



Kyrgyzstan — Va-PoReg Country Report

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10/07/1864 Start Part of Other Country [of Russia]: During the late 1800s, the eastern portion of present-day Kyrgyzstan, specifically the Issyk-Kul Region, was transferred to the Russian Empire through the Treaty of Tarbagatai on 10/07/1864¹ after being under Qing China's control. The area, referred to as Kirghizia in Russian, was officially integrated into the Empire in 1876.²

11/07/1917 Continuation Part of Other Country [of Russia, Communist Ideocracy]: On this date the Russian Soviet Republic (RSFSR) was proclaimed.³ On 04/10/1918 the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (initially, the Turkestan Socialist Federative Republic) was officially proclaimed. The Turkistan ASSR was an autonomous republic of the Russian Federative Socialist Republic, which included territories of present-day Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Fedorenko 2015: 3).⁴

12/28/1922 Continuation Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]: With the establishment of the USSR, Kyrgyzstan became a part of the Soviet Union.⁵ On 10/14/1924 the Kara-Kirghiz Autonomous Oblast was established in the former region of Soviet Central Asia, within the Russian SFSR. It was formed from the mainly Kyrgyz portion of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The oblast was later renamed to the Kirghiz Autonomous Oblast on 05/15/1925. On 02/11/1926, it was restructured and became the Kirghiz ASSR.⁶ On 12/05/1936 the former Kirghiz ASSR was upgraded to the Kirghiz SSR, which became one of the constituent republics of the USSR and gained independence from the Russian SFSR.⁷ The communist regime was implemented through the integration of Kyrgyz territory into the Soviet political and administrative system. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), through the Communist Party of Kirghizia, became the dominant political authority, guiding political, economic, and cultural life. The implementation involved the establishment of state institutions modeled on the centralized Soviet system, all subordinated to the CPSU.⁸ In the process of the integration, Kyrgyzstan experienced a forced transition of its nomadic and semi-nomadic society, as the Soviet collectivization campaign of 1929 and 1930 disrupted traditional ways of life. The Kyrgyz people were instead forced to settle into agriculture on collectivized farms. This process was particularly harsh in Kyrgyzstan due to the mountainous terrain and deeply rooted pastoral traditions. Industrialization, while bringing economic development to urban centers, was uneven and often disconnected from local needs. The republic's economy remained largely dependent on Moscow, serving as a supplier of raw materials rather than developing a self-sufficient industrial base.⁹ Repression was an integral part of Soviet governance in Kyrgyzstan, as in other parts of the USSR. During Stalin's Great Purge from 08/19/1936 to 11/17/1938, an estimated 30,000 people in Kyrgyzstan were subjected to political repression. Prominent intellectuals, party members, and cultural figures were arrested, deported, or executed. On 11/06 and 11/08/1938, 138 state and party leaders of Kyrgyzstan were executed and buried in the Chon-Tash area near Bishkek.¹⁰ Despite the oppressive political climate, there is no documentation of significant resistance movements. From 06/04 to 06/06/1990, violent riots broke out in the cities of Osh and Uzgen, as a result of disputes between Uzbek and Kyrgyz nationalist groups. This conflict undermined the position of the First Secretary and set the stage for Kyrgyzstan declaring its independence in the following year.¹¹ LIED and V-Dem only start to provide data for Kyrgyzstan in 1990. For 1990, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties were not really present.

08/31/1991 End Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date, following the failed coup attempt in Moscow, the Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyzstan voted to declare independence from the USSR.¹² This marked the beginning of a short transitional period. Upon attaining independence, President Akayev, who had been president of the Kirghiz SSR since October 1990, found himself navigating a political milieu wherein the communist-dominated Supreme Soviet held sway. Despite the formal dissolution of the communist party, Akayev's networks retained significant influence. In the interim period between the declaration of independence and the first presidential election, Akayev ruled as the head of the new state without a direct popular mandate. Shortly thereafter, Akayev ascended to the presidency unopposed. (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 73).¹³

10/12/1991 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral (Personalist) Autocracy: On this date, the first presidential elections of the independent republic were held. Askar Akayev, the incumbent leader, ran as the sole candidate and was elected unopposed with a reported 95.4% of the vote.¹⁴ This uncompetitive election served to formalize and legitimize Akayev's rule, cementing his personal authority and transitioning the country from a provisional state to an electoral autocracy. Universal suffrage did predate independence (LIED). Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED has never categorized any election in the country as competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI scores electoral freedom and fairness as not really given from 1991 to 2004, as ambiguous from 2005 to 2006, again as not really given from 2007 to 2009 and as somewhat given in 2010. V-Dem's CEI scores electoral cleanliness as not really given from 1991 to 1999, as not given from 2000 to 2009 and again as not really given from 2010 onward. On 03/24/2005, large-scale protests prompted Akayev's resignation and departure, resulting in an interim government overseen by the opposition and the organization of new elections (Radnitz 2006: 132, Hiro 2009: 305-07, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 73).¹⁵ On 07/10/2005, elections tainted by irregularities underscored a distinct progression toward authoritarian consolidation within the transitional government. Bakiyev, a key figure in the opposition to Akayev, assumed interim presidency and prime ministership subsequent to Akayev's removal from power. Initially entrusted with overseeing a democratic electoral process, Bakiyev's administration, however, leveraged its control over the electoral machinery to manipulate the ensuing election in favour of his own candidacy (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 73).¹⁶ From 1992 to 2005, as per Polity5's classification, the executive experienced moderate limitations on authority, placing it in the second intermediate category. In 2006, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive encountered substantial institutional limitations on power. In 2007 and 2008, as per Polity5's classification, the executive experienced moderate limitations on authority, placing it in the second intermediate category. In 2009, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power. V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent from 1991-2009, limited in 2010, and limited in 2011, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate until 2007, limited from 2008-2009 and robust between 2010-2011. In accordance with FH for 1991, the country receives a score between 9 and 10, which we interpret as rather not free. In 1992 the country receives a score between 6 and 7, categorized as partly free, which we interpret as rather free. In 1993 Kyrgyzstan is classified as partly free with a score of 8, which we categorize as rather not free. Per FH, for 1994, the country scores between 6 and 7, categorized as partly free, which we interpret as rather free. Between 1995 and 1997 the country is partly free with a score of 8, which we interpret as rather not free. For 1998 and 1999 the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. Between 2000 and 2004 the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. For the period between 2005 and 2008 a score between 9 and 10 makes the country not free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather not free. In 2009 the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. For the remaining period the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. Political liberties were absent since the country's independence, according to LIED. V-Dem's PCLI indicates an ambiguous status of political liberties in 1991, that they were somewhat present from 1992 to 1995, and again an

ambiguous status of political liberties, again as somewhat present from 2005 to 2007, as ambiguous from 2008 to 2009 and as somewhat present in 2010. The Kyrgyz Revolution of 2010, also known as the Second Kyrgyz Revolution, the Melon Revolution, the April Events or officially as the People's April Revolution, began in April 2010 with the ousting of Kyrgyz president Kurmanbek Bakiyev in the capital Bishkek (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 73).¹⁷ It was followed by increased ethnic tension involving Kyrgyz people and Uzbeks in the south of the country, which escalated in June 2010. The violence ultimately led to the consolidation of a new parliamentary system.¹⁸ On 04/08/2010 Bakiyev was ousted in a popular uprising.

10/30/2011 End Electoral (Personalist) Autocracy/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date, early presidential elections were held to replace interim president Roza Otunbayeva.¹⁹ The 2020 Kyrgyz protests began on 10/05/2020 in response to the previous day's parliamentary election that was perceived by protestors as unfair, with allegations of vote rigging. The results of the election were annulled on 10/06/2020. On 10/12/2020, President Jeenbekov announced a state of emergency in the capital city of Bishkek, which was approved by Parliament the following day. Jeenbekov resigned on 10/15/2020.²⁰ On 11/28/2021 snap parliamentary elections were held. They followed the annulment of the results of the October 2020 elections and the subsequent protests against the election's conduct. Turnout hit a record low at less than 35%.²¹ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. From 2011 to 2014 V-Dem's EF&FI classifies electoral freedom and fairness as somewhat given, from 2015 to 2020 as ambiguous and from 2021 to 2023 again as somewhat given. From 2011 to 2015 V-Dem's CEI scores electoral cleanliness as not really given, from 2016 to 2019 as ambiguous, as not really given in 2020 and again as ambiguous from 2020 to 2023. Per FH's evaluation for the period until 2019, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. From 2020 onward a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. Political liberties were absent according to LIED. In 2011 V-Dem's PCLI classifies political liberties as present. For the remaining years they were somewhat present according to V-Dem's PCLI. Since 2011, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate until 2022 and limited in 2023, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust until 2018 and between 2020-2022, comprehensive in 2019 and limited in 2023. While all other datasets agree that Kyrgyzstan was an electoral/multiparty autocracy, MCM observed a regime change to democracy.

Electoral Hybrid Regime as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Olcott 1997, Eschment/Grotz 2001, Schatz 2009)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Tarbagatai

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyrgyzstan>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkestan_Autonomous_Soviet_Socialist_Republic

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union#Treaty_on_the_Creation_of_the_USSR

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kara-Kirghiz_Autonomous_Oblast

⁷ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirghiz_Autonomous_Soviet_Republic_\(1926%E2%80%931936\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirghiz_Autonomous_Soviet_Republic_(1926%E2%80%931936))

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirghiz_Soviet_Socialist_Republic

⁹ <https://journals.openedition.org/monderusse/9124?lang=en>

¹⁰ <https://open.kg/en/about-kyrgyzstan/history/kyrgyzstan-during-the-soviet-period/553-usilenie-administrativno-komandnoy-sistemy.html>

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirghiz_Soviet_Socialist_Republic#History

- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Kyrgyzstan#Soviet_coup_attempt,_the_Transition_Period_and_the_end_of_the_Soviet_Union
- ¹³ <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-kyrgyzstan/>
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991_Kyrgyz_presidential_election
- ¹⁵ <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-kyrgyzstan/>
- ¹⁶ <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-kyrgyzstan/>
- ¹⁷ <https://www.economist.com/asia/2010/09/30/a-vote-into-the-unknown>
- ¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kyrgyz_Revolution_of_2010
- ¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Kyrgyz_presidential_election
- ²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Kyrgyz_protests
- ²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2021_Kyrgyz_parliamentary_election

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