



Kyrgyzstan

Last update:	23 January 2012
Author:	
Population:	5,587,443 (July 2011 est.)
Prime minister:	Omurbek Babanov (Since Sep 2011)
President:	Almazbek Atambayev (Since 1 Dec 2011)
Governemental type:	Republic
Ruling coalition:	Ata Zhurt, Social Democratic Party, Respublika Party
Last election:	Presidential 31 October 2011
Next election:	Parliamentary 2015
Sister parties:	Ata Meken (observer)

After the Tulip revolution (March 2005) that started out of discontent with the undemocratic tendencies of President Askar Akayev, the President fled the country. Subsequently Kurmanbek Bakiyev was elected President but was also ousted after he was blamed of nepotism and corruption in April 2010. An interim government was established, led by interim President Roza Otunbayeva of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). She composed a referendum in June 2010 in which Kyrgyz citizens voted in favour of the introduction of a parliamentary democracy and constitutional changes, including curbing presidential powers. As a result of the outcome of the referendum the first free and fair parliamentary elections took place on 10 October 2010, followed by presidential elections in October 2011. The country is now the first parliamentary democracy in Central Asia.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most worrying problems in Kyrgyzstan are the ethnic tensions between the Kyrgyz and the large Uzbek minority in the south. In June 2010 these tensions led to several days of clashes and killing between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek groups leading to more than 400 killings (officially but probably more). The division in the country is reflected in the outcome of the 2010 parliamentary elections where nationalistic parties had a strong support in the south.

Ata Zhurt, was the big winner in the parliamentary elections 2010, closely followed by the Social Democratic Party. The victory of Ata Zhurt has been a surprise to many as the nationalistic party wants to go back to a presidential form of government, something that was just voted against in the referendum in June 2010. On 17 December 2010 the Kyrgyz parliament approved a new government coalition with Ata Zhurt, the Social Democratic Party and the Respublika Party. Almazbek Atambayev, the leader of the Social Democratic Party was elected President on 30 October 2011.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL SITUATION

Political overview since Kyrgyz independence

Since Kyrgyzstan's independence in 1991 until 2005 the republic was ruled by President Askar Akayev. At first, Akayev was considered a liberal President, but his regime turned more authoritarian the longer he was in charge. In 2002 demonstrations against his rule broke out for the first time. Akayev promised to step down from office in



2005 after three presidential terms, but instead he tried to secure his power in other ways. Mass protests erupted in March against his rule following the Parliamentary elections in February 2005, because of the obvious failure to meet (international) democratic standards, such as a balanced media coverage. This led to the Tulip Revolution that officially started on 24 March 2005. The term 'Tulip Revolution' was used by Akayev himself in a speech warning that no "Color Revolution" should happen in Kyrgyzstan, after the non-violent Revolution's in Georgia and Ukraine in 2004. During the Tulip Revolution, the opposition marched to the government building to demand the resignation of President Akayev and after a clash with pro-government protestors, the opposition took over the building. On 24 March 2005 Akayev fled to Kazakhstan and later to Russia where he was invited by President Putin to stay. Subsequently Kurmanbek Bakiyev, opposition leader and former Prime Minister (PM), was appointed as acting PM in March 2005.

Previous elections 2007/2009

On 16 December 2007 early Parliamentary elections were held. The presidential Ak Jol People's Party ("Bright Way"), was the great winner, gaining almost 47 per cent of the votes and receiving 71 seats in Parliament. Despite the fact that the Ata-Meken party (merged with the Ak-Shumkar party) came in second with about 8.7 per cent of the votes at national level, the party did not receive any seats as it did not pass the regional threshold of 0.5 per cent in the south. The Social Democratic party gained 11 seats in Parliament, while the Communist Party got eight seats. In total, 23 women were given a seat in Parliament, making the proportion of women 23.56 per cent. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) affirmed that the vote did not comply with some OSCE standards.

In July 2009 presidential elections were held and won by Bakiyev with 76.4 percent of the votes. After the results were announced the opposition refused to accept the outcome of the vote, and accused the authorities of election fraud. Sporadic opposition demonstrations to protest the election results were held.

Violent anti-government demonstrations April 2010

In April 2010 thousands of demonstrators went out in the streets of the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek and other Kyrgyz cities to air their dissatisfaction with the regime, the high unemployment rate and the high energy prices. When Bakiyev came to power he promised to tackle these problems, but he lapsed into the authoritarian behaviour of his predecessor Akayev. The protests turned violent in Bishkek on 7 April, after President Bakiyev ordered the security forces to arrest some demonstrators. Consequently, protesters started attacking the police and tried to storm the government building by crushing its fences. The police reacted by shooting out opposition demonstrators, killing an estimated 85 of them and leaving many more injured.

The violence continued for several days and at the end of the week President Bakiyev fled to the southern part of the country to seek the support of his followers mostly living there. Meanwhile, on 7 April, the opposition forces formed an interim coalition government, led by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Roza Otunbayeva. Otunbayeva was the head of the Parliamentary group of the opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP) since October 2009. On 9 April, she announced plans to call elections in six months. Ultimately Bakiyev fled to Belarus, where he was granted amnesty by Belarusian leader Aleksander Lukashenka. Seven months later, on 17 November, a court in Bishkek began hearing the trial of Bakiyev and 27 of his aides in connection with the deadly shooting of protesters that April. Roza Otunbayeva was inaugurated as the official interim President on 3 July 2010, following the referendum that took place on 27 June 2010.

Ethnic violence June 2010

Tensions between the Kyrgyz and the ethnic Uzbek minority in the south of Kyrgyzstan came to a head at the beginning of June 2010. On 11 June ethnic violence erupted in Osh and Jalalabad, following which about 400,000 Kyrgyz from Uzbek descent were forced to leave their homes and approximately 100,000 resided in refugee camps in Uzbekistan. According to official numbers over 400 people were killed, but the real number of casualties is estimated to be several times higher. By the end of June the situation was stabilised, but the sudden outbreak of ethnic violence clearly illustrates the difficulties Kyrgyzstan is dealing with.



It is thought that the ouster of Bakiyev who supported the Kyrgyz in the south contributed to those tensions, but the exact reason that sparked the ethnic clashes is not clear. Fourteen percent of the Kyrgyz population is made up of Uzbek people. However, in the southern cities they make up one-third of the population. The Uzbek in the south mainly support the interim government, while many Kyrgyz back former President Bakiyev. Interim leader Otunbayeva acknowledged that her government was not able to ease the tensions in Osh. The Kyrgyz interim government appealed for Russian assistance, but Moscow refused to send in peacekeepers as did the Central Asian countries. Both the UN and the EU raised concerns about the situation.

Constitutional Referendum 27 June 2010

On 27 June 2010 the Kyrgyz voted in a referendum for the introduction of a Parliamentary democracy after the ethnic unrest in the preceding weeks. Many people were unsure whether to proceed with the referendum considering the many (Uzbek) people who were homeless at that time. The interim government decided to pursue the referendum, because it would also give legitimacy to the new government. Over 90 per cent of the participants voted in favour of the proposed constitution.

According to the new constitution, no political party can be created on religious or ethnic grounds, and members of the armed forces, police, and the judiciary are not allowed to join a political party. Another significant change is that the President has lost the right to appoint all 13 members of the Central Election Commission. That key electoral body now consists largely of independent civil society leaders.

The voter turnout was nearly 70 percent. OSCE monitored the elections and stated that “although there were evident shortcomings, the reported high turnout indicates citizens' resilience and desire to shape the future of their country”. Some Uzbeks had problems with voting, because their passports were destroyed during the riots or they were afraid to leave their neighbourhoods to vote. The interim government decided that people could vote without their passport if they registered their home address at a municipal office. Overall, the international election commissions administered the process in a largely transparent, collegiate and timely manner.

Parliamentary elections October 2010

On 10 October Parliamentary elections were held in Kyrgyzstan. Twenty-nine parties competed in the race, representing just a fifth of Kyrgyzstan's registered political parties. According to the new constitution one of the requirements for parties to register for elections is to have a list of 120 candidates. An other reason for the low amount of representation is the fact that a lot of parties are inactive, have a low amount of members and revolve around one or two key figures. The political party structure of Kyrgyzstan is relatively fragmented and in an ongoing process of development. The Ata-Zhurt party, led by former officials of ousted President Bakiyev's government, finished first with 8.89% of the votes. The Social Democratic party followed with 8.04% of the votes. The final turnout was 55.9%. In total only five parties passed the threshold of 5% to obtain seats in the parliament. The ceiling is that no party can obtain more than 65 of the 120 seats parliament.

Final results

Party	% of eligible votes	Seats
Ata-Zhurt	8.89	28
Social Democratic Party	8.04	26
Ar-Namys	7.74	25
Respublika	7.24	23
Ata-Meken	5.6	18

In the run-up to the elections the Ata-Zhurt party was expected to win seats in the parliament. However, polls that



had been taken during the election campaign did not indicate the party would finish first. Ata-Zhurt has been critical of the outcome of the constitutional referendum, and it had campaigned on a strongly nationalist platform. According to Kyrgyz analysts the party was able to overcome its unpopularity in the north of the country due to its strong support in the south.

Despite some reported flaws and irregularities, the OSCE praised the elections as free and fair and stated that the election results “reflected the will of the people,” adding that it “constituted a further consolidation of the democratic process and brought the country closer to meeting its international commitments on democratic elections.” About the election campaign international observers stated that it was highly competitive and “political parties were generally able to campaign freely without major impediments or incidents.”

New government

On 17 December 2010 the Kyrgyz parliament approved a new government coalition of the Respublika Party, together with the Social Democratic Party and the Ata-Zhurt Party. They control 77 out of 120 seats in the parliament. Previously a coalition of the Social Democratic Party, Respublika and Ata Meken had been formed by Almazbek Atambayev (SDP), but it collapsed after it failed to elect a new speaker of parliament. The new government has eighteen ministries, and includes Prime Minister Omurbek Babanov, (Leader of the Respublika Party).

Gender representation

Women make up 52% of the Kyrgyz society and 42.5% of the Labour force. Article 3 of the Constitution of Kyrgyzstan prohibits all discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnic origin or religious belief. The civil, penal, labour and family codes of Kyrgyzstan all uphold equal rights and the legal framework protecting Kyrgyz women’s rights complies with international standards. However, discrimination against women and violence against women is becoming increasingly widespread. Women are generally ill-informed about their rights and the traditional patriarchal system perpetuates gender-based stereotypes. In Kyrgyzstan 28 of the 120 seats in parliament are allocated to women, which makes up 23.3% of the seats.

Presidential elections 2011

On 30 October, presidential elections were held in Kyrgyzstan. The OSCE said the elections were conducted in a peaceful manner, but improvements must be made to comply with international standards. Sixteen candidates competed in the race, but a total of 24 showed up at the ballot, with eight names crossed out because they withdrew from the race shortly before the elections. Almazbek Atambaev, the former prime minister of the Central Asian country, won the elections in the first round with 63 percent of the votes. The turnout was 57 percent.

Final Results

Candidate	Votes	Percentage
Almazbek Atambaev	1,173,113	63.2
Adakhan Madumarov	273,577	14.7
Kamchybek Tashiev	265,460	14.3
Temirbek Asanbekov	17,174	0.9

The campaigns of the candidates focused mainly on personality and how the candidates related to the deep divide between the north and the south of the country. Atambaev campaigned as a leader that might be able to unite the country again, after the violent protests of April 2010. The wealthy businessman had the best-funded campaign and enjoyed significant public exposure by serving as prime minister until the elections. His two main rivals, Madumarov and Tashiev campaigned as nationalists both from the south, with especially Tashiev using harsh rhetoric.

Both the OSCE and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights noted irregularities with regard to the



voter rolls. Many names were missing, thus preventing people from voting. There were also problems with counting and tabulation of votes in some districts, with observers being completely barred from this part of the process. The OSCE also reported that media were severely restricted in their reporting on the campaigns in hopes of preventing biased journalism. Finally, it was noted that the Central Election Commission, although impartial in its work, should strive to be more open in order to raise public confidence. Most of its meetings were behind closed doors.

POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties in the republic are highly personified. People tend to vote for a person rather than for the party's ideology or program. Accordingly, the political parties focus on their list of candidates which they constitute out of people enjoying popularity and influence among the population. Similarly, most politicians do not regard political parties as much more than a vehicle to get into the Parliament. One of the results is the existence of more than hundred political parties in the republic.

LEFTIST PARTIES

Social Democratic Party (SDPK)
Chairperson: Almazbek Atambayev

The Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK) was founded in 1993 by Abdygany Erkebaev, who was replaced by Amambek Atambayev as its chairman in 1999. The party formed a coalition with the larger EI Party in preparation for the February 2005 parliamentary elections. The SDPK emphasizes a socially oriented development, economic revival and has been a great pleader for the establishment of a parliamentary system. The party played an important role in the Tulip Revolution of 2005 and in large-scale public protests against the Bakiev government in April and November 2006. Prominent members are Roza Otunbayeva the interim President from April 2010 until December 2011 and the current President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev. Because the party is one of the few parties in Kyrgyzstan that genuinely calls for a liberal democracy, it has good ties with the west. The party is said to have contacts with the Socialist International (SI), but it does not have any status within the SI. The SDPK came in second in the parliamentary elections of 2010 gaining 26 seats. They formed a coalition with the Respublika Party and the Ata-Zhurt Party.

Ata-Meken (Fatherland) / Socialist Party
Chairperson: Omurbek Tekebayev
Observer Status at the Socialist International

Omurbek Tekebayev founded Ata-Meken in 1992 following a split from the Erkin Kyrgyzstan party. He has been the party leader ever since. The party participated in all parliamentary elections, winning seats in the Kyrgyz parliament in 1994 and 2000. Tekebayev was Speaker of Parliament from March 2005 till February 2006, but resigned after a clash with former President Bakiyev. The party favours parliamentary democracy and economic reforms and can be considered centre left. It favours a compromise between various social sectors and government bodies. Ata-Meken is popular mostly in the north of Kyrgyzstan. Therefore the party is trying to strengthen its ranks with members of the Parliament representing different regions, hoping to widen its support bases. In the parliamentary elections of 2010 it finished fifth. The party has 18 seats in the parliament.

The Party of Communists
Chairperson: Bumairam Mamaseitova

The Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan (KPK) says to have about 2000 members and is one of the largest parties in Kyrgyzstan. The party was founded in 1992. The party's ideology could be considered as social democratic. It



accepts a pluralistic political system and a market economy but is strongly opposed to the privatization of public assets such as the energy system. Mamaseitova's predecessor was Iskhak Masaliev. He is the son of former party-leader Absamat Masaliev, who led the party until his death in 2004. Iskhak Masaliev resigned in August 2010 as he was detained in May that year, accused of planning mass disorder and attempting to overthrow the government. His case was sent to court on 25 October 2010. Masaliev said his detention prevented him from campaigning for the parliamentary elections. The Communists failed to garner enough votes in the October parliamentary elections to have seats in the parliament.

OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES

Ata Zhurt (Fatherland)
Chairperson: Kamchybek Tashiev

The right-wing party Ata Zhurt won the most seats (28) in the parliamentary elections of October 2010. This was seen as a surprise because the nationalistic party wants to go back to a presidential form of government, something that was just voted against in the referendum in June 2010. The party was founded in 2004 by interim President Otunbayeva (2010–2011) and several others. Otunbayeva however later became a member of the SDPK. Ata Zhurt has a strong base in south Kyrgyzstan, because of its hard-line nationalistic rhetoric and call for economic support of the southern part of the country. The party has warned minorities not to seek equal rights with ethnic Kyrgyz. A few days before the election, on 7 October 2010, the headquarters of the party in Bishkek were seized by a mob calling for the party to be banned. Reason for this uproar is the fact that Ata Zhurt is closely linked to former President Bakiyev and even called for his restoration to power. Ata Zhurt formed a coalition with the Social Democratic Party and Respublika Party.

Ar-Namys (Dignity)
Chairperson: Felix Kulov

Ar-Namys was founded in 1999 by former Soviet general Felix Kulov. This party quickly became Kyrgyzstan's leading opposition party against President Akayev. However, the Ar-Namys party was denied registration in the 2000 parliamentary elections and in March that year Kulov was accused of corruption and sentenced to seven years in prison. The party then formed the People's Congress of Kyrgyzstan electoral alliance together with three other opposition parties in 2001, of which Kulov became the chairperson, although he was still in prison. In 2004, Ar-Namys joined the 'For Fair Elections opposition alliance' in preparation for the 2005 elections that would lead to the Tulip Revolution and the ouster of President Akayev. Instead of running for president, Kulov joined forces with Kurmanbek Bakiyev serving as prime minister in President Bakiyev's government. However he resigned in November 2006 which meant an automatic dismissal of the cabinet. Ar-Namys participated in the 2010 parliamentary elections and came in third with 25 seats. Kulov favours close relations with Russia and visited Russian President Medvedev ahead of the elections. Furthermore, Ar-Namys promised that they would amend the constitution and re-adopt the presidential system in their election campaign. The party also recognizes ethnic diversity as an asset of the Kyrgyz people.

Respublika
Chairperson: Omurbek Babanov

Respublika is a new party founded in 2010. Unlike other nationalistic parties, the pro-parliamentary party Respublika embraces Kyrgyzstan's ethnic diversity. Moreover, the party tries to capture the youth vote. In the 2010 parliamentary elections, of the top ten candidates on the party list, the 40-year old leader of Respublika, businessman Omurbek Babanov, was the second oldest, and the youngest being only 25. Babanov (previously deputy prime minister under Bakiyev), is one of Kyrgyzstan's richest citizens, giving the party considerable financial resources. Due to business considerations, Babanov has welcomed closer ties with both Russia and the European



Union, the US and Turkey. Respublika came in fourth in the parliamentary elections of 2010 and currently has 23 seats in parliament. Respublika has formed a governing coalition with Ata Zhurt and the Social Democratic Party. Omurbek Babanov currently is the Prime Minister.

Ak-Shumkar (White Falcon)
Chairperson: Temir Sariev

Ak-Shumkar did not gain any seats in the 2010 parliamentary elections, even though the party was seen as a genuine contender. The party received only 2.6 percent of the votes, far below the threshold of 5 percent. Ak-Shumkar was founded in 2005 as "Union of Democratic Forces". Its leader, Temir Sariev, was a candidate in the 2009 presidential elections (receiving 7 percent of the votes). The party wants to give more power to the business community and favours free and fair elections.

Butun Kyrgyzstan (United Kyrgyzstan)
Chairperson: Adakhan Madumarov

Butun Kyrgyzstan is a nationalistic party popular in the south of the country, with a leader who previously served as the national security council chief under former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. The party won 4.8 percent of the votes in the parliamentary elections of 2010, just below the threshold to gain any seats in the parliament.

Zamandash
Chairperson: Muktarbek Omurakunov

The Kyrgyz diaspora has created parties representing the interests of hundreds of thousands of Kyrgyz labour immigrants abroad. The biggest of those parties is called Zamandash, established in 2007. In the 2010 parliamentary elections Zamandash gained 2.1 percent of the vote, gaining no seats.

Asaba Party (Flag)
Chairperson: Azimbek Beknazarov

Asaba was founded in 1990 as an opposition party against former President Akayev and later against Bakiyev. Its leader Beknazarov is a lawyer and longtime opposition activist. Beknazarov was minister of Justice and vice premier in the interim government between 2010 and 2011. Asaba did not participate in the 2010 parliamentary elections.

Ak Jol People's Party (Bright Way)

This party was founded by former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev on 15 October 2007 to run in the Parliamentary elections in December 2007. The party won the elections and gained 71 of the 90 seats in Parliament. The party disappeared together with the ouster of former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev.

BIOGRAPHIES

Almazbek Atambayev
President of Kyrgyzstan
Leader of the Social Democratic Party



Almazbek Atambayev was born on 17 September 1956 in the village of Arashan in the north of Kyrgyzstan. He graduated at the Moscow Institute of Management with a degree in economics and went into business afterwards, becoming director of manufacturing companies. In 1983 - 1987 he served in the Supreme Council of the Kyrgyz SSR. Atambayev is one of the founding members of the Social Democratic Party and became its chairman in 1999. He ran for President in the 2000 elections, but was unsuccessful. In 2005 and 2006 Atambayev headed the Ministry of industry, trade and tourism, but resigned in April 2006 as he accused Bakiyev of corruption and of blocking reforms. Nonetheless, in April 2007 he became prime minister under Bakiyev as his appointment was seen as a concession to the opposition. However, in November 2007 he resigned again, because of Bakiyev's nepotism and corruption. He participated in the 2009 presidential elections as a candidate and received about 8 percent of the vote. Together with others he claimed there were mass violations, but his protest was unsuccessful.

After the ouster of President Bakiyev, interim President Roza Otunbayeva appointed Atambayev as interim Deputy Prime Minister and interim Minister of economic affairs. On 17 December 2010 he was chosen to be Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, in a coalition government with the SDP, Respublika and Ata Zhurt after the parliamentary elections. Subsequently Atambayev won 60% of the votes in the presidential elections of October 2011. At his swearing-in he urged unity among political camps. "Without stability, he said, Kyrgyzstan had no future." Mr Atambayev wants to guide Kyrgyzstan towards a Russia-dominated Customs Union zone, and has spoken of Kyrgyzstan's "common future" with its neighbours and Russia. He said after his election that the US air base at Manas - a logistics hub for the Afghan conflict - should be shut down when its lease expires in 2014. His support base is in the Russian-leaning north of Kyrgyzstan.

Omurbek Babanov
Prime Minister
Leader Respublika party

Omurbek Babanov (1970), the wealthy leader of the Respublika party, is a relatively new player on the political scene of Kyrgyzstan. He was elected Prime Minister on December 24 by 113 out of 120 members of parliament, with just two votes against. Babanov pledged to achieve stability, eradicate corruption, and fight crime stating that "the nation wants to have more jobs, peace, and stability." Babanov, served as the first vice prime minister of Kyrgyzstan in the transitional period after the ouster of former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in April 2010 until December 2011. The Kyrgyz prime minister has full executive power and by constitution is consulted in foreign policy matters by the president.

Kamchybek Tashiev
Leader Ata- Zhurt

Also Kamchybek Tashiev is a relative newcomer to the Kyrgyz political scene and was by many seen as the most controversial of the presidential candidates for the presidential elections in 2011. He has been an member of parliament and served as minister under President Bakiyev. Disagreements led to his resignation in 2009, leaving Mr Tashiev free to emerge as an influential opposition leader as the Bakiyev administration fell. But critics still accuse him of links with the former President. Mr Tashiev 's numerous followers in the cities of Osh and Jalalabad credit him with stopping the bloodshed during ethnic clashes there in June 2010. But his claims that Uzbek community leaders instigated the violence earned him the image of a divisive nationalist, a label that has also been attached to his party Ata Zhurt. Mr Tashiev is known to be a supporter of strong presidential power. Tashiev came third with 14.3 %.

Adahan Madumarov
Leader United Kyrgyzstan Party



Adahan Madumarov studied in Russia and Kyrgyzstan and started his media career in newspapers and on state TV. He is an articulate speaker with a sharp tongue who made his name as a young television presenter. His celebrity assured him his way into parliament. Madumarov was a fierce critic of the first Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev. He then took a number of positions in the subsequent Bakiyev government, serving as deputy prime minister, state secretary and later as speaker of the parliament. Adahan Madumarov later fell out with President Bakiyev and became part of the opposition. His party was only established after the ouster of former President Bakiyev. Madumarov promises to bring order and a "dictatorship of law" in the run up to the presidential elections where he became second with 14.75 percent of the vote. He has a solid support in the south of the country.

Felix Kulov
Leader Ar-Namys

Felix Kulov (1948) was born in 1948 in Biskek and is a graduate of the Police Academy of the USSR. Kulov held various positions in the Kyrgyz government under the rule of President Askar Akayev. He served as governor of the northern Chui region, as mayor of Bishkek, head of the national security service and he was vice president of the Kyrgyz Republic from 1992 until 1993. During his vice presidency Kulov oversaw the launch of the Kyrgyz national currency, but he was forced to resign over missing gold reserves. Kulov was arrested in 2000 on charges of abuse of official position and imprisoned until being released following the 2005 Tulip Revolution, with all charges being overturned. During these events, Kulov became one of the leading candidates for the presidential elections. He decided, however, to join forces with Bakiyev, becoming his Prime Minister until he and his cabinet resigned over the new constitution in November 2006. The parliament did not accept his re-nomination to the post of Prime Minister in the beginning of 2007, after which Kulov, together with the party, decided to join the opposition forces again, claiming that President Bakiyev tried to get rid of him. Kulov's party became third in the parliamentary elections of 2010.

Omurbek Tekebayev
Leader of the Ata-Meken Party

Omurbek Tekebayev was born in 1958 in Jalalabad. Tekebayev graduated in physics and in law from the Kyrgyz State National University. In 1991 he was one of the founders of the Erkin Kyrgyzstan National Democratic Party. One year later the party split and he founded the Ata-Meken Party and served in the Kyrgyz parliament from 1995 to 2005. Tekebayev ran for president in 2000, receiving 14 percent of the votes. When Akayev was ousted in 2005 he became the speaker of the new parliament. Tekebayev resigned in 2006 and played a key role in organizing protests against Bakiyev in 2006. He founded the For Reforms Party, demanding reforms from Bakiyev. Tekebayev stepped down as chairman of the party in March 2007, but remained politically active and an outspoken critic of Bakiyev. He was arrested on 6 April 2010 during the violent protests against Bakiyev, but was released later that day. Tekebayev was appointed to serve as Deputy in charge of carrying out constitutional reforms by interim President Roza Otunbayeva. Despite hailing from the south, Tekebayev is seen by many as one of the few politicians who attracts support (and vehement opposition) across regional cleavages. When the new parliament was formed, Tekebayev was nominated as speaker for the ruling coalition. However, he narrowly failed to win the majority vote required to endorse his candidacy. Ata-Meken subsequently entered opposition as the smallest of the five parties in the national legislature.

Roza Otunbayeva
Interim President of Kyrgyzstan 2010–2011

Roza Otunbayeva was born on 23 August 1950 in Osh. She graduated from the Philosophy Faculty of Moscow State University in 1972 and went on to teach as senior professor and head of the philosophy department at the Kyrgyz State National University. Her political career began in 1981 in Bishkek as the second secretary of the Lenin "rayon" council of the Communist Party. From 1986–1989 Otunbayeva was the deputy chairwoman of the council of



ministers. Subsequently she served as head of the USSR Delegation to UNESCO in Paris and as the Soviet Ambassador in Malaysia. In 1992 Otunbayeva became the Kyrgyz ambassador to the USA and Canada and from 1994 until 1997 she served as the Kyrgyz Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister under Akayev. After that she became the Kyrgyz ambassador to the United Kingdom and the United Nations special deputy to Georgia.

Otunbayeva returned to Kyrgyzstan in 2004 and founded the Ata-Zhurt party together with three other opposition parliamentarians. She was a driving force behind protests against Akayev and after the Tulip Revolution she was appointed Foreign Minister by the new President Bakiyev. However the parliament failed to confirm her in the post. Otunbayeva then went into opposition as a member of the Social Democratic Party. She played a key role in the November 2006 protests that pressed successfully for a new democratic constitution, and became highly critical of Bakiyev, saying that his government continued the corruption and nepotism of Akayev. Otunbayeva was elected into parliament in December 2007 and served as head of the parliamentary group of the Social Democratic Party from October 2009.

On 7 April 2010 Otunbayeva was selected by opposition leaders as the interim President, receiving overwhelming popular support in the June referendum. She was the first female interim Head of State in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. Otunbayeva was prohibited from running in the following presidential elections that were held in 2011. Her term ended on 1 December 2011 after Almazbek Atambayev was elected in the presidential elections on 30 October 2011.

Kurmanbek Bakiyev
Former President of Kyrgyzstan

Kurmanbek Bakiyev was born on 1 August 1949 in the current village of Teyyet, in the Jalalabad Province. He graduated from the Kuybyshev Polytechnic Institute in Russia in 1978 and returned to Jalalabad where he had a job as a senior engineer-mathematician and as the director of an electronic industry. Next, he entered politics. From 1990 to 2000 he served in the local and oblast administration, being the head of the Jalalabad oblast from 1995 to 1997 and the Chui oblast from 1997 to 2000. Then in 2001 he became prime minister under Akayev, but was forced to resign over the death of five demonstrators in March 2002. In October that year he was elected to the Kyrgyz parliament. In March 2005 Bakiyev was appointed as the acting Prime Minister and President under Akayev. However, the latter resigned in April after the Tulip Revolution. Consequently, in July 2005, Bakiyev was elected President of Kyrgyzstan, to be re-elected again in 2009. During his presidential term Bakiyev had a difficult relationship with the parliament as they constantly disagreed on the distribution of powers. Moreover, Bakiyev faced public discontent among the Kyrgyz people over the economy, corruption and political fraud, even though he pledged to end nepotism and corruption and to fight poverty. This led to his ouster in April 2010, following violent riots in Bishkek. Bakiyev currently lives in Belarus where he was granted amnesty by Belarusian leader Aleksandr Lukashenka.