

teim



TEIM Election Watch Analysis

PRE-ELECTION ANALYSIS:

Kyrgyzstan/Legislative elections 2010

Rubén Ruiz

Latest revision: 12 December 2010

Observatorio Electoral

Taller de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

www.election-watch.org

ISSN: being processed

www.observatorioelectoral.es

Kyrgyzstan heads into its legislative elections on 10 October immersed in a crisis of political instability. In just two months between April and June, the country experienced the overthrow by force of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and then the violent conflict that developed in the southern provinces of Osh and Jalal-Abad. The latter event a wave of violence and destruction unleashed against the country's Uzbek community. The numbers are compelling: more than 2,000 deaths, the displacement of more than 400,000 people according to UNHCR, 100,000 of them refugees in Uzbek territory, as well as the burning and/or destruction of 2,500 homes, more than 100 shops and 10 markets and government buildings. Two weeks later, a previously scheduled referendum took place, to decide the reform of the country's constitution. Official results gave a broad victory to the "yes" vote, giving birth to, according to the new authorities, the first parliamentary republic in Central Asia. However, the new system of government is more semi-presidential than parliamentary, given that the president is elected elections for a six-year term, maintains control of the armed forces and other security institutions, can veto all laws except those relating to budgets and fiscal policy, and ultimately, may dissolve Parliament. Roza Otunbayeva, the current president will remain in office until 1 January 2011, thus postponing the presidential contest a year and a half after the fall of Bakiyev.

Two major problems have come to light in Kyrgyzstan since 07 April: firstly, the interim government's inability to monopolise both authority and the use of force over the entire Kyrgyz territory, something which became starkly manifest this past June; secondly, the extreme difficulty in stabilising the country at the political and institutional level. Part of the problem is that since taking power, the leaders of the coalition that has formed the government, have devoted more effort to their particular struggle for power than to stabilising the country, an attitude all the more serious given that any chance of democratisation relies on said stabilisation. The tension and accusations of all kinds between the Kyrgyz political leaders raise the degree of uncertainty about the elections in a country with a long tradition of electoral fraud and two revolutions to its credit, of which one was post-electoral.

The upcoming elections entail three challenges for Kyrgyzstan's institutional stabilisation: that the electoral process go ahead peacefully, that once the parliament is in place a new government can be formed, and finally that the legislature function effectively under the new system. The number of seats in the Kyrgyz parliament will increase from 90 to 120 members elected on party lists, with a maximum of 65 members for the same party. In these elections, the electoral system of 2007 will be maintained, with the addition of two thresholds limiting those who integrate the Parliament: one of 5% applicable throughout the national territory and another of 0.5% for each region. This peculiarity increases the risk of conflict in October, given that in at least one region there are a minimum of ten political parties of consequence, which will not, however, all be able to get past these thresholds, thus leading to potential cases of manipulation, in which some parties try to prevent their rivals from reaching the regional 0.5%, as occurred in 2007 with Ata Meken. Such a highly controversial system even opens the possibility that no political party exceed the two thresholds, or that the most voted party does not do so in a certain region.

The proliferation of new political parties since April, both among the coalition that led the opposition to Bakiyev, as well as among those who took part in the pro-Bakiyev power structures increases the risk of conflict. In the first group, the existing parties – the Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK)

led by Almazbek Atambayev, Ata-Meken led by Omurbek Tekebayev, Ak Shumkar led by Temir Sariev, the Birikken Eldik Kyimyly party (BEK) led by Azimbek Beknazarov, and Akyikat party, led by Alikbek Jekshenkulov – have been joined by newly created parties mounted by opposition leaders who have preferred to form their own parties rather than integrate existing ones. These include Azzatyk headed by Ismail Isakov and Aikol El headed by Edil Baisalov. Moreover, since June several senior members from the Bakiyev period have launched their own parties to take part in the race in opposition to the Otunbayeva government and to all those who have formed the provisional post-Bakiyev government. These include: Ata Zhurt headed by Tashiev and Keldibekov; Sodryshestvo headed by Suvanaliev, Mamyтов and Bayguttyev; Respublika led by Babanov; and Butun Kyrgyzstan fronted by Adaja Madumarov. As well as the above categories, there are three further political parties that cannot be ignored: Ar-Namys led by former Prime Minister Kulov; the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan and Erk. Finally, there are also those who make just sporadic appearances, but whose presence is destabilising given the weakness of the state. In closing, it is predicted at present, that between five and seven parties will make it into parliament, the favourites being Ata Meken, the SDPK, Ata Zhurt and Respublika.