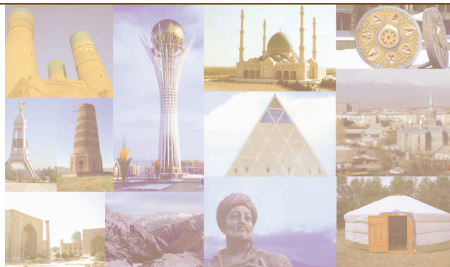


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KYRGYZSTAN

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Highlights

The presidential elections on 23 July affected all major domestic policy developments in the period July-August. Although very few people doubted the outcome of the elections long before election day, the magnitude of the efforts made to ensure the victory was unprecedented.

The major political event of this period was the informal summit of CSTO heads of states on 31 July - 1 August at Lake Issyk Kul, during which the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation agreed to establish a new Russian military base in southern Kyrgyzstan. This has given fresh impetus to the militarization of Kyrgyzstan and caused a new rift in Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations.

Internal affairs

The presidential campaign differed from previous campaigns in that it was characterized by the lethargy of the candidates and apathy of voters. Kyrgyz media described the campaign as "quiet and even boring". For the most part, media attention focused on two out of the six candidates: incumbent president Kurmanbek Bakiev and the candidate backed by the united opposition Almazbek Atambayev.

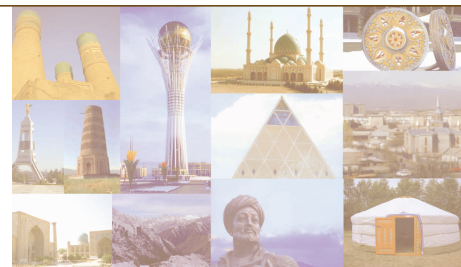
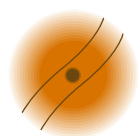
The Institute of Media Representatives, a Kyrgyz NGO, analyzed media coverage of the two candidates and concluded that Bakiev enjoyed the best media environment: his messages were the most visible of the six in the print media and ran for the longest period in electronic media. "It should be noted that electronic media showed Mr. Bakiev in a positive or neutral light only, while Mr. Atambayev was shown in negative light".

Senator Consiglio Di Nino, special coordinator of the OSCE's short-term special observation mission, described media coverage of the campaign as biased.

According to the OSCE, the media did not cover the candidates' campaigns fairly and evenly, preventing the candidates from expressing their messages and conveying them to voters. OSCE media monitoring found that Kyrgyz state TV and radio failed to follow the obligations set out in the country's Election Code. For example, the Kyrgyz National TV and Radio Corporation, the nation's largest channel, and its second-largest El-TR (Эл-ТР), broadcast biased coverage, devoting 56% and 80% respectively of total campaign coverage time to the current president and only 14% and 8% to covering Atambayev's election campaign, coverage being mostly negative at that. The OSCE coordinator also noted misuse of administrative resources, which gave the incumbent an unfair advantage over his opponents.

The "Time of my choice" NGO coalition also noted misuse of administrative resources during the election campaign, expressing its opinion that all government-funded organizations were employed to assist the incumbent. Early ballot voting became widespread among the employees of such organizations, with observers noting multiple violations, including managers controlling how and when their subordinates vote. Given that most of the violations were observed in the area of early voting ballots, civil-rights organizations appealed to the Central Election Committee (CEC), demanding that the early ballots should not be counted. Civil rights activists reported multiple instances of government security officers threatening voters and sabotaging election meetings of opposition candidates and their representatives. The final election report of the Union of Civic Organizations states that the 2009 election campaign features "abuse of administrative resources, threats

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against voters, representatives of opposition parties, NGOs and media”.

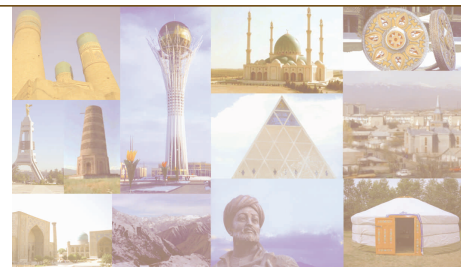
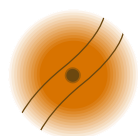
During the 21 July meeting with Radmila Sekerinska, head of the election observation mission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), President Bakiev promised that every effort would be made to ensure transparent and fair elections and that the government would prevent all attempts to destabilize the situation or cause disorder. On election day (23 July), in the city of Balykchy in Issyk Kul province, 20 people were arrested and beaten up, including two members of parliament representing the opposition Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK), despite the fact that MPs have immunity. The Prosecutor General initiated an investigation of the Balykchy case, describing it as a case of possible mass disorder. According to the SDPK's information, the unrest was caused by a case of massive ballot-box stuffing in one of the election districts, turning into an impromptu rally. Atambayev's election headquarters in Bishkek started reporting election breaches as early as 10 a.m. with reports of so-called ‘carousel voting’, where voters go to multiple precincts and vote several times using false absentee ballots. The use of this “election technology” became possible after the practice of finger marking with election ink was abolished in the run-up to the election.

Observers from NGO's recorded many other violations, namely ballot-box stuffing by members of local election commissions, refusal to show official voting protocols and, in some cases, even the beating up of independent observers. Ms. Asiya Sasykbayeva, director of Interbilim, an independent organization that supports the NGO community in Kyrgyzstan, described the 23 July elections as a farce. “We have never seen this scale of violations, we've been observing since 1995 and have seen many different violations, but 23 July beats them all”. By the end of election day, the Central Election Commission had produced preliminary results of the voting with

more than 90% of the votes for the incumbent. It should be noted that after four days the figure was revised downwards to 76.12%. The Ferghana.Ru newswire compared this result with the “fantastic achievements of two other prominent Central Asian heroes Mr. Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan and Saparmurad Niyazov of Turkmenistan”.

On the evening of 23 July, supporters of the two non-incumbent candidates gathered for a rally in Bishkek. The major slogan of the rally was rejection of the official election results. On 24 July, members of the “Ya ne veryu” (I do not believe) youth movement issued an official statement saying that they do not recognize the results of the election due to massive electoral fraud. On 29 July Atambayev's supporters started a march to protest at the results of the election. The march was dispersed by SWAT units on the outskirts of Bishkek. The Prosecutor General issued a warning to the Atambayev's staff, saying that the law enforcement agencies would take a very firm stand against any attempts to hold unauthorized rallies.

Another sad characteristic of the past election was the unconstructive attitude of the CEC towards the OSCE observers. On the day following the election, the OSCE mission issued a preliminary election statement, describing the election as falling short of the key standards Kyrgyzstan has committed itself to meeting as an OSCE participating State. “The conduct of election day was a disappointment”, - summarized Ms. Sekerinska. The European Union posted a statement on the German embassy's website in Bishkek, pointing out that the election did not meet the requirements of Kyrgyz legislation. “On election day widespread irregularities were observed”, says the statement. The EU also expressed readiness to assist Kyrgyzstan in its efforts to bring the election process into line with OSCE commitments and urged Kyrgyzstan to work closely with OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).



In response to this negative feedback, the CEC issued a statement advising the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic to issue its own assessment of the activities of OSCE observers and ask the OSCE management to send objective and competent observers to Kyrgyzstan. The CEC also accused the OSCE mission of unwillingness to present evidence of irregularities. In an interview with the Kyrgyz newswire AKIpress, the head of the election observation mission Radmila Sekerinska responded that the OSCE observers were under no obligation to present evidence of irregularities, expressing her bewilderment with the CEC's comments regarding the competence and objectivity of OSCE observers and reaffirming the OSCE's earlier statement on the elections.

A similar assessment of the elections was expressed by the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations, with notice of multiple major violations and the opinion that international election standards were not met in Kyrgyzstan's 23 July elections.

On 30 July, the Constitutional Court declared the elections valid and on 2 August President Bakiev commenced his second term in office. Sad statistics relative to journalists' deaths in Kyrgyzstan went up a notch on 12 July when Almazbek Tashiev succumbed to multiple injuries inflicted upon him by Kyrgyz law enforcement officers. Police Second Lieutenant Nurmatov of Naukat Raion Police Station was detained on charges of aggravated assault. The European Union expressed concern with the increased frequency of assaults on journalists and urged Kyrgyz authorities to ensure greater security.

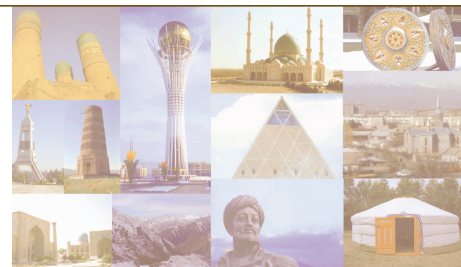
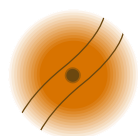
Mr. Syrgak Abdyldayev, former political observer of *The Reporter* newspaper who sustained 21 knife wounds and multiple fractures and concussion in March, had to flee Kyrgyzstan in August due to continuous threats. As of this date, the March assault on Mr. Abdyldayev remains unsolved, with the identity of the attackers and their paymasters unknown. Maxim Kuleshov, a renowned human

rights activist has also fled the country and asked for asylum in one of the democratic countries.

Despite mounting pressure, human rights organizations held a series of events to protest against the illegal detentions of activists and the use of torture against political opponents, demanding reforms of law enforcement agencies, primarily the State Committee for National Security.

Foreign and International policy

One of the consequences of the continued presence of the U.S. Air Base at Manas International Airport was the agreement to station another Russian military base in Kyrgyzstan. This was one of the outcomes of the visit of Russian deputy premier Igor Sechin and defence minister Anatoliy Serdyukov, during which confidential negotiations took place with President Bakiyev. Uzbekistan's response to this development was predictable and rather swift. In an interview with a Russian newswire, a high-level Uzbek official said that Uzbekistan objects to any new foreign military bases in neighbouring countries. On 15 July President Bakiev gave an interview to the *New York Times*, confirming increased military cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Russia. However, in his trademark evasive manner, he described the base as a counter-terrorism centre in the southern part of the country. In the run-up to the CSTO informal summit, talks about the new base gained momentum, culminating on 1 August when the Memorandum of Intentions between Russia and Kyrgyzstan was officially announced. The Russian Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan stated that the new base would house the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces (CRDF) of the CSTO countries. This collective force is viewed by Russian leaders as an alternative to NATO. This opinion was further confirmed by Sergei Prikhodko, the Russian presidential aide who, prior to the CSTO informal summit, confirmed that almost all matters relating to the CRDF base were settled.



The CSTO summit opened in Cholpon Ata, a resort town on the shores of Lake Issyk Kul. The primary topic on the agenda was the CRDF, viewed by the participants as a cornerstone, turning a “largely paper organization into an actual military bloc”. However, the prospective establishment of the CRDF met with a mostly chilly reception from Belarusian President and a negative reception from Uzbek President. As a result, on 1 August only a bilateral memorandum was signed between Kyrgyzstan and Russia, setting out the conditions under which additional Russian troops could stay in Kyrgyzstan and establishing 1 November 2009 as the deadline for signing the final agreement on the continued presence of Russian military personnel and objects in Kyrgyzstan.

Experts and journalists expressed a range of differing assessments of the outcome of the informal CSTO summit. This would appear to mirror the problems that exist within the CSTO, in which case undertaking joint military activities would seem to be premature at this stage. Experts also noted an expansion of Russian military and political presence not only in Kyrgyzstan, but in the whole of Central Asia. It is no coincidence that Uzbekistan officially objects to the new Russian military base. The Uzbek foreign ministry statement says that “the Uzbek side sees no need or justifiability in deploying additional Russian Forces in Kyrgyzstan's South”, which caused the Kyrgyz side to respond with a statement saying that this was a matter of domestic policy and well within Kyrgyzstan's rights as a sovereign nation. The CSTO General Secretary ensured fragile peace by assuring Tashkent that Uzbekistan's opinion would be taken into consideration when formulating the new military base agreement between Kyrgyzstan and Russia. On 26 August Kyrgyz media reported that Uzbekistan was planning to build a new garrison in Khanabad in the neighbouring Jalal Abad province of Kyrgyzstan. Thus, we have to report that the outcome of the informal CSTO July-August summit is further military build-up in the region and further deterioration of already complex Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations.

Economy and business enterprise

Kyrgyzstan's economy is still suffering from the effect of the economic crisis in Kazakhstan and Russia, Kyrgyzstan's main trade partners and primary destinations of Kyrgyz labour migrants. The volume of Kyrgyz foreign trade contracted by 22.1%, with increasingly more Kyrgyz labour migrants returning home. The volume of remittances sent from Russia to Kyrgyzstan fell 28%, with the amount of average remittance contracting by 32%.

Industrial output has also declined during the period. The output of the processing industry, which accounts for 77% of industrial output in Kyrgyzstan, was reduced by 13.9%, with the volume of electricity, natural gas and water output falling 10.2%. The volume of textile industry output, which accounts for 7% of overall industrial output, plummeted by 40%. Most of the contraction is observed in Bishkek. The Kyrgyz stock market is following the pattern, with the volume of trade in the period January-August 2009 having fallen by 46%.

In a bid to stimulate the economy, the Central Bank reduced its discount rate to 4.5%. Overall, the Central Bank has reduced its discount rate by 70% since January. Also, the Central Bank adjusted its annual inflation forecast from 7.5% to 15%.

The National Statistics Committee published CPI data for the first eight months of the year, recording deflation at 1.9%, denoting negative trends in the economy and falling consumption.

The National Statistics Committee has nonetheless reported that GDP climbed 3.4% in the year to August.

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