

# Kyrgyzstan

## *Ethnicity in Kyrgyzstan*

### *Power relations*

*1991-2004:* Under president Akajev, the Kyrgyz were senior partner and the Russians junior partner (<sup>1759</sup>). Akajev based himself on the power structures from the Kyrgyz SSSR, where Russians played an important role, consequently under his rule, the Russians remained “junior partners”. In 2005 after the power at the Tulip Revolutions, Bakijev came to power and finally exchanged the old Soviet elite with mostly ethnic Kyrgyz, and thus, the Russians became powerless.

<sup>1759</sup> [Gorenburg, 2005]

*2005-2009:* The Kyrgyz constitute the majority with 64.9% of the population, and they are politically dominant. For example, almost all public officials are ethnic Kyrgyz (<sup>1760</sup>). The largest minority are the Uzbeks. They live mostly concentrated in the South of Kyrgyzstan in the regions Jalal-Abad, Osh und Kara-Suu. The Uzbeks gained some more influence under president Bakijev since 2005, because his power foundations rely on Southern clans (especially in Jalal-Abad), where also the Uzbeks are more influential. Nevertheless, the Uzbeks - despite having some representatives in the legislature - are underrepresented and virtually powerless. In 2006, an Uzbek member of the Parliament advocated without success that Uzbek becomes an official language (<sup>1761</sup>; <sup>1762</sup>). The Russians finally lost their influential position when president Bakijev exchanged the old Soviet nomenklatura, where also Russians belonged to, and mainly replaced them with Kyrgyz after the Tulip Revolution. The Russians are now powerless, but politically organized to express their demands, for example in the organization “Slavic Diaspora” (<sup>1763</sup>). The Uyghurs have a very low level of organization and there is no representation of Uyghurs in government structures (Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, 2002), but the Uyghurs have a strong group identity and the community for example appeared on the political scene when they demonstrated for better conditions for their kin in China (<sup>1764</sup>).

<sup>1760</sup> [International Helsinki Federation for Human Rig

<sup>1761</sup> [International Helsinki Federation for Human Rig

<sup>1762</sup> [US Department of State, 2006-2009]

<sup>1763</sup> [International Helsinki Federation for Human Rig

<sup>1764</sup> [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2009]

*Update 2010-2013:* In 2010, Kyrgyzstan experienced another political turnover during the second Tulip Revolution. As a consequence, president Bakijev was ousted, and ethnic tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks dramatically increased. In particular in the South, ethnic clashes and riots occurred, resulting in more than 400 deaths (mostly Uzbeks) and nearly 100'000 forced migrants. After these clashes, societal, educational and economic discrimination of Uzbeks increased. For instance, Uzbeks schools were closed and Uzbek business seized by Kyrgyz (<sup>1765</sup>). Also some Tajik schools faced closing. Despite increasing Kyrgyz nationalism, which is for instance proven by the increasing popularity of the populist party Ata-Zhurt lead by Melis Myrzakmatov, minorities, including the Uzbeks, are not politically discriminated. Kyrgyz law requires that at least 15 percent of candidates on party lists be members of ethnic minorities. 14 members of the parliament belong to minorities (<sup>1766</sup>).

<sup>1765</sup> [Vela, 2011]

<sup>1766</sup> [US Department of State, 2013]

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## *Political status of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan*

*From 1991 until 2004*

| Group name | Proportional size | Political status |
|------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Kyrgyz     | 0.524             | SENIOR PARTNER   |
| Russians   | 0.215             | JUNIOR PARTNER   |
| Uzbeks     | 0.129             | POWERLESS        |
| Uyghur     | 0.01              | POWERLESS        |

*From 2005 until 2013*

| Group name | Proportional size | Political status |
|------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Kyrgyz     | 0.649             | DOMINANT         |
| Uzbeks     | 0.138             | POWERLESS        |
| Russians   | 0.125             | POWERLESS        |
| Uyghur     | 0.01              | POWERLESS        |



Figure 423: Political status of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan during 1991-2004.



Figure 424: Political status of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan during 2005-2013.

## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan*

*From 1991 until 2013*

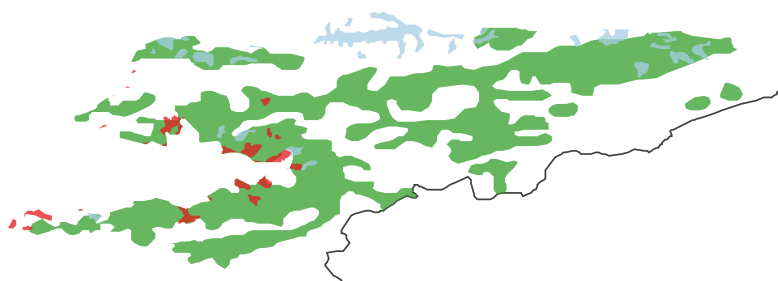


Figure 425: Map of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan during 2005-2013.

| Group name                                   | Area in km <sup>2</sup> | Type             |
|--|-------------------------|------------------|
| <span style="color: green;">■</span> Kyrgyz  | 90 287                  | Regional & urban |
| <span style="color: blue;">■</span> Russians | 7945                    | Regional & urban |
| <span style="color: orange;">■</span> Uzbeks | 3176                    | Regionally based |
| Uyghur                                       |                         | Dispersed        |

Table 127: List of ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan during 1991-2013.