

KYRGYZSTAN in Perspective

An Orientation Guide



Technology Integration Division

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CHAPTER 1: GEOGRAPHY

Introduction

Kyrgyzstan's location bordering China and the former Soviet Union is strategically important in Central Asia. Consequently, both the United States and the Russian Federation maintain military air bases in Kyrgyzstan. The U.S. base at Manas International Airport near the capital city of Bishkek has supported U.S. efforts in Afghanistan since 2001. Ethnic fighting in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan may be linked to jihadist influences in the region, raising government concerns that Hizb-ut Tahrir and other terrorist groups are growing stronger there.^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5}



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Kyrgyzstan Mountains

The country, which is slightly smaller than South Dakota, borders China in the east and southeast, Kazakhstan in the north and northwest, Uzbekistan in the southwest, and Tajikistan in the south.⁶ In addition to agricultural exports, deposits of gold, coal, oil, natural gas, iron, tin, copper, and other rare-earth metals have fueled the nation's annual economy of USD 5.9 billion since Kyrgyzstan gained independence after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.^{7, 8}

The landlocked country, sometimes called the Switzerland of Central Asia, is located at the edge of the Central Asian Steppes. Most of the terrain in Kyrgyzstan lies in two mountain ranges—the Tien Shan and the Pamir. The vast majority of the country is above 1,500 m (4,920 ft), nearly the same elevation as Denver, Colorado.^{9, 10}

Kyrgyzstan receives most of its moisture in the form of snowmelt from snowfields and glaciers, which cover 4% of the surface. Runoff fuels thousands of rivers feeding into hundreds of lakes.¹¹

¹ BBC News, "Country Profile: Kyrgyzstan," 14 December 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16186907>

² Christoph Koetti, "Satellite Images Reveal Widespread Destruction in Kyrgyzstan," Amnesty International, 1 July 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org.au/crisis/comments/23304/>

³ Richard Orange, "Kyrgyzstan Violence: British and US Governments Prepare Evacuation of Citizens," *Telegraph*, 13 June 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/kyrgyzstan/7824938/Kyrgyzstan-violence-British-and-US-governments-prepare-evacuation-of-citizens.html>

⁴ Global Security, "Manas International Airport, Ganci Air Base, Manas Air Base, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan," 2012, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/centralasia/manas.htm>

⁵ Associated Press, "Tens of Thousands of Uzbek Refugees Flee to Border to Escape Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan," Fox News, 14 June 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/06/14/renewed-gunbattles-erupt-buildings-torched-kyrgyzstan-scarred-ethnic-violence/>

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Geography," in *The World Factbook*, 26 April 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

⁷ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. State Department, "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan," 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 26 April 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Denver," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/158105/Denver>

¹⁰ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 3.

¹¹ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 3.

Geography and Topography

Tien Shan Mountains

The Tien Shan Mountains run east-west through Kyrgyzstan—from its eastern border with China toward Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in the west, separating Central Asia from East Asia.¹²



© Thomas Depenbusch
Tianshan Mountains

The Tien Shan (Celestial Mountain) is made up of dozens of ranges, broken into the Northern, Inner, and Western Tien Shan systems. The Northern Tien Shan ranges include the Talas and Kyrgyz Ala-Too, which mark the boundary of the Chu River Valley south of Bishkek. The Kungoy Ala-Too Range runs along the Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan border, forming the northern frame of mountains that surround Lake Issyk-Kul.¹³

The southern edge of the lake is framed by the Tesky Ala-Too Range, part of the Inner Tien Shan system. The Kakshal Range runs along Kyrgyzstan's southeastern border with China.¹⁴ Jengish Chokusu (also known as Poboda and Victory Peak) is the country's highest peak; it reaches 7,439 m (24,406 ft) where the Kashals meet the Sary Jaz Range. Khan Tengri is nearby on the easternmost edge of the Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan border. It is the country's third-highest peak and the world's northernmost mountain over 7,000 m (22,966 ft).¹⁵

Running at a slight angle to the other Tien Shan ranges is the Fergana Range, which marks the eastern boundary of the Fergana Valley. The mountains divide the country generally north from south, extending northwest between the Chatal Range in the north and the At-Bashy Range in the south.¹⁶

Pamir Mountains

Forming the southern boundary of the Fergana Valley is the Alai Range, the northernmost arm of the Pamir Mountains. The Pamirs extend west from the Pamir Knot, a block of some of the world's highest mountains formed by the convergence of the Himalayan, Hindu Kush, Tien Shan, and Pamir ranges on the edge of the Tibetan Plateau.¹⁷ The Pamirs are geologically older than the Tien Shan, with more rounded peaks. Lenin Peak is Kyrgyzstan's second-highest peak; it lies in the Trans Alai and reaches a height of 7,134 m (23,405 ft).¹⁸

¹² John D. Farrington, "Introduction to Kyrgyzstan," *A Report on Protected Areas, Biodiversity, and Conservation in the Kyrgyzstan Tian Shan* (Fulbright Commission of the U.S. State Department, June 2005), 13–15.

¹³ John D. Farrington, "Introduction to Kyrgyzstan," *A Report on Protected Areas, Biodiversity, and Conservation in the Kyrgyzstan Tian Shan* (Fulbright Commission of the U.S. State Department, June 2005), 13–15.

¹⁴ John D. Farrington, "Introduction to Kyrgyzstan," *A Report on Protected Areas, Biodiversity, and Conservation in the Kyrgyzstan Tian Shan* (Fulbright Commission of the U.S. State Department, June 2005), 13–15.

¹⁵ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 3.

¹⁶ John D. Farrington, "Introduction to Kyrgyzstan," *A Report on Protected Areas, Biodiversity, and Conservation in the Kyrgyzstan Tian Shan* (Fulbright Commission of the U.S. State Department, June 2005), 14.

¹⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Pamirs," 2012, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/440419/pamirs

¹⁸ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 3–4.

Fergana Valley

The Fergana Valley is about 22,000 sq km (8,500 sq mi) in size and triangular in shape, bounded in the northwest by the Chatkal and Kurama mountains, in the northeast by the Fergana Mountains, and in the south by the Alay and Turkistan ranges. Most of the valley lies within Uzbekistan, but it extends into parts of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Because of its ability to support agriculture, the valley is one of the most heavily populated areas in Central Asia, producing cotton, fruit, and raw silk. Two of Kyrgyzstan's most populous cities, Osh and Jalal-Abad, lie at the eastern edge of the valley near Kyrgyzstan's border with Uzbekistan.^{19, 20} Soviet dictator Josef Stalin divided the fertile valley, once controlled by a single feudal lord, among Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.²¹



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Fergana Valley

Bodies of Water

Hundreds of rivers and streams are fed by glaciers and runoff from the mountains in the spring. None of the rivers in Kyrgyzstan are fully navigable, although some sections are accessible for rafting.²² The Naryn and other permanent rivers are dammed and produce much of the country's electricity.²³ Dams also help regulate water flow, preventing flooding in the spring and allowing Kyrgyzstan to release water from its reservoirs for irrigation during the summer.²⁴ Much of the country is covered by glaciers and permanent snowfields, which feed dozens of alpine lakes, including Lake Issyk-Kul.

Lake Issyk-Kul (Ysyk Kul)

Lake Issyk-Kul is the second-largest alpine lake in the world, after Lake Titicaca in South America. The high salt content of the water keeps the lake from freezing in winter. *Ysyk Kul*, which means “hot lake” in Kyrgyz, is said to have been formed from the hot tears of an inconsolable kidnapped bride.^{25, 26}



© ckgai123 / flickr.com
Lake Issyk-Kul

¹⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Fergana Valley,” 2012,

www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/204603/Fergana-Valley

²⁰ Associated Press, “Tens of Thousands of Uzbek Refugees Flee to Border to Escape Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan,” Fox News, 14 June 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/06/14/renewed-gunbattles-erupt-buildings-torched-kyrgyzstan-scarred-ethnic-violence/>

²¹ Associated Press, “Tens of Thousands of Uzbek Refugees Flee to Border to Escape Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan,” Fox News, 14 June 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/06/14/renewed-gunbattles-erupt-buildings-torched-kyrgyzstan-scarred-ethnic-violence/>

²² Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 4, 127.

²³ John D. Farrington, “Part II: The Mountains and Wildlife of Kyrgyzstan,” *A Report on Protected Areas, Biodiversity, and Conservation in the Kyrgyzstan Tian Shan* (Fulbright Commission of the U.S. State Department, June 2005), 28.

²⁴ Aquastat, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “Kyrgyzstan,” 1997, http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/countries_regions/kyrgyzstan/index.stm

²⁵ Laurence Mitchell, “Lake Issyk-Kul—North Shore,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 133.

²⁶ Oksana Vasilenko, *Kyrgyz Legends* [AZW file (Kindle), 2012].

The eye-shaped lake is 182 km (113 mi) long, 61 km (38 mi) at its widest, and 668 m (2,192 ft) at its deepest point. The lake lies in a basin between the Kungoy Ala-Too Range in the north and the Tesky Ala-Too Range in the south.²⁷ More than 100 rivers feed into the lake, but none flow out, allowing salt and other minerals to become concentrated in the water.

Although the water is too salty to be used for drinking or irrigation, it does support two dozen species of fish, including carp and whitefish, which are fished commercially.²⁸ The north shore of the lake is a popular recreation spot, housing several resorts and presidential vacation homes.²⁹ But water pollution has become an increasingly critical issue for the communities around the lake. In 1998, cyanide spilled into one of the rivers feeding into the lake and killed several people.³⁰

Lake Song (Song Kul)

Kyrgyzstan's second-largest lake lies on a high plateau in the heart of the country. The few roads leading to Lake Song were built by the Soviets, although none are well maintained. The area is a popular summer pasture for herders. During the summer months, the grasslands surrounding the lake are dotted with yurts, the traditional temporary homes of Kyrgyz nomads. Snow sometimes falls in summer and makes the lake inaccessible for part of the year. In winter the lake surface freezes over.³¹



© Trekking the Planet / flickr.com
Lake Song

Lake Song, which is about half the size of Lake Tahoe in California, contained no fish until the 1950s.³² The Soviets regularly stocked the lake with fish in hopes of creating a viable commercial fishing industry. After independence, fish levels dropped so low that in 2004 a two-year moratorium on fishing in the lake was instituted.³³

The lake and surrounding area are part of the Karatal-Japyryk State Reserve. Many species of birds, including storks and cranes, stop on the lake during their yearly migrations.³⁴

²⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Lake Ysyk," 2012, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/296943/Lake-Ysyk

²⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Lake Ysyk," 2012, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/296943/Lake-Ysyk

²⁹ Laurence Mitchell, "Lake Issyk-Kul—North Shore," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 136.

³⁰ Laurence Mitchell, "Lake Issyk-Kul South and the Central Tien Shan," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 183.

³¹ Laurence Mitchell, "Naryn Province," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 206–7.

³² John D. Farrington, "Part II: The Mountains and Wildlife of Kyrgyzstan," *A Report on Protected Areas, Biodiversity, and Conservation in the Kyrgyzstan Tian Shan* (Fulbright Commission of the U.S. State Department, June 2005), 27.

³³ Laurence Mitchell, "Naryn Province," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 206–7.

³⁴ Laurence Mitchell, "Naryn Province," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 206–7.

Toktogol Reservoir

Created in the 1970s by the Toktogol Dam, the Toktogol Reservoir is the largest manmade lake in Kyrgyzstan and one of a dozen reservoirs along the Naryn River.^{35, 36} The reservoir is slightly smaller than Lake Song and is the largest source of commercially sold fish in the country.³⁷



Courtesy Wikipedia
Toktogol Reservoir Dam

Toktogol Dam produces most of the country's electricity and is instrumental in regulating water flow from the Naryn River into the Fergana Valley. But because Kyrgyzstan needs power in the cold winter months, while Uzbekistan needs water in the dry months of summer, the management of water levels at the dam has become a source of contention between Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors upstream.³⁸

Naryn and Kara Darya Rivers

The Naryn River, Kyrgyzstan's longest river, is fed by glacial and snow runoff from the central Tien Shan Mountains. It flows west for 700 km (435 mi) and passes through several dams that help generate hydropower and regulate water flow. In the Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan, the Naryn River merges with the Kara Darya River and forms the Syr Darya River.³⁹ The Syr Darya River is one of the two major rivers in Central Asia that drain into the Aral Sea, once one of the largest lakes in the world.⁴⁰



Courtesy Wikipedia
Naryn River

Other Rivers

The Chu River is formed by the joining of the Joon-Aryk and East Karakol rivers outside Kochkor, near Lake Issyk-Kul. The river flows east, coming within 4 km (2.5 mi) of the lake before turning north toward the Kazakhstan border.⁴¹ Changing direction again, the Chu flows west and forms 221 km (137 mi) of the border between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.⁴²

³⁵ Laurence Mitchell, "Jalal-Abad Province," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 241.

³⁶ Valery Votrin, "Transboundary Water Disputes in Central Asia: Using Indicators of Water Conflict in Identifying Water Conflict Potential" (master's thesis, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2002–2003), http://www.transboundarywaters.orst.edu/publications/related_research/Thesis_Votrin.pdf

³⁷ Mairam Sarieva et al., "The Current Status of Fisheries and Aquaculture," *Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Krygyz Republic: Current Status and Planning* (FAO Fisheries Circular no. 1030, Rome, 2008), 18.

³⁸ Valery Votrin, "Transboundary Water Disputes in Central Asia: Using Indicators of Water Conflict in Identifying Water Conflict Potential" (master's thesis, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2002–2003), http://www.transboundarywaters.orst.edu/publications/related_research/Thesis_Votrin.pdf

³⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Naryn River," 2012, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/403742/Naryn-River

⁴⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Aral Sea," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/31983/Aral-Sea>

⁴¹ Laurence Mitchell, "Lake Issyk-Kul—North Shore," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 136.

⁴² Economic Commission for Europe, "Drainage Basin of the Aral Sea and Other Transboundary Surface Waters in Central Asia," in *Our Waters: Joining Hands Across Borders* (New York: United Nations, 2007), 85. <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/water/blanks/assessment/aral.pdf>

The Kyzyl Suu River, running west through the narrow Alai Valley between the Alai and Trans-Alai ranges, is the northernmost tributary of the Amu Darya River. Historically known as the Oxus River, the Amu Darya also feeds into the Aral Sea.⁴³

In the northeast of the country, the Sary Jaz and Ak-Sai rivers flow east through the Tien Shan Mountains into China, where they become tributaries to the Tarim River in the Uyguir Autonomous Region.⁴⁴

Glaciers

Kyrgyzstan's 6,500 glaciers hold enough water to cover the entire country in 3 m (10 ft) of water. The 62-km (38-mi) long Inylchek Glacier in northern Kyrgyzstan is the longest glacier in the world.⁴⁵

Glacial melt accounts for 10–20% of the water in Kyrgyzstan's rivers, although in some areas the percentage is as high as 75%. Glaciers have recently been melting at an accelerated rate. Scientists are predicting that at current rates, glaciers in northern Kyrgyzstan will disappear within 20 years.⁴⁶



Courtesy Wikipedia
Inylchek Glacier

Climate

Because of Kyrgyzstan's distance from the ocean and wide variations in elevation, the country's climate runs to extremes. Valleys and low-lying areas tend to have hot, dry summers. In the Fergana Valley, highs average 28°C (82°F), although heat waves with temperatures above 40°C (104°F) during the summer are not uncommon.⁴⁷

High in the Inner Tien Shan Mountains, the average temperatures are much lower, ranging from -19°C (-2°F) in winter to 25°C (77°F) during the summer. In the mountains, temperatures drop below freezing even during the warmest months.⁴⁸



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Sunny alpine meadow

Winters can be extremely cold, although they are milder in low-lying areas such as Bishkek and Osh. The most moderate climate is found around the shores of Lake Issyk-Kul, where the large body of water helps temper the climate.⁴⁹

⁴³ John D. Farrington, "Part II: The Mountains and Wildlife of Kyrgyzstan," *A Report on Protected Areas, Biodiversity, and Conservation in the Kyrgyzstan Tian Shan* (Fulbright Commission of the U.S. State Department, June 2005), 28.

⁴⁴ John D. Farrington, "Part II: The Mountains and Wildlife of Kyrgyzstan," *A Report on Protected Areas, Biodiversity, and Conservation in the Kyrgyzstan Tian Shan* (Fulbright Commission of the U.S. State Department, June 2005), 28.

⁴⁵ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 3.

⁴⁶ John D. Farrington, "Part II: The Mountains and Wildlife of Kyrgyzstan," *A Report on Protected Areas, Biodiversity, and Conservation in the Kyrgyzstan Tian Shan* (Fulbright Commission of the U.S. State Department, June 2005), 26.

⁴⁷ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 4–5.

⁴⁸ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 4–5.

Kyrgyzstan is relatively dry, getting 300 days of sunshine a year. Rainfall varies throughout the country, with the areas along Lake Issyk-Kul's south shore receiving only 10 cm (4 in) of rain per year, while the mountains surrounding the Fergana Valley receive as much as 198 cm (78 in). Most rain falls during spring (March–May) and autumn (October–November), although the majority of precipitation comes in the form of heavy snow during the winter (November–March).⁵⁰

Major Cities

Bishkek

Bishkek is the capital of Kyrgyzstan and the country's largest city. It is located north of the Kyrgyz Mountains in the Chu River Valley.⁵¹ The United States has maintained a military air base at Manas International Airport near Bishkek since 2001.

Operated by the U.S. Air Force's 376th Expeditionary Wing, the base has supported operations in Afghanistan; it also houses troops from Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and South Korea.^{52, 53}



© zsoolt / flickr.com
Bishkek

Present-day Bishkek was founded on the ruins of a Sogdian settlement that was abandoned after the Mongols sacked it in the 13th century. In 1825, the Khan of Kokand rebuilt the fortifications to protect a section of the Silk Road. During a conflict with the Kokand Khanate in 1862, the Russians laid siege to the town, destroying much of it in the process. After the Russians rebuilt the fort in 1877, the town grew quickly from an influx of land-hungry Russian peasants, newly freed from serfdom and seeking a new life.⁵⁴

In 1926, Bishkek was renamed Frunze—in honor of Mikhail Frunze, a Bolshevik hero of the Russian Civil War—and became the capital of the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.⁵⁵ Developed by the Soviets, the city is laid out in an orderly grid pattern with wide boulevards, public parks, and monuments that mark the city's Russian heritage. Heavy industry arrived in the city during World War II when the USSR moved some of its armaments industry away from the Western Front.⁵⁶

When Kyrgyzstan became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991, the city was renamed Bishkek. Since independence, it has grown from a population of about 700,000 (mostly Russian) inhabitants to nearly 1 million people, the majority of whom are Kyrgyz. Much of the heavy

⁴⁹ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 4–5.

⁵⁰ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 4–5.

⁵¹ Laurence Mitchell, "Bishkek," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 83.

⁵² BBC News, "Country Profile: Kyrgyzstan," 14 December 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16186907>

⁵³ Global Security, "Manas International Airport, Ganci Air Base, Manas Air Base, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan," 2012, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/centralasia/manas.htm>

⁵⁴ Laurence Mitchell, "Bishkek," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 86–87.

⁵⁵ Bradley Mayhew et al., "Kyrgyzstan" in *Lonely Planet: Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2007), 279.

⁵⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Bishkek," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/66858/Bishkek>

industry established during World War II has disappeared. Although this has greatly improved the air quality around the city, it also has resulted in high levels of unemployment in the area.⁵⁷

Osh

Located on the eastern edge of the Fergana Valley, Central Asia's most populated area, Osh is the second-largest city in Kyrgyzstan and by far the oldest city in the country. It is a major administrative center for southern Kyrgyzstan and is situated 5 km (3 mi) from the country's border with Uzbekistan.^{58, 59}



© cercamon / flickr.com
Osh

No one knows for certain when the city was established, but by the 8th century C.E. it was already a major center of silk production and trade. It became a major stop on the Silk Road during the Middle Ages before it was nearly destroyed by Mongols sweeping through Central Asia in the 13th century.

Osh survived and over the following centuries managed to rebuild, becoming an outpost of the Kokand Khanate in 1762 and one of the most important cities in Central Asia during the Great Game—the struggle for influence in Central Asia played out by British and Russian agents during the 19th century.⁶⁰

Today, Osh still features one of the largest bazaars in Central Asia—the daily Jayma Bazaar, which stretches along the Ak-Buura River. Mount Solomon dominates the opposite bank. Topped by two mosques, this large rocky outcrop is an important Muslim pilgrimage site.⁶¹

The city's population of 250,000 includes one of the largest concentrations of ethnic Uzbeks in the country, with Kyrgyz holding a slight majority.⁶² Both the Kyrgyz and the Uzbeks are predominantly Sunni Muslims.⁶³ Although the two groups have lived peacefully together in the area for centuries, several outbreaks of interethnic violence have occurred in recent decades. In

⁵⁷ Laurence Mitchell, "Bishkek," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 86–87.

⁵⁸ Bradley Mayhew et al., "Kyrgyzstan" in *Lonely Planet: Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2007), 334.

⁵⁹ Associated Press, "Tens of Thousands of Uzbek Refugees Flee to Border to Escape Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan," Fox News, 14 June 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/06/14/renewed-gunbattles-erupt-buildings-torched-kyrgyzstan-scarred-ethnic-violence/>

⁶⁰ Laurence Mitchell, "Southern Kyrgyzstan," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 249–51.

⁶¹ Bradley Mayhew et al., "Kyrgyzstan" in *Lonely Planet: Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2007), 279.

⁶² Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, "Historical Background and Political Context," in *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010*, May 2011, 17.

⁶³ Associated Press, "Tens of Thousands of Uzbek Refugees Flee to Border to Escape Ethnic Violence in Kyrgyzstan," Fox News, 14 June 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2010/06/14/renewed-gunbattles-erupt-buildings-torched-kyrgyzstan-scarred-ethnic-violence/>

1990, around 300 people were killed in ethnic clashes as Soviet soldiers stood by.⁶⁴ In June 2010, 470 people, mostly Uzbeks, were killed when fighting broke out.⁶⁵

Jalal-Abad

Kyrgyzstan's third-largest city, Jalal-Abad, is also located on the eastern end of the Fergana Valley. Once an important outpost on the Silk Road, the city today has a population of 75,000, which includes a sizable Uzbek minority.⁶⁶



Courtesy Wikipedia
Jalal-Abad city seal

Jalal-Abad—not to be confused with Jalalabad in Afghanistan—is named after a 13th-century Turkic leader who was killed by invading Mongols.⁶⁷ During the 19th century, the Russians built a military hospital and outpost near the town. For many years the town was known as a health resort. Nearby mineral springs still provide an important source of income for residents.⁶⁸

After Jalal-Abad was linked to the railroad in 1916, it became an important hub for transporting cotton grown in the Fergana Valley to destinations in Russia. Today, Jalal-Abad is a college town, with two universities.⁶⁹

Karakul

Although Karakul (population 64,000) was closed to foreigners during Soviet times, the town is now one of the most popular places for foreign visitors to stay while in Kyrgyzstan.^{70, 71} Originally founded as a military outpost on the eastern shores of Lake Issyk-Kul, Karakul has a temperate climate, which prompted many Cossack soldiers stationed at the post to bring their families to the area.⁷² During the 1880s, the settlement grew rapidly from an influx of Dungans fleeing persecution in China, followed by large numbers of Tartars, Uyghurs, Ukrainians, and Russian peasants.⁷³

⁶⁴ Bradley Mayhew et al., "Kyrgyzstan" in *Lonely Planet: Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2007), 279.

⁶⁵ Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, "Executive Summary," in *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010*, May 2011, ii.

⁶⁶ Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, "Kyrgyzstan Clashes: Signs of Violence in Jalalabad," BBC News, 17 June 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10338566>

⁶⁷ Bradley Mayhew et al., "Kyrgyzstan" in *Lonely Planet: Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2007), 332.

⁶⁸ Laurence Mitchell, "Jalal-Abad Province," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 226–27.

⁶⁹ Laurence Mitchell, "Jalal-Abad Province," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 226–27.

⁷⁰ City Population, "Kyrgyzstan," 29 October 2011, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Kyrgyzstan.html>

⁷¹ Laurence Mitchell, "Lake Issyk-Kul South and the Central Tien Shan," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 157.

⁷² Bradley Mayhew et al., "Kyrgyzstan" in *Lonely Planet: Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2007), 300.

⁷³ Laurence Mitchell, "Lake Issyk-Kul South and the Central Tien Shan," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 157.

The atmosphere and appearance of Karakul are Russian, with streets laid out in a grid and lined with elaborately decorative houses and a Russian cathedral. Several times during Soviet rule, the name of the town was changed to Przhevalsky, after a famous Russian explorer who died there in 1888.⁷⁴ During the Cold War, the Soviets used the base to test submarine technology and torpedoes in Lake Issyk-Kul (thus the lake's off-limits status).⁷⁵



© yuan.muye / flickr.com
Naryn

Naryn

Located high in the Tien Shan Mountains, Naryn is Kyrgyzstan's most isolated provincial capital. Naryn sits only a few miles from the source of the Naryn River, which runs through the town. Founded as a Russian military outpost in 1868, the town is known for its frontier character. In 1920 it was the site of a battle between Bolshevik forces and the White Russian Army.⁷⁶

Naryn (population 45,000) still has a military base; it is also home to a university and a hydroelectric power station on the Naryn River. It is a common stopover for travelers heading to and from China through the Torugart Pass. Because of its high elevation—2,050 m (6,725 ft)—the town experiences more extremes in weather than Kyrgyzstan's other cities, with hot summers and winter temperatures as low as -40°C (-40°F).⁷⁷

Environmental Concerns

Mining Pollution

Although Kyrgyzstan has been spared much of the industrial pollution that plagues many former Soviet nations, it still holds the dubious distinction of being home to arguably the worst polluted site in Central Asia. During the Soviet era, the government operated a uranium plant in Mailuu Suu. Today, 23 tailing fields hold 2 million tons of unsecured uranium waste. Mailuu Suu in Jalal-Abad province registers levels of radiation several times higher than what is considered safe, and residents regularly suffer from cancer, infertility, and thyroid problems.⁷⁸ The waste has seeped into the ground and contaminated drinking water sources. It is easily swept away by floods and mudslides common to the region, spreading radioactive waste even farther afield.⁷⁹



© blogtrotters / flickr.com
Pollution in Kyrgyzstan

Khaidarkan in Osh province is the only place in the world that still mines mercury for export. Mercury is a powerful neurotoxin that is slowly being phased out of use in other countries.

⁷⁴ Bradley Mayhew et al., "Kyrgyzstan" in *Lonely Planet: Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet, 2007), 300.

⁷⁵ Laurence Mitchell, "Lake Issyk-Kul South and the Central Tien Shan," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 159.

⁷⁶ Laurence Mitchell, "Naryn Province," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 209.

⁷⁷ Laurence Mitchell, "Naryn Province," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 210.

⁷⁸ Emil Nasritdinov et al., "Environmental Migration: Case of Kyrgyzstan," in *Environment, Forced Migration and Social Vulnerability*, eds. Tamer Afifi and Jill Jäger (Berlin: Springer, 2010), 241–42.

⁷⁹ Emil Nasritdinov et al., "Environmental Migration: Case of Kyrgyzstan," in *Environment, Forced Migration and Social Vulnerability*, eds. Tamer Afifi and Jill Jäger (Berlin: Springer, 2010), 241–42.

Deposited next to Khaidarkan are millions of tons of mining waste that could lead to widespread mercury poisoning in the area.⁸⁰

Not all mining contamination dates from the Soviet era. A year after the Kumtor gold mine opened in 1997, some of the cyanide used for processing gold ore accidentally spilled into a river flowing into Lake Issyk-Kul. Several locals died, and dozens of others were hospitalized in what became the first of several incidents that called into question the safety of the mine.⁸¹

Water

The drying up of the Aral Sea represents one of the greatest environmental problems in Central Asia. The damming of the rivers in Kyrgyzstan—as well as the overuse of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya for irrigation in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan—have contributed to the drying up of the Aral Sea in Kazakhstan. As the waters recede, salt, fertilizers, and pesticides are left behind; they are exposed to strong winds that blow the contaminants into populated areas. Health problems such as throat cancer and kidney disease are common among people living in the area.⁸²

Kyrgyzstan has contributed to the problem through the inefficient use of water. Many of its irrigation systems are in poor repair, allowing water to be wasted in large amounts. Water is also often polluted with waste from agriculture, mining, and humans because many areas lack access to proper hazardous waste disposal sites and improved sanitation facilities.⁸³



© IFDC Photography / flickr.com
Irrigation site in Uzgen

⁸⁰ Alex Kirby, “Khaidarkan Mercury: Addressing Primary Mercury Mining in Kyrgyzstan” (report, United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya, 2009), 8, 24–25, http://www.chem.unep.ch/mercury/Sector-Specific-Information/Brochure_Kyrgyz.pdf

⁸¹ Laurence Mitchell, “Lake Issyk-Kul South and the Central Tien Shan,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Guilford, CT: Bradt, 2008), 183.

⁸² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Aral Sea,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/31983/Aral-Sea>

⁸³ Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, “Kyrgyz Republic: Environmental Issues” (concept paper, OSCE Centre in Bishkek, n.d.), 2, <http://www.osce.org/bishkek/14199>

Deforestation and Overgrazing

Under Soviet rule, forests were closely managed by the government. But as the economy struggled in the years following independence, trees were cut down during fuel shortages. This brought a variety of wild apple and other species to the brink of extinction and threatened the world's largest population of wild-growing walnut trees.^{84, 85}

Several Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) are working with the government to establish a system of stewardship that allows citizens to harvest nuts and fruit from the forest while taking responsibility for the care of the trees. However, replanting trees is challenging because young trees present a temptation to animals grazing in the groves.⁸⁶



© Lukas Bergstrom
Kyrgyzstan Forest

The breakdown of the collective herding system also changed the way pastures were used, leading to overgrazing on lower slopes and foothills. The Soviet government used trucks to move large collective herds from their winter homes in Kazakhstan to high summer pastures in Kyrgyzstan. Herders no longer have access to trucks to move livestock from summer to winter pasture. Consequently, they have been keeping herds closer to home, leading to overuse of some pastures and the underuse of others.⁸⁷ Overgrazing can cause soil erosion, which over time can lead to desertification, landslides, and flooding.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Mike Ives, "Saving Ancient Walnut Forests in the Valleys of Central Asia," *Yale Environment* 360, 8 September 2011, http://e360.yale.edu/feature/saving_ancient_walnut_forests_in_the_valleys_of_central_asia/2440/

⁸⁵ Michael McCarthy, "Death in the Orchard of Eden," *Independent*, 8 May 2009, www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/death-in-the-orchard-of-eden-1681057.html

⁸⁶ Mike Ives, "Saving Ancient Walnut Forests in the Valleys of Central Asia," *Yale Environment* 360, 8 September 2011, http://e360.yale.edu/feature/saving_ancient_walnut_forests_in_the_valleys_of_central_asia/2440/

⁸⁷ Tjaart W. Schillhorn van Veen, "The Krygyz Shepherders at a Crossroads" (paper no. 38d, Pastoral Development Network, 1995).

⁸⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Rangeland," 2012, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/491143/rangeland

Natural Hazards

Earthquakes are an almost daily occurrence in Kyrgyzstan, but most are so small they are hardly felt. Every few years, the country experiences an earthquake larger than 6.0 on the Richter Scale.⁸⁹ The last major earthquake occurred in July 2011 when a 6.1 magnitude earthquake struck Osh province near Kyrgyzstan's border with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, killing 14 people.⁹⁰ Even small earthquakes can destroy buildings and cause structural damage to dams and irrigation systems, leading to severe floods.



© allanv / flickr.com
Avalanche, Pamir Mountains

Landslides and avalanches, which are also common in Kyrgyzstan, often threaten human life and property. Landslides are especially problematic in the southern region of the country, particularly in the Fergana Basin. They are most common during the spring when rain and seismic activity can act together to loosen large amounts of dirt and debris from slopes. On average, 10 people die each year in landslides. In addition to destroying homes in minutes, landslides can cut villages off for months if roads are blocked by debris. Because of tailings from uranium mines, landslides in the Fergana Range also pose the threat of moving radioactive waste into inhabited areas.⁹¹

Avalanches can occur at almost any time of the year and are common in areas with heavy snowfall. Since avalanches can block roads and damage communications lines, villages may be cut off for months. Even major roads can be shut down for extended periods by avalanches, a common delay for winter travelers. Occasionally, the Kyrgyz government intentionally sets off avalanches in areas of high avalanche risk to prevent accidents.⁹²

Possible flash-flooding from outbursts of glacial lakes is another concern. As glaciers melt, sizable lakes appear on top of or next to them, contained by walls of ice, bedrock, rocks, and debris. Earthquakes—or even a large rock or piece of ice falling into the lake—can cause these natural containment walls to fail, releasing torrents of fast-moving water.⁹³ In Kyrgyzstan, 200 glacier lakes have been identified at high risk for glacial-lake outburst.^{94, 95}

⁸⁹ Earthquake-Report, “Kyrgyzstan Earthquake List,” 26 April 2012, <http://earthquake-report.com/2012/02/16/kyrgyzstan-earthquake-list/>

⁹⁰ Armand Vervaeck and James Daniell, “Earthquake Kyrgyzstan/Uzbekistan: 30 million US\$ Damage and 14 People Killed, 101 Injured,” Earthquake-Report, 26 July 2011, <http://earthquake-report.com/2011/07/19/extremely-dangerous-earthquake-in-kyrgyzstan/>

⁹¹ Christian Haberland et al., “Landslides in Southern Kyrgyzstan: Understanding Tectonic Controls,” *EOS, Transactions, American Geophysical Union* 92, no. 20 (17 May 2011): 169, <http://edoc.gfz-potsdam.de/gfz/get/17018/0/d3e45a29ccbfc464e745ef26788cecc/2011EO200001.pdf>

⁹² Central Asia Online, “Kyrgyz to Induce Avalanches on Bishkek-Osh Highway till March 30,” 24 March 2012, http://www.centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/newsbriefs/2012/03/24/newsbrief-08

⁹³ Suzanne Goldenberg, “Glacier Lakes: Growing Danger Zones in the Himalayas,” *Guardian*, 10 October 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/oct/10/glacier-lakes-melt-himalayas>

⁹⁴ IDW (Informationsdienst Wissenschaft), “Glacial Lake Outburst Floods in Central Asia,” 19 May 2008, <http://idw-online.de/pages/en/event23592>

⁹⁵ OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), “Country Fact Sheet: Kyrgyzstan,” January 2010.

CHAPTER 1 ASSESSMENT

1. The Tien Shan Mountains run north-south from Kazakhstan to Tajikistan.

FALSE

The Tien Shan Mountains run east-west through Kyrgyzstan, from the eastern border with China to the western border with Kazakhstan.

2. The Naryn River is a major source of electrical power for Kyrgyzstan.

TRUE

More than 90% of Kyrgyzstan's electrical power is produced by hydropower. The Naryn passes through a series of dams, including Toktogol Dam, the country's largest hydropower plant, before crossing the border into Uzbekistan.

3. Osh is Kyrgyzstan's largest city.

FALSE

Although it lies on the eastern edge of the Fergana Valley, Central Asia's most populated area, Osh is only the country's second-largest city. It has one of the largest populations of ethnic Uzbeks in the country and has been the site of interethnic violence in recent years.

4. During the Cold War, the Soviets used Lake Issyk-Kul to test torpedoes.

TRUE

Although the lake is now a popular destination for visitors, during the Soviet era it was strictly off limits to foreign visitors. The lake was used to test torpedoes from a military base near Karakul on the eastern end of the lake.

5. Unsecured radioactive waste from uranium mining poses a significant environmental and health threat to the region.

TRUE

Mailuu Suu is arguably the most polluted town in Central Asia and one of the most polluted sites in the world because of 2 million tons of unsecured radioactive waste. During the Cold War, the Soviets mined and processed uranium nearby. Many of the town's residents suffer from cancer, infertility, and thyroid problems as a result of exposure to radioactive waste.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY

Introduction

The Kyrgyz people established themselves in the area now known as Kyrgyzstan in the 15th and 16th centuries.^{96, 97} In 1758 Kyrgyz tribes were overrun by Manchus and became nominal subjects of the Chinese Empire. But by the early 19th century, they were ruled by the Uzbek Khanate of Kokand. In 1876 the region of present-day Kyrgyzstan was incorporated into the Russian Empire. Rebellion, revolution, and military suppression punctuated the Russian history of the Kyrgyz, who gained their independence as a nation following the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991.⁹⁸



Courtesy Wikipedia
Two Kyrgyz warriors

In terms of the region's significance in the Cold War, the first Soviet atomic bomb was developed during World War II in Kyrgyzstan, where the Soviets had relocated their arms industries away from the German front.⁹⁹

In recent decades ethnic violence has plagued the densely populated Fergana Valley, a portion of which lies in Kyrgyzstan. The root of the problem goes back to the 1920s, when Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin began to divide the area among the Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and Uzbeks.¹⁰⁰ Prior to this division, land barriers in the region had been undefined.¹⁰¹

Since 2001 and the beginning of the War on Terrorism, the United States has maintained an air base in Kyrgyzstan to transit soldiers to and from Afghanistan. The Russian Federation, which also maintains a military base in the mostly Muslim nation of Kyrgyzstan, opposes the U.S. presence in the region.¹⁰² Historically, Kyrgyzstan's natural resources—which include oil, gas, gold, and uranium—as well as its geographic position bordering China, have made the small mountainous country important.^{103, 104, 105, 106}

⁹⁶ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. State Department, "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: People and History," 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

⁹⁷ BBC News, "Kyrgyzstan Profile," 15 December 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16185772>

⁹⁸ BBC News, "Kyrgyzstan Profile," 15 December 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16185772>

⁹⁹ Rafis Abazov, *Historical Dictionary of Kyrgyzstan* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004), xxvii, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/44021681/Historical-Dictionary-of-Kyrgyzstan>

¹⁰⁰ Edward Stourton, "Kyrgyzstan: Stalin's Deadly Legacy," *Guardian*, 20 June 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jun/20/kyrgyzstan-stalins-deadly-legacy>

¹⁰¹ *Economist*, "Kyrgyzstan: Stalin's Harvest," 17 June 2010, <http://www.economist.com/node/16377083>

¹⁰² Leonid Ragozin, "Analysis: Why Kyrgyzstan Matters," BBC News, 21 March 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4368837.stm>

¹⁰³ BBC News, "Kyrgyzstan Profile," 14 December 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16186907>

¹⁰⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

¹⁰⁵ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. State Department, "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: People and History," 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

¹⁰⁶ Dave Brown, "Uranium Mining in Kyrgyzstan," Noront, 21 September 2010, <http://uraniuminvestingnews.com/4818/uranium-mining-in-kyrgyzstan.html>

Early History of the Kyrgyz

Nomadic tribes known as the Kyrgyz, believed to be of Turkic descent, lived in what is today northeastern Mongolia as early as 201 B.C.E. Some of the tribes migrated in the 6th century to the region of present-day southern Siberia, where they lived along the Yenisey River for about 200 years.¹⁰⁷



Courtesy Wikipedia
Kyrgyz envoys

The Kyrgyz—described in early texts as a red-haired, green-eyed people—continued their migration south during the 11th century, when they were absorbed by the Karakhanid Empire, which in the 13th century was conquered by the Mongol Genghis Khan.^{108, 109} After his death, the Kyrgyz were ruled by the Mongols for about 200 years.^{110, 111}

In the late 17th century, Mongol Oirats conquered the Turkic rulers who had been dominating what is now Kyrgyzstan for centuries.¹¹² The Oirats ruled the Kyrgyz until the mid-18th century, when the Chinese forced them out.¹¹³

After the fall of the Oirats, a Turkic tribe to the west known as the Uzbeks rose to fill the power vacuum. Infighting had split the Muslim Uzbeks into three powerful khanates—Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand.¹¹⁴ During the second half of the 18th century, the Khanate of Kokand expanded from its power base in the Fergana Valley to absorb most of modern-day Kyrgyzstan.¹¹⁵ But constant warfare among tribes left the region in tatters—economically isolated and cut off from the technological advances of modern society.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁷ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. State Department, “Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: People and History,” 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

¹⁰⁸ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 7.

¹⁰⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Mongolia,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/389335/Mongolia>

¹¹⁰ Martha Brill Olcott, “Chapter 2: Kyrgyzstan: Historical Background: Mongol Domination,” in *Kyrgyzstan: A Country Study*, ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1996), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kgtoc.html#kg0000>

¹¹¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Genghis Khan,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/229093/Genghis-Khan>

¹¹² BBC News, “Kyrgyzstan Profile,” 15 December 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16185772>

¹¹³ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 8.

¹¹⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “History of Central Asia,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/102315/history-of-Central-Asia/>

¹¹⁵ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 8.

¹¹⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “History of Central Asia,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/102315/history-of-Central-Asia/>

The Great Game

As the 19th century approached, Mongol and Turkic nomads found themselves increasingly hemmed in by two civilizations—those of England and Russia—with the technology and know-how to support their expansionist ambitions.¹¹⁷



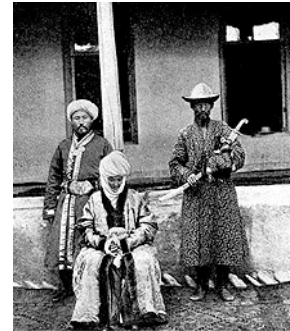
© upyemoz / flickr.com
Khudayar Khan Palace, Kokand

Russia had been quietly advancing eastward since the 17th century, taking control over Siberia and parts of Mongolia. As the British solidified their hold over India in the mid-1800s, Russia began taking an interest in the lands to its south. The race for control over Central and South Asia became known as the Great Game.¹¹⁸

The British were motivated by a desire to protect and expand their economic interests in the region. The Russians were drawn to the region for various other reasons, including a desire to maintain a buffer between Russian and British interests.¹¹⁹

The Kyrgyz resented the rule of the Kokand Khanate, which had a reputation for cruelty. By the 1820s, various Kyrgyz tribes had approached Russia, England, and China for help against Kokand, clearly believing that an alliance with one of the great powers was better than subjugation to the khans. It was not until the Great Game began in earnest that Russia stepped in to offer assistance.¹²⁰

In the 1850s, many of the Kyrgyz tribes came under Russian protection, and in 1861 Russian troops captured Bishkek from the Kokand Khanate. At the time Bishkek was little more than a fortified trading outpost. The Russians rebuilt the fort, which evolved into a Russian military outpost, a town, and eventually into the largest city in Kyrgyzstan as well as its capital.¹²¹



Courtesy Wikipedia
Kyrgyz men, circa 1907

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, the Russians fought the khanates for control of Central Asia, subjugating the Khiva and Bhukara khanates before defeating the Kokand Khanate in 1876. The same year, Russia officially annexed the area known as Turkestan into the Russian Empire.¹²²

¹¹⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “History of Central Asia,” 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/102315/history-of-Central-Asia/>

¹¹⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “History of Central Asia,” 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/102315/history-of-Central-Asia/>

¹¹⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “History of Central Asia,” 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/102315/history-of-Central-Asia/>

¹²⁰ Rafis Abazov, “Introduction: Land, People, and History,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 34–35.

¹²¹ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 86.

¹²² Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 8.

Russian Rule

Rebellion

The Russian colonization of Central Asia brought drastic social, ethnic, and economic change to the region. During the 1860s, Russian peasants began arriving in droves to claim what they assumed was unoccupied land, putting plow to many of the nomads' seasonal pastures. Subsistence farming quickly gave way to commercial farming after the Russians introduced cotton and tobacco to the region, while the completion of the Trans-Caspian Railway in 1888 increased the volume of trade. As other railways followed, an area that had been socially and economically isolated for centuries was opening up to an unprecedented degree.¹²³



Courtesy Wikipedia
Russian Civil War Poster 1917

The influx of outsiders inevitably led to tension as the Kyrgyz lost more and more territory to farming, forcing many nomads to settle and take up farming or move. Rebellions were common, including a violent uprising led by Muslim Uzbeks in the Fergana Valley in 1898.¹²⁴

Another major rebellion broke out in 1916 when the Russian tsar issued a conscription order, calling for Central Asians to be sent to Russia to provide labor for the war effort. Thousands of Russian colonists were killed during the violent uprisings that followed.¹²⁵

The Russian government retaliated brutally, massacring more than a million Central Asians. More than 100,000 Kyrgyz fled into the Tien Shan Mountains, hoping to find refuge in China, only to be snowed in by an early winter. It is estimated that more than 40% of the Kyrgyz living in Russian territories died during the rebellion.¹²⁶

¹²³ Rafis Abazov, "Introduction: Land, People, and History," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 36–37.

¹²⁴ Rafis Abazov, "Introduction: Land, People, and History," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 36–37.

¹²⁵ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 9.

¹²⁶ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 9.

Civil War

The situation deteriorated rapidly in 1917 with the abdication of the Russian tsar and the Bolshevik coup. After seizing control of the government, the Bolsheviks abolished all political opposition and launched a campaign of terror against the Russian people.¹²⁷ A civil war broke out in 1918, and by 1920 the Bolsheviks had secured most of Central Asia.^{128, 129}

While some Kyrgyz welcomed the end of imperial rule, others rallied around the Basmachi, a group of Islamic militants based in the Fergana Valley. The Basmachi had taken part in the 1916 uprising and continued their guerilla warfare into the 1930s.¹³⁰

Soviet Kyrgyzstan

It was under Bolshevik rule that Kyrgyzstan first became a country. In 1924, the Bolsheviks carved Turkestan into a jigsaw puzzle of new territories.¹³¹ Although the intent was to create nations based on ethnic and linguistic makeup, the true political impact of the five new nations that emerged was a drive toward nationalism and the loss of pan-Turkic unity.¹³²



Courtesy Wikipedia
Flag of Kyrgyz, 1936

The territory initially known as Kirghizia was renamed the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast in 1925.¹³³ Two years later, with *Kara* dropped from the name, the country was upgraded to an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1936, it became the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic, a full-fledged member of the Soviet Union.¹³⁴

Despite the rocky start, the Soviet Union did much to improve the quality of life in Kyrgyzstan. The Soviets introduced compulsory education, which increased literacy from nearly nonexistent to nearly universal.¹³⁵ Access to basic healthcare also improved, and poverty rates dropped drastically.¹³⁶ During this time, volunteers from Russia and Eastern Europe, building roads, power stations, and government buildings, spread the communist doctrine throughout Kyrgyzstan.¹³⁷

¹²⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/614785/Union-of-Soviet-Socialist-Republics>

¹²⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/614785/Union-of-Soviet-Socialist-Republics>

¹²⁹ Reuel R. Hanks, "The Geography and History of Kyrgyzstan," in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO, 2005), 324–25.

¹³⁰ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 10–11.

¹³¹ BBC News, "Kyrgyzstan Profile," 15 December 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16185772>

¹³² Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 9.

¹³³ Imogen Bell, ed., *Regional Surveys of the World: Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia 2003*, 3rd ed. (London: Europa Publications, 2002), 236.

¹³⁴ Reuel R. Hanks, "The Geography and History of Kyrgyzstan," in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO, 2005), 325.

¹³⁵ Reuel R. Hanks, "The Geography and History of Kyrgyzstan," in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO, 2005), 325.

¹³⁶ Rafis Abazov, "Introduction: Land, People, and History," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 43–44.

¹³⁷ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 10.

But these gains came at a steep cost. Education was a vehicle of indoctrination, a means of spreading the communist platform. Creative thought, innovation, and open debate were not tolerated. Russian was the state language, and native cultures and religions were suppressed by the promotion of a new pan-Soviet culture.¹³⁸

Private ownership of land was abolished and small farms were appropriated for large-scale collective farms. Nomads were ordered to surrender their herds and were assigned to collective farms. The collectives weakened and, in many cases, destroyed the old social order by breaking up clans. Many Kyrgyz resisted by slaughtering their herds and seeking refuge in China.¹³⁹

Stalin and Khrushchev

In 1922 Joseph Stalin began to consolidate his control over the Soviet Union. The next three decades witnessed the tightening of economic policy and the near total breakdown of civil liberties. Dissent was not tolerated, and freedom of the press was nonexistent.¹⁴⁰ Once Stalin had stamped out the last vestiges of anti-Bolshevik rebellion, he turned on his own people. In Central Asia, hundreds of thousands of Kyrgyz died of starvation while countless others simply disappeared. Regular purges of the Communist Party left no one safe.¹⁴¹ In 1937, nearly 140 of Kyrgyzstan's top political figures, including the entire Kyrgyz Supreme Soviet Central Committee, were secretly executed by the KGB outside the village of Chong-Tash and buried in an unmarked mass grave. During subsequent political purges, thousands more were executed or sent to labor camps.^{142, 143}



Courtesy Wikipedia
Portrait of Joseph Stalin

When Nikita Khrushchev assumed leadership of the Communist Party in 1956, he relaxed some of Stalin's strictest economic and political policies. Although he was removed from office in the 1960s, his efforts to improve the living standards in the Soviet Union paved the way for what many considered the Soviet golden age.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Rafis Abazov, "Introduction: Land, People, and History," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 46.

¹³⁹ Reuel R. Hanks, "The Geography and History of Kyrgyzstan," in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO, 2005), 326.

¹⁴⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/614785/Union-of-Soviet-Socialist-Republics>

¹⁴¹ Rafis Abazov, "Introduction: Land, People, and History," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 40.

¹⁴² Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 118.

¹⁴³ Rafis Abazov, *Historical Dictionary of Kyrgyzstan* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004), xxvi–xxvii,

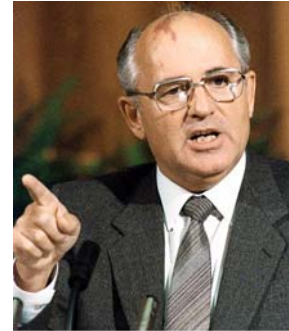
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/44021681/Historical-Dictionary-of-Kyrgyzstan>

¹⁴⁴ Rafis Abazov, "Introduction: Land, People, and History," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 40–41.

The Collapse of the Soviet Union

By the end of the 1970s the Soviet Union had reached a point of economic stagnation. Government spending was at deficit levels, due in large part to the cost of supporting the largest standing army in the world. Corruption and embezzlement at all levels of government were taking a toll, silently emptying coffers. The lack of innovation and limited access to developing technologies additionally contributed to the decline.¹⁴⁵ By the 1980s, housing shortages were a serious source of popular discontent.¹⁴⁶

It was under these circumstances that Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union. Hoping to stimulate the economy and give people a greater sense of ownership over their lives, he instituted policies of economic liberalization and openness known as perestroika and glasnost.¹⁴⁷ But by 1990 Gorbachev's reforms had inadvertently opened the door to interethnic tensions, which had been suppressed during Soviet rule, and created a sense of chaos, leading to shortages and confusion throughout the country.¹⁴⁸



Courtesy Wikipedia
Mikhail Gorbachev

Although Gorbachev's reforms allowed for greater freedom of the press and gave the Kyrgyz and other minorities the opportunity to air grievances, perestroika and glasnost were not met with much enthusiasm in Kyrgyzstan, where the political elite resisted surrendering their privileges.¹⁴⁹

A group that did take advantage of the more open atmosphere were the Osh-based Uzbeks, who believed that the Kyrgyz were exploiting the system for their own benefit, and who began to agitate for local autonomy. In response, the Kyrgyz organized themselves along ethnic lines, and in 1990 the Kyrgyz-controlled city council in Osh announced plans to build a cotton-processing plant on land operated by an Uzbek collective farm. The Uzbeks organized a resistance, prompting the Kyrgyz to retaliate. Between June and August, several hundred people were killed on both sides before the government intervened.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Rafis Abazov, "Introduction: Land, People, and History," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 48.

¹⁴⁶ Rafis Abazov, "Introduction: Land, People, and History," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 48.

¹⁴⁷ Rafis Abazov, "Introduction: Land, People, and History," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 48–49.

¹⁴⁸ Rafis Abazov, "Introduction: Land, People, and History," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 50.

¹⁴⁹ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 12.

¹⁵⁰ Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: Kyrgyzstan: Historical Background: Into the Soviet Union," in *Kyrgyzstan: A Country Study*, ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1996), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/kgtoc.html>

Kyrgyzstan Independence and Political Corruption (1991–2005)

In October 1990, the Kyrgyz legislature appointed physicist Askar Akayev to be the country's first president. Under his leadership, the name of the country was officially changed from the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic to Kyrgyzstan.^{151, 152}

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan joined other Central Asian and Balkan countries to declare their independence in August 1991. Kyrgyzstan reaffirmed its independence in December of that year when it became a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States.^{153, 154}



Courtesy Wikipedia
President Akayev with Putin

Akayev, officially elected president of the new country in October 1991 and reelected in 1995 and 2000, presided over an administration that became overshadowed by scandal and political infighting, including charges of voting irregularities.^{155, 156} Although a new constitution was approved in 1993 and a series of referendums introduced private property and provisions meant to protect freedom of speech, opposition candidates were arrested and discriminated against, and the state media only reported on the campaigns of approved candidates.^{157, 158}

The first public demonstrations against Akayev came in 2002 after the arrest of Azimbek Beknazarov, an outspoken critic of Akayev's plans to cede hundreds of miles of disputed border territory to China.¹⁵⁹ In the town of Aksy, six protestors were killed when police fired into the crowd. A national public outcry led to Beknazarov's release, but protests still continued for several months.¹⁶⁰

Large protests broke out again following the spring 2005 elections. Opposition supporters disputed the results and took to the streets in Osh and Jalal-Abad. On 24 March, a peaceful protest in Bishkek escalated into an uprising when police used violence to break up the crowd, which, after regrouping, stormed the main government compound and entered the presidential palace.¹⁶¹

¹⁵¹ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 13.

¹⁵² BBC News, "Profile: Askar Akayev," 4 April 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4371819.stm>

¹⁵³ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 13.

¹⁵⁴ BBC News, "Profile: Askar Akayev," 4 April 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4371819.stm>

¹⁵⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Kyrgyzstan," 2012, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/326091/Kyrgyzstan

¹⁵⁶ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: People and History," 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

¹⁵⁷ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: People and History," 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

¹⁵⁸ BBC News, "Kyrgyzstan: Kulov's Acquittal Annulled," 12 September 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/922577.stm>

¹⁵⁹ BBC News, "China Border Deal Approved," 17 May 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1993058.stm>

¹⁶⁰ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 14.

¹⁶¹ BBC News, "Eyewitness: Kyrgyzstan Protest," 24 March 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4378983.stm>

President Akayev, who had already fled the country, tendered his resignation from Belarus on 4 April 2005. Subsequently, opposition leaders created a coalition to assume control of the government until July, when new elections were to be held. Kurmanbek Bakiyev, a former prime minister, served as acting president until he was overwhelmingly selected for the top position in the 2005 elections.^{162, 163}

Nepotism During the Bakiyev Years (2005–2010)

The dramatic turnover in leadership did little to stabilize Kyrgyzstan. The new government's failure to adopt constitutional reforms in 2006 led to a new series of protests. In response to public pressure, Bakiyev signed a constitutional amendment stripping the president of certain powers. But within months most of the amendment's provisions had been overturned.^{164, 165}

In September 2007, Bakiyev used presidential powers granted through a public referendum to dismiss the government and call for new elections. Both the referendum and the subsequent elections were heavily criticized by international observers, especially when Bakiyev's new political party won 71 out of 90 legislative seats. Bakiyev himself was reelected in 2009 in an election that showed serious irregularities.^{166, 167}



Courtesy Wikipedia
President Bakiyev

A major criticism of the president was his blatant use of nepotism. During his presidency, Bakiyev managed to sprinkle family members throughout the government, effectively making it a family business. By the end of his presidency, five of his brothers and two of his sons oversaw almost every aspect of government, including handling foreign aid and overseeing the privatization of major businesses.^{168, 169}

Public protest built to a crescendo in spring 2010 when large demonstrations broke out in Talas, Naryn, and Bishkek. Adding to public dissatisfaction with President Bakiyev were economic problems and a steep increase in the cost of electricity and fuel. In early April, events took a violent turn after protestors in Bishkek attempted to storm government offices. After failing to disperse the protestors by other means, police fired live rounds into the crowd, killing 80 people and wounding hundreds more.^{170, 171}

¹⁶² Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: People and History," 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

¹⁶³ BBC News, "Profile: Kurmanbek Bakiyev," 29 April 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4660317.stm>

¹⁶⁴ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: People and History," 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

¹⁶⁵ BBC News, "Profile: Kurmanbek Bakiyev," 29 April 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4660317.stm>

¹⁶⁶ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: People and History," 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

¹⁶⁷ BBC News, "Profile: Kurmanbek Bakiyev," 29 April 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4660317.stm>

¹⁶⁸ Peter Leonard, "It's Not Easy Ousting a Kyrgyz Leader and His Kin," NBC News.com, 14 April 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36525372/ns/world_news-south_and_central_asia/t/its-not-easy-ousting-kyrgyz-leader-his-kin/

¹⁶⁹ BBC News, "Profile: Kurmanbek Bakiyev," 29 April 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4660317.stm>

¹⁷⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Kyrgyzstan," 2012, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/326091/Kyrgyzstan

The government declared a state of emergency as Bakiyev fled the capital. Opposition leader Roza Otunbayeva became head of the interim government and was confirmed as acting president in June 2010, the same month that interethnic violence erupted in the south of the country.^{172, 173}

Continuing Ethnic Violence

For years tension between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks has been high in the south, where the majority of the country's Uzbeks live. Uzbeks have long complained that as a minority they are shut out of the government and at the mercy of Kyrgyz-dominated local councils. The Kyrgyz offer little sympathy, pointing out that Uzbeks dominate the commercial sector in Osh and Jalal-Abad.¹⁷⁴

Although confrontations between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz have occurred in Osh and Jalal-Abad, the specific cause of the June 2010 violence—which left nearly 500 people dead—remains uncertain.¹⁷⁵ Atrocities were committed by both sides, and hundreds of thousands were displaced, including more than 100,000 Uzbeks who fled to Uzbekistan.¹⁷⁶



© blandm / flickr.com
Police prepare for riot

Despite the violence in the south, the government held a constitutional referendum on 27 June 2010.¹⁷⁷ The first parliamentary elections under the new constitution were held in October, followed by the formation of a coalition government in December led by Prime Minister Almazbek Atambayev, who was elected president in October 2011 amid observations of voting irregularities.¹⁷⁸ Despite these charges, when Atambayev assumed the presidency in December 2011, it marked the first peaceful transfer of power in a Central Asian country.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷¹ BBC News, "Profile: Kurmanbek Bakiyev," 29 April 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4660317.stm>

¹⁷² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Kyrgyzstan," 2012,

www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/326091/Kyrgyzstan

¹⁷³ BBC News, "Profile: Kurmanbek Bakiyev," 29 April 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4660317.stm>

¹⁷⁴ Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010," 2011, 20,

http://ukr.unhcr.org/ua/img/uploads/docs/kic_report_KGZ_ENG_final.pdf

¹⁷⁵ Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010," 2011, 26–27,

http://ukr.unhcr.org/ua/img/uploads/docs/kic_report_KGZ_ENG_final.pdf

¹⁷⁶ Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010," 2011, ii,

http://ukr.unhcr.org/ua/img/uploads/docs/kic_report_KGZ_ENG_final.pdf

¹⁷⁷ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: People and History," 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

¹⁷⁸ BBC News, "Kyrgyzstan Profile," 15 December 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16185772>

¹⁷⁹ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: People and History," 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

Islamic Extremism and the War on Terrorism

Kyrgyzstan is an area of Islamic extremism.¹⁸⁰ In 1999, the Islamist Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a group fighting to create an autonomous Islamic government in the Fergana Valley, crossed the border into Kyrgyzstan and kidnapped four Japanese geologists. Although the scientists were released unharmed, the IMU returned to Kyrgyzstan a year later and took more hostages, including four Americans who managed to escape.¹⁸¹



After the September 11 terrorist attacks, Kyrgyzstan agreed to allow the United States to use Manas Air Base as a staging area for operations in Afghanistan.¹⁸² Although the U.S. presence in the area brought Kyrgyzstan much-needed foreign aid, some feared that it might provoke more attacks from Islamic extremists and cause friction with Russia, which historically has viewed Central Asia as its “backyard.”¹⁸³ In 2003, Kyrgyzstan also allowed Russia to establish a base in the country.¹⁸⁴

But continuing U.S. access to the base is uncertain. The government of Kyrgyzstan announced that it would end the lease on Manas Air Base in 2009, but after negotiations the lease was extended until July 2014.¹⁸⁵ President Atambayev, who has stated that he wants to close the base after the lease ends, has hinted that U.S. usage of the base after 2014 ultimately may hinge on Russian approval.^{186, 187, 188}

¹⁸⁰ Leonid Ragozin, “Analysis: Why Kyrgyzstan Matters,” BBC News, 21 March 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4368837.stm>

¹⁸¹ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 14.

¹⁸² U.S. Air Force, “Transit Center at Manas,” n.d., <http://www.manas.afcent.af.mil/>

¹⁸³ Reuel R. Hanks, “The Geography and History of Kyrgyzstan,” in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO, 2005), 330–31.

¹⁸⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Kyrgyzstan,” 2012, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/326091/Kyrgyzstan

¹⁸⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Kyrgyzstan,” 2012, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/326091/Kyrgyzstan

¹⁸⁶ Elisabeth Bumiller, “Kyrgyzstan Wants Military Role to End at U.S. Base,” *New York Times*, 13 March 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/14/world/asia/panetta-meets-with-military-officials-in-kyrgyzstan.html>

¹⁸⁷ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: People and History,” 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

¹⁸⁸ Associated Press, “Kyrgyzstan: U.S. Base Fate Not Only About Money,” *Air Force Times*, 3 May 2012, <http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2012/05/ap-kyrgyzstan-us-air-base-fate-not-only-about-money-050312/>

CHAPTER 2 ASSESSMENT

1. Islamic militants are a recent phenomenon in the Fergana Valley.

FALSE

The Muslim Uzbeks led a violent uprising in the Fergana Valley in 1898. Another group based in the Fergana Valley, the Basmachi, who had taken part in the 1916 uprising in Russia, continued their guerilla warfare into the 1930s.

2. In recent years Kyrgyzstan has been important to the United States because of its proximity to Afghanistan.

TRUE

Since 2001 and the beginning of the War on Terrorism, the United States has maintained an air base in Kyrgyzstan to transit soldiers to and from Afghanistan.

3. Under Soviet rule, the Kyrgyz were allowed to practice their traditional nomadic lifestyle.

FALSE

Under Soviet rule, the nomadic Kyrgyz were forced to surrender their herds to the government and settle on collective farms. Russian was introduced as the state language, and native cultures and religions were suppressed.

4. Recent outbreaks of ethnic violence have been intense in the cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad.

TRUE

The southern cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad are located in the Fergana Valley, where most Muslim Uzbeks, who are a minority in Kyrgyzstan, live. Ethnic tensions in the region have been intense. Violent outbreaks in 2010 took the lives of hundreds.

5. The first two post-Soviet-era presidents of Kyrgyzstan were removed from office by popular discontent.

TRUE

Both Askar Akayev (1991–2005) and Kurmanbek Bakiyev (2005–2010) fled the country following large-scale protests and uprisings resulting from popular discontent with government policies, which included charges of corruption and nepotism.

CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY

Introduction

The economy of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan is less a well-oiled machine than a work in progress. When Kyrgyzstan was part of the Soviet Union, its economy was carefully planned as part of the whole—a cog in the wheel of Soviet production. Consequently, its economy was highly specialized for the production of specific products, and it relied heavily on trade with other Soviet countries. After independence, the trade that Kyrgyzstan depended on to keep its industries running and feed its animal herds disappeared, as did the market for many of its products.¹⁸⁹

The government quickly privatized smaller business enterprises, dissolved collective farms, and enacted a liberal trade policy in an effort to keep the nation solvent while encouraging foreign investment.¹⁹⁰ In spite of the Russian economic crisis in 1998, Kyrgyzstan managed to grow its GDP (gross domestic product) every year from 1995 until 2005.¹⁹¹



© Asian Development Bank
Kyrgyz workers

Although GDP has risen steadily, overall economic growth has been slow. By 2001, 10 years after independence, GDP was only 76% of Kyrgyzstan's 1991 level, and it was not until 2006 that GDP actually rose above pre-independence levels.^{192, 193} Kyrgyzstan has natural resources that could be exploited, but it lacks the infrastructure to do so, and it has lagged behind other Central Asian countries in attracting foreign investment. The outbreak of civil unrest in 2005 and 2010 contributed to this situation: poor economic conditions fed unrest, which in turn drove much-needed investors away.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: The Economy," in *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 147–48.

¹⁹⁰ Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: The Economy," in *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 157–58.

¹⁹¹ World Bank, "Kyrgyz Republic: Poverty Assessment" (report no. 40864-KG, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region, 12 September 2007), 5, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/publications/454763-1191958320976/Poverty_assessment_Vol2.pdf

¹⁹² Kubat Umurzakov, "Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report" (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 5, www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rrtpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

¹⁹³ World Bank, "Data and Statistics for Kyrgyz Republic: National Accounts," 2011, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/KYRGYZEXTN/0,,menuPK:305786~pagePK:141132~piPK:141109~theSitePK:305761,00.html>

¹⁹⁴ World Bank, "Kyrgyz Republic: Poverty Assessment" (report no. 40864-KG, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region, 12 September 2007), 14, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/publications/454763-1191958320976/Poverty_assessment_Vol2.pdf

Agriculture

Although agriculture's economic importance is shrinking, it still contributes about 20% to annual GDP and employs about one-half of the labor force.^{195, 196} When industry collapsed in the years after independence, the agricultural sector absorbed many of the newly unemployed and farm productivity increased.¹⁹⁷

Under communism, Kyrgyzstan's agricultural sector specialized in the production of meat, wool, and dairy products, which were primarily exported to other parts of the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁸ Because herd size was limited by the availability of winter feed, the Soviet government subsidized the livestock industry by importing feed in large amounts.¹⁹⁹

Independence forced Kyrgyz farmers to diversify. Inputs such as fuel and fertilizer became more expensive, and the market for its exports dried up; in 2008, a worldwide spike in food prices prompted Kazakhstan to halt the export of wheat grain during June–August of that year.^{200, 201}

Despite high levels of agricultural production, Kyrgyzstan remains food insecure.²⁰² Because its land is not suitable for grain production, Kyrgyzstan has traditionally imported almost all of its grain and many of its vegetables from Kazakhstan. Such a heavy reliance on imported food has led to food insecurity.²⁰³

¹⁹⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

¹⁹⁶ Raphy Favre, Guljahan Kurbanova, and Agnes Dhur, "FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to Kyrgyzstan" (special report, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN and World Food Programme, Rome, 7 December 2010), 7, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/a1970e/a1970e00.pdf>

¹⁹⁷ Kamiljon T. Akramov and Nurbek Omuraliev, "Institutional Change, Rural Services, and Agricultural Performance in Kyrgyzstan" (discussion paper 00904, International Food Policy Research Institute, October 2009), 15–16, <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00904.pdf>

¹⁹⁸ Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: The Economy," in *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 152.

¹⁹⁹ Tjaart W. Schillhorn van Veen, "The Krygyz Sheep Herders at a Crossroads" (paper, Pastoral Development Network Series 38, 1995), 4–6, <http://www.odi.org.uk/work/projects/pdn/papers/38d.pdf>

²⁰⁰ Tjaart W. Schillhorn van Veen, "The Krygyz Sheep Herders at a Crossroads," (paper, Pastoral Development Network Series 38, 1995), 10, <http://www.odi.org.uk/work/projects/pdn/papers/38d.pdf>

²⁰¹ Maurizio Guadagni and Turi Fileccia, "The Krygyz Republic: Farm Mechanization and Agricultural Productivity" (paper, FAO Investment Centre, Rome, 2009), 28–30, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2010/03/17/000334955_20100317051643/Rend ered/PDF/535360WP0P11111ultural0Productivity.pdf

²⁰² Dina Tokbaeva, "Kyrgyzstan: Agricultural Woes Give Way to Food Security Concerns," EurasiaNet.org, 25 April 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65314>

²⁰³ Maurizio Guadagni and Turi Fileccia, "The Krygyz Republic: Farm Mechanization and Agricultural Productivity" (paper, FAO Investment Centre, Rome, 2009), 28–30, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2010/03/17/000334955_20100317051643/Rend ered/PDF/535360WP0P11111ultural0Productivity.pdf

Crops

As a result of Kazakhstan's halt of wheat exports in 2008, farmers in Kyrgyzstan began growing more wheat, potatoes, and vegetables.^{204, 205} But in some areas, the rising cost of fuel and fertilizer has made it cheaper for farmers to buy produce from China, to sell in Kyrgyz markets, than to raise their own.²⁰⁶



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Bales of cotton in Bishkek

Because of its mountainous terrain, Kyrgyzstan's land is ill suited to cultivation. When the Soviets began large-scale hydropower development in the 1970s, the country lost even more arable land to reservoirs and power plants. Today, arable land accounts for only about 6.6% of the area.²⁰⁷

Tobacco and cotton remain important export crops. Russia introduced cotton cultivation to the Fergana Valley in the late 19th century to produce raw materials for its textile mills. (The American Civil War disrupted the global supply of cotton, forcing producers to look elsewhere for suppliers.)²⁰⁸

Animal Husbandry

For centuries, herding livestock was the primary source of economic livelihood for the nomadic Kyrgyz people.²⁰⁹ Later, under communism, Kyrgyzstan's agricultural sectors remained heavily concentrated on raising cattle, sheep, and goats. With subsidies of imported feed, Kyrgyzstan produced meat, wool, and dairy products for export to other Soviet countries. After the collapse of the support and distribution systems, as well as the economic markets provided by the former Soviet Union, the number of livestock plummeted during the 1990s; the focus shifted to food security and an increased cultivation of food crops.²¹⁰



© Trekking the Planet/ flickr.com
Boy with his cattle herd

²⁰⁴ Maurizio Guadagni and Turi Fileccia, "The Kyrgyz Republic: Farm Mechanization and Agricultural Productivity" (paper, FAO Investment Centre, Rome, 2009), 28–30, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDS/IB/2010/03/17/000334955_20100317051643/Rend/535360WP0P11111ultural0Productivity.pdf

²⁰⁵ Kamiljon T. Akramov and Nurbek Omuraliev, "Institutional Change, Rural Services, and Agricultural Performance in Kyrgyzstan" (discussion paper 00904, International Food Policy Research Institute, October 2009), 9–10, <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00904.pdf>

²⁰⁶ Dina Tokbaeva, "Kyrgyzstan: Agricultural Woes Give Way to Food Security Concerns," EurasiaNet.org, 25 April 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65314>

²⁰⁷ Raphy Favre, Guljahan Kurbanova, and Agnes Dhur, "FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to Kyrgyzstan" (special report, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN and World Food Programme, Rome, 7 December 2010), 7, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/al970e/al970e00.pdf>

²⁰⁸ Dilip Hiro, "Southward March," in *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran* (London: Overlook Duckworth, 2009).

²⁰⁹ Tien Shan Glaciers Project, "Nomadic Traditions: Tradition of Nomadic Pastoralism: The Kyrgyz Herder," 2009–2010, <http://tienshanglaciers.blogspot.com/p/nomadic-traditions.html>

²¹⁰ Kamiljon T. Akramov and Nurbek Omuraliev, "Institutional Change, Rural Services, and Agricultural Performance in Kyrgyzstan" (discussion paper 00904, International Food Policy Research Institute, October 2009), 9, <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00904.pdf>

Today, animal husbandry accounts for about 50% of Kyrgyzstan's agricultural sector and contributes to Kyrgyzstan's trade.²¹¹ Almost all livestock are raised by small farmers. The number of cattle being raised in Kyrgyzstan has returned to pre-independence levels, while sheep and goat herds have regained about 50% of their previous size.²¹²

Land Reforms

Land reforms that began in the 1990s have dramatically changed the face of agriculture in Kyrgyzstan. In addition to the abolition of collective farms created during the Soviet era, these reforms have included “the transition to a private (individual) farming system, land distribution on an equity principle, the introduction of private property rights to agriculture,” and the establishment of basic rights for landowners.²¹³ As workers who were left unemployed by the collapse of industry flocked to the newly reformed agricultural sector, the number of small farms grew exponentially.²¹⁴



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Shepherds

Today, the government still holds several large farms, which are used for seed production and other generalized uses.²¹⁵ But most agricultural production occurs on the small family farms that make up 97% of farms. These small farms, averaging fewer than 2.8 hectares (7 acres), account for only 31% of the land but produce twice as many crops per acre and generate nearly 500% more labor productivity.²¹⁶

²¹¹ Raphy Favre, Guljahan Kurbanova, and Agnes Dhur, “FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to Kyrgyzstan” (special report, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN and World Food Programme, Rome, 7 December 2010), 9, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/al970e/al970e00.pdf>

²¹² Kamiljon T. Akramov and Nurbek Omuraliev, “Institutional Change, Rural Services, and Agricultural Performance in Kyrgyzstan” (discussion paper 00904, International Food Policy Research Institute, October 2009), 8–9, <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00904.pdf>

²¹³ Kamiljon T. Akramov and Nurbek Omuraliev, “Institutional Change, Rural Services, and Agricultural Performance in Kyrgyzstan” (discussion paper 00904, International Food Policy Research Institute, October 2009), 3–5, <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00904.pdf>

²¹⁴ Kamiljon T. Akramov and Nurbek Omuraliev, “Institutional Change, Rural Services, and Agricultural Performance in Kyrgyzstan” (discussion paper 00904, International Food Policy Research Institute, October 2009), 15–16, www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00904.pdf

²¹⁵ Raphy Favre, Guljahan Kurbanova, and Agnes Dhur, “FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to Kyrgyzstan” (special report, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN and World Food Programme, Rome, 7 December 2010), 7, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/al970e/al970e00.pdf>

²¹⁶ Kamiljon T. Akramov and Nurbek Omuraliev, “Institutional Change, Rural Services, and Agricultural Performance in Kyrgyzstan,” (discussion paper 00904, International Food Policy Research Institute, October 2009), 11–12, <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00904.pdf>

Forestry

One of the largest wild walnut forests in the world is located in Kyrgyzstan's fertile Fergana Valley. The valley also has plentiful wild fruit trees, including ancient strains of apples, plums, and pears. The Kyrgyz have traditionally harvested these wild nut and fruit trees for personal and commercial use.²¹⁷



© Darya Drobyazko
Walnut forest in Fergana Valley

During the years of hardship following independence, these forests fell prey to what economists call “the tragedy of the commons.” Because the forests belonged to everyone, no one took clear stewardship to ensure their sustainable use. Forests were overexploited, with locals cutting down trees for firewood when fuel was short and allowing animals to graze in sensitive areas.²¹⁸ In the past half century, about 90% of the forests have been destroyed. Now, several dozen species of endemic wild fruit trees are threatened with extinction.²¹⁹

To address the problem, the government instituted a program that allows the Kyrgyz people to lease forest plots. Since a plot with healthy trees can yield USD 200–300 per year in additional income, there is a distinct incentive for those with leases to protect and care for the trees.²²⁰

Industry

Kyrgyzstan's industrial sector developed quickly during World War II when the Soviet Union moved some of its armaments factories from western Russia and the German front to the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek.²²¹ With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, some former defense-related companies in Kyrgyzstan began producing consumer electronics and products for the domestic market. Although activity in the Kyrgyz industrial sector has declined significantly since the 1990s, food-processing and the production of electrical power and household electrical appliances have increased.²²²



© Valodja / flickr.com
Bishkek industries

During the Soviet era, much of the country's manufacturing depended on imported components from other Soviet states, which were also the main export markets for Kyrgyz products. After the

²¹⁷ Mike Ives, “Saving Ancient Walnut Forests in the Valleys of Central Asia,” *Yale Environment* 360, 8 September 2011, http://e360.yale.edu/feature/saving_ancient_walnut_forests_in_the_valleys_of_central_asia/2440/

²¹⁸ Mike Ives, “Saving Ancient Walnut Forests in the Valleys of Central Asia,” *Yale Environment* 360, 8 September 2011, http://e360.yale.edu/feature/saving_ancient_walnut_forests_in_the_valleys_of_central_asia/2440/

²¹⁹ Michael McCarthy, “Death in the Orchard of Eden,” *Independent*, 8 May 2009, <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/death-in-the-orchard-of-eden-1681057.html?action=Popup&gallery=no>

²²⁰ Mike Ives, “Saving Ancient Walnut Forests in the Valleys of Central Asia,” *Yale Environment* 360, 8 September 2011, http://e360.yale.edu/feature/saving_ancient_walnut_forests_in_the_valleys_of_central_asia/2440/

²²¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Bishkek,” 9 August 2012, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/66858/Bishkek

²²² Martha Brill Olcott, “Chapter 2: The Economy,” in *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 154–55.

collapse of the Soviet Union, most inputs ran short, Russian military contracts lapsed, and nearly half of Kyrgyzstan's factories closed.²²³ Today, the industrial sector employs about 12.5% of the labor force and contributes about 29% to the country's annual GDP.²²⁴

Mining

One of Kyrgyzstan's greatest economic resources is its mineral wealth. Coal, oil, lead, mercury, and copper industries began in the country at the beginning of the 20th century, and during World War II the mining industry expanded to more than 20 enterprises. Later, Kyrgyzstan supplied as much as 18% of the Soviet Union's lead, 30% of its rare-earth metals, 15% of its uranium, and 100% of its mercury and antimony.²²⁵

Although many of the mines established by the Soviets are no longer working, mining still accounts for about 10% of GDP and nearly half of Kyrgyzstan's export income.²²⁶ In fact, much of Kyrgyzstan's recent economic growth has stemmed from the Kumtor Gold Mine, which began production in 1996 and is currently the 10th-largest producer of gold in the world. The mine is wholly owned by a Canadian company.^{227,}
228, 229



Courtesy Wikipedia
Coal being delivered in Grodz

Kyrgyzstan also produces tin and copper and is the only country in the world that still mines mercury for export. But much of Kyrgyzstan's mineral wealth is found in mountainous regions with poor infrastructure, making new mines difficult and expensive to develop.^{230, 231}

²²³ Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: The Economy," in *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 154–55.

²²⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

²²⁵ Valentine Bogdetsky, Karybek Ibraev, and Jyldyz Abdyrakhmanova, "Mining Industry as a Source of Economic Growth in Kyrgyzstan" (study, World Bank, Bishkek, 2005), 13, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTOGMC/Resources/336099-1156955107170/miningsourceeconomicgrowth.pdf>

²²⁶ Valentine Bogdetsky, Karybek Ibraev, and Jyldyz Abdyrakhmanova, "Mining Industry as a Source of Economic Growth in Kyrgyzstan" (study, World Bank, Bishkek, 2005), 23, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTOGMC/Resources/336099-1156955107170/miningsourceeconomicgrowth.pdf>

²²⁷ Valentine Bogdetsky, Karybek Ibraev, and Jyldyz Abdyrakhmanov, "Mining Industry as a Source of Economic Growth in Kyrgyzstan" (study, World Bank, Bishkek, 2005), 14, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTOGMC/Resources/336099-1156955107170/miningsourceeconomicgrowth.pdf>

²²⁸ Kubat Umurzakov, "Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report" (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 11, http://www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rrtpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

²²⁹ Centerra Gold, "Kumtor," 2012, <http://www.centerragold.com/operations/kumtor>

²³⁰ Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: The Economy," in *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 154–55.

²³¹ Kubat Umurzakov, "Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report" (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 15, http://www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rrtpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

Energy and Natural Resources

The two most important rivers in Central Asia—the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya—begin in or flow through Kyrgyzstan, providing water for both agriculture and hydroelectric power.²³² Hydroelectric power generates about 90% of the country’s domestic electricity and is a leading export. It is estimated that Kyrgyzstan uses only about 10% of its potential hydropower. The electricity production and distribution systems require modernization, which the government cannot afford to undertake. The Russian Federation and China are currently providing needed foreign investment to further develop the electricity industry in Kyrgyzstan.^{233, 234, 235}



Courtesy Wikipedia
Power Station in Kyrgyzstan

Although Kyrgyzstan has modest reserves of coal and natural gas, many of the deposits are in mountainous areas that are costly to develop. Consequently, the country has relied on imported coal, natural gas, and oil from its resource-rich neighbors to meet its fuel needs.²³⁶

Most of the energy sector in Kyrgyzstan is still controlled by the state.²³⁷ Under the Soviet system, electricity was widely available at little or no cost to citizens. Like other former Soviet countries, Kyrgyzstan has struggled to find a way to increase prices slowly to achieve solvency. But in recent years energy prices have risen steeply and the quality of service has declined, leading to charges of mismanagement and government corruption, as well as to widespread and violent social protests.²³⁸

²³² John Daly, “Saisphere 2008: Grains of Gold: Water in Central Asia,” SAIS, Johns Hopkins University, 2008, <http://www.sais-jhu.edu/pressroom/publications/saisphere/2008/daly.htm>

²³³ Rafkat Hasanov and Kemal Izmailov, “Kyrgyzstan’s Energy Sector: A Poverty and Social Impact Assessment” (draft, UN Development Programme’s Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS, April 2011), 21–23, http://km.undp.sk/uploads/public1/files/vulnerability/Senior%20Economist%20Web%20site/PSIA_Energy_Kyrgyzstan.pdf

²³⁴ Myles G. Smith, “Kyrgyzstan Looking to China for Strategic Investments,” Jamestown Foundation, 11 July 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=39611&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=6339a20491037ab8f9d30b2ae65f86e1](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=39611&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=6339a20491037ab8f9d30b2ae65f86e1)

²³⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, “Kyrgyzstan: Economy,” in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

²³⁶ Rafkat Hasanov and Kemal Izmailov, “Kyrgyzstan’s Energy Sector: A Poverty and Social Impact Assessment” (draft, UN Development Programme’s Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS, April 2011), 15, http://km.undp.sk/uploads/public1/files/vulnerability/Senior%20Economist%20Web%20site/PSIA_Energy_Kyrgyzstan.pdf

²³⁷ Rafkat Hasanov and Kemal Izmailov, “Kyrgyzstan’s Energy Sector: A Poverty and Social Impact Assessment” (draft, UN Development Programme’s Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS, April 2011), 66, http://km.undp.sk/uploads/public1/files/vulnerability/Senior%20Economist%20Web%20site/PSIA_Energy_Kyrgyzstan.pdf

²³⁸ Davida Wood, “Electricity Plays Key Role in Kyrgyzstan Uprising,” World Resources Institute, 19 April 2010, <http://www.wri.org/stories/2010/04/electricity-plays-key-role-kyrgyzstan-uprising>

Services Sector

The services sector employs about 40% of the labor force in Kyrgyzstan (the largest employer after agriculture) and accounts for about 51% of annual GDP.²³⁹ Services include trade and repair works, construction, transport and communications, education, public administration, and hotels and restaurants.²⁴⁰



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Truck Drivers

Skilled craftsmen and blue-collar workers often command higher salaries than those working in white-collar professions such as healthcare and education.²⁴¹

Tourism accounts for about 1% of annual GDP of Kyrgyzstan, with an indirect contribution of about 3%.²⁴² In 2003, several tourism groups organized the Kyrgyz Community-Based Tourism Association to help locals benefit from tourism while encouraging sustainable practices. Since its introduction, tours organized by hosting communities (as opposed to outside travel firms) have grown significantly, providing both direct and indirect economic benefits to communities.^{243, 244} Still, tourism has declined significantly since 2010.²⁴⁵

Banking and Finance

In the years immediately following independence, more than a dozen commercial banks appeared in Kyrgyzstan, including several state-owned banks.²⁴⁶ Although the banking industry has expanded over the past two decades, it has faced serious setbacks in years of global financial crisis and domestic unrest.²⁴⁷

²³⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, “Kyrgyzstan: Economy,” in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

²⁴⁰ UN Development Programme Kyrgyzstan, “Labor and Employment,” in *Kyrgyzstan: Successful Youth—Successful Country*, 2010, 29, <http://hdr.undp.org/fr/rapports/national/europecei/kyrgyzstan/Kyrgyzstan-NHDR-2010-EN.pdf>

²⁴¹ UN Development Programme Kyrgyzstan, “Labor and Employment,” in *Kyrgyzstan: Successful Youth—Successful Country*, 2010, 29, <http://hdr.undp.org/fr/rapports/national/europecei/kyrgyzstan/Kyrgyzstan-NHDR-2010-EN.pdf>

²⁴² World Travel and Tourism Council, “Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2012: Kyrgyzstan” (London, 2012), 3–4, http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/kyrgyzstan2012.pdf

²⁴³ Laurence Mitchell, “Practical Information,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 51–52.

²⁴⁴ Sheradil Baktygulov and Damira Raeva, “Creating Value for All: Community-Based Tourism” (GIM case study no. B058, UN Development Programme, 2010), http://growinginclusivemarkets.org/media/cases/Kyrgyzstan_CBT_summary.pdf

²⁴⁵ World Travel and Tourism Council, “Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2012: Kyrgyzstan” (London, 2012), 3–4, http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/kyrgyzstan2012.pdf

²⁴⁶ Kubat Umurzakov, “Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report” (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 8–9, http://www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rrtpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

²⁴⁷ Bakyt Dubashov et al., “Kyrgyz Republic: Political Stability Restores Growth” (World Bank, 2012), 4, www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDS/IB/2012/04/20/000333037_20120420032332/Rend ered/PDF/682160WP00PUBL0mic0Report0No0102012.pdf

In 2011, seven banks were put under the conservatorship of the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic (NBKR).²⁴⁸ The Asia Universal Bank was also placed under the control of the central bank while the provisional government conducted an investigation of the bank's ties to the family of former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev. The bank was restructured, with some of its assets placed in the newly formed Zalkar Bank.²⁴⁹ The government has made several attempts to reprivatize the bank, offering it for sale at less than its value, but the bank has failed to attract a buyer and remains under the control of the central bank.²⁵⁰



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Kyrgyz money

Monetary Policy

Monetary policy is set by the NBKR. The bank, which operates independently of the government, is specifically tasked with controlling inflation.²⁵¹ When Kyrgyzstan left the ruble zone in 1992, inflation reached 1400%. After monetary reforms were quickly implemented, the inflation rate dropped dramatically.²⁵² By 2001, inflation was 3.7% and has remained generally low, with the exception of 2010 when unrest caused it to rise temporarily to 19%.^{253, 254}

The NBKR also issues currency and sets interest rates (one of the means by which it influences inflation). In recent years, the bank has also been charged with stronger oversight of the private banking sector to improve transparency and accountability.²⁵⁵

Fiscal Policy

Some of Kyrgyzstan's high level of foreign debt stems directly from the breakup of the Soviet Union. Kyrgyzstan had been dependent on other Soviet states for trade. In the years following independence, the prices on imported materials, once subsidized by the Soviet government, rose

²⁴⁸ Bakyt Dubashov et al., "Kyrgyz Republic: Political Stability Restores Growth" (World Bank, 2012), 4, www.wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/04/20/000333037_20120420032332/Rendred/PDF/682160WP00PUBL0mic0Report0No0102012.pdf

²⁴⁹ Clare Nuttall, "Kyrgyzstan's Nationalized Companies Are Up for Sale," Business Insider, 8 November 2011, http://articles.businessinsider.com/2011-11-08/europe/30372440_1_roza-otunbayeva-kyrgyzstan-government-bakiyev-family

²⁵⁰ Kyrgyzstan Economy Newswire, "Kyrgyzstan's Zalkar Bank to Be Auctioned Again in May-June 2012," 14 February 2012, www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/economy/viewstory.aspx?id=11377

²⁵¹ National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic, "Aims, Objectives and Functions of the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic," 14 October 2012, <http://www.nbkr.kg/index1.jsp?item=1&lang=ENG>

²⁵² Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: The Economy," in *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 161.

²⁵³ Kubat Umurzakov, "Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report" (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 5, http://www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rtrpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

²⁵⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

²⁵⁵ Kubat Umurzakov, "Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report" (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 9, http://www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rtrpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

dramatically, while the prices of Kyrgyzstan's exported goods remained low.²⁵⁶ Political corruption also sapped the country of much of its monetary wealth.²⁵⁷

The government has employed several tactics to effectively bring the national debt under control, including debt cancellation or restructuring, controlling the budget deficit, and selling off government assets.²⁵⁸ In 2011, Kyrgyzstan's external debt-to-GDP ratio was 4.6%, about half the United States' debt-to-GDP ratio.^{259, 260}

Employment Issues

The unemployment rate in Kyrgyzstan is reported to be about 8.6%. Underemployment is high, especially in agriculture, which is saturated and unable to create new jobs for those entering the job market.^{261, 262} Moreover, labor participation rates—the number of working-age people who either have jobs or are seeking jobs—have fallen in the last few years.²⁶³



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Library workers

In terms of gender equality, women are poorly represented in the workforce and are more likely to hold low-paying jobs in the service sector, which includes education and healthcare. Women in Kyrgyzstan also are paid less than their male counterparts, earning on average about two-thirds the salary of men performing the same jobs.^{264, 265}

²⁵⁶ Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: The Economy," in *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 160–61.

²⁵⁷ Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: The Economy," in *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 159.

²⁵⁸ Kubat Umurzakov, "Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report" (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 6, http://www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rtrpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

²⁵⁹ Bakyt Dubashov et al., "Kyrgyz Republic: Political Stability Restores Growth" (World Bank, 2012), 6, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/04/20/000333037_20120420032332/Rend

<ered/PDF/682160WP00PUBL0mic0Report0No0102012.pdf>

²⁶⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "Country Comparison: Budget Surplus (+) or Deficit (-)," in *The World Factbook*, 28 May 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2222rank.html?countryName=Kyrgyzstan&countryCode=kg®ionCode=cas&rank=155#kg>

²⁶¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

²⁶² Rafkat Hasanov and Kemal Izmailov, "Kyrgyzstan's Energy Sector: A Poverty and Social Impact Assessment" (draft, UN Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS, 2011), 9, http://km.undp.sk/uploads/public1/files/vulnerability/Senior%20Economist%20Web%20site/PSIA_Energy_Kyrgyzstan.pdf

²⁶³ World Bank, "Kyrgyz Republic: Poverty Assessment" (report no. 40864-KG, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region, 12 September 2007), 4, 8, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/publications/454763-1191958320976/Poverty_assessment_Vol2.pdf

²⁶⁴ Gulnara Ibraeva, Anara Moldosheva, and Anara Niyazova, "Kyrgyz Country Case Study," in *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* (background paper, World Bank, 2011), 42, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1322671773271/Ibraeva_Kyrgyz_case_study_final_Sept2011.pdf

Underemployment and lack of job opportunities have prompted many Kyrgyz to emigrate in search of work, usually to Russia or Kazakhstan.²⁶⁶ Many families, especially in rural areas, rely on remittances from relatives working abroad.²⁶⁷

Informal employment is common in Kyrgyzstan, especially among women. Informal employment is any work that does not command a regular wage. It includes self-employment ventures and unregistered business ventures (paying bribes is often cheaper than paying taxes, so many entrepreneurs do not incorporate their businesses or report their profits).²⁶⁸ The informal sector also includes unpaid work done in the home, such as producing yogurt, bread, or handicrafts for sale in the markets.²⁶⁹

Standard of Living

According to the United Nations Human Development Index—which provides a composite measure of health, education, and income—Kyrgyzstan had a medium level of human development in 2011, lower than other countries in the region and 126 out of 187 countries ranked internationally.²⁷⁰



© AndieArbeit / flickr.com
Kyrgyzstan family

Based on CIA estimates, Kyrgyzstan's per capita GDP was USD 2,400 in 2011, one of the lowest in the region, although higher than most African nations; internationally, Kyrgyzstan ranked 182 out of 236 countries.^{271, 272, 273}

Although strong economic growth over the last decade has helped cut poverty in half, one-third of the Kyrgyz people still live in poverty, with 76% of the country's poor living in rural areas.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁵ Rafkat Hasanov and Kemal Izmailov, "Kyrgyzstan's Energy Sector: A Poverty and Social Impact Assessment" (draft, UN Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS, 2011), 13, http://km.undp.sk/uploads/public1/files/vulnerability/Senior%20Economist%20Web%20site/PSIA_Energy_Kyrgyzstan.pdf

²⁶⁶ World Bank, "Kyrgyz Republic: Poverty Assessment" (report no. 40864-KG, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region, 12 September 2007), 38, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/publications/454763-1191958320976/Poverty_assessment_Vol2.pdf

²⁶⁷ World Bank, "Kyrgyz Republic: Poverty Assessment" (report no. 40864-KG, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region, 12 September 2007), 4, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/publications/454763-1191958320976/Poverty_assessment_Vol2.pdf

²⁶⁸ Kubat Umurzakov, "Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report" (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 19, http://www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rrtpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

²⁶⁹ World Bank, "Kyrgyz Republic: Poverty Assessment" (report no. 40864-KG, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region, 12 September 2007), 20, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/publications/454763-1191958320976/Poverty_assessment_Vol2.pdf

²⁷⁰ UN Development Programme, "Kyrgyzstan Country Profile: Human Development Indicators," 2011, <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KGZ.html>

²⁷¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

²⁷² Brian Palmer, "Why Can't Kyrgyz and Uzbeks Get Along?" *Slate*, 14 June 2010, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/explainer/2010/06/why_cant_kyrgyz_and_uzbeks_get_along.html

²⁷³ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "Kyrgyzstan: Country in Transition: A Snapshot of the Kyrgyz Economy," 2010, <http://kyrgyzstan.carnegieendowment.org/2010/06/a-snapshot-of-the-kyrgyz-economy/>

Despite the high incidence of poverty, the Kyrgyz have near universal access to education and a literacy rate of 99%. Although the standard of living is higher in cities than in rural areas, 90% of the population has access to clean drinking water, and 93% have access to improved sanitation facilities.²⁷⁵ Healthcare is widely available, especially in cities, but the quality of care falls below the standards in Western countries.²⁷⁶

Public-Private Sector

Privatization

Since independence in 1991, when the Kyrgyz government owned most of the property and businesses in the country, many small and medium enterprises have been privatized. The government still owns several hundred larger enterprises and commercial properties, including a number of resorts. Many of the companies that the government still owns are related to energy and telecommunications.²⁷⁷ Over the past decade, the state has slowly been selling off the properties to raise money, but results have been mixed.²⁷⁸



© MarcinMonko / flickr.com
Job training

Foreign Direct Investment

Kyrgyzstan has had a difficult time attracting investment for new enterprises. Factors contributing to the wariness of foreign investors include high levels of government corruption, red tape involved in starting a business venture, weak property rights, and recent fears of political unrest.²⁷⁹ Kyrgyzstan's poor transportation infrastructure has also discouraged investment.²⁸⁰

On the other hand, Kyrgyzstan possesses an educated workforce and has a greater track record of macroeconomic stability than its Central Asian neighbors.²⁸¹ But economists warn that these

²⁷⁴ Raphy Favre, Guljahan Kurbanova, and Agnes Dhur, "FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to Kyrgyzstan" (special report, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN and World Food Programme, Rome, 7 December 2010), 7, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/al970e/al970e00.pdf>

²⁷⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

²⁷⁶ Laurence Mitchell, *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 58, 104.

²⁷⁷ Kubat Umurzakov, "Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report" (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 7, http://www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rrtpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

²⁷⁸ Clare Nuttall, "Kyrgyzstan's Nationalized Companies Are Up for Sale," *Business Insider*, 8 November 2011, http://articles.businessinsider.com/2011-11-08/europe/30372440_1_roza-otunbayeva-kyrgyzstan-government-bakiyev-family

²⁷⁹ Bakyt Dubashov et al., "Kyrgyz Republic: Political Stability Restores Growth" (World Bank, 2012), 10, www.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/04/20/000333037_20120420032332/Rend/ered/PDF/682160WP00PUBL0mic0Report0No0102012.pdf

²⁸⁰ Kubat Umurzakov, "Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report" (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 15–16, www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rrtpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

²⁸¹ Kubat Umurzakov, "Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report" (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 15–16, www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rrtpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

perceived strengths may become a weakness if wages continue to rise at a higher rate than productivity, impacting Kyrgyzstan's competitiveness in the international labor market.²⁸²

The government has instituted a number of reforms in recent years to address the concerns of potential investors, including simplifying the process for starting a business and increasing transparency in the public sector.²⁸³

The bulk of Kyrgyzstan's foreign direct investment (FDI) has come through the creation of public-private ventures, such as the Kumtor Gold Mine. Opened in 1996, the mine is jointly owned by the Kyrgyz government and Cameco Gold, a private Canadian firm. Kumtor alone accounts for nearly 40% of all FDI in Kyrgyzstan, while other mining ventures account for another 21% of FDI.²⁸⁴

Trade

As a small, landlocked country, Kyrgyzstan has been dependent on trade to keep its economy running. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan became part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and entered into trade agreements with its neighbors. But trade remained too limited to sustain Kyrgyzstan's industries. Seeking to broaden its trading partnerships, Kyrgyzstan joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1998, becoming the first country in Central Asia to do so.²⁸⁵

Although membership in the WTO has helped Kyrgyzstan find new trading partners, it has come at a cost. Part of its agreement with the WTO included lowering its tariffs—a major source of government revenue—and limiting its subsidies on agricultural products and other commodities.²⁸⁶

Lack of infrastructure has also placed limits on trade. Mountains have restricted the construction of railways across the country. Northern Kyrgyzstan is connected to Kazakhstan and Russia by train. Yet no trains and few highways connect North and South Kyrgyzstan, creating a cultural and economic division between the two regions of the country.²⁸⁷

²⁸² World Bank, "Kyrgyz Republic: Poverty Assessment" (report no. 40864-KG, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region, 12 September 2007), 19, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/publications/454763-1191958320976/Poverty_assessment_Vol2.pdf

²⁸³ Bakyt Dubashov et al., "Kyrgyz Republic: Political Stability Restores Growth" (World Bank, 2012), 13–14, www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/04/20/000333037_201204200323...

²⁸⁴ Kubat Umurzakov, "Investment Climate in Kyrgyzstan: Country Report" (paper, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003), 12–13, www.unescap.org/tid/mtg/rtrpaper_kyrgyz.pdf

²⁸⁵ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "Managing Globalization in Kyrgyzstan," in *Managing Globalization in Selected Countries with Economies in Transition* (paper, UN, New York, 2003), 88, www.unescap.org/pdd/publications/ManagingGlobal/Preface.pdf

²⁸⁶ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "Managing Globalization in Kyrgyzstan," in *Managing Globalization in Selected Countries with Economies in Transition* (paper, UN, New York, 2003), 89, www.unescap.org/pdd/publications/ManagingGlobal/Preface.pdf

²⁸⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Kyrgyzstan," 2012, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/326091/Kyrgyzstan

Imports and Exports

Oil and gas make up a large share of Kyrgyzstan's imports.²⁸⁸ Although Kyrgyzstan has diversified its agricultural output in the past two decades, it still relies heavily on imported grain (which is cheaper to import from Kazakhstan than to cultivate) to support the production of wool and meat for export.²⁸⁹



Courtesy Wikipedia
Train in Bishkek

About 60% of Kyrgyzstan's imports come from China, with another 14% from Russia and 5% from Kazakhstan.²⁹⁰ The country also imports nearly USD 200 billion in American goods each year, including vehicles, machinery, and poultry.²⁹¹

About one-quarter of Kyrgyzstan's exports go to Uzbekistan. The country's other export partners include Russia (22%), Kazakhstan (20%), China (8%), UAE (6%), Afghanistan (5%), and Turkey (4%). Kyrgyzstan's major exports are gold, cotton, wool, garments, meat, tobacco, mercury, uranium, electricity, machinery, and shoes.²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

²⁸⁹ Maurizio Guadagni and Turi Fileccia, "The Kyrgyz Republic: Farm Mechanization and Agricultural Productivity" (paper, FAO Investment Centre, Rome, 2009), 28–30, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2010/03/17/000334955_20100317051643/Rendered/PDF/535360WPOP11111ultural0Productivity.pdf

²⁹⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

²⁹¹ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Kyrgyzstan: Economy," 29 March 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5755.htm>

²⁹² Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

Outlook

Located at the crossroads of Asia and Europe, Kyrgyzstan is strategically positioned to benefit from some of the world's fastest-growing economies (e.g., China, Russia, India). The economic recovery of neighboring nations in Central Asia is also expected to benefit Kyrgyzstan. In addition, the country's GDP is expected to rise when commercial production at the Kashagan oil field in neighboring Kazakhstan begins in late 2012.^{293, 294, 295}



Courtesy Wikipedia
Heating and Electric Station

Although some analysts are optimistic about the economic outlook in Kyrgyzstan, the country remains plagued by corruption and an undeveloped business culture.²⁹⁶ Addressing these problems, as well as attracting foreign investors, is necessary for future economic growth.²⁹⁷

Despite adopting progressive trade policies and implementing reforms to encourage investment, Kyrgyzstan has been struggling to develop its economy. Government corruption, an ongoing problem in spite of attempts at reform, has prevented money from being reinvested in infrastructure and has discouraged foreign investors from bringing their business to Kyrgyzstan.²⁹⁸

²⁹³ Globserver, "Kyrgyzstan Country Profile 2012," 2012, <http://www.globserver.com/en/kyrgyzstan>

²⁹⁴ OffshoreTechnology.com, "Kashagan Offshore Oilfield Project, Kazakhstan," 2011, <http://www.offshore-technology.com/projects/kashagan/>

²⁹⁵ Globserver, "IMF Announces Staff-Level Agreement with the Kyrgyz Republic on First Review of the Extended Credit Facility," 2 October 2011, <http://www.globserver.com/en/kyrgyzstan/press/imf-announces-kyrgyz-republic-credit-facility-2011-10-02>

²⁹⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Central Asia Competitiveness Outlook," 28 June 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/countries/kyrgyzstan/centralasiacompetitivenessoutlook.htm>

²⁹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

²⁹⁸ Bakyt Dubashov et al., "Kyrgyz Republic: Political Stability Restores Growth" (World Bank, 2012), 10, www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/04/20/000333037_20120420032332/Rend/er/PDF/682160WP00PUBL0mic0Report0No0102012.pdf

CHAPTER 3 ASSESSMENT

1. Kyrgyzstan's industrial sector was severely impacted by the breakup of the Soviet Union.

TRUE

During the Soviet era, much of Kyrgyzstan's manufacturing depended on imported components from other Soviet states, which were also the main export markets for its products. After the Soviet collapse, nearly half of Kyrgyzstan's factories closed.

2. The mining industry in Kyrgyzstan is in decline.

FALSE

One of Kyrgyzstan's greatest economic resources is its mineral wealth. Much of the country's recent economic growth has stemmed from the Kumtor Gold Mine, which began production in 1996 and is currently the 10th-largest producer of gold in the world.

3. Kyrgyzstan imports most of its coal, natural gas, and oil.

TRUE

Although Kyrgyzstan has modest reserves of coal and natural gas, many of the deposits are in mountainous areas that are expensive to develop. Consequently, the country has relied on imported coal, natural gas, and oil.

4. Despite high levels of agricultural production, Kyrgyzstan remains food insecure.

TRUE

Because Kyrgyzstan's land is not ideally suited for grain production, Kyrgyzstan has traditionally imported almost all of its grain and many of its vegetables, which has led to food insecurity.

5. Most people in Kyrgyzstan live in poverty.

FALSE

Although Kyrgyzstan is one of the poorest countries in the region, economic growth over the last decade has helped cut poverty in half. Yet one-third of all Kyrgyz people still live in poverty. The country had a medium level of human development in 2011.

CHAPTER 4: SOCIETY

Introduction

Kyrgyzstan's culture reflects the influence of some of the greatest civilizations of the ancient world. Greeks, Persians, Arabs, and Chinese all brought with them not only material goods for trading, but knowledge and art, creating a fusion of technologies, religions, philosophies, arts, and languages.²⁹⁹

What is now thought of as traditional Kyrgyz culture is in reality a product of the 20th century. Russia, which took control of the area in the late 19th century, discouraged pan-Turkic nationalism. Russia divided Turkestan into five separate countries, largely based on ethnic makeup, and encouraged each to develop a “national” folk culture. Kyrgyz culture was thus defined by borders.^{300, 301}



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Handmade Kochkor

Through their strict control over all things cultural, the Soviets effectively preserved Kyrgyz culture, while at the same time fundamentally changing it. The focus on creating a single, national culture suppressed interethnic differences and fostered loyalty to the regime; additionally, because the area was cut off from Western culture for 70 years, much of what is considered Kyrgyzstan's traditional culture was effectively preserved.^{302, 303}

The Soviet regime also promoted Russian culture on a large scale, with the aim of creating a pan-Soviet culture in the USSR.³⁰⁴ It opened sports centers in even the remotest villages and introduced theater, ballet, and Western classical music to every child. Those who excelled in sports or the arts were given opportunities for social advancement.³⁰⁵

Today, Western sports and arts remain popular, but receive little government funding. Private lessons and training are available to those with the means to pay; at the same time, young people are showing less interest in participating in Soviet arts.³⁰⁶

On the other hand, Kyrgyz horse sports remain immensely popular; in addition, handicrafts created using traditional techniques are gaining new appreciation and traditional storytelling is enjoying a resurgence.

²⁹⁹ Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 79–80, 133.

³⁰⁰ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: History,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 9.

³⁰¹ Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 135.

³⁰² Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 45–47.

³⁰³ Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 133–34.

³⁰⁴ Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 46.

³⁰⁵ Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 93.

³⁰⁶ Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 158–59, 250–51.

Ethnic and Tribal Groups

Kyrgyz

Although the Kyrgyz are the largest ethnic group in Kyrgyzstan, until fairly recently they were a minority in urban areas of the country, including the capital, Bishkek. The departure of thousands of Russians following independence in 1991 resulted in the Kyrgyz no longer being outnumbered in urban areas.^{307, 308}



Courtesy Wikipedia
Traditional Kyrgyz hunter

The exact origins of the Kyrgyz are unknown. Early references describe the Kyrgyz as red haired and green eyed, but it is unclear if these are the same Kyrgyz, possibly mingled with Turks and Mongols, who emigrated from Siberia.³⁰⁹ What is certain is that the Kyrgyz had a reputation for ferocity—overthrowing the Uighurs and putting up a stiff resistance to the Mongols.^{310, 311}

The Kyrgyz were nomads who migrated seasonally with their herds. Today, many Kyrgyz continue to practice seminomadic lifestyles.³¹²

Kyrgyz Tribal Structures

Centuries-old tribal associations play an important role in Kyrgyz society. Political appointments are largely based on a person's clan as well as the person's standing within the clan and ability to control or influence its members.³¹³

Government appointments are an important means of securing resources for the tribe or clan. The system relies heavily on bribery and is exclusive to the Kyrgyz. Members of minority groups rarely receive high government appointments.³¹⁴



Courtesy Wikipedia
Kyrgyz man from the north

The Russians attempted to weaken tribal ties by drawing administrative lines through tribal territories; they hoped that splitting the tribes into multiple administrative areas would force the

³⁰⁷ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: People," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 19–20.

³⁰⁸ Dilip Hiro, *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2009), 283.

³⁰⁹ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: People," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 19–20.

³¹⁰ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: History," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 7.

³¹¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "History of Central Asia: The Uighurs: The Uighur Kingdom," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/102315/history-of-Central-Asia/>

³¹² Tjaart W. Schillhorn van Veen, "The Kyrgyz Sheep Herders at a Crossroads" (paper, Pastoral Development Network Series 38, 1995), 13, <http://www.odi.org.uk/work/projects/pdn/papers/38d.pdf>

³¹³ Azamat Temirkoulov, "Tribalism, Social Conflict, and State-Building in the Kyrgyz Republic," *Forum: Berliner Osteuropa Info* 21, 2004, 94, http://www.policy.hu/temirkulov/at_pub_boi.pdf

³¹⁴ Azamat Temirkoulov, "Tribalism, Social Conflict, and State-Building in the Kyrgyz Republic," *Forum: Berliner Osteuropa Info* 21, 2004, 95, http://www.policy.hu/temirkulov/at_pub_boi.pdf

Kyrgyz to work with local administrators and discourage reliance on traditional tribal codes. But the tribal associations survived the Soviet era and figure prominently today in national politics.³¹⁵

Kyrgyz tribes are divided into two main groups: the *sol* (left) and the *ong* (right). A third group, *ichikilik* (neither), exists as a mixture of Kyrgyz and non-Kyrgyz tribes.³¹⁶ The *ong* dominates in the north, while the *sol* dominates in the south.³¹⁷ Each group comprises several tribes, and each tribe consists of multiple clans.³¹⁸ A clan is defined by a common ancestor and is patrilineal, meaning it is determined by the father.³¹⁹

The tribal division between north and south is cultural as well as geographic. The northern Kyrgyz are more aligned with Russia and have historically supplied many of Kyrgyzstan's executive leaders. Southern Kyrgyz remain closely aligned with Uzbekistan and other Islamic countries in the region.³²⁰

Uzbeks

Uzbeks are the second-largest ethnic group in Kyrgyzstan. Uzbeks account for about 14% of the population, but they are heavily concentrated in and around the Fergana Valley, where their numbers nearly equal those of the Kyrgyz in some areas, such as Osh.^{321, 322}



© Valodja / flickr.com
Shepherd near Uzbek border

Although the Uzbeks are descendents of the Turkic tribes that migrated to the region in the early Middle Ages, they abandoned the nomadic lifestyle and became farmers and traders.³²³ Among the factors contributing to ethnic violence between the Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in 2010 was the sense on the part of the Kyrgyz that the Uzbeks dominate commerce in the south, to the exclusion of Kyrgyz workers.³²⁴

³¹⁵ Azamat Temirkoulov, "Tribalism, Social Conflict, and State-Building in the Kyrgyz Republic," *Forum: Berliner Osteuropa Info* 21, 2004, 94, http://www.policy.hu/temirkulov/at_pub_boi.pdf

³¹⁶ Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: Society and Culture: Social Structure," in *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 132–33.

³¹⁷ Reuel R. Hanks, "The Geography and History of Kyrgyzstan," in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 310.

³¹⁸ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: The Clan System," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 19.

³¹⁹ Azamat Temirkoulov, "Tribalism, Social Conflict, and State-Building in the Kyrgyz Republic," *Forum: Berliner Osteuropa Info* 21, 2004, 95–96, http://www.policy.hu/temirkulov/at_pub_boi.pdf

³²⁰ Azamat Temirkoulov, "Tribalism, Social Conflict, and State-Building in the Kyrgyz Republic," *Forum: Berliner Osteuropa Info* 21, 2004, 94, http://www.policy.hu/temirkulov/at_pub_boi.pdf

³²¹ Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010," 2011, 17, http://ukr.unhcr.org.ua/img/uploads/docs/kic_report_KGZ_ENG_final.pdf

³²² Laurence Mitchell, "Southern Kyrgyzstan: Enclaves and Exclaves," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 267.

³²³ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: People," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 20.

³²⁴ Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010," 2011, 20, http://ukr.unhcr.org.ua/img/uploads/docs/kic_report_KGZ_ENG_final.pdf

The Uzbeks are far more likely to be devout practitioners of Islam, attending mosque on Fridays and observing other Muslim customs and practices.³²⁵

Russians and Ukrainians

In the last 20 years, Russians have gone from being the second-largest ethnic group in Kyrgyzstan to being the third largest, now accounting for about 9% of the population.^{326, 327} This is largely due to high rates of emigration following the independence of Kyrgyzstan. The number of Ukrainians in the country has dropped by one-half since 1991.³²⁸



Courtesy Wikipedia
Russian - Kyrgyzstan talks

Many Russians and Ukrainians living in Kyrgyzstan are descendents of peasants who arrived in the country during the 19th century in search of free farmland and a better life. Most have never lived in Russia. After independence, many educated Russians were lured to Russia by better job prospects.³²⁹

Another reason for the exodus was the growing sense among Russians that they were becoming marginalized in Kyrgyzstan. In 1992, the government announced plans to make Kyrgyz the sole language of government. Since only about 3% of Russians spoke Kyrgyz, the policy would have left them unable to represent themselves in government.³³⁰ Since Russians constituted the majority of the skilled workers and experienced administrators in Kyrgyzstan, the outmigration of Russians resulted in a massive brain drain.³³¹

³²⁵ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: Religion,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 24.

³²⁶ Reuel R. Hanks, “The Geography and History of Kyrgyzstan,” in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 310.

³²⁷ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: People,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 20–21.

³²⁸ Reuel R. Hanks, “The Geography and History of Kyrgyzstan,” in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 310.

³²⁹ Rafis Abazov, “Introduction: People,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 16–17.

³³⁰ Michele E. Commercio, “Opportunity Structures and the Role of Informal Networks in Their Reconfiguration,” *Russian Minority Politics in Post-Soviet Latvia and Kyrgyzstan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 57–59.

³³¹ Reuel R. Hanks, “The Geography and History of Kyrgyzstan,” in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 310–11.

Uighurs, Dungans, and Tajiks

Uighurs and Dungans, each representing about 1% of the population, are descendents of Muslims who left China to escape religious persecution. Uighurs are a Turkic people closely related to the Uzbeks. Kyrgyzstan's Uighur population is largely composed of refugees who arrived during the 19th century and settled in the north. Uighurs also have occupied several areas in the south for centuries. Dungans are ethnically Chinese. Many speak a dialect of Mandarin and settled in the Chui Valley and along Issyk-Kul in northern Kyrgyzstan.³³²



© mmmavocado / flickr.com
Dungan mosque, Karakol

Small numbers of Tajiks live in Kyrgyzstan's southern region, including several thousand living in the Uzbek enclave of Sokh. The Tajik are of Persian descent and speak a language unrelated to Kyrgyz.³³³

Language

Kyrgyz is a Turkic language, closely related to Kazakh, that shares common roots with modern Turkish. Because it was the language of nomads, Kyrgyz did not develop as a written language until the 20th century when it was standardized by the Soviets, first in the Latin and Arabic scripts before the adoption of the modified Cyrillic alphabet in the 1940s.^{334, 335}



© Wayan Vota / flickr.com
Welcome to Kyrgyzstan

Both Kyrgyz and Russian are the official languages of Kyrgyzstan. Although most Kyrgyz people are somewhat fluent in Kyrgyz, it is spoken primarily in rural areas. Russian, which became one of the official languages in 1996 and is still a required subject in state schools, is spoken by most Kyrgyz living in urban areas and serves as the main language in government, business, higher education, and international affairs.^{336, 337}

³³² Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: People," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 21.

³³³ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: People," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 22.

³³⁴ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: Language," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 22.

³³⁵ Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: Society and Culture: Language," in *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 130.

³³⁶ Michele E. Commercio, "Opportunity Structures and the Role of Informal Networks in Their Reconfiguration," *Russian Minority Politics in Post-Soviet Latvia and Kyrgyzstan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 60–61.

³³⁷ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: Language," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 22–23.

Religion

Although Islam is the dominant religion in Kyrgyzstan, its practice varies widely throughout the country. It was brought to the region in the 7th century by Arab invaders. Islam was largely adopted in settlements along the Silk Road by the 9th century, but it was not absorbed as readily by nomads on the Central Asian steppes.³³⁸ It was not until the Oirat invasion in the 17th century that the Kyrgyz tribes, forced into closer association with their neighbors to the south, finally adopted Islam.³³⁹



© Irene2005 / flickr.com
Mosque construction

The conversion was weak at best, and once the Oirat threat had been neutralized, the Kyrgyz returned to the steppes, leaving many of Islam's practices behind. The weak connection to Islam was primarily a matter of practicality: the Kyrgyz rarely built permanent structures, such as mosques, and carried few if any written texts because literacy was rare.³⁴⁰

The Kyrgyz tribes did incorporate Islam into their practice of shamanism. The Kyrgyz, like many nomadic tribes in Central Asia, worshipped elements of nature, including the sky. Animals also played a large role in shamanistic beliefs as spirit guides or *totems*. Over the centuries, elements of Buddhism and Zoroastrianism also found their way into local practices.³⁴¹

Islam is practiced in its more orthodox form by Uzbeks living in the south of the country. In the north, traditional beliefs hold more sway, partly because the Soviets suppressed the practice of organized religion. Independence has seen a slight increase in religious interest.³⁴² New mosques have appeared throughout the country, although most of them have been built with money from foreign donors.³⁴³

³³⁸ Rafis Abazov, "Thought and Religion," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 67.

³³⁹ Martha Brill Olcott, "Chapter 2: Religion," in *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan Country Studies*, 1st ed., ed. Glenn E. Curtis (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1997), 136.

³⁴⁰ Dilip Hiro, *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2009), 288.

³⁴¹ Rafis Abazov, "Thought and Religion," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 62–63.

³⁴² Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: Religion," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 23–24.

³⁴³ Reuel R. Hanks, "The Geography and History of Kyrgyzstan," in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 312–13.

Cuisine

Kyrgyz cuisine relies heavily on meat, usually mutton, horse, goat, camel, and wild game. Chicken is rare, and fish is considered a luxury. Pork is never eaten because it is forbidden by Islam.³⁴⁴



© Travlr / flickr.com
Kyrgyz dishes

After a sheep is butchered, the meat is usually boiled. All parts of the animal are used. Fat is not trimmed from the meat. In fact, the fattier the meat, the better. Sheep's head is considered a delicacy, and the eyeballs are usually given to the guest of honor, while the fatty tail may be given to the elders. Meat is often served with handmade noodles (*laghman*) in a spicy sauce or in *plov*, a rice dish that is a specialty of the region.³⁴⁵

Dairy products, particularly those derived from mare's milk in the spring, are an integral part of the Kyrgyz diet. Yogurt is often dried in balls called *korut*, which are eaten as a snack food. *Kumys*, a drink made of lightly fermented mare's milk, is the national drink. It is slightly alcoholic and is considered a health food. (Most Kyrgyz do not observe the Muslim practice of abstaining from alcohol.)³⁴⁶

Bread is served at the beginning of every meal and holds a particular significance in Kyrgyz culture. It is sold in round loaves with a raised design on the top. Bread should never be refused when offered, and it should never be placed on the ground.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Laurence Mitchell, "Practical Information: Food and Drink," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 71–72.

³⁴⁵ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: Kyrgyz Cuisine," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 33–34, 71.

³⁴⁶ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: Kyrgyz Cuisine," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 33–34.

³⁴⁷ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: Kyrgyz Cuisine," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 34.

Traditional Dress

Traditional clothing is still widely worn in parts of Kyrgyzstan, but modern styles are more typical in cities. Some Kyrgyz incorporate elements of traditional dress, such as a belt, vest, or hat, with Western clothes.³⁴⁸

Women’s traditional dresses are typically long and loose fitting—suitable for horseback riding and layering in colder weather. Dresses, blouses, and skirts are brightly colored and are covered with a quilted, embroidered overcoat that hangs open.³⁴⁹ The Kyrgyz also have a tradition of wearing finely handcrafted gold jewelry that has been passed down through generations.³⁵⁰ Elaborate headdresses also are worn on special occasions.³⁵¹



© nesuspi / flickr.com
Traditional dress in Osh

In addition to a heavy overcoat (*chapan*), men wear loose pants and tunics, which are also good for layering and horseback riding. They generally wear a four-paneled felt hat called a *kalpak*, which is traditionally white with black embroidered patterns that can designate clan associations. In some areas, the *kalpak* is replaced by a skullcap, considered more practical for Muslims because it has no brim to get in the way during prayer. Although some Kyrgyz men wear skullcaps, they are more typically worn by Uzbeks.³⁵²

Gender Issues

Because a moderate form of Islam is practiced by most Kyrgyz, separation of men and women occurs infrequently.³⁵³ But in rural areas men and women do not dance together, and married women usually cover their hair.³⁵⁴ Aside from some areas in the south where Islamic practice is strong, it is unusual for women to veil their faces.³⁵⁵



© Stefan Krasowski
Young and old

The traditional nomadic lifestyle required women to work alongside men, even if their roles were strictly defined. Men take care of the herds, hunt, provide for the family, and deal with outside interests. Women tend to the home, prepare food, and care for children.³⁵⁶ They also undertake

³⁴⁸ Rafis Abazov, “Visual Arts,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 173–74.

³⁴⁹ Rafis Abazov, “Visual Arts,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 172–73.

³⁵⁰ Rafis Abazov, “Visual Arts,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 168.

³⁵¹ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: Kyrgyz Traditional Dress,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 31.

³⁵² Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: Kyrgyz Traditional Dress,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 30–31.

³⁵³ Reuel R. Hanks, “Kyrgyz Society and Contemporary Issues,” in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 382.

³⁵⁴ Reuel R. Hanks, “Kyrgyz Society and Contemporary Issues,” in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 377.

³⁵⁵ Reuel R. Hanks, “Kyrgyz Society and Contemporary Issues,” in *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 377–78.

³⁵⁶ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: Culture,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 26–27.

light food processing and textile manufacturing. Although many women are not formally employed, they actively contribute to the economic well-being of the household by selling items that they make.^{357, 358}

In urban areas, men and women interact in a manner that is typical in Western societies. Communists championed gender equality, and women have participated at all levels of society since the Soviet era, although their overall representation in government remains low.^{359, 360}

Although laws exist to protect women from rape and violence, recent years have seen a resurgence of the practice of bride kidnapping, which involves taking a woman from her home and forcing her, in many cases, to marry a complete stranger. Women rarely report this (or other forms of violence) because of strong social pressure to honor the practice and because laws against bride kidnapping are poorly enforced.³⁶¹

The Arts

Decorative Arts

Art for art's sake was a luxury in a nomadic society where constant movement favored light packing. Consequently, visual arts found expression almost entirely through the decoration of everyday objects. The Kyrgyz people used weaving, embroidery, woodcarving, and leatherwork to decorate clothing, rugs, food containers, and tools.³⁶²



© weesquirt / flickr.com
Preparing the wool

Making the *shyrdak* carpet is perhaps the most common of the decorative arts. Found in most Kyrgyz homes, these colorful felt rugs were traditionally made to line the inside walls and floor of a yurt. The process of making felt and sewing the *shyrdak* panels together is labor intensive and often requires women in the community to work together, which makes the *shyrdak* an important social medium.³⁶³

Wool is colored with dyes and pressed into felt to form designs. Some of the designs are elaborate patterns based on ancient nomadic symbols. The shapes are traced onto contrasting

³⁵⁷ Gulnara Ibraeva, Anara Moldosheva, and Anara Niyazova, “Kyrgyz Country Case Study,” in *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* (background paper, World Bank, 2011), 21–25, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1322671773271/Ibraeva_Kyrgyz_case_study_final_Sept2011.pdf

³⁵⁸ Smithsonian Institution, “Smithsonian Folklife Festival: Kyrgyz Handicrafts,” 2012, <http://www.festival.si.edu/2011/PeaceCorps/kyrgyz--handicrafts.aspx#>

³⁵⁹ Rafis Abazov, “Gender, Courtship, and Marriage,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 220.

³⁶⁰ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: Culture,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 27.

³⁶¹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “Kyrgyz Republic: Section 6: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons,” in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011, 2012*, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

³⁶² Rafis Abazov, “Visual Arts,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 163–64.

³⁶³ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: Kyrgyz Crafts,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 31–32.

pieces of felt and then cut out. Pieces are swapped and then sewn together to create panels with positive and negative images of the design.³⁶⁴

Scraps might be used to make patchwork designs. Brides and babies are often given *kurak* objects, such as blankets or dresses, made from 40 different pieces for good luck.³⁶⁵

Literature

Before the development of Kyrgyz as a written language, people who knew how to read and write enjoyed the literature of South Asia and the Middle East, particularly Persia. The Middle Ages were a golden era for Persian, Arabic, and South Asian literature in Central Asia, and many of the works written during this time are still popular in the region.³⁶⁶



© kindsir / flickr.com
Reading material in Osh

It was not until the 20th century that Kyrgyz literature began to develop. Even then, Kyrgyz writers living under Soviet rule were limited in what they could write about. Writers were encouraged to create patriotic works demonstrating the triumph of Soviet values. Since publication (through official channels) required the approval of the official Union of Writers, writers were forced to comply if they wanted to be published. Despite heavy censorship, writers found ways of creating uniquely Kyrgyz literature, even while writing in the Russian language.³⁶⁷

Many Kyrgyz consider Chingiz Aitmatov to be the greatest Kyrgyz writer of modern times. Although he began his career writing for a Russian newspaper, Aitmatov's *White Rain* was one of the first novels to be written and published in the Kyrgyz language. Aitmatov achieved national and international acclaim for his novels.³⁶⁸

³⁶⁴ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: Kyrgyz Crafts," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 31–32.

³⁶⁵ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: Kyrgyz Crafts," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 31–32.

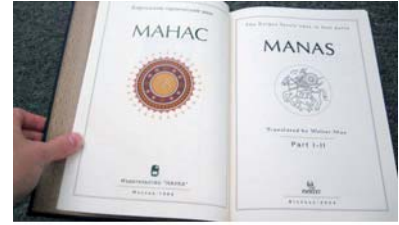
³⁶⁶ Rafis Abazov, "Folklore and Literature," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 80.

³⁶⁷ Rafis Abazov, "Folklore and Literature," *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 91–94.

³⁶⁸ Laurence Mitchell, "Background Information: Modern Kyrgyz Literature," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 37.

Oral Traditions

Even if the Kyrgyz had developed a written language before the 20th century, the nomadic Kyrgyz would have been unlikely to keep libraries of books. Instead, Kyrgyz storytellers, or *akyns*, memorized a rich repository of stories, songs, and even comedy routines.³⁶⁹



© J.D. and Jamie / flickr.com
Manas epic

Akyns were usually men who wandered the countryside, bringing news of the latest tribal gossip and scandals—like singing tabloids. The performances were sometimes accompanied with simple music. Their most popular material centered on the epics, stories of heroes performing superhuman feats, not unlike comic book characters of today.³⁷⁰

The best-known epic was that of *Manas*, the mythical Kyrgyz leader who united the 40 Kyrgyz tribes (*kyrgyz* means “40 tribes”). *Manas* is considered the Kyrgyz national hero. The poem, which is believed to be about 1,000 years old, is twice as long as Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined. The *Manas* epic is told by a special subset of *akyns* known as *manaschi*. Tradition holds that *manaschis* are called to the profession through spiritual means.³⁷¹

Because of the pivotal role they played in society, the storytellers were often revered.³⁷² Perhaps the best known *akyn* was Toktogul Satylganov, who was renowned for his improvisational skills.^{373, 374}

Although the *akyn* tradition declined during the 20th century when the Kyrgyz became more sedentary, independence has brought a renewed interest in traditional storytelling. Many of the stories have been written down, and several schools have opened in recent years to help a new generation learn the art of performing them.³⁷⁵

³⁶⁹ Rafis Abazov, “Folklore and Literature,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 81–82.

³⁷⁰ Rafis Abazov, “Folklore and Literature,” *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 81–82.

³⁷¹ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: The *Manas* Legend,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 35–36.

³⁷² Rafis Abazov, “Folklore and Literature,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 79–80.

³⁷³ Celestial Mountains Tour Company, “Traditional Music and Musical Instruments of the Kyrgyz: Aitysh, *Manaschi*,” 2011, <http://www.sounds.kg/en/aitysh/>

³⁷⁴ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: The *Manas* Legend,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 35–36.

³⁷⁵ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: The *Manas* Legend,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 35–36.

Performing Arts

Theater was introduced by the Russians and has followed similar trends as literature. Early on, plays by famous Russian writers like Chekhov and Gogol as well as the works of Shakespeare were popular. Contemporary playwrights were expected to explore noncontroversial topics and had a limited following. The end of Soviet censorship brought new life to theater in Kyrgyzstan, allowing Kyrgyz writers to honestly explore and express their anger and frustration with life under Soviet rule.³⁷⁶

The Russians also introduced ballet to Kyrgyzstan. Promising students were sent to Moscow for advanced training. Bibisara Beishenaliyeva, who is pictured on the 5 som note, was the first Kyrgyz dancer to achieve fame as a ballerina in Kyrgyzstan and the Soviet Union.³⁷⁷



Courtesy Wikipedia
Bibisara Beishenaliyeva

The arts in Kyrgyzstan were subsidized by the Soviet Union and provided a means of social advancement for citizens in even the most remote locations. Now that Soviet subsidies have ended, fewer Kyrgyz are pursuing performing arts.³⁷⁸

Music

In the everyday lives of the nomads of Central Asia, music has always played an important role. Women sing while making rugs, men sing while tending sheep, and people gather at night to sing while socializing.

Each tribe and region has its own songs and musical traditions; music-makers often use lightweight, portable musical instruments. These include the *komuz*, a small, three-stringed lutelike instrument, and *choors*, recorder-type instruments made from clay or wood.^{379, 380}



© Irene2005 / flickr.com
Kyrgyz man and his Komuz

Under communism, the Party determined the kind of music that was produced and performed; pop and rock music were banned, radio and TV access was limited, and in order to perform publicly, artists had to give a certain number of “patriotic” performances each year. Owning a guitar was viewed as an act of rebellion.³⁸¹

³⁷⁶ Rafis Abazov, “Performing Arts,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 149–53.

³⁷⁷ Rafis Abazov, “Performing Arts,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 147–48.

³⁷⁸ Rafis Abazov, “Performing Arts,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 147–48.

³⁷⁹ Rafis Abazov, “Performing Arts,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 135–36.

³⁸⁰ Celestial Mountains Tour Company, “Traditional Music and Musical Instruments of the Kyrgyz: Choor,” 2011, <http://www.sounds.kg/en/cuisine/20>

³⁸¹ Rafis Abazov, “Performing Arts,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 155–57.

Today, Kyrgyzstan's pop culture is diverse and global, a synthesis of Kyrgyz influences and those of the United States, Europe, Russia, Turkey, Iran, and South Asia. Folk music and folk pop remain popular genres despite the influx of Western music and pop culture. Kyrgyz rock groups such as Elsinor and Professor Moriarty perform at local clubs and venues but have a limited audience outside Kyrgyzstan, largely because of the language barrier.³⁸²

Sports

Traditional Sports

Traditional Kyrgyz sports reflect the nomadic traditions of the past and involve activities performed on horseback, such as horse racing and a version of polo.³⁸³



© eatswords / flickr.com
Kyrgyz horsemen

Horse racing is a common pastime, and almost all celebrations feature some variety of horse races, with variations in length and difficulty. One variation of horse racing is a race between a man and a woman known as the *kыз-кумай* (kiss the girl) or “bride chase.” The woman's goal is to win the race, while the man's objective is to get close enough to kiss the woman. The “bride” is given the faster horse and is allowed to use her whip for self-defense.³⁸⁴

The Kyrgyz version of polo, *улак тартыш* (gray wolf), is also popular and uses an animal carcass instead of a ball. Men on horses fight over the carcass, usually that of a sheep, until someone snatches it and rides with it to the goal. Players carry sticks for moving the carcass and hitting the other players.³⁸⁵

Although the Kyrgyz no longer rely on hunting for survival to the extent that they did, falconry is still widely practiced as a sport. The Kyrgyz are renowned for their ability to train golden eagles to bring down large prey, including wild goats, deer, and wolves.³⁸⁶

³⁸² Rafis Abazov, “Performing Arts,” in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 155–57.

³⁸³ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: Kyrgyz Horse Sports,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 39.

³⁸⁴ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: Kyrgyz Horse Sports,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 39.

³⁸⁵ Laurence Mitchell, “Background Information: Kyrgyz Horse Sports,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 39–40.

³⁸⁶ Laurence Mitchell, “The Southwest Shore: Eagle Hunting in Kyrgyzstan,” in *Kyrgyzstan* (Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides, 2008), 188.

Modern Sports

The Soviets introduced and promoted a wide range of sports in Kyrgyzstan, building sports centers in almost every town and village so that everyone could learn fencing, swimming, or soccer. As with the arts, talented athletes were afforded many privileges. Those at the top of their fields could travel abroad for competitions, such as the Olympics.³⁸⁷

Although many of the sports centers are now underfunded and rundown, sports are still popular in Kyrgyzstan. The country has a national soccer team and has sent teams to the Olympics, notably winning multiple medals in wrestling in the 2008 Games. Some women's teams exist, but organized sports remain largely a male activity.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ Rafis Abazov, "Festivals, Fun, and Leisure," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 249–50.

³⁸⁸ Rafis Abazov, "Festivals, Fun, and Leisure," in *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 249–51.

CHAPTER 4 ASSESSMENT

1. Communism effectively broke down tribal associations in Kyrgyzstan.

FALSE

Despite Russian attempts to weaken tribal ties by drawing administrative lines through tribal territories, centuries-old tribal associations continue to play an important role in Kyrgyz society.

2. Most Kyrgyz are devout Muslims.

FALSE

Although Islam is the dominant religion in Kyrgyzstan, its practice varies widely throughout the country. The Uzbeks are far more likely to be devout practitioners of Islam than the Kyrgyz.

3. Kyrgyz cuisine relies heavily on meat.

TRUE

The Kyrgyz primarily eat meat, usually mutton, horse, goat, camel, and wild game. Chicken is rare, and fish is considered a luxury. Pork is forbidden by Islam. Sheep's head is considered a delicacy, with the eyeballs usually going to the guest of honor.

4. Women throughout Kyrgyzstan veil their faces in public.

FALSE

Aside from some areas in the south where Islamic practice is strong, it is unusual for Kyrgyz women to veil their faces. In rural areas, married women usually cover their hair.

5. According to legend, the mythical hero Manas united the 40 tribes of the Kyrgyz people.

TRUE

The red background of the Kyrgyzstan flag is believed to represent the banner of the mythical national hero Manas, who united the 40 tribes of the Kyrgyz people, according to a spoken epic poem that is more than 1,000 years old.

CHAPTER 5: SECURITY

Introduction

Central Asia is becoming a showground that vividly exhibits the geopolitical struggle for influence among China, Russia, and the United States. This is not an entirely new position for the region, as it has recurrently played a similarly strategic importance in the power struggles of the world's superpowers throughout much of recorded history.

The deterioration of U.S.-Pakistani relations has underlined the significance of Central Asia as an alternative transit route. Likewise, the continued threat of escalating tensions between the U.S. and Iran is pushing Central Asian countries determine which of the superpowers they will support should conflict erupt. This may greatly alter Kyrgyzstan's efforts to maintain amicable relations with each of the world's superpowers.

Ethnic tensions among the Kyrgyz majority and the large Tajik and Uzbek minorities of southern Kyrgyzstan have presented major security issues to the stability of the country. Coupled with the political instability exhibited over the past decade, many observers are concerned about the ability of authorities in Bishkek to provide for the country's security.

United States-Kyrgyzstan Relations

The United States helped Kyrgyzstan gain membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1998, which—aside from U.S. recognition of Kyrgyz independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union—was the most significant interaction between the two nations in the 1990s.³⁸⁹ Although relations between the two countries were rather low-key prior to the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Kyrgyzstan became a key ally in U.S. operations in Afghanistan in the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Kyrgyz government offered to lease part of Manas International Airport to support U.S. troops in Afghanistan. As a result of this new friendship, U.S. military cooperation and economic aid to Kyrgyzstan increased greatly.³⁹⁰

But the U.S. presence in Kyrgyzstan has proved contentious among certain factions and with Kyrgyzstan's long-standing ally, Russia.³⁹¹ In early 2009, Kyrgyz authorities said that U.S. forces would have to withdraw from the base later in the year.³⁹² Although pro-American elements were able to reverse the decision by increasing the amount paid for the lease, President



© vlitvinov / flickr.com
Monument to Independence



© Secretary of Defense / flickr.com
US-Kyrgyzstan relations

³⁸⁹ Karen Ellicott, ed., *Countries of the World and Their Leaders Yearbook 2013, Volume 1* (Detroit: Gale Cengage, 2012), 1344.

³⁹⁰ Jim Nichol, "Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests" (report, Congressional Research Service, 19 January 2012), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/97-690.pdf>

³⁹¹ Sorrel Neuss, "A 'Stan' in the Middle," *New Statesman*, 18 June 2007, 19.

³⁹² *Economist*, "Base Motives: Kyrgyzstan Plans to Force the Closure of an American Military Base," 9 February 2009, <http://www.economist.com/node/13093292>

Almazbek Atambayev has stated that Kyrgyzstan will not renew the lease when it expires in 2014, which aligns with the stated timetable for U.S. forces to withdraw from Afghanistan.^{393, 394}

Relations with Neighboring Countries

In the 20th century, the Soviet Union created its Central Asian republics, intentionally dividing ethnic communities in the hope of thwarting their ability to present a united opposition to Russian hegemony. The Soviet-drawn borders exacerbated age-old rivalries and created territorial conflicts among the region's various ethnic groups and the new governments of the republics. One such emergent conflict pitted Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan against one another for control of the Fergana Valley, which was divided among the three republics.^{395, 396, 397}

Afghanistan

Stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan is important for the security of Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian nations.³⁹⁸ In addition to supporting al-Qaeda-linked terrorists in the region, Afghanistan is a major source of illegal drugs that are smuggled through Kyrgyzstan bound for markets in Western Europe. Criminal activity associated with the drug trade has plagued Kyrgyzstan.³⁹⁹



© U.S. Navy Imagery / flickr.com
Sailors and Marines in Manas

In terms of Kyrgyzstan's strategic geographic proximity to Afghanistan, which is one of its export partners, Kyrgyzstan leases Manas Air Base to the United States to support ongoing NATO efforts in Afghanistan.^{400, 401} Although the U.S. lease of the base is scheduled to expire in 2014 and may not be renewed, NATO and the government of Kyrgyzstan signed an agreement in May 2012 allowing NATO to transit cargo by land through Kyrgyzstan to Afghanistan.^{402, 403}

³⁹³ Global Security, "Manas International Airport: Ganci Air Base/Manas Air Base: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan," 11 July 2011, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/centralasia/manas.htm>

³⁹⁴ Elisabeth Bumiller, "Kyrgyzstan Wants Military Role to End at U.S. Base," *New York Times*, 13 March 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/14/world/asia/panetta-meets-with-military-officials-in-kyrgyzstan.html>

³⁹⁵ Roger Kangas, "Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyz," in *Encyclopedia of Russian History, Volume 2: E-L*, ed. James R. Millar (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 807–9.

³⁹⁶ Daniel E. Harmon, "Chapter 7: Foreign Relations," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Philadelphia: Mason Crest, 2005). Accessed from EBSCOhost History Reference Center, 23 July 2012.

³⁹⁷ *Economist*, "Kyrgyzstan: Stalin's Harvest," 17 June 2010, <http://www.economist.com/node/16377083>

³⁹⁸ New Europe Online, "Bishkek, NATO Sign Land Transit Agreement," 27 May 2012,

<http://www.neurope.eu/article/bishkek-nato-sign-land-transit-agreement>

³⁹⁹ Jane's, "External Affairs (Kyrgyzstan)," *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 20 December 2012.

⁴⁰⁰ Jonathan Z. Ludwig, "Kyrgyzstan," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations, Vol. 4: Asia and Oceania*, eds. Timothy L. Gall and Derek M. Gleason (Detroit: Gale, 2012), 438.

⁴⁰¹ Jane's, "External Affairs (Kyrgyzstan)," *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 20 December 2012.

⁴⁰² Jane's, "External Affairs (Kyrgyzstan)," *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 20 December 2012.

⁴⁰³ New Europe Online, "Bishkek, NATO Sign Land Transit Agreement," 27 May 2012,

<http://www.neurope.eu/article/bishkek-nato-sign-land-transit-agreement>

China

By mid-2002, the governments of Kyrgyzstan and China had ratified a series of treaties cementing their burgeoning friendship and settling long-disputed border issues, paving the way for greater political and economic cooperation between the two nations.^{404, 405}



© Lukas / flickr.com
China Kyrgyzstan border

Today, China maintains substantial trade and investment relations with Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁰⁶ It is Kyrgyzstan's top import partner and fourth-largest export partner. The two governments are building new trade centers along their shared border and frequently conduct joint military maneuvers. Additionally, in the past decade or so, more than 100,000 Chinese have migrated to Kyrgyzstan, bringing with them much-needed skills and capital.⁴⁰⁷

Furthermore, China and Kyrgyzstan have agreed to coordinate efforts to combat militant Uighur separatist groups operating in Central Asia.⁴⁰⁸

Kazakhstan

Relations between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are generally warm and cooperative, although the latter wields considerable leverage over the former. Kazakhstan is a major trading partner for Kyrgyzstan, both in terms of imports and exports.⁴⁰⁹ Kazakhstan is also a major labor market for Kyrgyz migrant workers.⁴¹⁰



© Asian Development Bank / flickr.com
Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan border

The two neighbors are developing joint investments, increasing trade, and opening new border crossings. In May 2012, the presidents of both countries met for bilateral negotiations concerning economic, cultural, security, and humanitarian issues.⁴¹¹ Further ministerial talks were held in August 2012 to resolve issues dealing with the construction of an oil pipeline connecting Kazak

⁴⁰⁴ Meng Yan, "China, Kyrgyzstan Tap Co-Operation Potential," *China Daily*, 23 September 2004, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-09/23/content_376896.htm

⁴⁰⁵ China Centre, University of Calcutta, "Relations Between China and Kyrgyzstan," n.d., <http://www.caluniv.ac.in/academic/China%20Study%20Final/Relations%20between%20China%20and%20Kyrgyzstan.html>

⁴⁰⁶ Jonathan Z. Ludwig, "Kyrgyzstan," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations, Vol. 4: Asia and Oceania*, eds. Timothy L. Gall and Derek M. Gleason (Detroit: Gale, 2012), 438.

⁴⁰⁷ Jane's, "External Affairs (Kyrgyzstan)," *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 20 December 2012.

⁴⁰⁸ J. Berkshire Miller, "China, Kyrgyzstan Ties Warm," *Diplomat*, 9 September 2011, <http://thediplomat.com/flashpoints-blog/2011/09/09/china-kyrgyzstan-ties-warm/>

⁴⁰⁹ Jonathan Z. Ludwig, "Kyrgyzstan," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations, Vol. 4: Asia and Oceania*, eds. Timothy L. Gall and Derek M. Gleason (Detroit: Gale, 2012), 438.

⁴¹⁰ International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), "Kazakhstan/Kyrgyzstan: Exploitation of Migrant Workers, Protection Denied to Asylum Seekers and Refugees" (report, FIDH, Paris, October 2009), http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerdoc/docs/ngos/FIDH_Kazakhstan_76.pdf

⁴¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Kazakhstan, "Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev Visits Kazakhstan to Advance Ties," Astana Calling, 11 May 2012, <http://portal.mfa.kz/portal/page/portal/mfa/resources/Pictures/AstanaCallingPDF2012/Astana%20Calling%20051112.pdf>

oil to Kyrgyzstan's Kara-Balt refinery. Construction of the refinery is expected to be completed by the end of 2012.⁴¹²

Tajikistan

Continued disputes in the Isfara Valley are delaying delimitation of the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border. Several thousand people live in this disputed area. In some communities, Kyrgyz and Tajiks live near one another; homogeneous ethnic composition defines other communities, which are connected to other communities of similar composition by disputed roads and waterways. Past bouts of ethnic violence in both countries have witnessed refugees crossing the border to seek safety.⁴¹³ Still, Kyrgyz and Tajik forces work together to combat frequent border incidents, which they have blamed on Islamic militants.⁴¹⁴

Uzbekistan

Politicians in Uzbekistan have long championed Uzbekistan's claim to much of southwestern Kyrgyzstan, including the city of Osh. This city and its surrounding areas have a large Uzbek population.⁴¹⁵ In June 2010, ethnic Uzbeks seized control of a government-run oil depot, threatening to destroy the facility if military forces intervened. This set off a wave of Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic conflict, forcing nearly 100,000 Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan to flee to Uzbekistan.⁴¹⁶



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Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan border

Fights between Uzbek and Kyrgyz border forces are common.^{417, 418} In 1999 and 2000, Uzbekistan forces entered Kyrgyzstan while conducting military operations against extremist groups.⁴¹⁹ Still, after the 2005 Andijan riots, Uzbek refugees received safe passage through Kyrgyzstan to eventual third-party resettlement.⁴²⁰

⁴¹² V. Zhavoronkova, "Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan May Discuss Oil Pipeline Construction," *Trend*, 6 August 2012, <http://en.trend.az/regions/casia/kazakhstan/2053577.html>

⁴¹³ Natalia Yefimova-Trilling and David Trilling, "Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: Disputed Border Heightens Risk of Conflict," *Eurasia Review*, 6 August 2012, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/06082012-kyrgyzstan-and-tajikistan-disputed-border-heightens-risk-of-conflict/>

⁴¹⁴ Jane's, "External Affairs (Kyrgyzstan)," *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 20 December 2012.

⁴¹⁵ Daniel E. Harmon, "Chapter 7: Foreign Relations," in *Kyrgyzstan* (Philadelphia: Mason Crest, 2005). Accessed from EBSCOhost History Reference Center, 23 July 2012.

⁴¹⁶ Jonathan Z. Ludwig, "Kyrgyzstan," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations, Vol. 4: Asia and Oceania*, eds. Timothy L. Gall and Derek M. Gleason (Detroit: Gale, 2012), 434.

⁴¹⁷ Interfax-AVN Online, "Kyrgyzstan Looks into Causes for Exchange of Fire on Border with Uzbekistan (Part 2)," 18 July 2012, http://www.militarynews.ru/fcl_1/news.asp?id=192785

⁴¹⁸ UPI.com, "Special Reports: Fighting Erupts Near Kyrgyz, Uzbek Border," 18 July 2012, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2012/07/18/Fighting-erupts-near-Kyrgyz-Uzbek-border/UPI-86331342638980/

⁴¹⁹ International Crisis Group (ICG), "Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential" (ICG Asia Report No. 33, Osh/Brussels, 4 April 2002), 4, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/central-asia/Central%20Asia%20Border%20Disputes%20and%20Conflict%20Potential.ashx>

⁴²⁰ Jane's, "External Affairs (Kyrgyzstan)," *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 20 December 2012.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) terrorists make incursions into Kyrgyzstan from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, leading to conflict with the government and ethnic unrest.⁴²¹

Uzbekistan periodically interrupts gas supplies in the absence of timely payment, using the threat of such disruptions as a diplomatic bargaining chip.⁴²²

Police Force

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) has jurisdiction over the Kyrgyz police force. The ministry divides the force, whose personnel numbers about 22,000, among national, regional, and municipal commands. Observers depict the police force as unprofessional, corrupt, and brutal. Numerous human rights organizations have accused Kyrgyz police of callous disregard for basic human rights. Government officials often use police units as tools to further their own political and personal schemes. The Interior Troops handle regular criminal cases, and the National Security Service (SNB) combats organized crime. The SNB is the successor to the Kyrgyz KGB service of the Soviet era.^{423, 424}



© Pieter Schepens
Border police

Border Guard

Operating under the supervision of the SNB and tasked with securing Kyrgyzstan's porous and ill-defined borders, the Kyrgyz Border Service is a poorly funded and inadequately equipped force. With 5,000 personnel to patrol more than 3,000 km (1,864 mi) of often mountainous border, the force is inadequate to present any real deterrent to smugglers, terrorists, or others crossing the border illegally.⁴²⁵ Bases are located in Isfara, Naryn, and Przhevalsk. Some Kyrgyz parliamentarians have called for the Border Service to emerge as a separate command independent of the SNB. But such calls have met with stiff resistance from the intelligence agency's leadership, who claim that doing so would weaken border security and threaten intelligence sharing between the two entities.⁴²⁶

⁴²¹ Richard McHugh, "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Terrorism*, 2nd ed., ed. C. Gus Martin (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Reference, 2011): 308–9.

⁴²² Jane's, "External Affairs (Kyrgyzstan)," *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 20 December 2012.

⁴²³ Jane's, "Security and Foreign Forces (Kyrgyzstan)" *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 12 April 2012.

⁴²⁴ Asker Sultanov, "Kyrgyz, OSCE Discuss Police Reform," Central Asia Online, 6 April 2011, http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2011/04/06/feature-02

⁴²⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Geography," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

⁴²⁶ Military Intelligence of the Czech Republic, "Kyrgyz Border Guard Force Spin-Off Will Weaken Border Protection—Official," Daily Bulletin, 11 July 2012.

Drug Control Agency (AKN)

Tasked with collecting counternarcotics intelligence, this agency works in cooperation with the SNB and the Border Service. It receives international assistance and funding from the United States and Russia.⁴²⁷

Military

Two branches of service make up the Kyrgyz military: the Army and the Air Force. They have approximately 12,500 personnel, with about two-thirds of those in the Army.^{428, 429} Existing legislation compels men aged 18–27 to serve a year in the armed forces or the Interior Ministry. Women are free to volunteer, but service is not compulsory.⁴³⁰ In 2011, defense spending accounted for 0.5% of GDP, totaling about USD 61 million.⁴³¹



Courtesy Wikipedia
Kyrgyz-U.S. military exercise

Kyrgyzstan is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), and the Partnership for Peace. This involvement in various international organizations has placed Kyrgyzstan in the position of relying on a combination of American, Russian, and Chinese military assistance and training, although the help has brought greater internal security for the nation.^{432, 433}

Army

The Kyrgyz Army is made up of about 8,500 personnel assigned to the following: one motor rifle division, two motor rifle brigades, one mountain motor rifle brigade, one artillery brigade, one air defense brigade, and one special operations brigade. Known bases are located in Bishkek, Tokmok, Osh, Cois Tache, Naryn, and Przhevalsk, with others possibly in the Batken Region. Equipment consists almost exclusively of outmoded Soviet-designed models including T-72 main battle tanks, BRDM-2 amphibious armored patrol cars, BMP-1 and BMP-2 tracked infantry fighting vehicles, BTR-70 and BTR-80 armored personnel carriers, and MT-LB auxiliary armored vehicles. Artillery pieces are likewise of mixed Soviet design and caliber, as are antitank weapons, air defense systems, and infantry weapons.⁴³⁴

⁴²⁷ Fabio Indeo, "La Primavera Araba non Arriverà in Asia Centrale," *Limes* (Italy), 11 July 2012, <http://temi.repubblica.it/limes/la-primavera-araba-non-arrivera-in-asia-centrale/36896>

⁴²⁸ Country Watch, "Kyrgyzstan: Defense Forces," 2012.

⁴²⁹ Jane's, "Armed Forces (Kyrgyzstan)," *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 8 June 2012.

⁴³⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "Kyrgyzstan: Military," in *The World Factbook*, 5 July 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>

⁴³¹ Jonathan Z. Ludwig, "Kyrgyzstan," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations, Vol. 4: Asia and Oceania*, eds. Timothy L. Gall and Derek M. Gleason (Detroit: Gale, 2012), 436.

⁴³² Jane's, "Armed Forces (Kyrgyzstan)," *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 8 June 2012.

⁴³³ Jonathan Z. Ludwig, "Kyrgyzstan," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations, Vol. 4: Asia and Oceania*, eds. Timothy L. Gall and Derek M. Gleason (Detroit: Gale, 2012), 436.

⁴³⁴ Jane's, "Army (Kyrgyzstan)," *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 3 April 2012.

Air Force

About 4,000 personnel serve in this branch of the armed forces. Tasked primarily with supporting army ground units, the air force performed poorly during the 1999–2000 incursion of IMU terrorists into Kyrgyzstan’s Batken region of the Fergana Valley. Its bases are located in Kant and Manas, both near Bishkek. The air force is equipped with Antonov An-26 Curl twin-engine turboprop transport aircraft, Aero L-39C Albatros jet trainer aircraft, Mil Mi-24 Hind helicopter gunships, and Mil Mi-8 Hip twin-turbine transport helicopters. Analysts believe that many of these aircraft are in severe states of disrepair.⁴³⁵



© livepine / flickr.com
Mi-8 military helicopter

Foreign Forces

Russia leases the air base at Kant, where it stations its 5th Army of the Russian Air Force and Air Defense Forces, consisting of about 1,000 personnel. Russian forces are equipped with Sukhoi Su-25 Frogfoot ground attack aircraft, Sukhoi Su-27 combat aircraft, Antonov An-24 Coke and An-26 Curl twin turboprop transport aircraft, Ilyushin Il-76 Candid strategic airlift transport aircraft, Mil Mi-8 Hip twin-turbine transport helicopters, and Aero L-39 Albatros jet trainer aircraft.⁴³⁶ The Kyrgyz government has recently stated that it may cease this relationship with Russia, and Uzbekistan’s 2012 withdrawal from CSTO has led many observers to speculate that Kyrgyzstan might follow suit.⁴³⁷

About 1,200 U.S. personnel and a fleet of Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker air-to-air refueling aircraft were stationed at the U.S. base in Manas in early 2012. The facility has supported Operation Enduring Freedom and NATO operations in Afghanistan, refueling aircraft and transporting personnel active in the theater. But the lease of the facility is scheduled to expire in 2014.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ Jane’s, “World Air Forces (Kyrgyzstan),” *World Air Forces*, 4 April 2012.

⁴³⁶ Jane’s, “Security and Foreign Forces (Kyrgyzstan),” *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 12 April 2012.

⁴³⁷ Alexander Shustov, “Uzbekistan Out of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Russia’s Geopolitical Influence in Central Asia Reduced,” *CentrAsia (Russia)*, 7 February 2012, <http://www.centrasia.ru/news.php?st=1341297840>

⁴³⁸ Jane’s, “Security and Foreign Forces (Kyrgyzstan),” *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 12 April 2012.

Issues Affecting Stability

Terrorist Organizations

Since the late 1990s the IMU, a radical Islamic organization with links to al-Qaeda, has posed a threat to the security of Kyrgyzstan. Formed in 1998, the group initially focused on creating an Islamic state in Uzbekistan, but it quickly expanded its goal to establishing a unified Central Asian state under Islamic rule. The group—active throughout Central Asia, including Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan—has engaged Coalition Forces and kidnapped Westerners in Afghanistan.^{439, 440} In November 2010, Kyrgyz Special Forces units engaged suspected terrorists in the city of Osh.⁴⁴¹



© blandm / flickr.com
Police prepare for demonstration

The China-based Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) consists of ethnic Uighur separatists. The organization seeks to establish an independent pan-Turkic state made up of areas currently in Afghanistan, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. In early 2002, Kyrgyzstan deported captured ETIM members to China. Kyrgyz officials charged the terrorists with plotting to attack the U.S. embassy in Kyrgyzstan. ETIM has ties to al-Qaeda.⁴⁴²

Political Turmoil

In less than a decade, popular discontent caused the removal of the first two post-Soviet presidents in Kyrgyzstan. The 2005 Tulip Revolution toppled President Askar Akayev amid allegations of corruption and government interference in parliamentary elections. By 2010, economic stagnation, government censorship, and corruption led to the deposing of Akayev's successor, President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who was also forced into exile.^{443, 444}

Ethnic Violence

In June 2010, ethnic violence erupted between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in and around Osh and Jalal-Abad in the Fergana Valley. About 470 people died, more than 100,000 fled to Uzbekistan, 300,000 became internally displaced, and violence damaged roughly 2,800 properties. The Kyrgyz government established an independent Nordic commission, the Kyrgyz Inquiry Commission (KIC), to investigate the violence. In May 2011, the KIC issued its findings, which included various instances of crimes against humanity, sexual and gender-based violence, torture, intimidation, and other crimes. The commission also blamed military and security forces for inadequate responses to the situation. Both the Kyrgyz government and the Uzbek minority responded to the report with mixed reactions.^{445, 446} The KIC recommended measures to address

⁴³⁹ Jane's, "Groups: Asia: Active (Uzbekistan)," *World Insurgency and Terrorism*, 23 May 2012.

⁴⁴⁰ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 113.

⁴⁴¹ Karen Ellicott, ed., *Countries of the World and Their Leaders Yearbook 2013, Volume 1* (Detroit: Gale, 2012), 1345.

⁴⁴² Country Watch, "Kyrgyzstan: National Security: Terrorism," 2012.

⁴⁴³ BBC, "Kyrgyzstan Profile," 14 December 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16186907>

⁴⁴⁴ Fabio Indeo, "La Primavera Araba non Arriverà in Asia Centrale," *Limes* (Italy), 11 July 2012, <http://temi.repubblica.it/limes/la-primavera-araba-non-arrivera-in-asia-centrale/36896>

⁴⁴⁵ *Economist*, "Investigating Kyrgyzstan's Ethnic Violence: Bloody Business," 12 May 2011, <http://www.economist.com/node/18682522>

the ethnic tensions between the two communities, but the government has been hostile toward such suggestions. Thus, renewed ethnic violence remains a concern.^{447, 448}

Ethnic tension also exists between the Kyrgyz and Tajik communities of southern Kyrgyzstan. In January 2012, military forces were deployed to the town of Aydarken following days of unrest stemming from the alleged murder of a Kyrgyz woman by an ethnic Tajik man. Although military intervention was able to prevent open conflict, the incident illustrates the continued fragility of ethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan.^{449, 450, 451}

Outlook

Kyrgyzstan is a politically unstable country in the heart of a historically troubled region. Although regional and world powers have shown strategic interest in the country, helping it modernize its military and security apparatuses, their involvement has not translated into meaningful development of infrastructure or political institutions.

With the impending withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan in 2014, the end of the U.S. lease of facilities at Manas in the same year, and the possible expulsion of Russian forces from their leased base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan will be left with only its own forces to provide for internal and external security.

Because of recurring political instability, fueled in part by fears of terrorist attacks, and continued outbreaks of ethnic violence, the country's future prospects appear uncertain at best. A growing division between the north and south may lead to permanent fracturing of Kyrgyzstan. But the country's membership in various international organizations supported by China, Russia, and the United States may prove to be a saving factor, since these organizations might be willing to intervene should the situation in the country deteriorate profoundly.



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Keeping a watchful eye

⁴⁴⁶ Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, "Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010," 2011, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Full_Report_490.pdf

⁴⁴⁷ Helsingin Sanomat, "Kyrgyzstan Bans ex-MP Kimmo Kiljunen Over Report on Unrest," 27 May 2011, <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Kyrgyzstan+bans+ex-MP+Kimmo+Kiljunen+over+report+on+unrest/1135266468597>

⁴⁴⁸ David Trilling, "Kyrgyzstan: Southern Nationalists Unite to Hold On to Osh," Eurasianet.org, 1 March 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65071>

⁴⁴⁹ Ivan Donis, "Murder of Bank Teller in Southern Kyrgyzstan Was Almost Turned into Ethnic Conflict," News-Asia (Russia), 31 January 2012, <http://www.news-asia.ru/view/2400>

⁴⁵⁰ David Trilling, "Ethnic Politics: Kyrgyzstan: How to Rouse Ethnic Tensions," Eurasianet.org, 18 April 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/taxonomy/term/3689>

⁴⁵¹ Timur Toktonaliev, "Kyrgyzstan: Unchecked Nationalism Threat to Stability," Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 8 March 2012, <http://iw1.iwpr.net/report-news/kyrgyzstan-unchecked-nationalism-threat-stability>

CHAPTER 5 ASSESSMENT

1. Kyrgyzstan became an important U.S. ally after the 9/11 attacks.

TRUE

Relations between the two countries were low-key prior to the 9/11 attacks. But after Kyrgyzstan began leasing Manas Air Base to the United States to support operations in Afghanistan, U.S. military cooperation and economic aid to Kyrgyzstan increased greatly.

2. Kyrgyzstan's police force is thought to be highly professional and effective.

FALSE

Observers depict the police force as unprofessional, corrupt, and brutal. Numerous human rights organizations have accused Kyrgyz police of callous disregard for basic human rights.

3. The Kyrgyz military consists of two branches, the Army and the Navy.

FALSE

The two branches of service that make up the Kyrgyz military are the Army and the Air Force. Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country with no fully navigable rivers. Thus, it does not have a navy.

4. Kyrgyzstan's membership in various international organizations has improved its internal security.

TRUE

Kyrgyzstan is a member of various international organizations supported by China, Russia, and the United States. Although this places the country in the position of relying on a combination of American, Russian, and Chinese military assistance, the situation provides Kyrgyzstan with greater internal security.

5. Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist organizations operate in Kyrgyzstan.

TRUE

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) are linked to al-Qaeda and operate in Kyrgyzstan. The IMU wants to form an Islamic Central Asian state. The China-based ETIM seeks to establish a pan-Turkic state.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. Kyrgyzstan is a flat country.
TRUE / FALSE
2. The Naryn River is Kyrgyzstan's longest river.
TRUE / FALSE
3. Bishkek was largely built by the Russians.
TRUE / FALSE
4. Lake Issyk-Kul never freezes because it is so large.
TRUE / FALSE
5. Although earthquakes occur almost daily in Kyrgyzstan, only major earthquakes destroy buildings and other structures.
TRUE / FALSE
6. The cause of ethnic fighting in recent decades in the Fergana Valley stems from the division of the area in the 1920s.
TRUE / FALSE
7. During the administration of President Askar Akayev, government programs aimed at political liberalization were successful in Kyrgyzstan.
TRUE / FALSE
8. Mikhail Gorbachev's reformist policies helped to reduce ethnic tensions in Kyrgyzstan.
TRUE / FALSE
9. Kyrgyzstan became a country under Bolshevik rule.
TRUE / FALSE
10. The Russians freed the Kyrgyz from an Islamic oppressor in 1876.
TRUE / FALSE
11. Industry is the leading source of employment in Kyrgyzstan.
TRUE / FALSE
12. Livestock traditionally has been of economic importance to the Kyrgyz people.
TRUE / FALSE
13. Most of Kyrgyzstan's electricity comes from nuclear power plants.
TRUE / FALSE

14. All businesses and land have been privatized.
TRUE / FALSE
15. Kyrgyzstan is the first country in Central Asia to join the World Trade Organization.
TRUE / FALSE
16. The Uzbeks are the second-largest ethnic group in Kyrgyzstan.
TRUE / FALSE
17. Skullcaps generally indicate the clan associations of Kyrgyz men.
TRUE / FALSE
18. Kyrgyz did not become a standardized written language until the 20th century.
TRUE / FALSE
19. Sports such as soccer are not popular in Kyrgyzstan.
TRUE / FALSE
20. Some ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan are descended from Muslims who left China to escape religious persecution.
TRUE / FALSE
21. Ethnic rivalries no longer threaten the stability of Kyrgyzstan.
TRUE / FALSE
22. In terms of water security, Kyrgyzstan is strategically important in Central Asia.
TRUE / FALSE
23. Kyrgyzstan enjoys close relations with China.
TRUE / FALSE
24. Kyrgyzstan has refused to allow NATO to transit supplies overland through its territory.
TRUE / FALSE
25. Relations between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have been deteriorating over the last decade.
TRUE / FALSE

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