

Constraining Democratic Development: Institutions and Party System Formation in Kyrgyzstan

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The collapse of communism left Kyrgyzstan, as well as other postcommunist states, with the remnants of its previous political system and little foundation for a new multiparty system. The development of stable party systems in the former Soviet Union is essential not only to the internal security of each state but also to the stability of the region as a whole. As part of developing democracy, the newly independent states face many similar processes and problems in forming multiparty systems. Kyrgyzstan has been dubbed the bright light of democracy in Central Asia, yet only the first semblances of a party system are beginning to arise. As recent events demonstrate, a conclusion that Kyrgyzstan is or is not democratic would be premature.¹

Like all of the other post-Soviet republics, Kyrgyzstan faces not only the burdensome task of developing new political institutions but also the constraints of the institutional legacy of socialism. Two such institutional constraints stand out in particular. Kyrgyzstan's 1993 constitution preserved the majority electoral system; however, in the unsettled political circumstances, it is challenged by many political actors who prefer proportional representation or a mixed system over the majority system. Although well intended and again *prima facie* a step toward greater democracy, another institutional influence that had serious implications to party system development was the October 1994 amendment/supplement to the parliamentary electoral law, which included provisions allowing public associations and "local communities" (essentially local government councils) to field candidates alongside political parties, labor collectives, meetings of voters at their place of residence, and self-nominated candidates.

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The purpose of this article is to analyze the institutional influences involved in the emergence and formation of a party system in Kyrgyzstan during the initial period of the transition from a single-party system to a multiparty system. I will demonstrate that the political institutions of Kyrgyzstan are deleterious to the development of a stable party system. My discussion will be limited to analyzing the institutional influences on party system formation in Kyrgyzstan within the framework laid out in Western literature on the relationship between institutions and party systems as it is relevant to the context of post-Soviet political transformation. I will analyze the various ways that the institutions and their components affect political parties and the party system in Kyrgyzstan and show that the specific institutional characteristics of the political system in Kyrgyzstan—including the majority electoral system, ballot access provisions, registration requirements, campaign financing and timing regulations, campaign length, ballot format, electoral commissions, the presidency, and the scheduling of elections—constrain the development of Kyrgyzstan's party system.

In the study of political systems, in general, and party systems, in particular, institutions have long been considered important. Institutions not only form the arenas in which relations among political actors are played out, they also—whether it be the electoral system, electoral laws, electoral commissions, parliaments, presidencies, or constitutions—affect the behavior of the political actors and, in turn, are affected by them. Institutions respond to their environments and simultaneously create those environments. Institutions influence such aspects of the party system as the number of parties, the types of parties, electoral strategies, and coalitions. Restrictive electoral rules, for instance, may even inhibit the formation of new political parties. Many of the political actors, including political parties and movements, operating within their institutional arenas often evolve into institutions themselves. Institutions, in and of themselves, become crucial actors in the evolution of a state's party system and political system. In the post-communist transitions recently embarked upon, for instance, the radical realignment of political institutions has had profound effects on the political systems.

Of course, institutional influences are not the only factors involved in shaping the formation of a party system in Kyrgyzstan. Arend Lijphart, for instance, incorporates eight issue dimensions (socioeconomic, religious, cultural-ethnic, urban-rural, regime support, foreign policy, and post-materialism) as important factors that, along with electoral systems, shape the development of party systems.² These issue dimensions resemble the social cleavages that Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan view as critical determinants of a party system.³ Lijphart, however, does not consider these sociological factors as the determinants of a party system; instead he views them as *influences*, along with institutional factors such as the electoral system.

As the Western literature on party systems suggests, these issue dimensions or social cleavages lead to the appearance of numerous parties during the initial stages of party system formation, but institutional factors eventually force them to consolidate into a party system with simple or moderate pluralism. The incipient party system in Kyrgyzstan has yet to reach the point of consolidation, by

which I mean a strengthening of the party system through the merger of parties based on similar programmatic and policy orientations, as opposed to the disjointed, idiosyncratic, personality-based parties that make up the party system of today. The neophyte parties are only beginning to consolidate their own structures, and new political parties are still emerging. Instead of fostering a consolidation of the party system, the political institutions in Kyrgyzstan actually impede its further development.

The Electoral System and Election Regulations

Majority System

The majority system is used for all elected posts in Kyrgyzstan, that is, a second round is required for the two top candidates if none of the competitors received 50 percent plus one of the votes. It is a carryover from the Gorbachev (and pre-Gorbachev) Soviet electoral system. The Constitution of Kyrgyzstan adopted in May 1993 and the January 1994 Law on Elections to the Jogorku Kenesh (the Kyrgyz equivalent of the parliament, formerly known as the Supreme Soviet) officially maintained the majority system of the 1989 Law on Election of the Supreme Soviet of (then) Kirghizia after the declaration of independence in 1991. Despite calls for proportional representation and multimember districts, even at the time the 1989 law on elections was adopted, the majority system continues to be retained. Retained also is the majority turnout requirement, which mandates that for elections in a district to be deemed valid at least 50 percent plus one of the registered voters must have voted.

The party system is still in its incipient stage and is subject to multiple influences. Despite that, some of the institutionalist assertions of traditional Western theories of party systems hold true, fully or at least in part. For example, Duverger's Hypothesis, which states that "the simple-majority with second ballot [the majority system] and proportional representation favor multi-partism,"⁴ precariously holds true for Kyrgyzstan. In Kyrgyzstan, the lack of factors inhibiting the development of multipartism is apparent. Currently, there are fifteen registered political parties in Kyrgyzstan. They are:

- Agrarian Party
- Agrarian-Labor Party
- Asaba (Party of national Revival)
- Ata-Meken (Fatherland)
- Birimdik (People's Party of Kyrgyzstan)
- Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan
- Democratic Movement Kyrgyzstan (DDK)
- Democratic Party for the Economic Unity of Kyrgyzstan
- Democratic Women's Party Ecological Party
- Erkin Kyrgyzstan (Free Kyrgyzstan)
- Manas El (People of Manas)
- Republican Party of Unity

Republican People's Party
Social Democratic Party

Several parties have fragmented, and efforts to merge political parties into larger units have proved to be short-lived and unsuccessful. However, the multipartism has not translated, as Duverger and other adherents to his hypothesis would believe, directly into a fragmented parliament. In fact, the difficulty neophyte political parties faced in reaching the 50 percent-plus-one vote thresholds was exacerbated in Kyrgyzstan by the liberal ballot access provisions discussed below. Political parties won only one-third of the 105 seats in the Jogorku Kenesh. Incidentally, the fragmentation in the Jogorku Kenesh resulted not from too many parties but from too few. The current Jogorku Kenesh consists mostly of deputies nominated by entities other than political parties or by self-nomination, and the paucity of representatives of political parties prevents any coherency in the parliament.

Confirming the validity of Matthew Shugart and John Carey's observations regarding the majority system, parties in Kyrgyzstan are disinclined to coalesce. In general, parties run separately in order to either (1) place second, make the runoff election, and attract support from those that did not qualify for the second round, or (2) enhance their bargaining position with one of the two parties in the runoff; for example, a party may offer its support in the second round in exchange for policy or office concessions.⁵ In a majority system, parties tend not to form coalitions and therefore remain independent of one another. In Kyrgyzstan, where the self-delusion of politicians also plays a role, there have been very few coalitions, and those that did emerge shortly fell apart. For example, the Congress of Democratic Forces attempted to unify the opposition parties in September 1994, but it quickly fell apart when the centrist parties realized that any potential electoral benefits would not be substantial enough to exceed the disadvantages that would accompany being associated with the radical stances advanced by Erkin Kyrgyzstan and the Communist Party.

The 1995 presidential election in Kyrgyzstan is another case in point. At the start of the campaign, four opposition candidates, Omurbek Tekebaev, of the Ata Meken party; Absamat Masaliev, of the Communist Party; Medetkan Sherimkulov, nominated by public associations; and Mamat Aibalaev, nominated by voters at their place of residence and labor collectives, held a joint press conference on 5 December 1995. During the press conference, the four candidates announced that to attain greater reach with their resources, they had agreed to campaign together but maintain independent platforms.⁶ Although relatively few joint campaign activities transpired, this loose coalition indicated that, despite significant differences among them, they were willing to work together to oust President Askar Akaev. The four candidates were willing to boost each other's publicity in the hope that minimally strong showings by each candidate would be enough to force a runoff with President Akaev. It was rumored that the three who would not qualify into the second round would then support the one who did. This fueled speculation that the sudden decision by the Supreme Court to revoke the candidacy of three candidates, Aibalaev, Tekebaev, and Dzhumgalbek Amanbaev,

just one week before the election was prompted by Akaev's fear that an election with six candidates could have diluted the vote and embarrassingly forced Akaev into a runoff. Electoral results in Osh and Dzhinal-Abad oblasts, where President Akaev barely received a majority, indicated that that could have happened. The type of "joint campaign" mentioned above, however, did not further the development of the party system in Kyrgyzstan. It was based solely on tactical opportunities and did not entail the selection of one candidate to represent the four; nor did it even incorporate a joint election platform.

The use of a majority system in Kyrgyzstan, as in other states, creates in each constituency a zero-sum game—in the end, only one candidate is elected and all others are not. The focus on individual candidates that is characteristic of majority (and plurality) systems detracts from party development. This is especially true in Kyrgyzstan because of its extremely liberal ballot access rules that in many cases allowed ten or more candidates per seat. Because of the focus on individuals, charismatic party leaders were able to win seats; however, with eleven parties sharing about thirty of the 105 seats, only party leaders, and in a few cases one or two other party representatives, were elected. Furthermore, given the intricacies of politics in Kyrgyzstan, politicians are popular because of support from the local administration or the dominant clan; therefore, potential candidates can be successful without party support. The stigma against parties (stemming from the association of the term "party" with the Communist Party), which is prevalent in most postcommunist states, actually hinders a candidate's chances in many cases.

As a result of a majority system, parties consistently receiving less than 20 percent of the vote most usually do not qualify into the second rounds and thus do not attain representation in parliament. Parties consistently placing second, with more than 20 percent of the vote in the first round, in most states generally win at least some seats in the second round, if they receive support from parties not qualifying for the second ballot. In presidential elections that usually strengthens political parties through the forging of coalitions and blocs that eventually may evolve into consolidated, larger parties. In parliamentary elections, the winner of a constituency becomes a deputy in parliament, and unless that deputy's party is large enough to form a government and the party that offered the support in the second round is represented in the parliament, the incentive for such second-round coalescing is lost.

The two preconditions necessary for second-round coalescing to be worthwhile virtually did not exist in Kyrgyzstan. First, the electoral dominance of candidates nominated by entities other than political parties or by self-nomination

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prevented any one party (or group of parties) from winning enough seats to form a majority coalition; therefore, no party or parties were in a position to assign government posts. And second, the smaller parties that would be pledging second-round support won so few seats (if any) that the disadvantages of coalescing outweigh any potential benefits. In presidential elections, on the other hand, advantages are real because, if elected, the candidate has the power to appoint supporters to government posts. Hence, parties in Kyrgyzstan have decided not to form firm coalitions, and the party system has not undergone a consolidation of political forces.

Ballot Access

Shortly after the 22 October 1994 referendum creating a bicameral parliament, President Akaev issued a decree significantly inhibiting the development of political parties in Kyrgyzstan. The decree amended/supplemented the existing electoral law and provisions in the constitution regarding which types of organizations are eligible to nominate candidates to elected office. The constitution gives to political parties the right “to participate in the affairs of the state only in the following forms: to nominate their candidates for the election to the Jogorku Kenesh, state posts and to bodies of local self-government; [and] to form factions in representative bodies.”⁷ Furthermore, the Law on Public Associations, which applies to political parties, refers only to political parties as having the right to nominate candidates in parliamentary elections. However, Akaev issued the aforementioned decree to extend that right to public associations and “local communities” as well. As a result, nonpolitical organizations, that is, public associations, can field candidates in parliamentary elections. The effect of Akaev’s decree has been that the already muddled distinction between political parties and public associations, resulting from the lack of a law solely addressing the unique characteristics of political parties, becomes virtually nonexistent.

Minister of Justice Mukar Cholponbaev (who later was elected speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Jogorku Kenesh), opined that the decree extending to public associations the right of nomination of deputy candidates was unconstitutional.⁸ He explained that the constitution, as cited above, grants this right to political parties; public associations are not mentioned in that context. According to Cholponbaev, a productive parliament and a democratic Kyrgyzstan depend on the development of strong political parties. The result of the presidential decree was the opposite—it weakened political parties. Only about one-third (36 of 105 seats) of the newly elected Jogorku Kenesh consists of representatives of political parties, eleven of which are represented. With each deputy, including those not representing parties, pulling his or her own way, the parliament became so bogged down in disputes that it was unable to proceed with legislation needed to carry out reforms. As a result, frustrated with the Jogorku Kenesh’s inefficiency, Akaev initiated the 10 February 1996 referendum on amendments to the constitution, which transferred considerable power from the parliament to the presidency.

The extension to public associations of the right to nominate candidates weak-

ens political parties by removing their special status of being the only public organizations allowed to nominate candidates, diluting their strength by adding competition from organizations not solely concerned with politics. Furthermore, it retards the development of political parties by undermining their efforts to unite similar political and ideological interests. Public associations also are weakened because they may be forced to compromise their specific goals in efforts to gain votes. Public associations may begin to seek alliances with political parties and/or other public associations representing other particular interests. Forming alliances requires organizations to make compromises to accommodate interests of the alliance or coalition. As the evolution of new political parties in developed democracies has shown, a party's *raison d'être* shifts from one of constituent representation to one of party competition and vote maximization. When public associations begin to concentrate on vote maximization, their function of protecting the interests of their constituents is diluted. For instance, if a public association devoted to the rights of orphans fields candidates in elections, it must divert funds and attention away from its primary purpose to election campaigns. In contrast, finding a balance between defending a broad platform of many interests and maximizing votes is a primary concern of political parties. When public associations are allowed to compete with political parties in elections, the best interests of both are compromised.

This is not to diminish the role that public associations play in democracy building. They play a crucial role in the development of civil society, a key concept in contemporary post-Soviet studies. One of the most useful definitions from the point of view of postcommunist studies defines civil society as "the realm of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state and bound by a legal order or set of shared values."⁹ Civil society consists of various formal and informal organizations, including economic, cultural, religious, informational, and issue-oriented groups. More specifically, civil society incorporates professional associations, musical enthusiasts, ethnic movements, clergy, environmental movements, the media, and trade unions. Excluded from the definition are private society (family) and political society (the party system). The distinction between civil society and political society lies in the strategic electoral nature of political parties. The driving goal of political parties is to receive votes; hence, they tend to become what Otto Kirchheimer calls catch-all parties and follow Herbert Kitschelt's "logic of party competition," a characteristic public associations cannot afford to have.

Before Akaev issued the decree amending the parliamentary election law, candidates could be fielded by labor collectives, by meetings of electors at their place of residence, and by self-nomination, as well as by political parties. Though candidates nominated by these entities also dilute the vote, competition from these groups does not have the same negative impact on political parties as does competition from public associations, since many public associations are national organizations, whereas the other groups generally have only very localized support. Individual labor collectives, meetings of electors at their place of residence, and self-nominated candidates may present significant competition for individual

candidates nominated by political parties, but that competition is restricted to the specific areas where those groups are located. Many public associations, on the other hand, are structured, national bodies with national recognition that compete with parties at all levels. Associated with the extension to local communities, that is, the local keneshes, of the right to nominate candidates to the Jogorku Kenesh is another problem, in that akims (the powerful heads of local state administration) and bodies of local state administration (which generally control the local keneshes) can extend their power to the national level.

To counteract the advantages of candidates supported by local state administration and to prevent the vote from being further diluted by institutional provisions allowing competition from public associations, labor collectives, and other groups, a very loose set of alliances among political parties emerged during the parliamentary election period. Though candidates were nominated by each party separately, some, including the Communist Party, worked collectively in certain districts to keep candidates of participating parties from running against each other.¹⁰ In some districts only one candidate per district was nominated from the "bloc" member parties.¹¹ These loose blocs were one reason that parties nominated so few deputy candidates. Although there were 105 seats available, most parties nominated only about twenty candidates each, except for the Communist and Social Democratic parties, which eventually registered about forty each. Such loose blocs, like the joint campaign of Aibalaev, Masaliev, Sherimkulov, and Tekebaev, did not further the development of political parties. They were based on short-term, tactical electoral strategies rather than long-term, structural party-building efforts. In fact, they actually curtailed party development. Because candidates were not required to reside in the districts where they stood for election, party leaders chose to run in less-competitive districts, a practice facilitated by the blocs. As a result, party leaders won seats, but in most cases few, if any, other party members won seats. Without backing from fellow party members in the Jogorku Kenesh, the elected party leaders had little leverage.

President Akaev's decision to extend to public associations the right to nominate candidates to the Jogorku Kenesh was a reversion to Gorbachev's electoral reforms that gave public association the right to nominate (and in the case of one-third of the parliament, to elect) candidates to the Congress of People's Deputies in 1989. Although the 1989 Law on Elections to the Supreme Soviet of Kirghizia for the 1990 elections did not include such a provision, it did allow nominations from various bodies, including labor and other collectives and local communities. As a result, in both the 1989 and 1990 elections numerous candidates were nominated per seat, as was the case in the 1995 Jogorku Kenesh elections. However, the high number of nominations in 1989 and 1990 was reduced by "pre-election meetings" that filtered the candidates per district to one, two, or three in 1989, and to no more than eight in 1990. This filtering resulted in very low ratios of candidate to seats, 1.8:1 in 1989, and 2.5:1 in 1990.¹² The much-criticized and undemocratic pre-election meetings were not incorporated into the 1994 election law. As the law stood in January 1994, nominations were allowed from political parties, work collectives, voters at their place of residence, and self-nomination. As

a result, when Akaev added public associations and local communities, the already potentially high number of candidates per district was compounded by the addition of two more types of nominating. In the election that followed, 1,054 candidates contested 105 seats (10:1); only 161 of the candidates represented political parties.¹³ Although it appeared to broaden democracy—allowing more types of groups to participate directly in elections—Akaev’s decree actually stunted democratic progress in Kyrgyzstan by facilitating the election of a fragmented parliament. The stalemate in parliament, in turn, led to a consolidation of presidential power in the February 1996 plebiscite.

Candidate Registration: Requirements and the Judiciary

The parliamentary election law required candidates to collect 500 signatures in support of their candidacy from constituents in their districts and to provide a monetary deposit of five minimum monthly salaries, which for the 1995 parliamentary elections amounted to 340 soms (about US \$33). These requirements were not huge and did not hinder candidates from being registered, even in cases where candidates did not reside in the districts in which they were running. In fact, the minimal registration requirements allowed (and even encouraged) politicians to register as independents and thus not have to seek support from political parties.

Compared with the parliamentary candidate registration requirements, the registration requirements for the two presidential elections in 1991 and 1995 were considerably more restrictive. In October 1991, the electoral law required a candidate to collect 25,000 signatures from throughout the republic, a large though not insurmountable number; however, prospective candidates without an existing support network found it impossible to collect the signatures in the two weeks given to do so. According to Dilip Hiro’s *Between Marx and Mohammed*, Akaev pushed the law through the Supreme Soviet to head off a potentially strong challenge from Dzhumgalbek Amanbaev.¹⁴ Amanbaev was unable to collect the necessary signatures in the short time allowed, and President Akaev ran unopposed. Because the restrictive registration requirements precluded a competitive election, the 1991 presidential election did not provide Kyrgyzstan’s neophyte parties with the opportunity to gain the experience they needed and that elections usually provide.

By the time of the registration period for the subsequent presidential election, in December 1995, several political parties had developed enough infrastructure to support candidates, particularly with regard to the collection of the 50,000 requisite signatures.¹⁵ According to the opposition, Akaev was threatened by a multitude of candidates, which potentially could dilute the vote, and therefore, pressured the Central Commission on Elections to issue an “explanation” requiring the 50,000 signatures to be collected proportionally from each of the six oblasts. Significant controversy surrounded the 50,000 signature requirement. Candidates argued that the explanation violated the election law and was unconstitutional. They pointed to Article 8 of the Law on Elections of the President and to Article 44, Paragraph 3 of the Constitution. Both state that candidates must collect not less than 50,000 voter signatures in their support. There is no mention of where

the signatures must be gathered. The sudden change in the requirement unfairly placed significant financial and time constraints on the nominated candidates. A leader of the Erkin Kyrgyzstan Party, Tursuibok Bakir uulu, was denied registration because his signatures, though well over the required number, did not meet the oblast quotas. He later unsuccessfully challenged the oblast quota in the Supreme Court.

Furthermore, candidates expressed their opinion that during the verification process signatures were unjustly invalidated. Supporters of Yuruslan Toichubekov had collected enough signatures per oblast, but after the verification process the number of signatures fell below the required quotas in Issyk Kol and Naryn

“Since political parties in Kyrgyzstan are still very small, election commissions at the lower levels included very few, if any, representatives from opposition parties.”

oblasts, and Toichubekov was denied registration. He also unsuccessfully appealed to the Supreme Court, claiming akims arbitrarily disqualified signatures to keep totals below oblast quotas.¹⁶ Other candidates also reported numerous cases of improprieties by local administration, such as exerting pressure on candidate supporters and obstructing their

activity. Mamat Aibalaev, for instance, reported that two of his supporters in Osh Oblast were dismissed from their jobs without legitimate reasons.¹⁷ After the verification process was completed, six candidates were registered: Mamat Aibalaev, Askar Akaev, Dzhumgalbek Amanbaev, Absamat Masaliev, Medetkan Sherimkulov, and Omurbek Tekebaev.

Not only did institutional factors (the electoral rules) inhibit potential candidates from being registered, but the judiciary also intervened to limit the number of candidates. Eleven days before the election, the Supreme Court revoked the registrations of Aibalaev, Amanbaev, and Tekebaev, based on allegations that citizens whose names were on lists of signatures in support of the three candidates had submitted letters indicating they did not support those candidates and had never signed any such lists, as well as other alleged improprieties brought forth by the procurator general. The three candidates protested that evidence presented before the Supreme Court was falsified, misconstrued, and incomplete, and argued that the Supreme Court acted outside its jurisdiction when it issued the decision to revoke their registration.¹⁸ Nonetheless, some candidates did admit that there were cases of “family signing,” in which one person signed for other family members. International observers in Naryn inspected the lists and confirmed that some signatures looked unusually similar, but they also stated that they saw the same problem with Akaev’s list of signatures. Election officials admitted to the observers that they were not as diligent when checking the signatures in support of Akaev as they were with those supporting other candidates.¹⁹ Two days before the election, and in conjunction with a hunger strike, the candi-

dates petitioned the Constitutional Court to reinstate their candidacy. The next day the Constitutional Court ruled that such issues were not under its jurisdiction and reaffirmed the decision of the Central Commission on Elections to revoke their candidacy.

There was a widely held belief among the opposition that the presence of five opposition candidates would have diluted the vote and forced a runoff election. Of the three candidates whose registration was revoked, Amanbaev had the most support, particularly in Issyk Kol and Naryn. International observers in Naryn oblast learned from election officials there that Amanbaev could have received as much as 90 percent of the vote in some of the districts in that oblast because of his agricultural background and platform.²⁰

The registration requirements for the presidential elections and the actions of the Supreme Court harmed Kyrgyzstan's party system by restraining its competitiveness. The insurmountable registration requirements, particularly because they arose so soon before the election, prevented political parties from registering candidates. Likewise, revocation of candidates' registrations limited manageable competition within the party system. Competition among parties and the confidence that the competition exists is essential to prevent postcommunist party systems from reverting to one-party-dominated systems.

Campaign Financing and Timing Regulations

In another carryover from the Soviet electoral system, candidates were precluded from using private funds to finance campaign activities.²¹ Parliamentary election campaigns were funded solely by district election commissions. Candidates wishing to use additional funds, including personal or party funds, were required to submit all nonofficial campaign funds to the district election commission, which would then disburse the funds equally among all candidates in that district. This restriction inhibited candidates who adhered to the law, while those who disregarded the law (which was not difficult to get away with) and used personal funds attained an unfair advantage. Also, the restriction diminished the effectiveness of already scarce funds by diluting them among all the candidates. During the last few days of the campaign, the Central Commission on Elections, realizing that it was not possible to enforce the regulation, allowed candidates to use personal funds and, as a result, effected considerable confusion. Furthermore, as noted by one international observer, "the involvement of the government in the actual disbursement of campaign funds and in the production of campaign materials can lead to serious abuses in terms of favoritism and curtailment of free expression."²²

One of the greatest benefits political parties provide candidates is financial backing. Precluding such funding eliminated one of the incentives to join parties. Moreover, because this important advantage of party-backed candidates was eliminated, parties in Kyrgyzstan were denied the incentive to further develop their infrastructures and support bases, the use of which was not fully allowed. Further disinclining candidates to seek association with political parties was the small financial commitment needed to run for a parliamentary seat. The inex-

pensive election campaign encouraged numerous candidates to run in each district and again hindered political parties by further diluting the vote.

During the presidential campaign, opposition candidates continually protested the unfairness of the election campaign. Article 10 of the election law stipulates that all registered candidates participate in the campaign on an equal basis and have equal rights to the use of the mass media. The law continues: "All registered candidates are provided with equal *opportunities* to use material, technical, and financial resources for the election campaign" (emphasis added). Use of the term *opportunities* allowed the Central Commission on Elections to disregard obvious disparities among the candidates' campaigns by legally arguing that all of the candidates had equal opportunities but some used them more wisely.

As mentioned earlier, to counteract the one-sidedness of the state media and the pervasiveness of incumbent Akaev's campaign, four candidates (Aibalaev, Masaliev, Sherimkulov, and Tekebaev) announced plans to campaign together to conserve scarce resources and more effectively communicate their messages to voters. They believed that by appearing together they could draw larger crowds at rallies and thus have greater impact on voters. They emphasized that although they were campaigning together, each maintained a separate platform.²³ Their joint appearance nonetheless evoked the possibility of a future coalition, bloc, or party uniting two or more of the political leaders. This was a move Aibalaev hinted may have been possible had there been more time,²⁴ though Sherimkulov did not seem as enthusiastic.²⁵ The other two candidates, Tekebaev and Masaliev, already headed their own parties but did not rule out future cooperation with the others. If the candidates had formed a party or coalition rather than a tactical alliance, the presence of a party strong enough to compete effectively in the electoral arena would have strengthened the party system significantly, and if the campaign period had been longer, could have produced different results in the election.

Campaign Length

The postponement of parliamentary elections from December 1994 to February 1995 allowed candidates and political parties enough time to carry out productive campaigns. However, the Central Commission on Elections, interpreting the election law, stated that the law regarding run-offs required any necessary second-round elections to be held fourteen days after the first round. Since the Central Commission on Elections had ten days to announce the election results, it was possible that in highly contested districts candidates would have had only a four-day campaign period for the second round.

During the presidential campaign, some candidates argued that the election should have been postponed because the 3 December deadline for registration of candidates did not allow them enough time to campaign. According to the election law, however, registration of candidates must be completed no later than twenty days before elections. Since the election took place on 24 December 1995, the December 3 registration deadline was in compliance with the law. Nonetheless, the three-week campaign period did not allow the opposition candidates enough time to inform voters about themselves and their platforms. Tekebaev

commented that the short campaign period allowed little time for the electorate to familiarize itself with the candidates, especially since the media overwhelmingly focused on programs and stories devoted to Akaev.²⁶ Sufficient time to run campaigns is essential to the development of incipient political parties and party systems. It is during the campaign that parties gain the most exposure and voters are most attentive to and interested in parties' efforts to make themselves known.

Ballot Format

In keeping with Soviet tradition, voters in Kyrgyzstan cast their ballots by crossing out the names of candidates against whom they were voting and leaving unmarked the name of the candidate for whom they were voting. This procedure also allowed voters to cast a valid ballot against all candidates. If the total number of against-all ballots was greater than the votes for any one candidate, new elections in that district were required. The value of this procedure diminished significantly with the advent of multicandidate and multiparty elections in the former Soviet Union. As a result of this format, casting of a ballot carries a negative connotation: voters vote against candidates rather than for them. Hence, it detracts from building among voters a feeling of identification with a certain party—an important phase in the evolution of parties—and curtails the development of a positive sense of democracy. Developing a positive attitude toward political parties and the democratic process is crucial in states without a strong democratic tradition, especially where even the term "party" carries a pejorative connotation.

Electoral Commissions

Article 6 of the parliamentary election law states that election commissions are to be composed of representatives of political parties, labor collectives, and meetings of voters at the place of residence, and applies the same to district and precinct commissions in Articles 17 and 19, respectively. Article 3 of the Law Concerning the Central Commission for Elections and Conduct of Referendums and the Law Concerning the Organization of Work of District Commissions for the Jogorku Kenesh Election state only that political parties can *nominate* potential members to the election commissions. Sitting on election commissions is another means by which parties gain experience in the political process. Allowing political party representatives to sit on election commissions is a significant step toward instilling confidence among the parties and citizens that the government itself has confidence in the democratic nature of the party system.

In practice, however, although election commissions—including the Central Commission on Elections—did contain representatives of political parties, many included only representatives from pro-government parties. Since political parties in Kyrgyzstan are still very small, election commissions at the lower levels included very few, if any, representatives from opposition parties. As a result, not all commissions were entirely evenhanded. For instance, when the results were tallied at one polling station during the 1995 presidential election and President Akaev was announced the winner, the precinct commission erupted in applause.²⁷ Manifestations of partiality on the part of electoral commissions were not limit-

ed to expressions of enthusiasm for Akaev but extended to condoning minor irregularities, as I witnessed, and in some cases even to outright ballot stuffing by commission members, as reported to me by international observers, domestic observers, and human rights activists. In a written statement to the Central Commission on Elections, candidates Masaliev and Sherimkulov alleged a series of violations by the president, such as campaigning on election day, and by precinct and district election commissions, which significantly altered the results in sixteen districts. For instance, they alleged that in Lyaylyakskogo raion Masaliev's vote total was decreased from 92 percent to 66 percent, from 80 percent to 22 percent in Chon-Alay, and from 70 percent to 35 percent in Uzgen.²⁸ Although international observers reported that in many cases electoral commissions conducted their activities professionally, allegations of improprieties on the part of election commissions, in general, greatly reduce the level of popular confidence in the integrity and transparency of the electoral process and further the public's disenchantment with "democracy."

The Presidency and the Party System

Two aspects of the institution of the presidency in Kyrgyzstan are particularly detrimental to the development of a stable party system. They are, first, the unbalanced separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches, which emerged in Kyrgyzstan after the 10 February 1996 referendum, and second, provisions in the Constitution requiring the president to forgo all party membership while in office, thus effecting a "nonpartisan" presidency.²⁹ The relationship between the presidency and parliament in the post-Soviet context could have followed several different blueprints that would have different impacts on the development of democracy and on party systems in particular. For example, a parliamentary system with a prime minister and government making up the executive branch would allow political parties the opportunity to gain valuable experience from the parliamentary politics of maneuvering for ministerial posts, forming blocs among parties, and the intraparlimentary competition among parties. In Kyrgyzstan, the president's power to appoint ministers, which became more important due to the minimal showing of political parties in the parliamentary election, undermines the benefits parties can gain from forging a government dependent on the parliament rather than the president. As R. Kent Weaver and Bert Rockman point out, in a presidential system, the executive's tenure is not dependent on rigid party support; hence, mechanisms of control over party legislators are not as important in party organization.³⁰ The cohesion of parties in parliamentary systems is essential to prevent the prime minister from being continually threatened with ouster from office. Mechanisms to maintain strong party discipline are built into party structures. In a presidential system, deviating from the party line does not necessarily result in a candidate being dropped from the party list or losing campaign funding.

Presidential systems, nonetheless, play a different role in developing a state's party system due to the benefits associated with a party member's holding the post. Such benefits include control of ministerial and advisory posts and the electoral

benefits associated with incumbency. The constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, however, requires the president to suspend activity in political parties and organizations while holding office, until the beginning of a new election for president.³¹ This type of provision is common in many post-Soviet states for two reasons: first, it alleviates holdover fears of Communist Party penetration of Soviet state institutions; and second, leaders want to avoid any inferences that the president is not working for the people but serving only the needs of his or her party. Along the lines of the latter, Akaev explained that his reason for rejecting membership in any party was that he is president for all the citizens of Kyrgyzstan and he does not want to be obligated to any party. He wants to have “free hands” and does not want to be hostage to anyone.³²

Of course, Akaev is not completely independent. Many parties, such as Birimdik, the Social Democratic Party, and the Democratic Women’s Party, have overwhelmingly pro-government and pro-Akaev stances and have provided considerable support to the president. Nonetheless, by not being a formal member of these parties President Akaev does not appear formally obligated to anyone (and given his personality, probably is not). But members of parties backing Akaev do not support him to no avail; many hold government posts while others have been included in his inner circle of advisors. Such practices are not illegal or improper; they strengthen political parties by providing experience and training for future political leaders. Formalizing these ties and allowing the president to maintain membership in a political party during his or her term would further the development not only of future presidents’ parties but also the party system as a whole. Realizing the benefits of holding the presidency, parties supporting a president have greater incentive to form a coalition or a new party by uniting with others themselves.

Normally the post of vice president is one example of a president’s membership in a party offering the party considerable benefits. In Kyrgyzstan, however, the post was eliminated after the 1993 crisis in Russia, which threatened the presidency there, and after a financial scandal in 1994 involving the former vice president of Kyrgyzstan, Felix Kulov.

Matthew Shugart and John Carey envision two possible factors resulting from the use of a plurality system in presidential elections: (a) a broad coalition forms behind the front-runner, and (b) the opposition coalesces behind one of the principal challengers.³³ A plurality system is not used in Kyrgyzstan; nonetheless *both* factors appeared, even though a majority system is used. A broad coalition of public associations, labor collectives, and some political parties formed behind Akaev. With regard to the second factor, as mentioned earlier, four opposition candidates banded together to try to dilute the vote and force a runoff election.

“Political parties and the party system are still extremely vulnerable and are indeed toys in the hands of institutions.”

However, the coalescing was directed more at counteracting the campaign advantages Akaev gained from incumbency and a favorable state media than at serious efforts to forge a long-term coalition.

Scheduling of Elections and Election Bundling

In mid-1995, supporters of President Akaev collected over one million signatures in a campaign to hold a referendum on extending Akaev's term to 2001 without requiring elections. The Jogorku Kenesh, however, ruled that holding such a referendum would be unconstitutional and instead scheduled the presidential election for 24 December 1995. The election was originally planned for October 1996, based on a five-year term beginning in October 1991. The parliament, however, based the timing of the elections on a five-year term beginning in October 1990. Akaev had been elected in 1990 by the Supreme Soviet, and in 1991 he was elected by popular vote in an uncontested election. Furthermore, a referendum on the presidency was held in January 1994, the wording of which indicated that the president was elected in 1991 for five years.³⁴

Opponents of President Akaev pointed to his democratic election in 1991 and to the referendum of January 1994. Akaev, on the other hand, directed attention to the fact that, according to the presidential election law and the constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, parliament is responsible for the scheduling elections,³⁵ as it did in this case. Among the opposition, speculation was rife that, although the Jogorku Kenesh scheduled the election, Akaev had pressured deputies into holding the election in 1995.

The opposition also pointed to another discrepancy. Article 44 of the constitution states that elections shall be held two months before the expiration of the president's term, which in this case would be 12 October 1995. If Akaev's term began in 1990, then elections should have been held in August 1995. Holding the election on 24 December 1995 resulted in a two-and-a-half month extension of Akaev's term.

The arguments made valid points regarding the constitutional references to the scheduling of elections. However, the willingness of the opposition to argue both simultaneously, which was not entirely unexpected, raised the issue of whether their concern was one of rule of law or of their political posture. Furthermore, the opposition candidates were running for election although most declared that the election itself was unconstitutional. Akaev responded to the criticisms stating that whether elections were scheduled in 1995 or 1996 the opposition would challenge their constitutionality. He believed that if elections transpired in 1996, the opposition would point to the 1990 election and argue that he had illegally extended his term by one year.³⁶

The date that elections take place has significant effects on the party system. In this case, scheduling the election a year earlier worked to the disadvantage of political parties, which were preparing and building national infrastructures to support candidates in 1996. The parties were caught off guard and, with a few exceptions, were not able to field candidates.

A state's electoral cycle and the practice of bundling elections also have con-

siderable influence on a party system, particularly when a presidency is involved. Kyrgyzstan is no exception. Because elections for the Jogorku Kenesh and the presidency were held separately, voters did not have the opportunity to vote a party slate or to split the ballot by voting for members of different parties to each post or level. Given the popularity of President Akaev, having those options would have benefited the party system in several ways. Those who voted for opposition candidates would most likely have voted for the parties of those candidates (which would be even more beneficial in a proportional representation system), and because Akaev was nominated by several public associations, including two parties, the Democratic Women's Party and Birimdik, voters for Akaev would be able to vote either for the parties supporting Akaev or split the ticket and vote for Akaev for president and for an opposition party to the Jogorku Kenesh. In any event, if elections were bundled in Kyrgyzstan, it is likely that more members of parties, including opposition parties, would gain representation in the parliament.

Institutions and Party Organization

Many Western political scientists, such as Duverger, LaPalombara, and Weiner, point to the significant impact of political party's origins on the party's organizational structure.³⁷ Though parties in Kyrgyzstan have various origins, nearly all of the ones that arose after 1991 had at least one member (usually a leader) who was already a deputy in parliament. The Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan is the successor to the Kyrgyz branch of the CPSU. Although many of its resources were confiscated and its organizational structure was virtually dismantled, the Communist Party remains one of the largest parties in terms of membership, and it receives considerable support from its compatriots in Russia and other states in the former Soviet Union. The other parties generally developed from public associations (Erkin Kyrgyzstan, Asaba), from umbrella groups for public associations (DDK), or from other political parties (Ata-Meken, Social Democratic Party, Republican Party of Unity).

Duverger's postulate regarding the various implications of intra- versus extra-parliamentary origins on party organization, however, does not necessarily hold in Kyrgyzstan. The parties that developed from "parliamentary clubs," as Duverger argues, do correspond to the posited cadre and caucus structures, focusing on personalities rather than branch and mass party structures. However, the parties that developed outside the parliament are organized along similar lines. Most of the parties have very small memberships, with few having broad appeal. Decisionmaking revolves around a core group of a few leaders, mainly party founders. The parties are basically charismatic,³⁸ their appeal based strictly on the personality identification of their leaders and not on an abstract notion of what the party stands for. Only the Communist Party (and possibly the agrarian parties) appears to be an exception, particularly given the growing appeal of its social policies, stemming from the economic recession and high unemployment. Nonetheless, it does not hurt that the party's leader, Absamat Masaliev, the republic's first secretary in the late 1980s, is very well known.

The many public associations that contested the parliamentary election, such

as the Slavic Fund, Ashar, and other ethnically oriented groups, may eventually evolve into political parties but seem more likely—if they continue their involvement in politics—to spinoff their political units.³⁹ The association would retain a role along the lines of what Angelo Panebianco calls “external sponsor organizations.”⁴⁰ The resulting parties would be only the political arms of their external institutions, to which the parties would owe their legitimacy.

Duverger found that the main differences between the effects of proportional representation and majority systems are not in the number of political parties but in the internal organization of political parties. Proportional representation produces more rigid and less personal parties than majority representation.⁴¹ In Kyrgyzstan, where the majority system is used for all elected posts, parties are grounded in their leaders, who are the most important focus for voters. Some parties allow open disagreement within the party and do not enforce any discipline. Thus, for instance, one of Erkin Kyrgyzstan’s leaders, Bakir uulu, refused to accept his party’s nomination to keep other party members from feeling obliged to support only his candidacy.⁴² Differences regarding policies and party structure, coupled with personality clashes, have reached the point where today Erkin Kyrgyzstan is divided into two distinct camps, one led by Tursuibok Bakir uulu and the other by Topchubek Turgunaliyev.

The importance of personalities rather than issues, and their lack of identification within society, indicate the immaturity of political parties, which is not surprising considering the recent origins of most of them. The indistinguishability of some parties’ platforms and positions means that all parties vie for the appeal of anyone and everyone. Kyrgyz parties resemble more than anything else Kirchheimer’s so-called “catch-all parties.”⁴³ However, for Kirchheimer the “catch-all” strategy is used deliberately by parties in a two-party system, which Kyrgyzstan is not. Although some parties in Kyrgyzstan do have certain support bases, such as young entrepreneurs and the Ata-Meken party, the parties in Kyrgyzstan (with the exception of nationalist oriented ones, such as Asaba) are so young and face so many institutional obstructions, as detailed throughout this article, that they do not restrict themselves to any particular support base but attempt to grasp votes from anywhere. Proportional representation, on the other hand, would force parties to escalate their differences with other parties, rigidify their platforms and creeds, and thus create firm support bases within society.⁴⁴

Herbert Kitschelt’s analysis of the formation of left-libertarian parties in Belgium and West Germany reveals that new parties respond to structural constraints by shifting from a “logic” of constituency representation to one of party competition. Kitschelt lists three such structural constraints: restrictive electoral rules, intense polarized competition between major parties, and hostility of major-party elites toward new competitors.⁴⁵ Though the structural constraints in Kyrgyzstan differ, they have had the same effect. Contrary to the restrictive electoral rules, Kyrgyzstan’s liberal/inclusive electoral rules (allowing public associations and other groups to compete electorally alongside parties), force political parties, given their small memberships, to struggle to find a union between the “logics” in order to compete and survive.

Conclusions

The brief overview of the electoral and party systems in Kyrgyzstan through the institutionalist lenses makes clear certain fairly obvious features of the idiosyncratic party system of Kyrgyzstan. Under the majority electoral system, the political parties are extremely immature. In some cases, it is not even clear whether they will continue to exist as parties, a point underscored by the fact that important democratic privileges normally granted to parties have been given to a host of nonparty institutions.

Political parties and the party system are still extremely vulnerable and are indeed toys in the hands of institutions. The vagaries of election laws and regulations seem to be designed to catch the political parties off guard, introducing changes midstream and affecting issues critical to long- and short-term planning and strategy, such as those regarding scheduling of elections, signature requirements for registration, and campaign rules.

The most deleterious institutional influences on political party and party system development in Kyrgyzstan have been the liberal ballot access provisions elevating public associations, work collectives, and other groups on par with political parties in allowing them to nominate candidates to elective office. The development of parties and the party system is stunted by the presence of electoral competitors not solely concerned with politics. These other competitors are guided by narrow interests, dilute the vote, and keep parties underrepresented in the Jogorku Kenesh. As a result, only a very low number of candidates (16) of any type were elected in the first round, and only 36 deputies, of the 105 in the Jogorku Kenesh, represent political parties. Public associations, instead of muddying the democratic process by their presence in elections, should be encouraged to develop their role in fostering democracy through their contribution to the development of civil society.

Likewise, the majority system, given the low level of party institutionalization in Kyrgyzstan, is not conducive to further party system development. The paucity of political parties represented in the Jogorku Kenesh is a result of both the majority system and the dilution of the vote due to the high number of candidates per seat. A proportional representation system would give a significant boost to the development of political parties in Kyrgyzstan by allowing them greater representation in the Jogorku Kenesh. At present, even considering deputies who are not officially (or openly) members of a party but are nonetheless associated with one, only about one-third of all deputies represent political parties. There is only one way to ensure the survival and development of political parties and the party system; that is, through their active and effective participation in the parliament, whether through majority or coalition governments, "blackmail potential," or permanent opposition.⁴⁶

To facilitate the development of a stable party system in Kyrgyzstan, I propose several institutional changes to the electoral system, including a partial shift to proportional representation and limiting ballot access to political parties and self-nomination. Depending on the electoral formula and system chosen, a shift to proportional representation in Kyrgyzstan would not necessarily carry with it the

destabilizing effects attributed to proportional representation by Duverger and others. For instance, without changing the bicameral structure or size of the Jogorku Kenesh or the majority system for the Legislative Assembly, a change to proportional representation for the Assembly of People's Representatives could be made without much institutional upheaval. My goal in proposing an electoral system for the Assembly of People's Representatives is to strengthen the party system by allowing political parties greater representation and by promoting the consolidation of existing parties, rather than the burgeoning of many small and new ones.

Although I propose a proportional representation system, the population-based structure of the size of the Assembly would have to be maintained, given the significance of regional cleavages in Kyrgyzstan. Any changes in the population-based structure of the size of the Assembly, such as creating equal sized districts for each oblast and Bishkek or one nationally elected district, would trigger tremendous opposition from the larger oblasts, such as Osh, which would become underrepresented in comparison to the smaller oblasts, such as Talas. However, maintaining the current number of seats per oblast (after eliminating single-mandate districts) poses significant difficulties regarding the proper seat allocation formula to be used. The resulting district magnitudes, or as Taagepera and Shugart call them, the "decisive factors," would be Dzhahal-Abad, 12; Issyk-Kul, 7; Naryn, 4; Osh, 20; Talas, 3; Chui, 13; and Bishkek, 11. The difficulties arise because of the wide range in the district magnitudes, from three in Talas to twenty in Osh. Each allocation formula has various costs and benefits associated with it depending on, among other things, the size of the district. Thus, I propose the combination of a fixed electoral threshold of 6 percent per district and the Hare Quota (also known as the Simple Quota) formula with the Largest Remainders Method, resulting in the following electoral formula: $q_0 = V_{threshold} / (M + 0)$.⁴⁷ Of course, the success of such a proportional representation system is predicated on restricting ballot access to political parties and self-nomination only and imposing more stringent requirements for registration.

The 6 percent oblast threshold would strengthen the party system by encouraging similar parties to consolidate and preventing the burgeoning of new parties. The party system also would benefit from the increased party representation in the Jogorku Kenesh that would accompany the shift to proportional representation. Without representation political parties do not gain much needed experience in governance, nor do they have many successes to promote in their efforts to appeal to the electorate.

Despite the president's newly gained powers vis-à-vis the Jogorku Kenesh, efforts within the parliament to reform the electoral institutions have not ceased. Presently, the committee on political parties, social organizations, and religious groups is working to strengthen the role of political parties. Spearheaded by its chairman, Bakir uulu, the committee is preparing a draft law on political parties that would institutionally separate political parties from public associations. Political parties are currently governed by the Law on Public Associations. The committee also is proposing that at least one-third of the Jogorku Kenesh be elected

according to a proportional representation system and that public associations be precluded from nominating candidates to elected office.⁴⁸

The bright light of democracy in Central Asia, which recently has begun to flicker, can be revived through strengthening the party system. Without much-needed electoral reforms, such as the introduction of proportional representation, restricting ballot access to political parties and self-nomination only, and revising registration requirements, democratically oriented and democratically functioning political parties in Kyrgyzstan will face an arduous struggle to survive rather than the task of governing. Unless the voices of these parties can be heard in the Jogorku Kenesh they might "take their politics to the streets." The future of democracy in Kyrgyzstan requires a strong democratic party system, which can only evolve within an institutional context that facilitates rather than impedes the development of political parties.

NOTES

1. These include the suspect arrest of Topchubek Turgunaliyev, a leader of the Erkin Kyrgyzstan Party, in December 1996; the 10 February 1996 referendum on constitutional amendments that gave President Askar Akaev considerable powers vis-à-vis the parliament; and the revocation of registration of three of the six candidates one week prior to the presidential election in December 1995.

2. Arend Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 127–49.

3. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction;" in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, eds., Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (New York: The Free Press, 1967).

4. Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State* (London: Methuen and Co., 1954), 239.

5. Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 210.

6. Mamat Aibalaev, Absamat Masaliev, Medetkan Sherimkulov, and Omurbek Tekebaev, press conference attended by the author, Bishkek, 5 December 1995.

7. Article 8, Paragraph 2, Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic.

8. Mukar Cholponbaev, interview with the author, Bishkek, 20 December 1994.

9. Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy*, 5:3 (1994): 5.

10. Zhepar Zheksheev, interview with the author, 19 December 1994.

11. Gwenn Hofmann and Gregory Koldys, "Pre-Election Technical Assessment, Kyrgyzstan," *Technical Election Assessment, Kyrgyzstan, March 1995* (Washington, DC: International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 1995), 15, 20.

12. Eugene Huskey, "The Rise of Contested Politics in Central Asia: Elections in Kyrgyzstan, 1989–90," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 47:5 (1995): 819, 820.

13. O. Pozdnyakova, "Liobimiy Protssess Prodolzhaetcy," *Vecherniy Bishkek*, 6 February 1995; and Boris Mainaev, "Second Round of Kyrgyzian Parliamentary Elections," ITAR-TASS, 17 February 1995.

14. Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing Face of Central Asia* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), 137.

15. The May 1993 Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic raised the signature requirement from 25,000 to 50,000. Article 44, Paragraph 3.

16. Yuruslan Toichubekov, interview with the author, Bishkek, 7 December 1995.

17. Mamat Aibalaev, interview with the author, Bishkek, 6 December 1995.
18. Mamat Aibalaev, Omurbek Tekebaev, and Dzhumgalbek Amanbaev, press conference attended by the author, Bishkek, 15 December 1995. The only reference in the election law to the withdrawal of a candidate's registration appears in Article 11.1, which states that any candidate found to have been directly or indirectly (through his/her representatives) intimidating or bribing constituents, or committing other violations of election legislation may be withdrawn from the election by the Central Commission on Elections.
19. Debriefing of international observers, chaired by the author, Bishkek, 26 December 1995.
20. Ibid.
21. Regarding the Soviet electoral system, see Michael Urban, *More Power to the Soviets: The Democratic Revolution in the USSR* (Brookfield, VT: Gower Pub., 1990), 92–93.
22. Daniel Blessington, "An Overview of the Kyrgyzstan Judicial System and Election Laws," *Technical Election Assessment, Kyrgyzstan* (Washington, DC: IFES, 1995), 41.
23. Aibalaev, Masaliev, Sherimkulov, and Tekebaev press conference, Bishkek, 5 December 1995.
24. Aibalaev, interview, 6 December 1995.
25. Medetkan Sherimkulov, interview with the author, 6 December 1995.
26. Omurbek Tekebaev, interview with the author, Bishkek, 13 December 1995.
27. Witnessed by the author at a polling station in Bishkek, 24 December 1995.
28. "Zayavlenie," from Masaliev, Sherimkulov, and their trusted faces to the CEC, the Jogorku Kenesh, and international observers, 25 December 1995, an original.
29. See "Law on Amendments to the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic," approved on 10 February 1996.
30. R. Kent Weaver and Bert Rockman, "Assessing the Effects of Institutions," in *Do Institutions Matter? Government Capabilities in the United States and Abroad*, eds., Weaver and Rockman (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1993), 10–14.
31. Article 43, Paragraph 5.
32. Askar Akaev, interview with the author, Bishkek, 21 December 1995.
33. Shugart and Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies*, 209.
34. The referendum asked: "Do you confirm that the President of Kyrgyzstan, democratically elected on 12 October 1991 for five years is president of the Kyrgyz Republic with the right to act as head of state during his term of office." (emphasis added)
35. Article 7, "Law Concerning Elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic."
36. Akaev, interview, 21 December 1995.
37. Duverger, *Political Parties*, xxiii–xxxvii; and Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner, "The Origin and Development of Political Parties" in *Political Parties and Party Development*, eds., LaPalombara and Weiner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 8–14.
38. See Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 52–53.
39. Valery Vishnevsky (president of the Slavic Fund), interview with the author, Bishkek, 8 February 1996.
40. Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 51–52.
41. Duverger, *Political Parties*, 243.
42. Tursuibok Bakir uulu, interview with the author, Bishkek, 7 December 1995.
43. Otto Kirchheimer, "The Transformation of the Western European Party Systems," in *Political Parties*, eds., LaPalombara and Weiner.
44. Ferdinand Hermens, *Democracy or Anarchy? A Study of Proportional Representation* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1941), 30–35.
45. Herbert Kitschelt, *The Logics of Party Formation: Ecological Politics in Belgium and West Germany* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 29.
46. Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 214–17.
47. $V_{threshold}$ indicates the total number of votes cast for parties that qualified beyond the

threshold, M indicates the district magnitude, q_0 indicates the resulting quota using the Hare Quota calculation. See Gregory Koldys, "Post-Soviet Central Asia and Democracy: Party System Formation in Kyrgyzstan" (Ph.D. diss., University of Miami, 1997), 326–33.

48. Tursuibok Bakir uulu, interview with the author, Bishkek, 9 February 1996.

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