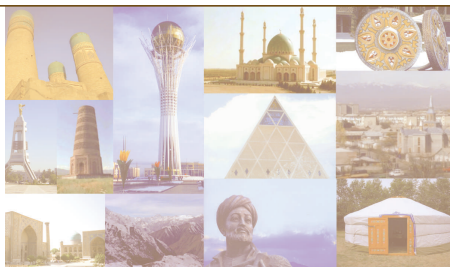


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CASA ASIA



KYRGYZSTAN

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Highlights

On 30 October, presidential elections took place quietly and peacefully despite numerous forecasts to the contrary. Incumbent prime minister Almazbek Atambayev, whose main campaign messages stressed the unity of all Kyrgyzstani citizens irrespective of ethnicity, regional consolidation and willingness to negotiate with various interest groups, won a landslide victory in the first round, eliminating the need for a run-off.

The primary economic news of recent months concerns better-than-expected economic growth, endorsed by the country's statistical and economic agencies and a team of IMF experts.

Internal affairs

The presidential race officially kicked off on 25 September. Out of the 83 candidates, only sixteen made it to final round, most of them being self-nominated. The weeding out of candidates in the preliminary stage was ascribed to lack of election funds and their failure to collect at least 30,000 signatures from citizens with voting rights, plus the fact that several candidates dropped out of the race to benefit other participants.

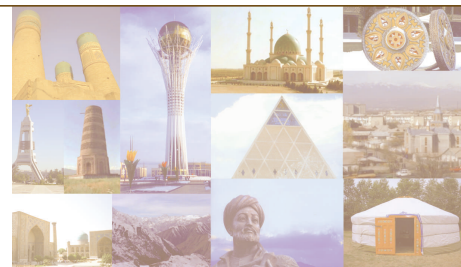
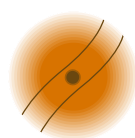
Unfortunately, the first casualties of the race included residents of Kyrgyzstan who were deprived of access to foreign TV channels. The decision to suspend the broadcasting of foreign television and radio channels in Kyrgyzstan was made by cable television operators and the KyrgyzTelecom communications company due to the entry into effect of a new law concerning the election of the president of the Kyrgyz Republic and members of Jogorku Kenesh. Article 16 of this law introduces a proviso to the effect that, during

the pre-election campaigning, foreign television and radio channels may only be broadcast in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic on a tape-delay basis. The MPs who adopted the law said the restriction was designed to prevent the dissemination of information that slandered candidates' dignity and honour, or otherwise cast a shadow on their business reputation. Since owners of television channels did not want to spend money on tape-delay and reprogramming of foreign TV programmes, residents of Kyrgyzstan were deprived of the opportunity to follow coverage on CNN, BBC, Euronews and RBC (Russian business channel), which do not generally devote much attention to Kyrgyzstan and events in the country. Russian political television channels such as ORT and RTR that monitor events in Kyrgyzstan quite closely continued to broadcast in the country.

Interior body officials were placed on high security alert and eventually confined to barracks. On election day, police officers were on duty at polling stations all over the country. These precautionary measures were sparked by the circulation of rumours of expected disturbances and statements by certain candidates to the effect that rallies, especially in south Kyrgyzstan, were likely to take place. Remembering the lessons of 2010, the authorities engaged 14,000 voluntary civil vigilantes and 10,000 taxi drivers to guarantee that law and order would prevail on election day. The mood of the majority of the country's citizenry, who were tired of political instability and the endless string of rallies supporting this or that political leader, was a key factor in terms of maintaining order.

According to the central electoral commission (CEC) that clarified voters' lists, a total of 3,034,017 citizens were eligible to vote. On 30 October, though, a total of 1,858,596 voters turned out to vote, ie, 61.28% of

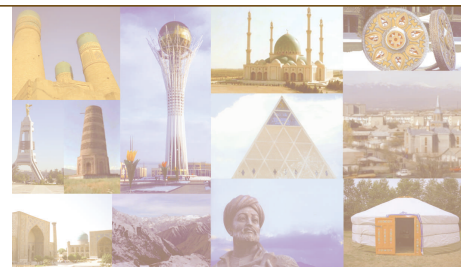
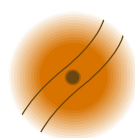
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the total. The voting process was attended by 725 international observers, local NGOs, political party representatives and candidates' confidantes. Observers identified untrue voters' lists as the primary violation. According to the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, at 65% of polling stations citizens were unable to find their names on the voters' lists. Public organizations registered twelve cases of ballot stuffing, voting without voter finger-markings in the Jalal-Abad province and other smaller breaches of the electoral procedure. However, in general, local observers concluded that the violations identified did not have a major impact on the election results. International observers from the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization reached the same conclusion. The OSCE mission, though, was more critical of the electoral process and while recognizing the results of the vote found it necessary to note significant faults and irregularities. "Despite flaws with the voters' lists and tabulation processes, we are cautiously optimistic about the future of democracy in Kyrgyzstan. Significant work is still needed at all levels for this country to live up to its commitments to hold democratic elections," said Walburga Habsburg Douglas, the Special Coordinator to lead the short-term OSCE observer mission and Head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation.

By as early as the evening of 30 October, it became evident that no run-off would be necessary since one of the candidates, Almazbek Atambayev, was able to secure more than 60% of the votes, the country's electoral legislation stating that 50% plus one vote accumulated in the first round was enough to win. In the evening of 30 October, without waiting for the official results, several losing candidates headed by Adakhan Madumarov held a press conference and accused the authorities of applying administrative resources and expressed their vote of no confidence to the CEC. The day after the election, one of the three favourites, Ata Jurt political

party leader Kamchibek Tashiyev, announced that he did not recognize the results of the election and rallied his people to the central square of the town of Jalal-Abad. On 31 October, in the Suzak district of the Jalal-Abad province, about 200 Tashiyev supporters closed the Bishkek-Osh road, a primary road artery that connects the south and north of Kyrgyzstan. In the town of Osh, around twenty people held a rally in front of the building of the province state administration demanding that the election be re-held. In the town of Kyzyl-Kiya, supporters of yet another presidential race favourite, the Butun Kyrgyzstan political party leader Adakhan Madumarov, arranged a rally and demanded a review of the voting results. On 1 November, in Madumarov's hometown, Uzgen, his supporters closed the road and stopped traffic for more than an hour. Smaller rallies took place in the towns of Osh, Jalal-Abad and Bishkek. In the capital, supporters of Kamchibek Tashiyev gathered in front of the White House (the building that houses parliament and the office of the president) and demanded that the election be ruled void. Overall, post-election actions and activities were localized and lacked the support of wide masses of the populace, public organizations and the media. During his first post-election press conference, winning candidate Almazbek Atambayev stated that he was willing to negotiate with his opponents, pulling the carpet from under the most radically minded presidential candidates and paving the way for negotiations in various formats, including the involvement of the speaker of parliament. By law, the CEC is supposed to announce the official results of the election within 20 days of the vote. Since 127 complaints were lodged with the CEC between 30 October and 1 November, the Commission decided to announce the election results after all the incoming materials had been studied. Nonetheless, the opinions of the CEC members with respect to the review of complaints differed and on 12 November the official results were announced with 62.52% of the votes ascribed to Almazbek Atambayev and 14.78% to his rival Adakhan



Madumarov, with the leader of the Ata Jurt political party Kamchibek Tashiyev collecting 14.32% of the vote.

In mid September, the internal affairs ministry announced the results and findings of the investigation of a major contract killing that occurred in March 2009. As the internal affairs minister Zarylbek Rysaliyev stated, the murder of the former head of the president's administration Medet Sadyrkulov, the former director of the International Institute for Strategic Research Sergey Slepchenko and a driver of an office vehicle Kubat Sulaymanov was committed at the direct order of a brother of ousted President Kurbanbek Bakiyev. The cynicism of this crime was that both the client and the perpetrators of this murder were government employees of law enforcement bodies with a duty to protect the citizenry and the state. The internal affairs ministry charged with triple murder Janysh Bakiyev, the former head of the state protection service, and the former deputy chairman of the border protection service, the former head of the president's affairs and other former high-ranking officers of these bodies. According to investigators, the murder was committed in a particularly cruel manner. The investigators also decided to question the former head of the security council of the Kyrgyz Republic Adakhan Madumarov, who ran for the office of the president on 30 October, the former internal affairs minister and the former prosecutor general. The solving of this crime was the ministry's biggest operation in recent years and uncovered the country's most substantive state problems – the use of the repressive state apparatus for personal purposes by a narrow circle of individuals and the defencelessness of not only ordinary citizens but also prominent political leaders and statesmen when threatened with murder.

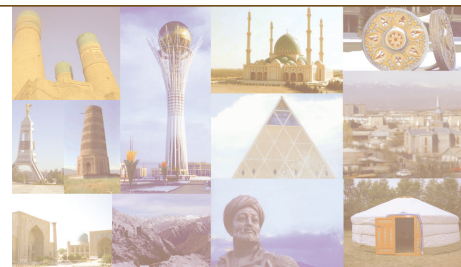
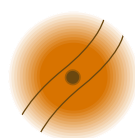
In the run-up to the elections, judge Jorobekov of the Jalal-Abad City Court issued a verdict that found Kadyrjan Batyrov, leader of the Uzbek diaspora in

Kyrgyzstan, guilty on three counts of the criminal code and sentenced him to life imprisonment with the confiscation of his property. Speaking to an Uzbek media outlet, Batyrov, who is outside Kyrgyzstan, denied his guilt in the organization of mass disturbances in June 2010 and said he would take advantage of the Swedish government's offer of a political asylum. In addition to Batyrov, Inomjan Abdurasulov was also sentenced to life in prison, while Abdurakhman Abdullayev and Khalimjan Khudayberdiyev were sentenced to 20 years in prison, Javlon Mirzakhodjayev was sentenced to 14 years in prison, and Makhamatrasul Abakjanov was sentenced to 3 years of probation. The seven-year prison sentence received by Akhmat Bakiyev, the brother of ousted former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev, was mild in comparison with the harsh verdicts meted out to these citizens, who are all ethnic Uzbeks.

Foreign and international policy

In September, the Kyrgyz diplomatic corps unsuccessfully attempted to secure a seat of non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. According to President Otunbayeva, the Kyrgyzstani diplomatic group in New York had been working meticulously on this issue since 1997, and particularly actively in the last eighteen months. Despite these long-standing efforts, the non-permanent UN Security Council member's seat was secured by Pakistan, which stands to reason in that it is a country of 187 million people and a nuclear power to boot.

In September, the outgoing President made her first visit to the Transit Centre at Manas International Airport where she participated in a ceremony dedicated to the tenth anniversary of 9/11. This visit was an expression of solidarity with the American people in the joint struggle against terrorism, an ongoing effort to which Kyrgyzstan contributes its assistance and support.



Encouraging news of late October 2011 included the announcement that the Uzbek side had agreed to resume the operation of the international border-crossing checkpoint “Dustlik” at the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border that had been closed in 2010. This decision was taken at the meeting of heads of the border protection services of the two countries that took place on 25 October in the town of Andijan (Uzbekistan).

Continuing the topic of the country’s relations with its immediate neighbours, there is also call to mention the address by the speaker of parliament to the president and prime minister with respect to problems at the Kyrgyz-Kazakh border. As we know, effective 1 July 2011, Kazakhstan had become a member of the Customs Union (CU) that also includes Russia and Belarus, which led to the severe restriction of procedures for crossing state borders of Kazakhstan for Kyrgyz citizens. Unfortunately, ever since the CU rules went into effect, not only have the Kyrgyz populace had to spend long hours at the customs and border-protection checkpoints but they have also been routinely subject to insults on part of officers of the Kazakh checkpoints.

Economy and business enterprise

During his meeting with prime minister Almazbek Atambayev, IMF team leader Christian Beddis, who visited Bishkek in September, congratulated the Kyrgyz government on its economic growth indicators. In the year to September, national economic growth exceeded expectations, with growth forecast to reach at least 6.7% by the end of the year. In addition, inflation is expected to fall in comparison with 2010, to 12-13%. Nevertheless, certain types of foodstuffs like meat saw their prices rise by up to 52% over a nine month period, significantly undermining the purchasing power of the populace in whose diet meat plays a crucial and predominant role.

The Kyrgyz government drafted and adopted a medium-term development strategy for 2012-2014, providing for a serious reduction of the controlling functions of state bodies. Thus, of the 500 types of currently existing licenses, the government plans to eliminate 278 in this first stage of deregulation, due to be followed up after 2014. Other positive aspects of the economic program included a clear-cut and limited set of economic development targets, differentiating this document from its predecessors where almost all sectors and industries of the economy were identified as primary and major sectors. The measures designed to achieve the objectives set out by the government are adequate and realistic. However, during the discussion of this document in parliament, the government failed to secure parliament’s support despite efforts by the ministry for economic regulation which has cast doubt on the possibility of the implementation of this programme starting in early 2012.

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