

FAILED DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE IN KYRGYZSTAN: 1990-2000

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ABSTRACT

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This study seeks to analyze the process of transition and democratization in Kyrgyzstan from 1990 to 2000. The collapse of the Soviet Union opened new political perspectives for Kyrgyzstan and a chance to develop sovereign state based on democratic principles and values. Initially Kyrgyzstan attained some progress in building up a democratic state. However, in the second half of 1990s Kyrgyzstan shifted toward authoritarianism. Therefore, the full-scale transition to democracy has not been realized, and a well-functioning democracy has not been established. This study aims to focus on the impediments that led to the failure of establishing democracy in Kyrgyzstan. It analyzes the role of economy, political elites and political culture in the form of tribalism in Kyrgyzstan within the framework of the economic and political changes that have been undergoing since independence. The political and economic developments in Kyrgyzstan are discussed with specific reference to the hardships in economic transition, elite continuity and role of tribal and clan structures in present politics.

Keywords: Kyrgyzstan, Transition, Democracy, Authoritarianism, Post-Independence Economy, Political Elites, Political Culture, Tribalism.

ÖZ

DEMOKRASİYE GEÇİŞTE BAŞARISIZLIK: KIRGIZİSTAN

DENEYİMİ : 1990-2000

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Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

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Bu çalışma, Kırgızistan'ın 1990-2000 arasındaki geçiş sürecini ve demokratikleşmeyi incelemektedir. Sovyet Birliği'nin dağılması Kırgızistan için yeni siyasi ufuklar ve demokratik ilkelere ve değerlere bağlı egemen devlet kurma olanağı sunmuştur. Başlangıçta Kırgızistan demokratik devlet kurma yolunda ilerleme göstermiştir. Ancak, 1990'ların ikinci yarısında Kırgızistan otoriterliğe doğru bir eğilim göstermiştir. Bu yüzden tam anlamıyla demokrasiye geçiş gerçekleşmemiş ve iyi işleyen bir demokratik yapı yerleşmemiştir. Çalışmanın amacı, Kırgızistan'da demokrasinin yerleşmesinde engel oluşturan unsurlara odaklanmaktır. Bu çalışma, bağımsızlık sonrası ekonomi ve siyasetteki değişimleri baz alarak Kırgızistan'da ekonominin rolü, siyasal elit ve siyasi kültürün bir biçimi olan kabileciliği incelemektedir. Kırgızistan'daki siyasal ve ekonomik gelişmeler, özellikle ekonomik geçişteki zorluklar, elit devamlılığı, kabilelerin ve kabileciliğin siyasetteki rolü ele almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kırgızistan, Geçiş, Demokrasi, Otoriterlik, Bağımsızlık sonrası Ekonomi, Siyasal Elit, Siyasal Kültür, Kabilecilik.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rule and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original in this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Kyrgyzstan is one of the republics of the former Soviet Union, which gained its independence on 31 August 1991 as a result of the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the communist system. Almost at the same time and in the same line with other post-communist states, Kyrgyzstan experienced transition from Soviet totalitarianism to democracy, from planned economy to market economy and from old communist internationalism to nation-state formation. In comparison with other former communist countries, Kyrgyzstan did not have any prior experience with democracy and liberal market economy. Moreover, the new political perspective that was opened up for Kyrgyzstan was evaluated to be a chance of developing as a sovereign state, with a system based on democratic principles and values.

In the first years of independence, Kyrgyzstan showed strong attachment to the process of political democratization and economic liberalization. At the time it was believed by many observers that the aim of Kyrgyzstan was to make the transition towards a real democratic state with a market economy. Many first steps

were taken which showed the willingness of Kyrgyzstan to establish market economy, to initiate political democratization and new democratic state institutions. Meanwhile, the country seemed sensitive on issues like observation of human rights and liberties as well as formation of rule of law and civil society. Although this transition was controversial and painful, Kyrgyzstan attained some progress in building up a democratic state. However, the situation started to change in the second half of the 1990s. Some political developments and severe economic crisis blocked further democratization. Thus, the process of democratization ended and Kyrgyzstan started to experience a disturbing tendency toward authoritarian reversal.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the reasons of the failure of democratization process in Kyrgyzstan. There is no single reason that can explain this failure, which is a product of historical, cultural, political and economic factors. These factors negatively effected and prevented democratization in Kyrgyzstan, resulting in the shift towards authoritarianism. The thesis aims to explore these factors, which impeded the development of democracy in the country and to provide some insights about the future prospects of democratization.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the world has encountered the collapse of Soviet Union and the emergence of fifteen different independent states, now often referred as the Newly Independent States (NIS). The process started with the fall of the Eastern European communist regimes in 1989, followed by the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself in 1991. For many people around the world, especially those in political and academic circles, the crucial question was the future political prospects for these ex-communist countries.

The failure of command-administrative system and state-planned economy led to the growth of transformation of political, economic and social systems in all of these post-communist countries. With few exceptions, it was generally agreed that post-communist transformation in these countries was in the same line with Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis, which also declared a global liberal democratic trend with no alternative. Therefore, it was thought that these countries would transform only in the direction of capitalism and liberal democracy.

In this context, Claus Offe's characterization of democratization process in Eastern Europe, which he defines as "triple transition", can be applied to the post-communist world in general.¹ Offe suggests that transition in the post-communist states would be realized at three levels: political transition, economic transition and in some cases, establishment of the framework of independent state. Political transition is related to constitution-making and the foundation of institutional framework of liberal democracy. Economic transition implies economic transformation, that is, from socialist planned economy to capitalist market economy. Finally, especially in Central Asia and former Yugoslavia, transition to democracy is also associated with the establishment and consolidation of independent state including such issues as identity, territory, nationhood and statehood, and social and cultural foundations of society. The transformation undergoing in the former Soviet republics had taken place at all of these three levels. Therefore, it has argued that the former Soviet states confronted significant challenge because of the coexistence of triple transition.

¹ Karen Henterson and Neil Robinson, *Post-Communist Politics: An Introduction*. (London: Prentice Hall, 1997), 164.

For today, it is obvious that the countries of East Europe, despite the fact that they had shared a common communist rule with former Soviet Union countries, had chosen different patterns of democratic development. What is more important, they have been successful in reaching democratic ideals. In a relatively short period of time, they rapidly established viable constitutional order and multi-party system, formed basic civil freedoms and liberties, and held fair, free, competitive elections. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to offer possible explanations of the success of East European countries in transition to democratic system, political and democratic advantages, closeness to Western Europe, perspectives of integration into European structures, level of economic development, their belongingness to Christianity in cultural and religious sense may be put forward as explanations of this transition.

The situation in terms of transition to democracy in the former Soviet republics seems worse than the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe. Only Lithuania has managed to transform itself into a democratic country. Other states had problems and anomalies of various scales. They varied from *facade democracies* and *ethnic democracies* to *non-democracies* (authoritarian regimes).² In some cases like Moldova and Russia, where the apparatus of democratic elections was present and the legal structure formally guaranteed civil and political liberties, the situation is better than others. Although Estonia and Latvia held free and fair elections, the citizenship policies consistently discriminate non-indigenous groups, which make them ethnic democracies. Other states are also characterized as non-democracies, experiencing various forms of authoritarianism. In geographic sense, Western

² Graeme Gill, *Democracy and Post-communism: Political Change and Post-communist World* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), 4-11.

countries of former Soviet Union, except Belarus, have shown better records of democracy than those for example in Caucasia or in Central Asia.

In Central Asia democratic development in general has failed. A decade of independent existence of Central Asian countries did not bring democratization, as these countries are now experiencing reversal to authoritarianism.³ In Central Asian political circles, there are attempts to justify the present authoritarian system. President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev for example, had claimed that a period of authoritarianism is necessary in transition from communist regime to liberal democracy and market economy.⁴ It seems that authoritarian practice is deemed necessary for the present political leaders in Central Asia to solve domestic problems. In some cases such as Uzbekistan, it is suggested that authoritarianism might prevent the spread and development of Islamic fundamentalism whereas in others such as Kazakhstan it is seen as a means of reaching national unity.⁵ Furthermore, based on the new developments in the recent history of the world, advantages of authoritarianism for economic order and its reformatory capacities are also presented as positive factors, which might bring economic prosperity in the near future. The main reasons against democratic development include some arguments such as “immediate transition to democracy might result in chaos and tyranny”, and “weak” democracy might be harmful for society and its citizens. From the experience of the first decade since independence, it can be concluded that the path from

³ Sally Cummings, “Introduction: Power and Change in Central Asia” in *Power and Change in Central Asia*, ed. by Sally Cummings (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), 1.

⁴ James Critchlow, “Democratization in Kazakhstan”, RFE/RL Research Report 1, no.30 (July 24, 1992) p.13 quoted in Shireen T. Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, published with Center for Strategic and International Studies, (Washington D.C. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 36.

⁵ Cummings, *Power and Change in Central Asia*, 18.

totalitarianism to democracy in Central Asia will be realized through authoritarianism.

Within this general context, the case of Kyrgyzstan seems to be the most striking. The country, too, had to manage the difficult and painful process of “triple transition”. Furthermore, Kyrgyzstan was deprived of the advantages that other post-communist, especially Eastern European, states had, such as absence of mature statehood, no prior experience of democracy and underdeveloped civil society. In economic sense, as compared with Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan had few natural resources and its economy was mainly based on agriculture.

Systematic study of Kyrgyz political history of the last twenty years indicates that Kyrgyzstan went through two completely different stages of development. The first is related to the beginning of the process of transition to democracy, which began in the mid-1980s, with Gorbachev’s *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies and continued until the mid-1990s. Here, we should also have in mind the overall global trend in the world: those years of “armaments race” and “iron curtain” were followed by warmer political relations between the East and the West; and the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the breakup of the Soviet Union, resulted in the establishment of 15 post-Soviet republics. This political environment initially played a significant role in Kyrgyzstan and the country’s leaders allowed relatively more political freedom and open political opposition as well as fair and competitive elections. Decisions and activities of Kyrgyz political leaders and chief executives in the first years of independence reflected their attempts to pull down old communist structures and to construct and develop a new political system based on democratic ideals and principles. Thus, these initial and rather successful stages of

democratization process and radical market-oriented economic reforms in Kyrgyzstan opened ways for important assessments on ongoing political and economic reforms. For some policy makers, academics and international observers, Kyrgyzstan, in comparison with other neighboring Central Asian countries, seemed capable of pursuing deeper liberal economic reforms and completing political transition to democracy, since it achieved radical economic reforms and allowed more room for democratic transformation, developing civil society and political opposition. The country was promoted by international community as a model for economic and political reform in Central Asia. As such Kyrgyzstan was seen as “an island of democracy” in the region.⁶

The second stage of development in terms of transition to democracy in Kyrgyzstan is related with emergence of an authoritarian system in the country. Unfortunately, the full-scale transition to democracy has not been realized, and a well-functioning democracy has not been achieved. It has been asserted that Kyrgyzstan could be evaluated as a “delegative democracy” in which the elected president enjoys unconstrained power and tries to prolong the time in power.⁷ As it was suggested earlier this thesis aims to shed light on those factors which led to the failure of democratic development and solidification of authoritarian regime in Kyrgyzstan.

⁶ John Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998).

⁷ Guilermo O'Donnell, “Delegative Democracy”, *Journal of Democracy* 5, No. 1 (1994), 67 quoted in Bruce Parrott, “Perspectives on Postcommunist Democratization” in *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus* ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 7. Other labels regarding the existing political regime in Kyrgyzstan are plebiscitarian democracy, or soft authoritarianism. See Eugene Huskey, “Kyrgyzstan: An Economy of Authoritarianism: Askar Akaev and Presidential Leadership in Kyrgyzstan”, in *Power and Change in Central Asia* ed. by Sally N. Cummings, 85.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The literature on authoritarianism, transition, democratization and consolidation suggests many theories that can be applied to the case of Kyrgyzstan. Such literature first emerged as an attempt to explain political and economic developments in Latin America and Southern Europe in 1970s and 1980s. The collective study edited by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* considered the experiences of several countries of Latin America and Southern Europe on transition toward democracy between the 1970s and the end of 1980s.⁸ This study deals with what they call “transitions from certain authoritarian regimes toward an uncertain ‘something else’”.⁹ Authoritarian rule differed from country to country on the grounds of social base, configuration, longevity, severity, intent and success.¹⁰ However, most of the referred authoritarian regimes were rather specifically military in nature. Therefore, examples mentioned in *Transitions* are transitions from military regimes to democracy.

Transition from authoritarian rule is defined as

...the interval between one political regime and another...delimited, on the one side, by the launching of the process of dissolution of an authoritarian regime and, on the other, by the installation of some

⁸ See Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, Laurence Whitehead, (eds.) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). It is a consolidated version of the study. Actually it includes four volumes: Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, Laurence Whitehead, (eds.) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986), Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, Laurence Whitehead, (eds.) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, Laurence Whitehead, (eds.) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), and Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, (eds.) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986)

⁹ Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, (eds.) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 65

form of democracy, the return to some form of authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative.¹¹

Regime breakdown “involves the deconstruction and possibly the disintegration of the old regime”.¹² Transition process starts with the breakdown of authoritarian regimes (dictatorships). Such breakdown opens the possibility for political change. A wide range of factors affects the breakdown of the regime, such as the “death of personalist dictator”, a voluntary transfer of power, regime disunity, armed insurrection, economic crises, international events, and protests.¹³ After regime breakdown, further political development can proceed in several ways. Transitions can be successful, but they can also fail. In some cases, successful regime change is likely to result in the installation of democracy. Still in others, authoritarian breakdown may be replaced by another different type of non-democratic regime.¹⁴ Therefore, the breakdown of authoritarian regime does not always lead to development of democracy. It is possible for countries to experience a series of transition attempts before they finally turn to democracy. However, the political developments of the last decades of the twentieth century showed that in many cases the breakdown of authoritarian rule led to a shift to democracy.

In addition, O’Donnell et al. in their study sum up many cases of importance of political elites during transitions. It is suggested that elite politics is crucial in understanding of the transition process. Political elites shape the political character of transition because outcomes of transition are determined and depend on the actions

¹¹ Ibid., 6

¹² Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000), 8.

¹³ See Paul Brooker, *Non-democratic Regimes: Theory, Government and Politics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000) 188-189; Graeme Gill, 8-42.

¹⁴ Concept of regime breakdown is defined in various ways. In some studies it is used as an opening or dictatorship demise. See Georg Sorensen, *Democracy and Democratization: Progresses and Prospects in a Changing World*, 2nd edition, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 28; Paul Brooker, *Non-democratic Regimes*, 188-189.

and preferences of political decision-makers (elite). Division within the authoritarian regime is one of the major reasons leading to the transition. This kind of split defines the future prospects of transition, that is, either to liberalize and shift toward democratization and democracy or to ensure the continuity of the existing regime, or to return to authoritarian rule. According to O'Donnell et al., pact is the important meaning of reaching

...an explicit, but not always publicly explicated or justified agreement among a select set of actors which seeks to define (or better, to redefine) rules governing the exercise of power on the basis of mutual guarantees for the 'vital interests' of those entering into it.¹⁵

Therefore, pacts allow reaching compromise "under which actors agree to forgo or utilize their capacity to harm each other by extending guarantees not to threaten each others' corporate autonomies or vital interests".¹⁶ Even though O'Donnell et al. defines pacts as of undemocratic nature, they are very important in providing the degree of certainty during transition.

Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan's significant work *Problems of Democratic Transitions and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* explains how non-democratic regimes successfully transit to democracy and then become consolidated.¹⁷ Linz and Stepan look at the experiences of Latin America and Southern Europe to analyze the impact of prior regime type, transition pacts and mass mobilization upon the transition paths of Eastern Europe. According to Linz and Stepan "five other interconnected and mutually reinforced

¹⁵ Guillermo O'Donnell et al., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, 38.

¹⁶ Ibid., 38

¹⁷ See Juan J. Linz, and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)

conditions must also exist or to be crafted for a democracy to be consolidated”¹⁸. Their analysis include five specific, interacting “arenas” of free civil society, autonomous political society, the rule of law, a state bureaucracy, and an institutionalized economic society. Linz and Stepan’s study seeks to determine the determinants of completed democratic transitions and of successful democratic consolidation.

This study also includes analysis of post-communist transition, although it is primarily conceptual in nature. According to them, a major difference between post-communist countries and Southern Europe and Latin America countries is the “simultaneity problem”. They assume that transition to democracy in these post-communist states is associated with simultaneous transition to democracy and transition to market economy.¹⁹ Leszek Balcerowicz argues that post-communist economic transition has fundamental differences from other capitalist neo-classical transition.²⁰ The specific feature of post-communist economic transition is the “overwhelming dominance of the state sector in the economy”²¹. Initial economic conditions of post-communist countries require unprecedented fundamental institutional restructuring. To reach market capitalism, it is necessary to change the old socialist economic institutions. This process might be done by means of privatization of state enterprises, reform of tax system, and introduction of new forms of private ownership and property rights. At the same time institutional restructuring needs to create new economic institutions such as stock exchange.

¹⁸ Ibid., 7

¹⁹ Ibid., 275

²⁰ Leszek Balcerowicz, “Understanding Post-Communist Transitions”, in *Transformations of Post-Communist States*, ed. Wojciech Kostecki, Katarzyna Zukrowska and Bogdan J. Goralczyk, (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 225-234.

²¹ Ibid., 230.

Therefore, the challenges for the post-communist countries are different in kind than in the Southern Europe and Latin America.

While they analyze legacies of totalitarian regime, they argue that there is “a very distinctive and difficult set of tasks in each of the five arenas” that must be accomplished for becoming a consolidated democracy.²² They illustrate some of salient generic problems in each of the five arenas faced by these states. In the arena of civil society, there are no organizations and groups that are independent from the state. Problems of political representation and existence of multi-party system always existed in the arena of political society in these countries. In the arena of rule of law major problems are the principle of constitutionalism, relatively autonomous rule of law and independent judiciary. In the arena of state bureaucracy the collapse and disintegration of communist parties might negatively affect efficacy and the functioning of state bureaucracy. Finally, in the arena of economic society, there is inadequacy of “components of effective, socially constructed economic society”, which include the problems of effective state, property rights, privileges in private property and banking and credit system.²³ Thus, according to Linz and Stepan, all these salient generic problems must be accomplished in five polity arenas if they aim to become democratically consolidated states.

Both O’Donnell et al. and Linz and Stepan’s works investigated why some countries succeeded in installing democracy after authoritarian rule, while others failed. Another very important issue was the consolidation of democracy, which could be realized in some countries, but failed in others. Therefore, in order to understand why some transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy succeeded

²² Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 244

²³ *Ibid.*, See pp. 244-253

while others failed, it may be necessary to study the transition experiences of many countries around the world.

For the purpose of this thesis, Samuel P. Huntington's *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* is also one of the most relevant works that can be used in analyzing and explaining the ongoing transition process in Kyrgyzstan. Huntington distinguishes three "waves" of democratization in the modern world. In his analysis, a "wave of democratization" is defined as

...a group of transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time.²⁴

The first wave of democratization, which was long and slow, began by 1828 presidential election in the United States (when 50 percent of white males had right to vote) and ended in 1926.²⁵ The second (short) wave of democratization started in 1943 with the move to democracy in Europe and ended in 1964 when military coups overthrew civilian governments in Latin America. Finally, the third wave of democratization began in 1974 (with in the Portuguese revolution and fall of Franco regime in Spain). These developments were followed by democratic breakthroughs in Latin America and Asia in 1980s. At the end of 1980s the democratic wave touched the communist world, where in a short period collapse of the communist regimes took place. Significantly, the two previous waves of democratization ended with what Huntington calls a "reverse wave" of democratic breakdowns.²⁶ This means that some countries were unsuccessful in establishing democracy and reverted

²⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 16-26.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

to the non-democratic rule. Regarding the first two waves of democratization, the first reverse wave lasted from 1922 (Mussolini disposed Italy's fragile democracy) to 1942; and the second wave, from 1961 with military coups in Latin America to 1975. Huntington recognizes that democratic transitions, consolidations and collapses can all result from a variety of dynamics composed of political, economic, social and external conditions such as the downfall of authoritarian regimes, demands for political participation, economic development, and the predominance of global democratic norms.²⁷

While explaining the third wave of democratization, Huntington, by using the typology of regime change, bases his analysis on the history of regime change in democratized countries. He develops five patterns of such change, which he represents in abbreviations. He uses capital *A* and capital *D* to represent long-lasting and stable authoritarian and democratic regimes. Accordingly, small *a* and small *d* represents short-lived and less stable authoritarian and democratic regimes.²⁸

The first pattern of regime change is *cyclical* (a-d-a-d-a-d).²⁹ From the abbreviations it is clear that there is alternation between authoritarian and democratic systems. Such systems are usually less stable and short lived. Change in a country's political system lead to this kind of alternation. Brazil, Argentina, Peru are most common examples of such cyclical pattern. Next pattern of regime change is *secondary* (A-d-a-D). It includes countries shifted to democratic rule but failed to continue it. So an authoritarian system replaces the democratic one. It is suggested that the second effort to restore democratic system is generally successful and produces long-lasting and stable democracies. Countries like Austria, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain,

²⁷ Ibid., 106-108

²⁸ Ibid., 43.

²⁹ Ibid., 41-43.

and Czechoslovakia fit to this pattern. *Interrupted democracy* (A-D-a-D) is the third pattern of regime change. Relatively stable democratic system is interrupted at some point by authoritarian system. Powerful tradition of democratic practice compels authoritarian forces to return to democratic system. Examples of this pattern are Chile and India. In *direct transition* (A-D) pattern of regime change, stable authoritarian system is replaced by stable democratic system. Bulgaria, Mexico and Taiwan are examples of direct transition pattern. Finally, the *decolonization pattern* (D/a-D) of regime change involves imposition of democratic institutions and values by the democratic colonial country to its colonies. Here, only those colonies, which were successful in preserving democratic system after independence, have been taken into consideration. Papua New Guinea is an example of this pattern.

While Huntington promotes the move toward democracy, he warns about the possibility of the third reverse wave.³⁰ Based on the prior experiences and keeping in mind the observation that the first two waves of democratization were followed by a reverse wave, he tries to identify some of the factors that can contribute to the shift from democratic to authoritarian political systems. With respect to the first two reverse waves, Huntington makes three basic generalizations. The first generalization is about the causes that led to the shift from democratic to authoritarian regime. Huntington lists several such causes among which two are relevant for our case: “weakness of democratic values” both among the political elite and the society, and economic crisis or failure.³¹ The second generalization flows out of the fact that

³⁰ Ibid., 290

³¹ Ibid., 290-291. Huntington mentions seven causes that lead to the shift from democratic to authoritarian political systems: 1. The weakness of democratic values among key elite groups and the general public, 2. Economic crisis or collapse that intensified social conflict and enhanced the popularity of remedies that could only be imposed by authoritarian governments, 3. Social and political polarization often produced by leftist governments attempting to introduce or appearing to introduce major socioeconomic reforms quickly, 4. The determination of conservative middle and

democratically elected leadership and executives in power play an active role in transition to authoritarian forms of governments. Huntington refers to two major forms of transition to authoritarian rule: military coup and executive coup. The latter one is important in our study. It can be defined as follows: successful attempts to concentrate power in the hands of democratically elected chief executives. The third and last generalization made by Huntington is that such transitions to authoritarian rule produced “historically new forms of authoritarian rule”.³² They took various forms like fascism and bureaucratic-authoritarianism.

Huntington’s study is helpful in making sense of recent events in Kyrgyzstan since independence, as it offers a solid theoretical framework for understanding democratic transition and a possible “reverse” transition in this country. As such there are two ways of assessing Huntington’s theory in application. First, if it is accepted that Kyrgyzstan was among the countries of the third wave of democratization, then its alternation to non-democratic rule also means that third “reverse wave” of democratization has started.³³ Secondly, the idea is that “not all countries, which had shifted from non-democratic to democratic regimes, might be successful in their transitions and there is always the risk of reversals” can be applicable to the Kyrgyz case. Huntington notes that after each wave of democratization, comes reflux. From this point of view, it is suggested that Kyrgyzstan is certainly one such case in which such transition failed, and

upper class groups to exclude populist and leftist movements and lower-class groups from political power, 5. The breakdown of law and order resulting from terrorism and insurgency, 6. Intervention or conquest by a non-democratic foreign government, 7. Snowballing in the form of demonstration effects of the collapse of overthrow of democratic systems in other countries. It seems that this last cause may be relevant to our case since there are clear evidences of Uzbek President Islam Karimov’s accusation regarding Kyrgyzstan for being too democratic.

³² Ibid., 292

³³ See Larry Diamond, “Is the Third Wave Over” *Journal of Democracy*, volume 7, No.3, July 1996.

authoritarian system returned. It is thought that both arguments are relevant for this study.

Based on Huntington's abbreviation of regime change, we propose that political developments in Kyrgyzstan in the last two decades can be summed up as: **A-d-A/a** (?). Here **A** means long lasting Soviet non-democratic past, **d** means short-lived political liberalization and democratization process. **A/a** is used to demonstrate that there is a clear shift to authoritarian rule but the dimension and scope of it has not been clear yet. For today's Kyrgyzstan, whether the political system will be shaped by a long-lasting and stable non-democratic rule, or whether it will be shaped by a short-lived and less stable one is an open question.

The basic argument of this thesis can therefore be presented as follows: there are two main groups of factors, which have endangered Kyrgyzstan's democratic development: economic factors and political factors. The main idea is that economic factors coupled with political factors resulted in failure of democratization.

Obviously, there might be numerous independent variables explaining failure of democratization in Kyrgyzstan. Theories give emphasis to the importance of various factors in shaping prospects for democracy though they are never fully determinative. On the one hand, it is a result of combination of causes. On the other hand, no single factor is sufficient to explain this failure in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, the factors of failure of democratic transition are varied and their significance is likely to vary considerably. It is more valuable to consider the factors that will be of relevance in explaining why Kyrgyzstan moves into authoritarian rule. In our view, economic factors and political factors are involved in determining the path of development embarked on by the country. Such independent variables as economic

development, political elite and political culture play significant role in explaining political development in Kyrgyzstan. The role of political elite is important since elites shaped the course of political development in Kyrgyzstan to a large extent. We assume that there is continuity between the old Soviet elite and the new Kyrgyz political elite who are still in power. Second, there is undemocratic political culture. On the one side, state institutions in form and shape look democratic. On the other side, the political culture of people who must direct these democratic institutions has strong imprints of Soviet political culture. Political culture prevailing within both elite and the mass is shaped by authoritarian political culture. In case of Kyrgyzstan, existing political culture is mostly predominated by *tribalism*, a hybrid of pre-Soviet and Soviet political cultures. So, there is still little room for emergence and development of democracy and democratic culture. The Kyrgyz political elite predominated by Soviet *nomenklatura* was unable to provide liberal reforms and economic prosperity. In addition, economic situation in Kyrgyzstan since independence was also less handy. These two reasons led to unsuccessful economic transition. Thus, in case of Kyrgyzstan, all three factors are key variables that are closely correlated with establishment of authoritarian practice. It appears that the conditions to successful transition to democracy should include economic performance, political elites and political culture.

1.2 Methodology and Outline

The basic method to be applied in this study is an interpretative-textual one. Our analysis of the Kyrgyz elite is based upon investigation of political elite between 1990 and 2000. The main method of study included the study if biographies of

president, prime ministers, parliament members and regional administration leaders, as well as biographies of previous political leaders of the Soviet time. Our principal bibliographical sources included the following: official biographies, press analysis, the study of official documents, statistics and Internet resources like *www.centrasia.ru*. Altogether 311 biographies of current political leaders were analyzed consisting of members of all state-structures in Kyrgyzstan (1 president, 7 prime-ministers, 63 ministers, 209 parliamentary members and 31 heads of regional administration). By this way we can explore the information on political background of ruling elites. Also, several resources such as books, journal articles, newspapers and sites of organizations such as Freedom House and Amnesty International in English, Kyrgyz, Russian and Turkish will be used. Furthermore legal documents in the Kyrgyz Republic such as the Kyrgyz constitution, elections laws, various decrees and laws will also be analyzed. The only means of comparing economic situation in Kyrgyzstan since independence seems to be the economic indicators of the late Soviet period. In this thesis, the economic development of Kyrgyzstan since independence will be evaluated according to basic economic indicators such as GDP per capita, inflation, economic growth and others. Finally, interviews with relevant scholars in Kyrgyzstan and statistical empirical studies issued by National Election Committee and National Statistic Committee of Kyrgyzstan are going to be used.

The objective of the thesis is to give an analysis of the most relevant factors that led to the failure of democratization process in Kyrgyzstan. Three basic factors are emphasized: economic transition and reforms, political elites and political culture. They are analyzed in the scope of general economic and political situation in

Kyrgyzstan since independence. The thesis is organized in three parts. Following the Introduction, Chapter Two emphasizes historical legacy of Kyrgyzstan from ancient times to the beginning of 1990s. Here the political developments and economic policies during the Soviet and post-Soviet era are evaluated. Chapter Three deals with the economic transition and reforms. It focuses on the economic conditions of Kyrgyzstan, economic hardships of transition. Failures and shortcomings of the economic transition are discussed and evaluated. Chapter Four looks at the political factors that led to the failure of democratization process. It focuses on the changes in politics since independence up to 2000. The main questions addressed here are possible changes in the elite structure, recruitment process, circulation or continuation of old Soviet political elite, the shape of political culture of Kyrgyzstan, the role of tribalism as a form of present political culture. Reforms of state institutions, government are also analyzed. Finally, the conclusion deals with idea in today's Kyrgyzstan the development of democratization process seems to be unattainable in the short run. It elaborates analysis of the Kyrgyz case; discuss the three basic factors, propose possible solutions and future prospects.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL LEGACY

In this part we study the political and economic factors that impede development of democracy is analyzed. When studying the political development of Kyrgyzstan, it is necessary to take into consideration the historical legacy of pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet eras. After a brief historical background, this chapter analyzes the political and economic development of Kyrgyzstan.

The historical development of the Kyrgyz people is analyzed in two sections. In the first section, the political developments since the ancient times to the emergence of the Kyrgyz Republic in 1991 are described. In the second section, the economic development of Kyrgyzstan in pre-Soviet and Soviet era is analyzed.

2.1 Thousands Years of History: from Ancient Times to the 1917 Great October Revolution

The Kyrgyz people are one of the most ancient peoples in the world. Our knowledge about them, unfortunately, is too limited and restricted to a few sources.

There is no rich material for studying of the political, social and economic history of the ancient Kyrgyz. Actually, the history of the Kyrgyz people has many unknowns that should be analyzed. From the existing sources we know that the first recorded information about the Kyrgyz people was found in Chinese chronicles, dating as early as the third millennium B.C.³⁴ This information has considerable significance for the history of the Kyrgyz, as we now know that in that time there existed Kyrgyz state under the name “Ki-ku, Kie-Ku”.³⁵ While considering the Kyrgyz people as pastoral nomads, we should take into account the fact that such form of activity was most popular among Eurasian nomadic societies.³⁶ According to Peter Golden, pastoral nomadism in Eurasian steppes was developed in the fourth and the third millennium B.C.³⁷ The geographical location, rich grassroots, and wastelands that were unproductive for agriculture were among the major factors resulting in the development of pastoral nomadism. The nomadism experienced by the Kyrgyz can be characterized as extensive pastoral nomadism that took a vertical direction. It is asserted that especially the Kyrgyz were engaged in vertical kind of pastoral nomadism meaning that they migrated to quarters in steppe before winter and to mountain pastures in summer.³⁸

³⁴ Vladimir Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kirgizov i Kirgizstana (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan)* (Bishkek: Ilim, 2000), 24.

³⁵ Mehmet Saray, *Kırgız Türkleri Tarihi* (İstanbul: Nesil Matbaacılık ve Yayıncılık San. Ve Tic. A.Ş., 1993), 15-16.

³⁶ See T.A. Zhdanko, “Ethnic Communities with Survivals of Clan and Tribal Structure in Central Asia and Kazakhstan in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” in *The Nomadic Alternatives: Modes and Models of Interaction in African-Asian Deserts and Steppes*, ed. Wolfgang Weissleder (Paris: Mouton Publishers, the Hague, 1978), 138.

³⁷ Peter B. Golden, *Nomads in Sedentary Societies in Medieval Eurasia* (Washington D.C.: American Historical Association, 1998), 7.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

The ancient Kyrgyz populated the North Western Mongolia.³⁹ In that time they were subordinated to China, however historical data shows that the Kyrgyz were among the powerful nomadic tribes, which repeatedly violated the Chinese borders and “stimulated the building of the original Great Wall of China”.⁴⁰ Later they lived under the rule of the Huns.⁴¹ In the second to the first century B.C. some of Kyrgyz tribes set themselves free from the Hun domination and moved to *Enisei* and *Baykal* regions where they formed their state in the sixth century A.D.⁴² It is thought that the main economic activity of Enisei Kyrgyz was combined production, that is, semi-nomadic pastoral nomads mixed with agricultural production, partially irrigated. Moreover, in mountainous and taiga regions, reindeer breeding and hunting were developed. The Kyrgyz society was at the stage of decomposition of primitive system of society. It was divided into three social groups. The first group was free cattle-breeders and farmers. A small group of privileged nobility composed the next group. Finally, slaves composed the last group.⁴³

Historical developments of that time show that most of the times new states were formed as tribal confederations. Disintegration of a confederation meant the organization of a new state. As far the Kyrgyz tribe, it was sometimes dominant over other tribes but sometimes subordinate to them. For example, it is asserted that the Kyrgyz were among the tribes that formed the “Usun tribal confederation”.⁴⁴ According to historians, there is inadequate information on the history of the Kyrgyz as well as Turkic tribes until the middle of the sixth century. The Kyrgyz people

³⁹ Martha Brill Olcott, “Kyrgyzstan” in *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan: Country Studies*, ed. by Glenn E. Curtis (Washington D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1996), 110.

⁴⁰ Olcott, “Kyrgyzstan”, 110.

⁴¹ Saray, *Kırgız Türkleri Tarihi*, 16.

⁴² Olcott, “Kyrgyzstan”, 110.

⁴³ Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kirgizov i Kirgizstana (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan)*, 26-27.

⁴⁴ Saray, *Kırgız Türkleri Tarihi*, 16.

formed their state in the middle Enisei (Minusinsk basin). It is thought that the ancient Kyrgyz state was established at the same time period when the Turkic Khanate was formed.

It is proved that the Kyrgyz lived within the Turkic Khanate (552- 744 A.D.).⁴⁵ A Turkic Empire was founded in Mongolia and by 565 A.D., and it displaced the Ephthalites (White Huns) from the territory of present day Kazakhstan and Western Central Asia. Turkic tribes dominated Central Asia and their influence expanded to southern Russia, Caucasus and Asia Minor. Muhan (r. 553-573), the second son of T'u-men, imposed his power over the Kyrgyz tribes in the Enisei region to the northwest.

After the split of Turkic Khanate into two parts, namely East Turkic and West Turkic Khanates, the West Turkic Khanate would determine the future of the Kyrgyz people.⁴⁶ The dissolution of West Turkic Khanate led to the foundation of the Uighur Khanate (744- 840 A.D.).⁴⁷ The Kyrgyz tried to oppose the Uighur Khans, manifested in revolts against their domination. The steady decline and weakness of the Uighur Khanate, which was reflected in economic and political depression, had caused their domination by the Kyrgyz. In 840 AD the Kyrgyz army captured the capital city of the Uighur Khanate, Ordu-Balik, and destroyed the Uighur Khanate.⁴⁸ The newly emerged Kyrgyz Khanate (841- 931 A.D.) occupied the areas of South Siberia, Mongolia, Baykal, the Upper Irtish, Issyk-Kol, and Talas up to the great Chinese wall. The Kyrgyz domination in Asia lasted for about a century. Thus, according to Ploskih, the ninth and tenth centuries were “the periods of mighty

⁴⁵ Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kirgizov i Kirgizstana (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan)*, 40.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

development of Kyrgyz military and feudal leadership which was reflected in territorial conquests and establishment of wide political, economic and cultural ties.”⁴⁹ The Kyrgyz were also a confederation of Siberian, Mongolian and Turkic tribes. However, they created neither a military nor a commercial empire in Mongolia.

In the following years the Kyrgyz gradually lost their domination. The Kyrgyz tribes returned back to Enisei River basin. There were several unsuccessful attempts of the Kyrgyz to reestablish their statehood. For the period between tenth and eleventh centuries, there is little information on their political and social existence as well as their way of life. It is known that on the eve of Mongolian invasion, the Kyrgyz established two principalities, one based in Enisei and the other one in Mountainous Altai.⁵⁰ Moreover, in the beginning of thirteenth century the Kyrgyz were divided into small feudal-tribal territorial entities.

The following history of the Kyrgyz was closely connected with that of Mongols. In 1207, the Kyrgyz, due to their fragmentation and the absence of unity, could not resist the threat coming from Chingis Khan’s son Dzhuchi and they had to accept his domination.⁵¹ As a result, in 1293 the state of the Enisei Kyrgyz was completely destroyed and their statehood was lost.⁵²

The rule of the Mongols lasted for two centuries and the Kyrgyz were subordinated to the Golden Horde that was succeeded by the domination of the Oirots and Jumgar Khanates.⁵³ In 1370, Tamerlane proclaimed his sovereignty and started continuously extending his rule. Finally in 1395, he defeated the weakening Golden

⁴⁹ Ibid., 57.

⁵⁰ Vasilij V. Barthold, *Kırgızlar* (Konya: Mayıs 2002), Birinci baskı, 56.

⁵¹ Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kirgizov i Kirgizstana (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan)*, 72.

⁵² Ibid., 73.

⁵³ Olcott, “Kyrgyzstan”, 111.

Horde and established his own mighty empire. After Timur's death in 1405, his empire fell into small pieces. However, the fall of the Tamerlane Empire did not bring independence to the Kyrgyz people. In the seventeenth century, the Kalmyks dominated over the Kyrgyz, followed by the Manchus in the mid-eighteenth century and the Uzbeks in the nineteenth century.⁵⁴

By the sixteenth century two major regional powers, the Khanate of Bukhara and Khanate of Khiva, emerged. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the third power came into being, that of the Khanate of Kokand. The Kyrgyz remained as an integral part of the Kokand Khanate for more than a century and a half (1710- 1876).

In political terms, Kokand Khanate, like Bukhara and Khiva, represented typical east despotism.⁵⁵ The rule of khans was very despotic and cruel since they were not limited by any law and personally disposed the lives and properties of their subjects. The feudal structure was deep and powerful, and slavery and patriarchal-tribal relations were dominant in the Khanate.⁵⁶ The Uzbek Ming dynasty ruled in Khanate, the major trait of which was sharp inter-feudal discords. On the one hand, there was continuous rivalry and war with Bukhara. On the other hand, the rulers of big principalities, aiming separation or capture of power, organized revolts from time to time. In addition, the Kokand Khanate held inconsistent rule over its people, who were partly nomads like the Kyrgyz and partly settled like the Kipchaks.⁵⁷ The Khanate was an arena of struggle between the khans and the Kipchaks, the biggest semi-nomadic tribal union.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 111.

⁵⁵ Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kirgizov i Kirgizstana (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan)*, 108.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 108.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 104.

While analyzing the political life of the Kyrgyz under the Kokand Khanate, we have to note that the khans tried to establish their authority by incorporating new regions into the existing administrative and territorial system.⁵⁸ Thus, the southern parts of present Kyrgyzstan were included in the administrative structure of several regions like Namangan, Andijan or Tashkent. These administrations were divided into smaller districts like Aravan or Osh. In northern parts of present day Kyrgyzstan there was no such division. Instead, fortresses played the role of administrative units.⁵⁹ Therefore, local Kyrgyz population was subjugated to fortress major (commandant). In other words, we can assert that the semi-nomadic and sedentary Kyrgyz of southern Kyrgyzstan were actively involved in political and administrative system of the Khanate, while the nomadic Kyrgyz mostly in the north were partially integrated to the system by means of fortresses.

In the nineteenth century Russia began to extend its imperial power to Central Asia due to certain political, strategic and economic reasons. First the Kazakh Hordes came under the Russian domination. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Russia conquered the khanates of the region. Emirate of Bukhara as conquered in 1868, followed by Khanate of Khiva in 1873 and Khanate of Kokand in 1875.⁶⁰ They retained the status of Russian Protectorates and were nominally independent. Khanate of Kokand, however, was soon liquidated, whereas Bukhara and Khiva existed until after Russian Revolution.

⁵⁸ B.V. Lunin et al., *Vzaimosvyazi Kirgizskogo Naroda s Narodmi Rossii, Srednei Azii i Kazahstana (konets XVIII-XIX vekah)* (Relations of the Kyrgyz People with peoples of Russia, Central Asia and Kazakstan in late 18 Century to 19 Century), Academy of Sciences of Kyrgyz SSR, Institute of History (Frunze: Ilim, 1985), 34-35.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁶⁰ Nadia Diuk and Adrian Karatnycky, *New Nations: The Fall of the Soviets and the Challenge of Independence* (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc. 1993), 177.

Central Asia became a great market for Russian exports and an import and source of raw material for Russian manufacture industry. In general, it is possible to say that Russia, like other imperialist countries around the world, used Central Asia entirely for its own benefit.⁶¹ Nevertheless, Russian rule also had some positive results as it paved the way for some progress.

According to Shirin Akiner, Russian domination over Central Asia was of “fundamental significance” in three areas.⁶² The first area was “psychological effect of the shift of the seat of power.” It meant that the authority of traditional leaders including the Khans was now shattered. Instead, Russian Governorate-General and Tsar became two new tiers of authority. Therefore, Russian penetration broke up the old order and system.⁶³ In political sense, therefore, Russian administration replaced the former feudal slave and patriarchal forms of rule, and ended the constant feudal wars between various Khans and Emirs.⁶⁴

Secondly, under Tsarist rule economic change took place. In general, gradual economic development and settlement of institution of capitalist forms of production destroyed the previous primitive feudal and patriarchal forms of economic production. The economy of Central Asia was directed towards supply of raw materials to Russian economy.⁶⁵ This was obviously an imperialist kind of relation, making Central Asia the supplier of raw materials.

⁶¹ W.P. Coates and Zelda K. Coates, *Soviets in Central Asia* (Published by the Philosophical Library, 1951; reprint New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1969), 63.

⁶² Shirin Akiner, “Social and Political Reorganization in Central Asia: Transition from Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial Society” in *Post Soviet Central Asia*, ed. Touraj Atabaki and John O’Kane (London, New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), 9.

⁶³ Akylbek Djumanaliev, *Politicheskaya Istoriya Kyrgyzstana: Stanovlenie Politicheskoi Sistemy Kyrgyzskogo Obshchestva v 1920-1930-e gody* (Political History of Kyrgyzstan: Establishment of Political System of Kyrgyz Society in 1920s- 1930s), (Bishkek: Demi Ltd., 2002), 73.

⁶⁴ Coates and Coates, *Soviets in Central Asia* 63.

⁶⁵ Shirin Akiner, “Social and Political Reorganization in Central Asia”, 10

Finally, there was a socio-cultural change. During Russian dominance, there were serious changes in all spheres of life, as new political and economic institutions such as banks, railway stations, hospitals, theaters, trading houses and hospitals were introduced. Other technological and scientific innovations like the printing press also influenced socio-cultural development of Central Asian people. A small number of intellectuals who aimed reforms of Western style emerged.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, there was little improvement in the political and economic conditions of the indigenous population. Central Asian people had less political rights than those of European Russia. For example, “they were not permitted to elect representatives to the short-lived and ill-fated Duma.”⁶⁷ In addition, Russian exports ruined local handicraft market. Increasing number of settlers from Russia and Ukraine led to the confiscation of land of the Kyrgyz which added to the increased grievances brought about by taxes and forced labor.⁶⁸ From a socio-cultural view, despite attempts to brought changes “most Kyrgyz remained illiterate, and in most regions traditional life continued largely as it was before 1870.”⁶⁹

In general, therefore it possible to conclude that from Middle Ages to pre-Soviet time patrimonial-tribal relations dominated socio-economic system of the Kyrgyz. It arose from the fact that the Kyrgyz preserved tribal (clan) divisions.⁷⁰ According to Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, Kyrgyz tribes were divided into two great federations.⁷¹ The first is the federation of Otuz Uul (thirty

⁶⁶ Ibid.,10

⁶⁷ Coates and Coates, *Soviets in Central Asia*, 63

⁶⁸ Olcott, “Kyrgyzstan”, 112.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 112.

⁷⁰ Djumanaliev, *Politicheskaya Istoriya Kyrgyzstana: Stanovlenie Politicheskoi Sistemy Kyrgyzskogo Obshchestva v 1920-1930-e gody* (Political History of Kyrgyzstan: Establishment of Political System of Kyrgyz Society in 1920s- 1930s), 39.

⁷¹ Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1985), 77-79. This division has been preserved up to the present.

sons). It is divided into two wings: “Ong Kanat” (Right wing) and “Sol Kanat” (Left wing). The second greatest federation is Ichkilik. Moreover, each federation is subdivided into clans. Although the Kyrgyz clans and tribes share common language and culture, due to weak economic relations and territorial and political fragmentation they did not unite into a nation.⁷²

2.2 Political developments in Kyrgyzstan in the Soviet Era

The October Socialist Revolution in 1917 opened a new page in the history of Central Asia. Between 1918 and 1922 the Soviet rule was established in the region. This period was a turning point in the history of the Central Asian states because the division of the region into nations on the basis of “one ethnic group, one territory” principle, led to establishment of current states Central Asia. Bolsheviks forced the formation of states based on ethnic principles, and this decision was also consistent with their doctrine that territoriality is the key feature of nationhood.

The territorial division generally known as national delimitation, started in 1924.⁷³ The territories of the newly independent Central Asian states are those that were first delimited in 1924. It was the result of nationalities policy, the main theory of which was firstly elaborated by Stalin on the basis of the notion of “people”. In Stalin’s “*Marxism and National Question*”, published in 1913, *narod* (people) is defined as a “historically formed stable community of language, territory, economic

⁷² See Djumanaliev, *Politicheskaya Istoriya Kyrgyzstana: Stanovlenie Politicheskoi Sistemy Kyrgyzskogo Obshchestva v 1920-1930-e gody* (Political History of Kyrgyzstan: Establishment of Political System of Kyrgyz Society in 1920s- 1930s), 39. Eugene Huskey, “Kyrgyzstan: the Fate of Political Liberalization” in *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and Caucasus* ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 243.

⁷³ Shirin Akiner, “Post-Soviet Central Asia: Past is Prologue” in *The New Central Asia and Its Neighbours* ed. Peter Ferdinand (London: Pinter Publishers, 1994), 11.

life and psychological formation, manifested through a common culture”.⁷⁴ The basic assumption of national delimitation was that ethnic and linguistic affiliations had to coincide in order to form national identity and state. One of the most difficult problems, which faced the Soviets, was nomads, particularly the Kyrgyz and the Kazakh, who did not easily agree to a settled life.

New territorial units in Central Asia were Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan (established in 1929), Kyrgyzstan (established in 1936) and Kazakhstan (established in 1936). Initially in 1924 Kyrgyzstan was given the status of an autonomous *oblast* (province) with the name the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast within the Russian Federation.⁷⁵ In 1926, Kyrgyzstan’s status and name was changed to Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), also in the Russian Federation. In 1936, the Kyrgyz ASSR was raised to the status of union republic and admitted as one of the constituent members of the USSR.⁷⁶

A comprehensive policy of “socialist construction”, economic modernization and Sovietization followed the physical creation of the Central Asian republics.⁷⁷ The social and cultural transformation of Central Asian societies took place in areas like mass education and emancipation of women. Russian language was now the basic means of communication and later on it became a major channel of Russification. This transformation was accompanied by political and economic integration into the Soviet system. For the purpose of “nation-building” between

⁷⁴ Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), 62.

⁷⁵ Djenishbek Djunushaliev, “Obrazovanie i Razvitie Natsionalnoy Gosudarstvennosti Kyrgyzstana” (Establishment and Development of National Statehood of Kyrgyzstan) in *Istoriya Kyrgyzstana 20 vek (History of Kyrgyzstan: Twentieth Century)*, ed. U. Chotonov (Bishkek: Kyrgyzstan Publishing House, 1998), 38-39.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷⁷ Akiner, “Post-Soviet Central Asia: Past is Prologue”, 11.

1925 and 1932, more than 500 high-ranking officials were sent by Moscow to Kyrgyzstan.⁷⁸

To fulfill a variety of political, economic and social programs, the Bolsheviks needed their own indigenous cadres. “Under the slogan ‘korenizatsia’ (nativization), the republics were urged to establish, with help from the center, programs for the crash-training of natives to many important posts in the structure.”⁷⁹ This policy was mainly implemented between 1921 and 1934. Its main feature was preparation and training of indigenous personnel for political and administrative apparatuses in non-Russian regions. The intention was to replace the old Tsarist and local *manap* (feudal/nobles) elites, so newly recruited native elites were mostly among the poorest elements of traditional society such as workers and peasants.⁸⁰ In addition, this policy would provide a wide range of educational opportunities resulting in the development of national cultures, record keeping in native languages and integrate native people in economic life.⁸¹ This step was seen as a significant measure of autonomy given to republics allowing development of national languages and cultures. This policy led to a boom of nation-building and the new native cadres were involved in the formation of, schools, scientific centers, institutions, and newspaper printing offices.⁸²

One of the major directives given to the executive committee of the Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast (KAO) in 1920s was nativization of the state apparatus of oblast

⁷⁸ T.K. Chorotegin and K.C. Moldokasymov, *Kyrgyzdardyn Jana Kyrgyzstandyn Kyskacha Taryhy: Baiyrky Zamandan Tartyp Bugunku Kungo Cheiin*, (A Brief History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan: From Ancient Time to Present) (Bishkek: Mektep, 2000), 110.

⁷⁹ James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty*, (Westview Press, 1991), 12.

⁸⁰ Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 102

⁸¹ Djunushaliev, “Obrazovanie i Razvitie Natsionalnoy Gosudarstvennosti Kyrgyzstana” (Establishment and Development of National Statehood of Kyrgyzstan), 42.

⁸² Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty*, 12.

and training of national cadres.⁸³ Under the leadership of the chief of the executive committee of KAO, commission on nativization was organized. The practical issue of nativization included two basic, interrelated problems.⁸⁴ First problem was to translate all records of Soviet and state offices in Kyrgyzstan into both the Kyrgyz and Russian languages. Second problem was to train national cadres and integrate them into the state apparatus of KAO. The major forms of training national cadres were institutions of internship and short-term courses.⁸⁵ However, both issues were not completely fulfilled. As an aspect of nativization, record keeping in Kyrgyz language was not followed. Nativization of national cadres was understood as hiring of Kyrgyz into state apparatus, though in some cases the major objective reasons of low-level nativization was illiteracy of the native Kyrgyz.

The survey of key native figures in Kyrgyz leadership such as Imanaly Aydarbekov (first chairman of the Revolutionary Committee), Yusup Abdrakhmanov (chairman of the Council of People's Commissars), and Abdukadyr Orozbekov (chairman of the Executive Committee) showed that they had poor educational background. The examination of biographies of the top political elite of Kyrgyzstan in the 1920s shows most of native leaders had low level of education. The range of education differed from self-taught, primary school, unfinished secondary school to secondary school. For instance, educational background of some leaders was as follows: Abdykadyr Orozbekov was a self-taught person, and Imanaly Aydarbekov did not finish secondary school. The nativization program also influenced education of leaders of Kyrgyzstan. Several of them like Abdrahman Bulatov and Osmon

⁸³ Djumanaliev, *Politicheskaya Istoriya Kyrgyzstana: Stanovlenie Politicheskoi Sistemy Kyrgyzskogo Obshchestva v 1920-1930-e gody* (Political History of Kyrgyzstan: Establishment of Political System of Kyrgyz Society in 1920s- 1930s), 143.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 144.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 144.

Tynaev finished Stalin Communist University of Working People of East in Moscow in 1920s.

However, the policy of nativization was criticized by thirty high-ranking officials of KAO, known as the *statement of thirties*, due to its slow pace, inadequacy of planned measures, underdevelopment of national education, promotion of leaders who had weak notion of local (traditional and cultural) specificities and formation of party-state apparatuses according to the group bases.⁸⁶ All members of *thirties* were charged with Turanism and “bourgeois-nationalism” and were executed between 1937 and 1938.

Under the rule of Stalin, most elements of the nationalities policy changed.⁸⁷ During his programs of radical change, basically collectivization and industrialization, Stalin abandoned the Leninist policy of nativization to form a new Soviet ideology with Russian nationalist values and traditions. In other words, the policy of Russification started. The native *nachal'nics* (managers or bosses) not only promoted Soviet ideology, but also underwent Russification.

In a period of political repression and purges, several prominent indigenous political leaders, many of whom were the leading communists, fell victim. Most of the political elite, including some leaders mobilized under *korenizatsia* by the Soviet government were punished or purged. The purges culminated in 1937-1938 when most of the prominent Kyrgyz political figures like Yusup Abrakhmanov (former Chairmen of the Council of People's Commissars), Bayaly Isakeev (Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars), Imanaly Aydarbekov (Chairmen of the Revolutionary Committee), and Abdukadyr Orozbekov (Chairman of the Central

⁸⁶ Djunushaliev, “Obrazovanie i Razvitie Natsionalnoy Gosudarstvennosti Kyrgyzstana” (Establishment and Development of National Statehood of Kyrgyzstan), 42-43.

⁸⁷ Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty*, 13.

Executive Committee) were executed. During Stalin's violent purges 30,000 people of Kyrgyz leaders and intellectuals were executed.⁸⁸ Those, who were not purged or punished, soon replaced the former leading party cadres. This turnover of cadres continued until late 1950s.

The administrative command system remained stable during the Brezhnev period. "The Brezhnev period was marked by stabilization of the Communist apparatus in Central Asia and by the continued power of the first secretaries of the parties in the republics..."⁸⁹ For example the First Secretary of Kyrgyz Communist Party Turdakun Usabaliev was in his post from 1961 to 1985.

The program of *korenizatsia*, which in the beginning was a positive development for Central Asian states, turned to be an important part of Russification. During Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's period, Soviet nationalities policy was directed toward eventual assimilation of non-Russians to a single Soviet people. This meant further Russification of different people and cultures. One result of Russification was that knowledge of Russian became compulsory for government and party elites. It was perceived as "a requirement for any kind of advancement in Soviet society".⁹⁰ However, some limited devolution of authority to national republics was allowed. Especially, in Brezhnev's period, Moscow's control over non-Russian republics substantially weakened.

In essence, Soviet nationalities policy provided some freedom for the development of native customs, languages, folklore, and traditions. Although it was

⁸⁸ Chorotegin and Moldokasymov, *Kyrgyzdardyn Jana Kyrgyzstandyn Kyskacha Taryhy: Baiyrky Zamandan Tartyt Bugunku Kungo Cheiin*, (A Brief History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan: From Ancient Time to Present), 110-111.

⁸⁹ Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 103.

⁹⁰ Patricia M. Carley, "The legacy of the Soviet Political System and the Prospects for Developing Civil Society in Central Asia" in *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu et al. (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 300.

based on the recognition of national and ethnic consciousness, it reflected Soviet and socialist values, or as put forward by Stalin, “National in form, socialist in content.” However, in practice, Soviet policy failed to assimilate and absorb non-Russian minority cultures. It was unable to diminish national consciousness and to Russify other ethnic groups, especially Central Asians. On the contrary, unwillingness to be incorporated into the Soviet identity led Central Asian people to revert to their old, more basic traditional identity structures: clan, tribe, and region. In spite of Soviet nationalities policy, they remained effective and paved the way for “a parallel system of power”.⁹¹ Over time, those traditional structures were incorporated into the Soviet administrative system. Moreover, during Brezhnev’s period of “stagnation” (1964-1982), those structures were viewed as being mutually beneficial. In other words, under Brezhnev, the system of regionalism and clientalism were established and they flourished in time.⁹² To assure effective control and to achieve high economic development, Soviet officials selected certain regional, clan or tribal elite groups to implement Moscow’s directives. The rivalry between tribes, clans and regions selected by Moscow brought certain advantages and privileges. Therefore, the Central Asian politicians tried to be mobilized around their more basic regional, clan and tribal identities. Moscow protected those power and patronage structures, and in return the loyalty of the Central Asian Republics was guaranteed.⁹³ Today, clans, regions and tribes are still important in understanding the politics and society in Central Asia. For example, in Tajikistan the Leninabad clan was most powerful and effective, in Uzbekistan the Samarkand clan dominated the Brezhnev period, while in

⁹¹ Akiner, “Post-Soviet Central Asia”, 16.

⁹² Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 109.

⁹³ Shahram Akbarzadeh, “The Political Shape of Central Asia”, *Central Asian Survey* 16 (4), (1997): 520.

Kazakhstan Greater Horde was the most politically powerful of all three Kazakh tribal confederations.⁹⁴ Those parallel power structures would also affect the political development of Central Asian states in the coming years.

At the All-Union level, the Kyrgyz political elite were not well represented. The All-Union political structures like the Politburo, Presidium of Supreme Soviets and the Council of Ministers were predominated by the Slavic nationalities occupying top positions.⁹⁵ At the republican level the native people enjoyed preference over Russians. The First Secretary of Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan, most members of Republican Politburo and most of ministerial and governmental positions were of titular nationality.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the Russians occupied a number of key posts in the republic. It was almost always the common practice that second party secretary was a local Russian specially assigned by Moscow from among the *nomenklatura* of Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU).⁹⁷ And usually, the head of KGB, the commander of military forces in the republic as well chiefs of factories under All-Union ministries were Russians.⁹⁸ “Though subordinate to Moscow in vital matters of economic planning, security and foreign relations, native elites operated within their titular republics with a growing sense of mastery and impunity”.⁹⁹ Most of them were trained in republican political structures and functioned within the borders of republic.

⁹⁴ See Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 109-114; Roland Dannreuther, *Creating New States in Central Asia*, (International Institute of Strategic Studies, ADELPHI Paper, 1994), 13.

⁹⁵ David Lane, *Soviet Society under Perestroika*, (Boston: Unwin Hyman Inc., 1990), 181-183.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁹⁷ See Mikhail Voslenski, *Nomenklatura: Gospodstvuyushii Klass Sovetskogo Soyuz* (Nomenklatura: Ruling Class of Soviet Union), First Soviet Edition, (Moscow: MP Oktyabr, 1991), 403-404.

⁹⁸ Voslenski, *Nomenklatura: Gospodstvuyushii Klass Sovetskogo Soyuz* (Nomenklatura: Ruling Class of Soviet Union), 404; Lane, *Soviet Society under Perestroika*, 184.

⁹⁹ Akbarzadeh, “The Political Shape of Central Asia”, 517.

The pluralism and democratization policies, started in 1985 under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, persuaded a “wide program of change to institutions, law and procedures”.¹⁰⁰ The first step toward democratization in the Soviet Union was the *glasnost* policy (1986-1987), which aimed to bring openness in media to restore public trust and support in Soviet leadership and Communist party. It also focused on allowing informal groups to operate freely and participate in politics. Thus, *glasnost* improved the availability of information, public awareness and participation in politics.¹⁰¹ The second step toward pluralism and democracy was the policy of *perestroika* (1987-1989) that entailed changes to state institutions and Communist party. It composed of three essential parts. First, representative and responsible government had to be created; free and competitive parliamentary elections had to be hold. Second, it envisioned the limitations of state and party officials’ terms of administration and governing, as well introduction of separation of power. Third, it necessitated the review of constitution regarding the role of “party’s position in politics”.¹⁰² Both policies had a significant impact on nations of Central Asia. The process started with the political rotations within the political leaders of republics. Thus, Absamat Masaliev came to power as the First Secretary of the Communist Party in Kyrgyzstan in the post-Brezhnev era when Gorbachev started the party purges against old secretaries.¹⁰³ This change was followed by changes of other high-ranking party nomenklatura. Party leaders from Moscow, most of whom were loyal to Gorbachev, strengthened several republican party positions. For example, G. Kisilev became the traditional second secretary of Kyrgyzstan Central

¹⁰⁰ John Miller, *Michail Gorbachev and the End of Soviet Power* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1993), 49

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 79-80

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 80

¹⁰³ Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kyrgyzov i Kyrgyzstana* (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan), 269

Party Committee. N. Semenov was appointed as the secretary of Central Committee on industry, while M. Vasilenko was appointed as the secretary on recruitment and appointments of party cadres.¹⁰⁴

Although at the beginning, policies were mostly concerned with reforms in the economic sphere, they later on turned to solve the problem of nationalities, which were crucial for future success of economic reforms. It is obvious that during this time “democratization has encouraged people to participate, glasnost has allowed them to articulate their feelings, and pluralism has legitimated the rights of groups to form on the basis of a consciousness of self-interest”.¹⁰⁵ It is worth mentioning that some major propositions of a plenum of the Central Committee of CPSU held in September 1989 were as follows: “The expansion of the rights and potential of all types of national autonomous entity, the creation of the conditions for the free development of national languages and cultures”.¹⁰⁶ So, *perestroika* and *glasnost* has allowed for the development of national cultures and languages.

Perestroika and *glasnost* also resulted in formation of informal groups and associations by the local intelligentsia. Most of them dealt with ecological, cultural, socio-economic, and linguistic issues. Several political discussions clubs like *Demos*, *Sovremennik*, and *Pozitsia*, informal organizations like *Ashar* and *Osh Aimagy*, and national democratic group like *Asaba* were formed.¹⁰⁷ They all tried to revive interest in the ethnic roots and to rediscover the cultural past of the Kyrgyz. Moreover, they voiced dissatisfaction with socio-economic conditions of their people and cultural

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 269.

¹⁰⁵ Lane, *Soviet Society under Perestroika*, 187.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 201.

¹⁰⁷ U. Chotonov, “Kyrgyzstan v Gody Perestroiki 1985-1991 gg” (Kyrgyzstan During Perestroika Years 1985-1991) in *Istoriya Kyrgyzstana-20 vek (History of Kyrgyzstan: Twentieth Century)*, ed. U. Chotonov (Bishkek: Kyrgyzstan Publishing House, 1998), 210.

and linguistic grievances. These groups also had a major role in promoting national language of the Kyrgyz. For example, Kyrgyzstan declared Kyrgyz as the state language in 23 September 1989.¹⁰⁸

Some of these organizations would later evolve into political parties and movements. In May 1990 Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (DMK) was organized. It was formed by 24 public organizations, which emerged earlier in Kyrgyzstan.¹⁰⁹ In the program of DMK, it was declared that the organization would work for the development of sovereignty, establishment of multi-party political system, introduction of private ownership and support of private sector in Kyrgyzstan.¹¹⁰ DMK was a result of political and ideological liberalization in the Soviet Union.¹¹¹ The questions of national revival, national interests and values, patriotism as everywhere in other republics of Society Union were actual and vital in Kyrgyzstan. DMK became an arena for expression of such interests. In the general public it had a reputation of an independent organization, which really aimed to struggle for the Kyrgyz national interests. The phenomenon of DMK in Kyrgyzstan is very interesting from several points.¹¹² First of all, in all republics of Central Asia the wave of democratic forums, movements and organizations came later than in other European countries of Soviet Union. That is, Kyrgyzstan was backward in sense of Public organizations and movements. “Cotton affairs” in Uzbekistan and 1986 Zheltoksan protests in Alma-Ata showed that these two countries were more

¹⁰⁸ Chorotegin and Moldokasymov, *Kyrgyzdardyn Jana Kyrgyzstandyn Kyskacha Taryhy: Baiyrky Zamandan Tartyp Bugunku Kungo Cheiin*, (A Brief History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan: From Ancient Time to Present), 119.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 118.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 118.

¹¹¹ Mehrdad Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1995), 104.

¹¹² Personal interview with former active member of Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan, “name withheld”.

engaged in politics than Kyrgyzstan. Secondly, DMK had an image of democratic and independent organization. It is interestingly enough to look at composition of the founders of DMK. They can be divided into three groups. First group, *apparatchiki* (managers/bosses) of Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan and Government such as co-chairman Kazat Akmatov, who was head of department in Party Central Committee. In the *perestroika* years they were purged or fired during party cleansing. Therefore, democratic movement was a means of coming back to power. Second group was formed of people who did not reach power during the Soveits. They had ambitions such as coming to power, attaining prosperity and wealth. However their background, education, training, family, kinship relations were seen by the Soviets as handicap. They were “facade democrats”. Finally, the third group was young well-educated people, who mostly interested in real democratic reform, future economic, social and cultural perspectives and whose final purpose was not power. They were “real” democrats, for whom democracy meant more than power. Thus, first two groups formed major core of DMK. Former communists became leaders of democratic movement.

Despite this, DMK had a wide range of people’s support in the country. It was also very effective during first elections of the president in October 1990. Their activities and protests affected presidential elections. They favored democratic and alternative election of president, as a result of which Absamat Masaliev, head of Communist party of Kyrgyzstan, failed in presidential elections, whereas in other countries first secretaries of Central Committee of Communist Party traditionally became presidents.

In the next years, DMK gradually lost its influence. According to interviewer, the main reason of weakening of DMK was economic condition in the country, which is also reflected in poor financial conditions of movement leaders. In the conditions when most of the leaders of movements were state employees delay in wage payment led to serious economic hardships. The miserable material and financial conditions of leaders led to change of ideology and ideas to material rewards. Especially, during privatization some leaders of movement became owners of real estate. Consequently, DMK, which not so far was widely supported by masses, was unable to become a movement covering all society. And finally, in later years DMK was divided into several groups and gave birth to several political.

2.3 Kyrgyz Economy in the Pre-Soviet Era

The Kyrgyz people were pastoral nomads, whose primary economic activity was livestock production. While considering the Kyrgyz people as pastoral nomads we should take into account the fact that such form of activity was most popular among Eurasian nomadic societies. According to Peter B. Golden, pastoral nomadism in Eurasian steppes was developed in the forth and third millennium B.C.¹¹³ The geographical location, rich grassroots, and wastelands that were unproductive for agriculture were among major factors for developing pastoral nomadism. In Vladimir M. Ploskih's book it is mentioned that traditional activities of the Kyrgyz were nomadism, supplementary agricultural production, hunting and handicraft.¹¹⁴ The main activity, however, was pastoral nomadism. The nomadism experienced by the Kyrgyz can be characterized as extensive pastoral nomadism that

¹¹³ Golden, *Nomads and Sedentary Societies in Medieval Eurasia*, 7.

¹¹⁴ Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kyrgyzov i Kyrgyzstana* (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan), 121-125.

took a vertical direction. Golden asserts that especially the Kyrgyz were engaged in vertical kind of pastoral nomadism meaning that they migrated to quarters in steppe before winter and to mountain pastures in the summer.¹¹⁵

Although Kyrgyzstan was located at the cross-roads of Great Silk Road since the ancient times, it was also the center of craftsmanship production, like weaving and carpet weaving. Industrial development, however, was at the lowest level.

After being subordinated to Kokand Khanate, agriculture, cattle-breeding and gardening played a major role in economy. Huge amounts of taxation (most of the times in the form of tax-in-kind) restrained both the enlargement and development of the domestic market, and commodity-monetary relations. There were trade relations carried on with Russia, China, Iran and other countries. The exports consisted principally of raw cotton, cotton textiles, silk and fruit; whereas imports consisted manufactured goods, sugar, pottery, paper, tin and fur.

Kyrgyzstan became a trade market for Russian exports and an important source of raw materials for Russian manufacturing industry.¹¹⁶ In general, it can be claimed that Russia, like other imperialist countries around the world, used Kyrgyzstan entirely for its own benefit crushing every manifestation of native culture and independence.¹¹⁷

Substantial migration of Slavic people into Kyrgyzstan had two main results. Firstly, the ethnic situation between natives and Slavic people turned out to be problematic, since most of the migrated population was settled in fertile and arable lands that belonged to the Kyrgyz. Secondly, the settling of Slavic peasants and craftsmen played a significant role in developing sedentary agriculture and small

¹¹⁵ Golden, *Nomads and Sedentary Societies in Medieval Eurasia*, 8-9.

¹¹⁶ W.P. Coates and Zeld K. Coates, *Soviets in Central Asia*, 62.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 63

craftsmanship among the native people. Nevertheless, Russian invasion in Central Asia had mixed results as Russian penetration broke up the old Khanate political order and social system. Furthermore, in order to facilitate economic development in the region and to develop infrastructure that would ease colonial exploitation, railways were constructed and coal mining was started towards the 1860's. However, Russia itself was still predominantly an agrarian country trying to realize industrial development. Therefore, half a century of Tsarist rule was not able to bring about fundamental economic transformation. In political sense, Russian administration replaced the former feudal slave and patriarchal forms of ruling.¹¹⁸ Additionally, it stopped the constant feudal wars between various Khans and Emirs. Actually, Tsarism to some extent paved the way for further progress, though in a limited scope.

To conclude, gradual economic development and the establishment of certain institutions of capitalist forms of production destroyed the previous primitive feudal and patriarchal forms of economic production in Kyrgyzstan. But there was little improvement in the economic and political conditions of the native people. Under Tsarist Russia technological and industrial innovations remained very limited and no real change in the structure of economy and society was realized.

2.4 Economic Development during the Soviet Era

In this part, the development of the Kyrgyz economy during the Soviet times is analyzed under two sections. In the first section, the economic change between 1920 and 1950 is described. In the second section, the developments between 1950 and 1991 are examined.

¹¹⁸ Ploskih et al. *Istoriya Kyrgyzov i Kyrgyzstana* (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan), 145

2.4.1 Transformation of the Kyrgyz Economy between 1920 and 1950

The 1917 October Revolution brought about real socio-economic transformation in Kyrgyzstan. One of the significant progressive steps realized by the Soviet government was complete sedentarization of the Kyrgyz people between 1920 and 1937.¹¹⁹ In this period, almost 142.000 households or 600.000 people were sedentarized.¹²⁰

Providing land to people and sedentarizing them was only a part of transformation. Change in life patterns and economic development were also required for the Soviet government. For that purpose the Soviet government had to develop a new socialist form of economy: new economic relations, machines, technology, instruments of production and development of irrigation system had to be created. The land reforms in Kyrgyzstan (1921-1922, 1927-1928) ensured by the Soviet government were directed toward solving several problems, each of which was seen as a precondition of the next stage.¹²¹ First, Kyrgyzstan had to solve land-tenure issue since land became a property of state. Secondly, there was a need for technical reconstruction of agriculture that aimed the transformation from manual and primitive instruments of production to machines and mechanizations. Finally, mechanization of all production process in agriculture was required.

Although not in all regions of Kyrgyzstan land reforms were finished, it led to essential change in society (like sedentarization of nomadic Kyrgyz) and stimulated agricultural production. In addition, collectivization, which started in

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 195

¹²⁰ D. Djunushaliev “Sotsial’no Ekonomicheskoe Razvitie Kyrgyzstana v 1917-1941 gg”, (Socio-economic Development of Kyrgyzstan between 1917-1941) in *Istoriya Kyrgyzstana-XX vek* (History of Kyrgyzstan-Twentieth Century) ed. U. Chotonov (Bishkek: Kyrgyzstan Printing House, 1998), 73.

¹²¹ Ibid., 55.

1929, accelerated agricultural reforms and mobilized resources for agricultural development. Complete collectivization of agriculture led to the creation of *Kolkhozes* (collective farms) and *Sovkhozes* (Soviet farms) as most productive forms of agricultural production.¹²² “By 1941, 99.9 percent of all the peasant farms had joined the *Kolkhozy*, and in 1947 there were 1,500 *Kolkhozy*, fifty-two *Sovkhozy* and sixty five machine tractor stations”.¹²³ Agricultural machines and mechanical instruments of production accelerated the agricultural development of Kyrgyzstan. Peasants “had at their disposal over 5,000 tractors, thousands of harvester-combines, 600 threshers, over 3,000 tractor-seeders and some thousands of motor-trucks”¹²⁴. Moreover, the climatic conditions of Central Asia in general and Kyrgyzstan in particular required the development of irrigation systems. For this purpose, between 1928 and 1939 112,3 million rubles were invested in construction of an irrigational system.¹²⁵ Several new water reservoirs and new channels constructed were constructed, and also some of the old reservoirs were reconstructed. This measure allowed the introduction of new cultivation areas. In 1937, in Kyrgyzstan, the total cultivated area was about 2,500,000 acres; whereas, by 1942, it reached 3 million acres, which was two times more than during Tsarist time.¹²⁶

The 14th Congress of Communist Party of the Soviet Union adopted an industrialization program developed by the Soviet government. Six main elements of industrialization were portrayed as the development of large-scale industry, support in developing local industry, development of metallurgy, development of fuel

¹²² Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kyrgyzov i Kyrgyzstana* (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan), 202.

¹²³ W.P. Coates and Zelda K. Coates, *Soviets in Central Asia*, 154.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹²⁵ Djunushaliev, “Sotsial’no Ekonomicheskoe Razvitie Kyrgyzstana v 1917-1941 gg.” (Socio-economic Development of Kyrgyzstan between 1917-1941), 75.

¹²⁶ W.P. Coates and Zelda K. Coates, *Soviets in Central Asia*, 154.

industry, education of staff according to industrial necessities, and development of railroad transportation.¹²⁷ Kyrgyzstan could develop only two of them: local industry and fuel industry (coal mining). According to D. Djunushaliev, the full-scale industrialization plan of the Soviet government was not an agenda for Kyrgyzstan.¹²⁸ In the first years of Soviet rule in Central Asia, industrialization took place basically in those sectors of industry that stimulated the development of agriculture and animal husbandry. This kind of industrialization seemed most appropriate for the Kyrgyz population because it not only took into consideration the real capacity of Kyrgyzstan in terms of raw materials, energy, transportation and geographic location, but also aimed to connect local people to industries that were not so differentiated from their traditional labor experience.¹²⁹

Instead of developing large-scale industries it was decided to develop small and local industries. The mainstreams of industrialization in Kyrgyzstan were raw material processing and local material processing industry as well as mining. Raw material processing industry included cotton refinery, animal husbandry products processing, and silk production, which were transported to other areas of the Soviet Union. The development of mining industry and production of fuel had an all-union importance. Local industry products had to satisfy local or native demands for sugar, leather, textile, and flour - grinding.¹³⁰ However, industrialization as well as the first Soviet five-year plan (1928-1932) did not reach the previously set aims in Kyrgyzstan. The main reason was shortage of financial resources. In addition, Stalin's demand to accelerate development had also affected the pace of

¹²⁷ Djunushaliev, "Sotsial'no Ekonomicheskoe Razvitie Kyrgyzstana v 1917-1941 gg", (Socio-economic Development of Kyrgyzstan between 1917-1941), 49.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 50.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 50.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 50.

industrialization. All these factors changed the priorities of industrial development in Kyrgyzstan. Mining became the major industrial sector in economy, whereas progress in processing industry, textile and consumer goods production was limited. It was thought that problems of industrialization would be solved during the second and third five-year plans. In short, pre-war industrialization of Kyrgyzstan was limited in scope and its pace was slower than other regions.¹³¹

The beginning of Second World War changed the economic development in Kyrgyzstan. From the European republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia, 30 large-scale industrial enterprises were evacuated to Kyrgyzstan.¹³² In a short period of time, most of them together with equipment and workers were relocated to Kyrgyzstan, especially to Bishkek. The production of these factories was oriented toward the demand of war: machines, guns, missile and ammunition. The development of metal-based industry required the development of colored and uncommon metals production. For that purpose, Aktyuz zinc-lead mining site and Haydarkan mercury metallurgical factory were constructed. To solve the energy production problem of all industrial production plants and factories, several small hydro-energy plants were constructed. The war changed the economic structure of Kyrgyzstan. Although in a limited scope, industrial base of the country was now relatively more diversified and this led to the development of other industrial sectors. In all, in 1947, the country had 5,000 industrial enterprises. The total number of industrial workers, which was only 1,000 in 1914, rose to 115,000.¹³³

¹³¹ Ibid., 54.

¹³² S. Kerimbaev, "Kyrgyzstan v Gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny 1941-1945 gg." (Kyrgyzstan During the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945), in *Istoriya Kyrgyzstana-XX vek* (History of Kyrgyzstan-Twentieth Century) ed. by U. Chotonov (Bishkek: Kyrgyzstan Printing House, 1998), 104.

¹³³ W.P. Coates and Zelda K. Coates, *Soviets in Central Asia*, 156.

2.4.2 Transformation of the Kyrgyz Economy Between 1950-1991

Since the second half of the 1920s, the economy of the Soviet Union showed signs of centralization. In 1950, this had already become a serious impediment to future economic development. Khrushchev's reforms of Soviet economy in the early 1950s radically changed the existing situation.¹³⁴ It marked "a transition to a territorial system of economic administration, the establishment of *sovnarkhozy* (regional economic boards), and the abolition of various ministries".¹³⁵ This measure increased the role of republics, local administrative organs and industries in solving socio-economic problems. The role of *Gosplan*, the state planning agency, in distribution of investments was decreased, though this institution still exercised considerable control. This kind of innovation resulted in strengthening the economic potential of Kyrgyzstan. For instance, the volume of capital investments in economy of the country between 1951-1955 was as large as 3,6 billion rubles, while the share of industrial output was 3,8 times higher than in 1940.¹³⁶ Nevertheless, development of agriculture was slower than industry. Problems of agricultural development were tried to be solved by two resolutions of the Soviet government adopted in April 1952: "Aid measures to Kyrgyz SSR for developing animal husbandry" and "Aid measures to the agriculture of Kyrgyz SSR", both of which aimed to strengthen material and technical bases of agricultural sector.¹³⁷ Moreover, to support agricultural development, the government increased the purchase prices of

¹³⁴ On positive effects of decentralization of the Soviet economy in general and sovnarkhoz in particular, See Boris Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 55-56.

¹³⁵ Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment*, 4.

¹³⁶ Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kyrgyzov i Kyrgyzstana* (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan), 242.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 243.

agricultural products, introduced the advance payment to *kolkhozniks*, and improved the veterinary services.¹³⁸

The new system of economic organization that was developed during Khrushchev was abolished in the second half of the 1960s, as Khrushchev was forced to step down as the leader of the Soviet Union. Change in political leadership also changed the economic system. Leonid Brezhnev, the new Soviet leader, reintroduced central planning. Return to this old policy had a negative effect on the economic growth in Central Asia in general and in Kyrgyzstan in particular. Under Brezhnev, the pace of economic development slowed. This particular period of economic development of the Soviet state is often referred as a *stagnation*. Nevertheless, from 1965 to 1985 national income of Kyrgyzstan increased almost 2,7 times while the volume of industrial production 4,4 times. Industry produced approximately half of national income of the republic. The industrial base of the country was defined by such sectors as energy production, colored metallurgy, machine building, electric devices, electronics, instrument making and construction.¹³⁹ Some of the food and textile industry enterprises were reconstructed, while several new ones were built. The high capacity of Kyrgyzstan for hydroelectric power generation led to the construction of such stations as Toktogul hydropower plant. In a way, Kyrgyzstan became part of the international economic system, as products produced in Kyrgyzstan were exported to other socialist countries. Similarly, the country was importing other products from these countries.

One of the main issues of agricultural development of that time was the intensification of the agricultural sector of economy. An important factor of

¹³⁸ Ibid., 244-245.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 255.

agricultural development was the increase of capital investments in this sector.¹⁴⁰ Investments allowed construction and exploitation of new animal fattening and fodder industry units, storages for mineral fertilizers and electricity transmission lines. In addition, between 1975 and 1980, *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* were equipped with 15,000 tractors, 12,000 trucks, 3,200 harvester-combines and 5 million tons of fertilizers.¹⁴¹ Under the conditions of “developed” socialism, in addition to economic development of agriculture, attention was also paid to socio-cultural development of villages.¹⁴²

From the mid-1970s the pace of economic development considerably slowed down. The speed of economic growth of the USSR was decreased from 7,4 percent in 1966-1970 to 3,5 percent in 1981-1985.¹⁴³ Long-term stagnation in economy impeded the solution of socio-economic problems. There was a need for radical changes to improve the existing economic system. In 1985 the acceleration program that was introduced by Michail Gorbachev started the period of *perestroika*. The Soviet economic problems like low labor productivity, poor returns on investment, technological backwardness, structural imbalances and environmental degradation were very serious. Therefore, economic innovations and reforms of that period introduced some elements of a market economy. However, partial reforming of economy had negative outcomes.¹⁴⁴ It is generally accepted that Kyrgyzstan in particular and Central Asian countries in general were the least economically

¹⁴⁰ I.S. Boldjurova, “Kyrgyzstan v period zastoya (1964-1985 gg), (Kyrgyzstan During Stagnation 1964-1985) in *Istoriya Kyrgyzstana-XX vek* (History of Kyrgyzstan-Twentieth Century) ed. U. Chotonov (Bishkek: Kyrgyzstan Printing House, 1998), 158.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 158.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 158.

¹⁴³ Chotonov, “Kyrgyzstan v gody perestroiki 1985-1991” (Kyrgyzstan During Perestroika 1985-1991), 199.

¹⁴⁴ Richard Pomfret, *The Economies of Central Asia* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 41-42.

developed ones among the former Soviet republics.¹⁴⁵ Soviet economists explain the economic backwardness of Soviet Central Asia mainly by two factors.¹⁴⁶ First, it is asserted that Central Asian republics had been already underdeveloped before October Revolution. The second reason is related to so-called “demographic peculiarities” of the region. During the Soviet period the population of Central Asia experienced rapid growth. High birth rates and decreasing death rates, improvement in quality of health and life throughout the region resulted in demographic explosion. The native Kyrgyz population has been increasing since 1959. In 1979 the Kyrgyz comprised about 2 million people while according to 1989 census they make up 2.5 million. The percentage of change over the decade accounted for above the 30 percent.¹⁴⁷ This demographic trend created difficulties in providing necessary economic facilities such as creation of jobs, housing and social services as well as mother care and nursing in rural areas.

The economic activity in Kyrgyzstan was centered on irrigated agriculture in valleys, animal husbandry in pastures and mountains, heavy and light industries in the cities and mining activities for military and nuclear industry in the regions. Most of the economic production was used outside Kyrgyzstan, in other economic regions of the Soviet Union. Kyrgyzstan also participated in irrigated cotton production, which was sown largely in southern regions of the republic.

¹⁴⁵ See Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment*. Rumer provides a very convincing survey of economic situation during Soviet era in the four Central Asian republics of Kirghizia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. He shows that Central Asia despite its great natural and economic capacities like cotton, oil, gas etc. neither during the Tsarist nor during the Soviet times was successful in becoming a developed region. The tragedy of the region is that it was seen as colonial periphery. The same conditions were also helpful for Soviet political leadership as the region provided raw materials, semi-finished goods, and mineral resources for advanced, industrial regions of the USSR.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 28

¹⁴⁷ IMF et al., *A study of the Soviet Economy*, Volume 1, (Paris, 1991), 204.

In spite of the overall decline in the economy of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan was capable of realizing economic growth. For instance, average Net Material Product (NMP) rate between 1971 and 1985 was 4.2 percent per year.¹⁴⁸ During the second half of the 1980s, when in the other regions of the Soviet Union annual NMP was 2.7 percent, Kyrgyzstan maintained reasonable economic growth that was 4.9 percent. However, the general decline in the Soviet economy also negatively affected the development of Kyrgyzstan. By 1989, the level of production ceased to grow. As elsewhere, Kyrgyzstan was faced with shortages of goods and inflation. The policy of perestroika resulted in some contradictions between center and periphery especially on the issue of distribution of wealth. Central Asian countries insisted on greater investment to their region.¹⁴⁹ In addition, inflation increased, economic relations with other enterprises were severely interrupted and there were acute problems in supply of material. Economic crisis deepened further. Unsuccessful reform of economy resulted in an increasing tension between the reformist and conservative members of the Soviet Communist Party leadership. In order to restore the old centralized system, conservatives organized the August 1991 coup against Gorbachev and his reforms. The failure of the coup and the following events hastened the collapse of the Soviet Union. Kyrgyzstan was now an internationally recognized sovereign state with an “independent” economy of its own.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 215

¹⁴⁹ Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment*, 179.

CHAPTER 3

ECONOMIC FACTORS

In line with Lipset's hypothesis, that is there is correlation between socio-economic development and transition to democracy¹⁵⁰, Huntington also underlines the significance of economic growth and prosperity on producing democracy. Although Huntington thought that economic factors certainly have an impact on democratization and democracy, they are not determinative.¹⁵¹ A more industrialized economy with well-educated populace is more conducive to the development of democratic regimes than backward ones.¹⁵² According to him, economic poverty as a result of economic underdevelopment (especially in countries like former Soviet

¹⁵⁰ Seymour Martin Lipset some 40 years ago stressed the importance of economic development which resulted in successful democratic development. The seminal work of Lipset assumes that there is a linkage between economic growth and general well-being on the one hand and democracy or transition to democracy on the other. His empirical study finds a significant correlation between socio-economic variables (wealth, degree of industrialization and urbanization, and level of education) and political outcomes such as stability and participation. He specifically emphasized the correlation between market economies and stable democracies. In contrast, the poorer the country is, the greater the possibility of undemocratic rule, and this leads the nation to "nepotism", i.e. support of kin and friends, lower level of standards of living, unreceptivity to democratic norms, the weakness of universalistic values and inefficient bureaucracy. Thus any state in the world that becomes democratic may not remain democratic for a long time due to impoverishment. See Seymour M. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy", *American Political Science Review*, 53, 1959: 69-105.

¹⁵¹ Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 59.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 271-272.

republics that did not have democratic regimes before) is a main obstacle to democratic development. This means that even if democracy is not an unattainable goal for non-democratic countries, its development is problematic.¹⁵³ Therefore, “the future of democracy depends on the future of economic development. Obstacles to economic development are obstacles to the expansion of democracy”.¹⁵⁴

Huntington’s stress on economic development is related to its facilitative role in terms of both emergence and maintenance of democracy. Moreover, he points out several reasons that favor promotion of economic growth.¹⁵⁵ In fact, Huntington suggests that economic development will have a positive effect on democracy and democratization process. Firstly, economic growth and development will inevitably increase the level of urbanization, literacy and education. This will also change the structure of society, as the role and size of peasantry will decline, whereas role and importance of middle class and urban working class will increase. Secondly, economic growth will create more resources for further distribution among different groups in society. Availability of resources will affect not only economics but also politics, since more political groups will be able to participate into the political system. Thirdly, economic growth promotes reduction of state control over economy, thus giving chance to self-regulatory free market mechanisms to function. In other words, the more complex the economy is, the less state has control over it. Fourth, economic development creates and strengthens independent centers of power. Commercial and industrial bourgeoisie, in other words the economic elites, will be effective in generating direct pressure for democracy. Private control of technology,

¹⁵³ Samuel P. Huntington, “*Democracy for the Long Haul*”, *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 7, Number 2, April 1996, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 311.

¹⁵⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, “After Twenty Years: The Future of the Third Wave”, *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 8, Number 4, October 1997, p. 5.

communications and mass media also support the existence of alternative sources of information and different political views. Finally, in the long run economic development reduces equality in income and wealth.¹⁵⁶

All these issues once again became relevant in the late 1980's. In this context, the fall of the Berlin Wall meant not only failure of totalitarian communism but also its economic failure.¹⁵⁷ Recent political events show that one of the explanatory factors of quick and successful transition to democracy in some of Eastern Europe countries is linked to the socio-economic development.¹⁵⁸ Thus it has been suggested that the successful transition from planned economy to market economy will also result in strengthening and consolidating of democracy. The economic development of a post-communist country will affect the conditions that might be conducive to the acceptance of democratic norms and values.¹⁵⁹

In this part the economic development of Kyrgyzstan is analyzed. Kyrgyzstan is also among the countries that underwent economic transition to market economy. Since independence, Kyrgyzstan proclaimed its commitment to a market economy. The first section this chapter the problems and economic hardships of transition

¹⁵⁶ See Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 1-7. Gill also mentions a number of economic aspects that have been identified to explain the emergence of democracy. In fact, he notes eight aspects that are not in contradiction with Huntington. In addition to Huntington's reasons, Gill mentions the emergence of voluntary and autonomous social organization that is civil society, decrease in susceptibility to radical, anti-democratic ideas, and change in values that result in generation of democratic political culture.

¹⁵⁷ See Morgan O. Reynolds, "The Impossibility of Socialist Economy, or, A Cat can not Swim the Atlantic Ocean", *The Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 29-44.

¹⁵⁸ See David Potter et al., *Democratization* (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with The Open University, 1997), 410-414.

¹⁵⁹ The decline of command economy resulted in the rise of neo-liberal economic ideas. Transition of post-communist states to democracy would be followed by immediate or simultaneous transition to the new structures of liberal market economy. For these countries that did not experience market economy, rapid economic transition and the construction of Western type market economy had vital importance regarding future political and economic development. Therefore, for post-communist countries, there was only one path for economic development. Liberal and free market economy seemed to be the basic aim of economic transition.

period are evaluated. Finally, economic transformation of Kyrgyzstan into a liberal market economy, the development of the Kyrgyz economy between 1991 and 2000 are analyzed.

3.1 Legacy of the Soviet Economic System

When studying the economic development of Kyrgyzstan, it is necessary to take into consideration the legacy of the Soviet era. It is already argued that the role of the Soviet planned economy was important in the economic development of Central Asia. However, the Soviet planned economic system also resulted in several economic and environmental problems. Soviet economic development policies resulted in four serious problems that had a negative impact on Kyrgyzstan: economic dependency, dominance of agriculture in economy, ecological problems and physical dependency.¹⁶⁰

3.1.1 Economic Dependency

Economic dependency refers to Kyrgyzstan's high degree of economic integration with the other regions of the former Soviet Union. Kyrgyzstan's economic and trade relations were depended on Russia to larger extent and on other economic regions of the USSR to a lesser extend. This dependence on Russia would be problematic for the future economic development of Central Asia in general and Kyrgyzstan in particular. For instance, in 1992, the export of Kyrgyzstan to Russia was 39.1 percent whereas its import was about 49 percent.¹⁶¹ The dominance of agriculture in

¹⁶⁰ Nesrin Sungur, "Yeniden Yapılanma Sürecinde Orta Asya Türk Cumhuriyetleri ve Geçiş Dönemi Sorunları" in *Bağımsızlığın İlk Yılları: Azerbaycan, Kazakistan, Kırgızistan, Özbekistan, Türkmenistan*, ed. by Büşra Ersanlı Behar et al., T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları/1723, Halk Kültürlerini Araştırma ve Geliştirme Genel Müdürlüğü/221, Türk Cumhuriyetleri Dizisi: 2 (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Milli Kütüphane Basımevi, 1994), 223-228.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 224

economic structure, insufficient industrial capacities for the processing of produced goods, insufficient mineral resources, and few alternatives of oil and petroleum suppliers made Kyrgyzstan dependent on Russia. For example, the large portion of produced wool was transported to Russia for further processing, making Kyrgyzstan a supplier of raw materials. Certainly, the policy of economic integration pursued by the Soviet government left Central Asian countries and Kyrgyzstan highly dependent in terms of trade relations. This kind of close economic relations with Russia also negatively affected politics, making it vulnerable to possible serious fluctuations in Russian economy.¹⁶²

3.1.2 Dominance of Agriculture in Economy

Another structural specificity of the Kyrgyz Soviet economy was the dominance of the agriculture sector in economy. As it can be seen from the *Table 2.1* the share of agricultural sector in Net National Production is much higher than industry and other sectors, the sum of which is only a little bit higher than agricultural sector.

Table 3.1

The share of Net National Production by sectors in 1991, (%)

	Agriculture	Industry	Construction	Transport/Communication	Others
Kyrgyz SSR	45.0	33.0	7.0	2.0	13.0

Sources: IMF, 1993 Country Reports

According to the statistics in the period of 1986-1989, Kyrgyzstan produced 7.9 percent of all wool, 1.0 percent of all meat, 20.2 percent of all tobacco, 1,8 percent of all vegetables, 0,9 percent of all cotton produced in USSR.¹⁶³ All these

¹⁶² Ibid., 224.

¹⁶³ IMF et al., *A study of the Soviet Economy*, Volume 1, 218.

products were produced despite the fact that the share of agricultural land of Kyrgyzstan in total land area is only 7 percent. Nonetheless, in 1970's about 40 percent of all arable lands were sown by cotton. Chuy valley was completely sown by sugar beets, which counted for 3-4 percent of all sugar beets produced in Soviet Union. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan had its own distinct specialization in agricultural production. In the Soviet division of labor, traditionally Kyrgyzstan was one of bigger producers of animal husbandry products. In 1970's the total number of cattle was 911.7 heads whereas it increased to 1.11 million heads in 1985. Total number of sheep was 9.455 million in 1970 while it increased to 10.200 million heads in 1985.¹⁶⁴ The key sector in animal husbandry was sheep breeding. Its share in total animal husbandry was 43 percent while it composed 34 percent of all incomes of collective and state farms.¹⁶⁵ In perspective the further development of fine-fleeced and semi-fine-fleeced sheep-breeding were aimed. It was planned that in 1980's traditional sector of economy of Kyrgyzstan would produce 1.700 million tons (live weight) of sheep meat and increase the total number of sheep to 12 million heads. Therefore, the dominant position of the agricultural sector in the Kyrgyz Soviet economy would probably have its impact on future economic development.¹⁶⁶

3.1.3 Ecological Problems

Another legacy of the Soviet planned economy is related to ecological problems. Accelerated economic development of Soviet Kyrgyzstan negatively affected its ecology and nature. Only in sheep breeding sector, for instance, there was

¹⁶⁴ Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kyrgyzov i Kyrgyzstana* (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan), 262.

¹⁶⁵ Boldjurova, "Kyrgyzstan v period zastoya (1964-1985)" (Kyrgyzstan During Stagnation Years 1964-1985) 158-159.

¹⁶⁶ Incomplete and limited industrialization of Kyrgyzstan was probably not the only factor that affected the nature of the Kyrgyz economy. The issue of industrialization of Kyrgyzstan was related to Moscow's willingness to allot necessary investments and capital. Communist Party bureaucracy, formalism and interruptions in economy were other obstacles to economic development.

a continuous increase in the total number of sheep between 1970 and 1990. For the same period the quantity of all animals increased almost by two times and this led to increase in animal (sheep) density which was highest in the Soviet Union: 119 sheep for 100 hectares of pasture while average rate of density in Soviet Union was 45 sheep. Such an increase brought about degradation of pastures, and about 60 percent of pastures had become of little use.¹⁶⁷ Due to the ignorance of scientific methods of plant-growing, sugar beets in Chuy valley in 1970's led to land degradation. Although production of sugar beets had decreased due to land impoverishment, constant increases in economic plans were dictated from Moscow. Efforts to fulfill these plans also led to ecological disbalance in Chuy valley. Moreover, results of industrial development also led to serious ecological catastrophe. Under the conditions of the Cold War, mining of strategic mineral resources was developed in Kyrgyzstan. The deposits of strategic mineral resources (like uranium), which were produced in Kyrgyzstan, were used in Soviet atomic and military industries. Some of uranium mines were conserved but their tailing disposals may result in a real threat to ecology, nature and human health.

3.1.4 Physical Dependency

Finally, the industrial development of Kyrgyzstan made the country “physically dependent” on the inter-republican trade and economic relations. For example, industrial enterprises located in Kyrgyzstan were dependent on a number of Russian and other Soviet suppliers and buyers. Some of the defense industry enterprises located in Bishkek needed iron and some spare parts were used in the production of military armaments. This kind of dependence can be explained by the

¹⁶⁷ Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kyrgyzov i Kyrgyzstana* (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan), 262.

logic of the system of Soviet planned economy, where almost all republics participated in Soviet-wide processing chain.¹⁶⁸ Soviet economy displayed an exaggerated tendency towards large-scale enterprises. The emphasis on large-scale enterprises might have its own economic logic. Production of a variety of goods and services that exceeded republic's own necessity only to be supplied to other republics was the policy of economies of scale, which was widely practiced during the Soviet era. Under the centrally planned economic system, economies of scale were inevitable, but it would have a negative effect on the viability of enterprises, especially in the post-Soviet era as the economy started to shift towards market economy.

3.2 Problems of Economic Transition

The dissolution of Soviet Union in 1991 was a shock in both political and economic sense for Kyrgyzstan. The country was almost totally unprepared for this very quick dissolution. The cost of independence resulted in three major economic shocks: “transition from central planning economy, dissolution of Soviet Union and hyperinflation”.¹⁶⁹ It meant not only political transformation of Kyrgyzstan but also transition to a market economy and the introduction of new liberal economic policies that would be appropriate to the new economic environment. After 1991, Kyrgyzstan started pursuing different economic policies. Transition to a market oriented economy was an essential duty to fulfill. Although transition from planned to market economy was not an easy one, it was necessary because Soviet planned economy, which had proven its incapability, ceased to exist. However, the dissolution of the

¹⁶⁸ Pomfret, *The Economies of Central Asia*, 32.

¹⁶⁹ Kathryn H. Anderson and Richard Pomfret, *Consequences of Creating a Market Economy: Evidences from Household Surveys in Central Asia* (Cheltenham UK: Edward Elgar, 2003), 11.

Soviet Union and the transition of Kyrgyzstan to market economy increased the existing economic problems. Dismantling of centrally planned economy resulted in disruption of trade and economic links among the former Soviet republics, disorganization in economy and a sharp drop in output production. For an agricultural country like Kyrgyzstan, disintegration of the USSR led to severe disruption. For example, the subsidies allotted to Kyrgyz economy by Moscow, which had reached 13 percent of GDP in 1991, came to an end. Kyrgyzstan had to solve many unexpected challenges, which had a negative impact on economic development. The main issue of the economic development of the 1990s was to transform the Kyrgyz economy from being a provider of raw materials for other economic regions into being a processor of its own raw materials and producer of its own industrial products.¹⁷⁰ Consequently, the future of Kyrgyzstan's economy would depend on its own economic policies and strategies.

The government of Kyrgyzstan was aware of two main types of problems associated with rapid transition to market economy. The first problem was associated with the current situation in economy that is decline and crisis, which had direct implications for the future of economy. The current economic situation of the country and the Soviet legacy caused serious doubts for any kind of future economic development. Secondly, there were problems associated with transition to a market economy and independent housekeeping. Introduction of new liberal market institutions and development of national strategies for transition were seen as important demands of economic transformation. However, the most important of all

¹⁷⁰ Olcott, "Kyrgyzstan", 148.

was to manage the economic crisis that began in the 1970's and culminated in second half of the 1980's and the beginning of the 1990's.

Modernization of exiting industrial enterprises constituted first kind of economic problems.¹⁷¹ Kyrgyzstan needed to modernize technological infrastructure almost in all industrial sectors such as communication, transportation, energy and heavy industry. Existing technologies in industrial enterprises of Kyrgyzstan were too old to compete in world markets and produce goods corresponding to world quality standards. Therefore, immediate technology transfer and innovation were necessary. At this point another problem was arisen. Technological modernization required financial capital. In the short run it seemed impossible for Kyrgyzstan to modernize its industry and diversify its production by its own finances. Under conditions of economic crisis, it seemed difficult to find extra internal financial sources. The visible solution of this financial problem was to attract direct foreign investments. However, to provide investment opportunities for foreign investors required structural change in economy, preparation of legislative bases and creation of favorable investment climate. Further, economies of scale existed during the Soviet era were now outmoded and created serious problems during transition.¹⁷² Large economic enterprises had been economically inefficient. They were dependent on a number of suppliers and buyers. However, the dissolution of the Soviet Union led to a significant trade shock, a decline in trade volumes and to permanent interruption in the supply of raw materials, spare parts and semi-finished goods. Instead, the development of small and medium enterprises became one of the

¹⁷¹ See Sungur, "Yeniden Yapılanma Sürecinde Orta Asya Türk Cumhuriyetleri ve Geçiş Dönemi Sorunları", 226; Turar Koichuev, *Ekonomika perehodnogo perioda (Economy of transitional period)*, National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic, (Bishkek: Ilim, 1995), 28-42.

¹⁷² Sungur, "Yeniden Yapılanma Sürecinde Orta Asya Türk Cumhuriyetleri ve Geçiş Dönemi Sorunları", 226.

primary issues. In order to facilitate economic growth, there was a need for qualified people who would provide economic transformation, expertise and knowledge of liberal market mechanisms. Especially indigenous specialists should be educated and prepared because out-migration of non-indigenous people from Kyrgyzstan led to a shortage of trained specialists.¹⁷³ And finally, a change in the mentality of people and their reorientation to the new conditions of liberal market economy were necessary.¹⁷⁴ This was an important but difficult process. People were used to living in a socialist economy when their job opportunities, wages, social nets, housing and health care needs and other social facilities were provided and secured by the state. Although, there were some problems in the distribution and provision of some goods and services, it was still a secure system of social development. Economic situation showed that Kyrgyzstan no longer had the financial resources and the ideological commitment to sustain high level of welfare distributed under communism. The atmosphere of liberal market economy with open market competition, development of private businesses and new forms of ownership found wide support of masses.¹⁷⁵ The prosperity of a small part of population and significant decline in the material living conditions of a majority of people created inequalities. Unfair distribution of income forced by severe economic crisis created highly visible inequalities in income. Elimination of most of the state subsidies for the financially disadvantaged groups resulted in extraordinary economic hardship for most of the population.

Under the new circumstances, Kyrgyzstan's unique problems such as the distance from the main world markets, land-locked geography, lack of natural

¹⁷³ Ibid., 227.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 227.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 227.

resources, few trade partners, and inadequate transportation facilities prevented a swift and quick reorientation to market economy.

Since independence, Kyrgyzstan proclaimed its commitment to a market economy and attempted to realize major reforms. First, Kyrgyzstan had to undertake stabilization policy to stop hyperinflation and restore macroeconomic equilibrium. Second, in order to implement market economy, quick liberalization of prices was necessary. Third, privatization of state enterprises should be realized as soon as possible. Finally, structural reforms including the creation of stable monetary system and introduction of national currency should be provided. Therefore, the major efforts in first years of independence were intended to find appropriate solutions to the current economic issues and directed towards developing policies and strategies as well as their implementation.

3.3 Economic Reforms 1991-1995

The institutional and economic reforms in Kyrgyzstan displayed many of the same inherited features as that of Eastern and Central Europe and other former republics of the Soviet Union. To a considerable extent Kyrgyzstan shared with them an agenda for change. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that economic development of Kyrgyzstan also showed dissimilar features, depending on the severity of economic crisis and articulation and implementation of policies and strategies.

Kyrgyzstan, in comparison to other countries in the region, applied different strategies and policies during the first years of transition.¹⁷⁶ In fact, there were two

¹⁷⁶ One part of Askar Akaev's book *Pamyatnoe Desyatiletie* (Memorable Decade) is devoted to his ideas of liberal economics and transition to market economy. When suggesting new strategies, Kyrgyz

alternative models of economic development that could help in the transformation from centrally planned economy to liberal market economy. A *Big Bang* approach to reform was the first alternative. *Gradualism* was second alternative.¹⁷⁷ The differences between these two options were about the speed and sequencing of reforms. Kyrgyzstan concentrated its efforts on *shock therapy* (i.e. Big Bang approach) the core element of which was rapid elimination of domestic prices controlled by state and liberalization of trade. According to some scholars, Kyrgyzstan “became a leader in the movement of the post-Soviet states toward an open market economy”.¹⁷⁸

As was suggested earlier, the agenda for transition consisted of reforms in various spheres of economy. They can mainly be divided into four categories: stabilization, liberalization of prices and trade, privatization and structural and institutional reforms that provide a framework for the well-functioning of the liberal market economy.¹⁷⁹

3.3.1 Stabilization Policy

Macroeconomic stability provides an indispensable base for successful economic reforms. Regarding economic stabilization, Kyrgyzstan implemented a

academic circles faced severe difficulties because of the burden of command-planned economy. The lack of knowledge and information on liberal economy created obstacles in developing new economic policies for solving economic problems. See Askar Akaev, *Pamyatnoe Desyatiletie* (Memorable Decade) (Bishkek: JSK Uchkun, 2002), 277-302.

¹⁷⁷ See Richard Pomfret, *The Economies of Central Asia*, 6-8; Gregory Gleason, *Markets and Politics in Central Asia: Structural Reform and Political Change* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2003) 24-26; Herman W. Hoen, “Shock versus Gradualism in the Central Europe reconsidered”, *Comparative Economic Studies*, Spring 1996, Vol. 1 Issue 1, pp. 1-20

¹⁷⁸ See Gleason, *Markets and Politics in Central Asia: Structural Reform and Political Change*, 69.; Anderson and Pomfret, *Consequences of Creating a Market Economy: Evidences from Household Surveys in Central Asia*, 12.

¹⁷⁹ Gregory Gleason argued that countries like Kyrgyzstan that preferred a Big Bang approach or the open competition approach have to pursue necessary preconditions of transition such as privatization, stabilization, liberalization, government structural reforms and currency convertibility. See Gleason, *Markets and Politics in Central Asia: Structural Reform and Political Change*, 24.

reform program that had been adopted in 1990.¹⁸⁰ The program aimed improvement in financial and monetary circulation, restructuring of credit policy, reforming of the banking sector and gradual shift toward free price determination on supply and demand bases. In line with the reform program in 1991, the government of Kyrgyzstan defined new economic policy, which had four main aspects. First of all, new agrarian policy should be implemented in order to establish social infrastructure and develop small industrial entrepreneurship in local areas. Secondly, it was necessary to review legislative and normative laws and documents, and create economic, judicial and organizational arrangements for attracting direct foreign investments, credits and new technologies. Third aspect aimed to privatize small and medium enterprises in trade and public food services, consumer services, local industry, transport and construction. Finally, Kyrgyzstan had to develop new economic relations with Eastern and Western countries.¹⁸¹ The program of transition to market economy was quite flexible, as Kyrgyzstan constantly had to take into account the current fluctuating economic situation. As such, immediate correction, improvements and amendments to the transition program were necessary.

The important issue for Kyrgyzstan was to curb Russian hyperinflation (shared with other post-Soviet countries in the ruble zone), which reached its peak in 1992 and 1993. Therefore, one of the primary issues of state was the introduction of national currency.¹⁸² It was thought that introduction of national currency would give an opportunity to control inflation and “hence establishing a functioning market

¹⁸⁰ Ploskih et al., *Istoriya Kyrgyzov i Kyrgyzstana* (History of the Kyrgyz and Kyrgyzstan), 293.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁸² The decision to introduce national currency was a very important one. It was thought that national currency would stabilize economy. On the preparations and introduction of national currency-som, see Medetkhan Sherimkulov, *Parlament Nezavisimogo Kyrgyzstana* (*Parliament of Independent Kyrgyzstan*), 389-404.

economy in which relative price changes could be observed and perform their allocative function”.¹⁸³ In addition, national currency had been a necessary condition for reaching macroeconomic stability and providing effective economic reform. In May 1993 Kyrgyzstan adopted its national currency, *Kyrgyz som*. It was the first country in post-Soviet Central Asia to leave the ruble zone. This decision was made in close cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and reflected Kyrgyzstan’s commitment to economic reform, stimulating international financial support. It was thought this support would give the opportunity to implement more market-oriented policies in economy. Also, such supports had to stimulate Kyrgyzstan for further pursuing a Big Bang economic approach and establish a well-functioning liberal market. For instance, the membership of Kyrgyzstan in World Bank in September 1992 was followed by the Bank’s approval of a country assistance plan. Under some programs and projects like Financial Sector Adjustment Credit (FINSAC) developed by the World Bank,¹⁸⁴ Kyrgyzstan received \$550 million loan for support of national currency and covering of budget deficit. Introduction of som allowed control over the monetary policies and stopped hyperinflationist trend in economy. Inflation rate was gradually brought under control and in 1995 annual rate was about 40 percent.¹⁸⁵

3.3.2 Liberalization of Prices and Trade

Liberalization of prices and trade was closely related to stabilization policies. These policies were expected to support macroeconomic stability and contribute to

¹⁸³ Anderson and Pomfret, *Consequences of Creating a Market Economy: Evidences from Household Surveys in Central Asia*, 12.

¹⁸⁴ <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:20011321~menuPK:34466~pagePK:64003015~piPK:64003012~theSitePK:4607,00.html>

¹⁸⁵ UNICEF, *Social Monitoring ‘Innocenti’: Social Monitoring 2003*, (Florence: Tipografia Giuntina; 2003), 115.

economic transition. Kyrgyzstan opted for quick liberalization. The first liberalization of prices took place in April 1991. The next liberalization was initiated by price liberalization in Russia in January 1992.¹⁸⁶ At least in the short run, the result of liberalization was cataclysmic. It led to hyperinflation, which reached its peak in 1992 and 1993. Kyrgyz economy was unable to isolate itself from Russian inflationary policies. This tendency showed the vulnerability and structural weakness of Kyrgyz economy, which began to recover and change for the better after 1994.

Initially, liberalization of trade led to trade losses. The severe trade shocks and economic relations had abruptly affected the domestic economy. Such a situation created an urgent need for the Kyrgyz enterprises to develop new trade linkages. The reorientation of trade patterns and a shift to world market prices was likely to be permanent.

3.3.3 Privatization

Privatization was portrayed as a key element of transition to market economy in the former centrally planned economies. The importance of privatization lied in microeconomic restructuring. The aim of privatization was large-scale transfers of state properties to the public or new private owners. It had to improve efficiency of enterprises and decrease or eliminate the role of state in economy. Kyrgyzstan, instead of “spontaneous privatization” preferred “voucher schemes” that was practiced in Poland, Russia and other former Soviet republics. “In the Kyrgyz Republic, application of this method has taken the form of converting privatization checks into “points” (upai).¹⁸⁷ Vouchers were distributed to the population almost

¹⁸⁶ World Bank. *A World Bank Country Study: Kyrgyzstan. Transition to a Market Economy* (Washington D.C.: the World Bank, 1993) 6, 9.

¹⁸⁷ Turar Koichuev, *The Economy of Kyrgyz Republic on the Way of Reforms*. (Bishkek: Reform, 2001) 106-114.

free of charge. “Every Kyrgyz citizen received a voucher, whose value depended upon how long the holder has worked and upon his or her salary (as proxies for each person’s contribution to the state)”.¹⁸⁸ These vouchers could be exchanged for enterprise shares and this resulted in giving away state property to the population at large. Voucher privatization was introduced in order to privatize state property at maximum speed. Kyrgyz government’s privatization program aimed to privatize about 35% of state assets by 1993.¹⁸⁹

According to some Kyrgyz economists, the privatization that took place during 1991-1995 was the first stage of privatization.¹⁹⁰ At this stage, privatization covered mainly small and medium enterprises. In fact, it was started in 1993 and was finished in 1994-1995. In accordance with the figures of State Property Fund, share of privatized enterprises was 1,74 percent of total state enterprises. This rate increased sharply in next years. It was 24,28 percent in 1992 and 25,61 percent in 1993. Share of privatized enterprises declined in 1993 and was only 18,01 percent. In sum, from 1 January 1991 to 1 May 1995, 5459 out of 9989 state enterprises (or 54,65 percent) were privatized.¹⁹¹ Dynamics of privatization during 1991-1995 shows that Kyrgyzstan was not ready either in legislative or organizational terms for privatization.

As it can be seen from *Table 3.2* only two sectors, consumer services, and trade and public food services were almost fully privatized. In industry, privatization was more than 50 percent, whereas in construction, agriculture, transportation and other sectors, it was weak.

¹⁸⁸ Pomfret, *The Economies of Central Asia*, 113.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁹⁰ Koichuev, *Ekonomika Perehodnogo Perioda*, 67.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

Table 3.2

Privatization of State Enterprises in Kyrgyzstan 1991-95

Sector of economy	Proportion privatized (1 January 1991-1 May 1995)
Industry	62.5
Consumer Services	100.0
Non- producing Sphere	24.5
Trade and Public Food Services	94.0
Construction	47.3
Agriculture	39.0
Transportation	39.0
Other sectors	13.1

Source: , Turar Koichuev (2001). *The Economy of Kyrgyz Republic on the Way of Reforms*. Bishkek: Reform. p. 100

Between 1991 and 1995 there were four basic types of privatization in Kyrgyzstan. First was the direct sell of enterprises to its workers, 26,2 percent of enterprises were privatized in this manner. The second most widespread form of privatizing was selling of enterprises to private persons, 20,9 percent of enterprises was privatized by this method. The third method of privatizing was selling at auctions, 20,1 percent of enterprises were privatized by this method. Finally, 17,86 percent of enterprises was privatized by the reorganization of state of enterprises into joint-stock companies.¹⁹²

The second stage of privatization was started after 1995. At this stage most of the large-scale enterprises were planned to be privatized. Privatization of large-scale enterprises required more time and organizational work. This stage will be further elaborated in the next pages.

3.3.4 Structural and Institutional Reforms

Structural and institutional reforms aimed to change the economic structure and redefine the role of state in economy according to liberal market economics. The

¹⁹² Ibid., 67-68.

state should no longer be involved in economy. Certain economic activities such as setting the prices and allocating resources and credits had no longer be performed by the state. Instead, market mechanisms, institutions, entrepreneurs and private sector should function effectively in allocating resources. In other words, the state now should implement the “laissez-faire” rule in economic sector. In market economy the role of state is minimized and concentrated on other issues such as upholding rule of law, creating legislative bases for development of market, adoption of law, introduction of new tax system. New market institutions had to be created to provide a framework for a well-functioning market. Most of them did not exist under the command economy, but at the present time they had to become the core of the market economic system.

To change the system of economic relations and property ownership, adoption of new laws were required. Taking into consideration the importance of these issues, several reform laws that had vital importance for the functioning of the market were adopted by the Kyrgyz Parliament,¹⁹³ such as laws on property, foreign investment and concessions, taxation, privatization, entrepreneurship, leasing, banks and banking activities, cooperation and diversity of ventures. However, insufficient knowledge and ignorance of market rules led to the revision and replacement of most of those laws. Furthermore, enumerated laws were only a part of the visible iceberg. Later, laws on the protection of private property, competition, insurance, labor relations and land taxation were adopted. In other words, there was a need for almost complete change of Kyrgyz legal structure. Changes in fundamental legislation like the civil code, criminal code, and labor code seemed inevitable.

¹⁹³ Askar Akaev, *Kyrgyzstan on the Way to Progress and Democracy* (Ankara: Ahmet Yasevi Foundation, 1995), 43.

In the period between 1991 and 1995 several political institutions were also created although some of these were temporary. At the beginning of 1990s, the Fund of State Property (or State Privatization Fund) was established by a special degree.¹⁹⁴ The primary duty of the Fund was to set out privatization program for 1992-1993 and its implementation. Another institution was *Goskominvest* (State Committee for Investments).¹⁹⁵ It was the executive body headed by the Prime Minister the primary purpose of which was to attract foreign investment to Kyrgyzstan. However, in terms of real mechanisms and institutions of market economy such as stock exchange, national labor market, capital markets and financial markets, Kyrgyzstan could not show much progress.

To conclude, the period between 1991-1995 was a period of deep economic crisis. As it can be seen from *Table 3.3* Kyrgyzstan had experienced severe reductions in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). GDP fell by almost 50 percent between 1991 and 1995. The country also suffered from a significant decline in production. During the first years of independence, Kyrgyzstan was heavily hit by the recession. Economy continuously declined in the subsequent years. Especially the year 1992 was the peak point of economic crisis. The hyperinflation reached 855,0 percent, the budget deficit rose up approximately 14 percent. In addition, the shocking effects of price liberalization worsened economic situation.

¹⁹⁴ Pomfret, *The Economies of Central Asia*, 113

¹⁹⁵ Akaev, *Kyrgyzstan on the Way to Progress and Democracy*, 58.

Table 3.3

Development of Important Economic Indicators, 1990-1995

Kyrgyzstan	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
GDP (index, 1989=100)	103,0	97,9	79,3	66,6	53.2	50.3
Inflation (%)	-	85,0	855,0	772,4	228.7	40.7
Budget deficit (% GDP)	-	-	-13,9	-7,1	-7.7	-11.5

Sources: UNICEF (2003). "Social Monitoring "Innocenti": Social Monitoring 2003; for budget deficit, National Report on Human Development (2001)

In this period wages also sharply declined in real terms. The currency shortage led to the significant delays in wage payments. The government tried to support the financially disadvantaged. It increased minimum wages and benefits several times. The fall in production and hyperinflation affected not only the wages and benefits, but also employment. Although the official rate of unemployment was negligible (0,1 percent in 1992 and 2,9 percent in 1995), reduction of working hours, involuntary leaves of absence and temporary layoffs increased. Therefore, the government's reaction to employment problem from the beginning had been passive form of regulating the labor market.

Financial and banking sectors were also transformed. The market now determined the interest rates and exchange rates freely.¹⁹⁶ With the help of the World Bank credits, banking system was slightly modified but still could not be adapted to the international standards of banking operations.¹⁹⁷ By 1995, in addition to the existing banks, there were 15 privately owned commercial banks. The government tried to reorganize the banking sector and improve its regulatory framework and legislative base.

¹⁹⁶ Anderson and Pomfret, *Consequences of Creating a Market Economy: Evidences from Household Surveys in Central Asia*, 12.

¹⁹⁷ Gleason, *Markets and Politics in Central Asia: Structural Reform and Political Change*, 72.

International financial institutions granted financial resources to realize the rehabilitation program and support institutional restructuring of economy. In fact, the IMF has been providing policy advice, technical assistance, and financial support to help Kyrgyzstan develop efficient market economy and accelerate integration into the global economy. In 1994, the IMF sponsored a SDR 88.8 or about US\$ 122.5 million enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) for Kyrgyzstan for the period 1994-1996.¹⁹⁸

After 1996, there were some improvements in the Kyrgyz economy despite the fact that the initial transitional crisis was certainly deeper than expected. It seemed that this was inevitable because transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy required certain radical economic reforms. Improvements in economic conditions depended on strategies and policies of economic reforms. Therefore, during the first years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan was confronted with economic crisis and selection of strategies for economic reforms. As was suggested earlier, in the first half of the 1990s, Kyrgyzstan adopted a Big Bang approach to economic transformation to market economy and realized basic reforms necessary for transition in a rapid fashion. The most common feature of Kyrgyzstan in first years of independence was a severe economic recession. Although it showed positive impulses, generally it was too sluggish. However, the economic backwardness of Kyrgyzstan and its agricultural economy created certain obstacles and difficulties in establishing a well functioning market economy. The foregoing analysis on the transition in the beginning of 1990s revealed that legacy of the past was indeed extremely important.

¹⁹⁸ <http://www.donors.kg/en/donors.imf>.

3.4 The Economy of Kyrgyzstan in 1995-2000

The economy of Kyrgyzstan began to recover in 1996 and 1997. Economic growth in real GDP (*see Table 3.4*) illustrates the impact of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and economic liberalization on economic growth.

Table 3.4
Economic growth in Real Gross Domestic Product in Kyrgyzstan, 1989-2000,
(percent)

1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	0
8	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	0
9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
8.0	3.0	-5.0	-19.0	-16.0	-20.1	-5.4	7.1	9.9	2.1	3.7	5.1

Source: Annual Report 2002 of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (London: Ventura Litno Ltd.)

Since the economy of Kyrgyzstan was relatively more liberalized, it was vulnerable to the economic developments from outside. The 1998 financial crises in Asia and Russia slowed the pace of economic growth and ensued financial collapse. Despite this, the economy of Kyrgyzstan displayed positive economic growth in the following years. Kyrgyzstan has managed to sustain positive growth since 1996. According to Alina Sagynbaeva and Marat Tazabekov, this growth resulted from two factors.¹⁹⁹ The first factor was related to direct loans. Foreign credits were given to Kyrgyzstan to show the support of the international community to the ongoing reforms in the country. International financial institutions as well donor countries totally borrowed \$1.57 billion in loans to Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan benefited most from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank assistance. For example, in

¹⁹⁹ Alina Sagynbaeva and Marat Tazabekov, "The Weak and Inefficient Agrarian Sector as a Mirror of the Kyrgyz Economy" in *Central Asia and Southern Caucasus Journal, Yearbook*, edited by Boris Rumer and Lau Sim Yee. Volume: 1, 2002. <http://www.spf-issykkul-forum.org/>.

March 1995, IMF released a tranche of \$21.3 million in loans. World Bank, in addition to a \$550 million loan for 1994-1995, promised a three-year loan of \$1.5 billion.²⁰⁰ “Over the period 1991-98, the actual amount of foreign aid received was US\$ 1.82 billion”.²⁰¹ Most of these loans (about 60 percent) were used to implement investment projects, while the balance was used to cover the budget deficit, balance of payments, support national currency and enhancement of foreign exchange rates.²⁰²

The second factor in the growth of Kyrgyzstan was the role of Kumtor gold mining enterprise. Kyrgyzstan’s big economic growth in 1997 can be explained by running of Kumtor gold mine, which is described as one of world’s largest gold fields. Indeed, Kumtor project invested in the economy of Kyrgyzstan \$500 million and resulted in the production of 20-25 tons of gold annually. Since two-third of shares of the Kumtor Operating Company are owned by the Kyrgyz Republic, much of the economic growth that originated in the Kumtor gold mine has added to increase in real GDP of Kyrgyzstan since then. The revenue from the gold mine constitutes a major income of Kyrgyz government and it was almost 40 per cent in 1999.²⁰³

Real GDP in Kyrgyzstan (*see Table 2.5*) illustrates the GDP of Kyrgyzstan from 1989 to 2000 and the cumulative impact that the transition has had upon the economy of Kyrgyzstan.

²⁰⁰ Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia’s New States: Independence, Foreign Policy and Regional Security* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996), 101.

²⁰¹ Askar Akaev, *Kyrgyzstan: An Economy in Transition* (Asia Pacific Press at the Australian National University, 2001), 81.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁰³ Gleason, *Market and Politics in Central Asia: Structural Reform and Political Change*, 72-73.

Table 3.5

Real Gross Domestic Product in Kyrgyzstan, 1989-2000

1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
100	103	97.9	79.3	66.6	53.2	50.3	53.9	59.2	60.5	62.7	65.9

Source: Annual Report 2002 of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (London: Ventura Litno Ltd.)

Kyrgyzstan suffered a sharp drop in the real output during the first half of the 1990's. Recovery of economy which started since 1995, led to a relative economic growth in 1996 and 1998. The level of this growth was 7.1 per cent in 1996 and 9.9 per cent in 1997. Economic growth in 1998 fell down to 2.1 per cent due to Asian and then Russian financial crises. This kind of sensitivity to external fluctuations shows that the macroeconomic conditions of Kyrgyzstan are still unsustainable. The Russian financial crash in 1998 devaluated the national currency of Kyrgyzstan to about half of its prior value.²⁰⁴ One of the reasons of unsustainable development of Kyrgyzstan is unfinished economic reform. In the following years, economic growth steadily increased and by 2000 reached 5.1 per cent. (*See Table 3.4*)

The large-scale contraction of industrial production led to a sharp decline in industrial production and change in structure of economy. The economic tendency of the previous years toward development of industry and industrial output, now, turned out to be agricultural. For example, 1996 statistical data shows that agricultural production consisted of 46.2 per cent of GDP while industry consisted only 11.1 per cent of GDP.²⁰⁵ With the Kumtor gold mine site being put into operation, the level of industrial output increased and reached 21.7 percent of GDP by 1999. Nonetheless, there were attempts to revitalize the manufacturing sector. It seemed that there

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 70.

²⁰⁵ See National Report on Human Development 2001: the Kyrgyz Republic, UNDP, 64.

should be a shift in industrial output. Now, food-processing, agricultural production processing, light and textile industry were regarded as major industrial sectors. In that sense energy sector and the mining industry were considered to be the country's great potentials. The reason why they were important was that they could generate export commodities.

However, in general agricultural sector became dominant in the Kyrgyz economy. (See Table 3.6) It seems that Kyrgyzstan have clear advantages in agriculture, which is planned to be used. In the following years agriculture is expected to continue to dominate the economy of the country.

Table 3.6
Changes in the Structure of Production and Employment (%)

	GDP In current prices				Employment		
	1991	1995	1998	1999	1990	1995	2000
Agriculture	37	44	39	41	33	46	53
Industry and Construction	35	19	23	26	28	16	11
Services	28	37	38	33	39	38	36

Sources: Sodrzhestvo nezavisimyykh gosudarstv (kratkii spravochnik predvaritel'nykh statisticheskikh itogov, 2000), Moscow, 2001 quoted in Stanislav Zhukov, Central Asia: Development Under Conditions of Globalization in Central Asia: A Gathering Storm edited by Boris Rumer, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2002, p.342

Despite such changes and improvements, however, in Kyrgyzstan the proportion of the population living below the poverty line is still a major problem. In 1993, the ratio was 45.4 percent. By 1999, this had increased to 55.3 per cent. (See Table 3.7) Thus, it is obvious that the poverty rate in Kyrgyzstan has further increased. The increase in poverty is a result of low-income levels of the population, which continuously fell down with the breakup of the Soviet Union and economic

crisis. Today, the growth of poverty among the population is one of the biggest problems, leading to changes in household economies.²⁰⁶

Table 3.7

The poverty rate in Kyrgyzstan based on incomes (per cent of the population) 1993-2000

1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
45.4	-	57.3	43.5	42.9	54.9	55.3	52.0

Source: National Report on Human Development 2001: the Kyrgyz Republic. UNDP, p.61

The failure of political leadership to transform economy increased general public discontent. In Bishkek and other cities several protests in considerable number took place in 1999.²⁰⁷ Protesters required improvement of their social conditions, increase in wage and safety nets as well timely payment of salaries. Most of the protesters represented economically vulnerable groups such as pensioners and teachers. In general, a steady regression in economy caused political and social protests represented threats to the existing political elite.

Alongside with the increase in poverty rate, Kyrgystan experienced increase in income inequality. (See Table 3.8) Such situation is associated not only with Kyrgyzstan, but in all countries in transition from planned economy to market economy. A Gini coefficient based on income is an indicator of measurement of inequality. The closer the coefficient to 0, the more equality, and the closer it is to 1, the more inequality. The situation drastically changed in negative terms over the last decade, as Kyrgyzstan experienced a decline in Gini coefficient. According to John

²⁰⁶ See Jude Howell, "Poverty and Transition in Kyrgyzstan: How Some Households Cope", *Central Asian Survey* 15 (1) 1996: 59-73.

²⁰⁷ Eugene Huskey, "An Economy of Authoritarianism? Askar Akaev and Presidential Leadership in Kyrgyzstan" in *Power and Change in Central Asia* edited by Sally N. Cummings (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), 81-82

Glenn, a more tangible measure of income inequality is to compare the lowest and the highest deciles by percentage share of income/consumption. Here the result is again disappointing. In 1997, income deciles ratio for Kyrgyzstan is as follows: the richest 10 percent of Kyrgyz population received 31.7 percent of national income, whereas the poorest 10 percent received 2.7 per cent of the national income.²⁰⁸ Therefore, the current social and economic situation of Kyrgyzstan is characterized by social stratification in the society.

Table 3.8
Changes in inequality- Gini coefficients (incomes) for Kyrgyzstan

	1986	1993	1997
Kyrgyzstan	0.259	0.353	0.47

Source: Glenn, John (2003) *The Economic Transition in Central Asia: Implications for Democracy*. Democratization, vol.10 No.3 Autumn 2003, p. 132

Privatization of the largest enterprises that were planned to be completed in the second half of 1990's also did not take place. "By the end of 1998, 7,500 out of approximately 10,000 state-owned enterprises in Kyrgyzstan (excluding the agricultural sector) had been privatized".²⁰⁹ Large state enterprises like defense industry plants and the most important assets like Kyrgyz Telecom, Kyrgyz Energo, Kyrgyzstan Airlines, Kyrgyz Gaz did not undergo this process. Recently, international financial institutions also have had pressure on government so that it quickly starts privatization of large state assets and liberalize domestic prices (for example, in energy sector). One of the explanations of such delay in privatization of

²⁰⁸ John Glenn, "The Economic Transition in Central Asia: Implications for Democracy", *Democratization*, vol.10 No.3 Autumn 2003, 133.

²⁰⁹ Akaev, *Kyrgyzstan: An Economy in Transition*, 105.

large-scale enterprises is the fear of Kyrgyz government about the potentially disruptive consequences for the population of the country.²¹⁰

Nonetheless, Kyrgyzstan continues institutional reform of economy. The country still suffers from unfinished economic reforms. Reformation of state structure has not been shaped yet. The number of public employees was reduced several times. The number of state structures was reduced sharply, but later on equal number of new employees was hired. Newly emerged financial markets were unable to function satisfactorily. There were also other problems like inefficient and inadequate space for entrepreneurship and development of small and middle enterprises. Here, we should also mention underdevelopment of tax laws and high rates of taxes. For example, the government in its search for extra incomes has continuously changed excise duties and tax rates. This fact has also affected foreign investment climate. The government attempts to attract foreign investments by creating conducive conditions for investors, which do not provide logical consequences.

Corruption level increased and became one of the most severe problems of economic transition. "Corruption and side-payment were the natural outgrowth of this new rent-seeking system."²¹¹ For example, in order to cover unpaid expenditures, the state bureaucracy found other sources of income by extraordinary fees and inspections. In addition, the underdevelopment of legislative system regarding market economy led to vulnerability in interpreting legislature. "Underpaid bureaucrats are exploiting unrealistic legislature and excessive state power to extort

²¹⁰ Gleason, *Market and Politics in Central Asia: Structural Reform and Political Change*, 72.

²¹¹ Oleg Havrylyshyn and John Odling-Smee, "Political Economy of Stalled Reforms", *Finance and Development*, A Quarterly Magazine of the IMF, September 2000, Volume 37, Number 3. <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2000/09/havrylys/htm>.

money from private individuals and enterprises”.²¹² It can be argued that rent-seeking bureaucracy impedes the development of market economy. Especially, issues such as privatization and development of business in Kyrgyzstan are the areas of bribery and rent seeking. As a result, for most of enterprises there is a need for political protection in order to operate in the market.

In the recent years, Kyrgyzstan tries to establish new economic activities in the field of tourism, because of the outstanding natural beauty of the country waiting to be discovered. In order to develop this sector, Kyrgyzstan needs infrastructure such as transportation and hotels. Several projects such as Osh-Bishkek highway and rehabilitation of the Manas Airport in Bishkek are developed.

In 1998, Kyrgyzstan fulfilled the requirements of World Trade Organization (WTO) and was accepted as a member state. This membership reflected the country’s liberal trade regime and the ability to buy and sell cheap products all over the world. Thus, after joining the WTO, Kyrgyzstan started to enjoy certain advantages in foreign trade. Contrary to the expectations, however, Kyrgyzstan faced isolation from its neighbors, since it is the only member state in Central Asia.²¹³ Some countries of the former Soviet Union introduced several measures against Kyrgyz goods such as quotas, export duties and increased transit fees in order to decrease competitiveness of goods and minimize advantages presented by WTO.

To conclude, Kyrgyzstan opted for “shock therapy”, in order to introduce market economy quickly. The main economic results of the first decade of independent development have proven to be a steady regression. A decline in GDP,

²¹² See Anders Aslund, “Sizing up the Central Asian Economies”, *Journal of International Affairs*, Spring-2003, vol. 56, no. 2: 80.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 85.

high unemployment, hyperinflation, and other economic hardship are some of the negative impacts of transition. It is worth mentioning that Kyrgyzstan experienced negative effects of transition to a very large extent.

Prior to independence, Kyrgyzstan was developing at faster pace than in recent years. One can observe a steady decline in GDP. Decline in production, which was precipitated by the dissolution of the USSR, occurred as a result of both trade dislocation within the former Soviet Union, and shocks of economic liberalization.

Kyrgyzstan achieved rapid economic reform and macroeconomic stabilization by 1996. Majority of enterprises had been already transferred to private hands. Most former defense related plants, which were efficient in the Soviet economy, are not expected to constitute future industrial base of Kyrgyzstan. Decline in production led to a sharp decline in the living standards of the Kyrgyz people. By the mid-1990's, approximately 57 percent of the population lived below the official poverty line. (*See Table 3.7*)

In terms of economic output, Kyrgyzstan has failed to achieve the output level of 1989. What is most striking is the devastation of the economy in 1995, when the GDP was cut to the half of the 1989 level. Specifically, the output in 2000 was only 65.9 percent of that in 1989. (*See Table 3.5*) It is assumed that an average of 3 to 4 per cent of economic growth per year is needed in the following two decades to regain the level of development registered in 1990.

The development of private enterprises and entrepreneurship have not generated a new economic elite, at least there are no attempts from them to define state politics and rivalry for power. The main reason is that

...like many of the economic elites in post-Soviet lands, businessmen in Kyrgyzstan are less interested in displacing current

political class or influencing economic policy than in maintaining a protected space within which they can pursue rent-seeking behavior.²¹⁴

Therefore, it seems that economic elite would not emerge unless the political situations changes.

Large-scale international assistance provided Kyrgyzstan with resources to carry out reforms. From the earliest days of the transition, international community and financial institutions have been providing policy advice, technical assistance and financial support. The main purpose of this assistance was to help to develop efficient market economy and integrate Kyrgyzstan into the global economy. However, it must be emphasized that Kyrgyzstan has accumulated a great amount of foreign debts. In a short period of time, Kyrgyzstan's external debt increased from zero to 136 percent of GDP and total external debts reached 1.608 billion \$US.²¹⁵ Meanwhile, Kyrgyzstan has few sources of revenue to pay back debts. Such situation has to lead a country recognize the inability to pay its external debts and to find compromise with creditors by restructuring these debts, the majority of which are to the IMF, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Kyrgyzstan has counted on an influx of large-scale foreign direct investments, but except for Kumtor Operating Company, it did not succeed in attracting any kind of significant foreign direct investment. At the same time Kyrgyzstan failed to attract domestic financial resources for reinvestment. By now it is unclear how Kyrgyzstan will sustain positive economic growth. Therefore, there is a need for urgent measures in solving economic problems and providing future sustainable development.

²¹⁴ Huskey, "An Economy of Authoritarianism", 76.

²¹⁵ See Bulletin of the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic. No.1 (61) 2001, Bishkek, 70-71.

Thus, economic failure of Kyrgyzstan led to slowing down or abandonment political reforms towards democratization. The short run economic costs of economic transition also created serious political and economic problems. Severe decline in economy made the Kyrgyz politicians, which were already predisposed to authoritarianism, to turn further to authoritarian rule. This allowed them to provide order and stability, as well as secure their offices. We can conclude that an authoritarian response to economic crises was evidenced in Kyrgyzstan.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICAL FACTORS

Political factors are twofold: political elite and political culture. The role of political elite is important since elites shaped the course of political and economic development in Kyrgyzstan to a large extent. It should be mentioned that until recently the elite theory was thought to be inherently conservative, anti-democratic and simplistic.²¹⁶ Most of the political developments in the world were explained by other theories while the role of the elite in political system was largely ignored. The concept of elite was generally used in a pejorative way. However, the historical events in the final two decades of the twentieth century forced a serious reconsideration of the elite theory. Three major developments in the world politics revived interest in this theory: economic advance of Asian countries, elite-centered transformation in Eastern European countries at the end of 1980s and elite-driven demise of the Soviet Union, and the “third wave” of transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes.

²¹⁶ See John Higley and Jan Pakulski, “Elites Theory versus Marxism: Twentieth Century’s Verdict” in *Elites after State Socialism: Theories and Analysis* ed. John Higley and Gyorgy Lonyel (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000).

Second, there is undemocratic political culture. On the one side, state institutions in form and shape look democratic. On the other side, the political culture of people who must direct these democratic institutions has strong imprints of Soviet political culture. For the last forty years the notion of political culture has been developed and used by scholars such as Gabriel A. Almond, Sidney Verba and Larry Diamond. In their famous study the *Civic Culture*, Almond and Verba use political culture as a major variable in analyzing political systems. Theory of political culture helped to overcome limited individual analysis in political research. Thus it gave an opportunity to explain phenomena as the role of state institutions, which have the same functions and roles in different countries. Almond and Verba defined political culture as “the specifically political orientations-attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system”²¹⁷. Political culture is based on value and belief. Almond, for instance, asserts that general culture is composed of psychological inclinations of a society’s members against social objects, whereas political culture is a system of inclinations against political action or political objects.²¹⁸ As such political culture is based on the images of people about politics, political power and political system realized through interaction with the state. Therefore, political culture reflects only the most stable and distinctive characteristics of human action that cannot be impetuously changed under the influence of a situation or fluctuation of moods.²¹⁹ Larry Diamond

²¹⁷ Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963; fourth printing, 1972), 13

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14-15

underlines a number of sources that influence and shape political culture such as history, existing social structure, political institutions, and political socialization.²²⁰

According to some political scientists political culture is “neither fixed once and for all, nor completely malleable. It changes in response to historical events and personal experiences”.²²¹ As Larry Diamond states “democratic culture is certainly not a precondition for initiation of democracy, but that process inevitably begins with shifts in the outlook, beliefs, and strategies of key elites, and eventually spreads to encompass the thinking of a wider circle of elites and ultimately the values and perceptions of the citizenry at large”.²²²

In this part we study the political factors that impede development of democracy is analyzed. In the first section political developments between 1990 and 2000 are evaluated. Finally, political elites, political culture and tribalism in Kyrgyzstan are analyzed as two basic political factors which impede transition to democracy.

4.1 Building a New Political Order 1990-1993

As it was mentioned earlier, in considering the political development of Kyrgyzstan the period of *perestroika* and *glasnost* have had a significant impact. In 1985 soon after Gorbachev came to power, the First Secretary of Kyrgyz Communist Party, Turdakun Usubaliev resigned. There were two reasons behind this resignation. First of all, he was a member of the all guards of the neo patrimonial system

²²⁰ Larry Diamond, “Causes and Effects” in *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*, ed. Larry Diamond (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), 423

²²¹ Bruce Parrott, “Perspectives on Postcommunist Democratization” in *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 22.

²²² Diamond, “Causes and Effects”, 423.

developed during the Brezhnev era, “in which the relative material well-being of the population was guaranteed by the top leadership in return for general political acquiescence and loyalty”.²²³ Secondly, Usubaliev became a target of anti corruption campaign and party purges issued against Central Asian party leaders in the early 1980s.²²⁴ So, he was replaced by his successor Absamat Masaliev. The ongoing political reforms in Soviet Union under the leadership of the CPSU resulted in real change in the political life of Kyrgyzstan. Although political reforms were opposed by some Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan officials, democratization process encouraged people to participate actively in politics. By 1989 there were many signs of political mobilization. The local intelligentsia formed a number of informal groups and associations. The political reforms had also necessitated reform in state institutions. The abolition of the 6th Article of the USSR Constitution, which introduced the separation of the Communist Party from the government, resulted in the changes of political environment.²²⁵ The Communist Party leadership was no longer the basic political institution of administration. The leader of the KCP, Masaliev, in order to ensure political power was elected to the post of Chairman of Supreme Soviet. The idea of executive presidency, in which institute of presidency “combined the functions of a Head of State with those of a Chief Executive”²²⁶, was initiated and proposed by Gorbachev, who was soon elected as the first President of the USSR. The wind of change in political structure of Soviet Union also affected the union republics.

²²³ Mehrdad Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia*, 42

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

²²⁵ Miller, *Michail Gorbachev and the End of Soviet Power*, 121

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 121-122

Following the example of Gorbachev, at a regular session of the Kyrgyz Supreme Soviet in October 1990, the issue of electing the President was raised. Initially, there were three candidates to the post: Absamat Masaliev (The First Secretary of the KCP), Apas Jumagulov (the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Kyrgyz SSR) and Jumgalbek Amanbaev (the First Secretary of Issyk-Kul Regional Committee of KCP).²²⁷ It was thought that Masaliev would easily win the elections. However, he was discredited by the serious ethnic conflict in the Osh region that took place earlier in June 1990.²²⁸ Masaliev failed to collect required number of votes. In accordance with the republican law on presidency, in the event that candidates in the first round could collect the required amount of votes, all of them would be eliminated as candidates and new candidates had to be identified. Among the candidates proposed was Askar Akaev, the President of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences. After a process of secret balloting, Askar Akaev was elected as the President of Kyrgyzstan. However, this election resulted in a period of dual power. Both Akaev and Masaliev claimed political supremacy. The First Secretary of Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan still remained a stronger figure. His authority rested on the institutional support of party-state bureaucracy while the President's authority rested "on the flimsier pillars of parliamentary and public support."²²⁹

It was thought that Akaev inspired many people because he did not have strong political ties with the Communist Party, although he was a part of *nomenklatura* (being a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU). Moreover, the post of President of Academy of Sciences was considered to be a *nomenklatura*

²²⁷ Sherimkulov, *Parlament Nezavisimogo Kyrgyzstana* (Parliament of Independent Kyrgyzstan), 272-273.

²²⁸ Ibid., 275-280.

²²⁹ Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: The Fate of Political Liberalization", 253

position of the Communist Party and “was always restricted to trusted party members”.²³⁰ Nevertheless, it was thought that he would prevent communist reaction in the country and be independent in his decisions. Akaev was quickly recognized as a promoter of political and economic reforms.

Askar Akaev in his early months as the President of newly independent Kyrgyzstan put much emphasis on the need of developing a liberal democracy, based on civil society and a market economy.²³¹ The first years of independence witnessed the emergence of embryonic civil society with a free press, which proved to be the most open and critical in Central Asia. In 1991 Akaev signed the law on social organizations, which allowed the political parties and movements to operate. Having the necessary legal framework, political parties began to develop, although, as in much of the former Soviet Union, subject to constant fragmentation. These parties were grouped around the leaders who were prominent in specific regions of the country. The first independent political party in Kyrgyzstan was the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (DMK). Initially, the DMK leaders like Topchubek Turgunaliyev focused on protesting the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, the DMK provided the impetus for new political associations, paving the way, as it was mentioned earlier, for the formation of several other political parties such as: *Asaba*, *Erkin Kyrgyzstan*, *Ata-Meken*, and the *Social Democratic Party*. As it was mentioned before, parties tended to have specific orientations. For instance, in the case of *Asaba* and *Erkin Kyrgyzstan*, promoting national values was important and these two groups were formed by prominent political figures. By February 1993, the Justice Ministry registered 15 political parties and movements. In addition, several

²³⁰ Martha Brill Olcott, “Emerging Political Elite” in *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and its Borderlands*, ed. by Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1994), 47

²³¹ Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy*, 24.

cultural and national centers for ethnic minorities like the Slavic, German and Turkic Unions were formed. These groups could be classified as somewhere between non-governmental organizations and political parties. The common aim of these groups was to revive national traditions and languages and protect minority rights.

During the August 1991 coup, Akaev proved his loyalty to democratic principles and opposed communist reaction, while the political leadership of CPK actively supported “emergency committee”. CPK was banned and its property was nationalized since it endangered sovereignty, security and territorial unity of the Kyrgyzstan.²³² In addition, President issued a decree prohibiting party involvement in state and military bodies. However, at the end of 1992, it was reemerged with new name-Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan. It is worth to underline that there was little change in its objectives and program. It was somehow the continuation of old Communist party Kyrgyzstan that promoted “law-governed democratic state on genuinely socialist principles with state-regulated economy”.²³³

By the end of 1991 Akaev was elected as the President of Kyrgyzstan at a nation-wide election and received 95 percent of the votes. It must, however, be pointed out that there were no other candidates. In this period of time, it was difficult for Akaev to work with the old Soviet constitution. The latest parliamentary elections had been held in February 1990. Such factors slowed down the emergence of a new democratic political order. To avoid continuous confrontation with the *Jogorku Kenesh* (the Parliament), which was mostly dominated by ex- communist party members, the President sought the adoption of a new constitution, which would create a smaller, but more professional Parliament, which meant optimal number of

²³² Sherimkulov, *Parlament Nezavisimogo Kyrgyzstana* (Parliament of Independent Kyrgyzstan), 251

²³³ SWB, SU/1716, B/4, 16 June 1993.

deputies that would be able to elaborate quickly legislative base for reforms during transition period.²³⁴ The document, which was eventually approved on 5 May 1993, provided with a semi-presidential (mixed) form of government, with legislative power vested in a 105-seat bicameral Jogorku Kenesh. It was also decided that parliamentary elections would be held by 1995. However, the President retained considerable authority, having the power to appoint the Prime Minister, initiate legislation and dissolve Parliament.

4.2 The New Constitution and Political Developments until 1995

There were three drafts of the new constitution, one prepared by the President and other two prepared by social organizations.²³⁵ Among them the first draft prepared by President and government was seen as the most preferable by Commission and working group on developing the draft of the new Constitution.²³⁶ Virtually, it had placed all power in the Parliament. This draft was severely criticized by Akaev, because according to him it ignored the realities of post-independence period when strong executive was necessary to “hold the country together and push through reform”.²³⁷ Also, some opponents of the new constitution criticized the proposal of bicameral Parliament as unnecessary, since Kyrgyzstan did not have a federal structure. Moreover, there was a debate over the issue of political power in general and the relationship between President and Parliament in particular. There were some proposals on that issue. Some argued for a powerful executive

²³⁴ Sherimkulov, *Parlament Nezavisimogo Kyrgyzstana* (Parliament of Independent Kyrgyzstan) 360

²³⁵ John Anderson, “Constitutional Development in Central Asia”; *Central Asian Survey* (1997), 16 (3), 303

²³⁶ Sherimkulov, *Parlament Nezavisimogo Kyrgyzstana* (Parliament of Independent Kyrgyzstan), 354-355, 374

²³⁷ Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy*, 25.

presidency; others claimed a strong Parliament; while other contributors expressed concern over much power being vested in central political structure and proposed to give greater power to local administration. The final draft reflected a relative balance of power.

A new constitution was proclaimed on 5 May 1993. According to its general provisions, the Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzstan) is a sovereign, unitary, and democratic republic founded on the principle of law, and secular government. All state power belongs to the people, who exercise this power through the state bodies on the basis of the constitution and laws of the republic.²³⁸ The people may decide matters of legislation and other issues pertaining to the state by referendum. The President of the republic, the deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh*, and representatives of local administrative bodies are all elected directly by the people.²³⁹

The 1993 constitution also defined the duties and scope of the presidential rule. According to Article 42, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic is the head of state and represents Kyrgyzstan both within the country and internationally. Any citizen of the republic between the ages of 35 and 65, who has a fluent command of the state language, may stand for election. The President's term of office is 5 years; he/she may not serve more than two consecutive terms. The President is directly elected by the people.²⁴⁰

The President appoints and dismisses (subject to approval by the legislature) the Prime Minister; the Prime Minister appoints other members of government, as well as heads of administrative offices and other leading state post; presents draft

²³⁸ Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic (Bishkek, 1996), Articles 3, 4.

²³⁹ Ibid., Articles 3,4.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., Article 43.

legislation to the *Jogorku Kenesh*, may call referendum on issues of state, may dissolve the legislature and call new elections.²⁴¹

In terms of political structures, a certain provision was made for future election of the Parliament. According to this, *Jogorku Kenesh* is the supreme legislative power with 105-members and two chambers²⁴²: the 35-member Legislative Assembly (Lower Chamber), which is a permanent chamber, and the 70-member People's Assembly (Upper Chamber), which sits twice yearly and represents regional interests.²⁴³

The government of the Kyrgyz Republic is the highest organ of executive power in Kyrgyzstan.²⁴⁴ The President appoints the members of the government, however, the President's appointment of the Prime Minister depends upon approval by the *Jogorku Kenesh*.²⁴⁵

The judicial system comprises the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, the Higher Court of Arbitration and regional courts. Judges of the Constitutional Court are appointed by the *Jogorku Kenesh*, on the recommendation of the President, for a term of 15 years, while the *Jogorku Kenesh* on the recommendation of the President appoints the members of the Supreme Court and the Higher Court of Arbitration for 10 years.²⁴⁶

After the adoption of the new constitution, Akaev described it as "a major step forward in the democratic development of Kyrgyzstan and rejected the view that

²⁴¹ Ibid., Article 46.

²⁴² Ibid., Article 54.

²⁴³ Ibid., Article 62.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., Article 70..

²⁴⁵ Ibid., Article 71.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., Articles 80.

the republic was not ready for democracy”.²⁴⁷ However, the tensions between the Parliament and the executive remained. The legislative, which was dominated by communist *nomenclatura*, accused the government of being unable to stop the ongoing economic decline and corruption. In December 1993 the Parliament initiated a vote of no-confidence that led to the dismissal of the government. In January 1994 Apas Jumagulov, the last Soviet era Prime Minister and one of the candidates to the post of President in 1990, was appointed as the Prime Minister. Another important political figure, who was influential in the first years of independence, was Feliks Kulov, deputy head of Bishkek regional department of internal affairs. Kulov became prominent due to his ability to prevent mass disorder in Bishkek during the Osh ethnic conflict and the failed coup in August 1991 when he strongly supported Akaev. He was appointed as Akaev’s vice-president in 1991. However, the abolishment of the post of vice-presidency in the new constitutional order led to his appointment as governor of Chuy region.

The confrontation between the Parliament and the executive, especially the continuous dispute on the new law about the election of deputies resulted in a referendum. Akaev arranged a referendum for 30 January 1994, in which 96 % of the voters expressed their confidence in the President, and supported his remaining in office until the end of his given term (scheduled, at that time, to expire in late 1996). The support of the people to the President on that referendum gave Akaev a mandate to continue his reform policies. It also showed the support given to the President in his conflict with the Parliament. Therefore, by arguing that the Parliament was quick enough to adopt laws for further economic reforms, Akaev initiated a campaign of

²⁴⁷ Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia’s Island of Democracy*, 27.

self-dissolution of the Parliament and called for another referendum on the creation of a two-chamber Parliament. The confrontation reached its peak in August 1994. 105 of the 323 deputies, many of them government officials, regional and local leaders appointed by the President “signed a letter accusing parliamentary leaders of sabotaging reform and called for a referendum on the creation of a new two chamber Parliament.”²⁴⁸ As the parliamentary sessions turned into an arena for settling political and private disputes, it was incapable of passing serious laws that would stand up to legal scrutiny. Furthermore, the adoption of decrees was continuously postponed. Other members of the Parliament supported the boycott of deputies. When the majority of the deputies (168 of 323) refused to participate in one of sessions in September 1994, Akaev dissolved the Parliament.

Following the dissolution of Parliament, another referendum was held on 22 October 1994 for two proposals of constitutional amendments. According to the first amendment, whenever the authorities wanted to make any changes to the Kyrgyz constitution and laws of the republic as well as other important decisions affecting the country’s life, a referendum would be held.²⁴⁹ The second amendment was related to the transformation of *Jogorku Kenesh* into a bicameral Parliament with a 70-member People’s Assembly; the upper chamber, to represent regional interests, and a 35-member lower chamber, the Legislative Assembly, to represent the population as a whole.²⁵⁰

In December 1994, President Akaev evaluating the place of democracy in Central Asia argued that in the absence of a mature civil society and stable economy,

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 28.

²⁴⁹ SWB, SU/2110, G2, 26 September, 1994.

²⁵⁰ FBIS-SOV-95-040 1 March, 1995, p.63.

the region would be not ready for full parliamentary systems in Western style.

According to John Anderson,

All of these things were lacking in Kyrgyzstan where the advocates of reform had to battle against strongly entrenched group interests based upon the old party system and traditional clan structures, where corruption was rife, and where the opposition was inclined to a destructive criticism that added little to political life. Above all the state remained weak and unable to tackle the serious and mounting problems facing the country.²⁵¹

As a result Akaev further argued that in such an atmosphere the transition period would naturally take a longer period of time than it was originally anticipated. What was suggested is “an era of proto-democracy during which all spheres of public life would be subject to an evolutionary process of democratization.”²⁵² It was further stated by Akaev that this period of proto-democracy required the shifting of balance of power in the direction of President.

4.3 Political Developments between 1995-2000

The general elections to the *Jogorku Kenesh* were held on 5 February 1995. In the first round of voting only 16 deputies were elected, since the new electoral system proposed proportional majoritarian elections. Therefore, second and in some districts third elections were required. By May 1995 the Parliament was ready to perform its duties. The result of the elections showed that people casted their votes for “well-known figures, irrespective of their political bias, most of them being the pride of the regions, where they were born, where they became candidates and where they were supported as fellow countrymen, not as representative of political

²⁵¹ Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy*, 49

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 49.

parties”.²⁵³ It was assumed that the new electoral system “favored the old elites, regional bosses and criminal elements”.²⁵⁴

The 1995 parliamentary elections were the first multi-party parliamentary elections since independence. All political parties registered in Kyrgyzstan participated in the elections; actually, 12 political parties nominated candidates to the Parliament²⁵⁵, several of who won seat in the new Parliament. However, none of the 12 political parties participated in elections could form the majority in Parliament.²⁵⁶ Deputies of the Parliament were elected from 105 single-person constituencies for a five-year term. Some observers asserted that unlike the previous parliaments, the 1995 *Jogorku Kenesh* was dominated by government officials (central, regional, local i.e. bureaucrats), businessmen and intelligentsia.²⁵⁷ However, “noting that three representatives of the Party of Communist of Kyrgyzstan have joined Parliament, local politicians state that there are many more ‘unofficial’ communists in it”.²⁵⁸

The elections to the newly established Parliament did not result in the emergence of active political parties and deputies. Most of the political parties were newly organized and in the atmosphere of the general ideological and political vacuum brought about by dissolution, they had no clear agenda and/or ideological orientation. Political parties showed little sign of forming a powerful bloc or could unify their activities. “More than one organization could nominate a single candidate,

²⁵³ This was a statement made by Head of the Kyrgyz government’s Information and Analytical Service Aziz Ibraimov to INTERFAX. FBIS-SOV-95-026, 8 February, 1995.

²⁵⁴ Anderson, “Constitutional Development in Central Asia”, 315

²⁵⁵ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Report on the Parliamentary Election in Kyrgyzstan: February 5, 1995, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (Prepared by the Staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe: April 1995), 8.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁵⁷ *Ata Meken*- 2 seats, *Erkin Kyrgyzstan*- 2 seats, Social Democrats-3 seats, Communists-2 seats, Party of People’s Unity-2 seats, and Agrarian Party-1 seat. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Report on the Parliamentary Election in Kyrgyzstan: February 5, 1995, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 11

²⁵⁸ FBIS-SOV-95-040, 1 March 1995, 63

and party platforms and affiliations {were} weak, so there {was} no reason to assume that deputies from any one party/group {would} act as unified bloc”.²⁵⁹ In addition, most of the elected deputies did not claim any party affiliation, which made it more difficult for political parties to develop. In several cases, political parties themselves reflected the socio-political conditions in the country. For example, some parties were associated with certain regions, from which they were supported. As the leader of the *Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan*, Zhypar Zheksheev stated the *Republican People’s Party* was connected to the region of Talas, and *Asaba* was connected to Osh and Djalal-Abad Oblasts.²⁶⁰ During elections, party programs had a secondary priority, whereas the membership of party leaders to a certain clan or tribe had a high priority.²⁶¹ The surface survey of political parties in Kyrgyzstan showed that most of the political parties were leader-oriented, while leaders were mostly dependent on certain region or regions of the country from which they had political support and were usually elected.²⁶²

One of the reasons of the unsuccessful performance by political parties in the 1995 parliamentary elections was that the election law at the time did not correspond either to the specific characteristics of Kyrgyzstan or to the mentality of its people.²⁶³ In other words, the existing law was an impediment to the development of political parties. After the introduction of a bi-cameral Parliament as mandated by the results

²⁵⁹ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Report on the Parliamentary Election in Kyrgyzstan: February 5, 1995, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 12.

²⁶⁰ 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), 96-108. www.hf-fac.uib.no/smi/paj/Hvoslef.html

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 96-108

²⁶² From our research on parliamentary political elites in Kyrgyzstan, there are clear evidences of such situation. For example, leader of Ata Meken party Omurbek Tekebaev was elected from his place of origin, and leader of Kairan El Party Dooronbek Sadyrbaev was supported by his fellow countrymen. Especially in the latter case, other party nominees failed in elections.

²⁶³ FBIS-SOV-94-040, 1 March 1995, 63

of the referendum in October 1994, election constituencies were organized on the basis of single-person constituency based on a majoritarian electoral system. The results of the 1995 parliamentary elections showed that most of the elected deputies were “well-known figures” and were elected from regions where they were born or originated. Political parties were weak to compete with them in single-person constituencies.

In its earlier period the new *Jogorku Kenesh* spent much time on disputing the relative powers and jurisdiction of each chamber, something unforeseen in the 1993 constitution, which had been drafted in terms of a single-chamber Parliament.²⁶⁴ The deputies could not agree on their duties and prerogatives because most of the time discussions in the newly elected Parliament were around the scope of legislative duties between two Chambers. The persistent failure of Parliament proved its weakness.

The President’s supporters and some deputies started a campaign for a referendum to extend his term of office until 2001, as had recently occurred in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.²⁶⁵ Although they could collect 1.2 million signatures, this was rejected by the legislature. Instead, a presidential election was scheduled for 23 December 1995, in which Akaev sought renewal of his mandate. The election was contested by Akaev, Absamat Masaliyev (who had recently being reinstated as leader of the KCP) and Medetkan Sherimkulov, former speaker of Parliament. The results provided, as expected, a victory for President Akaev, with 71.6 percent of the votes cast with a participation rate of 86.2 percent.²⁶⁶ Yet in some areas, notably

²⁶⁴ Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia’s Island of Democracy*, 53

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 53

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 54

Masaliyev's home region of Osh, Akaev received as little as 50.0 percent of the votes cast, with 46.5 percent going to Masaliyev.²⁶⁷

Akaev was elected to be the head of state for the second term. Faced with a highly unstable political situation, he proposed another referendum for a further extension of presidential powers. On the referendum the issues such as the power of president to appoint and dismiss members of government (with approval of Parliament), to appoint judges of all levels and to make other key appointments were included. The referendum was held on 10 February 1996, and 94.3 percent of those participating voted in favor of these constitutional amendments that greatly increased president's formal powers.²⁶⁸

Following the referendum on February 1996, President Akaev was criticized for moving Kyrgyzstan away from the path of democratization and true reform. The growing pressure on independent mass media and opposition leaders was seen as a new tendency toward dictatorship. For example, a severe sentence was imposed on an opposition leader, Topchubek Turgunaliyev and dissident journalists were harassed, including the editors of *Res.Publika*, who were found guilty of libel against the chairman of the state gold enterprise Kyrgyzaltyn, in 1997.²⁶⁹ In addition the Kyrgyz-language paper, *Asaba*, was evicted from its offices in mid-1998 for the alleged infringement of tax regulations. The *Jogorku Kenesh* approved legislation that imposed reporting restrictions on the media in November 1997. President Akaev initially vetoed the law, but the deputies, many with business and private interests,

²⁶⁷ *East Europe, Russia and Central Asia*, First Edition (Europe Publications, Taylor and Francis Group, 2000), 318

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 318.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 318.

insisted on and passing a new Criminal Code, which made newspapers liable to criminal (not civil) prosecution for slander or libel.

Thus, both the Kyrgyz language paper *Asaba* and the respected *Vechernii Bishkek* were subjected to pressures from the tax authorities, although their real offense appeared, to many observers, to be their unwillingness to succumb to political pressure.²⁷⁰

These pressures made it harder for political parties and social organizations with a more critical stance to gain legal recognition. The emergence of a strong multi-party democracy did not occur. Political parties failed to mobilize substantial sections of societies. In addition, with the exception of the Party of Communist of Kyrgyzstan, which had strong party organization established during Soviet era, political parties could not develop party organizations in the regions. Often they were based on strong people, regional patronage networks and tribalism.

Development of political parties was blocked for several reasons. First of all, the Kyrgyz politics had and still continues to pursue non-participatory politics. According to the survey conducted by Social Research Center of the National Academy with the support of the Conrad Adenauer Fund of Germany, most of the Kyrgyz people preferred to support the ideas of political parties in a very limited sense, and small number of people participated in the activities of parties.²⁷¹ Thus, it was indicated that level of political party activity on the part of population was insufficient. Some scholars argued that political parties have not yet become a serious political force in the republic since none of them reflected the interests of definite social group.²⁷² Second reason is related to the voting behavior of the

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 318.

²⁷¹ Kyrgyzstan Chronicle, 12-18 March 1997, p.4.

²⁷² Ploskih et al., 292

Kyrgyz. Since the role of political parties in determining state and government policies is minimal, the Kyrgyz and political elite adopted itself to other kind of political behavior. As it is argued by Djumagul Saadanbekov,

...only 20 percent of Kyrgyzstan's population has ideas about activities of political parties. Today voters vote not for parties and party ideologies but for concrete persons. This is one of the factors why power (authority) is non-party and not bound by party ties and obligations"²⁷³.

Another important reason is sources of funding or financing. Most of political parties have few financial resources limited to membership fees, whereas there is not any material and financial support from the state. Fourthly, the absence of a specific law on political parties could be also seen as major obstacle to their development. Today, they function within the framework of law on public organizations and foundations, which does not reflect many unique issues of political parties, such as sources of financing, participation in election and rules of competition. What is more important, there is a lack of consistent state policy and legislature which aim at development of active political parties.²⁷⁴ Finally, among other reasons such reason as the strengthening of tribalism/regionalism also impedes development of political parties because it does not allow the development of all-republican political organizations.²⁷⁵ In addition, after the introduction of a bi-cameral Parliament as mandated by the results of the referendum in October 1994, election constituencies were organized on the basis of single-person constituency based on a majoritarian electoral system, which favors tribal politics instead of development of political parties. The lack of experience in political struggle, underdevelopment of political

²⁷³ Djumagul Saadanbekov, *Sumerki Avtoritarizma: Zakat ili Rasvet? (Twilight of Authoritarianism: sunset or dawn?)* (Kiev: Nika-Center, 2000), 450

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 450

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 450

culture is another obstacle to the development of political parties.²⁷⁶ As a result, all these reasons created disincentives for the development of political parties. Therefore, political parties remained weak and did not actively participate in politics and political process, while regional specificities of clan and tribal lines and inadequate institutional arrangements did not encourage the development of political parties.

Two issues had negative consequences for the country at the end of 1990s. First one is the Russian economic crisis of late 1998, and the second one is the armed clashes with the militants of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in the south of the country. Both of these issues shattered Akaev's rule. After the 1998 Russian financial crisis, the government insisted that economy of Kyrgyzstan would not be affected by it. However, by the end of the year, economic situation was extremely bad. As a result, the President dismissed the government from office. As for the trouble with the armed Islamic militants, this put the country further into crisis. Estimated casualties from these clashes reported at least 20 government soldiers killed. The government once again demonstrated its weakness. The opposition severely criticized the President on both these issues and this growing opposition could now affect the future composition of Parliament. The adoption of a new election law and campaign against the independent media displayed a declining trust for democracy in Kyrgyzstan.

In this period another significant political issue facing the country was the question of parliamentary elections, to be held on 20 February 2000. The preparations for the election were characterized by substantial effort on the part of

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 450-451

the President to eliminate candidates who might challenge him. A number of leading politicians were prevented from standing as candidates through deliberate abstraction of the leveling of criminal charges against them; others were dissuaded from seeking election by the offer of other positions within the administration. For example, prominent critic of the government, Daniar Usenov, was prevented from entering the election, allegedly for returning a false statement of his income. Feliks Kulov, leader of oppositional political party *Ar-Namys*, a potential presidential challenger, was defeated in the election, despite entering the second round with a substantial majority. In late March, moreover, he was arrested and charged with abuse of office during his time as Minister of National Security in 1997-1998, although he was acquitted in August.

The referendum held on 17 October 1998 on constitutional amendments and additions once again changed the structure of Parliament. The 1994 referendum had envisioned a 35-seat lower chamber (Legislative Assembly) and 70-seat upper chamber (Assembly of People's Representatives).²⁷⁷ According to the 1998 referendum, the Legislative Assembly consisted of 60 deputies, 15 of whom would be elected from the party lists in the unified republican constituency district proportionate to the number of votes, while 45 of the deputies would be elected from single-person constituencies. The Assembly of People's Representatives consisted of 45 deputies elected from single-person constituencies.²⁷⁸ Political parties now faced an opportunity to run for 15 mandates of the Legislative Assembly as well as to

²⁷⁷ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Report on the Parliamentary Election in Kyrgyzstan: 5 February, 1995, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 8.

²⁷⁸ Central Election Committee on Elections and Referendums of the Kyrgyz Republic, *Vybory Deputatov Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniya i Sobraniya Narodnyh Predstavitelei Jogorku Kenesha Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki-2000: Tsifry i Fakty* (The 2000 Elections of Deputies in the Legislative and People's Representatives Assemblies of Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic: Figures and Facts), (Bishkek: 2001), 239.

nominate their candidates in single-person constituencies. For this purpose, Article 24 of the new election code adopted in 1999 envisioned the right of political parties and election blocs to nominate their candidates to representative bodies of state.²⁷⁹

15 out of the 28 existing political parties in Kyrgyzstan were allowed by the Ministry of Justice to participate in the February 2000 parliamentary elections in the unified republican voting district. Several political parties were excluded since they did not properly meet the requirements of Ministry of Justice. For instance, parties like *Ar-Namys* were not allowed to participate in the elections because they were newly organized. According to the requirements of Ministry of Justice, only those parties and organizations, which were registered at least one year before the elections, could proceed in the elections.²⁸⁰ Other political parties as *Manas El*, *El Partiasy* were not allowed to participate in elections because their party rules did not stipulate participation in elections.²⁸¹ Later on the *Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan* was also prevented from participation because it was accused of violating of the election code during the process of nomination of candidates.²⁸² In the end voting bulletins included only nine political parties and two election blocs.

After the publication of the presidential decree on parliamentary elections, political parties started to hold congresses to nominate candidatures for their party lists.²⁸³ For example, the *Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan* nominated 16 candidates. Those parties, which had the right of nominating candidates, formed two election blocs: *Union of Democratic Forces* and *Manas*. Union of Democratic Forces

²⁷⁹ Code of the Kyrgyz Republic on Elections in the Kyrgyz Republic, adopted in May 29, 1999 no. 40 (Bishkek: Perepletchik, 1999), 28

²⁸⁰ Central Election Committee on Elections and Referendums of the Kyrgyz Republic, 276.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 279

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 277

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 279

nominated 23 candidates and Manas nominated 15 candidates.²⁸⁴ Totally, final party lists of all political parties and blocs running for elections included 134 candidates.²⁸⁵

After the elections, 15 deputies were elected from party lists. The *Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan* gathered 27, 65 percent of votes and won 5 seats. The situation with other parties was as follows: *Union of Democratic Forces* (18,64 percent) 4 seats, *Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan's Women* (12,69 percent) 2 seats, *Party of Veterans of Afghanistan and other Local Military Conflicts* (8,03 percent) 2 seats, *Ata-Meken Party* (Fatherland) (6,47 percent) and 1 seat, and finally party *Moya Strana* (My country) (5,01 percent) 1-seat.²⁸⁶ Therefore, only 5 political parties and one elections bloc out 11 political parties and 2 elections blocs were able to cross the 5 percent threshold.²⁸⁷

International monitors from the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OCSE) described the election as not having met the expected electoral standards.²⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch reported that elections destroyed the prospects of Kyrgyzstan as a country firmly adhering to the democratic principles.²⁸⁹

The presidential elections in October 2000 were also controversial. Akaev was reelected as the President of Kyrgyz Republic for a third term, roughly violating

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 279

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 277

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 354

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 354

²⁸⁸ OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Kyrgyz Republic Parliamentary Election 20 February/ 12 March 2000, "Preliminary Statement on the Second Round of the Parliamentary Elections in Kyrgyz Republic, 12 March 2000 (13 March 2000), http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2000/03/1386_en.pdf

²⁸⁹ Human Right Watch, "World Report 2001: Kyrgyzstan: Human Rights Development" <http://www.hrw.org/wr2k1/europe/kyrgyztan.html>

the constitution in accordance with which President may not serve more than two consecutive terms.²⁹⁰

4.4 Political Elites and Political Culture

In this part, political elites and political culture in Kyrgyzstan are analyzed as two basic political factors, which impede transition to democracy. They both influence and are influenced by each other in complicated period of transition. So it is necessary to look at these two factors in detail. In the next section, tribalism, as a specific factor of political culture in Kyrgyzstan, which has a deep impact on political elite and masses, is analyzed.

4.4.1 Kyrgyz Political Elites

During the pre-Soviet period, feudal leaders who possessed patrimonial power coming from birth as well as official authority *manap* or *datka* in the southern regions played a major role in the Kyrgyz community. Under the Kokand Khanate, *manaps* were high social strata among feudals.²⁹¹ As representatives of the Kyrgyz feudals, they fully administered the internal affairs of tribes and clans, who subjugated to them. All administrative and judiciary functions were concentrated in their hands. They actively participated in domestic political life of the Khanate. “In general, *manaps* as national political elites were active participants in preserving and developing national consciousness, forming Kyrgyz people and their statehood.”²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Graeme Gill, *Democracy and Post-Communism: Political Change in the Post-Communist World* (London & New York: Routledge, Taylor&Francis Group, 2002), 63.

²⁹¹ Akylbek Djumanaliev, *Politicheskaya Istoriya Kyrgyzstana: Stanovlenie Politicheskoi sistemy Kyrgyzskogo obstshestva v 1920-1930 gody* (Political History of Kyrgyzstan: Establishment of Political System of Kyrgyz Society in 1920s and 1930s), 62.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 53

Russian Tsarism did not bring much change to the institute of *manaps*. They were still playing a major role in the administration of the region. They were used by Tsarist administration in order to govern in the region, as this cooperation was mutually beneficial.²⁹³ So, Kyrgyz people under Russian Tsarism had no “formally educated indigenous elite.”²⁹⁴

After the establishment of Russian domination in the second half of the nineteenth century, the territory of present Kyrgyzstan was organized as *volost* (smallest administrative-territorial unit). Now *manaps* competed for being elected as *volost* rulers. Since *volost* division did not correspond to tribal division among the Kyrgyz tribes and clans, it created certain problems during elections.²⁹⁵ This administrative-territorial division divided big tribal communities but united small ones. Thus, the election of head of *volost* administration was accompanied by the rivalry of *manaps* of several tribes and clans. Therefore “Kyrgyz *manaps* were partly dismissed from political power, though most of them having numerous cattle preserved economic predominance”.²⁹⁶

The Great October Revolution completely changed the elite structure of the Kyrgyz people. The Communist Party became a major element of political system, influencing the nature and establishment of national elite. In order to reach its socio-political purposes, the Soviet state needed the national cadres who would carry out programs and decision of Moscow in the periphery. As was indicated earlier, for that purpose the policy of *korenizatsia* (nativization) was initiated in the beginning 1920s.

²⁹³ Ibid., 71

²⁹⁴ Huskey, “Kyrgyzstan: The Fate of Political Liberalization”, 246.

²⁹⁵ Djumanaliev, *Politicheskaya Istoriya Kyrgyzstana: Stanovlenie Politicheskoi sistemy Kyrgyzskogo obstshestva v 1920-1930 gody* (Political History of Kyrgyzstan: Establishment of Political System of Kyrgyz Society in 1920s and 1930s), 71.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 73

It involved “the development and advancement of indigenous cadres in the national republics.”²⁹⁷ According to Pauline Jones Luong, the Soviets focused on certain regions for elite training and recruitment.²⁹⁸ As it was stated by some scholars, “recruiting new elites from indigenous society was an important precondition for imposing change over the indigenous social structure, since traditional elites could not be expected to support social change that might undermine their authority.”²⁹⁹ Most of the new political elites of the young Soviet Kyrgyz state were recruited from regions, which strongly supported Bolshevism and communism. The Soviet government should be based on “trusted cadres” in order to continue its existence. To that end Stalin formed the *nomenklatura* system,³⁰⁰ which was defined as a list of “important posts, on which candidatures were examined, recommended and confirmed by the appropriate party committee (i.e. raikom, gorkom, and obkom). Persons included in *nomenklatura* of party committee were also dismissed by its consent and approval”³⁰¹

The *nomenklatura* system, therefore, was used in the recruitment and selection of members of the elite group. In this system any member of the elite group was selected from above, that is, he/she was centrally appointed elite.³⁰² The major

²⁹⁷ Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 69.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 69

²⁹⁹ John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 188, quoted in Mark R. Beissinger, “Elites and Ethnic Identities in Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics” in *The Post-Soviet Nations: Perspectives on the Demise of the USSR*, ed. Alexander J. Motyl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 151.

³⁰⁰ Mikhail Voslenski, *Nomenklatura: Gospodstvuyushii Klass Sovetskogo Soyuz* (Nomenklatura: Ruling Class of Soviet Union), First Soviet Edition, (Moscow: MP Oktyabr, 1991), 82.

³⁰¹ *Partiynoe Stroitel'stvo* (Party Building), Educational Textbook, Six Edition (Moscow, 1981), 300, quoted in Mikhail Voslenski, *Nomenklatura: Gospodstvuyushii Klass Sovetskogo Soyuz* (Nomenklatura: Ruling Class of Soviet Union), First Soviet Edition, (Moscow: MP Oktyabr, 1991), 14.

³⁰² See Olga Kryshstanovskaya and Stephen White, “From Power to Property: The Nomenklatura in Post-Soviet Russia” in *Elites and Leadership in Russian Politics: Selected Papers from the Fifth*

criterion of selection of “trusted cadres” was political indications.³⁰³ For example, membership in the Communist Party and social background were important measures of *nomenklatura* system. In addition, Soviet Kyrgyz elites should not have traditional, cultural and religious values and beliefs, since such attachments were indicators of the past. As such,

Elites who desired career advancement in the state and party organs were instructed to separate their belief of Islam from their political ideology because Islam was associated with both cultural backwardness and disloyalty to the Soviet regime.³⁰⁴

As a result of the establishment of the Soviet power in Kyrgyzstan and spread of the *nomenklatura* system, the composition of political elites in Kyrgyzstan changed. Most of the political leaders of Kyrgyzstan were now of different social groups, essentially from the lower strata of workers and peasants. *Manaps* also tried to be part of the new elite. Some of them participated to the Communist Party. However, during *dekulakisation* (1929-1934)³⁰⁵ and the Communist Party cleansings (1924-1936)³⁰⁶ most of them were either purged or repressed. In short, the Soviet leadership created new political elite in Kyrgyzstan, which was based on the *nomenklatura* system, and this political elite would be influential throughout the Soviet period in Kyrgyzstan until the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in 1985.

Gorbachev’s *perestroika* and *glasnost* formed opposition movements in the country. The situation in Kyrgyzstan was very specific in that sense. At the end of

Congress of Central and East European Studies, ed. Graeme Gill (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1998), 81-105.

³⁰³ Voslenski, *Nomenklatura: Gospodstvuyushii Klass Sovetskogo Soyuz* (Nomenklatura: Ruling Class of Soviet Union), 83.

³⁰⁴ Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post Soviet Central Asia*, 72

³⁰⁵ Djunushaliev “Sotsial’no ekonomicheskoe razvitie Kyrgyzstana v 1917-1941 gg”, (Socio-economic Development of Kyrgyzstan between 1917-1941), 65

³⁰⁶ Djunushaliev “Obrazovanie Natsionalnoi Gosudarstvennosti Kyrgyzstana”, (Formation of Kyrgyzstan’s National Statehood) 41.

the 1980s the process of forming a new type of elite was intensified. These people were the reformist members of the CPSU, young intellectuals and participants to the newly emerged informal political movements and organizations. This new group in comparison to old communist elites was not homogeneous in its political origin, professional qualities and ideological orientations. However, they were too weak to form alternative political elite in Kyrgyzstan.

At the beginning of the 1990s, changes in the political atmosphere were reflected on the elites as well. A part of the political elite in Kyrgyzstan identified themselves as new democrats. They came from different backgrounds and were composed of young intellectuals, nationalists and leaders of various social and political groups, although majority of them had the Communist Party background. As such, it possible to suggest that the new political elite, which came to power at the end of 1980s, was not really different in nature. It seems that there is a continuity between the Soviet and the Kyrgyz elite. According to one scholar,

...nearly all the Soviet-era bureaucratic establishment and nomenklatura have remained intact. The political and bureaucratic skills of Soviet-era leaderships and the political apathy of the majority of the Central Asian population enabled them to remain in power throughout the turmoil caused by the Soviet Union's unraveling and to consolidate their positions after independence.³⁰⁷

In general, the political and socio-economic changes of the 1990s did not change much the Soviet political elite. Most of them remained in their positions at least for several years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Present political elite was recruited and promoted their political career under the Soviet regime, so it is assumed that most of them were strong supporters of the previous regime. According

³⁰⁷ Shireen T. Hunter, *Central Asia since Independence* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996), 24

to theories of socialization, early experiences of individuals are formative for later opinions.³⁰⁸ So, trained and educated during Soviet totalitarianism, these elites had a definite mentality, behavior and habits.

In addition to these characteristics, the post-Soviet political elites in Kyrgyzstan were selected by other principles such tribal and ethnic affiliation, regionalism or relative closeness to state leadership. It was stated that in 1991, there was a perfect situation, which reflected not only the balance of power between tribal and ethnic lines but also the process of recruitment of elite under new conditions. At that time, Askar Akaev was the President of Kyrgyzstan and represented the north, Nasirdin Isanov was prime minister and represented the south while German Kuznetsov was vice-president and represented the Russian minority.³⁰⁹ Another similar example of such recruitment could be seen in election of speakers of the two chambers in the 1995 Parliament.

Members of the Legislative Assembly elected as speaker a nominee of the Communist Party, Mukar Cholponbaev, a former Minister of Justice. His two deputies are trade union activist Alevtina Pronenko and entrepreneur Daniyar Usenov. The Assembly of People's Representatives elected as speaker Almambet Matubraimov, the former deputy prime minister, from Osh (as obvious gesture to the south). His two deputies are Anatoly Maryshev and Bakhtiar Fatakhov, representing the Russian and Uzbek communities, respectively.³¹⁰

As was suggested earlier, one of the most important impediments to democracy in Kyrgyzstan was the continuity between the Soviet and post-Soviet elites. Therefore, we need to investigate how the Kyrgyz political elite developed

³⁰⁸ See Arthur H. Miller, "In Search of Regime Legitimacy" in *Public Opinion and Regime Change: The Politics of Post-Soviet Societies*, ed. Arthur H. Miller, William M. Reisinger and Vicki L. Hesli (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 95-123.

³⁰⁹ Personal interview with one high-ranking member of local administration in Chuy oblast, "name withheld".

³¹⁰ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Report on the Parliamentary Election in Kyrgyzstan: February 5, 1995, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 12.

following the breakdown of the Soviet Union. This issue is important as it affects the future prospects for democratic development and the kind of state policies to be pursued on various problems and solutions. Therefore, in order to understand the present political elites, their connections with the past must be analyzed. This research has studied four main elite groups in Kyrgyzstan: President, members of the Parliament, ministers and *akims* (governors) of *oblast* (regional administration) including Bishkek city.

First of all, this study searched for previous membership in the Communist Party. This will give us an idea of how many former supporters of the communist ideology have remained within the elite structures under the new regime. In present study, membership in the *Komsomol* (Young Communist League) is not included as a variable because then most of the non-members would be also included and potential level of members would be higher.

Secondly, we study the occupation of former Communist Party members. It will shed light on the issue of how many former political bosses continue to rule in leading positions in the new regime. Actually, occupation is divided into two levels: low or middle occupational level and high level. Low and middle occupational level include all party members who were ordinary party members, low level *nomenklatura*, economic functionaries and others who had limited access to power, decision-making process, political agenda setting, and policy implementation. The high level occupational group includes all high level *nomenklatura* members of the Communist Party including secretaries of *raikom* (district), chief and chief-deputies of executive committee of people's deputies and *obkom* (region) secretaries (up to the level of secretaries of Central Committee of the Communist Party of

Kyrgyzstan), members of cabinet and deputy-ministers, heads of undersecretaries and their deputies.

In this part, the data for the 1990 Parliament is also presented in order to compare the change in the structure of deputies. The table of Heads of Government of Kyrgyzstan is presented to have an idea on political background of prime ministers.

The reliability of the data on former membership is impossible to check since information in biographies does not always clearly state Communist Party membership. Especially, regarding the members of the Kyrgyz Parliament, there were some problems in searching their background. For instance, there is a shortage of information about several parliamentary deputies elected in 1995. First of all, some members were not reelected in 2000 elections, so to find information including their biographies posed further difficulties. Secondly, some of them were elected from periphery and to find any information about their political life at country level was a challenge. Finally, to find information from official sources was also difficult. Fortunately, I could have an interview with one of the former *nomenklatura* member who provided information about elites with little background information.³¹¹

The lack of information on those deputies and members of cabinet may influence the results of the study. Those people with insufficient background information on party membership are grouped under the non-party members' column. In case of their being party members, they would increase the percent of party members. So, this kind of error would only increase the proportion of party members. If their party membership would remain unproved, then they are already

³¹¹ Personal interview with the former second-secretary of one of the districts in Kyrgyzstan, "name withheld".

included in the part of non-party membership and proportion of party members would remain unchanged.

Among the seven governments formed in Kyrgyzstan between 1990 and 2000 we randomly selected only three governments. It was thought that one government from the beginning, one from middle and one of the last few years would be helpful in searching the change within government structure in terms of party membership and occupation.

To start with, the President of Kyrgyzstan is from the *nomenklatura* of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Later he was appointed as President of Academy of Sciences of Kyrgyzstan, which was also a post of *nomenklatura* party members. Therefore, President was a member of the Communist Party and occupied high-ranking position.

As for the members of the Parliament, in 1990, most of the deputies (89,5 percent) of the Supreme Soviet's had a communist background. (See Table 4.1)

Table 4.1

The 1990 Parliamentary Elections: Party Membership of 1990 Parliament

Deputies of Kyrgyz SSR	Number of deputies	%
Members of the Communist Party	306	89,5
Members of Union of Young communists	5	1,5
Non-party members	31	9,0
Total	342	100

Notes: Actually Supreme Soviets of Kyrgyz SSR consisted of 350 deputies, but 342 deputies were registered at the first session of Twelfth Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyz SSR.

Source: Spisok Narodnyh Deputatov Verhovnogo Soveta Kirgizskoi SSR Dvenadtsatogo Sozyva (List of People's Deputies of Twelfth Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyz SSR) (Frunze: 1990), 62, quoted in Djumagul Saadanbekov, Sumerki Avtoritarizma: Zakat ili Rasvet? (Twilight of Authoritarianism: Sunset or Dawn?) (Kiev: Nika-Center, 2000), 326

It is possible to assert that the background of Kyrgyz deputies did not change much following the 1995 elections (88,5 percent). (See Table 4.2)

Table 4.2

The 1995 Parliamentary Elections: Previous Membership in the Communist Party

Chambers:	Total number of deputies	Non-members	%	Members	%
Legislative	35	7	20	28	80
Representative	69*	5**	7,2	64	92,8
Total	104	12	11,5	92	88,5

Notes: * Representative Assembly consisted of 70 deputies. Data on one deputy is unavailable.

** Data on 3 members is unavailable.

Sources: <http://www.centrasia.ru/person.php4>

However, there is a considerable change in proportion of party membership between the 2000 elections and previous ones. The proportion of deputies with previous communist background was decreased to 62,0 percent in the 2000 elections. This decrease also reflected the proportion of deputies, members of parties, movements and groups. (See Table 4.3)

Table 4.3

The 2000 Parliamentary Elections: Previous Membership in the Communist Party

Chambers:	Total number of deputies	Non-members	%	Members	%
Legislative	60	25*	41,7	35	58,3
Representative	45	15**	33,3	30	66,7
Total	105	40	38,0	65	62,0

Notes: * Data on 12 members are unavailable.

** Data on 8 members are unavailable.

Sources: Central Election Committee on Elections and Referendums of the Kyrgyz Republic, Vybory Deputatov Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniya i Sobraniya Narodnyh Predstavitelei Jogorku Kenesha Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki-2000: Tsifry i Fakty (The 2000 Elections of Deputies in the Legislative and People's Representatives Assemblies of Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic: Figures and Facts), (Bishkek: 2001)

We see the similar structure for the ministers. Among these elites the average proportion with previous communist political background is 92 percent. (See Table 4.4)

Table 4.4

Governments/Ministers 1991-2000: Previous Membership in the Communist Party

Governments	Total number of ministers	Non-party members	%	Party members	%
Chyngyshev Government Feb. 1992-Dec. 1993	17	1*	5,9	16	94,1
Jumagulov Government Dec. 1993-March 1998	21	1**	4,8	20	95,2
Muraliyev Government Apr. 1999-Dec. 2000	25	3***	12	22	88
Total	63	5	8	58	92

Notes: * Data on previous party membership is unavailable.

** Data on previous party membership is unavailable.

*** Data on previous party membership is unavailable.

Sources: Slovo Kyrgyzstana, 10,11 February 1992; Slovo Kyrgyzstana 22 December 1993; Slovo Kyrgyzstana 23 April 1999. "Kyrgyzstan" in *The International Directory of Government 1999*, Third Edition, Europa Publications Limited; "Kyrgyzstan" in *World Wide Government Directory 1992*, Regional Edition: The Former Soviet Bloc, (Washington: Belmont Publications), 1992; "Kyrgyzstan" in *Political Handbook of the World 1992, 1993, 1994-1995, 1995-1996, 1997, 1998, 1999* ed. Arthur S. Banks and Thomas C. Muller (Binghamton University, State University of New York: CSA Publications).

This rate is 96,7 percent among regional leaders. (See Table 4.5)

Table 4.5Heads of Regional Administration *Akims* (Governors) in Kyrgyzstan, 1991-2000: Party Membership and Occupation

Oblast	Total Number of Governors	Party-membership	%	Low-Middle occupation	%	High Occupation	%
Batken*	1	1	100	-	0	1	100
Bishkek city	5	5	100	-	0	5	100
Chuy	3	3	100	-	0	3	100
Djalal-Abad	5	4***	100	2	20	2	80
Issyk-Kol	2	2	100	-	0	2	100
Naryn	5	5	100	3	60	2	40
Osh	5	5	100	2	40	3	60
Talas	5**	5	100	1	20	4	80
Total	31	30	96,7	8	26,7	22	73,3

Notes: *Batken oblast was organized in 1999.

**Data on the period between 1996 and 1998 is unavailable.

*** Data on the party membership of one of governors is unavailable.

Sources: <http://centrasia.ru/masterestest.ru/cnt.php4>; Luong, Pauline Jones, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts*. Appendix II, p. 280.

In general, therefore, it is possible to observe that, people who were not Communist Party members have become part of the present political elite only to a limited extent. This tendency is higher in Parliament, with a rate of 11,5 percent in 1995 elections and a rate of 38 percent in the 2000 elections. (See Tables 4.2 and 4.3) However, this rate is less among ministers (8 percent) and near to zero among *akims*. (See Tables 4.4 and 4.5) Likewise, people who were members of the Communist Party and had previously held low and middle occupations have entered present political elite by 8 percent among *akims*, and 32,8 percent among government ministers. This rate is much higher among parliamentary deputies, 78,3 in the 1995 elections and 72,3 in the 2000 elections. It can be argued that people who occupied low and middle level in the *nomenklatura* hierarchy and Communist Party have chances to advance in state structures, especially the parliament with great success.

About more than a half of the present political elite in Kyrgyzstan (about 58 percent) are recruited from among those who were members of Communist Party and held higher positions in the Communist Party and Soviet government structures. For instance, except one Prime Minister, all other six prime ministers served in Kyrgyzstan between 1991 and 2000 were high ranking Communist Party *nomenklatura* people. (See Table 4.6)

Table 4.6

Background of Prime Ministers of Kyrgyzstan (1991-2000)

Prime- Ministers	The Communist Party Membership	Previous position (before appointment)	Position during the Soviets
1. Nasirdin Isanov Jan. 1991-Nov. 1991	Yes	Vice-president of Kyrgyzstan	1988-1991 First Secretary (Obkom)/ Chief of Soviets of Issyk-Kol oblast
2. Tursunbek Chyngyshev Feb. 1992-Dec. 1993	Yes	State Secretary of Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan	1989-1991 First Secretary/ Chief of Soviets of Tokmak city
3. Apas Jumagulov Dec. 1993-Mar. 1998	Yes	Governor of Chuy oblast	1986-1991 Head of Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz SSR
4. Kubanychbek Jumaliyev Mar. 1998-Apr. 1999	Data unavailable	Head of President Administration of Kyrgyzstan	N/A
5. Jumabek Ibraimov Dec. 1998-Apr. 1999	Yes	Chief of State Property Foundation-Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic	Deputy-chief of Committee on Security and Defense of Supreme Soviets of USSR
6. Amangeldy Muraliyev Apr. 1999-Dec. 2000	Yes	Governor of Osh oblast	1988-1991 Chief of Soviets of people's deputies of Frunze (Bishkek)
7. Kurmanbek Bakiev Dec. 2000-May 2002	Yes	Governor of Chuy oblast	1990-1992 First Secretary of Kok-Yangak Gorkom, Deputy-chief of Soviets of people's deputies of Djalal-Abad oblast

Sources: <http://centrasia.ru.mastertest.ru/cnt.php4>; Slovo Kyrgyzstana, 10,11 February 1992; Slovo Kyrgyzstana 22 December 1993; Slovo Kyrgyzstana 5 March 1996; Slovo Kyrgyzstana 26 March 1998; Slovo Kyrgyzstana 23 April 1999.

Moreover, the average rate of the previous high-ranking party bosses who held power until the 2000 was 67,2 percent; they served as ministers in various the Kyrgyz governments between 1991 and 2001. (See Table 4.7) At regional level this rate was 73,3 percent. (See Table 4.5)

Table 4.7**Governments/Ministers 1991-2000: Previous Occupation in the Communist Party**

Governments	Total number of Communist Party members	Low-Middle occupation	%	High occupation	%
Chyngyshev Government Feb. 1992-Dec. 1993	16	2	12,5	14	87,5
Jumagulov Government Dec. 1993	20	7	35	13	65
Muraliyev Government Apr. 1999-Dec. 2000	22	10	45	12	55
Total	58	19	32,8	39	67,2

Sources: <http://centrasia.ru.mastertest.ru/cnt.php4>; Slovo Kyrgyzstana, 10,11 February 1992; Slovo Kyrgyzstana 22 December 1993; Slovo Kyrgyzstana 5 March 1996; Slovo Kyrgyzstana 26 March 1998; Slovo Kyrgyzstana 23 April 1999; "Kyrgyzstan" in *The International Directory of Government 1999*, Third Edition, Europa Publications Limited; "Kyrgyzstan" in *World Wide Government Directory 1992*, Regional Edition: The Former Soviet Bloc, (Washington: Belmont Publications), 1992; "Kyrgyzstan" in *Political Handbook of the World 1992, 1993, 1994-1995, 1995-1996, 1997, 1998, 1999* ed. Arthur S. Banks and Thomas C. Muller (Binghamton University, State University of New York: CSA Publications).

However, in the Parliament former high-ranking party bosses were not well represented: the rate is 21,7 percent in 1995 and 27,7percent in 2000 respectively. (See Tables 4.8 and 4.9) One explanation is that parliamentary and legislative works are restricted in the sense of financial and political privileges and freedom. On the contrary, regional and ministry occupations are more attractive in sense of financial and power privileges.

Table 4.8**The 1995 Parliamentary Elections: Previous Occupation in the Communist Party**

Chambers:	Total number of Communist Party members	Low-middle occupation	%	High occupation	%
Legislative	28	21	75	7	25
Representative	64	51	79,6	13	20,3
Total	92	72	78,3	20	21,7

Sources: <http://centrasia.ru.mastertest.ru/cnt.php4>; <http://centrasia.ru.mastertest.ru/person.php4>.

Table 4.9**The 2000 Parliamentary Elections: Previous Occupation in the Communist Party**

Chambers:	Total number of Communist Party members	Low-Middle occupation	%	High occupation	%
Legislative	35	22	62,9	13	37,1
Representative	30	25	83,3	5	16,7
Total	65	47	72,3	18	27,7

Sources: Central Election Committee on Elections and Referendums of the Kyrgyz Republic, Vybory Deputatov Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniya i Sobraniya Narodnyh Predstavitelei Jogorku Kenesha Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki-2000: Tsifry i Fakty (The 2000 Elections of Deputies in the Legislative and People's Representatives Assemblies of Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic: Figures and Facts), (Bishkek: 2001)

Independence presented an opportunity for the Kyrgyz people to advance in state and government positions. However, change in regime did not result in elite change or replacement. Political elites, which held power just before independence, continued to perform their basic duties and tasks after independence. The lack of an alternative elite also strengthened the position of the existing elite. Therefore, the new system in Kyrgyzstan might be characterized by elite continuity. In addition, the study of elites in Kyrgyzstan showed that the majority of political elite who attained positions following the change of regime is indigenous people that are the Kyrgyz. This might be explained by seventy years of the Soviet domination and Russification.

Therefore, a considerable proportion of the Kyrgyz elite have been recruited from the previous elites. We searched the elites in Kyrgyzstan by looking at their former membership in the Communist Party and found out that a majority of the present political elites have been members of the Communist Party by rate of 87,8 percent (average of all four groups). The data clearly indicates a continuation of the former political elites, who have obtained certain advantages under the new regime. The tendency in the other bodies of state, such as judiciary and local administration,

is that former Communist Party members are represented in these new state institutions as well.

It is possible to suggest that the present political elite pose an impediment to the development of democracy in Kyrgyzstan. Most of them had close relations to and directly came out of old Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the *nomenklatura* system, and as such they do not have a democratic political culture. At this point, it can be suggested that there is a strong correlation between political elites and non-democratic political culture and the political elites in Kyrgyzstan.

4.4.2 Political Culture of Kyrgyzstan

Historical context had a strong influence on the political culture of Kyrgyzstan as well as the Kyrgyz people. Kyrgyzstan has a rich and complicated history shaped by many political cultures. Although, for a short period during the ninth and tenth centuries A.D., Kyrgyz people had established their own independent state, the Kyrgyz Khanate, for centuries they were ruled by other nomadic states of Eurasia including the Turks and Mongols, despotic Kokand Khanate and autocratic Russian Tsars before the Russian revolution of 1917. However, the dominant influence on political culture in Kyrgyzstan as well in the other former Soviet republics was Marxism-Leninism. It left numerous legacies on society, culture, and individual mentality in the form of national identity, Russification, and Soviet ideology.³¹² When the Soviet period ended in 1991, Kyrgyzstan started a period of transition. A new constitution was adopted and relatively democratic elections were held under new national laws.

³¹² Patricia M. Carley, "The Legacy of the Soviet Political System and the Prospects for Developing Civil Society in Central Asia" in *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu et al. (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 297.

As far the social structure, it was a colonial one under Russian domination.³¹³ Soviet Marxist-Leninist ideology changed the pre-existing social structures by creating national identities. Established political institutions were always strongly centralized in nature. Kyrgyz people were socialized by certain agents of political socialization such as family, religion, and clan in the earlier periods and Soviet schools, institutions and party in the Soviet period.

An alternative political culture always existed in Kyrgyzstan and other states of Central Asia, defined by some scholars as “a parallel system of power”.³¹⁴ The Communist Party generally suppressed this kind of political culture until the 1980s. However, the role of a parallel system of power in the form of tribalism today is of crucial importance. It is a means of having access to political power, scarce economic resources, prestige and social status. Some scholars assert that in the post-Soviet era it is possible to talk about the reemergence of tribalism.³¹⁵

When Kyrgyzstan gained its independence, the Soviet-era management organizations collapsed, and tribal communities once again became the fundamental institutions necessary for the survival of individuals and families. Indeed, leaders associated with traditional tribal-based communities and clans have emerged in every sphere of Kyrgyz society, from politics to business structures. They evolved into political forces during the parliamentary elections of 1992, when candidates were nominated and elected on the basis of tribal membership.³¹⁶

In this part we assume that the political culture in Kyrgyzstan is defined by the existence of three layers. The first layer is the *traditional* one, mostly associated with the pre-Soviet times when pastoral nomadism, clan and tribal affiliation, and

³¹³ Ibid., 301

³¹⁴ Shirin Akiner, “Post-Soviet Central Asia: Past is Prologue”, 16.

³¹⁵ Raya Osmanalieva, “Tribalism in Kyrgyz Society”, *Central Asia Monitor*, no. 5 (1999): 10.

³¹⁶ Rakhat Achylova, “Political Culture and Foreign Policy in Kyrgyzstan” in *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu et al. (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 327

feudal patterns of life coexisted with patriarchal backwardness. Later on, with the Tsarist administration, Russian supremacy prevailed, having a definite influence on culture, consciousness and mentality of the Kyrgyz people. The second layer is *Soviet* one, symbolized by collectivism, communism, Communist Party *nomenclatura*, Stalinism, purges, repressions (Gulags), stagnation and *perestroika*. Soviet political culture has had mostly negatively effected people in Kyrgyzstan, especially in the last decades. The last layer is *democratic*, emerging as a result of the collapse of the Soviet system. Although the first signs were available during *glasnost* and *perestroika*, democratic drive brought new elements and components to the political culture of Kyrgyzstan such as individualism, human rights, basic human freedoms, market economy and liberal democracy.

The mixture of the first two political cultures, traditional and Soviet has strongly influenced the present political culture of the Kyrgyz people. Non-democratic Soviet political culture continues to have a strong hold, especially on the political elites whose political socialization was completed during the communist era. As of now, the political attitudes and acts of a majority of Kyrgyz people show clear traits of previous traditional and non-democratic political culture. In this kind of political culture the main concerns are orientation toward collective behavior, domination of state over individual, delegation of individual interest and rights to the state, indifference to the rule of law priority of social order, while legality, moderation and compromise are not the major aspects of this political culture.³¹⁷

Authoritarianism was a common trend through the pre-Soviet and Soviet periods of

³¹⁷ Andrei Yu. Melville, "An Emerging Civic Culture? Ideology, Public Attitudes, and Political Culture in Early 1990s" in *Public Opinion and Regime Change: The New Policies of Post-Soviet Societies* ed. Arthur H. Miller, William M. Reisinger and Vicki L. Hesli (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 59

Central Asia in general and Kyrgyzstan in particular. It is asserted that “the pre-Soviet and Soviet experiences have left a legacy of authoritarian culture. The republican elites have inherited societies with minimal civic experience”.³¹⁸

4.4.2.1 Tribalism

The role of tribalism today is of crucial importance, as it directly influenced and is related to the process of constructing the new political system in Kyrgyzstan. Existence of powerful tribal relations has impeded the state formation in general and development of democracy in particular in Kyrgyzstan.³¹⁹ In order to define the concept of tribalism and its role in today’s Kyrgyzstan we have to start with an analytical refinement. There is no clear definition of tribalism³²⁰ as “it remains hard for the outsider to analyze the precise role and workings of ‘tribalism’.”³²¹ Some scholars call it *uruuchuluk* (in the Kyrgyz language) or *rodoplemennaya struktura* (in the Russian language).³²² Others call it *clantocracy*.³²³ Still others call it “clan networks.”³²⁴ Pauline Jones Luong defines it as *regional political identities* or *regionalism*.³²⁵ According to Erlend H. Hvoslef, tribalism is an

...organizational form based upon strong ties to a relatively corporate family and then to a clearly defined clan. A clan is, in this presentation, a patrilinear unit and the members of the clan descend from a common known ancestor... A tribe is a

³¹⁸ Akbarzadeh, “The Political Shape of Central Asia”, 527

³¹⁹ See Djenish Djunushaliev and Vladimir Ploskih, “Traibalism i Problemy Razvitiya Kyrgyzstana” (Tribalism and Problems of Development of Kyrgyzstan), *Central Asia and Caucasus*, Russian Edition, 3 (9), (2000): 146- 155.

³²⁰ For the discussion on the issue of definition see also David Gullett, “Tribalism v Kyrgyzstane: Tochka Zreniya” (Tribalism in Kyrgyzstan: Point of View), *Central Asia and Caucasus*, 2 (20), (2002): 35-43.

³²¹ Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia’s Island of Democracy*, 39.

³²² Djunushaliev and Ploskih, “Traibalism i Problemy Razvitiya Kyrgyzstana” (Tribalism and Problems of Development of Kyrgyzstan), 147; Hvoslef, *Tribalism and Modernity in Kirgizia*, 96-108

³²³ Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 46.

³²⁴ Akiner, “Social and Political Reorganization in Central Asia: Transition from Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial Society”, 2.

³²⁵ Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions and Pacts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 52.

congregation of many clans. The clans that make up a tribe are related to each other through common ancestors and because they feel that their roots are located in a certain region.³²⁶

Long before independence, even the October Revolution, the Kyrgyz people lived in the conditions of tribal relationships. Nomadic way of life predetermined such form of social and political organization. As T.A. Zhdanko states,

This is a typical feature of the social and ethnic structures of many people whose economies were always dominated by nomadic cattle breeding, irrespective of their ethnic affiliation (Turkic-speaking, Iranian-speaking, Arabic-speaking and others).³²⁷

Moreover, Peter Golden points out that it was the nomadic way of life that determined the tribal (kinship) form of social and political relations.³²⁸ Historically, Central Asians had strong ties with family, clan and tribe because of nomadic way of life, which also determined their social organization. For instance, Beatrice Forbes Manz notes “nomads traditionally organized in tribes or sections might switch their allegiance to a different tribe but their tradition dictated that they belong to one tribe or another.”³²⁹

During the Soviet era it was thought that tribalism and all kinds of “survivals” of the past like customs, traditions, mores assessed as vestiges of traditionalism would be overcome.³³⁰ The Soviet government tried to eliminate tribal, religious and national identities. Indeed, at first glance it appears that under the pressure of Bolshevik and Soviet politics such as collectivization, sedentarization of nomads,

³²⁶ Hvoslef, “Tribalism and Modernity in Kirgizia” 96-108

³²⁷ T.A. Zhdanko, “Ethnic Communities with Survivals of Clan and Tribal Structure in Central Asia and Kazakhstan in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” in *The Nomadic Alternatives: Modes and Models of Interaction in African-Asian Deserts and Steppes*, ed. Wolfgang Weissleder (Paris: Mouton Publishers, the Hague, 1978), 138.

³²⁸ Golden, *Nomads in Sedentary societies in Medieval Eurasia*, 8

³²⁹ Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; reprint 1996), 33.

³³⁰ Djunushaliev and Ploskih, “Tribalism i Problemy Razvitiya Kyrgyzstana” (Tribalism and Problems of Development of Kyrgyzstan), 148.

nativization, dekulakisation, secularization, education, urbanization, industrialization, as well as purges and repression, it was difficult for tribalism to survive. However, such policies led to the resistance of Central Asian people. Therefore, traditional and tribal elements retained their vitality in informal spheres of life, especially in family.³³¹ In formal spheres, however, it was given an appearance that it was totally and physically destroyed and Central Asian republics were fully incorporated into the new regime.

According to some scholars there is a historical division between the north and the south of Kyrgyzstan.³³²

There has always been a great difference in opinions, both culturally and politically, between Northern and Southern Kirgizians. The Kirgizians from the north accuse the southerners of acting and behaving like Uzbeks (Uzbeks have historically been the main enemies of the Kirgizians). The Southern Kirgizians on their side, accuse the northerners of behaving like Russians and taking up a dominant role in politics.³³³

In the late 1980s the tension between the south and north was increased during appointments to the key republican posts. For instance, “with the northerner Askar Akaev replacing the southerner Absamat Masaliev there were claims that appointments were increasingly dominated by the north, with special prominence given to those from the Talas and Chuy regions.”³³⁴ Chuy is the birthplace of Akaev and Talas of his wife.

³³¹ Akiner, “Social and Political Reorganization in Central Asia: Transition from Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial Society”, 18.

³³² Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions and Pacts*, 74; Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy*, 40.

³³³ Hvoslef, “Tribalism and Modernity in Kirgizia”, 96-108.

³³⁴ Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy*, 40

Some social scientists assert that at present time in Kyrgyzstan there is a tendency of the reemergence of tribalism.³³⁵ However, we suppose that tribalism as a phenomenon, beginning in the pre-industrial era did not always exist in one unchanged form. We cannot talk about its reemergence but reappearance in a new form. There were tribal structures and activities since the era of early nomadism. They originated and developed long before the October Revolution but especially during the Soviet time they were “mutated”. In other words, traditional elements such as tribalism adopted themselves to the new conditions.

The modern networks (colloquially referred to as ‘clans’ by Central Asian and others alike) were analogous in structure to traditional units, but more diverse in composition, function and degree of bonding.³³⁶

Elements of tribalism reappeared mostly during the elections in late 1980s and early 1990s, when candidates were often selected on the basis of their tribal affiliation.³³⁷ However, it became much more visible with the establishment of the independent state. As the leader of the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (DMK) Zhypar Zheksheyev explains, this tendency takes a form of mutually beneficial deal between the two sides. An individual receives help and access to scarce positions in exchange for political support. It is commonly believed that “supporting a member of one’s own tribe/clan may secure the future for an individual and his family.”³³⁸

³³⁵ Raya Osmonalieva, “Tribalism in Kyrgyz Society”, *Central Asia Monitor*, no. 5 (1999): 10.

³³⁶ Shirin Akiner, “Social and Political Reorganization in Central Asia: Transition from Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial Society”, 18

³³⁷ Djunushaliev and Ploskih, “Traibalism I Problemy Razvitiya Kyrgyzstana” (Tribalism and Problems of Development of Kyrgyzstan), 148

³³⁸ Hvoslef, “Tribalism and Modernity in Kirgizia”, 96-108

The data of the 1995 and 2000 Parliamentary elections showed that there is a relationship between place of origin (place of birth) and election constituency.³³⁹ The issue of tribalism (regionalism) as an important part of the present research showed that in the 1995 parliamentary elections, 64,8 percent of deputies were elected from their place of origin or birth. (See Table 4.10) In the 2000 parliamentary elections, the rate of the people elected from their place of origin or birth increased up to 74,4 percent. (See Table 4.11) One point should be underlined. Change in election law and introduction of majoritarian electoral constituencies in 1995 discriminated heavily against political parties, making it difficult for them to win electoral competition. Therefore, a majority of the elected deputies were independents. This clearly shows that the 1995 and 2000 elections structured political competition to a great extent on the basis of local (regional) and personal factors. Two basic groups of deputies were elected not from their place of birth or origin. First, only in two big cities of Kyrgyzstan, namely, Bishkek and Osh, there was the possibility of being elected on a cosmopolitan basis. Second, several non - native deputies, were not born in Kyrgyzstan, but they generally migrated during the Soviet era.

Table 4.10

The 1995 elections: Deputies elected from their places of birth/original location

Chambers	Total number of single member constituencies	Number of deputies elected from their place of birth / original location	%
Legislative	35*	24	68,5
Representative	70**	44	62,8
Total	105	68	64,8

Notes: * Data on 3 members is unavailable.

** Data on 4 members is unavailable

Sources: <http://centrasia.ru.mastertest.ru/cnt.php4>; <http://centrasia.ru.mastertest.ru/person.php4>.

³³⁹ Especially the results of parliamentary election of the 1995 and 2000 are used to search for the relationship between place of origin (place of birth) and election constituency. The match between these two variables would strengthen the idea of tribalism (regionalism) among different clans and groups competing for mandate.

Table 4.11

The 2000 elections: Deputies elected from their places of birth/original location

Chambers	Total number of single member constituencies	Number of deputies elected from their place of birth / original location	%
Legislative	45	35	77,7
Representative	45	32	71,1
Total	90*	67	74,4

Notes: According to the 1998 referendum the Legislative Assembly consisted of 60 deputies, 15 of whom would be elected from the party lists in the unified republican constituency district proportionate to the number of votes.

Sources: Central Election Committee on Elections and Referendums of the Kyrgyz Republic, *Vybory Deputatov Zakonodatel'nogo Sobraniya i Sobraniya Narodnyh Predstavitelei Jogorku Kenesha Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki-2000: Tsifry i Fakty* (The 2000 Elections of Deputies in the Legislative and People's Representatives Assemblies of Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic: Figures and Facts), (Bishkek: 2001)

According to some scholars, there are three basic reasons for the strengthening of tribalism in the post-Soviet era.³⁴⁰ First, tribal relations were the base of social relations for thousands of years. Two or three generations of people were not able to change this situation. So, tribalism adapted itself to the new socio-political conditions. Second, the present economic crisis of the transitional period, constant decrease in the living standards of people and struggle for survival resulted in the unity of people in accordance with blood ties. Privatization of state property led to the emergence of clans that could compete for property ownership. Third, independence paved the way for tribalism to operate openly and influence state building. At this point it is interesting to display the results of Pauline Jones Luong's research. Luong conducted interviews with central, regional leaders and political activists in Central Asia in 1994-1995.³⁴¹ The central and regional leaders as well as political activists in Kyrgyzstan considered the main source of political and/or

³⁴⁰ Djunushaliev and Ploskih, "Traibalism i Problemy Razvitiya Kyrgyzstana" (Tribalism and Problems of Development of Kyrgyzstan", 153

³⁴¹ See Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions and Pacts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

electoral support to be their region of origin and/or region in which last held office.

The results are as follows:

Table 4.12

Electoral Support of the Regional Leaders

Central leaders	Regional leaders	Political activists
Region in which last held office: 97%	Region in which last held office: 82%	Region in which last held office: 97%
Region of origin: 97%	Region of origin: 93%	Region of origin: 93%

Source: Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions and Pacts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 160.

It is interesting to note that more than 95 percent of leaders and activist in Kyrgyzstan viewed the greatest threats to stability as changing the regional balance power and spread of Islam.

Table 4.13

Perception of the Threat by the Activists and Leaders in Kyrgyzstan

Central leaders	Regional leaders	Political activists
Disrupting, or fundamentally altering, the regional balance of power: 99%	Disrupting, or fundamentally altering, the regional balance of power: 97%	Disrupting, or fundamentally altering, the regional balance of power: 95%
Spread of Islam: 99%	Spread of Islam: 97%	Spread of Islam: 95%

Source: Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions and Pacts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 160.

It seems that the present political leadership is interested in tribalism because it can be an instrument of controlling the political elite. On the one hand, tribalism resulted in the division of elites, and as such it can prevent the emergence or existence of a united political opposition. On the other hand, present political leadership stays in power by means of tribalism. It is stated that in the early years, President of Kyrgyzstan used the power of regional *akims* (governors):

They utilized their position to aid Akaev in the dissolution of Parliament and in ensuring satisfactory results during referenda, and in return enjoyed considerable leeway in the governance of their own territories.³⁴²

It is possible to say, that today tribal relations and ties are a means to get access to political power, scarce economic resources, prestige, and status. As Martha Brill Olcott asserts, clan and regional ties were always “underlain power in Central Asia, before the Soviet period, during it, and on into the present.”³⁴³ Tribalism within the Kyrgyz tribes and clans played a uniting role. However, for nation in general it played destabilizing role in some cases.³⁴⁴ As such, tribalism is a real threat to the existing stability in society and integrity of the sovereign state.³⁴⁵ The highest manifestation of reviving tribalism would be regionalism, which later can be turned into separatism.³⁴⁶ Clan and tribal structures remained as powerful political actors within the present political arena of Kyrgyzstan. “Even among the politicians that most strongly want to build up a modern democracy, there certainly remain aspects of behavior and thoughts that are closely related to ideas connected to ‘tribalism’.”³⁴⁷

To summarize, a new post of presidency was created in October 1990, and Askar Akaev was elected by the Parliament as the first President of Kyrgyzstan. It quickly became clear that political institutions and political reforms required new constitution, which was adopted in May 1993. Initially, the constitution provided a parliamentary system of government. The failure to achieve consensus among the

³⁴² Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia's Island of Democracy*, 41

³⁴³ Olcott, “Emerging Political Elites”, 50.

³⁴⁴ D. Djunushaliev and V. Ploskih, “Traibalism i Problemy Razvitiya Kyrgyzstana” (Tribalism and Problems of Development of Kyrgyzstan”, 151.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 153

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 153

³⁴⁷ Hvoslef, “Tribalism and Modernity in Kirgizia”, 96-108.

political elites, particularly between the executive (President) and the legislature led to the dissolution of this Parliament in 1994. Initiated by the President, a constitutional referendum of 1994 was followed by parliamentary elections in February 1995. One of the most important issues of the constitution was the balance of power between the President, the government and the legislature. The 1996 referendum adopted a new balance of power marked by a powerful President and a weak Parliament. Generally, this shift of power made the democratization process more difficult since it undermined the limited accountability of the executive. In addition, there were (and still are) serious failures and inadequacies in introducing competitive elections and competing political parties. There were frequent violations of law during elections: preventing leading politicians from participation in elections as well as controversial election of the President for a third time. After several years of independence, there is still no powerful and ambitious political party that can play a decisive role in Kyrgyzstan.

The above mentioned changes in political institutions could not alter the foundation of the former Soviet system in Kyrgyzstan. The collapse of the *nomenklatura* system led to the growing importance of the tribal networks in the process of recruitment and providing opportunities for political appointments. The old Soviet political elite the *nomenklatura* successfully maintained its privileged position in politics and economy.

The political elite, which came to power after independence in Kyrgyzstan, was not new in its composition. Most of them hold *nomenklatura* positions during the Soviet era. In other words, the majority of the present political elite in Kyrgyzstan came from the Soviet political elite structure. Therefore, we argue that

there is a continuity between the old Soviet elites and the new Kyrgyz political elites. The majority of the present political elites have been members of the Communist Party (87,8 percent) and held higher positions in both the Communist Party and Soviet government and administrative structures. Thus, the transition process in Kyrgyzstan had been managed by political elite, largely inherited from Soviet period. The President, prime-ministers, members of government, members of Parliament and regional leaders were mostly people who worked for the Soviet party, government and administrative structures and spend their political life in the ranks of CPSU.

On the other hand, the political culture of the old communist elites reflected the political culture of a totalitarian society. This is also reflected in the political culture of the post-Soviet elite in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, present political elite scarcely can be called democratic. Research shows that present political elite is not democratic in its nature, and political, social and economic changes did not improve the condition of the political elite in Kyrgyzstan in qualitative terms.

Today, the Kyrgyz native political traditions and political culture also influence the nature of political change in the country. In this context, one of the most important factors in Kyrgyzstan is tribalism, which (together with Soviet culture) has made democratization and economic reforms difficult to be realized. Patron-client networks, regionalism and tribalism, which were important in the last decades of the Soviet period, continue to play a key role. Tribal networks are more complex and less transparent. It poses the restrictive characteristic of political life and affects the close character of elite structure as well as creates obstacles to the competitive nature of elite selection.

This structure prevents the Kyrgyz society to be a nation. Independence has been evaluated as a chance to become a nation state. Although Kyrgyzstan attempts to become a nation-state, there are certain problems regarding the tribes and clans. Kyrgyz politics is still defined on the basis of these groups. The attempts coming from the government to bring these different clans and tribes together around a common ideal are too weak.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

All of the ex-Soviet republics today are undergoing a process of transition from authoritarian regimes to democratic political structures. In 1991 Kyrgyzstan proclaimed its commitment to Western style democracy and market economy. In the first years it showed strong willingness to establish democracy and market economy. It was stated at the time that Kyrgyzstan attained some progress in building up a democratic state and a market economy. However, the aim of democratization and liberalization proved hard to be implemented. The attempts to pursue democratization and market reforms simultaneously produced severe difficulties. It was argued that political and economic factors prevented further development of democracy and market reforms in Kyrgyzstan. The level of economic development since independence also impeded the democratic development. Two political factors: elite continuity and political culture in the form of *tribalism* played a major role in preventing the development of democracy and market economy. These factors negatively effected and prevented democratization in Kyrgyzstan resulting in the

reversal of authoritarian rule. Today, in case of Kyrgyzstan, transition still goes on. Therefore we can analyze only interim results of this transition.

Since economic and political factors are products of historical, cultural, political and economic aspects of development, the historical development of the Kyrgyz and present situation in Kyrgyzstan are important. The way in which political, economic, cultural and ideological issues were interrelated in the pre-Soviet and Soviet period has profoundly affected the nature of political change in the country.

As far the economic conditions, sudden and unexpected dissolution of the Soviet Union posed serious problems for Kyrgyzstan. It had to solve two basic and interrelated economic issues. First it was necessary to adopt policies of economic development. Second, it was necessary to form and adjust to a newly emerging national economy.

Kyrgyzstan was also among the countries that underwent economic transition to market economy. Since independence, Kyrgyzstan proclaimed its commitment to a market economy, based upon a variety of forms of ownership. Initially Kyrgyzstan, as compared to its neighbors, did not have the advantages of rich natural resources, favorable geographical location, fertile land and developed and diversified industry. In contrast, it had few natural resources, non-advantageous geography and an economy that was based mainly on agricultural production. However, economic transformation of Kyrgyzstan into a liberal market economy started very rapidly. The country realized various economic reforms, curbed hyperinflation and stabilized macroeconomic situation. Kyrgyzstan required large amounts of investments to rehabilitate, modernize and restructure its economy. Kyrgyzstan received a high level

of financial assistance and foreign direct investment from international financial organizations and donor-countries. While some impressive achievements have been made, it is undeniable that Kyrgyzstan still has a long way to go before it develops a system based on the principles of market economy.

However, these economic reforms were not sufficient in bringing about democracy. The Russian economic crisis of 1998 demonstrated the vulnerability of Kyrgyz economy. Post-independence economic development was difficult and did not lead to prosperity. Economic reforms have not reached their goals. Generally, it can be argued that economic reforms failed. The impact of a decade of economic decline on Kyrgyzstan's population has also implicitly effected democratization. Weak economic development in tact with social problems like poverty and decline in standards of living, further postponed transition to democracy. Current political leadership of Kyrgyzstan failed to provide economic liberalization and to bring about market economy. Thus, economy could not support democratic development. The economic policy choices of the Kyrgyz political elite have profound implications for the future of the country. At least in the first decade of independence the inability of political leadership to respond to the difficult economic circumstances, that are economic crisis the country confronted, led to economic failure that resulted in solidification of authoritarian rule in Kyrgyzstan.

In the introductory chapter of the present study we proposed that Samuel Huntington's patterns of regime change adapted to the case of Kyrgyzstan as **A-d-A/a** would be helpful in explaining the political and economic situation in the country. In fact, at the beginning, Kyrgyzstan showed strong attachment to the process of political and economic liberalization and was among the countries of the

third wave of democratization. Unfortunately, Kyrgyzstan was unsuccessful in its transition to democracy and market economy. The last two decades in Kyrgyzstan showed that the development of democracy and democratization process in the country since independence were short-lived and could not turn the country into a stable and consolidated democratic state. The shift toward anti-democratic practice of authoritarianism that started after 1995 as a result of both the creation of a powerful presidency and development (flourish) of local political culture in the form of tribalism, as well as failure of economic reforms, prevented further democratization in Kyrgyzstan. The attempts to construct democratic political institutions in the country have been coupled with the political crisis (dissolution of parliament in 1993), weak representation of popular interests (ineffective political parties), executive-legislature conflict, and faltering effects of constitutional revision. Political culture inherited from historical perspectives has been authoritarian and this legacy inevitably shaped and constrained democratization process. The political culture of the Kyrgyz elite has political subculture of communist-totalitarian tradition intensified with tribalism. Today it is clear that the present political elite (that is mostly composed of the old Soviet *nomenklatura* elite) and the mixture of the political culture of tribalism and the Soviet political culture will unlikely produce a democratic drive. In fact, democratic ideas and elements are still very weak to be effective in influencing general and political culture. Despite the changes in political, social and economic spheres, the formation of a new and democratic political culture is not accomplished yet. This study also demonstrates that one of the most important problems in the transition was/is the incompatibility of the new political institutions with the political culture of the Kyrgyz people. At least constitutionally, the new

political institutions are democratic in nature, while the masses of the Kyrgyz population have never had any democratic experience. The outcome of our study suggests that there is a far greater conservativeness of the old political culture. It is evident that present political culture in Kyrgyzstan contains two basic layers: traditional and the Soviet, that affect political behavior of the masses.

We suggest that Kyrgyzstan should move away from authoritarian rule and continue the initial practice of transition to democracy. The change of regime can again make the issues of democracy and liberalization viable. Previous political, economic, cultural, and social conditions may very well act as constraints decreasing the development of democracy. At least there is some need for certain changes regarding the preconditions elaborated in this thesis. Therefore, urgent steps should be taken to transform Kyrgyzstan into a modern democratic state. It is obvious that the emergence and development of democratic elite will take a long time. However, this notwithstanding the new democratic minded elites should replace the existing ones. The constitutional reform is needed to have a parliament formed on the basis of multi-party elections. An established multi-party system will have considerable effect on the elections in the following years. The development of political parties may also prevent the spread of tribalism. One way of preventing tribalism is to change the existing election law with its single-person constituency as well as its compulsory requirement of a three-year residence at the same region from which the candidates are elected. The political arena should be opened up for more political participation and new patterns of elite recruitment should be developed. The development of political parties as channels of large-scale participation should be supported. It is necessary to create certain legislative and financial conditions for

their development. The possibility of people's participation and representation in government and decision-making process should be opened. There is a need for regular elections. It seems that democratic political culture can play a major role in transforming political culture, mentality and consciousness of the Kyrgyz people in favor of democracy. There is a hope that democratic culture will be established since cultural systems are subject to dynamic change. Therefore, one of the major issues of reforming the Kyrgyz state and society is transformation of political culture on the basis of democracy. The Kyrgyz society needs to be prepared to the new democratic "rules of the game." Without changing the existing political culture, it seems difficult to reach democracy and fulfill overall transformation to democratic values and principles.

In economic sphere it is necessary to provide essential conditions for the development of market economy. Market mechanisms should be freely set at and any obstacles to the development of market mechanism should be eliminated. Development of market economy will increase economic growth and lead to prosperity; as such it will hopefully have positive effect on democracy by creating resources for political parties and groups in society. It is clear that liberal economy as an engine of further political and socio-economic development and change for a post-communist Kyrgyzstan will favor the emergence and maintenance of a stable democracy.

It is obvious that Kyrgyzstan should fully democratize its politics and economy by creating powerful mechanisms, widespread participation of its people into political and economic affairs, and extending the political rights and freedoms of its citizens.

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