POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION:
THE CASE OF ASKAR AKAEV IN POST-SOVIET KYRGYZSTAN

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the role of political leadership in post-Soviet democratic transition in Kyrgyzstan by looking at the case of Askar Akaev. Despite the fact that a variety of components can be considered as relevant for the democratic transition process in Kyrgyzstan, due to the highly personalistic nature of Kyrgyz politics, the issue of political leadership needs to be addressed for this purpose. In that sense, the converse trajectories of Kyrgyz democratization (an initial democratic leap till mid-1990s which attracted world-wide attention and made Kyrgyzstan a promising candidate for democratization, afterward a democratic reversion and finally a slip to authoritarianism) correspond to the three stages in Akaev's political leadership style (his emergence as a reform-minded politician, his initial liberal policies in political and economic spheres and his gradual reversion to authoritarianism). As a result, when Askar Akaev was ousted from his office in March 2005 by a public protest, Kyrgyzstan was far away from its world-wide accepted initial trajectory to democracy and became more similar to other authoritarian Central Asian Republics.

Keywords: Political Leadership, Democratization, Post-Soviet Transition, Kyrgyzstan, Authoritarianism

ÖZ

POLİTİK LİDERLİK VE DEMOKRATİK DÖNÜŞÜM:
SOVYET SONRASI KIRGIZİSTAN'DA ASKAR AKAEV ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu tez Askar Akaev ve Sovyet sonrası dönemde Kırgızistan'daki demokratikleşme bağlamında politik liderliğin bu süreçteki rolünü incelemektedir. Her ne kadar Kırgızistan'ın demokratik geçiş süreciyle ilgili pek çok değişken bulunsa da Kırgız siyasetinin kişiye dayalı yapısı düşünüldüğünde böyle bir inceleme için politik liderlik konusuna değinilmesi gerektiği açıktır. Bu bağlamda, Kırgız demokratikleşmesinin değişen yörüngesi (1990'ların ortasına kadar süren, dünya çapında dikkat çeken ve Kırgızistan'ın demokratikleşme adına ümit vadeden bir aday olarak algılanmasını sağlayan demokratik atılım, sonrasındaki demokrasiden geri dönüş ve sonunda otoriterliğe kayış) Akaev'in politik liderliğinde değişen süreçlerle (reform yanlısı bir lider olarak ortaya çıkışı, başlarda yürüttüğü politik ve ekonomik içerikli liberal politikaları ve aşamalı olarak otoriterliğe kayışı) eşleşmektedir. Sonuç olarak, Akaev 2005 yılının Mart ayında halk protestosu sonucu görevden alındığında, Kırgızistan dünya genelinde kabul gören başlangıçtaki demokratik çizgisinden çok uzakta ve diğer otoriter Orta Asya Cumhuriyetleri'ne daha yakın bir noktada duruyordu.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Politik Liderlik, Demokratikleşme, Sovyet Sonrası Dönemde Geçiş, Kırgızistan, Otoriterlik

To my dear mother, father and brother;

Fatma, Yenal and Sertaç Öraz

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ASSR   Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

CARs   Central Asian Republics

CIS   Commonwealth of Independent States

CPK   Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan

CPSU   Communist Party of Soviet Union

DMK   Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan

EBRD   European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

ICG   International Crisis Group

IMF   International Monetary Fund

KAO   Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast

NKVD   Narodnoy Kommisariat Vnutrennih Del (Soviet Secret Police)

OSCE   Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

SMDs   Single- Member Districts

SSR   Soviet Socialist Republic

UN   United Nations

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

USSR   Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis attempts to analyze the impact of Askar Akaev's political leadership in Kyrgyzstan's failed democratic transition. Despite the fact that a variety of reasons can be considered as relevant for this transition (such as historical, political, economic and social conditions), this thesis aims to focus on one particular factor: political leadership. On 31 August 1991, Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic changed its official title of the last 74 years and re-emerged as a sovereign state under the name of "Kyrgyzstan". Kyrgyzstan was one of the other fifteen states, each of which gained its independence right after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist system. That situation basically meant that the ex-communist part of the world was getting ready for their transition processes as post-communist states. Consequently, this process referred to the implementation of important and harsh economic, social and political reforms, to transform their communist systems under command or planned economy to democratic nation states adopting rules of market economy. That was difficult enough for all the newly independent republics of the Soviet era[1], but especially more so for the new republics of Central Asia, that is, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The reason behind this difficulty was related to the fact that the new republics of Central Asia were totally inexperienced in state building process. Having lived under first Tsarist Russian, then Soviet domination, they had neither similar experiences of state-building nor necessary skills and tools in social, economic and political aspects to survive as independent states. Thus, that was the framework in which the five Central Asian countries started their transition processes. Just as mirrors have two faces, building sovereign nation states had two meanings for the Central Asian republics: an opportunity and a challenge. In that regard, Kyrgyzstan to a certain extend could meet the challenge in the transition, it succeeded in carrying out a series of reforms, which was also confirmed by the outside world. This approval was the consequence of Kyrgyzstan's willingness to transform itself

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[1] Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

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into a democratically governed state by initiating political democratization via the formation of democratic institutions, political pluralism, rule of law, civil society etc. Simultaneously, Kyrgyzstan also committed itself to radical economic reforms such as leaving the ruble zone, adopting its own currency, implementing land reform and privatization policies and joining various international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and World Trade Organization (WTO). In a very short period of time, thus, Kyrgyzstan became the major foreign aid receiver as compared to any other member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and was labeled as "the island of democracy"[2] in the region. However, things have started to change and Kyrgyzstan's trajectory toward democratization has shifted towards a less democratic rule since the mid-1990s. What the observers generally agreed upon for the era after 1995 was an exact failure of democratization process and a subsequent reversal to authoritarianism in Kyrgyzstan. In this context, this thesis aims to incorporate political leadership as a significant variable in order to analyze Kyrgyzstan's reversal to authoritarianism and to explore the impact of Askar Akaev's leadership in Kyrgyzstan's changing trajectory in its process of transition to democracy.

Despite the fact that this thesis specifically focus on the political leadership issue, there is a couple of variables available in understanding the failure of democratization in Central Asian Republics (CARs), which can be summarized in three broad categories: historical Soviet legacy, economic problems and socio-cultural structure of the region.[3] In this context, seventy-four year lasted Soviet dominance over the region left very important marks behind. Most importantly, the region was experienced a strict communist rule during all these years of Soviet dominance. Having practiced communism, the political and economic structures of CARs were designed in harmony with the communist ideology, which was obviously inappropriate to democratic ones. Even after the collapse of USSR and communism, CARs are still headed by the

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[2] John Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy*, Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998

[3] More information about each topic will be provided in Chapter II.

former communist party bureaucrats with their communist mentality. Likewise, except Akaev, the other four presidents were the former first secretaries of their local Communist Party branches, who used to rule their republics by communist principles. Beside, the general economic situation of the region was devastating. Each of the CARs is being struggled by poverty and harsh economic problems so that the main priority of the Central Asian people eventually evolved as to improve their life standards economically rather than politically. Among all CARs, Kyrgyzstan seemed to be the unluckiest while it did not have any natural sources (oil, petrol, cotton etc.) like in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan. Last but not least important, the socio-cultural structures of the region were also challenging. Historically Central Asian societies were organized according to tribes, which pose a central role in social, economic and political life in Central Asia. Even tribes were defined as the key notion of CARs' political frame. Due to the fact that there existed strong loyalty within each tribes and their members, a system of patronage network were developed instead of central state apparatus. This general picture of the region gave some insights about the characteristics of Central Asian political systems, (which were strongly presidential, weakly institutionalized and highly personalized) and underlined the importance of the leadership in the political processes of the region.

In that sense, what was the relationship between Askar Akaev's political leadership and Kyrgyzstan's overall transition process? Did President Akaev contribute to the process of democratic transition in Kyrgyzstan or not? From which aspects did Akaev affect the democratic transition of Kyrgyzstan? Were there any differences in the presidency of Akaev in pre-independence and post-independence periods? Was Akaev basically an authoritarian leader or was he merely adopting a democratic discourse initially? These are the questions this thesis will try to answer. In doing so, the policies Akaev implemented, the constitutions he adopted, the relations he engaged with the rest of the state bureaucracy, political elites, society and the outside world, and the social, political and economic circumstances within which he worked during his office are all explanatory for the purpose of the analysis in this thesis. Moving from these key points, Askar Akaev's involvement as the

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political leader of his country will be clarified during the democratic transition process of Kyrgyzstan.

The reason of choosing Akaev's Kyrgyzstan is related to two main facts. First, Askar Akaev initially posed a somewhat different profile relative to his other Central Asian colleagues. At the beginning of the transition he gained the reputation of being the most liberal leader among the Central Asian presidents. This fact made leadership more important in the democratic transition in the case of Kyrgyzstan among other Central Asian countries. It can be argued that the difference displayed by the leaders' attitudes and policies toward transition determined the level of improvement in the transition processes of the each Central Asian regime. As Boris Rumer suggests, in Central Asia, regimes with varying degrees of authoritarianism were established behind a pseudo democratic façade. These regimes varied from relatively moderate ones like in Kyrgyzstan to the full-blown despotism like in Turkmenistan.[4] Rumer's classification is in harmony with Sally N. Cumming, who describes Akaev's government in Kyrgyzstan as mildly authoritarian, Nazarbaev's government in Kazakhstan as authoritarian with limited liberalization, Karimov's government in Uzbekistan as located between sultanism and authoritarianism, Rahmonov's government in Tajikistan as oligarchic and Niyazov's government in Turkmenistan as the closest to sultanism.[5] Secondly, being ousted by a public revolt in March 2005, Akaev completed his term which provides the opportunity to analyze a definite term with a beginning and an end. The other four Central Asian countries have been governed by the same presidents since their independence; Nazarbaev has been the president of Kazakhstan since 1991, Karimov since 1990, Niyazov[6] since 1992 and Rahmonov since 1994.

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[4] Boris Rumer, "Central Asia at the End of the Transition", in *Central Asia at the End of the Transition*, Boris Rumer (ed.), New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005, p.3

[5] Sally N. Cummings, "Introduction", *Power and Change in Central Asia*, Sally N. Cummings (ed.), London:Routledge, 2002, p.8

[6] Saparmurat Niyazov died in office on 21 December 2006.

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1.1 POLITICAL LEADERSHIP and DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

For this thesis two main bodies of literature are relevant: political leadership literature and transition literature. Although this thesis specifically utilizes the theoretical framework of political leadership in political transition process, it is also necessary to look at the main arguments of political leadership and transition literatures separately.

1.1.1 The Relationship between Political Leadership and Political Outcomes

As Blondel once put it,

> If one reduces politics to its bare bones, to what is most visible to most citizens, it is the national political leaders, both at home and abroad, that remain once everything else has been erased; they are the most universal, the most recognized, the most talked about elements of political life.[7]

Analysis of the impact of political leadership on politics can be considered as a new phenomenon as the literature on this topic started to develop only after the mid-1970s, when the functions of states expanded and started to dominate social and economic lives of countries. The developments of contemporary world thus underlined the centrality of political leaders in order to facilitate social progress to shape state policies. Thus the argument followed that: "political leadership often makes a crucial difference in the lives of states and other human communities".[8] So an awakening occurred among the scholars from different disciplines outside political science such as sociology, psychology, history and social anthropology.[9] In that sense, three

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[7] Jean Blondel, *Political Leadership: Towards a General Analysis*, London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 1987, p.1

[8] Robert C. Tucker, *Politics as Leadership*, Revised Edition, London: University of Missouri Press, 1995, p.xi

[9] For more information see, Barbara Kellerman, *Political Leadership: A Source Book*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986, Glenn D. Paige, *The Scientific Study of Political Leadership*, New York: The Free Press, 1977, James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, New York: Harper and Row, 1978, Jean Blondel, *Political Leadership: Towards a General Analysis*, London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 1987, Mostafa Rejai, *Leaders of Revolution*, California: Sage Publications, 1979, Bryan D. Jones, *Leadership and Politics: New Perspectives in Political Sciences*, USA: University Press of Kansas, 1989, Robert C. Tucker, *Politics as Leadership*, Revised Edition, London:

lines of inquiry have developed within the literature on political leadership which are relevant to the analysis of this thesis: 1) the definition and ingredients of political leadership, 2) the classifications of political leadership, 3) the evolution of political leadership.

In very simple terms, political leadership is defined as the "reciprocal process of mobilizing various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers"[10]. In this context, a political leader is simply the one who pursuits and exercises politics on behalf of his/her group. As Carl Friedrich mentioned, the most common element used in the definition of political leadership, however, is "power" because "any theory of political leadership is grounded in a theory of political power"[11]. Harold Lasswell used the term "homo politicus" to define the political leader, who is a power-seeker, gradually accentuates power, demands power for the self, accentuates expectations concerning power, and acquires at least a minimum proficiency in the skills of power.[12] Abraham Kaplan also defined political leaders as the most active power-holders[13] and similarly Andrew McFarland wrote that "The leader is the one who makes things happen that would not happen otherwise"[14] by underlining that political leadership can also be defined as exercising power by one or a few individuals in order to direct members of nation towards action. However, it is a fact that although power is the most common element of political leadership, it is not the only one. Political leadership is very complex in terms of its elements, which makes it difficult to build a general theory about political leadership among political scientists. As James MacGregor Burns suggests "Leadership is one of the most

University of Missouri Press, 1995, Robert Elgie, *Political Leadership in Liberal Democracies*, London: Palgrave, 1995

[10] James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership*, New York: Harper and Row, 1978, p.425

[11] Carl J. Friedrich, "The Theory of Political Leadership and the Issue of Totalitarianism," in *Political Leadership in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, Barry R. Farrell (ed.), Chicago: Adline Publishing Company, 1970, p.17

[12] Harold D. Lasswell, *Power and Personality*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1976, p.39

[13] Harold D. Lasswell, Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950, p.152

[14] Andrew S. McFarland, *Power and Leadership in Pluralist Systems*, California: Stanford University Press, 1969, p.155

observed and least understood phenomena on earth".[15] As for Jean Blondel, the difficulty that scholars experienced in providing a general definition for political leadership is because of the complexity of the issue in terms of its constitutive elements and its interaction with other factors. According to Blondel:

> Perhaps this is because there is concern not to lose the sight of the many ways in which leadership should be examined; it is indeed important that we should focus on personality while not forgetting the role of environment, that we should give attention to behaviour while not ceasing to be interested in the roles and the institutional structures that are embedded in these roles, or, indeed, that we should study the characteristic of leaders while not losing sight of the problems posed by their aims and their achievements.[16]

Moving from here, it can be suggested that political leadership results from the interaction of various ingredients such as (1) the character of the leader, (2) the followers with whom the leader interacts, (3) the organizational or societal context in which the leadership interaction occurs, (4) the agenda of problems or task which confront the leader, (5) the techniques which the leader uses to mobilize support, and (6) the effects of leadership.[17] In that sense, political leadership can be regarded as "an umbrella concept, which can be understood only if one examines all the ingredients and their combination."[18]

In that context, in the classification of political leadership, the above mentioned ingredients and their various combinations were utilized. Some scholars focus on differences intrinsic to the leadership process; others on differences in the outcomes of that process; and still others focus on differences in sources of power.[19] Among these scholars probably the most

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[15] Burns, ibid., p.2

[16] Blondel, ibid., p.2

[17] Gillian Peele, "Leadership and Politics: A Case for a Closer Relationship?", *Leadership*, 1/2, 2005, p.192

[18] Margaret G. Hermann, "Ingredients of Leadership", in *Political Psychology: Contemporary Problems and Issues*, Margaret G. Hermann (ed.), London: Jossey-Bass Publisher, 1986, p.187

[19] Barbara Kellerman, "What are the Types of Leaders?", in *Political Leadership: A Source Book*, Barbara Kellerman (ed.), Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986, p.193

familiar method of classifying leadership was developed in the early 20th century by Max Weber, who preferred to categorize leadership by reference to its source of authority. In that sense, Weber suggested that there exists three types of legitimate authority for political leadership, which are *legal-rational*, *traditional* and *charismatic*. [20] In the case of legal authority, obedience goes to the existence of the legally established impersonal order. In traditional authority, the person or persons, who enjoy authority, are designated according to traditionally transmitted rules and thus rulers become the object of people's obedience. As for charismatic authority, it is related with "specific sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person"[21], therefore, "is lodged neither in office nor in status but derives from the capacity of a particular person to arouse and maintain belief in himself/herself as the source of legitimacy"[22].

A second method to classify leadership is developed by Harold D. Lasswell, based on personality type. Lasswell categorized the leaders as political agitator and political administrator.[23] Political agitator is described as a vivid figure, interested primarily in arousing the public for the pursuance of goals the agitator deems worthy. On contrary, political administrator is somehow more complex and as a group, administrators are more committed to the performance of specific tasks but are uncomfortable with abstractions. They also tend to be less determined about shaping the events around them.[24]

Another method to classify leaders was illustrated by James MacGregor Burns, who emphasized the relationship between the leaders and the led. Burns

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[20] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,* H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, (trans.eds.), New York: Oxford University Press, 1958 pp. 77–128 also see Max Weber, "The Types of Authority and Imperative Co-ordination," in *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization,* A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (trans.), Talcott Parsons (ed.), New York: The Free Press, 1947, Max Weber, "Types of Authority," in *Political Leadership: A Source Book,* Barbara Kellerman (ed.), Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986

[21] Weber, "The Types of Authority and Imperative Co-ordination," p.328

[22] Ann Ruth Willner, "Charismatic Leadership", in Political Leadership: A Source Book, Barbara Kellerman (ed.), Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986, p.246

[23] Harold D. Lasswell, *Psychopathology and Politics,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.77

[24] Marvin J. Folkertsma, *Ideology and Leadership,* New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988, p.6

wrote that "Leadership, unlike naked power-wielding[25], is thus inseparable from followers' needs and goals. The essence of the leader-follower relation is the interaction of persons with different levels of motivations and of power potential, including skill, in pursuit of a common or at least joint purpose. The interaction, however, takes two fundamentally forms".[26] He explained these two forms as transactional leadership and transformational leadership. In this sense, in transactional leadership the relationship between the leader and follower is functional in the sense that leaders provide certain goods, values, or services in exchange for votes, money, or support, however; "transformational leadership ultimately becomes moral and it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both". [27]

The classification of political leadership is essential in understanding the issue of the evolution of the political leadership mentioned earlier, which emerged by the 20th century. Discussing the political aspect of leadership, Lester G. Seligman focused on the two-step change in contemporary political leadership. First, he mentioned that the democratization movements of 18th and 19th centuries depersonalized the power concept, by which power was vested not to the person but to the office itself. Likewise, the emergence of law and constitutions made leadership to operate in an institutional framework in which any kind of arbitrary rule was not allowed. Second, Seligman argued that the political leadership concept was modified by the disappearance of the traditional "hero" role. Hence, the contemporary political leadership was not necessarily perceived as a set of superiority, trait or attribute peculiar to someone but rather as a role of satisfying mutual

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[25] Burns mentioned the difference between "power wielder" and "leader". He described power wielders as the ones who exercise influence by mobilizing their power base in destructive ways through establishing a direct physical control over others as in a war or conquest. Leaders on the other hand are the ones who exercise power when people with certain motives and purposes are mobilized, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers. For further information please see James MacGregor Burns, "Power Wielders and Leaders," in *Political Leadership: A Source Book*, Barbara Kellerman (ed.), pp.287-299

[26] Burns, "Power Wielders and Leaders", p.295

[27] Burns, "Leadership", p. 20

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expectation of leaders and followers.[28] As such this evolution in the political leadership concept is directly related to the evolution of societies. As Weber stated in his theory, there existed "an evolution of societies from the stage of charismatic rule to the development of legal-rational terms of rule"[29]. Today, the majority of the political leaders of contemporary world states seem to depend on legal-rational authority rather than traditional or charismatic authority. They also act as political agitators in terms of satisfying the citizens' demands by operating as a transactional leader.

Even though this is the definition of the ideal type of political leaders in contemporary democracies, that may not be the case for post-Soviet republics including Kyrgyzstan. This is because of the fact that in the study of political leadership, the relationship between the type of leadership and type of society becomes more important. In that sense, depending upon country-specific conditions, Bruce Mazlish noted that "Leadership in Tsarist Russia cum Soviet Union is obviously different from leadership in a representative democracy such as America".[30] In that sense, it can be suggested that political leadership in Kyrgyzstan is much more different than the Western type and can be rather evaluated within the general framework of Central Asia.

In analyzing the issue of leadership in Central Asia, experts seem to be in agreement on the point that in Central Asian societies there is a "reliance on leadership" which makes Central Asian presidents "only-man" of their countries.[31] They also underline the fact that Central Asian political systems are strongly presidential, where power is vested in the person rather than the

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[28] Lester G. Seligman, "Leadership: Political Aspects", in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, David L. Sills (ed.), New York: Macmillan, 1968, pp.107-109, also see Lester G. Seligman, "The Study of Political Leadership", *The American Political Science Review*, 44/4, 1950, pp. 904-915

[29] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," p.118

[30] Bruce Mazlish, *The Revolutionary Astetic: Evolution of a Political Type*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977, p.3

[31] Further information please see, Sally N. Cummings (ed.), *Power and Change in Central Asia*, London: Routledge, 2002; Robert C. Tucker and Timothy J. Colton (eds.), *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1994; Ray Taras (ed.), *Postcommunist Presidents*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1997

position and authority is highly personalized. The personalization of power makes Central Asian political leaders feel comfortable in projecting their power and ideas on the population.[32] Thus, the presidents govern their countries in strict authoritarian ways without much of an institutionalization and separation of powers. In explaining the leaders' impulse on their states' moves for Central Asian case, Nancy Lubin claims that "the orientation of the region's population toward different systems of government and democratic reform, the traits that are most sought in a leader, and the legitimacy that leaders hold in population eyes all affect the way and the degree to which democratic and market reforms may or may not be initiated or take hold."[33] In short, it is possible to suggest that the impact of political leadership is very strong in Central Asia.

1.1.2 The Literature on Transition

The literature on transition from authoritarian and totalitarian to democratic rule grew rich over the past two decades related to the fact that we witnessed recent and consecutive transitions to democracy from authoritarianism in Southern and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Post-Soviet region and Asia. When the political landscape of the developing world before the early 1970s is analyzed, it is seen that democratic governments were an exception. Nevertheless, by the mid-1970s with the significant events of Franco's death in Spain and the collapse of Salazar's regime in Portugal and military regime in Greece, authoritarian regimes started to pave way for democratic governments one by one. In the early 1980s, the democratic wave moved on to to Asia, (India, Korea, Taiwan), in middle 1980s to Latin America (Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentine, Uruguay and Brazil), and in late 1980s eventually to the communist world (Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Czechoslovakia and Eastern Germany). The dissolution of Soviet Union and the subsequent emergence of fifteen independents states in 1991 were in that sense a continuation of the global democratic trend. Thereby, the democratization wave expanded so far

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[32] Farid Shafiyev, "The Role of Former Communist Leaders and Post-Soviet Bureaucracy in the CIS Political Landscape", paper presented at Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) 7th Annual Conference, 29.09.2006, University of Michigan, USA

[33] Nancy Lubin, "Leadership in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan: the Views of the Led", in *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, p.217

that it went beyond the boundaries of Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, where no democratic experience was valid before.[34] As Laurence Whitehead mentioned, nobody could have dreamed of the democratization of Albania, Cambodia, South Africa, or East Timor in the mid-1970s.[35]

Samuel Huntington elaborated on the issue of worldwide democratization efforts in his famous study, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. He wrote that by the end of the twentieth century our world is not a single house, but it is becoming closely integrated and consequently interdependent to each other. In that sense, he asked how long an increasingly interdependent world can survive partly democratic and partly authoritarian regimes, considering the new waves of democratization.[36] According to Huntington, there were three democratization waves. The first wave began in 1820s and continued till 1926, and twenty-nine democracies were built in this period. However, that wave was reversed by Mussolini's dictatorship in 1922 so that by 1942 the number of democratic states in the world was reduced to twelve. The second wave of democratization started with the triumph of the Allies in World War II and it resulted in the emergence of thirty-six democratically governed countries. Nevertheless, the second reverse wave backed the number down to thirty between 1960 and 1975. Despite the fact that these two waves were followed by reverse ones (a two-step-forward, one step backward pattern), the current transitions to democracies gave the signals of the new "two-step-forward"s. In that sense, Huntington described the current era as the third wave of democratization in the history of modern world. By the last wave, at least thirty countries realized their transitions to democracy by doubling the number of democratic governments all over the world.[37]

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[34] Roger King, Gavin Kendall, *The State, Democracy and Globalization*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp.85-90

[35] Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p.1

[36] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991, p.29

[37] For details please see, Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, pp.13-26, Samuel P. Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave", *Journal of Democracy*, 2/2, Spring 1991, pp.12-34

Another path breaking study about democratic transition is the collective work of Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter. This book defines transition as the interval between one political regime and another.[38] The writers explain that within that interval the dominant factor is uncertainty[39], out of which either instauration of political democracy or restoration of the authoritarian regime, which possibly become more severe may emerge.[40] This uncertainty in transition matches with Laurance Whitehead's emphasis upon the varieties of democratizations, which can be erratic, unpredictable or prone to metamorphosis as the life trajectory of butterfly.[41] Thus, the dissolution of an authoritarian regime result in the installation of some form of democracy, which is desirable, or return to some form of authoritarian rule, or in the emergence of a revolutionary alternative.[42] In that sense, there are some phases to go through in order to finish the transition process with a democratic end. Descriptively, transition literature conceptualized these phases in three broad categories, which are *regime breakdown, democratic transition* and *democratic consolidation*.[43] Very briefly, the regime change starts by the "regime breakdown", which means deconstruction and disintegration of the old regime, and continues with "transition", which means realization of the shift from old structures and processes to the new ones and ends up with "consolidation", which is seen by the stabilizing and embedding of the new structures and processes in political and social regards.[44]

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[38] Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter (eds.), *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986. Other than this study, there are also three complementary volumes: Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, Laurence Whitehead, (eds.), *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, Laurence Whitehead, (eds.), *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, Laurence Whitehead, (eds.), *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986

[39] Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter (eds.), *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 3

[40] Ibid., p.3

[41] Whitehead, ibid., p.2

[42] O'Donnell et al., Transition *from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*, p.6

[43] Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, p.8

[44] Ibid., p.8

Similar phases of regime change are mentioned in Dankwart Rustow's model as well. Rustow prepared one of the earliest and seminal works within the transition literature. Rustow's model introduced us concrete data about the phases and possible problems that can emerge within the transition process by describing the main elements of transition. As it is shown in Table 1.1, Rustow's model comprises one background condition and three phases.[45]

Table 1.1

Rustow's Model: Transition toward Democracy[46]

Background condition: National Unity	1. Preparatory Phase: Phase of breakdown of nondemocratic regime	2. Decision Phase: Phase of beginning establishment of a democratic order	3. Habituation Phase: Phase of developing and rooting democracy within the political culture

Time
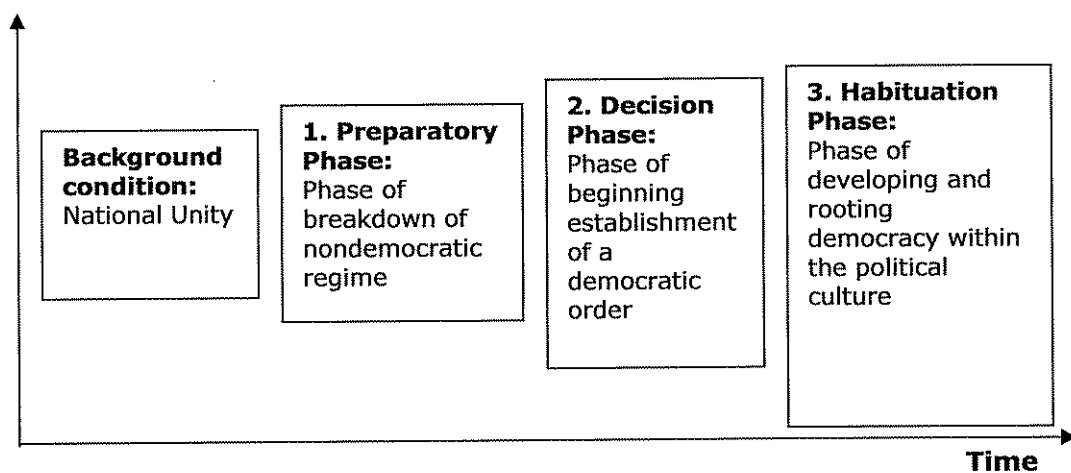
His model starts with "national unity" as the background condition, preceding all the other phase of democratization. For Rustow, this condition "simply means that the vast majority of citizens in a democracy-to-be must have no doubt or mental reservations as to which political community they belong to."[47] The preparatory phase is characterized by a political struggle leading to the breakdown of the nondemocratic regime; the decision phase is the establishment of democratic rule; and the habituation phase as the acceptance of democratic practice as a part of political culture.

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[45] Dankwart A. Rustow, "Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model", *Comparative Politics*, 2/3, 1970, pp.350-361, also available in *Transition to Democracy*, Lisa Anderson (ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, pp.14-41

[46] Georg Sorensen, *Democracy and Democratization: Processes and Prospects in a Changing World*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1993, p.40

[47] Rustow, ibid., p.350

Another significant study on transition belongs to Juan Linz and Alfred Stefan, who underlined the essentiality of establishment of a consolidated democracy.[48] In that sense, they defined a consolidated democracy as:

> A democratic transition is complete when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when this government *de facto* has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure*.[49]

By this definition, Linz and Stefan also underlined the fact that not all transition to democracy result in consolidation. In that sense, they defined this distinction by exploring the five requisites of consolidated democracy, that is, civil society, political society, rule of law, institutionalized state bureaucracy and economic society.[50]

As can be deduced from the above mentioned assumptions, paths of transitions from authoritarian regimes to democratic ones are diverse. The studies have commonly focused on the fact that countries did not follow a linear path and some countries did not complete the whole process of democratization. Thomas Carothers classified the transitional countries in terms of how they held up the transition paradigm. He clarified that among nearly a hundred countries considered as transitional, only a relatively small portion enjoyed a positive dynamics of democratization (mostly the ones in Central Europe and Baltic states and rarely the ones in South America and East Asia), while again a small number of them clearly failed (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Togo). According to Carothers, the majority of the rest entered a politically gray zone.[51] Steven Fish named this situation as "arrested

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[48] This argument is in line with Rustow, who also made the distinction between initial transition and consolidated transition.

[49] Juan J. Linz, Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996, p.3, emphasis original.

[50] Ibid., p.7

[51] Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm", *Journal of Democracy*, 13/1, 2002, p.9

or reversed democratization"[52]. Actually, it also seems logical to define the "arrested or reversed democratization" as the form of transition, which is deadlocked at the decision phase, without passing to the habituation phase. As a complementary study, Georg Sorenson also suggested four propositions about the current transitions toward democracy.[53] Moving from the current conditions of transitional countries, he suggested that majority of countries are still living their early phrase of transition. In that sense, the current transitions can be described as restricted, frail, unconsolidated and plagued by acute social and economic problems.[54]

In the transition literature there is also an important distinction between transition from authoritarianism, as in the Latin American and Southern European cases, and transition from communism, as in Eastern and Central Europe and former Soviet Union cases. There exist important studies in the transition literature about this specific question of "how should the transition process in post-communist states of East and Central Europe and USSR be analyzed".[55] The literature argues that the question of comparability between these two groups raises the problem of conceptual stretching on different levels. The complexity of the issue results from the "simultaneity problem".[56]

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[52] Steven M. Fish, "The Dynamics of Democratic Erosion", in *Postcommunism and The Theory of Democracy*, Richard D. Anderson, Jr., M. Steven Fish, Stephen E. Hanson, Philip G. Roeder (eds.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, pp.54-95

[53] Sorensen, ibid., p.45

[54] Ibid., p.46

[55] For further readings please see Leszek Balcerowicz, "Understanding Post-Communist Transitions", in *Transformation of Post-Communist States*, Wojciech Kostecki, Katarzyna Zukrowska, Bogdan J. Goralczyk(eds.), London: Macmillan Press, 2000, pp.225-234, Nancy Gina Bermeo, *Liberalization and Democratization, Change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1992, Russell Bova, "Political Dynamics of the Post-Communist Transition: A Comparative Perspective", *World Politics*, 44/1, 1991, pp.113-138, Valerie Bunce, "Regional Differences in Democratization: The East Versus the South", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 14/3, 1998, pp.187-211, Karen Henderson, Neil Robinson, *Post-Communist Politics: an Introduction*, London: Prentice Hall, 1997, Shale Horrowitz, "Sources of Post-communist Democratization: Economic Structure, Political Culture, War and Political Institutions", *Nationalities Paper*, 31/2, 2003, Micheal McFaul, "Transitions From Postcommunism", *Journal of Democracy*, 16/3, 2005, pp.5-19, Claus Offe, *Varieties of Transition, The East European and East German Experience*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1996, Claus Offe, "Capitalism by Democratic Design? Democratic Theory Facing the Triple Transition in East Central Europe", *Social Research*, 58/4, 1991, pp.865-892, Stephen White, "Rethinking Post-Communist Transition", *Government and Opposition*, 38/4, 2003, pp. 417-435

[56] Claus Offe, *Varieties of Transition, The East European and East German Experience*, Oxford: Polity Press, 1996, p.32

Keeping in mind the communist background of the states, it became clear that post-communist transitions are fundamentally different from Latin American and Southern European. Because post-communist transitions are not merely the regime change from authoritarianism to democracy, they also include tasks regarding creation of state institutions, definition of national identity and establishment of market economy as a result of their "triple transition".[57] So the two groups of cases must be analyzed separately as they face different circumstances in their transition processes. The point has been made that the transition to democracy is particularly problematic in the post-communist world since the establishment of democratic institutions coincides with economic transition. Communist societies also lacked strong vested economic interests. Additionally the monolithic nature of post-communist societies had removed all autonomous social institutions.[58] It is simply because communist system "denied any autonomy to what came to be known as civil society: the parties, trade unions and other bodies that allowed citizens to associate with each other outside the direct control of state."[59] This list of problems blocked a smooth and quick consolidation of democracy in post-communist world. Only the successful democratic breakthroughs of three Baltic states, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, eastern Germany and western Czechoslovakia were exception. Actually farther from these states, there was not such strong prodemocratic pull among the other post-communist states.[60] In that sense, Roeder distinguished post-Soviet regimes by their politicians and their choices of regime: autocracies, oligarchies, exclusive republics and balanced republics.[61]

In that sense, Fish's classification of the post-communist countries in transition with regard to their ratings received by Freedom House in 1999-2000 provides concrete data for us. This classification includes four categories

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[57] Ibid., pp.34-35

[58] Karen Henderson, Neil Robinson, *Postcommunist Politics,* London: Prentice Hall, 1997, p.163

[59] White, "Rethinking Post-Communist Transition", p.417

[60] McFaul, "Transitions From Postcommunism", p.5

[61] Philip G. Roeder, "Varieties of Post-Soviet Authoritarian Regimes", *Post-Soviet Affairs,* 10/1, 1994, pp.62-63

of countries: "democracies", "democratizers", "backsliders" and "autocracies" as shown in the Table 1.2. [62] In this regard, "democracies" consist of countries that received freedom scores of 1 or 1.5 in recent Freedom House surveys, while "democratizers" received scores ranging between 2 and 4, and "backsliders" scored better than 5 but previously scored better. "Autocracies" never scored better than 5 and evaluated as the countries which moved directly to new forms of authoritarianism without undergoing democratization.

Table 1.2

Classification of post-Communist Transitions

Categories	I- Democracies	II- Democratizers	III- Backsliders	IV- Autocracies
Countries	Czech Republic Estonia Hungary Latvia Lithuania Poland Slovakia Slovenia	Georgia Macedonia Moldova Mongolia Romania	Albania Armenia Belarus Bulgaria Croatia Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Russia Ukraine	Azerbaijan Bosnia Tajikistan Turkmenistan Uzbekistan Yugoslavia

From the table, it is obvious that post-communist transitions are unsuccessful with few exceptions. In that sense, the literature on transition argued the reasons lying behind these unsuccessful political transitions of post-communist world. Fish wrote that the reasons of unfinished transition discussed in the literature can be analyzed through two main categories: *fixed conditions* and *proximate circumstances*. Under the fixed conditions, Fish discussed the structural, economic, sociocultural and historical features.[63] As for the proximate conditions, the following factors of ideological polarization, electoral rules, constitutional arrangements, economic performance, economic policy doctrines, war, external interventions and agents (revolutionary party or movement, separatist ethnonational movement, military, political leader,

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[62] Fish, ibid.,p.56

[63] Ibid., pp.57-58

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foreign armies) were counted down.[64] In that sense, the literature considers the political leaders' role in transition as a relevant factor and presents a theoretical background for the purpose of this thesis, about which I will mention in detail below.

1.1.3 The Role of Political Leadership in Democratic Transition

Even though the literature on political leadership and the literature on transition are relevant for this study, the specific and more focused literature on the role of political leaders in democratic transition serves the purpose of this thesis better. So, in this part, the general theoretical framework of this literature is given.

On the connection between political leadership and democratic transition, the study of Kenneth P. Ruscio needs a close look, which drew the. In his book *The Leadership Dilemma in Modern Democracy*, Ruscio questioned if the concept of leadership has a good match with the concept of democracy. The word "dilemma" in the title makes sense when he puts forward the assumption "leadership threatens the highest values of basic democracy".[65] In this sense, political leadership becomes a shadow over individual liberty and equality of all citizens. He further explores the negative correlation between these two concepts and suggests that "the leadership often means persuading people to do something they originally may not have wanted to do or perhaps even fashioning policies that may require them to do something they will never want to do, so it is seen as a threat rather than a friend to liberty."[66] As for the case of equality, Ruscio notes that equality and leadership won't go together although it is said to be that no person, no position or no title has the priority in terms of equality. Simply put, he also underlined the suggestion of "strong leadership weakens democracy" by quoting from Benjamin Barber who wrote that "A leader strong enough to do everything we would like done for us is strong enough to deprive us of the capacity to do anything at all for

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[64] Ibid., pp.59-60

[65] Kenneth P. Ruscio, *The Leadership Dilemma in Modern Democracy*, Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing Inc., 2004, p.3

[66] Ibid., p.3

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ourselves."[67] In that sense, Fish also agrees with Ruscio and underlines the role of presidents in democratic reversals with the argument that "a political system depending upon 'superpresidentalism', seems to be the biggest antagonist of the consolidation of democratic products."[68] Fish also writes that depending upon the constitutional frameworks, which invest enough power and space for the leaders in order to act independently; leaders naturally pose necessary resources to engage in counter democratic attacks.[69] Moving from here Ruscio talks about developing a normative "theory of democratic leadership", in relation to the fact that democracy will stand or fall on the quality of leadership.[70] Another scholar, Arthur Schlesinger has similar views: "An adequate democratic theory must recognize that democracy is not self-executing; that leadership is not enemy of self-government but the means of making it work; that followers have their own obligation, which is to keep leaders within rigorous constitutional bounds."[71] In that regard, the theory of democratic leadership can soften the tension between the practice of leadership and the theory of democracy, while it tends to draw the profile of a leader associated with the democratic principles.[72] Thus, Ruscio suggested that democratic leadership is meanly being made by civility, constant dialogue, a form of politics marked by commitment to principles and a willingness to learn from others.[73]

Valerie Bunce is another important scholar who focuses on the essentiality of political leaders during political processes while they are the responsible for making final decisions and implementing policies. According to her,

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[67] Benjamin R. Barber, *A Passion for Democracy: American Essays*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998, p.97, quoted in Kenneth P. Ruscio, , *The Leadership Dilemma in Modern Democracy*, p.4

[68] Fish, ibid., p.54

[69] Ibid., p.54

[70] Ruscio, ibid., p.4

[71] Arthur M. Schlesinger,Jr., *The Cycles of American History*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986, p.419, quoted in Kenneth P. Ruscio, *The Leadership Dilemma in Modern Democracy*, p.4

[72] Ruscio, ibid.,p.5

[73] Ibid., p.7

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If political leaders, for various reasons, are understood to be the founders of democracy, then they also often function, after that initial breakthrough, as its sustainers or its underminers. Thus, for example, they design political institutions, which affect the quality and the survival of democracy; they decide to be more or less constrained by the rulers of the democratic games and in periods of political and economic difficulties, they can use their power to either protect democracy or destroy it[74].

In that sense, Bunce mentions that in times of crisis, political leaders can choose to break democratic rules, depending on either their unwillingness, or the lack of public support. Put simply, according to her observation, Bunce underlines the involvement of political leaders in two ways: in the quality and the survival of democracy.

Juan J. Linz also studied the issue of political leadership in his study, by focusing on different points of leaders' tasks in new democracies: convincing the people of the value and new circumstances created by democratic rule (newly gained freedoms, peaceful political alterations, protection from unlimited power of the authoritarian rulers etc.) and preparing them for the possible pains and mistakes of the newly establishing democracies over the society and state. [75] Linz defined it as a hard and ungrateful task devoted to the political leaders, who has to avoid the danger of "overselling of democracy"[76] by lowering the expectations (especially about the economic ones) while keeping alive the desire for democracy.

For the purposes of this thesis, Linz and Stepan's table, illustrating the leadership characteristics specific for the each regime type, is very useful. In that sense, Linz and Stefan defined four types of nondemocratic regimes, which are classified as *totalitarianism, post-totalitarianism, authoritarianism* and *sultanism*[77] by four dimensions, which are *pluralism, mobilization,*

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[74]Valerie Bunce, "Comparative Democratization: Big and Bounded Generalizations", *Comparative Political Studies,* 33/6/7, August/September, 2000, p.709

[75] Juan J. Linz, "Transitions to Democracy", *The Washington Quarterly,* 13, 1990, p.161

[76] Linz, ibid., p.162

[77] Ibid., p.40

ideology and *leadership*.[78] Table 1.3 presents the relation between the regime types and leadership as:

Table 1.3

Leadership Characteristics according to Regime Types[79]

Regime Types	Leadership Characteristics
Democracy	Elected by free elections, exercised within constitutional limitations and state of law. Subjected to free elections periodically.
Authoritarianism	Exercised power within formally ill-defined but predictable norms. Effort to co-opt old elites. Had autonomy in state careers and military.
Totalitarianism	Ruled with undefined limits and unpredictability without laws and procedures. Often charismatic. Recruitment by party organization.
Post-totalitarianism	Ruled with unspecified but reasonably predictable limits. More bureaucratic and state technocratic than charismatic.
Sultanism	Personalistic and arbitrary. No legal constraints. Compliance to leader base on fear or reward. Strongly dynastic.

O'Donnell et al. also stressed the issue of political leaders in transitions. They suggested that the dominant role of political leaders in transitions give the regime a "delegative"[80] character. In that sense, delegative democracy, as the term is used here, conceptualizes a new type as it is different in some crucial respects from the "representative" democracy. Existing theories and typologies of democracy refer to *representative* democracy as practiced, with

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[78] Juan J. Linz, " An Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Spain", in *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems*, E. Allardt and Y. Litunen (eds.), Helsinki: Transactions of the Westermack Society, 1964, pp.291-342 quoted in Sally Cummings, *Power and Change in Central Asia*, p.8

[79] Linz and Stepan, ibid., p.45

[80] Guillermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy", *Journal of Democracy*, 5/1, 1994, p.67, for further discussions about the applicability of delegative democracy in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan see also Bruce Parrott, "Perspectives on Postcommunist Democratization", in *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp.1-39 and Eugene Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: the fate of political liberalization", in *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, pp. 242-276

all its variations and subtypes, by developed capitalist countries. On the other hand, some newly installed democracies and at best many of the countries emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union *are* democracies. Nevertheless, these democracies are not moving toward representative democracy rather they present a set of characteristics which cause to call them *delegative* democracies. In due course, "delegative democracies are neither consolidated nor institutionalized democracies, but they may be *enduring*; in many cases, no imminent threat of an open authoritarian regression, nor advances toward institutionalized representativeness, are in sight"[81]. In very brief terms, a delegative democracy is one which "meets the formal requirements of democracy, but whose actual practice resembles that of an authoritarian state"[82]. In that sense, delegative democracy is strongly majoritarian: a majority, through elections, empowers an individual to become the sole interpreter of the interests of the nation. In practice, it gives the president free reign to act as he/she wishes and to justify activities in the name of the people. Because, typically, presidents in delegative democracies present themselves as above all parties and politics, since they alone can claim to represent and embody the entire nation.[83] Its closest cousin is the subtype of authoritarianism known as Caesarism, Bonapartism, or *caudillismo*.[84] Finally, O'Donnell argued the effect of an important interaction: the deep social and economic crisis that most of these countries inherited from their authoritarian predecessors powerfully multiplies the consequences of certain conceptions and practices that lead in the direction of delegative, not representative democracy.[85] Consequently, the delegative character of the regime prepares a convenient base for nearly unlimited, paternal and personalist operation fields for presidents. As the rings of a chain, the stronger presidential power leads to a weaker institutional power. That

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[81] Guilermo O'Donnell, "On the State, Democratization and Some Conceptual Problems", *World Development*, September, 1993, pp. 1358-9

[82] Paul Kubicek, "Delegative Democracy in Russia and Ukraine", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 27/4, 1994, p.424 (423-441)

[83] Kubicek, ibid., p.424

[84] Guilermo O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy?" Working Paper 172, Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, March 1992

[85] O'Donnell, "On the State, Democratization and Some Conceptual Problems", p.1359

weakness in legislative and judiciary powers makes it more difficult to incorporate bargaining for consensus in formulating public policies, and the leaders have a propensity to rule by surprise and decree, hence reducing the role of democratic institutions.

Furthermore, political leaders in transitional regimes can be evaluated in two distinctive categories: *hard-liners* and *soft-liners*. O'Donnell wrote that, by not totally rejecting all the democratic forms, hard-liners generally build some façade within which the authoritarian and hierarchical nature of their power can survive.[86] On the contrary, soft-liners tend to display a "reactive phase of authoritarianism"[87] hence they improve some degree of awareness upon the issues such as electoral legitimacy. In that sense, the impact of hard-liners and soft-liners over the transition processes of their countries are differentiated. Soft-liners make positive contributions as compared to hard-liners.

It has also been pointed out that the sequence of events and choices about transition process were organized around actors in post-communist states. As such the mainstream approach in analyzing transition in post-communist world is the "actor-centered approach", which allows an actor, probably the political leader of the country, to make decisions. [88]

After drawing the framework about the relation of political leaders and political transition processes in general, a couple of remarks about post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan can be made. Kyrgyzstan stopped at the early "decision phase" of its transition, so it can be defined as "backslider" or "arrested democratizer". In that sense, there are several other variables to explain this situation such as the Soviet legacy, lack of democratic culture, poverty, economic problems, and geographical factors. However within the framework of this study, it seems to be necessary to analyze the role of political leader in the democratic

[86] Guillermo O'Donnell et al., ibid., p.16

[87] Ibid., p.16

[88]Terry Lynn Karl, Phillippe Schmitter, "Concepts, Assumptions and Hypotheses about Democratization: Reflections on Stretching from South to East" in *Workshop on Regime Transition, Transitions From Communist Rule in Comparative Perspective,* California: Stanford University, 15-16 November 2002, pp. 6-7

transition process when the region-specific internal dynamics are kept in mind. In that sense, "leadership" played a critical role both towards the end of the Soviet and in the post-Soviet period related to the fact that political leaders have always played key roles for their republics not only in their moves towards independence after the closure of 1991 but also in the political, economic and social trajectories of their newly established states and afterwards. In any case, for the Central Asian countries it can be claimed that:

> Some leaders continue to insist that the time has been too short to develop democratic systems or bring prosperity to their peoples. But the differences now emerging among Central Asian states clearly show that some have managed better than others to move towards open societies and prosperous economies. The varied success experienced across the region since independence is much more result of specific policy decisions, and political and economic choices made by *leaders.*[89]

1.2 METHODOLOGY and OUTLINE

As was mentioned earlier, this thesis aims to analyze the specific case of Kyrgyzstan and its ex-president Askar Akaev in terms of this country's failed democratic transition. For Kyrgyzstan, as for other Central Asian countries, the issue of "political leadership" is very vital, where the political leader becomes the main executive figure of the country. In the first years of its independence, however, Kyrgyzstan's widely-known reputation as an "island of democracy" was mostly linked to the leadership style of Askar Akaev, by whom the country aimed to dismantle the political and economic pillars of Soviet rule. However, it is also a fact that since the mid-1990s a reversal in Kyrgyz political trajectory was perceived, which again seemed to coincide with Akaev's changing strategies in his leadership. In that sense, it is likely that there is a strong relation between the political leadership patterns of Askar Akaev and Kyrgyzstan's failed political transition.

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[89] ICG Asia Briefing Paper, "Central Asia: A Last Chance for Change", Osh/Brussels, 29.04.2003, p. 2, available at http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/icg77/icg77.pdf,(Accessed on 04 June 2005), emphasis mine.

Within this framework, there are two main bodies of issues, which have to be analyzed in an interrelated fashion in this thesis, Askar Akaev's political leadership patterns and Kyrgyzstan's democratic transition process. In order to analyze Askar Akaev as a leader, the main methods of study are discourse analysis and policy analysis. For discourse analysis, the principal sources are press analysis, published official documents, Askar Akaev's biographies, books and essays written by Akaev himself, related texts and books published in English, Turkish or Russian and internet resources. For policy analysis, the main sources are legal documents like Kyrgyz Constitution, laws, some related decrees. Beside, press analysis, related texts, books, journal articles are utilized. In order to analyze Kyrgyzstan's democratic transition process, surveys of Kyrgyzstan's political situation since its independence are required. For this aim, political indicators and statistical information about Kyrgyzstan published by institutions like OSCE, Freedom House and International Crisis Group (ICG) are also provided in addition to the studies of scholars, who are specialized in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia.

This thesis organized in four main parts. Following the introduction, Chapter II focuses on the historical background of Kyrgyzstan until its independence. In this chapter, a brief political summary of pre-Akaev era, the election process of Askar Akaev and a short biography of Akaev will be given. Chapter III focuses on Akaev era policies between the years of 1991-1995. This chapter deals with the most important political developments of Akaev's first term and tries to answer the following question "Where did Kyrgyzstan stand in its path to democracy at the end of Akaev's first term?" Chapter IV focuses on Akaev's tenure after 1995 till 2005 and tries to clarify Akaev's transition to an authoritarian leader and Kyrgyzstan's changing trajectory in its transition toward authoritarianism. This division of timing was basically organized in a chronological fashion, since these were the important turning points of Kyrgyzstan. In 1991, Kyrgyzstan gained its independence and also started its transition process. Between the years of 1991-1995, Kyrgyzstan was perceived as the most promising candidate in terms of its transition toward democracy, however; since 1995 Kyrgyzstan has shifted its path toward authoritarianism. Finally, the conclusion part looks at some of the possible

future scenarios about the fate of democratization in the post-Akaev era of Kyrgyzstan.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter, the Kyrgyz people's historical journey from the ancient times till the time of their independence in 1991 will be briefly described. By analyzing their political history, I aim to highlight the historical development process of the Kyrgyz people and their political, social and economic conditions on the eve of Kyrgyzstan's emergence as an independent state. In that sense, I analyze Kyrgyz history till 1991 in two main parts: pre-Soviet era and post-Soviet era. Additionally, in accordance with the main subject matter of this thesis, there is also a separate part in which the Kyrgyz political leaders in the Soviet era and the election process of Askar Akaev as the first president of Kyrgyzstan are described.

2.1 Kyrgyzstan from Ancient Times to the Soviet Rule

The history of the Kyrgyz people goes back to the ancient times. The ancestors of the Kyrgyz, who are a mixture of Turkic, Mongolian and Kipchak descent, originally inhabited an area, what is known as the Tyva region of Russia. Anthropologically, the Kyrgyz people belong to the South Siberian type formed as a result of the mingling of Central Asian Mongoloids with the ancient Caucasoid population of Kazakhstan.[90] Being a nomadic society, the Kyrgyz people are simply defined as pastoral nomads and mostly engaged in stock-breeding as the main economic activity. However, the Kyrgyz people were also involved in trade since Kyrgyzstan was on the legendary Silk Road. The main trading items were raw cotton and silk. In addition to these, there were some mining and agricultural activities. However, in this period there was no industrial development in the region. In any case, the circumstances of the geography that they lived in, had limited the options of the Kyrgyz people. It was an arid land of grasslands, deserts and plains and simply lacked fertile lands for agricultural production. In addition to the pastoral

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[90] Geoffrey Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964, p. 9

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nomadic Kyrgyz (who were the majority), in some localities there were clay or stone dwellers or in lower valleys there were wheat and barley planters.[91]

Nomadic Kyrgyz, similar to the other Central Asian societies, were "traditionally organized in tribes or sections [and] might switch their allegiance to a different tribe but their tradition dictated that they belong to one tribe or another."[92] In that sense, the Kyrgyz were divided into two major tribal confederations, which referred to the north-south division[93]: the *Otuz Uul* and *Ich Kilik*. The *Otuz Uul* was situated in northern Kyrgyzstan and consisted of two groups; the *Ong Kanat* (Right Wing) and *Sol Kanat* (Left Wing). The *Ong Kanat* was composed of there tribes: the Tagay, Adigine and Mungush; while the *Sol Kanat* included eight tribes: Bugu, Sary Bagysh, Solto, Adigine, Bulat, Temir, Nadyrbek, and Tynai.[94] *Ich Kilik* was situated in southern Kyrgyzstan and consisted of the Kipchak, Nayman, Teyyit, Kesek, Ihoo Kesek, Kandy, Boston, and Noygut.[95] This tribal division carried (and still carries) importance in order to understand Kyrgyz's sub-national identities and loyalties, which were crucial both in social lives and political institutions of the country.

The first written records about the ancient Kyrgyz were found in the Chinese chronicles going back to about 2000 B.C. In those years, the Kyrgyz were subordinated to China and had a reputation of being great fighters and traders. It was even written that the invasions of the Kyrgyz into the Chinese

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[91] Elizabeth E. Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966, p.47

[92] Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.33

[93] The southern regions of Kyrgyzstan −Osh and Jalal-abad − are geographically separated from the north of Kyrgyzstan by the physically formidable Tien Shan Mountain. Historically, the northern part of Kyrgyzstan was more Russified and industrialized while the southern part was influenced by the Islamized Ferghana Valley and stayed agricultural. For further information please see Erlend H. Hvoslef, "Tribalism and modernity in Kirgizia", in M.Sabour and K.Vikor (eds.): *Ethnic Encounter and Cultural Change*, London: C. Hurst & Co., 1997 and John Glenn, *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia*, Palgrave: New York, 1999

[94] Paul Georg Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia*, RoutledgeCurzon,London, 2003,p.41

[95] John Glenn, *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia*, p. 59

territories motivated the building of the original Great Wall of China.[96] After the Chinese rule, the first Kyrgyz state was established under the name of "Ki-Ku" or "Kie-Ku" in the Yenisei and Baikal regions of today's south-central Siberia.[97] However, the life of this state was indeed short and soon the Kyrgyz tribes chose to live under the rule of Huns (Epthalites).[98]

In those years, the Huns were a confederation of Eurasian tribes, which stretched to the Central Asian steppes. In the 2nd century B.C. in the era of Mo-Tun, the Huns incorporated the Kyrgyz tribes into their confederation. In that sense, the Hun Empire managed to keep all those Turkic tribes in control with common language and culture policies. In this manner, the Huns formed the "Usun Union" within Turkic tribes including the Kyrgyz. Being a part of the "Usun Union" affected the organizational structures of the Kyrgyz, especially in political and military aspects. Just as the Kyrgyz, the Huns also organized their political and administrative systems into three units: the right, the left, and the center.[99]

In the 4th century A.D., the long-lasting domination of the Huns over the Kyrgyz tribes ended. After the Huns, the Göktürk (or Kök-Türk) Khanate was established in the same geography and the Kyrgyz tribes were dominated by the Göktürks until 581, when the Khanate was split into two.[100] After this break-up, the Kyrgyz established the Kyrgyz Khanate in the 6th century and reached their greatest expansion by conquering the Uyghur Khanate and forcing it out of Mongolia in 840.[101] During this century, the Kyrgyz people came into contact with the Muslim traders and missionaries traveling along

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[96] Martha Brill Olcott, "Kyrgyzstan", in *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan: Country Studies*, Glenn E. Curtis (ed.), Washington D. C.: The Divison: Headquarters, Dept. Of Army, 1997, p.110

[97] Mehmet Saray, *Kırgız Türkleri Tarihi,* İstanbul: Nesil, 1993, p.16

[98] Ibid., p. 17

[99] Mehmet Saray, *Modern Kırgızistan'ın Doğuşu,* Ankara: TİKA yayınları, 2004, p. 16

[100] Ibid., p.18

[101] Olcott, p.111

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the Silk Road after the Arab invasion for the first time and Islam started to spread along the region.[102]

The expansion of the Kyrgyz Khanate continued in the following centuries and eventually by the 10th century, the Kyrgyz reached to the land of present-day Kyrgyzstan by moving from Siberia into the Tien Shan Mountains, Issyk-Kol and Talas.[103] However, in the following years, the Kyrgyz lost their efficiency basically because of the internal conflicts among the Kyrgyz tribes and withdrew from the conquered lands. By the 12th century, the Kyrgyz tribes, which were fragmented and disunited, were unprepared for the Mongolian attacks to come.[104]

In 13th century, the famous Mongol invasion of Central Asia devastated the territory of Kyrgyzstan. Mongols, under the leadership of Genghis Khan, succeeded in uniting the Mongolian tribes for the first time in their history and became an undeniable fighting force which conquered Eurasia from China to Eastern Europe, including the Middle East. The Central Asian invasion took place between 1219 and 1223, which left catastrophic destruction behind.[105] Cities were torched, people were killed, irrigation systems were destroyed. However, despite this destruction, Mongolian rule also had some positive impact such as the evolution of the legal system and the system of government.[106] Additionally, the Mongols conducted censuses, devised a

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[102] However, it must be mentioned the Islamic practices spread into the Kyrgyz steppes, the desert, and the mountains to a lesser extent as compared to settled areas of the oases and the river valleys. In that sense, even today religious observance among the Kyrgyz is not strong; although the majorities of the Kyrgyz identify themselves as Muslims and celebrate basic events in life (birth, marriage, death etc.) according to Islamic tradition. However, the Kyrgyz people generally remained aloof from the orthodox Islamic practices. As such, the five pillars of Islam are not regularly practiced in Kyrgyzstan. Likewise very few women wear the veil even in towns, while women in countryside never do. It can be argued, therefore, that the most of the Kyrgyz adopt a superficial recognition of Islamic practice. For further information see Pal Kosto, *Political Construction Sites: Nation-building in Russia and the Post-Soviet States*, Susan Hoivik (trans.) Oxford: Westview Press, 2000, p.74, Gleen E. Curtis, "Kyrgyzstan: A Country Study", in *Central Asia in Focus: Political and Economic Issues*, Lydia M. Buyers (ed.), New York: Nova Science Publishers,Inc., 2003, p.136

[103] Mary M. Rodgers, Tom Streissguth, Colleen Sexton, *Kyrgyzstan*, Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Co., 1993, pp.27-29

[104] V. V.Barthold, *Kırgızlar*, Ufuk Deniz Aşçı (trans.), Konya: Kömen, 2002, pp.47-49

[105] Micheal Kort, *Central Asian Republics*, New York: Facts on File, 2004, p.26

[106] Beatrice F. Manz, "Historical Background", in *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*, Beatrice F. Manz (ed.), Boulder: Westview Press, 1994, p.5

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regular system of taxation, organized postal stations, and promoted safe travel and trade.[107]

After Genghis Khan, the most powerful leader of the Mongols was Timur. In Timur's era, the Mongolian Empire remained united. However, after Timur's death in 1405, the empire was divided as the successors of Timur were unsuccessful in keeping it united.

After the collapse of the Mongolian Empire, the Kyrgyz tribes went under the rule of Golden Horde, the Oriot Khanate and the Jungar Khanate. Golden Horde (1242-1502) was a successor Mongol state established on the lands of present-day Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan after the break up of Timur's Mongol Empire. The rule of the Golden Horde's power lasted until the beginning of the 16th century, when it collapsed after the war with Crimean Tatars in 1502.[108] After the Golden Horde, the Oriots occupied the Tien Shan region until the end of the 16th century.[109] Oriots' main aim was to re-unite the Mongol state by gaining control over the Mongol tribes. However, this aim could not be reached, as the Oriot khanate, after a war with the Chinese Khanate in 1590s would collapse.[110] The Jungar Khanate that succeeded the Oriots was also a Mongol state, established in southern Mongolia, that would also eventually be destroyed by the Chinese Khanate in 1758.[111] After the collapse of the Jungar Khanate, the Kyrgyz tribes were ruled by the Kalmyks, who were known as the successors of the Oriots in Turkish and Persian documents in the 17th century; and by the Manchus, who were Chinesse in

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[107] Moris Rossabi, "The Legacy of the Mongols", in *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*, Beatrice F. Manz (ed.), Boulder: Westview Press, 1994, p.28

[108] Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, pp.87-90, and Michael Burgan, *Great Empires of the Past: Empire of the Mongols*, New York: Facts on File,Inc., 2005, pp.52-53

[109] Döölötbek Saparaliyev, "Kırgızlar ve Orta Asya Halklarının Birlikte Cungar Hanlığının İstilalarına Karşı Verdikleri Mücadeleler", Ulanbek Alimov (trans.), *Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 6/1, İzmir, 2006, p.209

[110] Burgan, ibid., p.49

[111] Viktor Butanayev and Irina Butanayeva, *Yenisey Kırgızları*, Yaşar Gümüş (trans.), İstanbul: Ötüken, 2007, p. 117

origin and lived in todays northeastern of China in the 18th century.[112] By the end of the 18th century, the Uzbek Kokand Khanate subdued the Kyrgyz and seized their territory. The Kokand Khanate was one of the three major powers of Central Asia in that period together with the Khiva Khanate and the Bukhara Emirate.[113] The Kokand Khanate's rule was indeed harsh and resulted in frequent rebellions among the Kyrgyz. Asking for independence from the Kokand Khanate, the Kyrgyz tribes allied with Russia to get their protection against the harsh Uzbek rule by the 1860s.[114]

Russia encroached on Central Asia in the mid-19th century as Central Asia became a good option in order to serve Russian benefits both as a market and a supplier of raw materials. In that sense, the defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856) also directed Russia's attention toward the Black Sea, Caucasus and Central Asia. Thus, Russian intervention, which progressed virtually to Kyrgyzstan's border, began in 1855. In 1862, Russian armies captured the fort of Bishkek (that time Pishkek) and occupied the country's northern part.[115] The southern part was annexed in 1867, when the Kokand Khanate also fell under Russian rule. The capture of the entire region was only completed in 1876, when Russians conquered and eventually defeated the three major powers in the region.[116] The Russians divided Central Asia into two main administrative parts. The large area consisting of present-day Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and parts of Kazakhstan was governed under the *Governate-General of Turkestan*, while the northern part of present-day Kazakhstan was governed under the *Steppe District.*[117] The Russian rule was harsh; repressive policies such as the confiscation of Kyrgyz lands for Russian and Ukrainian farmers, heavily taxation, forced labor

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[112] Lev N. Guminev, *Eski Ruslar ve Büyük Bozkır Halkları,* D. Ahsen Batur (trans.), İstanbul: Selenge Yayınları, 2003, p.25

[113] Saadettin Gömeç, *Türk Cumhuriyetleri ve Toplulukları Tarihi,* Ankara : Akçağ, 1999, pp.128-129

[114] Curtis, ibid., p.111

[115] Giampaolo R. Capisani, *The Handbook of Central Asia: A Comprehensive Survey of the New Republic,* London: I. B. Tauris, 2000, p.224

[116] Francis Henry Skrine and Edward Denison Ross, *The Heart of Asia: A History of Russian Turkestan and the Central Asian Khanates from the Earliest Times,* London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004, pp.284-286

[117] Kort, ibid., p.38

and price policies created dissatisfaction among the indigenous Kyrgyz nomads, who were forced to live in less fertile lands and became poorer. The general dissatisfaction increased during the World War I. The Czarist government drafted many Kyrgyz into the Russian army and forced the Kyrgyz farmers to give their crops and livestock to the army. Those conditions resulted in a bloody rebellion against the government in 1916, which began in Bishkek and spread across Central Asia. The Kyrgyz resistance was put down brutality and according to some estimates, out of a population of 780.000, 100.000 to 120.000 Kyrgyz were killed.[118] Furthermore, 300.000 Kyrgyz fled across to China during the revolt.[119] This revolt's effect was not limited to Central Asia, it also weakened the Czarist government and helped the Russian communists, who wanted to overthrow the Czar. The Bolshevik Revolution was realized in 1917, which ended the rule of the Czarist Russian Empire and started a new era for the Kyrgyz.

2.2 Kyrgyzstan under the Soviet Rule (1922-1991)

With the Bolshevik Revolution, a new era opened for the Kyrgyz. After the revolution, in 1922 the Communist Party declared the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). In due course, the territory of present-day Kyrgyzstan was incorporated into the USSR despite the fact that the Kyrgyz expected to gain their freedom by using the advantage of the collapse of the Czarist authority. However, things did not go as expected and Soviet control over the Kyrgyz territory was established. As soon as the Soviet rule was strengthened, Central Asia was subjected to a process of reorganization of its administrative boundaries, which also affected the Kyrgyz territory. In 1922, none of the ethnic groups in the region gained republican status; however, by 1924 with the policy of national delimitation, the region was divided into five administrative units based on the principle of "one ethno-one land".[120] The Kyrgyz were initially designated as Kara-Kyrgyz and their administrative territory was named Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast in

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[118] Sue Wright, "Kyrgyzstan: The Political and Linguistic Context", *Current Issues in Language & Society,* 6/1, 1999, p. 85

[119] Saadettin Gömeç, *Tarihte ve Günümüzde Kırgız Türkleri,* Ankara: Akçağ, 2002, pp.55-56

[120] Oliver Roy, *Yeni Orta Asya ya da Ulusların İmal Edilişi",* Mehmet Moralı (trans.), İstanbul: Metis, 1997, p.99

1924.[121] This changed in a year and the new name was the Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast. In 1926 the official status of the Kyrgyz was upgraded to the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR). Finally, in 1936 the full Union Republic status was achieved by the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR).[122]

The delimitation of the region into Soviet republics based on nationality is a widely discussed topic of Central Asian history as the boundaries of these republics were evaluated as "arbitrary" and "artificial". It has been suggested that the delimitation process was itself "merely a device to enable Moscow to 'divide and rule' while ostensibly adhering to the Communist principle of self-determination"[123]. It may be argued that the delimitation process was imposed on Central Asia from above and the creation of these national units was not realized by the attempts of local people for self-determination.[124] In that sense, John Glenn[125] stated that there can be two main explanations for the delimitation of Central Asia: (1) national consolidation can diminish the effects of supranational movements which were potential threats for the Soviet state, and (2) introduction of a nation-building process can lead to the integration of the region into the larger community of Soviet people.[126] Moving from this point, national delimitation can be considered as the first stage in the consolidation of Soviet power in Central Asia. Afterwards, socio-cultural, economic and political transformation of Central Asia took place in order to adopt the region to the Soviet system. In the following section, brief information will be provided regarding this transformation, however; for the purposes of the thesis, the main emphasis will be on the political transformation process.

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[121] The term "Kara-Kyrgyz" was used by Russians in order to distinguish Kyrgyz from Kazakhs as Kazakhs were known as Kyrgyz by Russians. For more information see Arne Haugen, *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia*, New York: Palgrave, 2003, p.239

[122] Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States Discovering Independence*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1997, p.57

[123] Wheeler, ibid., p.123

[124] Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.225

[125] Glenn, ibid., p.49

[126] The Ferghana Valley was divided among Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbek city of Osh was given to Kyrgyzstan and Tajik cities of Samarkand and Bukhara were now within the borders of the Uzbek SSR. Roy, ibid., p.109 and Kort, ibid., pp.50-51

2.2.1 Socio-cultural Transformation Process

The key measures of the socio-cultural policies implied by the Soviet government can be summarized under the titles of "linguistic policy", "mass-education policy" and "policy of creating Soviet person". In this part, I will look at these policies in more detail.

2.2.1.1 Linguistic Policy

In Central Asia there were two most commonly spoken languages: Chaghatay Turkic and Persian. The former belonged to the Ural Altaic family and the latter belonged to the Indo-European family. [127] However, the early years of the communist era were characterized by an active promotion of the minority languages in the Soviet Union. Thus, new literary languages such as Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, Uzbek and Karakalpak were developed as a separate literary language for each significant ethnic group in the Soviet Union. As Beningsen and Quelquejay argued, "in the USSR, the emergence of a written language [was] not always the result of a long internal evolution; it [was] frequently the consequence of a decision by the central authorities who [could] present a community with a literary language worked out by Russian linguists"[128]. Thus, it can be argued that each Central Asian group chosen to constitute a nation was given a literary language that was artificially differentiated from those of neighboring nations which had similar languages. The final goal was to break up the linguistic unity of the area by emphasizing the differences between the languages.[129]

Another main component of Soviet linguistic policy was about the alphabets. Prior to 1927, the Arabic alphabet was used throughout the region.[130] However, the Soviet regime changed the alphabets used in Central Asia twice.

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[127] Soucek, ibid., p.230

[128] Alexandre Beningsen, Chantal Quelquelay, *The Evolution of Muslim Nationalities of the USSR and their Linguistic Problems*, Oxford: Central Asian Research Center, 1961, p.16 quoted in Mark Dickens, "Soviet Language Policy in Central Asia", available in http://www.oxuscom.com/lang-policy.htm, (Accessed on 20 February 2006)

[129] Dickens, ibid., pp.11-12

[130] Bacon, ibid., p.27

First, the Arabic alphabet was replaced by the Latin alphabet in 1927 and then in 1940, the Latin alphabet was discarded in favor of the Cyrillic alphabet. The Soviets strongly defended this linguistic reform policy according to a Soviet linguist:

> One of the most important cultural acquisitions of the peoples of the USSR is the development of alphabets .... on the basis of the Russian character. The adoption of Russian script ... has been notable assistance to the various nationalities of Soviet Union in their successful mastery of the Russian language and in the assimilation of Russian culture.[131]

Later on, Russian would become the official language of each Central Asian republic, which was employed for strengthening ties with the Russian core of the Soviet Union. It was an effective way of Russifying the population linguistically.[132] For the Kyrgyz case, "Russian increasingly became the *lingua franca* in the cities, with the capital Frunze having few schools that taught in Kyrgyz. In consequence most Kyrgyz brought up after the war knew Russian better than their own language".[133] Despite this however, the Kyrgyz language law was adopted in September 1989, making Kyrgyz the official language, while Russian was still to retain a role as the "language of interethnic communication"[134].

2.2.1.2 Mass Education

Another major goal of the Soviet government in Central Asia was the spread of literacy. Before 1917, most of Central Asians were illiterate so the Soviet government embarked on mass education programs. According to Lenin, "It was impossible to build a Communist society in a country where people are

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[131] N.A. Baskakov, "Razvitiie iazyka i pismennosti narodov SSSR", quoted in Michael Rywkin, *Russia in Central Asia*, New York: Collier Books, 1963, p.86

[132] Glenn, ibid., pp.78-79

[133] Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy*, p.17

[134] Robert Lowe, "Nation Building and Identity in the Kyrgyz Republic," in Tom Everett-Heath (ed) *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, pp.114-115

illiterate".[135] In that sense, the results of Soviet policy in the field of education in Central Asia (such as the development of compulsory school system and universal literacy) were impressive. On the eve of the Russian revolution, the literacy rate was only %3.1 among the overall population in Kyrgyzstan, but it grew up to %79.8 according to the 1939 census and to %98 according to the 1959 census.[136] However, widespread system of education, which also included propaganda of the Soviet system, was a perfect tool in order to teach the people the requirements and goals of the new socialist system and to create an orientation toward Russian ideas.[137] In 1918 the Communist Party declared that[138]

> General education (literacy), in school and out-of-school, must be closely linked to Communist propaganda. There is no form of science or culture which cannot be linked with the great ideas of Communism.

2.2.1.3 Policy of Creating the New Soviet Person

The new Soviet person were designed to be collectivist, selfless, educated, enthusiastic about spreading the socialist revolution in the country and "New Soviet person (Noviy Sovyetski Chilovek), as postulated by the ideologists of the CPSU was an archetype of a person with certain qualities that were said to be emerging as dominant among all citizens of the Soviet Union, irrespective of the country's long-standing cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, creating a single Soviet people, Soviet nation".[139]

The basic goal of creating the new Soviet person among the Soviet nationalities was closely related to Sovietization and Russianization policies of the new regime. Sovietization, as applied to Central Asia, involved the spreading of socialist ideology, modernization (mainly education and literacy),

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[135] John McLeish, " The Soviet Conquest of Illiteracy", *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 18, 1972, p.310

[136] Dickens, ibid., p.27

[137] Wheeler, ibid., p.139

[138] McLeish, ibid., p.308

[139]Nikolay Ustryalov, "Form NEP to Soviet Socialism", 1934, available at http://www.magister.msk.ru/library/philos/ustryalov/ustry035.htm (Accessed on 3.05.2007), quoted from the following website: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Soviet_man

and secularization (to eradicate the popular support for Islam).[140] Russianization, referred to the "process of internationalizing Russian language and culture within the Soviet Union and the process whereby non-Russians [were] transformed objectively and psychologically into Russians".[141] Within this general framework, the Islamic, tribal and Turkic/Persian identities of Central Asians [were] deemed irrelevant. Therefore the Soviet government aimed to eradicate the influences of these identities on the people and tried to impose Russianization policy.[142] Thus, the regime attacked Islamic culture and discouraged and outlawed certain Islamic practices such as the veiling of women, pilgrimage, celebrating religious holidays, and circumcision. Actually the main aim was to eradicate Islam and to substitute atheism and Communism to it.[143]

In addition to the attacks on Islamic culture, the government also imposed certain measures in order to weaken the influence of Turkic/Persian identities. To that end, a tight Russianization policy was observed in various fields of daily life, imposing the Russian culture on languages, education, literature, art (theater, opera, cinema) and political processes of Central Asian republics. "Russification of the arts and language was especially harsh in the middle and late 1930s, when those aspects of national cultures and languages which differentiated them from the ways of the Russian 'elder brother' were proclaimed archaic, dying and even counterrevolutionary".[144]

The flow of Slavic populations to the region in the early decades of Soviet rule undoubtedly accompanied the policy of creating the new Soviet person. Actually, the Soviets encouraged Slavic immigration, since the fastest way to Russianize the non-Russians was to accelerate the influx of Slavic people to the region. In Kyrgyzstan in 1926 Russians constituted only 5.8 percent of

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[140] Pedro Ramet, "Migration and Nationality Policy in Soviet Central Asia", *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, 6/1-F/W, 1978, p.89

[141] Vernon V. Aspaturian, "The Non-Russian Nationalities", in *Prospects for Soviet Society*, Allen Kassof (ed.), New York: Praeger, 1968, pp.159-160

[142] Wheeler, ibid., p.185

[143] Soucek, ibid., p.229-230

[144] William Fierman, "The Soviet 'Transformation' of Central Asia", in *Soviet Central Asia, The Failed Transformation,* William Fierman (ed.), Oxford: Westview Press, 1991, p.27

total population. However, this number increased gradually up to 16.4 percent in 1959[145], to 22.5 percent in 1970, and to 25 percent in 1979. At the time of independence, Russians accounted for 21.5 percent of the population in Kyrgyzstan.[146]

2.2.2 Economic Transformation Process

The most fundamental aims of the Soviet government in terms of Central Asian economic transformation were twofold: improving agricultural production and introducing industrialization. The Soviet rulers believed that agriculture was a much more desirable way of economic life than nomadic pastoralism.[147] Agriculture was also vital for the sustainable industrialization of a country.

For realizing the first aim, Soviet policy makers introduced the sedentarization program and forced the nomadic population of the region to adopt a settled way of life. Given every encouragement by the state, the former nomads were settled on the land and were turned into agricultural laborers. In time, the nomadic camps grew smaller and smaller in number and in their place new towns and villages were seen.[148] Between 1920 and 1937 sedentarization of the nomads was completed. In this context, approximately 600.000 Kyrgyz people were sedentarized. After the completion of the sedentarization program, the second step was the land reform. In 1928 redistribution of lands and animals from tribal leaders to poor families was started in order to encourage people for agricultural economic activities. The redistribution was realized within the framework of the collectivization program, which took place in the first Five Year Plan (1928-1932).[149] In accordance with this program, individual land owners' farms were confiscated (by 1937, %95 of

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[145] Ramet, ibid., p.83

[146] Valerii Aleksandrovich Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after Soviet Union: the Mind Aflame,* London: Sage, 1997, p. 116

[147] Bacon, ibid., p.118

[148] W. P. Coates and Zelda K. Coates, *Soviets in Central Asia,* New York: Greenwood Press, 1969, p. 153

[149] Olaf Caroe, *Soviet Empire The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism,* London: MacMillan, 1967, pp.173-175

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the lands), and state farms (solkhoz) and collective farms (kolkhoz) were established on these lands. The collectivization program was controlled by the Communist Party officials, who hoped to produce more food in the long-run. Eventually, nomadic herdsmen were turned into agricultural labours to work in these farms.[150]

However, all these attempts led thousands of nomadic families to live in collective encampments involuntarily; thousands of people died because of the serious famine beginning in early 1930s. "The famine was the result of a poor harvest and the government's insistence on taking almost all the peasants' grain to feed city workers or to be sent abroad to pay for new machines"[151]. During the same era, livestock levels decreased dramatically as well. Millions of animals were either killed or died, as Central Asian nomads preferred to kill their animals, rather than giving them to government. [152]

Despite the chaos, however; Soviet government achieved to collectivize agriculture in Central Asia and settled the majority of nomads (mostly Kazakh and Kyrgyz) on collective farms by 1932. By 1933, 67% of the Kyrgyz were placed in *kolhozs*.[153] In addition to the sedentarization and land reform, the Soviet government also paid attention for the technical reconstruction of agriculture in order to utilize various machineries and modern tools (instead of manual ones) in agricultural production. In that sense, the government invested both for infrastructure facilities (irrigation systems, water channels etc.) and for agricultural machines and other mechanical instruments (such as tractors, harvesters, trucks etc.). As a result, there was a considerable increase in agricultural production. For instance by 1942, the total cultivated area in the Kyrgyz territory was duplicated as compared to the Tsarist times.[154]

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[150] Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge*, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1990, pp. 44-45

[151] Kort, Ibid., p.53

[152] Ibid., p.54

[153] Saray, *Kırgız Türkleri Tarihi*, p.75

[154] Coates and Coates, ibid., p. 154

As was mentioned above, the second aim of the Soviet government was introducing industrialization. However, a limited agenda was set for the industrialization of Central Asia which mostly focused on the areas of agriculture and animal husbandry. [155] Actually, Central Asia's economy was among the most specialized in the Soviet Union. This specialization developed as a result of not only region's geographic situation and land and water resources but also as a result of Soviet policy of "specific division of labour".[156] According to this, the Soviets designed each part of the all-Union economy in specific, circumscribed economic tasks and roles in order to increase efficiency of economic output. Central Asia, in that regard, had to be developed primarily as a base for agricultural products and raw materials (mainly cotton, grain and livestock).[157]

Kyrgyzstan's industrialization was also limited in scope and there was almost no improvement even in light industry sectors such as textiles or consumer goods production. However, the World War II changed the economic structure of Kyrgyzstan, mostly due to the fact that Russia, Ukraine and Belarus relocated their industrial equipment and workers to Bishkek because of the war conditions.[158] Although the industrial production was war-oriented (guns and missiles) in this period, there was an important increase in the number of industrial workers and enterprises in Kyrgyzstan.[159] In the following years, Kyrgyzstan's economy further improved, especially during Khrushchev's policy of "decentralization of economy" (1953-1964), which increased the role of republics. However, Brezhnev reintroduced central planning of economy, and this in turn slowed the Kyrgyz economy down.[160] Actually, this policy (adopted between 1965-1985) resulted in a long-term stagnation and negatively

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[155] Alex Stringer, "Soviet Development in Central Asia: The Classic Colonial Syndrome?" in *Central Asia: Aspect of Transition*, Tom Everett-Heath (ed.), London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003, p.148

[156] Boris Z. Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment*, Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p.27

[157] Stringer, ibid., p.148

[158] This situation was observed all over the Central Asia, while the big portion of relocated enterprises went for Kazakhstan. For further information see S. Kerimbaev, "Kyrgyzstan During the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945", in *History of Kyrgyzstan in Twentieth Century*, U. Chotonov (ed.), Bishkek: Kyrgyzstan Printing House, 1998

[159] Coates and Coates, ibid., p.156

[160] Martin McCauley, *The Khruschev Era*, London: Longman, 1995, p.31

affected the economies of all republics in the USSR. The difficult conditions of stagnation resulted in Gorbachev's economic reform policies (*perestroika*), to restructure the Soviet economy in 1985.[161] However, *perestroika,* too would be inadequate in solving the serious problems of the Soviet economy.

It has been suggested the Central Asia's status in the Soviet economy corresponded to the familiar definition of economic exploitation, because the region was a part of a Union-wide planned economy shaped in Moscow and was charged for producing raw materials (agricultural products and mineral resources), which were shipped to the metropolis to feed its industries.[162] That's why Central Asian countries in general, and Kyrgyzstan in particular, were at the end of the list among the Soviet republics in terms of their economic development. During the Soviet era Central Asian economy revolved mostly around the production of agricultural and industrial raw materials (mainly cotton and grain) without extensive industrialisation. As a result, Central Asia became the most specialized economy in the Soviet Union by producing approximately 95 percent of the USSR's raw cotton and cotton fibers, 15 percent of its vegetable oils, 100 percent of its machinery and equipment for cotton growing, more than 90 percent of its cotton gins.[163] In the Kyrgyz case, the main economic activity was based on agriculture in valleys and animal husbandry in pastures and high mountains. So, the overwhelming majority of the working population was engaged in agriculture and forestry, while the urban population was involved mainly in the cottage industry and trade. It must also be emphasized that there was a lack of qualified personnel for the creation of a modern industrial sector.[164] In that sense, Kyrgyzstan became the major producer of wool and silk products in USSR.[165] Additionally, Kyrgyzstan's water and hydroelectric power stations

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[161] William Tompson, *The Soviet Union under Brezhnev,* London: Pearson, 2003, pp.64-67

[162] Michael Mandelbaum, *Central Asia and the World,* New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994, p.4

[163] Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment,* pp.27-28

[164] Alexei Malashenko, "Turning Away from Russia: New Directions for Central Asia," in Bruno Coppieters, Alexei Zverv and Dmitri Trenin (eds) *Commonwealth and Independence in the Post-Soviet Eurasia,* Great Britain: Frank Cass, 1998, p.160

[165] Saadettin Gömeç, *Türk Cumhuriyetleri Tarihi,* Konya: Kömen, 1997, p.109

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were also important at the all-Union level.[166] Although light industries and mining activities took place, they were of rather limited scope. Briefly, on the eve of its independence, the Kyrgyz economy was not developed enough and it was highly dependent on Russia.

2.2.3 Political Transformation Process

The structure of the Soviet administrative system was very complicated. There was the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) at the top. Since the official ideology of Soviet Union had permitted for one party only, every Soviet republic was governed by the CPSU's local branches, whose leaders were the top executive figures of their respective republics. In that sense, the Soviet government in Moscow was in charge of implementing CPSU's policies. Local Communist Parties were also under the direct supervision of the CPSU. In local party apparatuses, Russians were dominant instead of indigenous officials. The number of Slavic ministers exceeded the native ones in local cabinets. Furthermore, the second secretary of the local Communist Parties were always Russian and appointed by Moscow. Likewise, the political institutions at the all-Union level such as Council of Ministers, Politburo, KGB or Presidium of Supreme Soviet were generally composed of Slavic officials.[167]

That kind of administrative system was totally different for the Central Asian region, where traditional political institutions led by tribal/regional leaders and powerful Khans had been in power. Under the Soviet rule, this traditional political division of power changed and former feudal and patriarchal system of rule was replaced by Soviet communist system in the region. In that sense, in order to analyze the Soviet effect on Central Asian political processes, the following policies need to be understood: Leninist policy of *korenizatsia* (nativization), "Great Purges" of Stalin, "stability of cadress" policy of Brezhnev and reformist policies of Gorbachev.

The policy of *korenizatsia* was implemented between the years of 1921-1934. Main aim lying behind this policy was to create a new generation of Central

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[166] David C. King, *Kyrgyzstan*, New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2005, p.33

[167] David Lane, *Soviet Society under Perestroika*, Boston: Unwin Hyman Inc., 1990, pp. 181-182

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Asian elites, who were considered to be politically reliable cadres in order to keep the revolution going and to make the new system reach its goals. In that sense, these native people were planned to be trained first and later to be appointed to important posts in the political, legal, and administrative institutions of their republics so that they would implement socialist rules and principles. In that sense, they "learned Russian, joined Communist Party, went through Russian and communist educational and party institutions and came to occupy post of real authority, if not ultimate power."[168] Simply put, with *korenizatsia* the Soviet authorities aimed to recruit native cadres into the party ranks and incorporate them into *nomenklatura*[169]. In any case, "the ability to impose far-reaching social transformations on a highly traditional society-divided from the Russian centre by language, religion, and culture-required the recruitment of large numbers of Central Asian natives into local communist parties."[170] From this point of view, the *korenizatsia* policy seemed to be a positive development for Central Asian republics. The scope of the program included educational facilities, improvement of native languages and integration of native people to the state apparatus. In that sense, Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast's (KAO) executive committee was authorized to follow the nativization of the Kyrgyz state apparatus in 1920. However, in the early 1920s, there was not a single ethnic Kyrgyz with higher education and at best less than five percent were literate. Thus, the administration of the territory fell largely to the Slavs and Tatars. For example in 1925, ethnic Kyrgyz accounted to 10.8 percent of the regional and local administrative personnel in the region. In order to prepare a new generation of Kyrgyz for leadership positions, the government offered several courses and more extensive training in educational institutions in the Russian Federation. Subsequently these newly trained Kyrgyz cadres were enlisted in the late of 1920s for the managing posts. This gradual indigenization of political life in Kyrgyzstan continued until the mid-1930s. [171] However, there would be certain problems

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[168] Mandelbaum, ibid., p.5

[169] Nomenklatura is a Russian term that refers to the elite group in the former Soviet Union who held key administrative position in all spheres of public life.

[170] Stringer, p.158

[171] Eugene Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: the Politics of Demographic and Economic Frustration", in *New States New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations,* I.Bremmer, R. Taras (eds.), New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 656-657

in fully adopting the nativization policies. Although full indigenization of republican apparatus was expected by 1934, the emergence of Russian nationalism brought an end to the drive for indigenization in the early 1930s. The Stalinist regime stopped promoting native Central Asians in proportion to their population and eventually, the nativization policy was dropped from the agenda.[172]

During this era Stalin preferred to glorify Russian culture in forming the Soviet ideology and he was completely intolerant for any idea except this one. Such intolerance resulted in political repression and culminated in a process which was known as the Great Purges. This process referred to a wave of arrests and executions that began in late 1934 and reached its peak between 1936 and 1938. The purges were motivated mostly by the desire to remove opposing elements from the Communist Party and to consolidate the authority of Stalin.[173] Additionally, a number of purges were realized as a result of the desire to eliminate the possibilities of sabotage and espionage. This motivation was mostly related to the "spy-mania" of Soviet officials that developed in the mid-thirties. A considerable number of scholars in the humanities, historians, linguists, geographers, and philosophers and academicians including the members of the *Soviet Academy of Sciences* were accused of being spies and arrested.[174] The purges swept through the ranks of local Communist Parties (party administrators, intellectuals, workers, revolutionaries and other communists), the educated elites and the population as a whole. According to the declassified Soviet archives, during 1937 and 1938, the Soviet secret police -NKVD *(Narodnoy Kommisariat Vnutrennih Del)*- detained 1,548,366 victims, of whom 681,692 were shot - an average of 1,000 executions a day.[175] According to Otto Pohl, the total number of victims between 1936-1939 was approximately two million, who were either

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[172] Fierman, Ibid., p.22

[173] For further information see Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties,* London: Mac Millan, 1968 and Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, and Robert Conquest, "Life and Terror in Stalin's Russia: 1934-1941- book review", *National Review,* 15 July 1996

[174] Güljanat Kurmangaliyeva Ercilasun, *Stalin's Great Purges and the Penal System: The Case of the Kazak Intelligentsia, Master Thesis,* Ankara: METU, April, 2003, pp.75-76

[175] Richard Pipes, *Communism: a History,* New York: Modern Library, 2001,p.67

sentenced to death or sent to camps/exile.[176] Great Purges was experienced in Central Asia with extreme repression. Only in Kyrgyzstan, approximately 30.000 people were arrested; accused of counter-revolutionary practices and either executed or sent to prison/labor camps during the purges.[177] There were high level officials mobilized under *korenizatsia*, top party leaders, writers, historians, scientists, linguists, philosophers, and academicians among the punished people.[178] By the purges, the membership of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan (CPK) dropped from 19.932 in 1933 to 6.385 in 1938[179] and the first generation of the Kyrgyz politicians was swept away; in their place more Slavs came in to take over positions of power.[180]

Opposite to Stalin, Brezhnev put a big emphasis on stability. In line with his policy of "stability of cadres", continuity was observed in the composition of the Communist Party apparatuses of Central Asia.[181] Brezhnev, contrary to his predecessor, relaxed the CPSU's policy of direct intervention to local Communist Parties and instead gave the local party officials extensive personal power. In that sense, in Central Asia political life was now even more dominated by the traditional tribal or regional rivalries.[182] Shirin Akiner defined this situation as "a parallel system of power"[183] and stated that "colloquially referred as the modern type of networks, 'clan' simply was a tight cluster of individuals linked by some shared experience, interest and strong moral imperatives and the 'pyramids', the largest clan structures based on regional networks, have the ability to mobilize support vertically throughout

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[176] Otto J. Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System: a Statistical History of Soviet Repression and Terror: 1930-1955,* Jefferson N.C: MacFarland, 1997, p.8

[177] Saray, *Modern Kırgızistan'ın Doğuşu,* p.104

[178] Kort, ibid., p.55

[179] Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy,* p.13

[180] Wright, ibid., p.86

[181] Janna Khegai, " The Role of Clans in the Post-Independence State Building in Central Asia", ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshop; *Comparing Transformation: The Institutional Paradigm,* Uppsala, 13-18 April 2004, pp.9-10

[182] Rafis Abazov, "The Political Culture of Central Asia: A Case of Kyrgyzstan", Conflict Studies Research Center, March 2003, p.45 available at http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/Special/M27/M27.ch5born (Accessed on 28 November 2005)

[183]Shirin Akiner, "Post-Soviet Central Asia: Past is Prologue", in *The New Central Asia and Its Neighbours,* Peter Ferdinand (ed), London: Pinter Publisher, 1994, p.16

the society, thus have retained considerable political significance within the region."[184] Until Brezhnev, Moscow directly intervened in this political process by supporting one rival group in order to balance the rivalry. However, Brezhnev gave all the authority to local officials and in return he maintained their loyalty to Moscow.[185] This "deal" brought the stability of cadres in local Communist Parties throughout Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan.[186]

When Gorbachev came to power in 1985, policies toward a more open, pluralist and democratic way of government were implemented. The first policy was *glasnost* (openness), which aimed to bring more freedom to the press with less censorship, free circulation of information, and more public participation in politics.[187] After *glasnost,* Gorbachev introduced *perestroika* (restructuring) in 1987. *Perestroika* was applied primarily to the economy but it was meant to refer to the society in general. In political terms, *perestroika* stimulated a more liberal view and assented to several political proposals such as "the election rather than appointment of party committee secretaries; the holding of multi-candidate elections to the soviets; the assignation of non-party members to high public office".[188] Simply put, by *perestroika* Gorbachev aimed at industrial as well as political democratization. These policies toward democratization also brought rotations of political leaders in Central Asia. On the one hand, the former First Secretaries of Communist Parties and later important names of the former *nomenklatura* were forced to step down. On the other hand, these reform policies had important effects on Central Asia since *glasnost* and *perestroika* brought an atmosphere of relative openness, which provided a base for free development of national cultures, languages and informal organizations and groups that defended their rights in a more democratic space. Among the organizations established in Kyrgyzstan in this

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[184]Shirin Akiner, "Social and Political Reorganisation in Central Asia: Transition from Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial Society", in *Post-Soviet Central Asia*, Touraj Atabaki, John O'Kane (ed), Leiden: The International Institute for Asian Studies, 1998, pp.18-20

[185] Abazov, ibid., p.45

[186] Further information regarding the Kyrgyz Communist Party leaders during the Soviet era will be provided in the next part.

[187] Robert Service, *A History of Modern Russia: From Nicholas II to Vladimir Putin,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003, pp.448-449

[188] Service, ibid., p.451

era, Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (DMK) was especially important. DMK was formed by uniting the previously existing various public organizations.[189] It was an independent organization that aimed to work on behalf of Kyrgyz national interest especially on issues like sovereignty, more democratic political system, and more liberal economy. The movement actually did well and gained a wide range of support during the presidential elections of 1990.[190]

2.3 Political Leaders in the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic

In this part, political leaders in the Kyrgyz SSR prior to Akaev's coming to power will be briefly introduced. In order to understand Akaev's era in Kyrgyzstan better, the general profile of the previous Kyrgyz leaders should be given.

2.3.1 Stalin Era Political Leaders

As was briefly explained above, Stalin purged a tight Russianization policy and gave up the policy of nativization of political cadres. In that sense, during his thirty-one years in power (1922-1953), there were only two native Kyrgyz first secretaries in the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan and the rest of the first secretaries were all Russian. The full list of first secretaries of CPK in this period is given chronologically in Table 2.1.[191] As can be seen in the table, Yusup Abdrakhmanovich Abdrakhmanov and Iskhak Razzakovich Razzakov were the only Kyrgyz political leaders of this period. Here it must be emphasized that information about Yusup Abdrakhmanovich Abdrakhmanov and Iskhak Razzakovich Razzakov was quite limited.[192]

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[189] These public organizations were composed of Kyrgyz and Russian groups in Kyrgyzstan, which favored democratic reform and later had a membership of 100.000. Kort, ibid., p.68

[190] Kort, ibid., p.68

[191] The information on the table is compiled from the website http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Kyrgyzstan.htm (Accessed on 10 March 2007), and the following two books: Askar Akaev, *Kırgız Devlet Geleneği ve Manas*, İstanbul: Da Yayınları, 2003, pp.180-184, Saray, *Modern Kırgızistan'ın Doğuşu*, pp.102-104

[192] It has been argued that this was basically due to the tight Soviet policy, which did not permit using their names in books, publications or mass media while they were the "betrayals". For further information see Tyntchtykbek Tchorev, "Historiography of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 34, 2002, pp.351-374

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Table 2.1

First Secretaries of Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan (CPK) (1924-1961)

Years in Office	Name
1924 - 1925	**Yusup Abdrakhmanovich Abdrakhmanov**
August 1925	Nevler (acting)
August 1925	Zhaynak Sadayevich Sadayev (acting)
Aug.-Sept. 1925	Duyshenaly Babakhanov (acting)
September 1925	Nevler (acting)
Sept.1925 - June 1927	Nikolay Anisimovich Uzyukov
1927 - 1929	Vladimir Petrovich Shubrikov
1929 - 1930	Mikhail Maksimovich Kulkov
1930 - 1934	Aleksandr Osipovich Shakhray
1934– Mar. 1937	Moris L'vovich Belotsky
Apr.1937–1937	Maksim Kirovich Ammosov
Nov.1937-Feb.1938	Kerim Kenebayev (acting)
1938-1945	Aleksey Vlasovich Vagov
1945-1950	Nikolay Semyonovich Bogolyubov
1950-1961	**Iskhak Razzakovich Razzakov**

Yusup Abdrakhmanovich Abdrakhmanov was born in 1901 and regarded within the first generation of Kyrgyz political elites. Although he was one of the top political elites in the 1920s, he had very low level of literacy and weak educational background just as the majority of the Kyrgyz people due to the heavy conditions of his time.[193] He became a political activist during the civil war in Kyrgyzstan in 1918-1920 and in 1924 he was selected as the first secretary of CPK. Nevertheless, he could stay in office only for a couple of months and was replaced by Russian officials as a consequence of Stalinist Russification policy. Later, in March 1927 he was elected as the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and he served in this position until

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[193] Ouran Niyazaliev, "Failed Democratic Experience in Kyrgyzstan: 1999-2000", Master Thesis, Ankara: METU, 2004, p.33

1933.[194] In the middle of the 1930s he became one of the victims of Great Purges alongside with other Kyrgyz officials with the accusations such as being Pan-Islamist or Pan-Turkist, being members of Alash Orda Party or Social-Turan Party[195] or betraying the CPSU. As most of them, Yusup Abdrakhmanovich Abdrakhmanov, too, was sentenced to death penalty in 1938 when he was only 37 years old.[196]

Between the years 1938-1945, the Soviet officials continued to appoint only Russians as the heads of CPK. Only in 1950, a Kyrgyz, Ishak Razzakovich Razzakov, became the head of CPK and stayed in power until 1961. Razzakov worked hard in order to decrease the negative effects of the Great Purges and ensured to bring the deported Kyrgyz intellectuals, writers, and historians who had been exiled back to Kyrgyzstan. Ishak Razzakovich Razzakov also struggled for increasing the role of Kyrgyz natives in the CPK and could have limited success.[197] After 1961, when his term of office finished, he continued to be involved in politics until 1979 when he died at the age of 69.[198]

2.3.2 Brezhnev Era Political Leader: Turdakun Usubaliev

Turdakun Usubaliev was born in a remote eastern province of the republic, Naryn, in 1919. Usubaliev joined the CPK in 1941 and spent his entire career in the Communist Party apparatus, later became one of the republic's most influential politicians by serving as the First Secretary of the CPK for two and a half decades, from 1961 to 1985. Before assuming leadership in the republic, he worked as the editor of the leading national newspaper, *Sovettyk Kyrgyzstan,* and later held various party posts such as deputy department head in the regional council, instructor in the Central Committee of the CPK (1941-45), departmental chief in the Central Committee of the CPK (1956-

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[194] Rafis Abazov, *Historical Dictionary of Kyrgyzstan,* Asian/Oceanian Historical Dictionaries No.49, Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004, p. 51

[195] These parties that were evaluated as "separatist" by Soviet officials and were non-communist parties composed of Kazak, Bashkir and Kyrgyz intellectuals.

[196] http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Kyrgyzstan.htm (Accessed on 10 March 2007).

[197] Askar Akaev, *Kırgız Devlet Geleneği ve Manas,* p.212-213

[198] Abazov, *Historical Dictionary of Kyrgyzstan,*p.51

58), first secretary of the Frunze (Bishkek) City Council of the Central Committee of the CPK (1958-61).[199] He was, just as the majority of Central Asian leaders, appointed by Khrushchev, kept in power by Brezhnev, and finally removed by Gorbachev. In general terms, Usubaliev belonged to the cohort of Central Asian leaders who were most loyal to the Soviet political system and to Moscow's leadership. Actually, he was a good defender of Soviet regime and he evaluated the implementation of Soviet policies as an important mode of modernization of a traditional "backward" country such as Kyrgyzstan.[200]

As Kyrgyzstan's leader, Usubaliev contributed to the implementation of the policies of Russification. He also tried to develop strong ties with the CPSU and Kyrgyz government officials during his term.[201] He also aimed to reduce the CPSU's interference into the Kyrgyz domestic politics. To that end Usubaliev almost took total control of the vital posts on local and republican *nomenklatura,* while Moscow retained its power to appoint the posts which were defined as Slavic key positions (such as the Second Secretary of the republican party organization, the heads of the procuracy and the KGB) in the republic during the Brezhnev era.[202] However, two developments at the end of Brezhnev era increased Usubaliev's power and reduced the center's ability to interfere domestic politics of the republic.[203] One of these developments was the appointment of V. A. Makarenko, with whom Usubaliev had close ties, as the Second Secretary of CPK and the other was the firing of the leading Slavic officials on charges of corruption.

However, things changed after Brezhnev's death. The close relation between corruption, localism and law enforcement in the region attracted Moscow's

[199] Available at http://www.rferl.org/specials/kyrgyzelections/bios/Usubaliev.asp (Accessed on 08 July 2006)

[200] Turdakun Usubalievich Usubaliev Biography, available at http://www.bookrags.com/biography-usubaliev-turdakun-usubalievich-ema-06/index.html (Accessed on 12 February 2007)

[201] Eugene Huskey, "The Rise of Contested Politics in Central Asia: Elections in Kyrgyzstan, 1989-90", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 47/5, July 1995, pp. 814-816

[202] Ibid., p. 816

[203] Edward Allworth, "The New Central Asians", in *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance: a Historical Overview,* E. Allworth (ed.), Durham: Duke University, 1994, pp. 534-38

attention, which consequently resulted in stronger intervention into local politics, starting with the successor of Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov's era.

Later, when Gorbachev came to power, interrogations and cadre changes continued and they resulted in Usubaliev's accusation with the charges of mismanagement, patronage and corruption.[204] In October 1985, Usubaliev was forced to resign and seven years later, in 1992, he returned to political arena as a deputy of Kyrgyz Parliament, a job which he still holds as of 2007.

2.3.3 Gorbachev Era Political Leader: Absamat Masaliev

By the resignation of Usubaliev, Absamat Masaliev became the new First Secretary of CPK. Born in 1933, in the Osh Oblast, Masaliev served as the first secretary of the Issyk-Kul Oblast committee of the CPK just before he was appointed as the first secretary.[205] Although he was trained in Usubaliev's party machine, he strictly distanced himself from Usubaliev and criticized him aggressively. According to him:

> Usubaliev, single-handedly resolved cadre and other questions, did not tolerate objections, would not suffer any observations which differed from his opinion, and did not shrink from persecuting people who did not suit him... Comrade Usubaliev encouraged servility and intrigue.[206]

However, as early as 1987, a campaign aiming to dismantle Masaliev has already begun. He became the main topic of series of critical articles published in central newspapers such as *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, *Izvestiya*, *Stroitel'naya gazeta* and *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya* mainly because of his conservatist policies. Masaliev did not go along with the centrally implemented reforms of Gorbachev and the policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*.[207] As such, he preferred to limit the effects of those centrally implemented policies of

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[204] Mehrdad Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995, pp.49-50

[205] Available at http://www.rferl.org/specials/kyrgyzelections/bios/Masaliev.asp (Accessed on 12 February 2007)

[206] " Report by Kyrgyz Communist Party First Secretary Masaliev", FBIS, 5 February 1986, p.3

[207] Huskey, "The Rise of Contested Politics in Central Asia: Elections in Kyrgyzstan, 1989-90", pp.817-818

democratization and economic reform in his country. Turning a deaf ear to Moscow's pressure and urges to implement reforms within the republic, Masaliev tried to establish relations with the hardliners in Moscow, who also were not happy with Gorbachev's policies.[208] Eventually however, Masaliev's unresponsive attitude towards the demands of the reform-minded Kyrgyz elites and people, who also suffered from poor socio-economic conditions of the Kyrgyz republic, resulted in the emergence of protests against him within the republic. The ethnic clash in June 1990, which occurred between the Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the border city of Osh, entirely destroyed Masaliev's image in the eyes of population.[209] The riot, which caused heavy casualties and grew up to be a severe political turmoil, showed that Masaliev failed to cope with the socioeconomic problems and ethnic tension within the Kyrgyz republic. Therefore, it did not come as a surprise when he lost power in the October 1990 presidential elections. These elections would be a major turning point in the history of Kyrgyzstan because it was in these elections that Askar Akaev became the first President of the republic. In the following section the political and social conditions which led to Akaev's rise to power as well as his biography are given.

2.4 First Presidential Elections of Kyrgyzstan and the Emergence of Askar Akaev

On 23rd October 1990, the Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyzstan held an extraordinary session in order to settle the nation-wide tension after the summer riot of 1990. The chairman of the session was Masaliev. While the session was being held, outside the parliament building "Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan" was organizing a demonstration, in which it demanded the resignation of Masaliev. Meanwhile within the Supreme Soviet itself, an opposition group was formed, gaining the support of 117 members of the parliament out of 350.[210] Among the various discussion topics of the session, the issue of the next leader of Kyrgyzstan was extremely important.

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[208] Ibid., p.818

[209] Graham E. Fuller, *Central Asia: The New Geopolitics*, Santa Monica: Rand, 1992, p.27

[210] Huskey, The Rise of Contested Politics in Central Asia: Elections in Kyrgyzstan, 1989-90", p.813

The parliament introduced the post of presidency by a newly adopted constitutional change.[211] Among the three candidates (Absamat Masaliev as the First Secretary of the KCP, Apas Dzhumagulov as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Kyrgyz SSR and Jumgalbek Amanbaev as the First Secretary of Issyk-Kul Regional Committee of CPK), the upper hand seemed to be Masaliev's in spite of the June 1990 conflict in Osh region.[212] However, neither Masaliev nor other candidates succeed in gaining the required number of votes, absolute majority, in the first round. The votes were split as follows: 154 votes for Masaliev, 96 for Dzhumagoluv, and 83 votes for Amanbaev. The second round of voting also failed to produce the necessary majority. Such a situation required the elimination of all the candidates and identification of new ones according to the newly adopted republican law on presidential election. [213] In that sense, the opposition group among the parliamentarians proposed Askar Akaev, who was not a deputy but the head of Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences at that time, and the parliament elected Askar Akaev as the first President of Kyrgyzstan on 30th October 1990.

Askar Akaev was born in 1944 in northern Kyrgyzstan's Kyzyl-Bayzak Keminsky raion as the son of a colletive farmer. As it was argued above, Kyrgyz politics became an arena of family ties and loyalties among the upper classes of society[214]. As such, Akaev was no exception. Thus a brief explanation about Akaev's family roots seems to be necessary. Just as Usubaliev, Askar Akaev belonged to the biggest and strongest northern tribe, the Sary Bagysh (Kemin specifically). His advent to power was also supported by the Talas elite, which was announced as the most "aristocratic" regional tribal community of Kyrgyzstan. Akaev's relation to that tribe was through his wife, who was a member of the Talas tribe.[215]

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[211] Abazov, "The Political Culture of Central Asia: A Case of Kyrgyzstan", p. 45

[212] Niyazaliev, ibid., p.91

[213] Gleason, ibid., p.60

[214] Raya Osmanalieva, "Tribalism in Kyrgyz Society", Central Asia Monitor, 10/5, 1999, p.11

[215] Lori M. Handrahan, "Gender and Ethnicity in the Transitional Democracy of Kyrgyzstan", Central Asian Survey, 20/4, 2001,p. 473

Askar Akaev's life and career can be analyzed by looking at his two titles: Akaev as an academician and Akaev as a politician. In that sense, academician Akaev had been in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) between the years of 1962-1977. In 1968 he graduated from the Leningrad Precision Mechanics and Optics Institute and pursued his studies to receive his Ph.D. degree. Eventually he became a physics professor. As an academician, he produced more than eighty scientific works and in return received many national and international awards for his contribution to the development of science.[216] Akaev, as a politician, on the other hand, contrary to other Central Asian republics' presidents, was not originally a member of the CPK and so did not come from communist tradition. His joining to the CPSU took place as late as 1981[217], and only in 1986 he accepted the invitation of becoming the head of the Central Committee Department of Science and Higher Educational Institutions. Eventually in 1989 he became the head of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences. In March of that year, Akaev was also engaged in the Congress of People's Deputies as a representative from northern Kyrgyzstan.[218] This position made sense for Akaev because it allowed him to experience the everyday dynamics of political life in Moscow. As stated by Huskey, "If Leningrad introduced Akaev to serious science; Moscow gave him schooling in serious politics."[219] Only one year after his entrance in "serious politics", the turning point of Akaev's political career was realized: his election as the President of Kyrgyzstan in 1990. What convinced parliamentarians to vote for Akaev in October 1990 presidential elections was mainly due to Akaev's own stance. Known as a liberal figure with no close ties to the Kyrgyz Communist Party, Akaev "presented himself as a strong, technocratically-oriented leader, who had no ideological commitment to the CPK and who had a clear idea of where to lead his country in a time of economic turmoil, emphasizing the

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[216] Askar Akaev, *Kyrgyzstan on the Way to Progress and Democracy,* Bishkek, 1995, back page.

[217] Gleason, ibid., p.95

[218] Congress of People's Deputies was a Gorbachev product non-Party institution, to which non-party leaders and intellectuals were accepted. It was planned to be the new legislative organ of the USSR. For information, Regine A. Spector, "The Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan", Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Paper Series, pp.4-5, available at http://istsocrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/publications/2004_02-spec.pdf_(accessed on 19.05.2006)

[219] Eugene Huskey, "Askar Akaev", in *The Gorbachev Encylopedia: Gorbachev: the Man and His Times,* Joseph L. Wieczynski (ed.), Salt Lake City: Charles Schlacks, Jr., Publisher, 1991, p.31

establishment a democratic, pluralist society and of a liberal democratic, multiparty, political system."[220] That image, as a promoter of political and economic reforms, brought him both the support of Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan and the votes of reform-minded deputies. Furthermore, as Akaev himself stated, "Many deputies saw the nomination of a totally new person for the presidency as a real way of bringing the groups together and getting them to agree."[221] As such he was seen as a candidate, on whom a kind of political compromise could be achieved. Thus, Akaev was elected as the first president of Kyrgyzstan and this would start a new political era for Kyrgyzstan.

As a president, Akaev draw a different profile in comparison to other Central Asian leaders. He was seen as be a liberal, who would in turn Kyrgyzstan into one of the most free Central Asian republics. Akaev was the first president, who condemned the coup attempt organized by the CPSU hard-liners against Gorbachev in August 1991.[222] Actually, this was one of the most important turning points in his political life. After the coup attempt, he quickly resigned from the CPK but continued to be his country's president until March 2005, when his rule ended by a public revolt.

In the following section, Akaev's rule between 1991 and 1995 will be briefly analyzed by looking at features of political transition, adaptation of a new constitution, establishment of a multi-party system, development of civil society, elections and referendums and general comments about Akaev's first era.

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[220] Abazov, "The Political Culture of Central Asia: A Case of Kyrgyzstan", pp.45-46

[221] Spector, ibid., p.7

[222] Further information will be given in next chapter.

CHAPTER III

AKAEV ERA POLICIES: 1991-1995

"...a great deal has been done in these two years since independence. First of all, we have established the prestige of our state ... in the world community. I think Kyrgyzstan is today recognized by the entire world community as an independent, sovereign state advancing along the path of truly democratic transformations and market reform."[223]

Askar AKAEV

At the beginning of his term of office, Akaev stressed his major goals in Kyrgyzstan as to strengthen the national accord among the various ethnic elements of the population in order to establish healthier ethnic relations, to realize Kyrgyzstan's transition to a market economy, and to ensure both the foundation of civil rights and the process of democratization through the establishment of a state based on law and separation of powers.[224] Thus, Akaev's policies between 1991 and 1995 can be analyzed in three separate sections: social policies in order to settle the tension between titular and non-titular nations in Kyrgyzstan; economic policies in order to transform the Kyrgyz economy to a market economy and political policies in order to establish democracy in Kyrgyzstan, which is also the main subject matter of this study. In that sense, within this chapter first general information about the very early years of Akaev's tenure is given. Then the democratization process of Kyrgyzstan through Akaev's policies in his first term and his contribution to Kyrgyzstan's democratic transition between 1991-1995 are described.

Shortly after the 1990 presidential elections, in the very beginning of his presidency Akaev faced an awkward period of dual power, during which both First Secretary of CPK Masaliev and President Akaev claimed political supremacy. For a brief period, Masaliev was even considered to be a stronger figure thanks to the institutional support of the vast party-state bureaucracy.

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[223] FBIS Daily Report – Central Eurasia, 1 September (FBIS-SOV-93-168), p.48 quoted from Pauline Jones Loung, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post- Soviet Central Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 106

[224] Fuller, ibid., p.27

Akaev, by contrast, was supported by the weaker members of the parliament, who were out of the Communist Party apparatus. Nevertheless, during the first few months of his mandate, despite the chaos, Akaev "achieved some success by applying largely orchestrated policies, the most important of which were the restoration of a long-lasting peace in Osh and the proclamation of national sovereignty on 12 December 1990"[225]. In addition to that, Akaev also successfully dealt with the protest of non-titular nationalities of the republic in May 1991 against the new land law adopted by the Kyrgyz parliament, describing the land and natural resources of Kyrgyzstan as the wealth of the ethnic Kyrgyz.[226] During these protests, Akaev pursued a sensible and balanced policy in order to preserve the civil and ethnic harmony within the republic and vetoed the new land law as contrary to constitution. This attitude settled the tension immediately. For him, transition process required the willful action and sacrifice of all citizens of the country, not only the ethnic Kyrgyz. So Akaev was able to "make enough tactical concessions to the other ethnic communities to assure their continued loyalty."[227]

Another important event of Akaev's first years in office, by which the balance of power was shifted in favor of Akaev, was the August coup in 1991.[228] The coup targeted Gorbachev and led by military and CPSU hard-liners in order to keep the Soviet federal state structure and the monopoly of the party intact. Unlike the other Central Asian leaders, Akaev did not hesitate to show his opposition against the coup right from the beginning. Actually, among all the republican leaders, it was only Boris Yeltsin, who was more eager than Akaev in his resistance to the coup. On the first day of the coup attempt, while the other Central Asian leaders were keeping silent to see the outcomes of the coup attempt, Akaev became the only Central Asian president, who attacked the coup makers and took measures against the local hard-line communists. He moved troops to Bishkek in order to prevent local hard-line communists from staging a coup of their own. Even moving further, just after the coup in

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[225] Capisani, ibid., p.208

[226] Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: the politics of demographic and economic frustration", p.654

[227] Eugene Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: an economy of authoritarianism?", in *Power and Change in Central Asia*, Sally N. Cummings, New York: Routledge, 2002, p.77

[228] Eugene Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: the Fate of Political Liberation", p. 253

Moscow failed, Akaev resigned from the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan and declared that the Kyrgyz government banned the CPSU in Kyrgyzstan.[229]

Those decisive actions of Akaev during the August coup undoubtedly provided respectful attitude from the general public and strengthened his image as a liberal, intellectual and charismatic leader.[230] The public support to Akaev reached its peak on 31st August 1991 when he declared Kyrgyzstan's independence and thus became a symbol for the Kyrgyz nation and its rebirth.[231] As a result, on 12 October 1991 Akaev could easily win the direct presidential election and was re-elected as the president of his country. In the election, Akaev was the only candidate and he received 95 percent of the votes.[232]

Following the declaration of independence and re-election of Akaev, the transition in Kyrgyzstan began. Akaev emphasized on the necessity of developing a liberal democracy based on civil society and market economy. In a speech in December 1991 he argued that,

> The only way forward was through the development of private interest, private life, and private property based upon a strong civil society, guarantees of civil and political rights, ethnic harmony, and social protection for those likely to find the transition period difficult.[233]

In that sense, political, social and economic reforms were seen closely related to each other. This interdependence of the reforms gave signals about the patterns of political, social and economic development of the newly independent Kyrgyzstan. However, for the purposes of the thesis, certain features of political transition between 1991 and 1995 will be analyzed.

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[229] Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?*, London: Oxford University Press, 1994, p.147

[230] Askat Dukenbaev, William W. Hansen, "Understanding Politics in Kyrgyzstan", DEMSTAR Research Report No. 16, 2003,p.27 available at http://www.demstar.dk/papers/UPKyrgyzstan.pdf (Accessed on 16.06.2005).

[231] Spector, ibid., p.11

[232] Capisani, ibid., p.210

[233] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.24

3.1 Features of Political Transition

As the president of the newly independent Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev was faced with a very difficult and complicated process of transition. There laid ahead tasks of performing political reforms in order to construct a new political order, which was aimed to be based on democratic values. In order to realize democratic transition, Kyrgyzstan had to increase political participation of citizens, support the emergence of an independent mass media, organize free and fair elections, strengthen parliamentarism, decentralize monopolistic state structures, combat corruption, and establish a system of rule of law. In this section, four main aspects of political transition are analyzed: adaptation of a new constitution, establishment of a multi-party system, development of civil society and the elections and referendum.

3.1.1 Adaptation of a New Constitution

After his nation-wide election at the end of 1991, it became much more difficult for Akaev to work with the old Soviet constitution and the ex-communist party member parliamentarians. Since independence had been proclaimed in 1991, the main law of Kyrgyzstan was the Constitution of the Kyrgyz SSR, which was adopted back in 1978. Thus the President wanted to adopt a new constitution, which would create a smaller, but more professional Parliament with optimal number of deputies who would be able to elaborate quickly a legislative base for the necessary reforms during the transition period.[234] In that regard, throughout 1992, the Kyrgyz parliament discussed different versions of a new Kyrgyz constitution. In that sense, three drafts were proposed; one of them by Akaev and the others by social organizations.[235]

The key point of the discussions on the new constitution focused basically on the distribution of power between the legislative branch and the executive branch. Akaev was personally on behalf of a stronger executive organ, which

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[234] Niyazaliev, ibid., pp.93-94

[235] John Anderson, "Constitutional Development in Central Asia", *Central Asian Survey*, 16/3, 1997, p.303

would be necessary to hold the country together and push it through reforms.[236] In that sense, Akaev claimed that the reality of the post-Soviet situation and the complexity of the tasks ahead required a strong executive power, which was capable of realizing the necessary reforms against the resistance of hard-line officials and bureaucrats.[237] His opponents, however, were in favor of a stronger legislation.

Another major discussion point was about the timing of the parliamentary elections in order to replace Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyzstan, which was elected prior to the country's independence. "Akaev and his administration, as well as the majority of political party leaders, saw this as an opportunity to disband the existing national legislature early and to elect a new one in accordance with Kyrgyzstan's newly adopted democratic constitution."[238] Akaev hoped that the new parliament would be more enthusiastic about the reforms than the old Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyzstan, which was mainly composed of the Soviet-era *nomenklatura*.[239]

The new constitution was finally adopted on 5th May 1993 by the parliament of the republic. According to Akaev:

> One of the main ideas of the Constitution is that a person as an entity is superior to the state, as a subject is primary, with the state in relevance to him (her) being secondary, also that many human rights, liberties are rooted in Man's nature and granted to him from above. According to our Constitution the state must acknowledge them, ensure their full implementation, but it can in no case deprive a person of these rights since it was not the state that had given them to the individual.[240]

In that sense, the new constitution of Kyrgyzstan was generally evaluated as a carefully drafted document. In contrast to the 1978 version, the 1993 constitution guaranteed the protection of human rights and freedoms as

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[236] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.25

[237] Ibid., p.24

[238] Loung, ibid., p.156

[239] Ibid., p.156

[240] Askar Akaev, *Kyrgyzstan on the Way to Progress and Democracy*, pp.25-26

recognized in the world community and provided legal grounds for the creation of a civil society. The constitution also guaranteed the citizenship and full political rights to all people of the republic without discriminating on language or ethnic bases.[241] It is possible to argue that, in general terms, the constitution caught up with the standards and requirements of a modern, developed democracy.[242] In his analysis on the Kyrgyz constitution, Kovalskii stated that "without analyzing the lengthy document in full, one main point may be noted: the constitution defines the Republic of Kyrgyzstan as a parliamentary republic with strong presidential power and as a democratic, law-governed, secular state, based on principles of freedom, independence and unity."[243]

Likewise, the new constitution also incorporated the principle of division of state power into three branches (executive, legislative and judiciary), and clearly defined the separation of powers between these bodies and provided for checks and balances on the president.[244] Briefly, the new constitution embraced the constitutional ideas of modern Western liberal democracies, and Akaev described the new constitution "as a major step forward in the democratic development of Kyrgyzstan and rejected the view that the republic was not ready for democracy."[245] In due course, the constitution defined the main elements operating within the political system of Kyrgyzstan as a strong president, an independent parliament, government and courts. Chapter I / Article 7 of the constitution organized the state power on these principles:[246]

1. "Supremacy of the power of the People, where such power shall be represented and ensured by the nationally elected head of the state - the

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[241] Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: an Economy of Authoritarianism?", p.77

[242] V. F. Kovalskii, "Democratic Declarations and Political Realities", in *Central Asia: Political and Economic Challenges in the Post-Soviet era,* Alexei Vassiliev (ed.), London: Saqi Books, 2001, p.235

[243] Ibid., p.235

[244]Muzaffar Suleymanov, "Bringing Down the 'Family'", p.5, available at http://www.monitor.upeace.org/pdf/Central_Asia.pdf (Accessed on 14.02.2006)

[245] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.27

[246] Constitution of Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, 1993, Article 7, unless otherwise stated all of the quotations from the Constitution of Kyrgyz Republic are taken from the following web site: http://missions.itu.int/~kyrgyzst/Constitut.html (Accessed on 08 January 2007)

President of the Kyrgyz Republic; division of the state power into legislative, executive, and judicial branches, and their coordinated functioning and interaction; responsibility of state bodies to the people and the exercise of their powers in the interests of the people; and separation of functions between state power and local self administration

2. In the Kyrgyz Republic, state power shall be represented and exercised, within the bounds of authority ascertained by this Constitution, by

-       President of the Kyrgyz Republic

-       Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic

-       Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and executive bodies subordinate to the Government

-       Constitutional Court of the Kyrgyz Republic, Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Higher Arbitration Court and local courts and judges of the Kyrgyz Republic."

In that sense, according to the separation of powers formulated in the constitution, the state power of the Kyrgyzstan is exercised by: the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

3.1.1.1 The Executive Branch: The President and the Government

According to the constitution, the president and the government are charged with the executive duties. In that sense, Chapter III, which is composed of articles from 42 to 53, was devoted to the president of the Kyrgyz Republic:

1. "The President of the Kyrgyz Republic shall be the head of the state [and] the highest official person of the Kyrgyz Republic."[247]

2. "A President of the Kyrgyz Republic shall be elected for the term of five years. No person shall hold the office of President of the Kyrgyz Republic for more than two consecutive terms. The President of the Kyrgyz Republic shall not be a deputy of the parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, [he shall not] occupy other posts [and] engage in business activities."[248]

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[247] Article 42

[248] Article 43

3. "The President of the Kyrgyz Republic shall be elected by citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic on the basis of the universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot. The number of nominees for the presidency shall not be limited. Any person, who shall have gathered no less than 50,000 signatures of voters, may be registered as a candidate for the presidency of the Kyrgyz Republic. Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic shall be considered valid if more than fifty per cent of voters of the [Kyrgyz] Republic shall have cast their ballots in the election."[249]

4. "The President of the Kyrgyz Republic: determines the structure of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic; appoints the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic with the consent of the parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic; appoints, by the advice of the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, members of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and also the directors of the administrative departments, and dismisses them of their offices."[250]

5. "The President of the Kyrgyz Republic presents draft laws to the parliament; signs laws and returns them with his objections to the parliament for further consideration; publishes laws"[251]

6. "The President of the Kyrgyz Republic call referenda on his own initiative, or takes decisions on calling referenda on the initiative of no less than 300.000 voters or a majority of the total number of deputies of the parliament, calls elections to the parliament"[252]

7. "The President of the Kyrgyz Republic issues decrees and orders. Execution of decrees and orders of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic shall be mandatory for the whole territory of the Kyrgyz Republic."[253]

8. "The President of the Kyrgyz Republic is entitled to halt or annul the effect of acts of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and acts of other organs of executive power"[254]

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[249] Article 44

[250] Article 46/1

[251] Article 46/5

[252] Article 46/6

[253] Article 47

[254] Article 46/5/4

9. "The President of the Kyrgyz Republic may be dismissed from office by the two third votes of the parliament only on the basis of a charge of state treason or of another grievous crime supported by a ruling of the Constitutional Court of the Kyrgyz Republic."[255]

As can be seen from these articles, it is clear that president has superiority over the other state institutions. He has the power to interfere into the jurisdiction of both the government and the parliament as he has some discretionary power in suspending the acts of government (46/5/4) and in regulating a broad area alone by presidential decrees (46/6). However, there are some checks and balances for the president's acts, as well.[256]

As for the other wing of the executive branch, the government, Chapter V states that:

1. "The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic shall be the highest executive body of State Power in the Kyrgyz Republic. The activity of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic shall be headed by the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic. The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic shall consist of the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, Vice-Prime Ministers, Ministers and Chairmen of State Committees of the Kyrgyz Republic." [257]

2. "The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic with the consent of the parliament. The Prime Minister, in accordance with the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, laws, and decrees of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, determines the fundamental directions of the activities of the Government, organizes its work, and personally answers for its activities." [258]

3. "The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic shall decide all matters of state governing except authorities vested in the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and the parliament by the Constitution. The Government of the Kyrgyz

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[255] Article 51

[256] These checks and balances will be mentioned below.

[257] Article 70

[258] Article 71

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Republic shall take measures to provide rule of law, and the rights and freedoms of citizens; pursue budgetary, financial, tax, and price policy"[259]; "issue decrees and ordinances binding throughout the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic for all bodies, organizations, officials and citizens and organize, supervise and secure their fulfillment"[260]; "guide the activity of ministries, state committees, administrative departments and bodies of local state administration"[261].

In that sense, the government is not as free and independent as compared to the president. Likewise, the government is responsible to the parliament, as it needs the parliament's vote of confidence. In that sense, it can be stated that the acts of government are rather limited relative to the president and the parliament.

3.1.1.2 The Legislative Branch: The Parliament

During the first years of independence, parliamentarism became an inalienable part of the country's political system. The development of parliamentarism was instrumental in establishing the rule of law, protecting human rights and ensuring the transparency of state administration, while the parliament and its structures allowed the citizens to take part in political decision-making and controlling the executive branch.[262] Actually during the debates over the new constitution, the structure of the parliament -whether to maintain a unicameral legislature or to establish a bicameral one- was an issue of controversy. Some deputies proposed for changing the existing Supreme Soviet into a professional parliament in which the duties and responsibilities were divided between two chambers. They argued that the existing parliament was not professional enough and in order to realize political and economic reforms in an efficient manner, so a full-time bicameral parliament was needed. However, this proposal was rejected and the legislature remained unicameral in the 1993 constitution. However, a new

[259] Article 73

[260] Article 74

[261] Article 75

[262] Sergey Diachenko, "Parliamentarism in Kazakhstan: Key to the Country's Democratization", *Central Asia and the Caucasus,* 6(42), 2006, p.134

institution, if not an additional chamber, named the Assembly of People of Kyrgyzstan was established. This institution basically brought together the leaders from the country's twenty-seven ethnic communities. "Although this institution was served modestly only as a consultative organ, it still provided the members of the Assembly a chance to access the president and to take a role in drafting documents related to the ethnic policy."[263] Additionally, overall number of seats was reduced from 350 to 105 in order to provide a more effective parliament.[264] In that sense, Chapter IV organized the legislative power by the following articles:

1. The Uluk Kenesh - the parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic - is the representative organ which effects legislative power.[265]

2. "A citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic, who has attained the age of 25 and has permanently resided in the Republic for no less than 5 years before the election, may be elected a Deputy. Each deputy is elected for five years."[266]

3. "The deputies have the right of inquiry to organs of executive power and their officials, who are obliged to answer the inquiry within 10 days."[267]

4. "The parliament shall have the power to introduce the amendments and supplements to the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic; to adopt the laws of the Kyrgyz Republic; to call elections for President of the Kyrgyz Republic; to approve of appointments of the Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic; to express a vote of no confidence to the Prime Minister"[268]

5. "The parliament may be dissolved ahead of time by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic: as the result of a referendum; in the event of three-time refusal to approve the appointment of a Prime Minister; or in the event of another crisis caused by insurmountable differences between the parliament and other branches of state power."[269]

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[263] Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: an Economy of Authoritarianism?", p.77

[264] Loung, ibid., pp.178-180

[265] Article 54

[266] Article 56

[267] Article 57

[268] Article 58

[269] Article 63/2

6. "A law rejected by the President which, in accordance with this Constitution, has been adopted by a majority vote of no fewer than two-thirds of the total number of deputies, shall be subject to signing by the President if under second consideration it is approved."[270]

In general, the duties of the parliament were organized in such a way that it had the normal, appropriate functions of any legislative branch of a state. The parliament had legislative powers and regular powers over the government, which needed its confidence vote. Furthermore it also had some power over the president in terms of his appointments. In general the parliament had the power, although not a strong one, to monitor the chief executive acts and to start the impeachment process of the president if necessary. However, it still has not authorized to repeal the presidential decrees, which underlined the superiority of the president over the parliament.

3.1.1.3 The Judicial Branch: The Courts

According to the Constitution,

1. "Justice in the Kyrgyz Republic shall be administered only by the courts. In the Kyrgyz Republic there shall be the following courts: the Constitutional Court of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Higher Arbitration Court of the Kyrgyz Republic, and local courts. The status of courts and judges in the Kyrgyz Republic shall be defined by the Constitutional laws."[271]

2. "A judge of the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, and Higher Arbitration Court may be a citizen no younger than 35 years and no older 70, who has a degree in law and no less than 10 years of experience in the legal profession. Judges of the Constitutional court of the Kyrgyz Republic shall be elected for a term of fifteen years and judges of the Supreme Court and of the Higher Arbitration Court of the Kyrgyz Republic for a term often years by the parliament upon nomination by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic. Judges

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[270] Article 66

[271] Article 79

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of the local courts shall be appointed by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic initially for a term of 3 years, and subsequent terms for 7 years."[272]

3. "Judges of the Constitutional Court of the Kyrgyz Republic may be removed from office upon presentation by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic by the majority of not less than 2/3 of votes of the total number of deputies of the Kyrgyz Republic."[273]

4. "The Constitutional Court shall be the highest body of the judicial power for the protection of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic The decision of the Constitutional Court shall be final and shall not be subject to appeal. Finding laws or other acts unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court shall terminate the effect of these laws on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic; such finding shall also abrogate normative and other acts, which had been based on the act declared unconstitutional."[274]

The court system organized in the constitution seems to be mainly under the control of the president, who appoints or removes the judges of each court. Furthermore, concerning the presidential and judicial powers, it was observed that president has important powers in conducting elections and referendums. In that sense, it would be better for a functioning democracy to leave the supervision of conducting of elections and referendums to judicial authorities rather giving it in the hands of the president. Additionally, according to an expert, it is not clear in the constitution that whether "the courts in practice check the presidential prerogatives and the abuse of the presidential powers"[275].

3.1.1.4 The Relations between the State Branches

The 1993 Constitution "has adopted a strong version of French type semi-presidentalism which combines a popularly elected president with significant

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[272] Article 80

[273] Article 81

[274] Article 82

[275] M. Steven Fish, "The Impact of the 1999–2000 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections on Political Party Development", paper presented at the meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, 2000, pp. 22–23

constitutional powers with a government responsible to the legislature."[276] However, the dominant powers given to the president influenced the competency of the government, parliament and the courts which resulted in an inconsistency concerning the state power shared among the three branches. For instance, the president can monitor the work of the government and has the power to interfere or annul its activities whenever he thinks that they are against the Constitution. Additionally, president's authority of dismissing the members of the government seems discretionary. What happens, for example if the president dismisses a government enjoying the confidence vote of the parliament? Or is the consent of the Prime Minister needed for the dismissal?[277] Likewise, president's power to dissolve the parliament before the end of its term according to the results of public referendum seems discretionary as well.

However, the relation between the president and the parliament is, if not ideal, comprising. For instance, president's prerogative of appointing the prime minister and the cabinet members were designed to be balanced by the veto power of the parliament. The appointments of the president were subjected to legislative confirmation.[278] A two-thirds majority in the parliament is necessary for a vote of no-confidence in the government. Similarly, president's veto power against legislative activities can be overridden by the two-thirds of the parliament votes.

Put simply, the constitution is based on the principle of the division of powers, with a strong presidency. It does not seem, however; that the position of the president contradicts the principles of the democratic government.[279] Keeping in mind that the constitution included provisions for a secular and ideologically neutral state[280], for the liberal and natural law conception of individual rights

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[276] Ergun Özbudun, "Comments on the Draft Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic", in *European Commission for Democracy through Law*, Strasburg: Council of Europe, March 1993, p.27

[277] Özbudun, ibid., p.27-28

[278] Curtis, "Kyrgyzstan: A Country Study", p.161

[279] Zdzislaw Kedzia, "Remarks on the Draft Constitution of Kyrgyzstan", in *European Commission for Democracy through Law*, p.3

[280] Article 8

and liberties[281] and for the recognition of individual property[282], it can be argued that the constitution at least provided a basic framework for a democratic system.[283]

3.1.2 Establishment of a Multi-party System

It can be argued that in the early years of his rule, Akaev succeeded in establishing the first multi-party system in the region. He personally aimed to strengthen political pluralism and encouraged the foundation of several parties so that they can establish a firm footing and develop a meaningful variety of programs.[284] As a result, Akaev signed the "Law on Social Organizations" in 1991. The law provided the legal base for the establishment of the opposition parties without state interference.[285] By February 1993, 15 political parties and movements were registered by the Ministry of Justice.[286] Actually, the majority of these political parties were previously included in the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (DMK); however, later they split from

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[281] Article 15

[282] Article 20

[283] Özbudun, ibid., p.31

[284] Fuller, ibid., p. 28

[285] Actually the development of political parties in former Soviet Union is not promising. Since the collapse of the USSR most studies have pointed to the weakness of the political parties in the states of the former Soviet Union, and it has been argued that only 'pseudo parties' have arisen, which are seen as "largely shifting coalitions of individuals, unanchored in post-communist society and incapable of performing even the most basic functions of political parties and are scarcely more than transient organizations with little continuity from one election to another, lacking coherent ideological programs and reliable social constituencies". The basic reasons of the situation were defined as the legacy of decades lasted totalitarian rule and the superpresidentalist nature of politics in the former Soviet Union. For further information please see John T. Ishiyama, Ryan Kennedy, "Superpresidentialism and Political Party Development in Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53/8, 2001, pp.1177-1191; Alexander Dallin (ed.), *Political Parties in Russia*, University of California: Berkeley, 1993; M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995; Ian McAllister, Stephen White, "Democracy, Political Parties and Party Formations in Post-communist Russia", *Party Politics*, 1/1, 1995, pp. 49–72; Stephen White, Matthew Wyman & Olga Kryshtanovskaya , "Parties and Politics in Post-Communist Russia", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 25/2, 1995, pp. 185–202; Richard Sakwa, "Parties and the Multiparty System in Russia", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 2, 28, 1993, pp. 7–15; Michael McFaul, Sergei Markov, *The Troubled Birth of Russian Democracy: Parties, Personalities and Programs*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1993

[286] Niyazaliev, ibid., p.92

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DMK one by one and emerged as separate political parties with their own agendas and political platforms.[287]

In that regard, in the first phase after independence opposition parties can be grouped around three main tendencies; the radical nationalists, the national democracts, and the moderates.[288] Among the most important radical nationalist groups, there were *Asaba* (Banner), *Ashar* (Mutual Aid), and *Erkin Kyrgyzstan* (Free Kyrgyzstan). *Asaba* was an ethnocentric and nationalist party and described its goals as the defense of the economic, social and political interests of the Kyrgyz people. A more nationalist-oriented group was *Ashar*. *Ashar* aimed to protect the rights of Kyrgyz population especially in the Uzbek-inhabited region of Osh. Another group, *Erkin Kyrgyzstan*, was less nationalist as compared to the others and rejected all types of chauvinism, fascism and racism. It also opposed Islamic fundamentalism, while emphasizing positive features of Islam. *Erkin Kyrgyzstan* later split into two because of lack of reconciliation between the two wings of the party. One wing of the party was closer to nationalism, while the other wing was more moderate and formed a new party named *Ata-Meken* (Fatherland) in 1992.[289] After the disintegration of *Erkin Kyrgyzstan*, further splits were observed among the nationalist parties, which led to the emergence of new parties proclaiming their adherence to the democratization of society and to internationalism defined as the equality of and friendship among all ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan.[290] In that sense, *Ata-Meken* and *Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan*, the party of Akaev, were considered as the national

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[287] Actually most of these political parties were newly formed thus their agendas were not so clear and their ideological orientations were weak. According to surveys about Kyrgyz political parties, this situation made political parties "leader-oriented", while leaders were mostly dependent on certain region or regions of the country from which they had political support and were thus elected. This is directly related to the reflection of tribal reality over the political life. For further information please see Elmira Nogoybaeva, "Political Elites of Kyrgyzstan: How They Appeared and How They Interact?", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 1/43, 2007, pp.101-109, Azizbek Cusupbekov, Emil Niyazov, "Siyasi Partiler", in *Bağımsız Kırgızistan, Düğümler ve Çözümler*, Emine Gürsoy Naskali (ed.), Ankara: TC Kültür Bakanlığı Türk Dünyası Dizisi, 2001, pp.167-185

[288] Capisani, ibid., p.213

[289] Shireen Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, Westport: Praeger, 1996, pp.50-51

[290] Vladimir Babak, Demian Vaisman, "Kyrgyz Republic", in *Political Organization in Central Asian and Azerbaijan, Sources and Documents"*, Vladimir Babak, Demian Vaisman, Aryeh Wasserman (eds.), Portland: Frank Cass, 2004, p.203

democracts.[291] Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan was officially established in September 1993. Its social base consisted primarily of educated Kyrgyz and blue-collar workers. The main goals of the party were to establish a genuine democracy governed by law and to raise living standards by adopting the best of both the capitalist and socialist models of economy. Its members were mainly the representatives of the industrial and governmental managerial elite.[292] Beyond these parties, there emerged other parties claiming a centrist orientation, which made them moderates. Among these parties, the *Republican People's Party* and *Social Democrat Party* were the most widely known. The Republican People's Party was founded in September 1992 and was basically supported by the people such as students, artists, writers and pensioners. Its main goals were to stabilize the economic, social and political life of the republic.[293] Social Democrat Party emerged in 1993 and even at the time of registration it had a large political base from the educated Kyrgyz to ordinary workers.[294]

In addition to these groups, there were other political parties that did not fit into any of the above mentioned categories such as *The Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan* and *Agrarian Party*.[295] The Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan was the unofficial successor to the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan; its chairman being the former communist leader Absamat Masaliev. It was re-established in June 1992 after it was banned after the August 1991 coup. The party was one of the largest and most popular party organizations in Kyrgyzstan, its members (mainly former CPSU members) being somewhere between 20.000 and 25.000.[296] Agrarian Party was established in 1993. The social base of the party consisted of peasants and workers of the agrarian-

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[291] Azizbek Cusupbekov, Emil Niyazov, "Siyasi Partiler", in *Bağımsız Kırgızistan, Düğümler ve Çözümler,* Emine Gürsoy Naskali (ed.), Ankara: TC Kültür Bakanlığı Türk Dünyası Dizisi, 2001, p.168

[292] Babak and Vaisman, ibid., p.245

[293] Kovalskii, ibid., p.243

[294] Babak and Vaisman, ibid., p.190

[295] Cusupbekov and Niyazov, ibid., p.168

[296] Babak and Waisman, ibid., p.226

industrial sector who were disappointed by the failed results of the agrarian reforms.[297]

The 1995 parliamentary elections became the first multi-party parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan into which all of the above mentioned parties were allowed to participate. After the elections, several of these parties sent their candidates to the Parliament.[298] In addition, Akaev administration did not attempt to utilize the institutional and popular support base of the Communist Party in these elections as a vehicle of state influence and power. On the contrary, the former president of *Ata-Meken* Party, Kamila Kenenbaeva, stated in her interview made by Pauline Jones Loung that "Akaev's approach was also unique in that he made deliberate attempts to incorporate representatives of the various political parties and social organizations in his government and often solicited their policy-making advice".[299] Actually, it seemed that Akaev turned it into a habit to meet every week in his office with the leaders of main opposition parties. Two alternative proposals introduced to the parliament for the new constitution were prepared by the representatives of *Erkin Kyrgyzstan*.[300]

Under Akaev's rule, the opposition parties also found a relatively free atmosphere to operate. An example of this was the congress, "Forward with Democracy" held by the political parties and political groupings in 27-28 February 1993. The congress focused on two main issues: amendments to the constitution and the ongoing economic decline in Kyrgyzstan.[301] Again on 12 September 1994, political parties and institutions organized the "Democracy Congress". In this congress the leaders of opposition parties freely made their speeches and criticized the government. They also published a declaration in the final stage of the congress without any restrictions or intervention from

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[297] Ibid., p.192

[298] Commision on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Report on the Parliamentary Election in Kyrgyzstan: February 5, 1995, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan", April 2005, p.8

[299] Loung, ibid., p.111

[300] Cusupbekov and Niyazov, ibid., p.174

[301] Veçerniy Bişkek, 03.03.1993, quoted in Cusupbekov and Niyazov, p.171

the government.[302] In that regard, it can be stated that Akaev's administration encouraged the emergence of independent parties, and indeed, proliferation of different types of social and political organizations. Thus, Kyrgyzstan gained a momentum in creating a multi-party system and establishing political pluralism.

3.1.3 Development of Civil Society

For democratic consolidation, the role of civil society is paramount. "Civil society, a sphere of voluntary associations situated between the state and the market, can serve as a promoter of democratic values, providing models of active citizenship, and tempering the power of the state."[303] Since the very beginning of his rule Akaev emphasized the contribution of civil society, particularly informal NGOs and an independent media, in facilitating the consolidation of democratic institutions in Kyrgyzstan. Actually, civil society in Kyrgyzstan was primarily a product of the post-independence period. Akaev encouraged the development of a civil society to a large extent and "by 1992, Kyrgyzstan was probably the most open of the Central Asian republics, with a lively media, and an ever growing number of social organization and political movement."[304]

As a first step for the emergence of civil society, embassies in Kyrgyzstan, foreign institutions and international organizations contributed to the establishment of local NGOs and they considered that the growth of civil society is largely based on the increase in the number of NGOs in the country.[305] In that sense, it is a fact that "although the very existence of the Western type NGOs is far from being achieved, there is a sector of NGOs which can be considered as the indicator of a developing civil society"[306] in

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[302] Slovo Kyrgyzstana, 13.09.2004, quoted in Cusupbekov and Niyazov, p.172

[303] Altinay Kuchukeeva and John O'Loughlin, "Civic Engagement and Democratic Consolidation in Kyrgyzstan", *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 44/8, 2003, pp.557-558

[304] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.29

[305] Boris-Mathieu Pétric, "Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan on the Birth of a Globalized Protectorate", *Central Asian Survey*, 24/3, September 2005, p.325

[306] Gökhan Alper Ataşer, "Non-Governmental Organizations and Democratization in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan", Master Thesis, Ankara: METU, December 2005, p.37

Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan's NGO sector has rapidly grown since the early 1990s and has been accelerating throughout the decade.[307] As such it is depicted as having the fastest growth rates in Central Asia.[308]

Although the accurate estimates of the number of existing NGOs are not available, some sources estimate the number of NGOs established between 1991 and 1996 to be more than 800.[309] The scopes of these organizations were varied, covering a wide range of issues such as human rights, environment, poverty, homeless people, women, and workers.[310] However, it must be stated that the development of NGOs was to a large extent related to Akaev's determination to create a civil society. Under Akaev, NGOs were subjected to a progressive, if not perfect, legislation. Despite its shortcomings, the legal framework for NGOs in Kyrgyzstan had a relatively democratic character. In this period, lots of social organizations flourished and only a few of them faced problems in gaining legal recognition. The legal environment for NGOs consisted of the constitution, Kyrgyz Civil Code and Law on Non-Commercial Organizations.[311] The constitution guaranteed the people to establish associations freely without government interference.[312] Kyrgyz Civil Code established the basis for civil-law institutions and recognized two major categories of legal entities, commercial and non-commercial organizations, while the Law on Non-Commercial Organizations dealt with the legislative process concerning the organizations and their

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[307] Anne Garbutt, "Donor Trends and Civil Society Development in Central Asia", ONTRAC: *The Newsletter of the International NGO Training and Research Center,* 26 January 2004, p.3

[308] Even in the first decade of its independence, Kyrgyzstan seemed different than other Central Asian countries. In that sense, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) declared at the end of 1990 that "The countries of Central Asia constantly rank at the bottom of the Europe and Eurasia Bureau's NGO Sustainability Index. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan ranked 21st, 25th, 26th and 28th, respectively. Kyrgyzstan, which has a somewhat vibrant civil society ranked 11th out of 28 countries. Pétric, Ibid., p. 325

[309] Erkinbek Kasybekov, "Government and Nonprofit Sector Relations in the Kyrgyz Republic", in M. Holt Ruffin, Daniel Waugh (eds.), *Civil Society in Central Asia,* Washington: University of Washington Press, 1999, p.71, Zairash Galieva, "Civil Society in the Kyrgyz Republic in Transition", *Central Asian Monitor,* No.5, 1998, p.7

[310] Lori M. Handrahan, "Political Participation and Human Rights in Kyrgyzstan: Civil Society, Women, and a Democratic Future", *Central Asian Monitor,* No.3, 1999, p.9

[311] Ataşer, ibid., p.55

[312] Constitution of Kyrgyz Republic, Article 8

activities. Thus, it can be stated that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan operated in a far more liberal environment as compared to other Central Asian republics.

In a parallel fashion with the development of the NGOs sector, the importance of a free information space within which social groups and movements can exchange views, offer critiques of others, and inform the public about their activities was understood. In that sense, following Akaev's election to presidency, the official media adopted a more open approach to reporting political events and several private radio and television stations as well as quasi-autonomous papers, with their new editorial lines and often highly critical positions towards the government. *Slovo Krygyzstana, Svobodnye Gory, Respublika and* the *Pravda Kyrgyzstana* were among the most important examples of such papers during that time.[313] *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* was the least critical among them and it explored the daily political issues, reported the activities and programs of political parties and politicians and occasionally published critical articles and letters from the people. *Svobodnye Gory* and *Respublika*, however, were more critical as they increasingly criticized the president and his team, and waged a war on corruption and what they saw as growing authoritarianism.[314] *Pravda Kyrgyzstana* was the newspaper of the Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan, which was highly critical as well.[315] In an interview made by Pauline Jones Loung in 1994, the editors of *Svobodnye Gory* and *Respublika*, suggested that:

> From independence up until the beginning of 1994, Kyrgyzstan had media arguably among the most free and open in the former Soviet Union. Journalists in the Kyrgyz and Russian language press readily acknowledge that the press has generally become 'more democratic' and stayed 'more or less free' from state intervention and control since Akaev was popularly elected.[316]

In his early years, Akaev often spoke of the need to create a lively civil society if democratization was to proceed and made frequent references for

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[313] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.29

[314] Ibid., pp. 29-30

[315] Babak and Waisman, ibid., p.226

[316] Loung, ibid., p.110

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establishing a vibrant civil society to provide a foundation for democratic transition. He indeed achieved some success and Kyrgyz civil society reached a substantial level of development. Furthermore, Akaev personally aimed to incorporate civil society into domestic politics. For instance, during his first three years in office, Akaev held frequent meetings with journalists and leaders of political parties, social organizations and religious communities and utilized their ideas in policy planning.[317] Simply put, "during the early 1990s an embryonic, modern civil society was gradually emerging within Kyrgyzstan"[318], and as such the country was the most open of the Central Asian states and exhibited a relatively high degree of social pluralism.[319]

3.1.4 Elections and Referendums

Under Akaev's first term, elections and referendums were frequently utilized in order to get people's approval about the new developments, arrangements and institutions. Between 1991 and 1995 there was one parliamentary election, one presidential election and two referendums.

3.1.4.1 Elections

Elections are the direct measures used in democratization surveys by the international agencies such as Freedom House. In that sense, in order to meet democratic criteria, there must be direct elections in which "all parties can compete equally, in which votes are accurately counted, and in which the victors take political power. Indirectly, the ability of parties to compete equally is affected by the ability of individuals to express themselves politically, both through free association and organization for political purposes, and through open competition of political views in the mass media."[320]

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[317] John Anderson, "Creating a Framework for Civil Society in Kyrgyzstan", *Europe-Asia Studies,* 52/1, 2000, p.79

[318] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.32

[319] Anderson, "Creating a Framework for Civil Society in Kyrgyzstan", p.79

[320] Shale Horowitz, "Sources of Post-communist Democratization: Economic Structure, Political Culture, War, and Political Institutions", *Nationalities Papers,* 31/2, June 2003, p.125

From this point of view, 9 February 1995 parliamentary elections could be evaluated as only partially meeting the above mentioned preconditions. Newly formed political parties were allowed to participate to the election in a much greater capacity than it has ever been. Thus a total of 1.021 candidates, representing twelve registered parties and social organizations, were nominated to the parliament and eleven of these political parties gained seats in the parliament. However, the results were not completely satisfactory in the sense that none of the participated parties could get a majority in the parliament. As a Moscow-based journalist noted, there were many parties, but each had "two and a half members."[321] The distribution of seats after the February 1995 parliamentary elections is shown in Table 3.1.[322]

Table 3.1

Political Parties and Parliamentary Representation in Kyrgyzstan, 1995

Name of the Party	Number of Parliamentary Seats
Social-Democratic Party	14
Asaba National Renewal Party	4
Unity of Kyrgyzstan	4
Ata-Meken	3
Republican People's Party	3
Erkin Democratic Party Kyrgyzstan	3
Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan	3
Agrarian-Labor Party of Kyrgyzstan	1
Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan	1
Agrarian Party	1
Democratic Party of Economic Unity	0
Unaffiliated	67

The results of 1995 parliamentarian elections also showed that most of the elected deputies did not claim any party affiliation and were elected

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[321] Alexander Sabov, "Kirgiziia: spory o fasade?", *Slovo Kyrgyzstana,* 15 July 1995, pp.6-14, quoted in Huskey, , "Kyrgyzstan: the Fate of political liberation", p. 263

[322] Huskey, , "Kyrgyzstan: the Fate of Political Liberation", p. 262

independently. In general, these new deputies were "well-known figures" in their own regions, rather than being as the representatives of political parties.[323] This was mainly because of the new electoral law adopted in January 1994. The law organized the election constituencies on the basis of single-person constituency based on a majoritarian electoral system. And "the use of single-member districts (SMDs) virtually insured local issues and loyalties' triumph over the national political parties and national party programs, which were weak to compete with them in single-person constituencies."[324] In that sense, the new electoral law adopted by Akaev was open to criticism. As a result of the implementation of SMDs, People's Assembly, the lower chamber, was dominated by regional *akims*[325] and business-oriented people. Actually, during the registration of candidates, there were complaints about the local electoral commissions-which had to verify each candidate- as they were said to be in the hands of authorities and regional bosses. This was perceived as a vital concession for the *akims* and the businessmen, as about 30 percent of the businessmen in the new parliament were being investigated by State Prosecutor's Office for illegal financial dealings. After being elected as deputies, however, they acquired immunity.[326] That's why it was assumed that the new electoral system "favored the old elites, regional bosses and criminal elements"[327]. Beside, it was argued that Akaev gave too much freedom to *akims,* whose bureaucratic power increased to such an extent that they influenced the electoral outcomes of the 1995 parliamentary elections. In that sense it was also argued that the increased power of regional *akims* in the parliament turned the parliament

[323] Zhypar Zheksheyev, the leader of Democratic Movement Party, told in an interview that "It is difficult to unite the Kyrgyz politically, because the different political parties, and their supporters, are connected to certain regions of the country. The Republican Peoples Party, for example, is connected to the region Talas and Asaba to Osjskaja and Djalalabadskaja Oblast. That means, if your relatives come from Talas you will normally vote for The Republican Peoples Party. Kyrgyz tend not to vote according to party programs, but rather according to the tribe or clan of the party leader. People believe that supporting a member of own tribe/clan may secure the future for an individual and his family. For further information see, Erlend H. Hvoslef, "Tribalism and Modernity in Kirgizia" in *Ethnic Encounter and Culture Change* ed. M.Sabour and Knut S. Vikor, Bergen: Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies, 1997, p.103

[324] Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: the Fate of political liberation", p. 262

[325] The province governer, who was a presidential appointee, was called as *Akims* until 1996. Generally *akims* were the most powerful spokeman for regional interests.

[326] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.50

[327] Anderson, "Constitutional Development in Central Asia", p.315

into an organ of regional power.[328] Such changes in Kyrgyzstan's institutional design was evaluated as reinforcing, if not damaging democratization, existing social and cultural impediments to democratic reform.[329] Beyond this, there were many reports about the use of pressure and bribes during the election[330]:

> Candidates told of being intimidated into withdrawing, or of local officials who would not give them the mandated airtime on local television, or allow their platforms to be printed in local newspapers. In Talas oblast, candidates alleged that the entire oblast press, radio and television had been ordered to work on behalf of one candidate and against all the others. Candidates in Naryn oblast alleged that local authorities dismissed one candidate's trustees and refused another candidate television airtime. Elsewhere, candidates charged that their assistants had been fired from their jobs. And throughout the country, there were allegations that candidates bought votes with money, gasoline, or other commodities, such as flour, rice or shoes."

The second contested election of this era was the presidential election held on 23 December 1995. Originally, presidential elections were due in 1996; but Akaev announced that he would reschedule the elections so that they would be held in December 1995. This was realized however, by the approval of the Legislative Assembly. Contrary to first presidential elections in 1991, this time there were two more candidates. Other political opponents of Akaev, however, stated that they had been prevented illegally from participating to the election. They were especially critical of the short time period allowed for the campaign and argued that the given time was not long enough in order to get the required number of signatures for registration or to prepare a proper campaign. Eventually by December 6, there were six registered candidates: Askar Akaev, Medetkan Sherimkulov, (the speaker of the assembly and the former ideology secretary of the CPK), Absamat Masaliev, (the former leader of the CPK), Jumgalbek Amanbaev, (former Communist leader), Omurbek

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[328] By giving too much freedom to *akims* Akaev unilaterally lifted the constitutional ban on regional and local *akims* holding office in the People Assembly. The relation between Akaev and regional *akims* in that sense was reciprocal. Akaev compromised to them and in return they provided loyalty to Akaev. For more information, see Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: the Fate of political liberation", pp.250-255, "Akaev Fears 'Shouters, Politicians' in New Parliaments", INTERFAX in English, Daily Report: Central Eurasia, 23 November, 1994, p.46

[329] Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: the Fate of political liberation", p. 260

[330] *Slovo Kyrgyzstana,* 28th January 1995, 7th February 1995, *Res Publica* 31st January 1995, 3rd February 1995, quoted in Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Report on the Parliamentary Election in Kyrgyzstan: February 5, 1995, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan", April 2005, p.9

Tekebaev, (leader of Ata-Meken party) and Mamat Aybalaev, (the dismissed director of a southern factory). However, Central Electoral Commission announced that the last three candidates had to be removed because they could not meet the criteria about the collection of adequate number of signatures. As a result, only two opposition candidates were left: Absamat Masaliev and Medetkan Sherimkulov.

The election campaign turned out to be one-sided, as the media campaigned on behalf of Akaev. For instance, *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* published pages of endorsements from well known Kyrgyz public figures, religious leaders and CIS heads of state supporting Akaev. Additionally, the opponents' campaigns were blocked by the state institutions. For instance Sherimkulov's campaign manager was arrested without enough evidence justifying the arrest.[331]

Askar Akaev won the elections with 71.9% support. Other two candidates received 24.4% (Masaliev) and 1.7% (Sherimkulov) of the votes.[332] The campaign and voting processes in both Kyrgyzstan's parliamentary and presidential elections were shadowed by violations, intimidation, official pressure, vote buying and fraud. Some specialists thought that the December 1995 presidential election raised concerns about Akaev's real commitment to democracy, given the barring of certain candidates and tight control of media.[333] Still, under Akaev's rule, Kyrgyzstan, by holding multi-party and multi-candidate elections, was indeed more free than other newly independent states of Central Asia.

3.1.4.2 Referendums

Under Akaev's first term, there were two referendums; one in January 1994 and the other in October 1994. However, contrary to other Central Asian leaders, Akaev did not prefer to use referendums as an option to extend his

[331] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.54

[332] Abazov, "The Political Culture of Central Asia: A Case of Kyrgyzstan", p.47

[333] Glenn, ibid., p.146, and Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.54

term of office.[334] In the first referendum, the citizens were asked whether they wanted Akaev to complete his term, while the other was asking the approval of the citizens to the amendments in the constitution. About the usage of the referendums, Akaev stated that:

> Life proved that in the light of our economic and social specifics, our culture and way of thinking, our democratic priorities and the sequence of their implementation are other than in the West. Let us take for instance, the referendum. I am more and more convinced, and I am not alone in my thinking, that Kyrgyzstan is among those countries wherein referendum is likely to be the most efficient form of direct public administration. Maybe our national character accounts for the value of referendum, but our experience indicates that this sort of dialogue amidst people of the Republic is the most real expression of democracy. Convincing proof of this is referendum on constitutional amendments. When a constitution is adopted or amended by the people themselves, as world experience shows, it acts to the benefit of both the Constitution and democracy.[335]

The first referendum in January 1994 was held as a result of the growing opposition toward Akaev within the parliament, mainly due to the economic problems of the country and the corruption scandals in the government. Thus, by 1993 the initial harmony between Akaev and parliament was no longer there. Throughout 1993, the parliament demanded more control over the executive branch. According to Glenn E. Curtis, around this time:

> The allotment of development concessions for two of the republic's largest gold deposits was a particular rallying point. When it was discovered that the Kyrgyzstani negotiating team ... had financial interest in the deal, the agreement nearly was cancelled entirely. In December 1993, public protest about this gold concession brought down the government of Prime Minister Tursunbek Chyngyshev and badly damaged Akaev's popularity and credibility. ... Akaev was not publicly accused of being involved in gold scandals, but numerous rumors have mentioned corruption and influence-peddling in the Akaev family, especially in the entourage of his wife.[336]

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[334] Kovalskii, ibid., p.237

[335] Quoted from Askar Akaev's speech during the meeting on the 70th Anniversary of the Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast, 7th October 1994, in Askar Akaev, "Kyrgyzstan on the Way to Progress and Democracy", p.153

[336] Curtis, "Kyrgyzstan: A Country Study", p.160

Subsequently, in January 1994, Akaev arranged a referendum and asked the citizens whether they supported his economic and political policies and wanted him to continue his constitutional tenure until 1996. There was a support of 95% percent, which meant full public confidence to Akaev.[337]

In spite of the public confidence, however, legislative branch still refused to support Akaev and the government, and this negative attitude slowed down the reform movements. Although the new constitution was accepted by the parliament in May 1993, it still failed to produce a quorum for its last scheduled session prior to the expiration of its term, which was February 1995. Akayev, in turn, asserted that the communist parliamentarians caused a political crisis by preventing the legislature from fulfilling its role. Mostly due to the pressure coming from Akaev, the whole Cabinet of Ministers resigned on September 1994 by "complaining that the parliament turned from a legislative body into a place of political intrigue".[338] Akaev accepted the resignation but asked the government to continue its duties until a new government would be formed. Akaev dissolved the parliament by the end of September. After dissolving the parliament, he issued a presidential decree, which declared that the government itself was illegitimate and that the parliament did not function on behalf of the Kyrgyz nation.[339]

Akaev subsequently scheduled another referendum on 22 October 1994. By this referendum, two amendments to the constitution were put to public approval; one amendment would allow the constitution to be amended by means of referendums, and the other would create a new bicameral parliament[340], the *Jogorku Kenesh*. This referendum, too, strengthened

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[337] Niyazaliev, ibid., pp.97-98

[338] Kovalskii, ibid., p.239

[339]"Political History since Independence" in *Politics of Kyrgyzstan,* available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Kyrgyzstan (Accessed on 15.11.2006)

[340] Actually the proposal for establishing a bicameral parliament was made while drafting the constitution in 1993 as mentioned before but it was refused. However, in the spring of 1994 the issue of the adoption of a two-chamber parliament took into consideration again. This time Akaev defended publicly the need for a reformed parliament, which was vibrant and worked more effectively. After the referendum the objective of establishing bicameral parliament was achieved. Through Article 62 the new parliament -*Jogorku Kenesh*- was established in two chambers: the Legislative Assembly (*Myizam Chygaruu Jyiyny*) and the People's Assembly (the Assembly of People's Deputies) (*El Okuldor Jyiyny*). The Legislative Assembly (upper chamber) was a permanent chamber and consisted of thirty-five members. The Legislative Assembly would

Akaev's hand as an was overhelming majority of the people (approximately 86%) approved these amendments.[341]

However, the usage of referendum by Akaev was criticized by his opponents who claimed that by doing so, Akaev behaved "not as the head of executive branch but a kind of republican monarch who served as the guarantor of the constitution... operating at the pinnacle of state power."[342] Akaev's critics also claimed that this was simply an instrument to arrange a "quiet" parliament. Likewise, this constitutional reform was deemed to be illegal, because the constitution empowered only the parliament to call for referenda.

3.2 Comments about Akaev's First term

Akaev finished his first term of office by the 1995 elections. During his tenure between 1990 and 1995, Kyrgyzstan gained international recognition, credibility and the reputation of being "Switzerland of Central Asia" or "island of democracy". This was due to the fact that Kyrgyzstan "retained a considerably degree of social pluralism and a more open political space than any other of its Central Asian neighbors."[343] Akaev's reforms attracted the attention of the Western world and Kyrgyzstan received almost a billion dollars worth of donation in its attempts of transition toward democracy.[344] Introduction of political reforms, including dismantling the Soviet-style one party political system, building the institutions of a sovereign state, preparing a new constitution, building a legitimate parliament and presidential power and seeking to develop European style democratic institutions were indeed promising. As a result, Kyrgyzstan established the most liberal political environment in Central Asia. Bolstered by the newly gained civil and political

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convene all year round and deal with issues of national import and daily legislative matters. The People's Assembly (lower chamber), which represented regional interests, met a few times a year and consisted of seventy members. The deputies are supposed to be elected on the basis of universal, equal, and direct suffrage by secret ballot for a five year term from single member constituencies. For further information see "Kyrgyz Political System", available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Kyrgyzstan (Accessed on 18.03.2007)

[341] Kort, ibid., p.160

[342] Handrahan, ibid., p.468

[343] Kovalskii, ibid., p. 238

[344] Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: the Fate of Political Liberation", p.242

freedoms, independent media, political parties, and various social and civil society support organizations proliferated at an unprecedented rate. A series of progressive reforms soon led to increasing political and economic liberalization and civic pluralism.[345] Additionally, the 1993 Constitution provided a legal framework for realizing the general standards and ideals of a democratic, law-governed state. According to one expert, during this era: "The president adhere[d] to the constitution in domestic and foreign policy, the multiparty parliament discusse[d] and adopte[d] laws freely, the government publicly advance[d] economic and political programs and regularly reporte[d] to the parliament. The opposition ha[d] its own press, and often criticize[d] the government's actions."[346] In fact, although the new constitution did not create a strong parliamentarism, it did not intend to create a strong presidential rule either. The constitution gave substantial powers to the president but also provided the parliament with a mechanism to balance the presidential power.

In that sense, the evolution of Akaev's leadership strategy can be analyzed in two periods: "first, his political ascent and his first few years in power from 1989 to 1993; and second, the year of crisis in 1993 and the subsequent repercussions of his initial political and economic policies from 1994 to the present."[347] In that sense, 1993 was a crucial year. As a result of the events and challenges of the early years, a change in Akaev's leadership tactics became visible by 1994. Approvingly, Akaev's launch toward authoritarianism could be traced back to September 1994, when "he engineered a quiet revolution in which he disbanded parliament, forced the resignation of the government, cowed the judiciary, shut down the press, set up new electoral commission, and announced new parliamentary elections."[348] The following referendum in October 1994 also encouraged Akaev's stance toward a more authoritarian rule. The amendments accepted by referendum limited the parliamentary power, threatened the separation of powers and facilitated a power shift in the direction of president. "Following this series of flawed

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[345] Kuchukeeva and O'Loughlin, ibid., p.563

[346] Kovalskii, ibid., p. 236

[347] Spector, ibid., p.4

[348] Gleason, ibid., p.99

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elections and constitutional changes pushed through by the president, some critics charged that Akaev was reverting to Central Asian type, with a thin veneer of democratic rhetoric and practice disguising more authoritarian forms of rule."[349]

In that regard, it can be argued that Akaev's leadership encouraged the base for a delegative democracy in Kyrgyzstan. Moving from the following assumption of delegative democracies are grounded on one basic premise: he/she wins a presidential election and thus enables to govern the country as he/she sees fit, and to the extent that existing power relations allow, for the term to which he/she is elected; Akaev's presidency between 1991 and 1995 was seemed to fit the case of a delegative democracy. As such, Akaev was elected as the president of Kyrgyzstan in 1991 in a presidential election by public votes. In that sense, election of Akaev instead of Masaliev, who was the first secretary of Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan, attracted attention. As a part of Soviet legacy, in the other CARs the ex-first secretaries of Communist Party came to power to rule the new republics. However, in Kyrgyzstan that would not be the case and Akaev was elected as a result of the public trust toward him. This public support emerged mainly via Akaev's charisma. Shortly before his election by public vote, he had engaged in important events, which strengthened his charisma in the eyes of the population such as restoring the peace in Osh, proclaiming national sovereignty of Kyrgyzstan, successfully coping with the protest of non-titular nations, dealing with the August Coup against Gorbachev and most importantly declaring the independence of Kyrgyzstan. Among these events, his way of response toward August Coup was especially important. On contrary to the majority of the Soviet leaders, he was absolutely opposed to the coup and took measures in that regard. As a result, although he was a totally new name for Kyrgyz citizens by the time he was elected, he was chosen to be elected as the president, while it was believed that he was a liberal figure and would be the promoter of political and economic reforms and thus achieved to create a political consensus around his name. After his election, typically for a delegative democracy, Akaev was authorized to govern the country as he saw fit and he was delegated to exercise a full authority since the president is seen as the

[349] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.55

embodiment of the nation and the main protector of the national interest, which is incumbent upon him to define. In very simple terms, Akaev's actions of utilizing referendums for making constitutional changes, forcing government to resign and dissolving the parliament can be analyzed in this frame. Beyond this, he still respected to the constitutionally limited term of office and announced the new presidential elections for the period of 1995-2000.

In the next chapter, I will analyze Akaev's era between 1995 and 2005 by looking at the erosion of the democratic principles of the constitution via referendums, increasing intolerance against the opposition and the parliamentary and presidential elections held in this period.

CHAPTER IV

AKAEV ERA POLICIES: 1995-2005

I would like to also mention about my personal position on democratic development. I want to say that there are a number of various myths on this subject. Some of them go as far as to depict me as transforming from a democrat into an autocrat. I say openly if it had not been for my democratic conventions and principles with regard to opposition. ... Kyrgyzstan would have just a part of the current opposition political parties and media that we currently have. The many opposition leaders who exhibited great zeal in aggravating libelous considerations would have been in a different place. In terms of democratization, among the post-Soviet countries, the Kyrgyz republic is one of the leading countries. And I do not want to minimize my personal role in this process.

Askar AKAEV[350]

Contrary to what Akaev had said back in 2002 about his contribution to democratization of Kyrgyzstan, the trajectory of his leadership obviously turned towards a more authoritarian path since mid-1995. The restrictions in political space such as the erosion of the democratic principles of the constitution, the frequent crackdowns on independent media outlets, the massive attacks on opposition parties, and the irregularities of the elections, undermined the widely-known metaphors of being the "island of democracy" and "Switzerland of Central Asia" referring Kyrgyzstan's development since independence. In this chapter, the shift in Akaev's leadership style from liberal to authoritarian between 1995 and 2005 is described. As such, the focus will be on the erosion of the democratic principles of the constitution via referendums, increasing intolerance against the opposition and the parliamentary and presidential elections held in this period.

4.1 Erosion of the Democratic Principles of the Constitution via Referendums

Askar Akaev utilized the option of national referendum more frequently in his second term of office. The referendums held in 1996, 1998 and 2003

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[350] Askar Akaev, "The Future of Kyrgyzstan", Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C., September 24, 2002, p.5 available at http://www.csis.org/media/csis/events/020924_akaev.pdf (Accessed on 16 June 2005)

generally served the aim of amending the democratic principles of the constitution. This technique of going to the people for this kind of change can be considered as a way of bypassing the legislature. In that sense, Huskey argued that "by appealing for an up or down vote of the populace on constitutional changes, Akaev avoided the compromises and concessions that parliament or a constitutional convention would have exacted."[351] Akaev himself, however, argued that in Kyrgyzstan the referendum was objectively becoming one of the most real and active forms of popular power[352] because referendums were the only way of speeding up reforms. What seemed to be more important about the issue was the fact that pressure for implementing such reforms did not come "from below" in any case. On the contrary, this instrument was perceived as a device belonging to the leaders, who tended to use popular vote in order to strengthen their personal power by removing constraints over their areas of jurisdiction.[353] In a similar sense, Akaev turned it into a habit to rely on referendums whenever he met with parliamentary opposition and resistance against his policy initiatives by the legislative branch.

The February 1996 referendum was nothing different in due course. It was the first referendum in Akaev's second presidential term and resulted in a popular approval of the Kyrgyz people for extending powers of the president via additional constitutional amendments. The referendum consisted of a simple "yes" or "no" vote for a variety of amendments. The proposed amendments were so complex that most voters admitted they did not understand the referendum.[354] By the referendum, the power of the president was consolidated, and some powers of the parliament granted by the 1993 Constitution, were now transferred to the president. With the referendum, the right to nominate the prime minister, to appoint the cabinet members, the director of the National Bank and the Attorney General were given to the

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[351] Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: an Economy of Authoritarianism?", p.83

[352] "Sprosit' i vyslushat' narod – ne v etom li segodnia real'naia demokratiia v Kyrgyzstane?", *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 27 September 1994, p.1 quoted in Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: an Economy of Authoritarianism?", p.83

[353] Paul Goble, "How Authoritarian Regimes Use Elections", *Central Asia Monitor*, 6, 1999

[354] Lori M. Handrahan, "Gendering Ethnicity in Kyrgyzstan, Forgotten Elements in Promoting Peace and Democracy", *Gender and Development*, 9/3, November 2001, pp.71-72

president without the need of approval from the parliament.[355] Furthermore, the president could now determine the main course of action for domestic and foreign policy. As such, Akaev became the only one who "determine[d] the major trends in the state's foreign and domestic policy"[356] in Kyrgyzstan.

Two years later, on 1 September 1998 Akaev announced a new referendum, which was scheduled for October. On the following day, the official decree about the referendum was published in *Slovo Kyrgyztana*. The call for referendum surprised the *Jogorkhu Kenesh* as there was no mention of holding a new referendum. On the contrary Akaev himself had declared that there would be no more referendums until the year 2000. The deputies called this move as a "slap in the face of the parliament"[357]. The new referendum would be about five new proposals regarding further constitutional amendments, each of which was diverse in its context. The issues ranged from private land ownership to a reduction in the size, structure and power of the parliament and immunity and privileges of the parliamentarians. According to Huskey, "Akaev forced the voters to cast a 'take it or leave it' ballot on wholly unrelated matters."[358] Specifically, the proposal included an increase in the number of deputies in Legislative Assembly (upper house) from 35 to 63, and a decrease in the number of representatives in the People's Assembly (lower house) from 70 to 42. Unlike the 1993 constitution, "the new proposal would have the Legislative Assembly elected based on proportional representation (48 of the seats) and on party lists (15 of the seats). On the other hand, the People's Assembly would be indirectly elected by the local *oblast keneshes* (local legislators) with six seats going to each *oblast*-there are six regions in Kyrgyzstan- and six to the city of Bishkek".[359] In that sense, local observers criticized the proposal as a "presidential effort

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[355] Pınar Akçalı, "Democracy and Political Stability in Kyrgyzstan", in *Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia*, Birgit N. Schlyter (ed.), Stockholm: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 2005, p.43

[356] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.50

[357] "Kyrgyz President Calls for Changes to Constitution", *Central Asian Monitor*, 5, 1998, p.35

[358] Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: an Economy of Authoritarianism?", p.83

[359] Joyce Connery, "Caught between a Dictatorship and a Democracy: Civil Society, Religion and Development in Kyrgyzstan", *The Fletcher Journal of Development Studies*, 16, 2000, p.7

to create a pocket parliament"[360] while the *oblast keneshes* were influenced strongly by the *akimy* (regional governors), who, in turn, were appointed by the president. So this meant that 42 members of the parliament would be under the direct control of Akaev, which led to the weakening of the parliament. It was argued that, in doing so, Akaev forged a *de facto* ruling alliance with *akimy* of six regions, who were now linked to the president as leaders of local government. Under this new system, power was highly centralized in the hands of the president, as the president would appoint the *akimy*, who in turn would appoint the officials in towns and villages. Actually this system aimed to establish the "institution of akimiaty", which was perceived as the backbone of authoritarian rule.[361] In those regards, the planned referendum caused opposition among the people, the members of the parliament, and the oppositional political parties. As a result, approximately 1000 people met in the city of Dzhalalabad on 25th September to protest the referendum decree while on 28th September the leaders of the Communist, Socialist, Agrarian and Democratic Parties met in Bishkek and made a call for Akaev to cancel the scheduled referendum. They reasoned that given the acute economic situation, Akaev should concentrate on social and economic issues and appealed further demands to Akaev such as dismissing the government, limiting the cabinet's immunities and restoring deputies' credit. However, these efforts could not change Akaev's mind and at the end of September 1998, the Central Electoral Commission declared that the referendum was going to be held in October while the parliament continued to resist reforms; thus, could not fulfill its duties.[362] As scheduled, the referendum was held and accepted with over 90 percent approval and 96 percent of eligible voters participating.[363]

The final step in the process of constitutional change via referendums was initiated in August of 2002 by another presidential decree. According to the decree, in order to reconsider the amendments, the newly established

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[360] Personal interview of Joyce Connery with Galina Sergunina, who is from International Foundation for Election Systems, 10 June 1998 quoted in Connery, ibid., p.7

[361] Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: the Fate of Political Liberalization", pp. 258-259

[362] "Kyrgyz President Calls for Changes to Constitution", p.36

[363] Connery, ibid., p.7

Constitutional Council would be chaired by Akaev, and composed of a wide number of people including pro-governmental and opposition figures, heads of the Supreme and Constitutional Courts and representatives of civil society. Despite the existence of several disagreements among the members of the Constitutional Council, they could nevertheless prepare a final set of proposals regarding new constitutional changes by compromise and consensus. Afterwards, Akaev issued a decree "On the Nationwide Discussion of Amendments to the Constitution", which required the government to make the necessary arrangements for national and local newspapers to publish the draft amendments, holding public meetings to explain the proposals, and instructing the local authorities to help citizens in their communities understand the "purpose and goals" of the constitutional reform process.[364] However, "the unforeseen establishment of an 'experts group' by a further decree of Akaev in January 2003 to finalize the proposed amendments broke the good will engendered through the formation and deliberation of the Constitutional Council"[365]. The experts group significantly amended the proposals put forward by the Constitutional Council, changing the balance of powers between the president and the parliament in favor of the president. The experts group presented a final document to the Constitutional Council that was not open to any further discussion. Thus, on 13 January 2003, the president issued another decree setting the date of the referendum on the basis of the expert group's proposals, which included:

> (1) the provision of more substantial powers to the president in relation to the parliament, notably an absolute right of veto of legislation; (2) alteration of the electoral system to the detriment of political parties; (3) reduction of the right of citizens to appeal to the Constitutional Court; (4) an ambiguous prohibition on the "pursuance of political goals", by foreign nongovernmental organizations which could preclude involvement with domestic monitoring or human rights groups; (5) inclusion of libel provisions in the Constitution; and (6) weakening of the protection from arbitrary removal from parliament enjoyed by MPs and the establishment of parliamentary procedures normally left to the prerogative of parliament."[366]

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[364] *Kyrgyz Republic Constitutional Referendum 2 February 2003,* Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 20 March 2003, p.3 available at http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2003/03/1381_en.pdf, (Accessed on 8 May 2007)

[365] Ibid., p.3

[366] Ibid., p.4

As a result of the criticism coming from both national and international bodies, some final alterations to the proposals were made on 23 January. For instance, the absolute right of veto given to the president over legislation and the regulations against "freedom of the press" were removed from the proposal.[367] On 2 February 2003, the Kyrgyz citizens once more went to the polls[368] regarding two issues: whether the new version of the Kyrgyz constitution should be adopted and whether Askar Akaev should remain in office until the end of his official term in October 2005. Kyrgyz Central Election Committee declared that out of %86.68 voters, %76.61 accepted the amendments in constitution, while %78.74 voted in favor of Akaev.[369]

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[367] Although those proposals were dropped, the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, which was responsible for monitoring the referendum, still expressed concern on the following articles regarding the shift in balance of power to the advantage of the executive branch: Article 63.2 "The Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic may be dissolved early by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic", Article 71.4 "After the parliament may have three times rejected candidates for the office of prime minister, the President shall appoint the Prime Minister and shall dissolve the parliament", Article 47.1 "The President...may issue decrees and orders", Article 68 "The parliament may delegate its legislative powers to the President for a period of up to one year following the dissolution of the parliament". Likewise, there was concern on the following articles regarding human rights and freedoms: Article 8.4 "The following activities shall not be permitted in the Kyrgyz Republic ... Activities of foreign political parties, non-governmental and religious organizations, including their representative offices and branches, which pursue political goals ...", Article 16.9: "No propaganda or advocacy that constitutes incitement to social....hatred or hostility shall be permitted", Article 16.12, "Insulting one's ethnic (national) dignity shall be prosecuted in accordance with law", Article 16.21 "In realizing his rights and freedoms, a person may not violate the rights and freedoms of others". These articles seemed to be open to executive abuse. For further information see *Kyrgyz Republic Constitutional Referendum 2 February 2003,* Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2003, pp. 8-9

[368] The 2003 referendum was regarded as a tactical move by Akaev to calm down the population and the international community and to divert the heightened political and social tension resulted from the "Aksy Events". The Aksy events occurred in March 2002 and resulted in five people to be shot to dead and several to be injured by the police during a demonstration held for the release of an oppositionist, Azimbek Beknazarov, who was a popular deputy from Jalalabad. The international community and the oppositionists labeled the events as a set of human rights violation. Furthermore, by Aksy events, Akaev confronted the question of using state security organs against the population. After the events, Akaev fired the key ministers who were involved in the decision of using fire, which resulted in the resignation of the entire government. The event also made the opposition groups to function in a closer cooperation in order to force Akaev to resign. For further information see Akçalı, Ibid., p.43, Judith Beyer, "Rhetoric of 'Transformation': The Case of the Kyrgyz Constitutional Reform", in *Realities of Transformation: Democratization Policies in Central Asia Revisited,* Andrea Berg and Anna Kreikmeyer (eds.), Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2006, p.51, Spector, Ibid., pp.23-24

[369] Judith Beyer, "Rhetoric of 'Transformation': The Case of the Kyrgyz Constitutional Reform", p.51. Beyond the voting results, Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights (KCHR) members found out irregularities and reported that "Authorities exerted undue pressure on people to vote in favor of the amendments. For example, university students were not allowed to go on winter holiday before the elections but had to vote under supervision of their professors. In addition, many of them voted a second time in their place of residence. Before the polling, the Ministry for Health announced that the 10,000 people staying in hospitals would vote in favor of the constitutional amendments. Some 17,000 members of militia and Ministry of Internal Affairs, 13,000 members of Ministry of Security, and also thousands of people from different ministries, administrations

As a consequence, it can be stated that the constitutional amendments voted on the referendum consolidated the presidential authority at the expense of the parliament's. According to Dukanbaev and Hansen, the most important of these amendments were (1) the replacement of the bicameral parliament with a unicameral one having seventy-five members, (2) the immunity of president and his family members from prosecution upon his retirement[370], (3) the abolishment of the party-list voting for parliament, which destroyed proportional representation in favor of a single member majoritarian runoff system.[371] In one of his speeches in early 1995, Akaev expressed his opinion about the necessities of curtailing parliamentary rule under certain conditions as follows:

> It's common knowledge that a parliamentary rule is the most democratic form of governing, the parliament being the main vessel for democracy. At the same time, examples of history, like the generation of democracy in Athens, degeneration of the Senate in Rome, and of the National Convent of the first French revolution, not to mention of recent examples, convincingly prove that even representative institutions are capable of transforming into something not democratic; they have only to retreat from their principal law to become a collective political monopolist of a national idea. Our experience, for instance, proved that *to idolize the parliament as the sole factor of political democracy is no less dangerous than is the cult of personality*.[372]

Moving from here, Akaev clearly blocked the way to "idolization of the parliament" with the constitutional amendments in 1996, 1998 and 2003. Because the amendments led to a "transfer of power" between the parliament and the president on behalf of the latter, which drastically increased the power of the executive branch while gradually eroding the legislative power. Put simply, it can be stated that by utilizing a democratic instrument such as

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and the army were virtually forced to vote in favor of the amendments". For further information see Annual Report 2003 of the Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights, available at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc_id=5525 (Accessed on 08 May 2007)

[370] This amendment naturally brought about the question of why a president, who was about to complete his term of office, needed legal immunity both for both himself and for his entire family. In that sense, Dukanbaev and Hansen commented on the issue and wrote that such a law could be unprecedented for, say Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac or George Bush but not for Boris Yeltsin, who requested and received the same protection when he left the office. See Dukanbaev and Hansen, Ibid., pp.31-32

[371] Dukenbaev and Hansen, ibid., pp.30-31

[372] Askar Akaev, ""Kyrgyzstan in Transition: Illusions Lost, New Values Gained", in Askar Akaev, *Kyrgyzstan on the Way to Progress and Democracy*, p.115, emphasis mine.

a national referendum, Akaev legally strengthened his presidential rule by destroying the democratic principles of the constitution each time. According to the local observers, this frequent use of referendums resulted in the emergence of "referendum governance", which pointed out Akaev's tendency to rule by decree at the expense of weakening legislative authority.[373]

4.2 Increasing Intolerance against the Opposition

Intolerance towards the opposition is another key issue in analyzing Akaev's shift to authoritarianism. Unlike in his first term of office, Akaev imposed tight politics and pressure to political parties and civil society institutions as well as their leaders and to independent media in his second and third term of office.

4.2.1 Political Parties and Civil Society Institutions

> We regarded political pluralism as one of the fundamental features of modern democracy. We promoted the formation in Kyrgyzstan of numerous political parties, which now exist and pursue the aim of taking power. Nevertheless they make little influence upon the flow of social life. This is because these parties do not reflect social interests; they are not backed up by real and influential social forces. Parties function all by themselves ... In Kyrgyzstan political party aims are increasingly shifted off to newspapers to interpret political process and thus fail to become an efficient channel to influence the mind and the social behaviour coming under the psychological press of the papers. A political leader then gives preference to secondary, not substantial issues and to the instantaneous decisions. They ignore long-term fundamental programs needed by society, because these acts are unpopular. Some leaders are tempted to assess the effectiveness of their ideas by how they are reflected in the newspapers, rather than their own convictions.[374]
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> Askar AKAEV

As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, by 1995 thirteen political parties based on different political ideologies were established and the Kyrgyz people witnessed their first multi-party election. When we came to 2005, it was observed that the number of registered political parties in Kyrgyzstan increased up to 40 and the Kyrgyz people faced two more multi-party

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[373] Connery, ibid., p.6

[374] Askar Akaev, ""Kyrgyzstan in Transition: Illusions Lost, New Values Gained", in Askar Akaev, *Kyrgyzstan on the Way to Progress and Democracy*, p.115

elections. However, as in 1995, the political parties still remained weak in their political opposition in the period between 1995 and 2005, and it can be stated that Akaev's manipulative tactics contributed to the political effectiveness of Kyrgyz political parties.[375]

Akaev's politics concerning opposition parties can be explored in two ways: to formulate legally framed regulations, which directly or indirectly limit the activities of the parties and to keep the leaders and the members of the parties under pressure. The examples of this kind of regulations were frequently observed prior to the elections. For example, prior to the parliamentary elections in 2000, amendments were adopted in the Election Code of the Kyrgyz Republic, some of which were found as unusual and unreasonable for an electoral law by the international criteria.[376] For instance, Article 92 of the Election Code determined which parties could participate in the election by two criteria: their period of registration (one year prior to the call for the election), and their charter (it had to include a stated intention to participate in the election). This article was criticized because it was foreseen that the interpretation of this article would create a number of problems during the parliamentary elections and result in a number of prominent parties being denied registration. Likewise according to Article 72.3 of the Election Code, "Nomination of candidates for single mandate constituencies from political parties, election blocs shall be carried out at a congress". This article was also criticized because under such conditions parties could not freely determine their own mechanisms for selecting their own candidates. Instead the Election Code proposed a new instrument, the Election Commission, now enjoyed the right to refuse a candidate or list of candidates of a party.[377] Understood from some of the shortcomings clarified by the

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[375] Babak and Waisman, ibid., p.191. Here, it must be also underlined that the organization of election constituencies on single member constituencies according to 1994 amendments as mentioned in the previous chapter, inadequate financial and material resources of the parties and the strong tribal consciousness of the voters, who therefore preferred to vote according to names not to party ideologies also lied under the weakness of political parties in Kyrgyzstan.

[376] For further information see "Analysis and Recommendations Concerning the Election Code of Kyrgyz Republic", Warsaw: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights / OSCE, 26 May 2000, available at http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2000/05/1387_en.pdf, (Accessed on 29 March 2007)

[377] Ibid., pp. 9-10

international observers, the new election legislation formulated new restrictions, which disadvantaged opposition political parties. As a result,

> Four political parties, including one of the most popular opposition parties, the *People's Party*, were blocked from competing because their charters did not state specifically they could compete in elections for state bodies (as underlined in Article 92). Beside, eight parties were barred from competing because they were registered less than 1 year prior to the announcement of elections (again as underlined in Article 92). This included a second major opposition party, the *Ar-Namys Party*, in addition to *Manas El, El Party* and the pro-government party *Adilet*. The participation of three registered parties, including the opposition Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan, subsequently was challenged on the grounds that their nominating conventions were conducted improperly.[378]

Consequently, out of 27 registered political parties, only 15 of them were qualified enough to participate to the parliamentary elections in 2000.

While blocking the political parties to participate the elections via legal regulations, the authorities also increased pressure against the main opposition party leaders. In that regard, during 2000 three political party leaders were sent to prison by Akaev. The common point of these people was their indicated intention to run in the presidential election. Daniyar Ussenov, the leader of the above mentioned *People's Party*, was sentenced to prison by criminal charges dating back to 1996. As a result, he was constitutionally ineligible to stand in the election. Feliks Kulov, the Chairman of *Ar-Namys* party, was also arrested in March on charges of fraud and embezzlement and sentenced to ten years. A third opposition figure, Topchubek Tuganaliev, the leader of *Erkindik party*, was arrested as well in May and charged with plotting to assassinate the president. He claimed the charges were fabricated, but nevertheless sentenced to sixteen years, which later was reduced to six years.[379] On this issue, Scott Horton, the president of the International League for Human Rights, stated that "After studying this case for some nine

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[378] *Kyrgyzstan: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2000,* US Department of State, 23 February 2001, p.10, available at http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/eur/807.htm (Accessed on 30 March 2007)

[379] "Kyrgyz Republic Presidential Elections", OSCE/ODIHR Final Report, Warsaw, January 2001, p.3, available at http://www.osce.org/documents/html/pdftohtml/1384_en.pdf.html (Accessed on 23 May 2006).

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months, I have come to the conclusion that prosecution, trial and sentence were all politically manipulated. You could hardly imagine stronger evidence of judicial misconduct".[380] Thus, it could be argued that this series of sentencing of the political party leaders and politically motivated minor technicalities damaged both the development of the political parties, as the major oppositional figures and also Kyrgyzstan's reputation as the most promising democracy among the republics in Central Asia.[381]

4.2.2 Interference on Independent Media

> To start I'd like to ask: who and what do some of our papers serve? To the people? To the interests of ordinary men? No! In this regard they work at considerably lower level than the earlier communist papers, which in those times focused their attention at given workers and peasants, scientists and craftsmen. Older newspapers pictured them and protected them. Just try to find in today's papers such information. There is another question: do several republican newspapers contribute to our purposeful aim in stabilizing our society, in advancing our hard-won achievements, or do they arouse instability and social unrest? It is clear to me that some newspapers turned toward antidemocratic ideas, at our expense.[382]
>
> Askar AKAEV

The constitution already included laws, which provided for freedom of the mass media. In December 1997, two more laws were accepted related to the media: the law "On Guarantees and Free Access to Information" and the law "On The Protection of the Professional Activities of Journalists". However, the legal frame for the freedom of mass media did not match with the practice. It is a fact that the position of independent media in Kyrgyzstan got worse, in line with Akaev's simultaneous move toward authoritarian tendencies. Especially after 1996, the growing pressure on the mass media was noticeably more and more observed within the country. As understood from his speech,

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[380] Douglas Frantz, "Fresh Dynasties Sprout in Post-Soviet Lands as Democratic Succession Withers", *The New York Times*, 20 February 2001, available at http://eurasia.org.ru/archive/2001/press_en/02_20_Freshdynasties_eng.htm (Accessed on 14 May 2007).

[381] Further information about the repression on the oppositional political parties, their leaders and leading figures will be provided in next parts.

[382] Askar Akaev, "To Strengthen Judicial Power and Heighten the Role of the Courts in the Life of the Republic", speech at the First National Congress of Judges, in Askar Akaev, *Kyrgyzstan on the Way to Progress and Democracy*, p.136

impatience about the freedom of media grew Akaev's mind, who blamed the media to behave irresponsible:

> I came across a modern French sociologist, who wrote: 'Freedom of press (like any kind of freedom) is ruled by the following paradoxical principle: To organize it means to limit, not to limit means to kill this freedom'. If the first part of the quotation responds to common sense, the second part provokes vague uncertainty. Impunity and absolute immunity of the press against responsibility means nothing if not the appearance of some kind of despotic political life. Due to this circumstance, the problem of legal limitations of the freedom of the press arises rather rigorously in the sense of securing a balanced relationship between freedom and responsibility, fragmented and coherent interests and, in the long run, in the sense of stability in society.[383]

Since then, Akaev attacked on the certain sections of the media for their "irresponsibility". Likewise, "he issued a decree creating a public chamber for media activity which stressed the need for a responsible media, though this body was formally to be independent of governmental control."[384] In that regard, even the parliamentary paper *Svobodny Gory* was shut down by the proposal of Akaev, on the grounds that the paper systematically published false information and thus discredited state bodies and state power in the person of the President.[385] In his explanation about the closure of the paper, Akaev said the following:

> I'd like to single out 'Svobodnye Gory', one of the parliamentarian Russian language newspapers. This paper, in its every edition, constantly publishes information to compromise legitimate power and its actions, to undermine its image and induce uncertainty into the people's security and future life. Its every edition throws mud at the President of Kyrgyzstan in perfect Russian language. The fact is that, the post of the President, held by Askar Akaev or anybody else is a symbol of the nation's sovereignty, of national statehood. Thus it is not an individual who is abused, but 'the civic honor of the people', as the law of mass media puts it. The paper permits systematic, unacceptable and insolent attacks against leaders of foreign states, their national symbols, of a

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[383] Askar Akaev, ""Kyrgyzstan in Transition: Illusions Lost, New Values Gained", in Askar Akaev, *Kyrgyzstan on the Way to Progress and Democracy*, p.115

[384] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.55

[385] Ibid., p. 56

sort of which has brought about a problem within our interstate relations, in particular with investing countries.[386]

For Akaev, tolerance had its boundaries if it encouraged insolence and immorality. In that sense, *Svobodnye Gory* was not the only target. Referring to the mass media, Akaev declared that it had to adhere to legislation. However, according to him, there were shortcomings in the legislative framework such as the lack of precise regulation about registration of mass media institutions. That's why he thought to shape an entirely new law with detailed definition of political and legal status of the mass media was essential. As can be foreseen, the new law imposed further restrictions. In that sense, Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights explored the new law in their annual report:

> Kyrgyz law provided for defamation both as a civil and a criminal matter. A criminal defamation conviction could lead to a sentence of three years imprisonment, loss of journalists' privileges for an extended period of time, and hefty fines. Article 128 made it an offence to deliberately humiliate the honor or dignity of another person or to insult someone in a public statement, a publicly exhibited work, or the mass media. Article 342 provided for a specific offence of publicly insulting a public official during the exercise of his/her official duties and provided harsher penalties. The Constitution stated that the honor and dignity of the president 'shall be inviolable' and article 79(4) provided the same protection to judges. Of great concern was article 18 of the Civil Code, which provided for civil liability for the dissemination of information discrediting the honor, dignity or business reputation of a citizen or of a legal entity. Under the civil defamation provisions, the defendant must prove that any opinions expressed were true. The punishment for civil liability was generally an award of damages for the plaintiff and reimbursement of his/her legal costs. The damage awards could force media outlets into bankruptcy.[387]

Actually, the provisions in the Criminal Code seemed particularly problematic. The mentioned term such as "humiliating the honor or dignity of a person" remained vague and open to interpretation and abuse. Beside, defamation charges aimed to put the media outlets under heavy burdens of monetary fine

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[386] Askar Akaev, "To Strengthen Judicial Power and Heighten the Role of the Courts in the Life of the Republic", speech at the First National Congress of Judges, 15th July 1994, in Askar Akaev, *Kyrgyzstan on the Way to Progress and Democracy*, p.136

[387] Annual Report 2003 of the Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights, available at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc_id=5525 (Accessed on 08 May 2007), pp.3-4

and under heavy political pressure. *Kyrgyz Orda* and *Moya Stolisa* were two examples in due course. Eventually they announced that they had to stop publishing as they went into bankrupt. Because of the cases against these two papers, the courts requested heavy fines -300.000 som (5.700 Euro) from *Kyrgyz Orda*[388] and 4 million som (76.000 Euro) from *Moya Stolisa*- in accordance with the defamation law[389] in 2002. Similarly, members of *Moya Stolica* submitted five separate requests for registration of a new publication to the Ministry of Justice in June 2003, however, they were all rejected.[390] Throughout the same year, three newspapers, *Kapitalism* and *Litsa* permanently, and *Respublica* temporarily, were closed down under the regulations of the Criminal Code. Again, the chief editor of the frontier newspaper of Kyrgyzstan, *Respublica*, Zamira Sydykova was sent to prison because of his article about the president, which allegedly claimed that Akaev had two houses in Turkey and Switzerland. Some issues of the newspaper were also not published.[391] Another independent newspaper, *Delo No*, which accused of exposing national secrets in one of its issues, and *Asaba,* too, due to the tax regulations were shut down.[392] Clear enough, in this period the media was constantly harassed via such legal cases and persecutions.

While keeping oppositional media under that kind of heavy pressure, Akaev, frequently utilized the state media in promoting his policies throughout the country. *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* and *Vechernii Bishkek* were two of the widely known state newspapers, which also received government subsidies, thus

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[388] *Kyrgyz Orda* was the second attempt on the part of his editor, Beken Nazaraliev, whose previous newspaper *Criminal* had also been closed back in 1998.

[389] Kyrgyz Criminal Code included a defamation law, which provided for defamation both as a criminal and a civil matter. In that sense, a criminal defamation conviction led to a sentence of three years imprisonment, loss of journalists' privileges and heavy fines.

[390] Ibid., pp.4-5

[391] "Kyrgyz Media Censored for Publishing Story about President's Wife", available at http://www.ijnet.org/Archive/2001/6/15-9719.html, for more information about the pressure on Kyrgyz press see "Kyrgyz Secret Services Warn Mass Media of Impermissibility of Hotting up Situation", http://www.english.pravda.ru/cis/2002/06/19/30704.html; Michael Goldfarb, "Attacks Against Kyrgyz Media And Human Rights Defenders Must Stop", http://freedomhouse.org/media/pressrel/060403.htm, Mesut Taştekin, "Kırgızistan: Güvenlik Çıkmazında Bir Ülke ve İktidar-Medya İlişkileri", http://www.turkishweekly.net/turkce/makale.php?id=76, (Accessed on August 2006).

[392] Anderson, "Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy?", p.32

permitting the president and the government to influence media coverage.[393] Additionally since the end of 2003, there has been only one newspaper publisher in Kyrgyzstan, named *Uchkun,* which belonged to state.[394] About *Uchkun,* some arbitrary sanctions were reported such as refusing to print and deliver the independent newspaper *Respublica.*[395]

In that sense, in spite of the fact that there were approximately 40 to 50 independent newspapers and magazines, including some with local, but not national, standing and also several hours daily of independent television and radio broadcasting;[396] the pressure and the heavy restriction made the independent media groups and journalists to practice self-censorship. As such, they chose not to print their critical opinions concerning the general situation in the country. The few remaining critical newspapers that could have created a counter force to the governmental media were, however, harassed by criminal libels because of openly stating their critical views towards the president and the government.

Put simply, it was observed that the opposition was kept weak and quiet in Kyrgyzstan and therefore contributed to growing authoritarian tendency of Akaev. As such, "the weakness of the opposition allowed the executive authorities to gain strength to the point where instead of further democratization, Kyrgyzstan has been faced with increasingly authoritarian trends".[397]

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[393] Beyer, Ibid., p.52

[394] The first independent printing press opened in November 2003 operated by the local NGOs. See "Kyrgyzstan: First Independent Printing Pres Opens", IFEX, 14 November 2003.

[395] This action was taken pending *Respublica*'s full payment of a fine awarded to Akaev in an earlier honor and dignity suit. *Uchkun* also refused to deliver *Respublica* to the regions via its distribution system after it resumed publishing the newspaper. *Respublica* also experienced distribution problems with the state postal system prior to the presidential elections, and the newspapers were confiscated form kiosk by authorities in Osh and Jalalabad. See *Kyrgyzstan: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2000,* p.6

[396] *Kyrgyzstan: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2000,* p.6

[397] Atyrkul Alisheva, " Kyrgyzstan: The Public and the Authorities", in *Realities of Transformation: Democratization Policies in Central Asia Revisited,* Andrea Berg and Anna Kreikemeyer (eds.), Baden: Nomos, 2006, p.83

4.3 Elections

During 1995-2005, Kyrgyzstan faced one presidential and two parliamentary elections, both of which were not found adequate enough in order to meet international criteria of a free and fair election.

4.3.1 Presidential Elections in October 2000

The presidential elections held on 29 October 2000 received too much criticism both internally and externally. The election process form the beginning till the end became a stage for constitutional violations. According to Regina Spector:

> By 1998, Akaev had begun to use criminal proceedings to silence critics of the regime. In perhaps the most blatant power grab, Akaev manipulated the Constitutional Court to allow him to stand for a third term. In 1998 ... he attempted to secure a third term in office, arguing that he should be allowed to remain in power for two reasons: the first election did not count because it was held prior to the establishment of the constitution in 1993; and he was the only one who could keep the country together and prevent social violence. To achieve this goal, he appointed a well-respected but loyal judge as the head of constitutional court ... [This judge] ... ignored the clause of the constitution stating that elections prior to 1993 were to be considered valid."[398]

Hereby, the Constitutional Court ruled that Akaev had the right to run for a third term, although it was constitutionally not allowed. The court concluded that since the constitution changed the scope and structure of the powers of the president in 1993, Askar Akaev was elected under the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic dated May 5, 1993 for the first time in 1995.[399] Thus he had the right to stand for presidential election once more. However as Huskey argued, "the Constitutional Court decision represented a prelude to a presidential election campaign in 2000 that shattered any remaining illusions about Kyrgyzstan's claim to be an oasis of democracy in Central Asia".[400]

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[398] Spector, ibid., p.21

[399] Connery, ibid., p.6

[400] Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: an Economy of Authoritarianism?", p.86

Beside, Akaev took a number of measures against his rivals by sponsoring new forms of coercion. Arrestment of three most prominent candidates for the presidency by the criminal prosecution was among these forms. As it was mentioned above, Feliks Kulov, Daniyar Ussenov and Topchubek Turgunaliev, whose immunities were removed by October 1998 referendum, were sentenced to prison after they indicated their intention to participate the election. Akaev also managed to find another obstacle for the restriction of presidential candidates by issuing a new language law requiring the president to speak Kyrgyz. In line with the new law, a Kyrgyz language exam was organized by a linguistic commission. After the exam eight candidates were eliminated while Akaev had the highest degree.[401] It was also stated that Akaev offered ambassadorial and executive posts to potential opponents and manipulated all forms of the media; newspapers, radio, and television broadcasts.[402] One of the candidates, who succeeded to participate to the elections, Melis Eshimkanov (editor of influential Kyrgyz-language independent newspaper *Asaba* and the leader of the opposition *People's Party*) claimed the following in an interview:

> The pressure has already begun. Court hearings have started against Asaba in the last month - initiated by Usubaliev (former first secretary of the Kyrgyz Communist party), Akaev's press secretary, banks, and parliamentary deputies. Altogether they are seeking 60 or 70 million soms (about $1.5 million) worth of damages. The court of arbitration so far has awarded 1.1 million soms to plaintiffs, and if I don't pay that the paper will close. However neither I nor Asaba has that sort of money. They plan to close us by the end of August, and to stop me running in the election. They have many methods, we have seen these before. For example, in May Akaev's people came and offered me $500,000 to buy Asaba for five months, until the election is over. I didn't even need to think about it, I immediately refused.[403]

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[401] Akçalı, ibid., p.43

[402] Assistants of Omurbek Tekebaev, candidate for presidency, declared that TV Company of KOORT did not broadcast commercial clips of Tekebayev irrespective of promises made by the president of the company Temirbek Toktogaziev. Similarly, most TV companies of the country except independent TV of Bishkek (IBTV) also refused to broadcast clips of Tekebaev. Information available at http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/election/kyrgyzstan/kew110100.shtml, (Accessed on April 2007).

[403] Interview with Melis Eshimkanov, 08 November 2000, available at http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/qanda/articles/eav081100.shtml (Accessed on 09 March 2006)

After the elimination of potential candidates, there were five candidates left except Akaev: Omurbek Tekebaev, the leader of the *Ata-Meken Party*, Almaz Atembaev, the leader of the *Social-Democratic Party*, Melis Eshimkanov, the leader of the *People's Party*, Tursunbai Bakir Uulu, the leader of the *Erkin Free Kyrgyzstan Party*, and Tursunbek Akunov, the leader of the Human Rights Movement of Kyrgyzstan.[404]

Election day was also shadowed by irregularities. Voting irregularities, ballot stuffing, bribing and intimidation were observed by the monitoring organizations during the election that's why they labeled the elections as unfair, not free and unaccountable.[405] The results of the election showed that Akaev won the election in the first round by receiving required percentage of votes, as illustrated in Table 4.1.[406]

Table 4.1

The Votes Received by the Candidates in the 2000 Kyrgyz Presidential Election

Candidate	Votes	%
Askar AKAEV	1,459,067	74.45
Omurbek TEKEBAEV	271,456	13.85
Almazbek ATAMBAEV	117,557	6.00
Melis ESHIMKANOV	21,240	1.08
Tursunbay UULU	18,990	0.97
Tursunbek AKUNOV	8,540	0.44
Against All	13,214	0.67

According to the results, it seemed that Akaev could get what he wanted: to win the election in the first round by an overwhelming majority in order to prove that he expressed the will of nation and he could govern Kyrgyzstan

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[404] This information is available at http://www.electionguide.org/results.php?ID=697

[405] Spector, ibid., p.21. In addition Huskey wrote that "university students in some areas were required to drop ballots in the box unfolded so that professors standing nearby could ensure that they voted for Akaev. In a precinct in Bishkek, over 700 ballots were discovered in a ballot box before the polls opened, with virtually all of those cast for the president.", Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: an Economy of Authoritarianism?", p.87

[406] "Kyrgyz Republic Presidential Elections", OSCE/ODIHR Final Report, p.14

effectively. Because he believed that "in a winner-take-all presidential election, he needed more than a minimum winning majority".[407] Nevertheless, because of all the irregularities concerning the election, neither the international observers nor the Kyrgyz people no more believed that Akaev represented the will of nation.

4.3.2 Parliamentary Elections in 2000

The parliamentary elections of 2000 were held in two rounds[408], the first round was on February 20th and the second round was on March 12th. In these elections, 45 members of the *Legislative Assembly* were elected by popular vote for a 5-year term, 30 out of these 45 members were elected by absolute majority vote in single-member constituencies while 15 members were elected by party list. To win any of the 15 seats available under proportional representation, parties had to get votes higher than the %5 threshold. In the *Assembly of People's Representatives*, on the other hand, 60 members were elected by absolute majority vote in single-member constituencies to serve for a 5-year term.[409] Both of the two rounds starting from the pre-election periods were characterized by a series of negative trends. Due to the various registration problems and court proceedings, opposition parties and candidates faced a number of obstacles, which resulted in unequal conditions between contestants. Most strikingly, selective use of legal sanctions, based on technicalities passed into law by new electoral legislation mentioned above, prevented parties and candidates from fairly competing in the election. In that sense, courts banned four of the fifteen participating political parties from putting forward their slates and denied the registration of twelve of them. Those banned parties included three of the most popular opposition parties: the *People's Party*, the *Ar-Namys Party* and the *Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan*. The government also made it difficult for certain individual opposition candidates to register. In that regard, de-registration of leading opposition candidates after the first round and systematic voting irregularities

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[407] Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: an Economy of Authoritarianism?", p.89

[408] According to the election law, a candidate must take more than 50 percent of the valid vote in the first round. Unless the candidates succeed in winning in the first round, the two leading candidates contest a second round, held within two weeks, in which a majority victory prevails.

[409] http://www.electionguide.org/election.php?ID=697

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committed against leading opposition candidates were serious causes of concern.[410] Actually, the opposition in Kyrgyzstan is in any cases fairly ineffective, thus by restricting the participation of key parties and key candidates, the opposition was effectively excluded from the formal political process and from parliamentary politics for the next five years.[411] In that sense, the international observers reported that "The cumulative effect of these decisions was a significant narrowing of political alternatives available to the electorate ... In that sense, the election exhibited some worrying trends, noticeably the lack of full independence of the judiciary, election administration and media, and obstacles preventing full and equal participation by the country's political forces."[412] After the elimination of the candidates and the political parties, four hundred twenty candidates (four hundred seven out of four hundred twenty were identified as independent on the ballot), and fifteen political parties were registered to stand in the elections in forty-five single mandate constituencies both for the Legislative Assembly and the People's Representative Assembly.[413] The results declared after the second round showed that there were important similarities between the 2000 and 2005 parliamentary elections as well as the 1995 parliamentary elections in terms of their results. Similar to these previous elections, the elected members were generally independent, and only thirty-six members (in the lower chamber, twenty-nine out of sixty, in the upper chamber, seven out of forty-five members) claimed party affiliation[414] as it was shown below.[415]

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[410] "Kyrgyz Republic Parliamentary Elections 20 February & 12 March 2000 Final Report", Warsaw: ODIHR/ OSCE, 10 April 2000, p.3 available at
http://www.osce.org/documents/html/pdftohtml/1384_en.pdf.html (Accessed on 9 February 2007).

[411] Ibid., p.23

[412] "Kyrgyz Republic Parliamentary Election", OSCE Election Observation Mission, 21 February 2000, p.2, Bishkek, available at
http://www.osce.org/documents/html/pdftohtml/1383_en.pdf.html (Accessed on 9 February 2007).

[413] Kyrgyz Republic Parliamentary Elections 20 February & 12 March 2000 Final Report", p.6

[414] Ibid., p.11. This result actually signified the main conclusion, that political parties remained a weak force in the country and Kyrgyz electorates had a weak attraction toward political parties.

[415] Kyrgyz Republic Parliamentary Elections 20 February & 12 March 2000 Final Report", p.22

Table 4.2

Distribution of Seats in Kyrgyz Parliamentary Election in 2000

Name of the Political Party	Orientation of the Political Party	Total Seats Gained
Union of Democratic Forces	Presidential Orientation	12
Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan	Opposition Orientation	6
Maya Strana	Presidential Orientation	4
Democratic Party of Women	Presidential Orientation	2
Party of Afghan War Veterans	Presidential Orientation	2
Ata-Meken	Opposition Orientation	2
Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan	Opposition Orientation	2
Agrarian Labor Party	Presidential Orientation	2
Erkin Kyrgyzstan	Opposition Orientation	1
Independent	-------	73

Deriving from the above mentioned conditions, it is possible to suggest that the 2000 Kyrgyz parliamentary elections did not comply with international standards as they were not free, fair or competitive. These elections failed to introduce a fair participation of the opposition, which is the fundamental basis of pluralism, and to create the possibility for an alternative for voters, which is central to a free and competitive election.

4.3.3 Parliamentary Elections in 2005

The election to the parliament was set for 27 February 2005 by a presidential decree of 10 December 2004. This election would be the first parliamentary elections conducted since the 2002 referendum, and the subsequent amendment of the Election Code. The approved amendments in the referendum had changed the structure of the *Jogorku Kenesh* from a bicameral to a unicameral body, eliminated the proportional list method, and reduced the number of deputies from 105 to 75, who would be elected from

single-mandate constituencies if they received at least 50 percent.[416] On the other hand, the Election Code had undergone several revisions since 1999 and the final version of it passed in January 2005. There were improvements in the amended Election Code. For example, there were "provisions for domestic non-partisan observation, use of ink to mark voters' fingers as a prevention against possible multiple voting, institution of a second round in constituencies where no candidate has received an absolute majority during the first round, a common starting date for the election campaign for all candidates; a broader opportunity for more inclusive composition of election commissions, and steps taken to increase transparency in the polling station procedures".[417] So, if the candidates would fail to receive the required amount of votes (%50) in order to get elected in the first round (to be held on February 27th), there would be a second round to be held on March 13th.

During the election, there were over 40 registered political parties, many of which expressed their intention to participate in the election either directly or through an election bloc. The major pro-government political parties, *Alga Kyrgyzstan!* and *Adilet*, together nominated %65 of the total number of candidates nominated by political parties. As was mentioned earlier, *Adilet*, founded in 2003 and associated with the President Akaev's daughter (Bermet Akaeva), was headed by the deputy prime minister Kubanychbek Jumaliev, a close friend of Akaev. The opposition parties, on the other hand, were grouped in four coalitions: the People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan[418], the Civic

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[416] "Parliamentary Elections, 27 February 2005, OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report", 9-11 December 2004, Warsaw: OSCE/OIDHR, 4 January 2005, p.3, available http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2005/01/4021_en.pdf (Accessed on 14 May 2007).

[417] "Parliamentary Elections, The Kyrgyz Republic", International Election Observation Mission, p.3, available at http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2005/02/4334_en.pdf (Accessed on 14 May 2007).

[418] *The People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan* was formed in September 2004 by the participation of nine political parties, former Prime Minister Kurmanbek Bakiev was its de facto leader. In late October parliamentary deputies Alevtina Pronenko and Alisher Abdimomunov, and former Education Minister Ishengul Boljurova also joined the new group. For further information see "New political bloc emerges in Kyrgyzstan", Bishkek, RFE/RL, 27 September 2004, available at http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2004/09/2-TCA/tca270904.asp, (Accessed on 24 May 2007).

Union for Fair Elections[419], *Jani Bagit*[420] (New Direction), and *Atajurt*[421] (Fatherland). These four coalitions, together with other opposition parties such as the two communist parties[422] and *Ar-Namys*, formed a *Forum of Political Forces* which pledged to cooperate during the campaign. Nevertheless, over 80 percent of candidates who applied for registration were self-nominated independent candidates rather than party nominated as usual.[423] This situation necessarily reduced the role played by political parties. Because, the system encouraged local authority figures -businesspeople and informal leaders, some with links to criminal groups to run in their neighborhoods, ensuring that kinship and clan links would be key elements. Local businesspeople, some with criminal reputation, were thus encouraged to run in the elections and this caused extensive gerrymandering and domination of local bread-and-butter issues during the establishment of the new parliament.[424]

Beyond these, the election displayed some improvement, although limited, because voters were offered a real choice among contesting candidates in

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[419] *Civic Union for Fair Elections* gathered some of the main opposition figures and potential presidential candidates –Bakiev being the notable exception- and was led by the former Akaev ally Misir Ashirkulovis. The coalition was evaluated as less a political union than a single issue umbrella group. It seemed like an attempt to join some of relatively centrist elites behind a platform for a more controlled transition. For further information see "Political Transition in Kyrgyzstan: Problems and Prospects", ICG (International Crisis Group) Central Asia Report, No.81, 11 August 2004, p.15

[420] *Jani Bagit* was led by the former foreign minister, Muratbek Imanaliev and was established in the winter of 2004. Linda Kartawich, "Kyrgyzstan: Parliamentary Elections February 2005", NORDEM (Norwegian Center for Human Rights) Report, September 2005, p.7

[421] *Atajurt* was founded on December 2004, when another significant opposition leader Roza Otunbaeva, former foreign minister and ambassador to the U.S. and the UK, returned home and announced the establishment of *Ata-Jurt*. Afterward, deputies Dooronbek Sadyrbaev, Adahan Madumarov, and Omurbek Tekebaev participated the group. *Ata-Jurt* also signed a partnership agreement with *the People's Movement of Kyrgyzstan* to coordinate policy in the 2005 parliamentary elections to garner a majority in the parliament. "Kyrgyz opposition groups form partnership", RFE/RL Newsline, Vol. 8, No. 236, RFE/RL, 17 December 2004, available at http://www.rferl.org/newsline/2004/12/2-tca/tca-171204.asp, (Accessed on 15 June 2007).

[422] *The Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan (Partiya Kommunistov Kyrgyzstana)*, headed until his death in August 2004 by Absamat Masaliev, and the *Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan (Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Kyrgyzstana)*, headed by Klara Ajibekova.

[423]"Parliamentary Elections, 27 February and 13 March Kyrgyz Republic", OSCE/ODIHR, Warsaw, 20 May 2005, p.4, available at http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2005/05/14456_en.pdf (Accessed on 16 May 2007).

[424] "Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution", ICG (International Crisis Group) Asia Report, No.97, 4 May 2005, p.1

many constituencies. However, incidents of vote buying, infringement of the secrecy of the vote, pressure on student voters, multiple voting, voter intimidation, and interference with independent media[425] showed, once again how political elites corrupted the election process by undermining the necessity of competitiveness. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that 2005 parliamentary elections, too, fell short of international standards for democratic elections in a number of important areas and worked against the democratic consolidation in Kyrgyzstan. In general, neither the 2000 presidential elections nor the 2000 and 2005 parliamentary elections complied with the required characteristics of a democratic election. In addition to the continuing criticism about these election processes, the existing pressure upon the above mentioned oppositional elements resulted in a steady decrease in the ratings of Kyrgyzstan in the course of its political and civil rights, which also affected its democracy score.

In that sense, there is a seven point scale in Freedom House ratings of political and civil rights, in which scores of 1-2.5 signify a free country, 3-5.5 partly free, and 5.5-7 not free. Kyrgyzstan ranged form 4.2 to 5.5 during the period from 1992 to 2000, later it increased up to 6.5 during the period from 2001 to 2005 as shown in Table 4.3. [426]

Table 4.3

Year to Year Civil Rights Ratings for Kyrgyzstan

Ratings	1997	1998	1999-2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Independent Media	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.75	6.00	6.00	5.75
Civil Society	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.50
Electoral Processes	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.75	5.75	6.00	6.00	6.00

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[425] Ibid., p.7

[426] Available at http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/Chart96File115.pdf for independent media, at http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/Chart93File110.pdf for civil society, and at http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/Chart95File113.pdf for electoral processes. (Accessed on 23 April 2007).

4.4 Comments about Akaev's Tenure after 1995

Shortly after the 2005 parliamentary elections, opposition politicians agreed to organize a major rally in Bishkek on 24 March, gathering supporters from the regions and trying to mobilize support in the capital. In the morning, several thousand people gathered in Bishkek and headed in the direction of the White House, presidential administration building. According to the International Crisis Group (ICG) Report, "The protestors were very diverse: Bakiev, Usen Sydykov and Beknazarov brought their supporters; Roza Otunbaeva helped transport activists from the south; Jeenbekov brought people from Talas and Japarov from Kochkor, while supporters of Atambaev and Melis Eshimkanov came from their villages near the capital. Workers at bazaars, many of them from the south, joined in. There were also young people from different organizations."[427] The demonstrators gathered on the square close to the White House. By the arrival of the several hundred protestors from Osh, the crowd marched straight to the White House, and soon afterward, a fight broke out between these protesters and the police outside the building. Despite the police, the protestors could come inside the White House within minutes, throwing papers and chairs out of the windows. At that point, opposition leaders tried to take control of the situation in order to stop looting. However, the situation did not calm down and the protest resulted in the eventual resignation of Akaev on 4 April 2005. Therefore, 14 year-long rule of Akaev came to an end dramatically, despite the fact that Akaev himself declared that he would not seek re-election after the expiration of his term of office in October 2005, respecting the decision of the Constitutional Court. If he had stepped down earlier voluntarily, he would have been the first president in a Central Asian republic to leave office on his own. Instead, he became the first president in a Central Asian republic who is ousted from office.

Undoubtedly, the March protests and the eventual downfall of Akaev, (the so-called "Tulip Revolution"), was a result of day-to-day growing impatience against Akaev and his policies. In that sense, it can be argued that the

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[427] "Kyrgyzstan: After the Revolution", ICG (International Crisis Group) Asia Report, p.8

internal disturbance had already emerged since the late 1990s. The Aksy events, a couple of spontaneous demonstrations in Bishkek, Narin and Osh during 2001-2002 and the eventually established reform movement in 2002, *For the Resignation of Akaev and Reform for the People*[428] were the indicators of the growing opposition and unrest in this period. These events proved that Akaev's increasingly authoritarian rule would become even more unbearable from the perspective of people when combined with the quickly deteriorating economic conditions and corruption claims on Akaev and his family.

Since his first years in office, Akaev started to implement radical economic policies in order to ensure a quick transition to market economy.[429] In that regard, Akaev's program of economic reform began in January 1992 with the liberalization of prices. In this direction, Akaev allowed the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to draft the country's economic program, which was approved by the government in June 1992. The new economic program called for accelerated privatization, de-monopolization and deregulation.[430] Simultaneously, in close cooperation with the IMF, Kyrgyzstan adopted its national currency, *Kyrgyz som*, in May 1993 and thus became the first country in post-Soviet Central Asia to leave the ruble zone. Thus, throughout the 1990s Kyrgyzstan's government opened up its economy to globalization and free trade, focusing on attracting foreign investors by lifting all trade restrictions. However, while those policies of radical economic reforms helped to restructure the national economy, they failed to generate the promised economic growth.[431] Between 1991 and 1996, the economy declined by 45 percent, while agricultural production fell by a third and industrial production by two-thirds.[432] In 1996-1997, people began to experience a moderate economic recovery; nevertheless, it was destroyed by the subsequent

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[428] "Kyrgyzstan: A Political Overview", available at http://www.ukdf.org.uk/regional/RS26E.doc, (Accessed on May 2007).

[429] Even though it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze Askar Akaev's economic policies, some of the major points need to be mentioned in order to clarify March 2005 events.

[430] James Chavin, "Independent Central Asia : A Primer", *Current History*, 93/582, April 1994, p.163

[431] Abazov, *Historical Dictionary of Kyrgyzstan*, p.43

[432] Kort, ibid., p.162

financial downfall in Asia in 1997 and Russian economic crisis in 1998. By 1999, Kyrgyzstan's real GDP was less then 70 percent of its level in 1991. The economic situations got even worse in 2000s. By 2001 the Kyrgyz economy bottomed out causing most Kyrgyz to live in more dire straits than in the previous decade,[433] making economic decline harder to cope with. Most of the population started to complain from worsening living standards and economic conditions. Some economic indicators regarding these conditions are illustrated in Table 4.4.[434]

Table 4.4 Economic Indicators of Kyrgyzstan

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
GDP ($) in billion	10.3	12.6	13.5	13.5	7.8	8.49	10.08
GDP Per Capita($) In thousand	2.3	2.7	2.8	1.6	1.7	2.0	2.0
Unemployment Rate	7.2	8.1	10.3	12.4	13.5	18.2	Na

What made these economic difficulties more unbearable was the ongoing corruption claims on Akaev and his family. Corruption that developed in the political system and around the presidential family indeed undermined Akaev's popularity and increased the popular aggression against Akaev. Contrary to what Akaev had promised earlier, he allowed corruption to flourish rather than rooting it out. What was even worse, was that, lots of corruption claims were circled around his family. As recorded in the documents of Freedom House, Akaev was accused of retaining power in order to accumulate wealth and status for his family and friends especially during the privatization process of most popular industries such as telecommunications, energy and airlines:

> Among the money apparently stolen by the Akaev family were funds that might have been earmarked for foreign assistance or investment to the country. Alam Service, a company that supplied fuel to American

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[433] Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance,* Washington D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005, p.42

[434] The table was prepared according to the information available in *Annual Report 2002 of the European Bank of Reconstruction* and *Annual Report 2003 of the European Bank of Reconstruction.* See also the following website:
http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=kg&v=67

warplanes at Manas airport, belonged to Akaev's son-in-law, Toigonbaev, who apparently siphoned off at least $16.5 million from the contract with the U.S. government-cash that should have been paid into the state treasury. Another fuel supplier, Manas International Service, belonged to Akaev's son Aydar, who may have stolen $30 million per year. Competition for government contracts or other lucrative ventures was neither fair nor open in Akaev's Kyrgyzstan, where the best opportunities were steered towards family members and allies.[435]

Nevertheless, Akaev did not give up his democratic discourse and repeated that he considered Kyrgyzstan "an oasis of democracy" and "... an island in the midst of a tempest, which could, however, be suppressed by high seas"[436] during 1995-2005. However, in practice Akaev's policies turned out to be clearly authoritarian, just as Melis Eshimkanov, leader of the opposition *People's Republic Party*, stated the following in an interview:

> We criticize (Turmenistani president) Turkmenbashi Saparmarat Niyazov and (Uzbekistani president) Islam Karimov for their authoritarian regimes, but at least it is clear where they stand: they declare openly "this is the path we are taking, we don't need freedom of speech or demonstrations". We're the opposite: our president always speaks about democratic laws and we have the image of being "the island of democracy", but in practice this is not the case. We are wearing a mask and have become a hypocritical society.[437]

The most obvious sign of Akaev's authoritarian tendency was the frequently held constitutional amendments, by which the constitution codified a strong presidential rule and a weak parliament with a ceremonial post of prime minister. The harassment of political party leaders, critical media, independent NGOs and civil society activities, which were associated with the political opposition therefore intensified.[438] Likewise, Akaev also did not respect to the very basic tenet of democracy: a constitutionally limited term

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[435] "Freedom House Country Report: Kyrgyzstan", available at http://www.freedomhouse.org/modules/publications/ccr/modPrintVersion.cfm?edition=7&ccrpage=31&ccrcountry=122 (Accessed on 03.06.2007)

[436] Capisani, ibid., p.212

[437]Interview with Melis Eshimkanov, 08 November 2000, available at http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/qanda/articles/eav081100.shtml (Accessed on 09 March 2006)

[438] Rouben Azizian, "Democratization in Central Asia: the Asian Way?", Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, Hawaii, p.3 available at http://www.aprc.jp/kokusai/2003/33.pdf, (Accessed on 23 December 2006)

of office. By violating the constitution, he succeeded to stay in the office for a third time through an election, which distorted the nominally democratic procedures. From this point of view, in spite of the optimism toward him, Akaev rather resembled to other Central Asian presidents during his second term of office from 1995 to 2005 and moved away from his path toward democracy just like his country, which also lost its initial liberal trajectory.

In that sense, it can be argued that the regime type in Kyrgyzstan was not stable and subjected to evolution from a delegative democracy to authoritarianism between 1995 and 2005 due to the fact that Akaev's presidency unlikely provided for the base of a delegative democracy as it did in his previous term. As it was argued, delegative democracy is a hybrid, a mixture of selected democratic norms of majoritarian rule and authoritarian practice. During Akaev's rule especially after late 1990s, however, the mentioned selected democratic norms of majoritarian rule, such as elections and tolerance toward opposition, did not suspend. Thus the employment of this notion for this era became inappropriate. Instead of this notion, by looking at the expanded authoritarian practices, it can be argued that Akaev's presidency turned out to be strongly authoritarian. His choice of authoritarianism became visible by the amendments on constitution, the violence of election and the repression toward countervailing forces within the political arena (media, political parties, courts, legislation). These practices helped Akaev to establish strong executive control over policy making by transferring powers of legislation to the chief executive (the president) or to bodies dependent on executive. In addition, Akaev did not choose to substitute referendums for competitive elections as Nazarbaev, Kerimov or Niyazov; however, instead he limited the competitiveness of the elections by using legal sanctions illegally. This attitude encouraged his tendency toward authoritarianism.

The reasons lying under this change in Akaev's leadership has been widely discussed since then. Although to analyze this issue in details is beyond the scope of the thesis, a brief analysis is necessary. In that sense, Loung analyzed the situation in a power-based manner, which underlined an inverse relationship between the president's perception of power and the level of

political openness, which meant that the greater the perception of power the lesser the desire for political openness. She argues that Akaev liberalized the political system in order to include smaller parties in the political process because he was "bargaining from a position of weakness relative to other established elites"[439]. This, in turn implied that he "withdrew his support for democracy later in transition because he perceived that the balance of power had shifted in his favor."[440] Collins, on the other hand, put the role of clans and clan politics in Kyrgyzstan as the main reason behind Akaev's divergence from his liberal reforms. Collins stated that clan pacts carried Akaev to the presidency and led him to implement a democratic-oriented program due to the high levels of trust within his clan. However, at the same time these clan loyalties have required Akaev to distribute political power and economic resources among his own clan members, leading to an over-reliance on his group to the exclusion of others. This has resulted in even more authoritarian policies.[441] Another opinion came from McGlinchey, who argued the issue from the point of "determinants of regime outcomes" and evaluated leaders' access to economic sources of rule as the most important determinant.[442] In that sense, he argued that Akaev's authoritarian attitude can be explained as a behavior motivated by his reluctance for losing his free access to power and wealth, which became especially apparent during his last term of office. Huskey, on the other hand, proposed that Akaev had became disillusioned with the classical democratic road and looked for an alternative path[443] of proto-democracy while Akaev thought that "Kyrgyz are not yet mature enough for genuine democracy"[444]. This change in Akaev's leadership style was also viewed as a new tactic to overcome opposition and guarantee a

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[439] Loung, ibid., p. 28

[440] Ibid.

[441] For details, please see Kathleen Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia," Doctoral Dissertation, Stanford University, December 1999, Kathleen Collins, Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, Kathleen Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories", World Politics, 56/2, 2004, pp.224-261

[442] Spector, ibid., p.26, for details please see Eric McGlinchey, "Paying for Patronage: Regime Change in Post-Soviet Central Asia", Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton University, 2003

[443] Huskey, The Rise of Contested Politics in Central Asia: Elections in Kyrgyzstan, 1989-90", p.829

[444] Kovalskii, ibid., p.239

measure of social and political stability. As such Akaev's more authoritarian policies were seen as politically necessary concessions to conservative forces in central and local bureaucracies.[445] In that sense, Akçalı also focused on Akaev's priority over political stability, which limited and even prevented democratic tendencies and attempts. She wrote that "the basic priority given to political stability resulted in a process in which democratic formations and movements [were] repressed for the sake of realizing the long-term goal of democratic consolidation."[446] To put it differently, "democratic demands and movements, which [were] perceived to be potential threats to political stability, [were] repressed during the transition period."[447] Whatever the reasons were, one fact remains obvious: Askar Akaev's leadership, by its shift towards more authoritarian policies, resembled more to the leadership of his colleagues in the region.

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[445] Huskey, The Rise of Contested Politics in Central Asia: Elections in Kyrgyzstan, 1989-90", p.830

[446] Akçalı, ibid., p. 56

[447] Ibid.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study focused on the relationship between the characteristic of Askar Akaev's political leadership and the democratization process of Kyrgyzstan. Keeping in mind the fact that the nature of politics can be highly personalistic in certain cases and executive power generally has a big influence in Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan, political leadership seems to be one of the most important factors of transition in Central Asian republics (CARs). Due to the fact that the whole transition process (which included political, social and economic reforms) is a very broad topic to be analyzed, this study focused basically on one particular aspect of transition: political leadership and democratization. Since their independence in 1991, leadership patterns in each of the CARs has shown similar characteristics and played a major role in the establishment of several forms of authoritarianism: "strong presidential systems", "strongmen regimes" or "sultanates".[448] In due course, Kyrgyzstan (at least initially) was a notable exception. Upon its independence, Kyrgyzstan appeared to have the highest potential to realize a real democratic transition and was viewed as a success story of economic and political reform in Central Asia. However, by the mid-1990s the initial democratic trajectory of Kyrgyzstan was reversed and it resembled more and more to the other CARs. In that sense, this study analyzed the role of Askar Akaev's leadership in Kyrgyzstan's initial democratic leap, its subsequent reversal and its final approach to authoritarianism. These of three phases in Kyrgyzstan's political transition seemed to be in parallel to the three stages in Akaev's leadership. The first stage (1989-1991) included Akaev's rise as a politician in the last days of USSR and his emergence as the first president of the newly independent Kyrgyzstan. The second stage (1991-1995) corresponded to Akaev's adaptation of liberal policies in political and economic spheres, and

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[448] John Ishiyama, "The Prospects for Democratization", in *Power and Change in Central Asia*, p.49

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the third stage (1995-2005) witnessed a setback in his democratic reforms and a shift towards an authoritarian way of leadership.[449]

As was analyzed in detail in Chapter II, Akaev's political life started in October 1990, when he was elected as the first president of Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic by the Kyrgyz parliament. By the time he was elected, he was the head of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences as a physics professor. Unlike other Central Asian presidents, he was not originally a member of the CPK and so did not come from the communist party tradition. Having no explicit ideological commitment to communism and known as a liberal, he spontaneously built an image as a promoter of political and economic reforms, creating especially in the first years of his rule massive public support. One major development took place in 1993 when the new constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic was adopted. The 1993 constitution, in basic terms, "provided a legislative framework for further democratic transition".[450] It embraced the constitutional ideas of liberal democracies by strengthening the separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary branches, by guaranteeing protection of human rights and freedoms and by providing legal grounds for the creation of a civil society. In that sense, in contrast to the other Central Asian states, an independent media, multi-party system, NGOs and a civil society were largely allowed to develop in a relatively more free atmosphere. In those years, therefore, Kyrgyzstan was viewed as one of the leading reformist countries in Central Asia and the international community expressed ideas that Kyrgyzstan was actually as an island of democracy in a region where autocracy and conflict seemed to be the norm. Kyrgyzstan looked promising indeed as compared to the authoritarian rule in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the ferocious civil conflict that raged for five years in Tajikistan and the Stalinesque personality cult that President Niyazov developed in Turkmenistan.[451] However, in time, especially after 1994, we see an authoritarian tendency in Akaev's leadership. The first sign was the disappearance of the initial harmony between Akaev and the

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[449] Regine A. Spector, *Transformation of Askar Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan,* IREX 2003 Central Asia Policy Symposium Executive Summary and Bibliography, p.2

[450] Abazov, "The Political Culture of Central Asia: A Case of Kyrgyzstan", p.46

[451] "Kyrgyzstan at Ten: Trouble in the 'Island of Democracy' ", International Crisis (ICG) Report No: 22, 28 August 2001, p.1

Jogorku Kenesh mostly due to the fact that the parliament now wanted more control over the executive branch. Subsequently, Akaev held a referendum in January 1994 and received the approval of citizens toward his policies. In spite of the public confidence, however, legislative branch still refused to support Akaev and the government, which resulted in resignation of the government and the dissolution of the parliament in September 1994. This event was perceived as a "quiet revolution"[452] engineered by Akaev in which he disbanded parliament, forced the resignation of the government, repressed the judiciary, and announced new parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, before these elections, he announced a new referendum for October, which eventually limited the parliamentary power and the separation of powers. Akaev's usage of referendum as a tool for policy-making without the involvement of the parliament was highly criticized. Akaev was now resembled to a republican monarch rather than to the head of the executive in a democratic state.

In that regard, from the mid-1990s onwards, Akaev began to lose his liberal reputation. Although in rhetoric he continued to underline his loyalty to the principles of democratic development during his second and third terms of office, the regime in Kyrgyzstan became increasingly authoritarian. In that sense, the most frequently utilized instruments became the referendums held in February 1996, October 1998 and September 2002. After these referendums (each of which was approved by overwhelming margins), the powers of the president were considerably increased as compared to the legislature and the judiciary. Those new powers allowed Akaev to dominate and manipulate all three branches of state in order to pave way for the creation of a powerful central executive. Akaev gradually reduced the powers of parliament in favor of the executive to such an extent that the parliamentarians thought that *Jogorkhu Kenesh* turned into a "working cabinet" for the president.[453] Likewise, the judiciary was also manipulated and put under the control of the president. In that sense, courts were frequently used to silence political opponents by issuing verdicts by manipulating the election results and by repressing the media (once the freest in Central Asia).

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[452] Gleason, ibid., p.99

[453] "Kyrgyzstan at Ten: Trouble in the Island of Democracy", ICG Asia Report, p.8

The more Akaev expanded his powers, the more he moved to pressure the opposition forces. In that sense, independent newspapers were frequently closed down, human rights activists were harassed, and elections were manipulated. Combined with the worsening economic conditions of the country and the never-ending corruption claims on Akaev and his family, the popular uprising among the Kyrgyz people had started in 2002. The initial protests had been about local issues, mostly in Kochkor, Naryn, Talas and Aksy. But gradually these sporadic opposition movements turned into a major mass protest in March 2005 with the "Tulip Revolution" held in the capital, Bishkek, resulting in the resignation of Akaev. By the time he was ousted from office, Kyrgyzstan was far away from its world-wide accepted initial trajectory to democracy, resembling more to its authoritarian neighbors.

These developments seem to support the main argument of this thesis: political leadership often makes a crucial difference in the destinies of countries especially during unpredictable processes such as democratic transition. In that sense, the relation between political leadership and democratic transition process can be clearly observed in the case of Askar Akaev and post-independence Kyrgyzstan. As it was mentioned above, it can be suggested that Kyrgyzstan failed in its democratic transition by the end of Akaev's era. According to Dankwart Rustow's model on "Transition toward Democracy", mentioned in the introduction, Kyrgyzstan is stuck at the "decision phase" of transition, (the phase in which establishment of a democratic order begins), and could not more forward to the "habituation phase", which include the development and consolidation of democracy. This deficiency caused Kyrgyzstan to be understood as a "delegative"[454], "illiberal"[455], "obstructed", or "defective"[456] democracy, a backslider[457], soft

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[454] O'Donnell, "Delegative Democracy", p.55

[455] Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy", *Foreign Democracy,* 76,1997, p.22

[456] Wolfgang Merkel, "Defekte Demokratie", in *Demokratie in Ost und West,* Andreas Busch (ed.)., Frankfurt:Suhrkamp, 1999, p.361,quoted in Paul Georg Geiss, "State and Regime Change in Central Asia", in *Realities of Transformation, Democratization Policies in Central Asia Revisited,* p.23

[457] Fish, "The Dynamics of Democratic Erosion", p.56

authoritarianism[458] or a "hybrid regime", which consisted a mixture of both "authoritarian" and "democratic" regime properties[459], despite the fact that Kyrgyzstan was perceived as a promising candidate in the so-called "fourth wave of democratization"[460] at the beginning of its independence.

This clear shift in Kyrgyzstan's trajectory is also closely related to the issue of political leadership. In that sense, the transformation in Askar Akaev's leadership style during his 14 years-long presidency match with the transformation of Kyrgyzstan from its initial liberal path to an authoritarian rule. Simply put, in his first years in office following his election as the first president of Kyrgyzstan once by the parliament (1990) and once by the public vote (1991), Akaev's political leadership was different as compared to his later years in office. To categorize his leadership style between 1990 and 1994, it can put forward that Akaev's authority was closer to a *legal-rational* one according to its source of power as Max Weber identified it. In that sense, Akaev had no ties with the Communist Party hierarchy and he also had no history as the head of the republic, contrary to the other four Central Asian presidents. Thus, his election was rather a rational choice among the voters, who believed in him for further development of Kyrgyzstan. According to the relation between the leaders and led, as James MacGregor Burns illustrated, Akaev's leadership style could be named as *transactional,* since during this era Akaev was engaged in various reforms on behalf of the Kyrgyz citizens and in return he gained the accountability, and trust of the voters. Finally, Akaev to a large extent fit to Linz and Stepan's definition for democratic leadership characteristics, which included election by free elections, subjection to free election periodically and exercising within constitutional limitation and state of law.

However, these characteristics of Akaev's leadership could not be sustained. In relation with the changes in his policies, his source of power became very much *traditional* rather than *legal rational* as it was used to be. Resembled to

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[458] Edward Schatz, "Soft Authoritarian Rule and Agenda-Setting Power in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan", paper presented at 7th CESS Conference, Ann Arbor/Michigan, 30 September 2006

[459] Geiss, "State and Regime Change in Central Asia", p.23

[460] Micheal McFaul, "The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in Postcommunist World", *World Politics,* 54/2, 2002, pp. 212-244

other Central Asian presidents, Akaev's relation with his "led" also changed, which made him a *transformational* leader. Because especially after 1995, as long as his authoritarian tendency evolved, he limited the number of people around him and he legitimized his power upon a small group composed of *akimys* and *tribal leaders*, whose support seemed to be enough to keep Akaev in power. In due course, his policies aimed to satisfy the members of this group rather than the nation as a whole. These choices brought about the authoritarian practices, as well. Basically he disregarded the constitution, and ran for presidency for a third time. By new constitutional amendments, he prepared a good base for an almost unlimited power. As such he turned out to be an *authoritarian* leader according to Linz and Stepan's classification.

It was more clearly observed that Akaev's leadership has became gradually stronger since the mid-1990s and, as such this stronger presidency resulted in a weaker democratic development. Consequently, having begun as a democratic parliamentary republic according to the norms of the 1993 constitution, Kyrgyzstan became an authoritarian presidential republic. Thus, Kyrgyzstan seems to be fit into the general pattern in the sense that presidential rule may actually increase the probability of the emergence of a non-democratic regime during transitional periods.[461] This argument is especially valid in a region like Central Asia, where there was no democratic experience throughout its history and, where the political leaders pose somehow arbitrary and personalist fields for themselves to operate independently. According to Farkhod Tolipov, "the first leaders of the post-Soviet and newly independent Central Asian states are very interesting phenomena in terms of their roles, images, status and personality. Their accession to and retaining of power, their ruling of the respective countries and their soon-to-be ending presidencies play a crucial role in shaping the political systems of these young states."[462] In that sense, the case of Askar Akaev and Kyrgyzstan is an explanatory one in order to get a better understanding about the democratization attempts in this region. Although a

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[461] Cummings, ibid., pp. 8-12, Dukanbaev and Hansen, ibid., p.32, Fish, "The Dynamics of Democratic Erosion", pp.50-51

[462] Farkhod Tolipov, "Power, Nation-Building, and Legacy – A Comparative Analysis of Central Asian Leadership", in *Realities of Transformation: Democratization Policies in Central Asia: Revisited*, p.63

full explanation about the failed democratic experiences in Central Asia must address many other variables, the presidents' leadership is indeed helpful for this aim.

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