparing information content that is possible to do without a journalist will become common practice in order to curtail the editorial's expenses, to simplify procession and preparation of information. For example, while in Russian mass media the weather forecast is still presented by journalists, in large North American mass media this process does not require a journalist.

However, the need for journalists, capable of working with analytical, fictional content and creating columns will hardly reduce in the nearest future. It will hardly become possible to fully introduce artificial intelligence and automatic systems. The creativity aspect will become the chief criterion for keeping a journalist in his work place. With this background, Kirgizstan is going to require facilities to train such journalists, that will become the main condition for preserving the country's information sovereignty. What is more, a contemporary Kirgiz journalist is to be competitive. The journalist must be literally a cross-functional professional in the sphere of mass media and be able to turn their hand to anything, including text creation, photographing, surfing the internet, filming and even desktop publishing. The more the journalist can do, the more valuable they are. Today the question of training field-specific professionals is not relevant, because the employer can always choose the journalist who possesses more skills and competences. Due to the fact that the experience Russia possesses in training journalists to work in the contemporary information ecosystem substantially exceeds the one of Kazakhstan, it is of utmost importance to develop collaboration with Russia.

Specific Features of Work Realized by Russian Mass Media in Kirgizstan Against the Background of Technological Innovations⁵ (A.B.Moldokeeva)

According to the data, provided by the Republic of Kirgizstan National Statistical Committee, the country currently disposes of 1800 institutions, registered as mass communication media. That being the case, between 2015 and 2022 their number increased by 12%. In Kirgizstan there operate 177 television and radio broadcasting companies (51 of them being located in Bishkek)⁶.

⁵ Based on the data of the Kyrgyz media and with their consent

⁶ Mass media and book publishing: facts and figures. Available from: <http://www.stat.kg/ru/news/sredstva-massovoj-informacii-i-knigoizdanie-cifry-i-fakty/>

Figure 1. Distribution of schools by language of instruction in 2010-2020s

The number of Kyrgyz-speaking schools significantly prevails over the rest

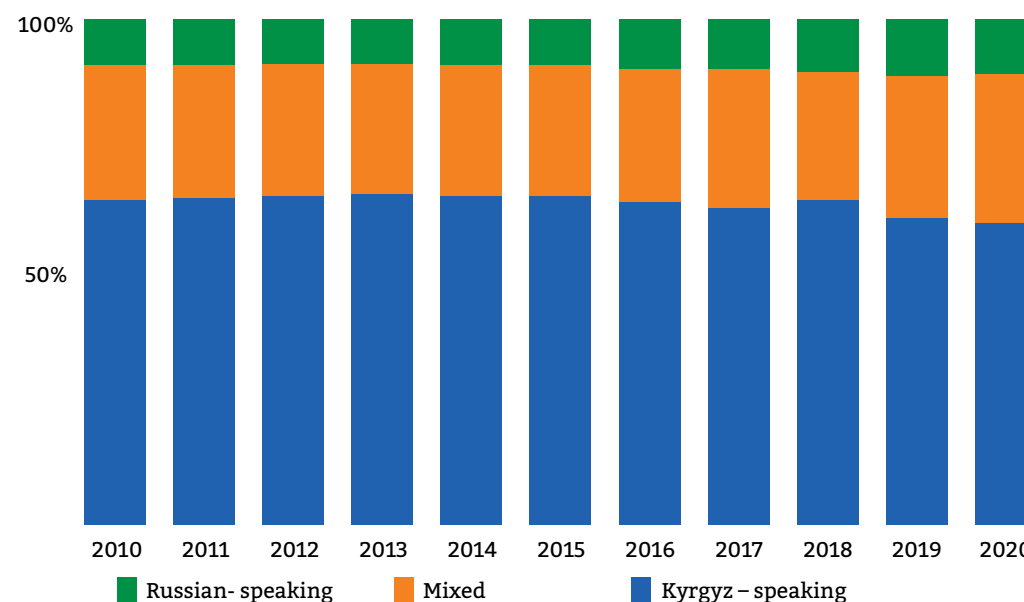


Diagram: Zarina Zholdoshova

Source: National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic

Source: Native language or the future: why Kyrgyz schools teach poorly in both Russian and Kyrgyz⁷.

In November, 2018 a social research-study was carried out (by the Information and Analytical center of Moscow State University) in order to estimate the level of popularity of Russian television in Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan. Results: In the Republic of Kirgizstan the channels to become the first best in terms of "information awareness with respect to TV programs" were the Russian "First channel" and the national "KTRK", each having 89% of spectators. As for the news releases on TV and political disputes, the distribution of viewing figures was the following: Russian "First Channel" – 27.8%, national "KTRK" – 24.3%, "Russia – 1" – 18.1%, "Russia – 24" – 11%. These figures allowed drawing quite an optimistic conclusion: "Russian TV remains the most popular in Kirgizstan. And it is the case despite the increasing criticism with respect to the content quality and a strongest competence posed by the internet"⁸.

⁷ Native language or the future: why do schools in Kyrgyzstan teach poorly both in Russian and in Kyrgyz. URL: <http://mediaplov.asia/ru/news/12302-rodnoy-yazyk-ili-budushshee-pochemu-shkoly-kyrgyzstana-ploho-uchat-i-na-russkom-i-na-kyrgyzskom>

⁸ The USA-Kirgizstan: the information expansion strategy. Available from: <https://stanradar.com/news/full/51058-ssha-kyrgyzstan-strategiya-informatsionnoj-ekspansii-.html>

Figure 2. In Bishkek and Chui region students choose Russian more often. Russian is more often chosen by students in Bishkek and Chui region.

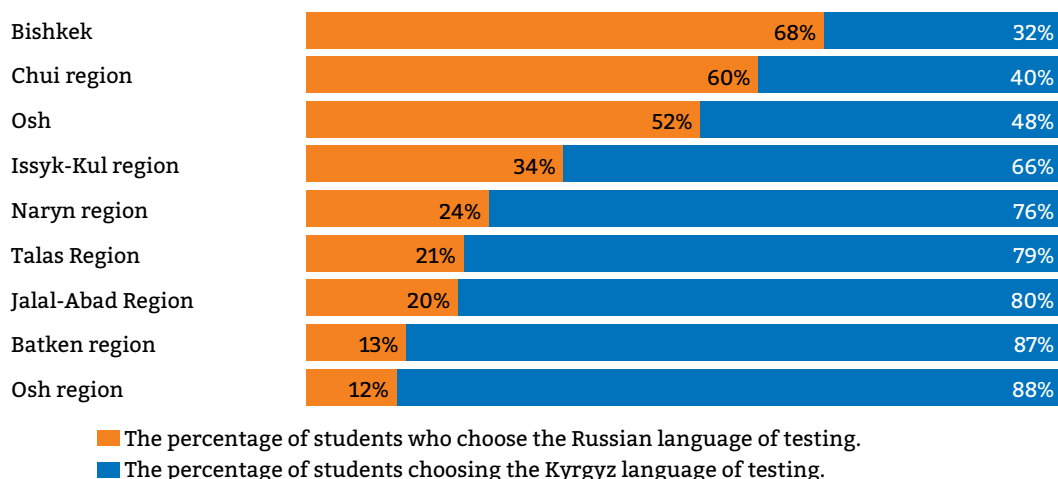


Diagram: Zarina Zholdoshova

Source: National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic

Source: Native language or the future: why Kyrgyz schools teach poorly in both Russian and Kyrgyz⁹.

There is no more up-to-date information regarding the popularity of Russian television in the republic. Quite possibly, the picture has changed. Especially bearing in mind the fact that the scope of Russian language use is steadily narrowing. According to the data provided by opinion polls, the proportion of Russian speaking population in Kirgizstan is approximately 40–50% of the total number of 6.7 million people living on its territory. Russian language is mainly spoken in the capital and in Chui region, neighboring the capital. In the other six regions vast majority of local population communicate in Kirgiz language¹⁰.

The data regarding Russian language schools demonstrate that there are almost 2300 schools in Kirgizstan, only one tenth of them using Russian as the language of instruction. Another one third of schools deliver classes in two or three languages, dividing children into groups with different tuition languages (Figure 1).

From 2010 to 2020, there were 99 more schools in Kyrgyzstan. The number of Kyrgyz-speaking educational institutions has decreased, while Russian-speaking and mixed, on the contrary, has increased. However, Kyrgyz-language schools still prevail.

The language to take the exam required for university entrance, the national republic test (ORT), can be either Russian or Kirgiz, at the discretion of the students. In Bishkek and

⁹ Native language or the future: why do schools in Kyrgyzstan teach poorly both in Russian and in Kyrgyz. Available from: <http://mediaplov.asia/ru/news/12302-rodnoy-yazyk-ili-budushshee-pochemu-shkoly-kyrgyzstana-ploho-uchat-i-na-russkom-i-na-kyrgyzskom>

¹⁰ Russian Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan fears that there might be a reduction in Russian language coverage in the republic. Available from: <https://tass.ru/politika/13016651>

in Chui region children usually prefer Russian language, in the other regions prevailing Kirgiz language. In 2020 61% of students preferred Kirgiz as the master language for their national republic test (figure 2).

Labor migrants mainly travel to Russia, the majority of them being descendants from the southern regions of the country. By the end of 2019 the number of Kirgizstan citizens living in Russia amounted to 1.5 million, more than 260 thousand of them being originally from Batken region, another 200 thousand coming from Osh and the same number from Jalal-Abad region accordingly. Only 52% of people leaving for Russia are fluent in Russian language¹¹. There are no teachers for children: the regions lack accomplished instructors.

Staff shortage is an acute problem not only in Osh, but rather in the remote schools of the region.

More importantly, what we need is not only Russian language teachers, but also instructors on the other subjects, who might deliver classes in Russian language¹².

Between 2005 and 2010 the number of school students, who chose Russian as the major studying language, was annually increasing by 5-6 thousand people, according to the calculations made as part of the research work, financed by “Soros-Kirgizstan” foundation¹³. However new schools and classes capable of satisfying this demand even if they were established in the region, appeared in too small a number to be sufficient. Therefore, over the course of time a significant part of Kirgizstan population will cease understanding what is being broadcast by Russian Channels.

Meanwhile the competence on the part of internet recourses increasingly grows¹⁴:

1. “Kaktus media” – over 4 million sessionizations;
2. “24.kg” – 3,2 million sessionizations;
3. “AKIpress” – 2,4 million sessionizations;
4. “Sputnik Kirgizstan” – 889,5 thousand sessionizations;
5. “Kloop media” – 501,3 thousand sessionizations;
6. “Vecherniy Bishkek” – 363,8 thousand sessionizations;
7. “Azzatyk media” – 490,5 thousand sessionizations;
8. “Vesti.kg” – 177,9 thousand sessionizations;

¹¹ Does anyone still need Russian language in Kirgizstan? Available from: https://www.tuz.kg/news/2357_komy_to_v_kyrgyzstane_eshe_nyjen_rysskiy_iazyk.html

¹² The number of Russian speaking citizens is decreasing in Kyrgyzstan – Lyubov Riksieva (head of the methodical association of teachers of Russian schools in Osh). Interview with the Russkaya gazeta: Available from: <https://rg.ru/2016/11/03/v-kirgizii-sokrashchaetsia-kolichestvo-grazhdan-vladeiushchih-russkim-iazykom.html>

¹³ Language policy in the sphere of education: social demand and the prospects of multi-lingual education on the South of Kirgizstan/ Policy brief based on the results of a study in schools in the south of Kyrgyzstan. Available from: https://soros.kg/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/policy_brief_center_social_integration.pdf. The foundations of “Otkrytoe obshestvo” and “Sodeystvie”, established by George Soros have been recognized as foreign non-commercial organizations, unwelcome on the territory of Russia.

¹⁴ According to Similarweb data for October, 2022. Available from: <https://www.similarweb.com/ru/website/kabar.kg/competitors/>

9. "Economist" – 206 thousand sessionizations;
10. "Bulak.kg" – 80,1 thousand sessionizations.

It is worth mentioning that the top five online news providers include three blatantly pro-European mass media ("Kaktus media", "24.kg", "Kloop media"), the generally neutral "AKIpress" and only one Russian "Sputnik Kirgizstan". The second five mainly include pro-European mass media ("Azzatyk media", "Vesti.kg", "Economist", "Bulak.kg"), only "Vecherniy Bishkek" posting sometimes Russia-friendly content. Therefore, Kirgizstan audience covered by pro-European electronic mass media is approximately three times as large as that covered by Russian mass media or mass media demonstrating themselves relatively Russia-friendly.

According to the data provided by M-Vector consulting company, 92% of Kirgiz users prefer reading news content in social nets, rather than obtaining news form mass media official websites (for example, Facebook). Then follows the number of subscribers current as on November, 15, 2022¹⁵:

1. "Azzatyk media" – 365 558 (in Russian language), 442 656 (in Kirgiz language). Total – 808 214;
2. "Kloop media" – 167 000 (Russian), 57 000 (Kirgiz). Total – 224 000;
3. "Kaktus media" – 218 000;
4. "AKIpress" – 148 048;
5. "Sputnik Kirgizstan" – 130 000 (Russian), 471 (Kirgiz). Total – 130 471;
6. "24.kg" – 115 119;
7. "Vecherniy Bishkek" – 52 000;
8. "Vesti.kg" – 28 655;
9. "Economist" – 24 000;
10. "Bulak.kg" – 2500.

Here as well the pro-European mass media dominate.

The reason for such a disequilibrium is trivial: European donors spend large sums on financing local information resources (a more detailed analysis follows later), including salaries for the journalists, purchasing up-to-date equipment, as well as organizing various training sessions both in Kirgizstan and abroad, which makes an important factor. It is usually there, that the journalists are instructed to hold anti-Russian information work¹⁶.

In October this year the United States Agency for international Development (USAID) completed the five-year project "Cultivating Media Independence Initiative (Media-K)". Under the auspices of this project there were financed twelve mass media and non-governmental organizations in Kirgizstan ("NTS", "TV1KG", "Kloop.media", "Cactus.Media", "Political Clinic", "Salam Radio", "24.kg", "Govori TV", "Maral TV", "Elgezit", "Liubimy TV" and NGO "Institute of Media Policy") for a total amount of 10 million 650 thousand US dollars¹⁷.

The majority of pro-European mass media (the circle of grant recipients is almost identical) still keep connected to the NED grants, the National Endowment for Democracy

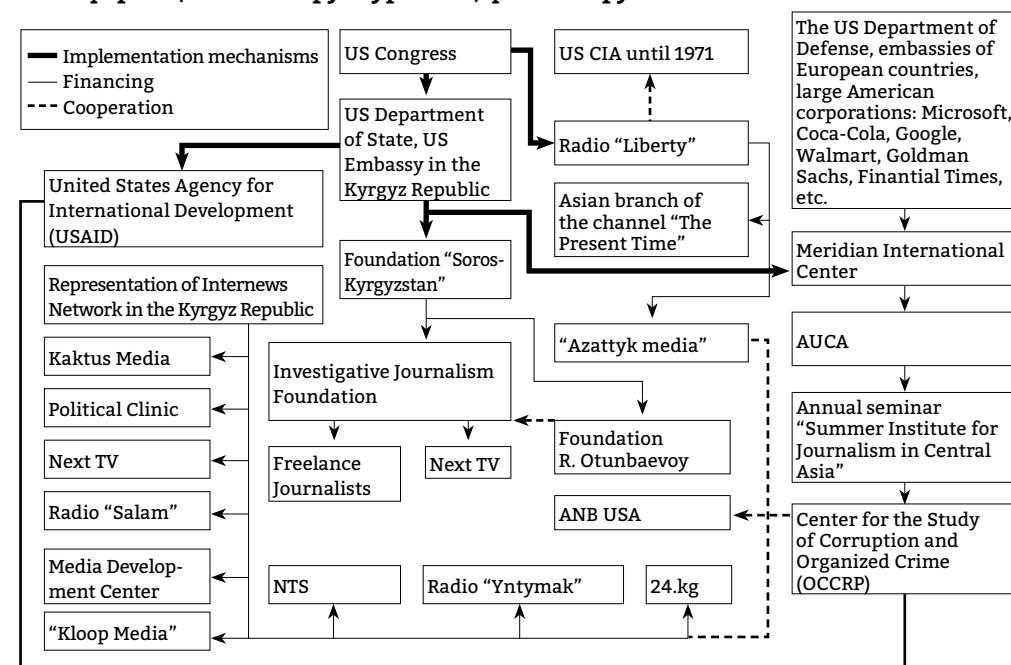
¹⁵ The USA-Kirgizstan: the information expansion strategy. Available from: <https://stanradar.com/news/full/51058-ssha-kyrgyzstan-strategiya-informatsionnoj-ekspansii-.html>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Projects of the USA Agency for International Development. Available from: <https://www.usaid.gov>

Figure 3. Country integrated strategy

Информационная структура в КР, финансируемая США



foundation. In 2021, according to the NED accounts, the foundation funded in Kirgizstan such media companies as: "Economist" – \$58,000, "Kloop Media" – \$565,900, "Media Space" – \$48,800, "Center for Media Development" – \$94,000, "Institute of Media Policy" – \$48,000, "Ginomix Media" – \$110,000¹⁸.

In May this year the US Congress approved the budget proposed by the US State Department for 2023. In accordance with this budget, the NED intends to spend 300 million dollars on "democratic changes", including Central Asian countries. Having approved the Budget, the US Congress permitted the NED to implement political plans regarding Russia, China and Iran, acting through Central Asian region. Each year the NED realizes the so-called "Eurasia" program, which embraces almost all post-soviet countries, such as Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The foundation intends to support intensively the "civil society" and mass media in these countries¹⁹.

Some more economical data: in 2023 the United States Congress will provide the main donor, the US Agency for international Development (USAID) grants of 21 million US dollars to support pro-European NGO and mass media in Kirgizstan²⁰.

¹⁸ The USA Will soon set their foot into Kirgizstan's "door" via mass media. Available from: <https://stanradar.com/news/full/51204-ssha-v-skorom-vremeni-prosunut-svoju-nogu-v-dver-kyrgyzstana-cherez-smi.html>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Projects of the USA Agency for International Development. Available from: <https://www.usaid.gov>

The US Congress approved funding of another institution for 2023, that is the United States Agency for Global Media – USAGM. This organization joins together several large networks, including “Golos Ameriki”, “Nastoyashee vremya”, “Radio Svoboda”, “Radio Svobodnaya Asia”, Marti radio and television (propaganda against Cuban authorities), as well as Arabic radio company Sawa and Alhurra TV channel. In Central Asia the USAGM has deployed an entire network of national services Radio Svoboda – Azattyk (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), Ozodi (Tajikistan), Ozodlik (Uzbekistan) and Azattyk (Turkmenistan). The USAGM is planning to spend 2 million 26 thousand dollars of the budget on financing Kirgiz company “Radio Svoboda” – “Azzalyk Media”²¹.

The following year 2023 is not going to be easy for Kirgizstan, neither will it be for the other Central Asian states. This year the USA has commenced to implement the long-term Project “Integrated Country Strategy” (figure 3)²².

To sum up, foreign countries purposefully create conditions in Kirgizstan that would provoke humanitarian rupture of its relations with Russia, which is to be given special consideration, having in mind the geographical position of Kirgizstan, its membership in a number of integration communities, and its close economic and historical ties with Russia.

Conclusion

Despite the dynamic of influence, European countries exercise over Kirgizstan’s social and media space, Russia remains its key actor and is seen by the majority of Kirgiz people through the spectacle of good neighborly relations. However, Kirgizstan being a friendly and close country to Russia is currently overcoming difficult social processes. Social and humanitarian structure of the society is being transformed, both influenced by foreign actors and by force of natural processes, such as demographic ones, increasing openness and accessibility of different information resulting from digitalization of communication process, growing number of Kirgizstan’s economic partners, etc. Quite a controversial way is developing the policy in the sphere of historical memory, the level of knowledge of Russian language is decreasing, attempts are implemented to replace Russian language as the language of business communication at the level of public institutions. Russian mass media and national Russia-friendly mass media, are being gradually replaced by anti-Russian mass media, supported by European organizations.

The purposeful efforts of European organizations in Kirgizstan information ecosystem, narrowed sphere of use of Russian language and decrease in the number of Russian speaking people who can understand information broadcast by Russian-speaking media, the increasing role of social networks in shaping public opinion in Kyrgyzstan, especially among young people, as well as the intensive work the European NGOs hold among Kyrgyz people – all these factors create prerequisites to a decrease in the role of Russia in shaping public

²¹ The USA–Kirgizstan: the information expansion strategy. Available from: <https://stanradar.com/news/full/51058-ssha-kyrgyzstan-strategiya-informatsionnoj-ekspansii-.html>

²² Ibid.

opinion in Kyrgyzstan and to creation of media and public infrastructure broadcasting anti-Russian content. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan, both at the level of National government and at the level of general public, is interested in developing good-neighborly relations with Russia, therefore we would like the institutions, in charge of developing good-neighborly relations, to take into consideration the problems described in the article.

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