Peacebuilding and Reconciliation Projects in Southern Kyrgyzstan

Working Paper

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Contents

Summary

This report considers Western-supported peacebuilding, mediation and reconciliation drives initiated in response to inter-communal violence in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010. These have proved attractive to donors because they are short term, easy to implement through the use of existing local partners, make substantial promises on a low budget, and offer numerical claims of success through the quantities of people 'trained'. Methodologically it is hard to assess the impact of projects designed to either reduce complex phenomena such as 'ethnic mistrust' or to prevent future violence from occurring. Nonetheless the report concludes that there are good reasons to question the value of the initiatives considered here. Our analysis identifies five factors common to violence in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 and a similar incident in 1990. We argue that the peacebuilding activities that have been undertaken have not had and cannot have a significant impact on most of these five factors.

Our policy recommendations fall under two headings. The first set are specific to the peacebuilding, mediation and reconciliation projects considered here and arise from our findings. Projects should seek to prioritize working with demographic groups directly involved in perpetrating violence—that is, young, less educated, unemployed males from mono-ethnic areas. Furthermore, conflict mediation and reconciliation programmes should go hand in hand with a substantive element of creating economic opportunity for young people.

Recognizing that they are a tarnished brand in the eyes of many Kyrgyzstanis, donors should, where possible, support appropriate Kyrgyzstani conflict management programmes rather than initiate their own. More generally, Western actors should develop more critically reflective and rigorous appraisal mechanisms of the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions, and be prepared to substantially modify or discontinue existing programmes. Donors should welcome proposals to fund local civil society monitoring of international initiatives and programmes for their impact on governance and conflict potential. International partners should do more to welcome scrutiny of their interventions by international and local media and civil society. Finally, donors should make long-term commitments to working with key individuals and communities.

The report concludes that perhaps the most important factor behind the violence was political instability created by the popular violent coup against the Kyrgyzstani Government in April 2010. Whilst these factors were primarily driven by local agents and institutions, the geopolitical interests of both Russia and the West, and the opportunities for corruption provided by Western financial offshoring arrangements, were important factors exacerbating the instability. Broader Western geopolitical and financial interests in Kyrgyzstan are sometimes in direct contradiction with the conflict

management agenda, and clearly trump it. Donors should consider whether there are also ways in which they can begin to address some of the international structures and policies that are continuing to fuel the poor governance and economic failures that contributed to the conflict in the first place.

Therefore, our second set of recommendations begins with the recommendation that external governments and international agencies should consider how their full range of engagements—from the establishment of military bases to economic investment—may exacerbate underlying conflict dynamics. Furthermore, Western governments should work together to improve the anti-money laundering regime which make corruption possible and fuels political crisis and thus ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan. Finally, Western states should do much more to facilitate the recovery of stolen assets and to tackle tax evasion through their corporate and financial systems. OECD states are still lagging behind in complying with many of the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

This report recognizes that acting on these last recommendations will be particularly challenging. Conflict mediation, peacebuilding and reconciliation projects may be valuable in themselves and for what they represent symbolically. However they are only ever ameliorative of enduring structural issues. Efforts to promote reconciliation between different ethnic groups will not be effective without a lasting political settlement that permits all communities to take part in political life and thrive economically and culturally. The report thus concludes with a sombre warning: why waste time trying to ameliorate consequences of ethno-territorial structures if we are complicit in producing the very conditions that allow the tensions created by those structures to explode into deadly violence?

1. Introduction

In June 2010 inter-communal violence in the southern Kyrgyzstani cities of Osh and Jalalabad left 400–500 people dead, hundreds of thousands displaced internally and externally, and extensive damage to residential and commercial property. The social demographics of these cities are marked by substantial Uzbek minority communities living in their historic cores, and growing numbers of Kyrgyz residents who have migrated from rural areas over recent decades. Social and political tensions created by the ethno-territorial structure of (post) Soviet Central Asia, and a lack of economic opportunity, provided a backdrop but it was political instability and a power vacuum following the violent overthrow of President Kurmanbek Bakiev in April 2010 that provided the primary causes of the conflict.

It appears that a street confrontation in Osh on the evening of 10 June sparked violence that rapidly escalated into mass murder, looting, arson and sexual violence, and spread to the neighbouring city of Jalalabad. Politicians and the security forces were overwhelmed, and for four days proved unable to contain the greatest crisis to threaten Kyrgyzstan in its two decade history as an independent state. Widespread instances of inter-ethnic assistance and sheltering notwithstanding, the violence fell along communal (Kyrgyz-Uzbek lines). Both groups suffered, but the economically more comfortable but politically weaker Uzbek minority disproportionately bore the brunt of harm to body, property and livelihood.[1]

The June 2010 violence was the worst crisis in independent Kyrgyzstan's history, both politically and in terms of human suffering. The Kyrgyz government and some international agencies have conducted investigations into the events, although there is little agreement on their cause. The official Kyrgyz government report put primary blame on an alliance of Uzbek 'separatist' politicians and members and supporters of the former Bakiev regime, with secondary responsibility on Kyrgyz political and security chiefs in the south of the country who failed to spot warning signs and then failed to prevent initial violence from escalating.[2] The then mayor of Osh, Melis Myrzakmatov, produced a popular (and populist) account that downplays accusations against the Bakievs, pinning the blame firmly on a specific Uzbek separatist plot that was backed and armed by Uzbekistan to attach southern Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan.[3] The foreign independent Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (KIC) found that the provisional government that replaced Bakiev failed to address the deterioration in ethnic relations in the south, and once the conflict began, its security forces failed to intervene adequately and

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[1] For a chronological outline of the incidents, see Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (2011), 'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010.' This report was criticised within Kyrgyzstan for its purported bias towards the Uzbeks.

[2] Government of Kyrgyzstan, Заключение Нацкомиссии по расследованию июньских событий на юге Кыргызстана. Bishkek: 2011.

[3] Myrzakmatov, Melisbek (2011). *Men Izdegen Chyndyk.* (Bishkek, Turar).

may have been complicit in violence against Uzbeks. It detailed a series of attacks on Uzbek neighbourhoods, which exhibited 'evidence of pattern and planning' but not a 'high degree of organization'. It concluded that the violence on Uzbeks does not qualify as either 'war crimes or genocide', but aspects of it might constitute 'crimes against humanity'.[4]

Although these accounts differ to the extent that they paint Uzbeks as perpetrators or victims, the two most politically important reports—those of the Kyrgyz government and the KIC—agree on some basic elements. Against a background of economic stagnation and corruption, the latter in part produced by western and Russian geopolitical interests and the nature of Kyrgyzstan's particular process of transition to capitalism, on 7 April 2010 the regime of President Kurmanbek Bakiev was overthrown in a violent popular uprising. Elements of the Bakiev regime attempted to retake control of the south of the country, and the participation of Uzbek leaders such as Kadirjon Batyrov in the southern political arena raised ethnic tensions. A violent incident in central Osh on 10 June quickly escalated into city-wide fighting, looting, arson and killing, which intensified as groups of young men from villages entered the city to support their co-ethnics. Security services failed to control the escalation.

Furthermore, the aftermath of this violence has yielded ample evidence of widespread extortion and robbery of Uzbek property and money by police, petty criminals, and organized criminal gangs, with virtual impunity. It is therefore hard to say that lessons have been learned, and there are thus some grounds to fear future violence.

Understandably, given this, many international actors have intervened in various ways to seek to help Kyrgyzstan deal with the effects of the June 2010 tragedy and prevent a similar recurrence. By the end of 2010, the emergency humanitarian response drew to a close in Osh and its surrounding areas. While longer-term large-scale infrastructural improvement projects continued, many international actors increasingly switched to peace-building programmes (see table 1). Key donors, such as the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and the United States, and their implementing partners—international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Eurasia Foundation, the OSCE, ACTED, IREX, Helvetas, DRC, and International Alert—introduced a host of peacebuilding projects that advocated reconciliation between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks through inter-ethnic dialogue, mediation and joint social and infrastructure projects in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods.

These reconciliatory activities aimed to establish peace through transforming destructive attitudes and behaviour into constructive and peaceful relationships between the two ethnic groups, healing divisions and making future conflict less likely. They have proved attractive to donors for various reasons. They make lofty promises on low budgets; their 'grassroots' focus commonly obviates the difficulties of protracted dealings with high-

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[4] Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (2011), 'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010'.

level officialdom, are relatively easy to implement and thus attractive to foreign NGOs. As yet however they have not been properly researched and analysed.

This report therefore aims to redress this by outlining the activities, describing their provenance and the complex inter-relationships that exist between donors, intermediary groups and the local state, and critically examining and evaluating their operations. It draws upon fieldwork in southern Kyrgyzstan between May 2011 and March 2012, and 94 interviews conducted during that time with state and local officials, international actors, non-governmental organisations, and with Kyrgyz and Uzbek residents located in Osh and its surrounding areas (Uzgen, Karasuu, Suzak and Jalal-Abad).[5]

Due to sensitivities, and generally upon their request, we have concealed the identities of most of our respondents by either citing them anonymously or (for people mentioned repeatedly) creating pseudonyms. This includes many foreign citizens working for international agencies.

Table 1: Key peacebuilding projects in post-conflict Osh province, 2011–13

Key donors and implementing NGOs	Projects	Project aims	Target groups
ACTED	REACH electronic mapping programme of socio-economic indicators in 240 administrative areas; irrigation projects funded by the EU; and peacebuilding round tables	Early conflict warning and conflict prevention; peace through access to irrigation water in the south; and dialogue and talks about tolerance	Local government, community leaders and WUAs; 2000 households in 7 villages; and communities in Osh
EFCA	Youth Banks and Women's Peace Banks	Inter-ethnic reconciliation, confidence building in communities	60 ethnically-mixed teenagers from Osh and16 Women's Banks in Osh and Jalal-Abad cities
OSCE	Youth Councils; Women's Peace Initiative; and Peace Ambassadors (*Yntymak Jarchylary*)	To engage women, young people and community leaders in peace-building initiatives through mediation and dialogue facilitation	Young people and women recruited from 11 territorial councils in Osh; and 748 members were formed in Osh city, Osh, Jalal-Abad and Chuy provinces
United Nations	Empowering young people in peacebuilding and reconciliation;	Peacebuilding and reconciliation by engaging young people, women and water users	Young people and women in Osh and Jalal-Abad cities; and WUAs in multi-

[5] 65 of these interviews were conducted by Elmira, the remainder by Nick. Interviews were conducted variously in Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Russian and English.

	Cultivating Peace—Using water-based agriculture to facilitate reconciliation: and Women Building Peace, Trust and Reconciliation in Kyrgyzstan	associations (WUAs) in capacity building activities for inter-ethnic co-existence	ethnic communities of Kara Suu.
USAID	Funded over 163 projects, including Public Advisory Boards, Youth and Women's Banks and rehabilitation projects in Osh and Jalal Abad provinces	Peacebuilding and reconciliation by engaging young people, women and local state	14 multi-ethnic districts across the south
European Union	TASK programme 'Conflict mitigation and peace-building in Kyrgyzstan'	Mitigation of sources and factors of conflict and facilitation of durable peace and stability	100 communities in South Kyrgyzstan targeting women, young people, small business and civil society
Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation	Vocational education of young people and irrigation projects	Prevent conflicts through vocational training of young people and better distribution of irrigation water among WUA members	Young people and WUAs in Aravan and Kara-Suu rayons of Osh oblast, Jalal-Abad town and Bazar-Korgon rayon of Jalal-Abad oblast
International Alert	Training mediators in Kyrgyzstan funded by EU for 18 months	Mediation and seminars on conflict issues, designed to be both an early warning and immediate community-based early response	4 provinces: 3 in the south of the country and 1 in the north
IREX	Youth Theatre for Peace funded by USAID	Conflict prevention at the community level through a participatory theatre methodology, Drama for Conflict Transformation	Teachers and teenagers (15–16 years old) in rural, conflict-prone areas of Kyrgyzstan

Reconciliation and mediation programmes were predominantly sponsored by three key actors: the EU, the USA and the UN. Western donors (e.g. working through the UN) commonly funded short term reconciliation and mediation projects with a minor development component. The EU and the USAID funded these as crises mitigation projects which can only provide short term and targeted assistance. For instance, a UNDP development specialist based in Brussels explains how EU post-conflict intervention is limited in scope and time.

the EU's Instrument for Stability is a crises mitigation instrument and not a development programme. These projects are limited by law to 18 months. If these projects want to stay longer, they should get incorporated into development programs. That's the rationale of it and the way regulation has foreseen it.[6]

The EU allocated €4.55 million to its 18-month 'Conflict mitigation and peace-building in Kyrgyzstan' project (November 2011–April 2013). The EU funds were dispersed to 7 international and 9 national NGOs in southern Kyrgyzstan, which have implemented various peacebuilding projects approved by the EU.[7] The UN allocated a total of $10 million for six projects on reconciliation activities.[8] USAID, through its Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), claims that it funded over 163 projects over two years for over $10 million.[9]

The report identifies and evaluates these projects. Methodologically it is difficult to assess their impact, and they may have some potential to de-escalate tensions and rebuild inter-communal links. However they suffer from a number of serious flaws and their effects are necessarily limited because they fail to address important causes of conflict. The report concludes by reflecting on lessons learnt and pointing ways forwards for constructive international engagement within the field of peacebuilding and reconciliation.

The report is written by a team of scholars who have variously been researching inter-ethnic relations in Osh since 1995. More immediately, we interviewed representatives of donors and implementers, and also experts, journalists, service users and government officials, in Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek, Osh and Jalalabad), and in a handful of cases outside Kyrgyzstan where necessary. Some participant ethnographic study of reconciliation projects in Osh was also undertaken. Such qualitative research does not claim to be statistically representative of the whole population, but the wide-ranging research conducted with numerous stakeholders is indicative of attitudes and issues more generally.

[6] Interview with authors, Brussels, Mar. 2012.

[7] Interview with authors, Delegation of the European Union to the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, Nov. 2011. The seven INGOs are DanChurchAid, ICCO, ACTED, Danish Refugee Council, Save the Children, HELVETAS and International Alert. These were active during the humanitarian assistance to Osh and specialise in mediation and some development activities in the region.

[8] The UN funded the following six projects: 'Infrastructure for Peace in Kyrgyzstan' ($3 000 000), 'Cultivating Peace: Using water-based agriculture to facilitate reconciliation among multi-ethnic residents of Karasuu' ($400 000), 'Administration of Justice' ($1 799 997), 'Strengthening Media Capacity to Promote Peace and Tolerance' ($330 108), 'Empowering youth to participate in peace-building and reconciliation ($910 000), 'Women Building Peace, Trust and Reconciliation in Kyrgyzstan' ($559 891), <http://www.unpbf.org/countries/kyrgyzstan/>.

[9] USAID, Office of Transition Initiatives. Kyrgyz Republic Program Summary, 27 Oct. 2011, <http://centralasia.usaidallnet.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/u4/oti-kr_program_update_2011_10_27_october_final.pdf>.

2. The nature of peacebuilding and reconciliation programmes

As we saw in the introduction (see table 1), various peacebuilding and reconciliation programmes were established on a significant scale by well-funded donors in the aftermath of the June 2010 violence. It is important to note that they bring a particular conceptual and practical understanding of violence and social relations in Osh, and a set of models of conflict management developed elsewhere.

This approach to handling conflict by targeting 'civil society' as peacebuilding actors is not new, having gained importance internationally in the mid-1990s (see chapter 5 for examples in Kyrgyzstan prior to 2010). Today, these bottom-up peacebuilding approaches have integrated with the mainstream development programmes, gaining popularity as an alternative to top-down peacebuilding initiatives that focus on elites and institutional reforms. According to Lefranc, bottom-up dialogue oriented peace programmes originate in religious and pacifist movements the USA, and have borrowed therapeutic techniques from psychological counselling that reject political routes to conflict resolution.[10] The therapeutic techniques, such as local dialogues, co-existence programmes, role-play and the training of conflict resolution skills, are used to transform individual prejudices and emphasise contact among 'ordinary people'.

In post-conflict Osh, the bottom-up peacebuilding approaches merged with pre-existing participatory development approaches, which also mobilised local communities for the reduction of conflict potential in the Ferghana Valley. Rooted in these two approaches, international actors predominantly mobilised *aksakals*, women and youth to re-build social relationships by 'being and doing things together.' For instance, the UN peacebuilding projects assume that ' a return to conflict could be prevented if key sectors of society (women, youth, agricultural communities) were positively engaged in reducing inter-ethnic tension through social cohesion and economic/vocational activities'.[11]

The following USAID projects' objectives share similarity with other international peacebuilding projects:[12]

- Expand opportunities for youth and other vulnerable populations to engage in constructive and productive activities at critical times
- Promote interaction that encourages diversity and tolerance

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[10] Lefranc, S. 2012, 'A critique of "bottom-up" peacebuilding: do peaceful individuals make peaceful societies?,' pp. 34–53, in *Peacebuilding, Memory and Reconciliation*, ed. by Charbonneau, B. and Parent, G., Routledge: London.

[11] Zapach, M. and Ibraeva, G. 'Immediate Response Facility. Final Evaluation-Kyrgyzstan,' June 2012, <http://www.unpbf.org/wp-content/uploads/Kyrgyzstan_2012.pdf>.

[12] USAID Stabilization–Office of Transition Initiatives, Program Description, <http://centralasia.usaid.gov/kyrgyzstan/stabilization-OTI>.

- Strengthen the capacity of civil society—especially women and youth—to assess, prevent, mediate, and mitigate conflict
- Stimulate economic recovery and expand opportunities in marginalized and volatile communities

In practice, these objectives translated into many similar projects that used seminars on tolerance and conflict mediation as an essential mechanism to prevent relapse into conflict.

Donors saw these reconciliation and mediation projects as a cost-effective and democratic means of conflict resolution. An anonymous development professional involved in running these schemes notes that donors normally prefer to fund training programmes, in part because they are more quantifiable:

Trainings and seminars is what donors like to give money for. It's direct. It's easy to monitor. The outcomes read like: 50 people trained in human rights standards, 10 people trained in something else. Ideally, funding should go to long term institutional development. But donors don't like to give funding for long term development. It's a bit unclear what the outcomes are. Donors want tangible accounts on each step of the process.[13]

In Osh and Jalal-Abad oblasts, the OSCE alone trained about 750 mediators made up of community leaders. The UN, with its local partner Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI), trained about 100 women in Kyrgyzstan's three southern *oblasts*. International Alert trained 90 local trainers in mediation, and they subsequently trained more than 700 community mediators. ACTED formed 11 peacebuilding round tables to promote inter-ethnic dialogue.

Leading programmes followed a model of intensive training of carefully selected local people, who were then in turn given support to train others whom they themselves selected. Mediation and reconciliation are seen as specific products that can be standardized and owned. International Alert explains, 'nationally, we are working on projects to promote mediation generally; to clarify what mediation is. … We would like a number of products agreed on, including a handbook, a structure for mediation, etc'.[14] As we shall see in considering criticisms below, some local people trained in this way found it arrogant, inflexible and patronizing.

In addition to this creation of a network of mediators, the OSCE set up Youth Councils in each of the eleven territorial councils in Osh to encourage inter-ethnic tolerance and reconciliation among youth. The Eurasian Foundation-Central Asia ran a similar project, called Youth Banks.[15] The UN set up 17 youth centres as spaces for inter-ethnic interaction as well as a

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[13] Anonymous, Interview with authors, Europe-based international development professional coordinating a suite of major foreign-funded peacebuilding and state-building projects in Central Asia, Mar. 2012.

[14] International Alert, Interview with authors, Oct. 2010, Bishkek.

[15] EFCA, Interview with authors, Osh, May 2011. Youth Bank was introduced in 2009 to address and reduce the impact of conflict for border communities living in southern Kyrgyzstan, and introduced to Osh following the June 2010 ethnic violence.

platform for vocational and conflict resolution skills trainings. School children were recruited in USAID's 'Youth Theatre for Peace' programme, which claimed to promote sustainable conflict prevention at the community level through a participatory theatre methodology called Drama for Conflict Transformation (DCT). School children and teenagers had to write short plays about conflict issues and to perform them in their communities, engaging the audience in the performance. A discussion would follow the performance, encouraging dialogue on conflict issues and 'bringing divided groups into contact.'

Women in particular were targeted as efficient peace actors. For instance, Lilian Darii, the Deputy Head of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, notes that involvement of women 'will help include all sections of the communities and, in the long run, will contribute to restoring confidence towards institutions in the south of the country.'[16] As a result, the UN set up Women's Peace Network, represented by 20 Women Peace Committees in 3 southern oblasts.[17] The Eurasian Foundation-Central Asia established 16 Women's Peace Banks in Osh and Jalal-Abad cities to facilitate inter-ethnic reconciliation and confidence building in communities. The OSCE established a Women's Initiative Group, consisting of women leaders from 11 territorial councils in Osh, and trained them in conflict prevention, early warning and mediation.[18] Women's Banks and other networks were then required to train other women in conflict mitigation skills.

Some peacebuilding projects also offered small grants to civil society groups to implement social and infrastructure projects. ACTED and Helvetas mobilised Water-User Associations to clean irrigation canals in conflict affected communities and mixed neighbourhoods. Youth and women's initiatives also were allocated limited funds to repair local infrastructure and organise social events. A highly visible USAID project repaired eight small parks around Osh city for mixed social interaction.[19]

The sudden rush of western donors to be involved in reconciliation and mediation projects in the aftermath of the June violence is striking. Danish Church Aid told us that, prior to June 2010, their main work in the south of Kyrgyzstan was on the legal aspects of migration. However within two weeks of the violence they had secured $900 000 of aid funding, and began a new raft of projects that went on to include 'a bit of sustainable livelihoods…. a bit of community-based psychological support, a bit of mediation.'[20] Speaking anonymously, an employee of an international organisation heavily involved in sponsoring mediation and reconciliation vouchsafed that to him it:

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[16] OSCE. 'OSCE supports women in conflict prevention and reconciliation efforts in southern Kyrgyzstan,' 11 Aug. 2011, <http://www.osce.org/bishkek/81487>.

[17] Zapach and Ibraeva, 2012.

[18] Ibraimov, B. 'Women in southern Kyrgyzstan work to reduce ethnic tension,' 12 Apr. 2012, <http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2012/12/04/feature-01>.

[19] Interview with authors, Eurasia Foundation-Central Asia, ACTED and OSCE, Osh, May 2011. See also TASK Newsletter #2, 'Conflict Mitigation and Peacebuilding in Kyrgyzstan: Programme Highlights', <https://assets.helvetas.ch/downloads/120925_task_newslette_2_en.pdf>.

[20] Interview with authors, Bishkek, 12 Oct. 2011.

seems a bit scary, as it seems to me that this is an idea that people think seemed to work well in one case, so everyone jumps on it, but more often than not it is based on misunderstanding and misrecognition. Anyway, the mediators idea began before the Revolution, but I am not exactly sure how. Then last June, there was no violence in Uzgen [authors – the scene of the worst violence in 1990]. Why was this? There are lots of explanations and theories given, but one was that the mediators stepped in front of the crowds and calmed them down. So the internationals went ballistic, saying, "ah yes, if we have these everywhere, next time they would stop it".[21]

This would appear to indicate a bandwagoning momentum behind the sudden rush of reconciliation and mediation projects.

It is worth noting that international organisations were not the only drivers of the reconciliation and mediation momentum. The Osh mayoralty declared 2011 'The year of strengthening the relations, concordance and friendship between ethnic groups in the city of Osh'.[22] Many activities promoted aimed to bring Uzbek and Kyrgyz people together in cultural activities. However, as Megoran argues, these activities had a strong nationalist ideological bent, aimed at drawing different ethnic groups together in loyalty to a primarily Kyrgyz city of Osh in a Kyrgyz nation state.[23] As such they were embodiments of what Khan identified as 'titular ethnicization'.[24]

However, other local initiatives subsequently became entangled with foreign donors. For example, a local religious group, calling itself 'Peacemakers' began in the summer of 2011 to run camps for local Uzbek and Kyrgyz children to break down what it described as the 'great wall between the two' that 'Satan' put there after 2010.[25] Initially run by Kyrgyz and Uzbek leaders without any other involvement, its apparent success in the eyes of parents led the local education authority to support future camps and invite the leaders into local schools to run similar events. By the summer of 2013, the organisation had sought foreign personnel and financial support to continue its activities.

Similarly, an ethnically Uzbek local political leader recounted that soon after the violence he

organised sessions with people from the police commandants, with women, the elderly, ordinary Uzbeks and Kyrgyz etc, all round [his administrative region], to do reconciliation and learn about not hating, in order to be able to live alongside each other. For example, our Uzbeks have to go through HBK [region] for going about their business, where there are Kyrgyz, and the Kyrgyz have to go through Stalin [village], where there are Uzbeks. We don't want them giving funny looks at each other.

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[21] Interview with authors, Bishkek, 24 Nov. 2011.

[22] 'Osh shaaryna uluttar aralyk mamileni, yntymaktuuluktu, dostuktu chingdoo jyldyn otkoruu boyuncha ish-charchlar plany' [A plan of activities for implementing the year of strengthening the relations, concordance and friendship of the ethnic groups of Osh city'], *Osh Shamy*, 5 Feb. 2011.

[23] Megoran, Nick *Averting Violence in Kyrgyzstan.* Chatham House, 2012, p. 23.

[24] Khan, Valeriy. 2010. The state ideologies in Post-Soviet Central Asia: The ethnic dimension. In *Central Asia in Retrospect and Prospect*, edited by M. Kaw. New Delhi: Readworthy, See also chapter 5 in this report.

[25] Interview with authors, 24 Oct. 2011, Osh.

He claimed that he ran 21 of these sessions between 22 June and 1 August 2010, 'before I had had any training by the OSCE or before the foreigners had come and started to do this here; and other people saw my initiative, and liked it, and replicated it elsewhere.' He went on to add that he was subsequently identified by the OSCE for their mediation training, and has sent more people from his area for OSCE training, although he stressed that it was originally his initiative before the OSCE became active. He praised the OSCE training sessions as valuable, although not because they learnt anything new about 'diplomacy' that they didn't already know, but that 'what was new was the preparation of documents, the provision of handbooks, etc.'[26]

Therefore we see that following the violence of June 2010, reconciliation and mediation projects were rapidly spearheaded by international donors as a valuable means of conflict prevention in Osh. As they proliferated they variously overlapped with each other, became intertwined with local state and civil society interventions, and had fleeting if deceptive parallels to nationalist state consolidation programmes.

[26] Interview with authors, Osh region, 25 Nov. 2011.

3. Questioning reconciliation interventions

As seen in the previous chapter, the mushrooming of foreign-led and funded peacebuilding and reconciliation programmes in southern Kyrgyzstan after the June 2010 violence is striking. However this burgeoning is not necessarily an index of their effectiveness. Our fieldwork and interviews with participants recruited into the projects, local NGOs, and local state officials reveal four major shortcomings of these projects: problematic understanding of the causes of conflict, patronising and inappropriate teaching methods, their limited reach in recruitment, and their bias against the state. We consider each of these in turn.

Problematic understanding of the causes of conflict

Many Osh residents and local NGOs argued that reconciliation and mediation projects were not adequate for re-building inter-ethnic relations and preventing future conflict. Local actors stressed that inter-ethnic tensions could not be overcome by talking about peace, but rather by addressing deep structural problems such as the lack of economic opportunity, and the failures of the legal system to secure justice for ethnic minorities.

Even as early as the summer of 2011, we detected a growing perception that there were too many reconciliation and mediation projects in Osh. Participants and local NGOs expressed cynicism about workshops and seminars, referring to them as a façade (*filkina gramota, shirma, bolbogon ish*) and a waste of time and funds as they did not offer economic help. Many in Osh were struggling to re-build their businesses and were looking for financial support, such as interest free loans. Entrepreneurs, whose businesses were affected by the conflict, complained that they did not receive compensation, and some had become bankrupt because the banks demanded re-payments of loans and interest rate payments.[27] Even by modest estimates, there were over 7000 entrepreneurs of both ethnicities who had suffered damages.[28] In Cheremushki district, its territorial district head described how businesses were still trying to recover along particular streets.[29] In On Adyr district, the head of Amir Temur territorial council, explained that unemployment had increased in his district as many people had lost their jobs as traders, cooks and waiters at the central bazaar, '35 000 people live here and 65 per cent of people are unemployed. About 30 percent have left for Russia to find employment'.[30] In Shahid Tebe district, many residents were worried about the closure of Osh Bazaar and the

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[27] Some banks (such as Halyk and Kazkommertz Banks) refused to delay re-payments and issued penalty fees on top of the debt. According to the law, banks must take into account the *force majeure* situation of their clients, but 90% of the beneficiaries did not have this clause in their contracts. Some banks forced businesses to mortgage or sell their property and homes.

[28] Interview with authors, International Committee of Red Cross, Osh, June 2011.

[29] Interview with authors, Ak-Tilek territorial council, Osh, July 2011.

[30] Interview with authors, Amir Temur territorial council, Osh, July 2011.

Uzbek-Kyrgyz border by Uzbekistan. Many people expressed the view that talks on peacebuilding were not relevant to their everyday pressing concerns, which focused on finding work, financial insecurity and family survival anxieties. Olimjon, the head-teacher of an Uzbek school, who had participated in several tolerance seminars, dismisses them:[31]

My opinion is that such seminars are useless. I don't understand how these trainers can teach us to be tolerant. In reality, people living in Central Asia are tolerant and have learnt this from their parents and grandparents. If these people really want to help, they should stay away from ideology. I don't need them to tell me how to rebuild my relationship with my Kyrgyz friends. I had Kyrgyz friends and still have them. Look, my assistant is Uzbek and her husband is Kyrgyz. How can they teach them how to live together? They know that better than anybody. They're just wasting resources. So much money is spent on transportation, accommodation and various materials. I think it would make more sense if they would use the money to buy computers and give them to schools. This would be a real help!

Olimjon reflects on how western donors and local actors had different perceptions of needs, and how seminar trainers did not understand local residents' daily practices. In addition, Olimjon is indignant that adults are being lectured to on how to get along by overpaid foreign consultants who knew very little about the local context (for more on this, see the next subsection). There was a perception that western consultants were imported to correct their 'uncivilised behaviour,' using therapeutic techniques that were seen as inadequate. Many interviewees pointed out that only a few days after the violence people practised tolerance by travelling in overcrowded and stifling *marshrutkas*. With or without training seminar, people had to practise tolerance in their everyday activities in getting about in the city: people bargained for goods at the bazaar, ate at the same *chaihanas*, and prayed together at the central mosque. The very necessity of having to carry on with everyday life forced many to socialise and mingle, despite possibly harbouring negative sentiments, such as distrust, insecurity and anger. The logics of everyday life meant that Osh residents did not only or necessarily see each other through the prism of ethnic identities.

People's ability to carry on in difficult circumstances was not surprising given that social relationships and ties did not totally disappear because of the violence, even though in many cases they were badly fractured. For instance, an Uzbek Cheremushki resident, who had his house burnt down, felt very proud when his Kyrgyz work colleagues came searching for him as soon as the violence had subsided. On that day, they celebrated his survival at a local vodka-selling *komok*, toasting to peace and to rebuilding his house. A Kyrgyz businessman, whose house was damaged in Turan *mahalla*, did not hesitate to protect the business of his Uzbek friend when the latter was approached by criminal groups. Similarly, by making frequent telephone calls, a Kyrgyz pensioner sought to reassure his long-time Uzbek friend that things would be better. These accounts show how individuals saw each other in broader social

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[31] Interview with authors, Osh, June 2011.

relationships in terms of friendship and work, rather than merely through an ethnic gaze.

Importantly, many local residents resented the tolerance seminars because how they understood and framed 'perpetrators' and 'victims' differed from the international donors' notions. Despite different narratives about the nature of the conflict, many residents agreed that the dominant discourse of a historical inter-ethnic hatred did not make sense. It was striking how seminar participants challenged reconciliation processes in seminars, where one ethnic group was framed as a perpetrator and another as a victim. The resentment of the reconciliation process was particularly strong among the Kyrgyz, who rejected such a simplistic dichotomy and their portrayal as a group that suffered less and that were required to acknowledge their wrongdoing. A Kyrgyz resident in Cheremushki district notes, 'We're against these international organisations. Instead of helping us, they came here and blamed Kyrgyz for everything.'[32] A popular opinion was expressed by a Kyrgyz man working for an NGO in Jalal-Abad, 'The western [KIC] report listened to Batyrov a lot. They took his side as truth.'

As Brewer notes, wider structural conditions are important in shaping Osh residents' perceptions of the causes of the violence and its resolution.[33] Some Osh residents felt that the reconciliation and mediation seminars failed to address the root causes of violence and they would not make an effective intervention in building peace in Osh city. They argued that international actors were reconciling the wrong groups and that the real divide was between the powerful Kyrgyz and Uzbek elites on the one hand, and the ordinary people. By rooting the conflict in economic and power inequalities, participants in the Osh seminars spoke about the different kinds of victims and violence.

A Kyrgyz woman from Tuleiken district attributes the conflict to the elites' quest for power, 'The rich elites eat and eat and they can't get enough. They gain power not only with money but through spilling blood. They brought this war. We were relatives with Uzbeks (*kudalaship jurgon elek*) and they've separated us.'[34] Similarly, a Kyrgyz man blames political ambition for the violence, 'What caused the conflict is the ambition of our politicians. They wanted power. In particular Batyrov.'[35] Noah Tucker, who reported on the Osh conflict extensively, notes that people in Osh spoke about structural and symbolic violence rather than ethnic violence: 'Many people ...dismiss the importance of an ethnic issue at all, arguing instead that even the "June war" was not a conflict between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, it was a conflict between a few rich Uzbeks and a few rich Kyrgyz that made ordinary, working and middle-class people on both sides its real victims.'[36]

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[32] Interview with authors, Osh, May 2011.

[33] John Brewer (2010), *Peace Processes: A Sociological Approach*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

[34] Interview with authors, Osh, June 2011.

[35] Interview with authors, Jalal-Abad 2011.

[36] Tucker, N., '"Ordinary People" and the Violence of Collapse (Osh, Part III)', 26 June 2011, <http://registan.net/2011/06/26/ordinary-people-and-the-violence-of-collapse-osh-part-iii/>. On

Dilmurad, an Uzbek leader of a youth group in On Adyr district, repeatedly stressed that donors should focus on politicians, who resorted to violence to protect their economic and political capital, rather than on the ordinary people:

All the problems come from greedy politicians. I always say in these seminars, 'Just leave the people alone! They're not the ones fighting each other. They know how to get along. Ordinary people don't need wars! They're just feeding their families. The fish gets rotten from its head. If you want to fix the ethnic problem, fix politicians, work with them! There is no need to fix the ordinary people.'[37]

Dilmurad and many other interviewees viewed the Osh conflict as violence by the rich elites against ordinary people. Dilmurad was exasperated that international actors failed to realise the importance of class inequalities in explaining the conflict. For peace to work in Kyrgyzstan, donors had to curtail the powers of the corrupt rich elites, rather than to 'civilise' the poor. Often national and international discourses have neglected social class as an important issue, refusing to discuss the detrimental role of markets in creating vast inequalities, social polarisation, the corrosion of state welfare institutions and traditional moral norms of equality and solidarity. Seeing the conflict from a distinctly class perspective, many ordinary Osh residents from both ethnic communities felt they were the victims of the violence, a narrative reinforced by the dominance and impunity of rich elites:

In the end, those who died were small herders, small farmers, ordinary poor people. Those who started and financed this did not suffer at all. The rich moved their families overseas. They did not suffer. Ordinary people had nowhere to run. For the rich, those 300 Uzbeks and 200 Kyrgyz were disposable![38]

Several interviewees saw a divide between the 'greedy' rich elites and the struggling poor as the real threat to the unity and stability in the country.[39] Cities have become sites of struggle for resources, where the poor and the *propiska-less* Kyrgyz and institutionally marginalised Uzbeks are losing out to the wealthy elites.[40] A Kyrgyz female pensioner in Osh predicted a civil war because of the elites' self-interested behaviour, 'The rich have to wake up from their greed. They have to start thinking about the consequences. If they don't, I am afraid that there will be a war between the rich and the poor. The poor will have enough one day!'[41] Similarly, another Kyrgyz resident in Osh hoped for political reforms to tackle the elites, 'The only way to renew our

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structural and symbolic violence see Bourdieu, P., 'Rethinking the state: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field,' *Sociological Theory*, vol. 12, no. 1 (1994), p. 118.

[37] Interview with authors, Osh, July 2011.

[38] Interview with authors, Kara Suu, July 2011.

[39] For more on this, see Megoran, Nick. 'On researching "ethnic conflict": epistemology, politics, and a Central Asian boundary dispute', *Europe-Asia Studies* vol. 59, no. 2 (2007): pp. 253–77.

[40] *Propiska* is a residence permit required to access basic services. Rural Kyrgyz are *de facto* second-class citizens, unable to exercise their basic rights because they do not possess residence permits for Osh.

[41] Interview with authors, Osh, June 2011.

country is by getting rid of corrupt rich elites… Completely uproot the rich and powerful'.[42]

This divergence between external and local understandings of inter-ethnic dynamics and the cause of the 2010 violence is revealed in tensions between organisers and participants of seminars. For example, many mediation projects had to allocate small grants for local development (infrastructure repairs and income generating activities) to keep project participants motivated in peacebuilding because of its growing unpopularity. Initially, mediation projects trained mediators, who were supposed to be influential community members, assessing, preventing, mediating and mitigating conflicts.[43] Mediators, who were assumed to be capable of being neutral, objective and fair, were trained to analyse conflicts, to gather data, to produce monthly monitoring reports which fed into early warning system, and to mediate local conflicts. But as a local NGO representative noted, 'People did not understand peacebuilding as data gathering. They demanded funds to organise events and to repair local infrastructure'.[44]

If some respondents critiqued the reconciliation/mediation programmes for misdiagnosing the causes of conflict as mistrust caused by lack of familiarity rather than as lack of opportunity caused by greedy elites, others emphasised lack of justice as the primary issue. This was particularly common amongst ethnic Uzbeks, who suffered most material and bodily harm in the violence itself but in particular have been subjected with impunity to violence against person and property since that time.[45] For example, the World Bank, amongst other donors, has funded an urban infrastructure regeneration project, which 'is deliberately intended to foster social cohesion' by responding to needs identified by communities and to ensure that, 'for example, with projects that are labour intensive, we try to make sure that one [ethnic group] doesn't benefit substantially more than another in recruitment'.[46] Some people in Osh regard this as counter-productive. One Uzbek farmer, whose family had fled to Uzbekistan during the June disturbances and upon returning had been subject to frequent incidents of violence, said disparagingly:

This place is awash with Americans. They are bringing huge amounts of aid, grants – rewarding our killers by giving them roads etc. What we need is political pressure and help – for example, sanctions on them, like with Belarus, less economic aid to force them to treat us better and give us our rights - not more aid.

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[42] Interview with authors, Osh, June 2011.

[43] All mediation projects mentioned above train mediators as conflict prevention mechanism. See also: International Alert, 'Training Mediators in Kyrgyzstan,' 3 Sep. 2012, <http://www.international-alert.org/fr/news/training-mediators-kyrgyzstan>.

[44] Interview with authors, Osh, July 2011.

[45] See for example Amnesty International. *Still Waiting for Justice: One Year on from the Violence in Southern Kyrgyzstan.*, London: Amnesty International, 2011.

[46] Interview with authors, World Bank, Bishkek, Oct. 2011.

He concluded, most of all 'we need [the rule of] law – there is no law for us, and that is the problem'.[47]

Similarly, one of the researchers spent a day participating in a peacebuilding event between a Kyrgyz and an Uzbek school, hosted at an Uzbek school in Osh. Many of the activities involved Uzbek children speaking Kyrgyz, dressing up in traditional Kyrgyz clothes, and singing songs about their love for Kyrgyzstan. Following a jolly inter-communal dancing session in the playground, the visiting Kyrgyz school head teacher, clearly very emotional, gave a heartfelt speech. Insisting that they would never let the 'bad events' of last year come between them, that 'it will be as if nothing had happened,' she ended with a series of wishes and prayers that 'our friendship may never be broken.' Listening to her, a senior teacher in the Uzbek school asked the researcher about urban riots in the UK in August 2011. She was told that they began as protests over the death of a man in custody, but others used them as an excuse to rob and loot. She said, with bitter sarcasm, 'ah, yes, they taught our Kyrgyz that.' A further irony was that standing nearby were two uniformed private security guards, employed by parents to protect the school against attack by groups of Kyrgyz criminals and youths who, more than a year on from the original fighting, were still preying on Osh Uzbeks with virtual impunity. Fine words about friendship meant little with ongoing injustices being perpetrated unchecked. Osh Uzbeks repeatedly stressed the lack of justice, and especially police and court corruption and injustice, as the major obstacle to peace.

But that is not to say that there was universal cynicism about peacebuilding and reconciliation projects. Many leaders and residents in Osh recognised that they had value, but alongside the meeting of other needs such as economic opportunity and justice. Thus the Uzbek head teacher of the above-mentioned school, who personally had been subject to extortion, violence and robbery by the police and who had sent his sons to Russia to protect them from racist attack by the police, criminals and other citizens, insisted that such peacebuilding projects:

are effective, because they get Uzbek and Kyrgyz children together using a certain methodology that is interactive. We see children wanting to be friends with each other, and I think this made a great impression - particularly early on when people were going through the city glaring at each other with great suspicion. This is more important and more valuable than money.[48]

Likewise, an Uzbek politician in Jalalabad region outlined the systematic abuse of ethnic Uzbek by the Kyrgyz police, blamed the violence on the scheming of senior leaders and on poverty, and insisted that 'people don't fight if they have everything they need'. Nonetheless, he enthusiastically supported the organisation of peacebuilding and reconciliation events, because he said that 'it is through ignorance that people fight and hate each other, and

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[47] Interview with authors, Osh region, 2011.
[48] Interview with authors, Osh region, 2011.

by getting to know each other in this way we can help overcome that. These events also help us to show them that we are good people, committed to working hard for Kyrgyzstan.'

From our data it is clear that opinion is divided in Osh about the value of reconciliation, mediation and peace-building activities. Some dismiss it as useless and as a distraction from more important issues, others recognise its limited value alongside other structural measures to address those issues. Thus it might possibly be argued that these measures had some use in helping to de-escalate tensions and rebuild contacts, but that they failed to address the root causes. Nonetheless these programmes are in danger of being based on problematic understandings of the causes of conflict. Osh residents commonly ascribe the violence to racism, social inequality and elite corruption, lack of economic opportunity, and the failure of the rule of law. In contrast many peacebuilding and reconciliation programmes categorise the local population in terms of homogenous ethnic groups essentially at odds with each other, thus misdiagnosing the problem and proscribing an ineffective or limited remedy.

Patronising or inappropriate delivery of workshops

The second critique of peacebuilding programmes that we encountered is that their delivery may be patronising or inappropriate. The sense that donors who promote reconciliation and peacebuilding activities are imposing alien and erroneous assumptions is reinforced through the experiences of some Osh residents who sat through their training programmes. For some people, the format of small group training seminars produced feelings of fatigue, irritation and frustration. An Uzbek NGO representative in Osh notes the inadequacy of reconciliation seminars

Imagine a family that has lost everything—a house, a family member, a job. They've got nothing left. These are the circumstances they are in, you understand? So, how are these seminars supposed to help them? Ask yourself! What are they going to tell them? It's been a year, forget everything and make up, you see people have come just for that? These families need practical help![49]

In addition, some Osh residents regarded reconciliation workshops as a bizarre set of activities: the face-to-face interactions, sessions of speaking out inner feelings, role plays and group discussions did not correspond to the way the local population expressed feelings of grief. As one female *domkom* from Suleiman district notes, 'What kind of help is that? I don't need to talk about my problems, I need to solve them. If I talk about my problems I only feel worse'.[50] Central Asian people are commonly reluctant to talk about their suffering and trauma in a seminar setting with strangers.

These concerns echo the findings of Ismailbekova and Sultanaliev, who wrote a brief but illuminating report about how these training seminars work.

[49] Interview with authors, Osh, July 2011.
[50] Interview with authors, Osh, July 2011.

They sat in on training session delivered by a Western employee of the international NGO Saferworld, who had been invited to Osh by the Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia.[51] They describe participants who were largely bored and uninspired by the NGO training, not bothering to turn up, not taking it very seriously, drifting away during breaks, and using their phones instead of paying attention. In the end, claim Ismailbekova and Sultanaliev, EFCA became like a schoolteacher disciplining naughty or sullen children: telephoning their homes and asking them why they did not show up without an excuse, telling them to turn off their mobile phones, etc.

More seriously, they argue that outsiders who know neither local language nor context can be dangerously counterproductive through such seminars. They argue that the focus on ethnic 'conflict' by NGOs is problematic, as asking respondents to discuss it in mixed ethnic group meetings splits the group along ethnic lines and raises tensions.[52]

However, not everyone related such criticisms. A Kyrgyz political activist trained as a mediator by the OSCE related her experiences:

It was for 5 days at first in Kochkor Ata, then 4 days in Issuk-Kol, then 3 days at a sanatorium place near Yugo-Vostok [a suburb of Osh]. It was wonderful, these places where they took us. I hardly speak any Russian and don't know any English, and [the American trainer] only speaks Russian not Kyrgyz. So at first I really didn't understand anything at all. But slowly, by asking questions in Kyrgyz and talking to other people, I started to realise what it was about.[53]

Clearly this relatively poor woman enjoyed a rare set of trips to nice places at someone else's expense. Her participation will be included in reports of successful work carried out, but as she didn't really understand what was going on can she be said to have been 'trained as a mediator'? Were these training seminars appropriate for her? It is hard to generalise from these examples, but we can say that at least in some cases the training seminars themselves were at best inappropriate and at worst patronising and counter-productive.

Recruitment of mediators

A third criticism of the reconciliation and peacebuilding projects is that of recruitment: did they select appropriate people from appropriate demographics to act as peacemakers? Some local NGOs judged the mediation projects to be problematic on this ground. The projects often recruited groups who were already pro-active in maintaining peace and who possessed limited political and social capital in their own communities. For instance, the UN and FTI worked with a network of female peacemakers, who helped their communities

[51] Ismailbekova, Aksana. and Sultanaliev, R. (2012) *The role of NGOs in conflict management and resolution in post-conflict Osh, Kyrgyzstan*. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.
[52] Ismailbekova and Sultanaliev (note 51), pp. 8–9.
[53] Interview with authors, Osh, 28 Nov. 2011.

to ease strife, and OSCE and IRET work with *aksakals* and other local leaders, who act as informal mediators in the communities. But strangely, donors engaged social groups who did not directly participate in the violence, failing to involve groups who did. In particular, the projects failed to appeal to angry unemployed men in their 20s and 30s, who were prone to both elite manipulation and violence.

This can perhaps be explained with reference to wider literature. Lefranc notes that bottom-up peacebuilding projects do not necessarily see the exclusion of those likely to commit violence as a problem because of their underlying individualist, relationist conception of social functioning and change. She writes, 'The individual becomes the only true agent of peace; a peace that is supposed to become a shared culture thanks to a gradual social diffusion, starting with the select few who are immediately connected with the international programs in question.'[54] These transformed individuals then are able to affect others in the community, starting from immediate family members and neighbours to ultimately everyone in society.

However this assumption is questionable. Many women have been recruited as mediators, but in a heavily patriarchal society what influence could these women have over the young men who perpetrated much of the violence in 2010? For example, in one of the mediators' meetings, a young woman from *Japalak* suburban village expressed her frustration with her inability to recruit young men for peacebuilding activities because she lacked social authority, unable to compete with *chernye* (sportsmen with criminal links), who commanded more attention and respect. Young Uzbek women in particular found it hard to break out of traditional gender roles to become genuine social transformers. Young married Uzbek women were rarely present at seminars as their movements were closely monitored and controlled by men. Young women, in particular Uzbek women, faced difficulties to become conflict mediators, because they avoid being outside their homes for too long, especially at night. Brewer notes that women in patriarchal societies are often ignored or told to stick to domestic issues when they enter the political space of peace negotiations. He argues that politics in communities is a relational activity and does not transform individuals just because they undertake certain roles.[55]

It may of course be true that successful mediators may not need to come from the social groups responsible for perpetrating violence – but they do need to be able to influence them. The director of a local partner NGO to OSCE said that the hardest part of her work was to recruit influential leaders to her seminars on mediation, because often the leaders were business-criminal figures (*chernye*). An Uzbek human rights worker in Jalal-Abad, trained as a mediator in Almaty and Bishkek, admits that their mediation project was a failure, because they did not recruit young men and their leaders:

[54] Lefranc, S. 2012, p. 34.
[55] John Brewer (2010), *Peace Processes: A Sociological Approach*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

We don't see mediation as possible yet. There's a need to work with young people in rural mountainous areas and Uzbek *mahallas*. Many work with *aksakals* but they are not the problematic segment. If there's a need to work with these two groups, then there's a need to work with their leaders. Among Uzbeks, all the leaders are either gone or arrested. Uzbeks have no leaders left. Young Kyrgyz see men with criminal links as leaders. They don't see individuals like President Otunbaeva as a leader. We can't just gather the people and talk about peace. They will tell us to get lost or beat us up![56]

As this quote indicates, many programmes recruited older men who are seen to have authority within their communities, so-called *aksakals*. This fits with some external visions of 'local' ideas of how power works. However the young men who perpetrate violence may respond to informal business-criminal leaders and not to these other types of authority figure. International mediation cannot deal with these figures. As the Mayor of a small town in the Osh region notes, 'In this conflict, mainly young people were involved. They are unemployed. There are no jobs. All the factories are closed. They don't know what to do with themselves. If they would be educated and employed, none of this would have happened.'[57] Most peace projects favour capacity building of women and the youth, but not young adults. International projects have offered little assistance to men, who require support to change their violent behaviour. On the contrary, international actors have largely sought to demonise and persecute them. None of the projects addressed the issue of masculinity. A way to engage vulnerable young men in peacebuilding projects may be to tie them to economic opportunities, such as farming and small agro-businesses. This would require international actors to operate in economically deprived areas.

In southern Kyrgyzstan, many communities are rural and predominantly Kyrgyz. But many peacebuilding projects avoided economically deprived mono-ethnic communities, working predominantly in ethnically mixed and developed areas. Nurbek, the *akim* of a rural *rayon* state administration in Jalal-Abad *oblast*, strongly criticised the international donors for neglecting poor rural communities in his district, where frustrated and embittered young men live – the very people who were implicated in the ethnic violence. When several donors visited his *rayon* to select communities to help, Nurbek recounted, they chose to work in ethnically mixed villages rather than underdeveloped mono-ethnic Kyrgyz mountainous villages, which required greater economic assistance. Local state officials argued that donor assistance should be based on economic needs, evaluating people's social conditions, irrespective of ethnic identities and tensions. Although Nurbek tried to explain to the donors the importance of assisting deprived communities and tackling structural inequalities, his concerns were dismissed:

I get tired of explaining the real risks of conflicts to international organisations. They came and circled the affected areas and search for sources of conflicts there. I told

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[56] Interview with authors, Jalal Abad, July 2011.
[57] Interview with authors, June 2011.

them: 'You are looking at the wrong places. Conflicts did not originate here. These homes were attacked by people who lived in the upper zones [mono-ethnic Kyrgyz mountainous areas], search for problems there.'[58]

Like Nurbek, many state officials in Osh did not understand donors' obsession with working in only ethnically mixed neighbourhoods. For instance, USAID built eight parks in targeted 'multi-cultural locations' in order to 'create safe public spaces that help to build confidence in each other and prevents conflicts.'[59] But participants in Osh seminars questioned the logic of organising reconciliations with urban Kyrgyz residents, when most Uzbek homes were attacked by Kyrgyz who came from mono-ethnic rural areas. An Uzbek NGO lawyer in Osh notes:

People living in Osh have no complaints with each other (*drug k drugu pretenzij ne imejut*). But now they [donors] are reconciling people living in mixed territories. But they had no problems with each other! They should do peace work in Kara-Kulja and Alaj *rayons* not here.'[60]

Several Uzbek residents insisted that they did not hold a grudge against their urban Kyrgyz neighbours, and wanted the donors to work with the rural Kyrgyz youth. One *kvartalnyj* head in On Adyr notes:[61]

Osh city residents are not guilty, we do not bear a grudge against the urban Kyrgyz. The trouble is stirred by those coming from the *rayons*. There are no jobs in *rayons* and they come looking for jobs in Osh, especially at the Bazaar market. Young people come on buses in the morning and work the whole day at the market. Many of them drink in the evening and then pick a fight, calling us *sart* [a racist term for Uzbeks]. We are friends and relatives with the local city Kyrgyz. I always explain that they need to work with the *rayon* youth. But no one is paying attention to that.

Nurbek explained that the rural Kyrgyz had legitimate reasons for being angry. He described how in mountainous communities there was little infrastructure, causing resentment and anger. For instance, in some places there were no real roads, so people could not access hospitals built in the valleys. Some children were forced to be educated in tents and animal farms, because schools had crumbled, lacking the budget to repair them. Their resentment arose from a lack of equal dignity and respect, in comparison to their urban counterparts. When Nurbek attempted to explain the local context to the donors, his views were dismissed as ethnic bias:

I am trying to improve these badly impoverished areas but we have no funds. And donors are not interested in supporting these [mono-ethnic] communities. They just don't get it! I am sure they think that I'm a nationalist when I explain the need to help people in economically deprived communities. They think, 'He's a Kyrgyz, who is

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[58] Interview with authors, Suzak, July 2011.
[59] Interview with authors, International Resource Group, Osh, July 2011.
[60] Interview with authors, Osh, June, 2011.
[61] Interview with authors, On Adyr, Osh, June 2011.

lobbying for the Kyrgyz communities and doesn't want the Uzbek communities to have any funds!' I can sense this.[62]

Nurbek alludes to how the donors often operate with their own particular agenda, rather than trying to understand different perspectives on the situation. Those perspectives that do not match with theirs are dismissed as being inferior and unreasonable. To some extent, international actors also inflamed Kyrgyz ethno-nationalist sentiments by prioritising the peace process in mixed urban and suburban areas over rural economic considerations, causing the rural Kyrgyz to question the donors' impartiality and to be resentful about perceived unequal treatment. However it remains the case that Uzbeks suffered most and thus needed most assistance and this problem (which was certainly discussed within agencies) might be unavoidable, at least in the phase of immediate humanitarian responses.

In her research on the subject, Ibraimova found that after the violence - aksakals (who had witnessed the 1990 violence) played important roles in hosting reconciliation feasts etc, but that during the violence young men did not heed their calls to desist.[63] Violence in the 2010 clashes was perpetrated largely by young, economically marginalised men, often from outside Osh in mono-ethnic rural areas. Yet it is disproportionately women and the elderly from ethnically mixed areas that have been recruited as 'mediators' for training. This appears bizarre: how can it be explained? We propose three explanations. Firstly, a commendable but contextually inappropriate political correctness: one international donor told us that 'we try to ensure gender, age, ethnicity representations, and also involvement of religion.'[64] Secondly, the inability to persuade those most in need of such training to undertake it. Thirdly, a mis-diagnosis of conflict dynamics are based largely on fundamental misapprehensions about the nature of social relations in Osh and the causes and course of the violence in 2010. These shortcomings raise serious questions about the value and efficacy of reconciliation and peacebuilding training as currently pursued in Osh by international donors.

Bias against the state

The fourth and final weakness of the international reconciliation/ mediation/ peacebuilding drive in Osh is its bias against the state. This has long been the case. In 2005, an employee of a western organisation active in promoting peacebuilding/reconciliation in the Ferghana Valley borderlands identified three major aspects of their work as 'empowerment' of local people to solve their own ethnic problems, the strengthening of harmonious communities, and the 'attempt to bypass the authorities' in so doing. He added that donors prefer

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[62] Interview with authors, Suzak, July 2011.

[63] Ibraimova, Saikal 'Narratives of the Osh conflict of June of 2010,' Paper presented at ESCAS conference, Cambridge, Sep. 2011.

[64] Interview, head of foreign donor organization, Osh, October 2014.

'cultural' reconciliation projects because 'they are easier to do than political initiatives.'[65]

Nurbek, whom as we saw above was the *akim* of a rural Jalalabad *rayon,* notes how the international donor community affected his legitimacy, because he could not persuade donors to invest in deprived areas as part of a strategy to reduce the potential of future ethnic violence:

In the end we are supporting developed areas and poor communities are again neglected… Kyrgyz are just watching all the help bypass them… Kyrgyz living in [deprived communities] are angry at me and call me a 'sell-out'. The other day they came to my office and said, 'You work only for the Uzbeks. You've built bridges for them, their roads are asphalted, and their schools are renewed. Why are we suffering?' Last time we had a meeting up there, all the local residents, including *aksakals*, criticized us. They said: 'Keep up this unfair governance and we promise you there will be another war!'[66]

Nurbek and some other state officials feel that their authority has been undermined by the international community and feel powerless to squash Kyrgyz sentiments of injustice and unfairness.[67] This could of course simply be resentment by one official that his territory was not the recipient of aid whilst another was. Clearly there is difference in practice between organisations. One director of a foreign organisation investing heavily in mediation and reconciliation work told us:

There is a security component to this. I want to integrate the teams into the security apparatus, for example we want to do conflict outbreak simulations involving the teams and the security services sometime, and next year do a big one with the government. The aims are to calm people down, to convey accurate information, and to prevent people participating in violence.

In contrast, another international organization working on mediation in Osh explicitly criticised this body for seeking to work with the local government, saying:

they are too close to the authorities. They will start passing on the government message, and be perceived as a reserve police force; we want them to be known as independent: to be *known* by the authorities, so as not to get harassed by them, but not to be *owned* by the authorities.[68]

Although the international actors often insist that they work with local state institutions, they generally bypass them, preferring to invest in 'civil society.' A foreign consultant, based in Osh, admitted that international actors do not improve state capacity and end up setting up parallel institutions, 'There is so much emphasis on civil society. The goal is to empower the youth and women

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[65] Interview with authors, Osh, Apr. 2005.
[66] Interview with authors, Suzak, July 2011.
[67] See also Brewer (2010).
[68] Interview with authors, Bishkek, Oct. 2013.

but they end up providing services that the state should do.'[69] A UNDP development specialist in Brussels also suggested that the very short term nature of conflict mitigation projects prevents international actors from meaningfully engaging with the local state:

In reality by the time you establish an office and gain the confidence of various parties, you are down 9–12 months [of the project] and what's left? 6 months to run something? And so they give money to civil society and worry only about getting financial and narrative reports. But for an average mayor or *oblast* governor, that's not their concern. They don't know the complex bureaucratic rules that come from Brussels. They want assistance and they count on it. It's always very frustrating.[70]

In this sense, peacebuilding promotion differs little from many foreign aid programmes that seek to bypass the state for reasons both ideological (promoting democracy by strengthening civil society) and practical (avoiding the corruption and bureaucracy of state mechanisms). Lefranc argues that that bottom-up projects aim to de-politicise the peace-building process, which may sound admirable in theory.[71] However this approach can cause friction with the local state. Many international donors do not adequately listen to or consult with local *akims* and mayors. There may be understandable reasons for this, as in Osh many donors believed that local state structures—including the mayor—were complicit in the violence or in an anti-Uzbek reaction after it. Foreign donors find themselves presented with a conundrum here.

As recognised in this report, what Khan calls 'titular ethnicization' (see chapter 5) ensures that the state as structured nationally and in its local manifestations tends to act to both structure discrimination and keep minorities as second class citizens. It is thus understandable that foreign donors would want to wish to avoid it. Choosing a course of action in such circumstances is difficult and there are no easy answers. Nonetheless undermining an institution that, however flawed, is ultimately responsible for (and more accountable to) the local population than foreign organizations is itself a serious political intervention. This is particularly the case as state institutions tend to persist, whereas foreign-established networks are relatively short-term in nature.

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[69] Interview with authors, Osh, May 2011.
[70] Interview with authors, Brussels, Mar. 2012.
[71] Lefranc, 2012, op cit.

4. Evaluating reconciliation interventions

International actors present their efforts to promote peacebuilding, mediation and reconciliation as success stories. Project success is inevitably reported in numerical terms, which are showcased as an achievement with concrete results.[72] We are led to believe that thousands of mediators are now capable of mediating conflicts, the youth is more tolerant as a result of joint football games and dancing to each other's music, and as funding comes to an end it is the responsibility of the communities to carry on with various activities to sustain peace.

Research for this report has identified four problems with this field that lead us to question how sanguine a story this is. These are the problematic understandings of the causes of conflict (including ongoing post-conflict injustice), patronising and inappropriate teaching methods, their limited demographic reach in recruiting people to train as mediators, and their bias against the state. It may be possible that not only are these projects failing to achieve what they claim, not only might they be irrelevant and thus distracting attention from potentially beneficial interventions, but they may even be dangerously counter-productive. Unanticipated negative outcomes of international post-conflict intervention are not rare. For example, Aitken and Simonsen, analysing international intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq and Afghanistan, argue that peace processes have contributed to the maintenance and institutionalisation of ethnic divisions in post-conflict situations.[73]

However it is very difficult to evaluate the success of the schemes outlined here. Certainly many respondents were critical of them; but these criticisms might be misplaced. Also they should not be accepted uncritically. It is not mutually exclusive to both blame the rich and powerful and also mistrust or fear the representatives or intentions of the other group generally.

Other respondents viewed aspects of these schemes positively. But none of this helps us know whether these mediators and reconciliation projects will contribute towards preventing or de-escalating future violence, nor could it be easily clear how one might assess that. Surely promoting interaction between people from two ethnic groups recently entangled in violent conflict can't be a bad thing? Familiarity may be no guarantee of trust and civility; but ignorance is a virtual guarantee of mistrust and incivility.

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[72] See e.g. TASK Press Release, 23 Apr. 2013, <http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kyrgyzstan/documents/press_corner/pr_task_final_conf_apr23_en.pdf>.

[73] Aitken, R., 'Cementing Divisions?', *Policy Studies*, vol. 28, no. 3 (2007), pp. 247–67; and Simonsen, S., 'Addressing ethnic divisions in post-conflict institution-building: lessons from recent cases,' *Security Dialogue*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2005), pp. 297–318.

Three success stories?

We have considered some general critiques of the mediation/peacebuilding projects based on the evaluation of participants and observers. However another approach to evaluation is to critically interrogate some specific claims of success made by international donors. Three examples will be considered here. For the first, we asked a major player in the mediation/reconciliation sector in Osh about the success or otherwise of their work. He cited a 2011–12 project with 120 students from Osh and Jalalabad in summer camps, organised though local partner FTI and funded by the UK's Department for International Development. The students were given 'tolerance training, and project cycle management' (identifying and developing a good idea into a formal proposal, then managing a budget and bringing it to completion). The original intention was that it would be ethnically mixed, but Uzbeks eventually made up less than 10%, as they were afraid to participate. 14 projects were funded. 'One of them made posters to put up in buses urging people to be tolerant,' and another saw 'students going into schools and doing workshops with the children on tolerance.'

These came to an end in April 2012 because 'unfortunately we couldn't extend it as we had hoped, there were funding problems.' The organization said 'this has worked well. It was not ambitious, it needed limited resources, and we exceeded our objectives. Small things often work well'.[74] What this means, apparently, is that a certain number of people were 'trained' in 'tolerance', and they properly demonstrated ability to undertake 'project cycle management' on a tolerance-related theme in the correct way. We do not know whether these individuals were already 'tolerant', whether they became more or less so, whether their newfound 'tolerance' diffused to friends and family in the expected manner, or what impact their projects had. We simply know a certain amount of British government money was spent via a London-based international NGO and a professional local NGO on a certain number of students in a certain timeframe.

The second example was adduced by the representative of an international organisation in answer to our question about the evidence of success, against the background of 'anti-terror' operations in Narimon, an Uzbek village on the outskirts of Osh:

Folk in Alai were coming together for Kurmanjan Datka day, and rumours reached them that the Uzbeks in Osh had started another war. Our mediators, who knew each other by now and had personal contact details, called each other in each place, and were able to clarify what was happening, and defuse tensions. … After calling folk in Narimon, they Alai mediators went into the streets in Alai and used phones to convey to people the truth. I want to get teams from different districts to go to each other's regions – to make future conflicts like Alai versus Osh *mahallas* less likely.[75]

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[74] Interview with authors, Bishkek, 24 Nov. 2011.
[75] Interview with authors, Osh, 14 Oct. 2011.

We lack sufficient evidence to evaluate this claim. The logic of this argument appears reasonable, but who knows whether a further outbreak of violence would have occurred in the absence of these exchanges? Such networks and links can hardly be bad, but would they have been enough to de-escalate tensions in June 2010 or prevent further violence? Nonetheless, Ibraimova has shown how the circulation of rumours by mobile phones was crucial in the escalation of violence, and argues that combating such rumours will be important for maintaining peace.[76] If these activities can open new ways to refute rumours at moments of crisis, they may be able to make a contribution to preventing further violence.

Finally, simply having someone listed as 'trained' and working as mediator and reconciler is no guarantee that they are having the desired impact or that they even share the ideological presupposition of the international donors. The third example is therefore someone who has gone through the OSCE community mediator training programme and was introduced to us as an example of their success. According to her own claims, she had been successful in recruiting and training first 22 then 40 more people in turn, as required.[77] These figures no doubt feed into donor reports of success. However the actual impact cannot be discerned from figures alone. Interestingly, having the 'training' apparently gave her greater social capital and authority. Not only was she was elected *domkom* for her kvartal, but, tellingly, recounted that although she previously was the sort of person who would help people sort out their difficulties, the training:

gave great additional benefit in that it gave me documents/certificates. Before I didn't have these documents, but now I have an excuse to go somewhere, I say that I have a reason to come here, and people can't tell me that it is none of my business—'we are mediators' I say, 'we have been given authority to go into a conflict situation and call people to live in unity, so that we can protect Kyrgyzstan's integrity, to live well, not to quarrel'.

She summarized the training she gave of the second group of (40) people as:

we got to know each other, we got to explain to the ordinary people, to parents, to teachers etc., calling on them to living in concordance (*yntymak*), saying that we need to be together, to protect the unity (*birimdik*) of the people.

As Megoran argues elsewhere, these terms *yntymak* and *birimdik* have acquired particular meanings in the frail project of independent Kyrgyz nationhood, and inform an understanding that easily frames Uzbeks as threats to the insecure Kyrgyz state.[78] It is thus perhaps no coincidence that this person is an activist with the populist *Ata-Jurt* party and a keen supporter of the city's divisive and populist former mayor, Melis Myrzakmatov. In the course of our interview, she espoused numerous anti-Uzbek prejudices and

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[76] Ibraimova, Saikal 'Narratives of the Osh conflict of June of 2010,' Paper presented at ESCAS conference, Cambridge, Sep. 2011.

[77] Interview with authors, Osh, 28 Nov. 2011.

[78] Megoran, *Averting Violence,* pp. 11–2.

conspiracies: that the June 2010 violence was a plot by separatist Uzbeks who had been hoarding weapons, that Uzbeks burnt their own homes down during the violence to make the Kyrgyz look bad, that they have gained financially from this by monopolising foreign aid, and that their leaders have orchestrated them to undertake a concerted campaign on the internet to blacken the honour of the Kyrgyz. She regards subsequent police mistreatment of the Uzbeks as 'revenge on the Uzbeks for what they did to us, for trying to take our country from us.' She insisted that although the Uzbeks began it, it wasn't the ordinary people, but their leaders who were responsible—therefore demonstrating that blaming leaders is not necessarily an alternative to racist prejudice.

How are we to evaluate this? We should not judge this woman too harshly. It isn't reasonable to expect even a trained 'community mediator' to transcend the interests and prejudices of their social group: few of us can do that completely.[79] It may be that through the experience of becoming part of these donor-sponsored networks she develops relationships and imbibes ideas that soften her attitude to Uzbeks—it could be that she was even more hostile about Uzbeks prior to her participation. On the other hand, it may be the case that international donors have equipped someone who will use her newfound social and political capital to propagate Myrzakmatov's vision of mediation/peacebuilding as a project of guaranteeing the Kyrgyzness of Osh and the nation state, thereby further marginalising Uzbeks, and that it is this nationalistic vision that she is imparting to or reinforcing in the new generation of community mediators that she is training. The international donors do not apparently have any way of knowing. Whichever is the case, she and her 60+ mediators feature in someone's spreadsheet as evidence of the success of promoting tolerance and mediation in Osh, but it is far from certain that such a claim is justified. The opposite may be the case.

Staging reconciliation events against a context of recent ethnic-based violence may have a powerful symbolic value in challenging narratives of inevitable enmity and, more fundamentally, raising critical questions about the future of humanity looking beyond a world of nation states. However, we can find no compelling evidence that the mediation, reconciliation and peacemaking activities led by international donors in southern Kyrgyzstan since 2010 are useful in conflict management, and there are many reasons to suspect that they may be either ineffective or even counter-productive. This leads us to conclude that international donors need to be more careful and more critically reflective in pursuing and evaluating these projects.

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[79] See also Megoran, N., 'Shared space, divided space: narrating ethnic histories of Osh', *Environment and Planning A*, vol. 45, no. 4 (2013), pp. 892–907.

5. Missing the main points?

The preceding chapters have evaluated the peacebuilding and reconciliation interventions in their own terms and with reference to observations of researchers, policy practitioners and participants. In this final section we stand back and ask whether the response pursued by the EU and the United States and in particular the priority given to mediation and reconciliation approaches over other possible interventions offered an effective response to the violence of 2010 and to preventing a possible re-emergence of violent conflict in the future.

To answer this question it is important to note that the events in the south of Kyrgyzstan in 2010 repeated in significant ways the central dynamics of a previous conflict in the region in 1990, when violence broke out in Osh and spread to neighbouring districts, including involving an important inter-ethnic dimension.[80] Together, these two similar conflicts point to the presence of a deep-seated set of factors in the south of Kyrgyzstan at the heart of the emergence of violence in the region in recent decades. This section will therefore evaluate the peace building response of the EU and the USA in light of the set of factors at the root to the 1990 and 2010 incidents of violence.

Drawing upon the existing literature on violence in Central Asia, fieldwork research conducted in connection with the preparation of this paper and the extensive experience of the authors in this region below we set out an ethno-political history of Osh and its surrounding areas. This history points to the existence of five important factors in common behind the two conflict incidents.[81] In light of the identification of these key factors, the authors propose that peacebuilding and reconciliation projects are only likely to be effective if they are designed and implemented to address these conflict factors in a comprehensive way, moving far beyond reconciliation and mediation to address key political issues, notably economic opportunity and justice.

Ethno-nationalism in Osh

Prior to the establishment of the Soviet Union, the Ferghana Valley was not organised on national territorial lines. With the consolidation of Bolshevik power, Moscow instituted a wholesale redrawing of the political map of Central Asia, known as the 'national territorial delimitation.'[82] This attempted to reorganise the region using the building block of the 'nation.' As part of this

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[80] Asankanov, A., 1996. Ethnic conflict in the Osh region in summer 1990: Reasons and lessons. *In*: K. Rupesinghe and V. Tishkov (eds.) *Ethnicity and Power in the Contemporary World.* Paris: United Nations University, pp. 116–124.

[81] This list is not exhaustive of all possible contributing factors, nor does it imply that identical factors were at play on both occasions.

[82] Haughen, A. (2003) The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan).

process, the Kyrgyz and Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republics were created. Soviet ideologues claimed that this clever compromise between nationalism and socialism solved the national question in Central Asia, but Suny and Martin argue that 'The territorialisation of ethnicity aimed to defuse nationalism but instead often intensified it and exacerbated ethnic conflict'.[83] The titular majorities of each republic (e.g. Uzbeks in the Uzbek SSR, Kyrgyz in the Kyrgyz SSR etc.) were fast-tracked to leadership and privilege. Concomitantly it meant that the minorities that the new system created (Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz in Uzbekistan, and so on) were by the same token structurally disadvantaged.

This had important consequences for inter-ethnic relations in Osh, down to the present day. The urban Uzbek populations in southern Kyrgyzstan could not easily rise to the top levels of society in the Kyrgyz SSR, so had two avenues open to them. The first was to emigrate to the Uzbek SSR, where in fact many ambitious Osh Uzbeks attained political and cultural distinction. The other option was to remain, and specialise in trade, farming, and technical occupations, and to an extent the professions. Over time, more Kyrgyz migrated from the rural areas into cities like Osh for higher education and thence advancement and leadership in politics and the professions. As the Soviet economy moved from stagnation into crisis in the 1980s, this migration of rural Kyrgyz into urban areas led to severe problems of lack of land and homes for incomers, and competition for existing jobs. By 1990 an acute housing shortage saw as many as 40 000 people registered waiting for state flats in Osh oblast, which had the highest unemployment rate in the republic. At the same time, Uzbeks complained of 'persistent discrimination and consequent under-representation in the Kyrgyz administration.'[84]

But it was the move from economic to political crisis that was to prove most dangerous for Osh. In the late 1980s Soviet political liberalization occasioned sovereignty movements in both the Uzbek and Kyrgyz SSRs—movements that would almost certainly have been crushed in most other Soviet periods. These succeeded in changing the national languages of the republics to Uzbek and Kyrgyz respectively, and raised a whole host of national grievances.[85] As ethnonational tensions flared into inter-communal violence in at least 15 incidents across Central Asia from April 1988 to December 1990 and political uncertainty rose, the situation in Osh deteriorated.[86] A dispute over the distribution of land to recent Kyrgyz

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[83] R. Tuzmuhamedov, How the National Question Was Solved in Central Asia (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973); and Suny, R. and Martin, T., 'Introduction' in R. Suny and T. Martin (eds), *The Affirmative Action Empire: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2001), pp. 3–20.

[84] Gaziyev, Jamshid. Ethnonationalism in Central Asia: Inter-Ethnic Conflicts and Institutionalized Ethnicity in the Land of Eternal Friendship and Brotherly Nations. Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert, 2010, pp. 190–92.

[85] See e.g. Critchlow, James. Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty. Boulder: Westview, 1991.

[86] Gaziyev, Jamshid. Ethnonationalism in Central Asia: Inter-Ethnic Conflicts and Institutionalized Ethnicity in the Land of Eternal Friendship and Brotherly Nations. Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert, 2010, p. 175.

incomers, and fear amongst Kyrgyz that some Uzbek nationalist groups like 'Adolat' would try and seek autonomy for Osh region led to mass, violence between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Osh, Uzgen, and other towns which as characterised by rape and other brutality and left hundreds dead. We can thus see that the Soviet institutionalization of ethnicity and nationality in Central Asia created particular dynamics of conflict and cooperation between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Osh. Against a background of economic crisis and resource shortage, political instability and uncertainty, and poor management of social tensions, these dynamics swiftly unravelled to create a massive confrontation with the spark of a poorly-handled land dispute. It was a repeat of this scenario that the Kyrgyz government and international organisations worked on avoiding in the first decade and a half of independence.

With independence in 1991, the Soviet-era institutionalisation of ethnicity in the form of national territorial republics that structurally favoured the titular majorities was maintained and intensified. Uzbekistani scholar Valery Khan argues that the new independent nationalising regimes of Central Asia have created narratives of history claiming that the titular nations are the rightful historic inheritors of their territories and thus their languages, cultures etc should be promoted as the basis of statehood. Minorities are allowed to maintain an existence in the cultural sphere that creates aspirations but largely denies opportunities to fulfil them. What he calls this 'titular ethnicization' has serious implications for newly-stranded minorities who, with the appearance of international boundaries and citizenship regimes cutting them off from co-patriots in their kin states, suffer a double vulnerability.[87]

It therefore 'leaves little room for non-titular population to express and protect their interests through state structures.'[88] Instead, while the state drives to enhance the opportunities for and status of titular majorities, minorities are expected to express group aspirations through the preservation of culture, 'reduced to mechanistic productions of ethnographic pictures' (dances, folklore, music etc) through cultural centres, while their real economic and legal interests are side-lined.[89] States expect minorities either firstly to emigrate or secondly to accept this settlement, although Khan himself recommends a third strategy, that 'minority groups should seek broader inclusion by stepping up their political activities, and international institutions and organizations should also play a role in reforming these policies.'[90] Khan does not elaborate on what that would look like and therefore raises more questions than he does answers.

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[87] Megoran, Nick, 'For Ethnography in Political Geography: Experiencing and Re-Imagining Ferghana Valley Boundary Closures', *Political Geography* vol. 25, no. 6 (2006), pp. 622–40.

[88] Khan, Valeriy. 2010. The state ideologies in Post-Soviet Central Asia: The ethnic dimension. In *Central Asia in Retrospect and Prospect*, edited by M. Kaw. New Delhi: Readworthy, p. 20.

[89] We would add that poor and *propiska*-less Kyrgyz do not have *de facto* equal legal status and complain of discrimination (in accessing social services), denial of opportunities, corruption and the inability to protect their rights.

[90] Khan, Valeriy. 2009. On the Problem of Revival and Survival of Ethnic Minorities in Post-Soviet Central Asia. In *Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia* edited by B. Schlyter. London: IB Tauris: p. 79.

Although since 1990 there has been some Uzbek emigration from Osh, Osh Uzbeks have generally followed the second option of accepting their subordinate condition in Kyrgyzstan. Uzbeks maintained a strong presence in skilled manual professions and in trade. Askar Akaev, Kyrgyzstan's President from 1991 until his overthrow by popular protest/mobs in 2005, actively sought to protect the rights of Uzbeks and other minorities, however he faced a vocal if generally disunited populist parliamentary opposition that was markedly nationalistic and anti-Uzbek. It gained more power and influence in the government of Kurmanjan Bakiev, that came to power on the back of the overthrow of Akaev in 2005. Because Bakiev's power-base was in the south of the country, he both lacked and did not need the alliances with Uzbek politicians that Akaev had had. As a result Uzbeks had fewer channels open to government, and enjoyed less state protection. Uzbek employment representation in the state sector declined. Furthermore, many of Bakiev's allies were in direct economic competition with Uzbeks in the south. As Melvin argues, 'as the corruption and criminality associated with Bakiev's rule spread… Uzbek communities and businesses came under pressure from semi-legal criminal groups seeking extortion or expropriation.'[91] Inter-ethnic tensions rose, but there were no major incidents of violence.

Five common factors, 1990 and 2000

As we have seen, it was only with the political instability and crisis following the April 2010 overthrow of Bakiev that further inter-communal violence occurred. Bakiev's unpopularity was to a large extent due to his corruption, and one of the major sources of ill-gotten gains was via the sub-contracts for supplying fuel to the US airbase outside Bishkek. Likewise, Bakiev's apparent failure to adhere to a promise to Russia to remove the US military base led to a Kremlin-backed media campaign against him and a hike in duties on energy exports that precipitated massive protests in Kyrgyzstan against Bakiev. The air base contract was so lucrative to the Bakiev clan because its opaque offshoring arrangements made siphoning off large sums easy. Thus this instability was in part produced by Western-backed economic and political liberalisation and Western and Russian geopolitical contests.[92]

Instability was exacerbated by the weakness of the interim government which effectively produced a power vacuum in which Kyrgystani Uzbek leaders like Kadirjon Batyrov in Jalalabad broke ranks from the traditionally low-profile policy of Kyrgyzstani Uzbek politicians to instead support the interim government against remnants of the Bakiev regime. No doubt they

[91] Melvin, N. (2011) Promoting a Stable and Multiethnic Kyrgyzstan: Overcoming the Causes and Legacies of Violence. Washington DC: Central Eurasia Project, p. 12.

[92] Cooley, Alexander. 2012. *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Toktomushev, Kemel. 2013; and 'Regime security, rent-seeking and the state: an analysis of the international political economy of supplying jet fuel to the American airbase in Kyrgyzstan, 2001-2010'. A paper delivered to the International Studies Association annual convention, San Francisco, Apr. 2013.

hoped for personal political gain in the form of returns from the new government, to rebuild patronage links that were broken during the Bakiev era. However, this was read differently by many Kyrgyz politicians, newsmen and general public: the spectre was raised in Kyrgyzstan of Uzbek national separatism that reminded them of Adolat in 1990. This was also because, as the interim government began hammering out a new constitution to put to the electorate, Batyrov raised the question of the granting of formal status to other languages in the republic.

Batyrov, it could be said, was following Khan's third path of seeking 'broader inclusion by stepping up their political activities'. However, in a state which was increasingly taking the form of an 'investment market' for private and sectarian gain, this was seen by many Kyrgyz as exactly the opposite: as a code word for separatism and a slippery slope towards irredentism and the break-up of the republic.[93] Indeed, Myrzakmatov depicts Batyrov's campaign as the continuation of Adolat's in 1990.[94] We have never seen any evidence that this is the case, nor is there any credible evidence of any separatist movement or even sentiment amongst Osh Uzbeks from 1990–2010, but it was widely believed.

Thus, as in 1990, in 2010 we saw a toxic combination of five main factors.

1. Resentments on both sides created structurally by the operation of the ethno-territorial settlement, which through 'titular ethnicization' raises expectations of privilege amongst Kyrgyz and experiences of discrimination amongst Uzbeks;
2. Poverty, unemployment and lack of economic opportunity, which disproportionately affected rural Kyrgyz;
3. Kyrgyz fears about Uzbeks challenging the integrity of the state, which circulate as conspiracy theories and rumours;
4. Political instability and crisis, meaning that the altercation in Osh quickly grew into what appeared, exactly 20 years on, to be a repeat of the 1990 violence; and
5. As demonstrated in each of the major reports on the conflict, institutional weakness, or the inability of administrators and security forces to anticipate and respond to and de-escalate violence when a sudden and unpredictable spark ignites it.[95]

All of these factors, apart from political instability and crisis, have been more

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[93] Engvall, Johan. (2011) The State as an Investment Market: An Analytical Framework for Interpreting Politics and Bureaucracy in Kyrgyzstan, PhD diss., Uppsala University, Sweden

[94] Myrzakmatov, Melisbek. 2011. *Men Izdegen Chyndyk*. Bishkek: Turar.

[95] As Brass argues in the context of Indian Muslim-Hindu violence, inter-communal riots (like, we would add, that in Osh) are produced by precipitating events such as the killing of a prominent public person or an attack on a place of worship: 'One reaction then leads to another, generating a chain, which if not immediately contained will lead to a major conflagration.' Paul Brass, *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). See also Paul Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*. (London: University of Washington Press, 2003).

or less constants for some time and have not produced large-scale conflicts regularly. Political instability and crisis is the single issue that seems key to explaining why violence occurred in 1990 and 2010.

Western responses to ethnic-based violence in Osh

If the above analysis is accurate, it presents five factors that international actors can potentially seek to influence to prevent or contain violence. Perhaps the greatest impact would be on the second driver of conflict where international actors could offer support, either through promoting economic opportunity or mitigating economic harm. These factors are easiest to work on, but not easy to solve, and their continuation is a cause for alarm. As Sanghera and colleagues wrote in 2012, 'The conditions for ethnic tensions remain largely unaltered, because state and inter- national interventions have failed to tackle housing, urban poverty, [and] the rural economy'.[96] However, such discussions are beyond the scope of this report.

It is difficult to see how conflict prevention and peacebuilding programmes could effectively act on these factors. The first and third are the most visible factors, but they are particularly hard to address. The late 1990s and early 2000s in particular saw attempts by western donors to implement conflict-prevention programmes in southern Kyrgyzstan.[97] Much foreign intervention—either in local communities or through the activities of offices such as the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities that attempt to work with national governments—has sought to ameliorate effects of 'titular ethnicization'. However, it is hard to envisage how these attempts could do anything given the structures of ethnic stratification and the ideology of nationalism that 'titular ethnicization' represents and embeds. It is also doubtful whether foreign actors have a clear grasp of the structures of titular ethnicization that are productive of many of the tensions they seek to address. Therefore it is relatively easy for external interventions purportedly on behalf of minorities with the aim of easing tensions in fact to prove counter-productive. Thus for example both Melvin and Megoran argue that some western interventions have been misread by Kyrgyz as attempts to support separatism, thus exacerbating anti-Uzbek backlashes.[98]

Many of the conflict prevention programmes were predicated on the assumption that there was an 'ethnic basis of the new Central Asian countries', meaning that massively violent ethnic clashes 'are likely to increase in

[96] Sanghera, Balihar, Elmira Satybaldieva, Adil Rodionov, Sabira Serikzhanova, Nurlan Choibekov, and Kunduz Sultanmuratova. 2013. *Illegal Settlements and City Registrationin Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan: Implications for Legal Empowerment, Politics, and Ethnic Tensions*, *Occasional Paper Series, No.5.* New York: Open Society Foundations, p. 34.

[97] Saferworld. Looking Back to Look Forward: Learning the Lessons of Conflict Prevention in the Ferghana Valley. London: Saferworld, 2011.

[98] Melvin, Neil. (2011) Promoting a Stable and Multiethnic Kyrgyzstan: Overcoming the Causes and Legacies of Violence. Washington DC: Central Eurasia Project; and Megoran, Nick, *Averting Violence in Kyrgyzstan.* Chatham House, 2012.

frequency and intensity'.[99] This was particularly seen as likely for the Ferghana Valley, where reports like the US Center for Preventative Action's *Calming the Ferghana Valley* issued clarion calls for conflict-prevention intervention.[100] These reports assumed that some un-theorised force called 'ethnicity' was the most salient social force in southern Kyrgyzstan. They lacked an appreciation of the five factors identified above behind the 1990 violence, and produced a deformed account of how and why conflict occurred.

This distortion informed a mushrooming of what has been termed 'the conflict development industry' in Ferghana Valley states in general and southern Kyrgyzstan in particular.[101] It has served as the premise of a number of policy studies and multi-million dollar aid programmes. Numerous international donors invested in projects to promote peaceful inter-ethnic relations and reduce conflict, often along Kyrgyzstan's borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and frequently worked with a new breed of local 'conflictologists' and intermediary, sub-contracting NGOs such as the Foundation for Tolerance International.[102]

Although many of these projects had stopped by the time of the 2010 violence, they form a background to their subsequent revivification and thus the critical study of them is instructive.[103] Between 2003 and 2007 Bichsel investigated the attempts of international donors to resolve and pre-empt ethnic conflicts over resources in the Ferghana Valley's borderlands.[104] She argues that peacebuilding framework adopted by the donors she considers leads them to a common approach, which misses the complexities of local politics while misdiagnosing conflicts as driven by ethnic difference and scarcity of resources. This misdiagnosis, she contends, means that their aid has unintended effects. The community-based organizations (CBOs) she surveyed thus inadvertently resourced local political and criminal elites who were battling for control of state power and resources. One unintended consequence was thus supporting processes which generate some of the grievances behind

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[99] Ralph S. Clem, 'The new Central Asia: prospects for development,' in Michael J. Bradshaw, ed., *Geography and transition in the post-Soviet republics* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), pp. 171–72; and Robert Kaiser, *The geography of nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 370–71.

[100] Slim, Randa. 2002. The Ferghana Valley: In the midst of a host of crises. In *Searching for Peace in Europe and Asia: An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Initiatives*, edited by P. van Tongeren, H. v. d. Veen and J. Verhoeven. Lynne Rienner: London; and Rubin, Barnett, and Nancy Lubin. Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia. Report of the Ferghana Valley Working Group of the Centre for Preventive Action. New York: Century Foundation, 1999.

[101] Megoran, Nick, 'Preventing Conflict by Building Civil Society: Post-Development Theory and a Central Asian–Uk Policy Success Story', *Central Asian Survey* vol. 24, no. 1 (2005): pp. 83–96.

[102] Reeves, Madeleine, 'Locating Danger: *Konfliktologiia* and the Search for Fixity in the Ferghana Valley Borderlands', *Central Asian Survey* vol. 24, no. 1 (2005), pp. 67–81.

[103] This section is limited because it is based on an overview of published work on this topic, which has not been extensive. It would, for example, be instructive to research the roles played by bodies such as the OSCE's office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities in conflict management in the 1990s, but that is beyond the scope of this report.

[104] Christine Bichsel, Conflict transformation in Central Asia (London: Routledge, 2009). See also Heathershaw, John. *Post-Conflict Tajikistan: The Politics of Peacebuilding and the Emergence of Legitimate Order* London: Routledge, 2009, which reaches a parallel conclusion in Tajikistan.

the conflicts. Examples like this are in line with an established body of research on development projects that show they often have unintended negative political consequences.[105] They caution donors working on peacebuilding in Osh since 2010 to question their assumptions about the dynamics and causes of conflict, and in evaluations to reflect critically on their unintended political effects. But they also caution that this will be extremely difficult for donors to do, especially when under pressure to produce positive evaluations to secure further funding and individual career advancement.

At this point we would offer a caveat. Although some respondents criticised these activities for misdiagnosing the causes of conflict when they could more usefully devote attention to creating economic opportunities (factor 2) or holding law enforcement agencies to account for their mistreatment of minorities (factor 1), it is not the case that foreign donors have *only* been engaged in mediation training and reconciliation. Some international actors are supporting human rights and challenging corruption and racism, others are doing development, and the government of Kyrgyzstan (including regional employment for the government in Osh and Jalalabad) is kept alive by bilateral aid and loans. Significant international donor spending in response to the violence has gone on reconstruction.[106] Nonetheless on the basis of our findings, we would question not simply whether the mediation and peace-building programmes *have* been as valuable as donors have claimed, but whether they *could* be as effective in the light of the understanding of conflict dynamics examined here.

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[105] See e.g. J. Ferguson, The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development,' Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), and A. Escobar, Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World (Princeton,: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[106] See e.g. Asian Development Bank, International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, 2010. *Joint Economic Assessment: Kyrgyz Republic—Reconciliation, Recovery and Reconstruction.*

6. Conclusions and recommendations

This report has investigated Western-supported peacebuilding, mediation and reconciliation drives initiated in response to inter-communal violence in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010. These have proliferated because they are short-term in nature, relatively low budget, easy to initiate through the use of existing local partners, bypass the state and thus minimize bureaucracy, make great promises, and offer quantitative claims of success through the number of people 'trained'.

It is very difficult to evaluate these projects, in part because they purport to be able to overcome intangible problems (such as inter-communal mistrust) and in part because they aim to help prevent future conflict. How could the former be measured and the latter established? Therefore it is not possible to conclude positively that these projects lack value. Some of our respondents praised aspects of them whilst acknowledging their shortcomings. Perhaps they might feature in the biography of future peacemakers in the region.

However, critical questions can be asked about them. Limited detailed research on similar projects in Central Asia has found that they generally misdiagnose the supposed causes of conflict and have unintended political consequences. Our research leads us to raise questions about the efficacy and value of the post-2010 peacebuilding interventions: their problematic understanding of the nature and causes of conflict (especially neglecting issues of economic opportunity and police injustice), patronising or inappropriate training methods, their recruitment of mediators from demographics least likely to participate in violence themselves or be able to influence it, and a bias against the local state.

Our policy recommendations thus fall under two headings. The first set is specific to the peacebuilding, mediation and reconciliation projects considered in this report. The second set arises from this analysis more generally.

Recommendations for peacebuilding, mediation and reconciliation projects

First, peacebuilding, mediation and reconciliation projects should seek to prioritize working with demographic groups directly involved in perpetrating violence—i.e. young, less educated, unemployed males from mono-ethnic areas, with less emphasis placed on people from mixed urban areas, women, and the elderly.

Second, rather than divorcing 'development' from 'peacebuilding', conflict mediation and reconciliation programmes aimed at young men should go hand in hand with a substantive element of creating economic opportunities for young people.

Third, Western actors must recognize that their brand is tarnished, and that they lack credibility as peace-making entities in the eyes of many

Kyrgyzstanis. To help address these concerns, donors should therefore aim to support and strengthen appropriate and effective Kyrgyzstani conflict management programmes where they exist and where their support would not harm or undermine such initiatives, rather than initiate their own.

Fourth, Western actors should develop more critically reflective and rigorous appraisal mechanisms of the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions. Monitoring and evaluation reports should read neither as 'success stories' nor as technocratic and quantitative exercises in counting recipients and measuring attitudinal change. Prior to initiating peace-building interventions, a strategy including clear baselines for action should be established based upon an integrated conflict analysis.

Fifth, the strategy for peacebuilding and its subsequent assessment should include qualitative and ethnographic methods. As assessments may conclude that these projects should be discontinued rather than revised, evaluations should be performed by independent individuals and organisations, without an obvious vested interest in the continuation of these and similar projects. This demands that donors make long-term commitments to working with key individuals and communities.

General recommendations

As the history of Kyrgyzstan demonstrates, different ethnic groups can coexist successfully and peacefully for decades. Ethnicity itself and the existence of ethnic groups with a history of conflict does not necessarily produce conflict. Understanding violence in the south of Kyrgyzstan therefore requires analysis that goes beyond narratives of enmity to identify why at particular moments conflicts appear. An examination of the two recent major incidents of violence in southern Kyrgyzstan—in June 1990 and June 2010—indicates significant similar dynamics, which allow us to identify five conflict factors common to both instances.

Five main factors explain the violence that occurred in 1990 and 2010: resentments on both sides created structurally by the operation of the ethno-territorial settlement, which through 'titular ethnicization' raises expectations of privilege amongst Kyrgyz and experiences of discrimination amongst Uzbeks; poverty, unemployment and lack of economic opportunity; Kyrgyz fears about Uzbeks challenging the integrity of the state, which circulate as conspiracy theories and rumours; political instability and crisis; and institutional weakness, or the inability of administrators and security forces to anticipate and respond to and de-escalate violence when a sudden and unpredictable spark threatens to ignite it.

Foreign interventions that attempt to overcome these local tensions through mediation and reconciliation cannot address the structures that produce them. Apart from a probable symbolic value, the projects considered in this report can, therefore, only be minimally ameliorative of these problems, and inherently risk creating negative unintended consequences.

Whilst the background factors of local resentments, poverty and fears and conspiracy theories have been more or less constants for three decades, they do not in themselves produce major outbreaks of violence—indeed, such violence has occurred only twice in Kyrgyzstan's recent history. Rather, political instability and crisis created a context for the violence to explode. In 1990 this crisis resulted from the unravelling of the Soviet Union, but the 2010 crisis resulted from the violent overthrow of the Bakiev regime, which was despised partly because of its rampant corruption.

Efforts to promote reconciliation between different ethnic groups will not be effective without a lasting political settlement that permits all communities to take part in political life and thrive economically and culturally. This process of political stabilisation is complicated by the legacy of the 2010 violence, competing visions of the future of the Kyrgyz state and the difficulties of managing diverse political and regional interests within the political system.

These are issues internal to Kyrgyzstan and outsiders must accept with humility that they have only a limited ability to modify them. However, there are a range of international linkages that have facilitated some of the corrupt practices that contributed to protest and public discontent in 2010. For example, one of the major sources of the Bakiev clan's corrupt activities was from the arrangement of the sub-contracts to supply fuel to the US airbase outside Bishkek. The air base contract was so lucrative to the Bakiev clan because its opaque offshoring arrangements made siphoning off large sums easy.[107] Western offshoring arrangements continue to facilitate patterns of corruption in Kyrgyzstan[108] and thus make it more difficult to produce the economic and social development that would contribute to political stability. There are several areas where EU states and the US, in particular, could do more to tackle their own culpability in creating the conditions for regime corruption and social discontent.

For example, governments in OECD countries should work together to improve the anti-money laundering regime which make corruption possible and helps to fuel political crisis and thus ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan. As Global Witness' 2012 report on Kyrgyzstan recommends, Western states, particularly the UK and USA and their offshore territories, should require that 'the identities of the real, "beneficial" owners of all companies should be publicly available in the country they are incorporated, and nominee directors and shareholders should be held liable for their clients' actions'.[109] Western

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[107] Cooley, Alexander. 2012. *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia*. Oxford: Oxofrd University Press. Toktomushev, Kemel. 2013. 'Regime security, rent-seeking and the state: an analysis of the international political economy of supplying jet fuel to the American airbase in Kyrgyzstan, 2001-2010'. A paper delivered to the International Studies Association annual convention, San Fransisco, Apr. 2013

[108] Of particular value is Global Witness. 2012. *Grave Secrecy*. London; see also Heathershaw, John. "Tajikistan Amidst Globalization: State Failure or State Transformation?". *Central Asian Survey* 30, no. 1 (2011): pp. 105–125.

[109] Global Witness, *Grave Secrecy*, 17 July 2012, <http://www.globalwitness.org/library/grave-secrecy>. It is worth noting, in this regard, that even such apparently commendable measures as attempting to tighten the screw on money-laundering can have, whether by design or accident, harmful effects on, for example, civil liberties. See World Organisation Against Torture, 'Kyrgyzstan: Open

states should do much more to facilitate the recovery of stolen assets and to tackle tax evasion through their corporate and financial systems. OECD states are still lagging behind in complying with many of the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).[110]

More broadly, much more effort should be made by external actors—whether international financial institutions, bilateral donors or foreign investors—to consider the wider impact of their activities, including their impact on conflict dynamics in southern Kyrgyzstan. Donors should welcome proposals to fund local civil society monitoring of international initiatives and programmes for their impact on governance and conflict potential. International partners should do more to welcome scrutiny of their interventions by international and local media and civil society.

These broader, structural problems are difficult to tackle. But in placing the main emphasis on pursuing reconciliation and mediation projects, donors working on conflict mediation, peacebuilding and reconciliation in Kyrgyzstan may find their efforts are ultimately largely frustrated. These organisations should consider whether there are also ways in which they can begin to address some of the international structures and policies that are continuing to fuel the poor governance and economic failures that contributed to the conflict in the first place.

Letter to the authorities: Concerns over Article 12 of the draft Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on "Fighting Against the Legalization (Laundering) of Criminal Proceeds and the Financing of Terrorist or Extremist Activities"', <http://www.omct.org/human-rights-defenders/urgent-interventions/kyrgyzstan/2013/05/d22245/>.

[110] Mark Tran, 'Rich countries failing to address money laundering and tax evasion, says OECD', *The Guardian*, 18 Dec. 2013.