

KYRGYZSTAN AFTER THE REVOLUTION: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHOICE OF FORM OF GOVERNMENT

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Struggle for Political Reform. Constitutional Conference Convened

In the wake of the March 2005 events, a Constitutional Conference of the Kyrgyz Republic was convened on the initiative of Ch. Baekova, chairperson of the republic's Constitutional Court, and a decision of Zhogorku Kenesh (the parliament). It met in Bishkek to discuss the political and constitutional reforms the country badly needed after the revolution. The one hundred and fourteen people who attended the conference represented the head of state, the cabinet, the deputies, and the civilian sector. Omurbek Tekebaev, speaker of the newly elected Zhogorku Kenesh, a very popular opposition member and leader of the Socialist Ata Meken Party, was elected the conference chairman.

At first, the political demands were moderate and boiled down to a political assessment of the events of 24 March and limiting some of the president's powers. The next president should be deprived of the right to organize referendums at will and to amend or change the Constitution. The premier, on the other hand, should be given more power when it comes to appointing ministers. It was decided to restore the parliament's former (105 against 75 deputies) numerical strength; and to elect two-thirds of its deputies on the basis of proportional representation as a step toward more developed party democracy. By 15 May, 2005, the amended Constitution was ready for publication. Supported by the civilian sector, it appeared in the local media.

Kurmanbek Bakiev, the prime minister and acting president, surprised many by remaining absolutely indifferent to the prospect of constitutional reform. He was busy readying for the presidential election, scheduled under parliamentary pressure for 10 June, 2005. Part of the country's political elite, however, insisted on immediate constitutional reform, after which the president (who would have different powers) could be elected.

The hastily organized election was fraught with another political crisis caused by the bitter rivalry between the North and the South. This would have deprived the republic of its revolutionary dynamics and democratic conquests. The revolutionary leaders spared no effort to pacify the democratically minded public, while the two recognized leaders who formed a "political tandem"—Kurmanbek Bakiev, who represented the South, and Felix Kulov, who represented the North—entered an agreement and promised to carry out the constitutional reform. The tandem won the elections with

about 90 percent of votes; Kurmanbek Bakiev became president, while Felix Kulov was presented to the parliament as a candidate for premier under the previous agreement between them.

What happened next defied logic, but we should hardly have expected anything different from the new rulers. The new elite turned out to be an exact copy of the old one. The years of independence taught it what to do. The disillusioned revolutionaries, politicians, and ordinary people all say: "This is the old power with new names."

After a short breathing space filled with denunciations of the old regime and former president Askar Akaev, the "new" power tried to disavow the political agreements concluded by the Bakiev-Kulov tandem and the obligations it had assumed. Its aims became clear to all: to bury in empty talk the deep-cutting constitutional reform the democratic public expected; to rehabilitate Akaev's constitution of 2003, and to impose on the nation their own idea of the country's political development, which would leave the shortcomings of the acting Constitution and the pillars of the authoritarian-clan system intact. Today, the "new" power consists of former communist functionaries of the regional and district level with the most primitive and largely utilitarian ideas about the political, economic, and international processes underway. They have no adequate strategies for getting out of the systemic crisis: primitive and financially unsubstantiated slogans about the need to revive industry and create new jobs in order to leave the present difficult period behind are all they can offer the nation.

The new leaders' anti-democratic intentions and the fact that leaders of the criminal world managed to come to the political proscenium in official capacities (with the new power's connivance or even active help) caused chronic political instability, which threatens the country's integrity. The public is deeply disappointed, anarchy and the mob reign in the country; power is impotent; property rights are flagrantly violated; re-division of property looms on the horizon; the state has lost its stability, while the Kyrgyz revolution lost face in the eyes of the world. Political adventurers are fishing in the troubled waters of post-revolutionary chaos; they are spreading discontent, hatred, and uncertainty. People are afraid of new political upheavals which might destroy the state.

The new power remains politically euphoric; it cannot formulate a new program and consolidate the nation. It wants no democratic or market reforms, therefore society is growing more and more radical while all sorts of political forces are becoming convinced that constitutional and political reform—up to and including fundamental changes in the present presidential-parliamentary system of government—is overdue. The democratic forces are convinced that this system of government has outlived itself; it has no development potential, has led the republic into a political impasse, and should be destroyed.

A large part of the Constitutional Conference, which split into those supporting the parliamentary and those in favor of the presidential-parliamentary form of government, insisted that starting in 2010 Kyrgyzstan should become a parliamentary republic. Within the span of twelve months, the country was twice plunged into a political crisis fraught with instability and disintegration caused by the attempts of criminal leaders to become legal. First, T. Akmatbaev, parliamentary deputy, was murdered in a penal colony (he was the third deputy to be killed after the revolution). His brother, criminal leader R. Akmatbaev, accused of organizing contract murders and criminal groups, was included on the "Wanted" lists. (He said that former president Akaev sought his services during the election campaign.) Relatives of the murdered deputy picketed the building of the parliament and demanded resignation of some of the country's leaders, including Premier Kulov and Speaker Tekebaev, whom they accused of organizing the murder. The picket stayed for several days, while wanted criminals were free to walk around the central square of the country's capital and threaten law-abiding citizens, deputies, and even the prime minister. The frightened law enforcement bodies remained passive; their heads and top generals were seen hobnobbing with leaders of the criminal world. It was the democratic forces—the NGOs and political parties—that defended the premier and forced Presi-

dent Bakiev to interfere, talk to the picketers, and convince them to leave the square until the investigation was completed.

The second crisis, likewise, was caused by the criminal world: its leader, the above R. Akmatbaev, after being completely acquitted in court on 24 January, 2006, threatened the premier at a press conference (sic!). Felix Kulov responded with a statement that the state had merged with the criminal world; power was passive, while some of the top politicians and bureaucrats profited from what was going on.¹ The expert community believes that this was an ultimatum to President Bakiev due to his passivity and inability to oppose the criminals' pressure. The premier said that since criminals enjoyed the support of high officials, in particular, of T. Aytbaev, chairman of the National Security Council, he himself would not shoulder any responsibility for carrying out anti-criminal activities. This statement was prompted by the fact that under the Bakiev-Kulov political memorandum, the president assumed control over the power structures.

Highly placed officials, including the top people of the public prosecutor's office, regularly infringing on the freedom of the press, they tried to scare journalists and even deputies of the parliament under the pretext of defending the president's honor and dignity and preserving political stability in the republic. This caused a veritable storm in the public and among some of the deputies.

After the Revolution: Gains and Losses

In the wake of the March events of 2005, the public felt there were more political rights and freedoms probably not because power wanted it, but because of the revolution: civil society and the public did not want to be trapped in an authoritarian system once more. The country is experiencing contradictory processes, whereby new, positive shifts have not yet removed the old habits and trends that pull the country back into the authoritarian quagmire.

According to the international Reporters without Borders organization, in 2005, Kyrgyzstan was 111th out of 150 world states in terms of freedom of the press, with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and other Central Asian republics trailing behind it.² According to the RF embassy in Kyrgyzstan, during the first nine months of 2005, there were about 2,500 unsanctioned rallies and pickets in the republic.³ Since 2000, Kyrgyzstan has invariably appeared among the "not free" countries in the *Freedom in the World* annual. According to an NGO, Freedom House, in 2005 the republic could be described as "relatively free," which did nothing but reflect the general improvement of the situation with respect to political freedoms and civil rights.⁴ Kyrgyzstan has to work hard to fight corruption, carry out constitutional and judicial reforms, ensure the personal security of its citizens, etc.

The republic's ombudsman has pointed out that human rights were also violated on a massive scale in 2005, while the number of Kyrgyz citizens and foreigners who applied to him in 2005 reached an absolute maximum: 35,000 compared with 12,000 in 2003, and 15,000 in 2004. In 2005, only 27 percent of complaints were satisfied—the figure for previous years was 33 percent.⁵

¹ See: *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 27 January, 2006.

² See: *Vecherniy Bishkek*, 12 December, 2005.

³ See: E. Shmagin, "'Rossia vseгда riadom'. Interv'iu posla RF v Kyrgyzstane," *Argumenty i fakty* (Kyrgyzstan), No. 3, 2006, p. 3.

⁴ See: *MSN* newspaper, 23 December, 2005.

⁵ [<http://www.akipress.kg>], 16 January, 2006.

After the 24 March events, people have been turning more frequently to the government for help: 4,000 applications in 2005 compared with 2,119 in 2004; they are obviously pinning more hopes on the new power.⁶ The far from simple situation with corruption has become even worse. According to Transparency International, in 2005 the republic was the 130th in the world, it lost 8 points compared with 2004.⁷ This is confirmed by the 2005 public opinion poll carried out by the Center for Public Opinion Studies, which demonstrated that 24 percent believed that their country was the most corrupt in the world; and 14 percent indicated that corruption in Kyrgyzstan was higher than in other countries. About 70 percent of the polled believed that corruption was the country's worst problem; there were 81 percent such people among businessmen; 76 percent among civil servants, and 83 percent among those employed by the law enforcement bodies. Eighty-three percent of the respondents believed that the militia was the most corrupt structure; 83 percent thought that it was the courts and prosecution structures; 81 percent, the traffic police; 80 percent, customs services; 79 percent, higher educational establishments; 78 percent, the taxation sphere; 65 percent, military conscription structures; 59 percent, the Ministry of Finance; 59 percent, medical services, 55 percent, bank and large companies; 53 percent, national security structures; 49 percent, the Cabinet of Ministers; 74 percent, the Presidential Administration, and 26 percent, schools.⁸

About 500 Uzbek citizens driven by the Andijan events of May 2005, cruelly suppressed by the powers of Uzbekistan, crossed into Kyrgyzstan to avoid massive repressions. Despite the demands of the Uzbek officials, Bishkek, supported by the world community, refused to deport them because of the threat of repressions and tortures that might be used against them in their homeland. Later, some of the European countries granted them refugee status. Today, there are four Uzbek rebels still kept in custody in Bishkek; Tashkent accuses them of grave crimes, while the UN HCR had already granted them refugee status.⁹

At the same time, post-revolutionary Kyrgyzstan spoiled its new political image by deporting Makhambet Abzhan, an opposition politician and youth leader who was falsely accused of grand larceny, to Kazakhstan in the winter of 2005.

The level of crime, one of the gravest threats to the country and its population, rose by 3 percent in 2005 compared with 2004; the number of grave and capital offences grew by 10 percent to reach a figure of over 4,500.¹⁰ According to the republic's Ministry of Internal Affairs, 34 contract murders and six attempted contract murders with the use of firearms were registered in 2000-2005; only nine of them were solved. In 2000, there were three similar crimes; in 2001, one; in 2002, eight murders and one attempted murder; and in 2003, seven and two, respectively. In 2005, there were 24 organized criminal groups and four criminal communities acting in the country.¹¹ Last year set a record for political assassinations: after the March events, three Zhogorku Kenesh deputies—Zh. Surabaldiev, E. Baiamanov, and T. Akmatbaev—were killed one after another. In 2006, Raatbek Sanatbaev, twice champion of Asia in Greco-Roman wrestling and chairman of the republican Federation of Greco-Roman Wrestling, was murdered by a contract killer.

The government is taking measures to improve the standard of living by raising wages, pensions, and social allowances. So far this has not produced the desired effect. According to the republic's Ministry of Finance, the average monthly wage in the country was 2,446.8 soms, or \$60.2; the minimal consumer budget being 1,832.91 soms, or about \$45.¹² It should be said in all fairness

⁶ [<http://www.vb.kg>], 1 December, 2006.

⁷ [<http://www.pr.kg>], 19 January, 2006.

⁸ See: R. Musurmankulov, "Kak obuzdat' chinovnika," *Argumenty i fakty* (Kyrgyzstan), No. 3, 2006, p. 4.

⁹ See: *MSN*, 18 December, 2006.

¹⁰ See: *Obshchestvenniy reyting*, 22 December, 2005.

¹¹ [<http://www.akipress.kg>], 16 January, 2005.

¹² See: "Zarplata rastet," *Delo No...*, 11 January, 2006.

that in 2005, wages in the state sector were raised by 15 percent for medical workers and teachers; by 30 percent for people employed in the sphere of culture; by 50 percent for employees of the law enforcement bodies; and pensions were raised by 5 to 15 percent. The standard of living, rather low in itself, is still undermined by inflation. In 2005 alone, the price of some foodstuffs increased by 50-100 percent.¹³

Migration has also increased. According to the National Committee for Statistics, in 2005, 25,500 left the republic for Russia; this is 9,449 more than in 2004. At the same time, 2,600 people came from Russia to Kyrgyzstan, 809 more than in 2004.¹⁴ In 2005, the GDP dropped by 0.6 percent compared with 2004.¹⁵

In 2005, freedom of movement was violated more than before: the country's leadership failed to supply about 340,000 Kyrgyz citizens with new passports, which deprived tens of thousands of trips abroad.¹⁶

By January 2006, the absolute majority of the political parties and civilian associations, staunch supporters of the parliamentary form of government, demanded that a referendum be held on the form of governance.

What is Best?

This is the core of all the political discussions. On 5 January, 2006, under pressure from the democratically minded public, President Bakiev signed a decree on Preparations for the Referendum of the Kyrgyz Republic, under which national voting on the constitutional order is to be carried out in the fourth quarter of 2006. It was pointed out that the nation and the power structures should be explained the differences among the three possible forms of governance—parliamentary, presidential, and mixed (semi-presidential).¹⁷

Back in November 2005, the head of state offered his own version of constitutional reform for national discussion, which had nothing in common with the alternative the Constitutional Conference discussed. He wanted nothing more than superficial changes: a majority-proportional election system, as well as uniting the Constitutional and Supreme courts and abolition of the death penalty. Civil society subjected the president's version to scathing criticism; members of Venetian Commission of the Council of Europe likewise showed no enthusiasm. This forced the president to drop his alternative, but he announced that he had received over 11 constitutional drafts and many other suggestions submitted by various groups.

In fact, the problem is not to select the absolutely best form of government, but to choose from among them the one best suited to Kyrgyzstan, its culture, history, and economy, as well as to the geopolitical conditions and domestic policies. The choice should be based on a careful analysis of Kyrgyzstan's past experience, the degree of maturity of its society, and the results of the country's 15 years of independent development.

The constitution should establish an efficient form of governance able to put an end to the current lack of prospects and the state's irresponsibility in the face of the nation. The government should meet several requirements: first, it should be democratic and correspond to popular will, while the elected officials should be responsible for their actions. Abuse of power should be minimized. Sec-

¹³ See: D. Orlov, "Zarplata i zhizn'," *Argumenty i fakty* (Kyrgyzstan), No. 3, 2006, p. 8.

¹⁴ [<http://www.pr.kg>], 19 January, 2006.

¹⁵ [<http://www.sk.kg>], 27 January, 2006.

¹⁶ [<http://www.akipress.kg>], 29 September, 2004.

¹⁷ See: "Referendumu navstrechu," *MSN*, 10 January, 2006.

ond, it is important to assess the effectiveness of the conducted policy against the achievements of other countries.

The state should be able to deal with economic and political problems and to find a balance between society's growing requirements and the country's meager resources acceptable to the nation's majority. From this it follows that the constitution should make the state effective and dynamic, while the state structures should become more responsible. In turn, a government that meets the nation's expectations should feel popular support; otherwise the nation will turn to an alternative power that cares about the people.

Today, there are democratically minded people on the republic's political scene who can think flexibly, who can look far ahead, and who are prepared to abandon their personal interests for the sake of the country. Such people should be present in the parliament as political leaders; they can effectively govern the state as heads of parliamentary parties and factions. This is a consideration in favor of the parliamentary form of government.

Kyrgyzstan must overcome poverty and backwardness—not an easy task requiring a strong government. The system headed by the president elected by popular vote has demonstrated that the two-headed executive power is inefficient since the cabinet is changed too often. In addition, this form of government leads to conflicts between the president and the parliament. In fact, the rest of the world believes that the pure parliamentary system is much more conducive to democracy than the presidential system. International realities and the geopolitical situation have limited the choice to the democratic option.

Unlike countries with a parliamentary form of government, none of the new presidential or mixed (semi-presidential) systems formed between 1945 and 1979 managed to remain democratic throughout this period. Only five old presidential systems avoided revolutions and coups: the United States, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Columbia, and Venezuela, which have remained democratic throughout decades. Other presidential countries lived through twice as many military coups than the parliamentary states between 1973 and 1989.

Shortcomings of the Present Presidential-Parliamentary Form of Government

President Bakiev insists that he has nothing against the parliamentary or the presidential-parliamentary form of governance, despite the vast difference between them. The bureaucrats are all for the present form of government: they argue that the country is still not ready for the parliamentary form; that the political parties are not mature enough, that there is no adequate political culture, and that for many centuries the Kyrgyz lived under one leader, etc.

Their opponents active in civil society and political parties offer equally weighty arguments. The present system, they say, helps the president and the parliament avoid responsibility, since the voters never know whom to thank for, or to accuse of, the country's policies. The state bodies are not responsible to the nation; executive power cannot function properly in the absence of urgently needed laws, while the parliament cannot function without being responsible for what it does. In short, neither executive power, nor the parliament can function effectively.

In countries where the president is elected by popular vote, the head of state and the parliament receive their powers from the nation by means of general elections. Coexistence of two mutu-

ally independent structures causes conflicts between them which could end in an impasse or constitutional crises. The system has no democratic mechanisms of crisis settlement. To be effective, the president has to extend his powers at the expense of the parliament, which is also elected by popular vote. At the same time, the limited presidential term deprives the president of the chance to complete his reforms. This makes the system inflexible; it is unable to adjust itself to the political processes, while the parliament cannot control the executive branch and turns into a discussion chamber, rather than a lawgiver or a restraining structure. Contrary to the premier, in parliamentary governance, the president is invulnerable throughout his term. It is next to impossible to get rid of a head of state who has lost his voters' confidence. Impeachment is possible only if the president has flagrantly violated the law. It is a time-consuming procedure which depends on certain officials, some of them belong to the president's structures or are even his relatives or close friends.

The presidential system functions according to the principle of "winner takes all." After winning the presidential election, the winner acquires power over the whole of society and all the political forces for the duration of his term. Concentration of power does not encourage coalitions or compromises. Any person elected to his high post by popular vote is elated; he tends toward authoritarian methods of rule and nepotism, creates favorites, etc. Examples can be found across Central Asia and elsewhere. For this reason, the president's supporters are found in all the power structures, while other people in the same system have no official role to play and are deprived of access to executive power. The presidential system does not lead to public compromises and agreements, two indispensable democratic elements; by contrast, the collegiate nature of parliamentary democracy is perfectly adjusted to them.

Since the president's power rests on popular vote, the head of state remains convinced that he alone was chosen to speak for the people; he identifies those who voted for him with the rest of the nation and believes that his policies are accepted by all, while his opponents with their plans and actions speak for a small group and represent narrow interests. This leads to populism and potentially to fairly hazardous developments.

The presidential system tends toward authoritarian rule for the simple reason that it concentrates political power in the hands of one person. The president elected by popular vote and his closest circle may destroy the system's key advantage—the checks and balances mechanism. For this reason, most presidential republics in the developing world acquired superficial attributes which limit the powers of the president, parliament, and the judiciary, yet the checks and balances system is either absent or poorly developed. The president is accountable to no one; the division of power helps him to avoid accusations during the next election campaign. He can always shift the blame to the cabinet and the opposition-dominated parliament. It is commonly believed that under the presidential form of government power is frequently concentrated in the hands of one political party or one ethnos which looks after its own interests and serves its own needs. In such cases, the presidential form of government degenerates into an ethnic, clan, regional, etc. symbol of domination and subjugation, which multiplies problems in polyconfessional, polylinguistic, and polyethnic societies. Kyrgyzstan is one such country.

To survive in the Kyrgyz Republic democracy needs economic success. Some Western experts who have studied 135 countries across the world concluded that democracy could survive and develop even in the poorest countries, if they are able to move ahead, lower the inequality level, and enjoy a favorable international climate. The parliamentary form of government is the key to success: more likely than not democracy dies where there is no advance because poverty breeds dictatorship and leads to destitution.

From this it follows that the future of democracy in Kyrgyzstan depends on the parliamentary form of government.

The Parliamentary Form of Government

The parliament is the main body responsible for drafting and passing laws and forming executive power—the president and the government. The majority (34 out of 43 developed democracies) uses the parliamentary system, while most of the presidential countries are authoritarian regimes found mainly in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. It is commonly recognized that parliamentarianism creates more balancing mechanisms which help young states to incorporate diverse political forces into domestic policies.

Under the parliamentary system, the representative branch of power, which elects the president and forms the cabinet, dominates the entire political system. In other words, a purely presidential system is dominated by an independent president, while a purely parliamentary system is marked by mutual dependence and intertwined executive and legislative powers. The parliament forms the cabinet from members of the parliamentary majority. This makes the government a collective body in which decision-making depends on collective effort, while the premier is merely the first among equals. The president has practically no power: his right to disband the parliament or veto its decisions can only be realized if the cabinet agrees to this. His normative acts come into force when approved by a corresponding minister or premier who is personally responsible for them.

The parliamentary state is a state of mutual dependence: the government is accountable to the parliament, which, having passed a vote of no confidence, may order the cabinet's resignation. Executive power, on the other hand, may disband the parliament (in some countries the right belongs to the premier, in others, to the head of state acting on the prime minister's instructions).

The parliament's efficiency as a mechanism of democracy depends on its composition, the number of parties represented in them, and their stances. This makes the parliamentary system one of the variants of proportional representation. It gives social minorities the chance to be represented both in the parliament and the cabinet. The "winner takes all" principle is powerless here. Those who support the parliamentary system never fail to mention its other advantages, such as flexibility and adjustability to changing circumstances. The parliament may force discredited executive leaders (including cabinet members) to resign. It is commonly believed that the parliamentary system makes the government accountable to the nationally elected deputies and increases the executives' dependence on them. This leads to more efficient public control over decision-making and to greater transparency of the process itself.

On the whole, this system maintains democratic stability, which is three times more stable than under the presidential system, and develops without riots, revolutions, and constitutional coups. In economically weak countries, the chance of survival of the parliamentary system is twice as great as that of the presidential system. In fact, the parliamentary system is more frequently used by economically strong states, while the presidential one, by undeveloped countries.

The parliamentary system's advantages are much more obvious when coupled with a certain election system. Those who support parliamentarianism argue that the minority acquires the opportunity to be represented in the same way as the majority, which rules out one-party domination, and that coalition governments will become a norm. This calls for proportionate representation as the key to success.

The choice of form of government should be based on the conclusions of social sciences and the science of man. I have in mind political science and constitutional law. Constitutional engineering as a branch of science has repeatedly demonstrated that when applied thoughtfully it can bring the desired political results.

A parliamentary republic is not free of shortcomings either: it is not mobile; the cabinet is not stable enough while the parliament is less accountable to the nation; it is poorly fragmented politically, therefore the majority dominates the minority.

Why We Need a Parliamentary System

The need to introduce a parliamentary system in Kyrgyzstan is prompted not only by the sad experience of the presidential-parliamentary rule of the Akaev period. There are also certain historical, social, political, and economic factors, as well as national specifics, trends, and prerequisites. Here are some of them:

- For many centuries the Kyrgyz people lived under conditions of primitive democracy, for a long time they had no centralized state, monarchy, and bureaucracy as a social group;
- The country and its population are relatively small;
- There is not much time to spend on protracted development;
- Today, the information age has opened up vast possibilities; it has shortened distances and made it possible to use the latest achievements of political thought in real time, etc.
- The nation is fairly well educated, while its civil society is fairly developed.
- There are over 70 political parties, eight or ten of which have been on the scene for a decade or longer.
- There are numerous interest groups and a high conflict level in society caused by the absence of a well-developed middle class, by widespread poverty, unemployment, gender problems, etc.
- The country is in need of urgent political and economic modernization.
- The opposition's potential should be tapped in all spheres of life—the winner should not “take all,” as happens in the presidential system.
- The democratic political system, political parties, and civil society should be encouraged to overcome the political heritage of tribalism and regionalism;
- There are charismatic political leaders, such as Bakiev, Kulov, Atambaev, Beknazarov, Otunbaeva, and others.
- The country's division into North and South, as well as the clan and client relations should be taken into account;
- The external factor and the threat of establishing an authoritarian regime (authoritarian neighbors) should not be neglected, nor should the neighboring parliamentary republics (India in Asia and Moldova in Europe);
- Reelection is not limited to a certain number of terms: people can be elected deputies, speaker of the parliament, or appointed prime minister;
- The country should avoid one dominating post, since the South would be displeased with the victory of a Northern candidate and vice versa.

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After March 2005, Kyrgyzstan reached another turning point in its history and, probably, in that of Central Asia as a whole. The country has already missed its first historic chance, yet the nation's stubborn resistance to the authoritarian trend gave the country another opportunity to realize the widest possible political reform to modernize the state and its election and party system, make power more efficient and accountable to the nation, create a modern democratic society, and build a truly democratic, law-based, and open state with a genuine market economy. Nevertheless, this possibility does not guarantee success—much depends on how the political forces will use this chance.