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Overview and Issues for Congress

The Kyrgyz Republic (commonly known as Kyrgyzstan) is a mountainous country slightly smaller than South Dakota. Kyrgyzstan borders three other Central Asian states in addition to the People's Republic of China (PRC, or China) (see **Figure 1**) and maintains close ties with Russia. The population of approximately 7.4 million is predominantly Kyrgyz (74%), with minority groups including Uzbeks (15%), Russians (5%), Dungans (1%), and Uyghurs (1%), among others.[1] Approximately 90% of the population is Muslim, primarily Sunni; a plurality of the Christian minority, which accounts for about 7% of the population, is Russian Orthodox.[2] For most of the 30 years since independence, Kyrgyzstan was considered by scholars and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as the most democratic country in Central Asia, with a vibrant civil society and a higher degree of press freedom than is found elsewhere in the region.[3] Kyrgyzstan is one of 17 countries worldwide whose legislatures participate in the House Democracy Partnership, a bipartisan commission of the U.S. House of Representatives that aims to advance U.S. strategic interests by promoting good governance, legislative transparency, and institutional effectiveness.[4]

In light of political developments that began in 2020 (see "Domestic Political Background" below), the U.S.-based NGO Freedom House classified Kyrgyzstan as "not free" in 2021 and has since maintained that designation.[5] Some Members of Congress, other U.S. officials, and outside observers have voiced concern about democratic backsliding (see **Table 1**) in Kyrgyz politics.[6] Some Members have raised alarm about Kyrgyz government pressure on independent media outlets, including the congressionally funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL).[7] Kyrgyzstan, a lower-middle-income country that relies heavily on foreign remittances, has faced additional economic and geopolitical pressures as a result of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and related sanctions, but it has also benefitted from trade diversion, emerging as a major hub for reexport to Russia.[8] According to the World Bank, Kyrgyzstan's economy experienced the

[1] Ethnic composition figures as of 2022. See National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, "Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia" [Ethnic composition of the population], http://www.stat.gov.kg/ru/opendata/category/312/.

[2] U.S. Department of State, *2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Kyrgyz Republic*, June 26, 2024.

[3] Kyrgyzstan was the only Central Asian country to be characterized as "Partly Free" by Freedom House's *Freedom in the World* report after 1993, although it did not consistently maintain that rating (Kyrgyzstan was rated "Partly Free" in 23 of the 30 years following the country's independence). In most years since 1991, Freedom House assessed that Kyrgyzstan exhibited a higher degree of political rights and civil liberties than any other Central Asian country. See Freedom House, "Country and Territory Rankings and Statuses, 1973-2021," https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Country_and_Territory_Ratings_and_Statuses_FIW1973-2021.xlsx.

[4] U.S. Congress, House Democracy Partnership, "Kyrgyzstan," https://hdp.house.gov/partner-legislatures/kyrgyzstan.

[5] See *Freedom in the World* reports on Kyrgyzstan at Freedom House, "Kyrgyzstan," https://freedomhouse.org/country/kyrgyzstan.

[6] See, for example, House Foreign Affairs Committee (@HouseForeign), X, October 16, 2020, 12:17PM, https://x.com/HouseForeign/status/1317137561018601475; U.S. Embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic, "Statement on Threats to the Kyrgyz Constitutional Order," October 13, 2020.

[7] See, for example, Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, "Central Asia: Political Prisoners and Ongoing Human Rights Abuses," July 22, 2026, https://humanrightscommission.house.gov/events/hearings/central-asia-political-prisoners-and-ongoing-human-rights-abuses; House Foreign Affairs Committee, "McCaul on Kyrgyz Court Decision to Terminate Local Radio Free Europe Station," May 1, 2023; Senator Ben Cardin (@SenatorCardin), X, April 23, 2023, 6:13PM, https://x.com/SenatorCardin/status/1651711201414348805; Representative Bill Keating (@USRepKeating), X, May 1, 2023, 10:57AM, https://x.com/USRepKeating/status/1653050926184255488; Senator Jim Risch (@SenateForeign), X, May 1, 2023, 11:29AM, https://x.com/SenateForeign/status/1653058971882668032.

[8] Oliver Fisk, "Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Grit Their Teeth Amid Growing Central Asian Fuel Crisis," *The Diplomat*, July 15, 2026; Niko Vorobyov, "Sanctions Fears as Kyrgyzstan Shutters Companies Suspected of Aiding Russia," *Al*

(continued...)

fifth-fastest gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate in the world in 2025.[9] In June 2026, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly elected Kyrgyzstan to serve as a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council for a two-year term beginning in January 2027.[10]

Some Members of Congress have expressed interest in strengthening U.S. economic ties with Kyrgyzstan, countering Russian sanctions evasion via Kyrgyzstan, and the state of democracy in Kyrgyzstan, among other issues.[11] S.Res. 816, agreed to in the Senate in the 119th Congress, affirms the strategic importance of the U.S. relationship with Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries. S.Res. 459, also agreed to by the Senate in the 119th Congress, "honor[s] the strategic importance of the C5+1 diplomatic platform [see "U.S.-Kyrgyzstan Relations" below] and recogniz[es] the deepening partnership between the United States" and Central Asia countries, including Kyrgyzstan.

Figure 1. Map of the Kyrgyz Republic



Source: Graphic created by CRS based on data from the State Department and Esri.

Jazeera, May 27, 2026; Aigerim Turgunbaeva and Chris Rickleton, "How Long Can Kyrgyzstan's Economic Boom Keep Booming?," *The Diplomat*, February 16, 2026; Evgenia Pismennaya and Yuliya Fedorinova, "Kyrgyzstan Rises as Central Asia's Budding New Tiger Economy," *Bloomberg*, December 17, 2025. See also CRS Report R47591, *Central Asia: Implications of Russia's War in Ukraine*, coordinated by Maria A. Blackwood.

[9] World Bank, "GDP Growth (Annual %)," https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?most_recent_value_desc=true.

[10] UN, "Kyrgyzstan Wins Seat on UN Security Council for First Time Ever," June 3, 2026.

[11] See, for example, CQ Congressional Transcripts, "Senate Foreign Relations Committee Holds Hearing on Pending Nominations," September 17, 2026.

Table 1. Kyrgyzstan: Selected Governance Indexes, 2019 vs. 2025/2026

Issue	Index (Organization)	2019 Status/Rank	2025/2026 Status/Rank
Political Rights/Civil Liberties	Freedom in the World (Freedom House)	Partly Free (Score: 38/100)	Not Free (Score: 25/100)
Press Freedom	World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders)	83rd of 180 Countries	146th of 180 Countries
Economic Freedom	Index of Economic Freedom (Heritage Foundation)	Moderately Free (Score: 62.3/100)	Mostly Unfree (Score: 56/100)
Perceptions of Corruption	Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International)	126th of 180 Countries	142nd of 180 Countries
Rule of Law	Rule of Law Index (World Justice Project)	85th of 126 Countries and Jurisdictions	99th of 143 Countries and Jurisdictions

Source: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2019* and *Freedom in the World 2026*; Reporters Without Borders, *2019 World Press Freedom Index* and *2026 World Press Freedom Index*; The Heritage Foundation, *2019 Index of Economic Freedom* and *2026 Index of Economic Freedom*; Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2019* and *Corruption Perceptions Index 2025*; World Justice Project, *Rule of Law Index 2019* and *Rule of Law Index 2026*.

Note: Status/rank for 2025 or 2026 is given depending on most current information available.

U.S.-Kyrgyzstan Relations

The United States was among the first countries to recognize Kyrgyzstan's independence following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. From 2001 to 2014, the United States operated a Transit Center at Manas, near the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, in support of both Operation Enduring Freedom and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. U.S. relations with Kyrgyzstan deteriorated under President Almazbek Atambayev (in office 2011-2017), reportedly in part due to Russian pressure, and the Kyrgyz parliament voted in 2013 not to extend the U.S. lease on Manas.[12] Russia leases the nearby Kant airbase. In 2023, the State Department described bilateral relations with Kyrgyzstan as characterized by "ebbs and flows" and noted "wide swings in our political and security relationship."[13] The Trump Administration describes priority areas of engagement with Kyrgyzstan as including "expanding economic cooperation, strengthening sanctions compliance, and enforcing national immigration laws" and identifies infrastructure, critical minerals, and investment cooperation as areas of opportunity for strengthening economic ties.[14]

U.S. bilateral relations with Kyrgyzstan are complemented by the C5+1 diplomatic platform, which provides a forum for the governments of the United States and the five Central Asian countries to "advance regional solutions to global challenges" by engaging on economic, energy, and security issues.[15] In November 2025, President Trump hosted a C5+1 presidential summit in Washington, DC, to mark the 10th anniversary of the platform. According to the State Department, as part of the summit, "the United States celebrated commercial deals involving U.S. and Kyrgyz

[12] Akhilesh Pillalamarri, "The United States Just Closed Its Last Base in Central Asia," *The Diplomat*, June 10, 2014; Olga Dzyubenko, "U.S. Vacates Base in Central Asia as Russia's Clout Rises," Reuters, June 3, 2014.

[13] U.S. Department of State, *Integrated Country Strategy: Kyrgyz Republic*, October 31, 2023.

[14] U.S. Department of State, "Deputy Secretary Landau's Meeting with Kyrgyz First Deputy Prime Minister Amangeldiev," July 28, 2025; U.S. Department of State, "Secretary Rubio's Meeting with Kyrgyz Republic Chairman of the Cabinet Adylbek Kasymaliev," April 15, 2026.

[15] U.S. Department of State, "C5+1: Central Asia & the U.S.," https://www.state.gov/c51.

companies" that "are expected to generate billions of dollars in U.S. export content and support thousands of American jobs."[16]

Bilateral trade between the United States and Kyrgyzstan equaled $218 million in 2025. Of the $213 million in U.S. exports to Kyrgyzstan, cars and piston engines accounted for 44% and 10%, respectively. The largest category of U.S. imports from Kyrgyzstan, which equaled $5 million in 2025, was textile articles, accounting for about 19%.[17] The United States was Kyrgyzstan's ninth-largest trade partner as of 2025.[18] Under the second Trump Administration, the President has assessed Kyrgyzstan a 10% tariff rate under various authorities, most recently under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. § 2132).[19] That tariff expired on July 24, 2026. Kyrgyzstan is the only Central Asian country that Congress has exempted from Section 402 of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. § 2432), the so-called Jackson-Vanik amendment. Initially aimed at promoting free emigration from the Soviet Union, the amendment denies normal trade relations (NTR) status to some current and former nonmarket economy countries unless they adhere to certain freedom-of-emigration requirements.[20] Congress enacted legislation authorizing permanent NTR status for Kyrgyzstan in 2000 (P.L. 106-200) following Kyrgyzstan's 1998 accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In January 2026, the State Department paused the issuance of immigrant visas to Kyrgyz nationals as part of a "full review of all screening and vetting policies to ensure that immigrants from high-risk countries do not unlawfully utilize welfare in the United States or become a public charge."[21] As of August 21, 2026, the pause of immigrant visa issuance is no longer in effect, in accordance with a court order by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.[22] Kyrgyz nationals are subject to the State Department's visa bond program, through which consular officers may require applicants for business and tourism visas to post bonds of up to $20,000.[23] Since 2025, as part of an agreement with the Uzbekistan's government, the United States has removed (deported) an unspecified number of Kyrgyz nationals to Uzbekistan for violating federal immigration laws.[24] S.Res. 631 would request that the Secretary of State submit to Congress a statement regarding Uzbekistan's human rights practices, including as they relate to

[16] U.S. Department of State, "The United States Strengthens Commercial Ties with the Kyrgyz Republic," November 7, 2025.

[17] CRS calculations using UN Comtrade data.

[18] CRS calculations using UN Comtrade data.

[19] Section 122 allows the President to impose a maximum tariff rate of 15% for 150 days to address balance-of-payments crises, unless Congress takes further action. See also CRS In Focus IF13199, *Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974*, by Christopher A. Casey, Danielle M. Trachtenberg, and Christopher T. Zirpoli. For background on previous tariff policies under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, see CRS Legal Sidebar LSB11398, *Supreme Court Rules Against Tariffs Imposed Under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)*, by Christopher T. Zirpoli.

[20] See CRS In Focus IF12556, *The Jackson-Vanik Amendment and Permanent Normal Trade Relations*, by Maria A. Blackwood, Cathleen D. Cimino-Isaacs, and Liana Wong.

[21] U.S. Department of State, "Immigrant Visa Processing Updates for Nationalities at High Risk of U.S. Public Benefits Reliance," August 28, 2026.

[22] The State Department has appealed the case in question, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) v. Rubio, which remains pending with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

[23] U.S. Department of State, "Countries Subject to Visa Bonds," May 13, 2026; U.S. Department of State, "Visas: Visa Bond Program," 91 *Federal Register* 48757, August 3, 2026, https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/08/03/2026-15726/visas-visa-bond-program.

[24] U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "U.S. and Uzbekistan Forge Strong Security Partnership with Historic Deportation Operation," April 30, 2025.

people who are not citizens of Uzbekistan but have been removed to Uzbekistan by the U.S. government.

Domestic Political Background

Kyrgyzstan experienced political upheavals that ousted authoritarian-leaning presidents in 2005 and 2010.[25] A new constitution adopted in 2010 transitioned the country to a semi-parliamentary system in which the president shared executive power with the prime minister. Several Members of Congress and other U.S. policymakers voiced support for Kyrgyzstan's parliamentary democracy, the only such political system in Central Asia at the time.[26] By 2020, however, Kyrgyzstan's legislature had, in the assessment of Freedom House, "de facto surrendered its constitutionally granted power to form and control the executive branch" and had become a rubber-stamp body "merely paying lip service to the declared goal of building a parliamentary democracy."[27] Kyrgyzstan experienced further political upheaval following October 2020 parliamentary elections in which opposition parties alleged widespread irregularities.[28] The country's Central Electoral Commission annulled the elections after mass protests broke out in Bishkek, and within ten days both the prime minister and the president had resigned.[29] Sadyr Japarov, a former member of parliament who had been serving an 11-year sentence on kidnapping charges that he maintains were politically motivated, quickly became both prime minister and acting president after protestors freed him from prison.[30]

Upon taking power, Japarov—a nationalist politician with a large social media following—began to push for a constitutional referendum that would return the country to a presidential form of government.[31] In January 2021, Japarov won 79% of the vote in a snap presidential election that coincided with a referendum in which 84% of voters supported reverting to a presidential system.[32] A new constitution, endorsed by voters in a subsequent April 2021 referendum, significantly expanded presidential power at the expense of the legislature, transferring several key parliamentary competencies to the executive and reducing the number of seats in the

[25] Bruce Pannier, "Rethinking Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution," *RFE/RL*, August 25, 2009; Catherine Putz, "Remembering Kyrgyzstan's Revolutions," *The Diplomat*, April 9, 2015.

[26] See, for example, Sen. Ted Kaufman, "Kyrgyzstan," remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 156 (July 15, 2010), p. S5954; Sen. John Kerry, "Kyrgyzstan's Democratic Transition," remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 157 (June 28, 2011), p. S4149; Rep. Joe Wilson, "New Partnership with Kyrgyzstan," remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 158 (February 27, 2012), p. H951.

[27] Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2020: Kyrgyzstan*, May 6, 2020.

[28] "Kyrgyz Opposition Decries Mass Irregularities In Parliamentary Elections," *RFE/RL*, October 4, 2020.

[29] Central Commission on Elections and the Conduction of Referendums of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, "TsIK priznala nedeistvitel'nymi itogi golosovaniia na vyborakh" [CEC has declared election results invalid], October 6, 2020; Abdujalil Abdurasulov, "Kyrgyzstan Election: Euphoria Turns to Insecurity as Mob Rule Spreads," *BBC News*, October 8, 2020; Catherine Putz, "Does Kyrgyzstan's Post-Election Chaos Put It on the Road to Revolution?," *The Diplomat*, October 6, 2020.

[30] "Kyrgyzstan: Japarov's Nomination as PM Pauses Crisis," *Eurasianet*, October 14, 2020; Catherine Putz, "Kyrgyz President Jeenbekov Offers Resignation," *The Diplomat*, October 15, 2020; Peter Leonard, "Kyrgyzstan: Japarov Seizes All Levers of Power," *Eurasianet*, October 16, 2020; "Kyrgyz Parliament Gives Newly Elected PM Japarov Presidential Powers," *RFE/RL*, October 16, 2020.

[31] On Japarov's political background, see, for example, Temur Umarov, "Who's in Charge Following Revolution in Kyrgyzstan," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 26, 2020, and Joldon Kutmanaliev and Gulzat Baialieva, "How Kyrgyz Social Media Backed an Imprisoned Politician's Meteoric Rise to Power," OpenDemocracy, October 15, 2020.

[32] "Kyrgyzstan: Japarov Secures Commanding Election Victory," *Eurasianet*, January 10, 2021; Mariya Omelicheva, "Why Did Kyrgyz Voters Give Up Parliamentarism?," *The Diplomat*, January 12, 2021; Ana-Maria Anghelescu, "Should Europe Worry About Kyrgyzstan?," *The Diplomat*, January 16, 2021.

unicameral parliament from 120 to 90.[33] Some local and international critics argued that the new constitution "undermines human rights norms and weakens checks and balances necessary to prevent abuses of power," and questioned the legitimacy of the manner in which it was adopted.[34]

In the context of Japarov's rise to power, some analysts posited that Kyrgyz voters may have been drawn to a strong presidency due to long-standing frustrations with corruption and the ineffectiveness of parliament.[35] One observer, for example, noted Japarov's "deliberate anti-establishment appeal and nationalist populist rhetoric" in contrast to "people's rage against the political elites largely associated with a parliament marred by corruption and scandals."[36] Many analysts assess that, since taking power, Japarov has successfully stifled political opposition within Kyrgyzstan and increased government pressure on civil society and independent media.[37] One analyst has argued that November 2025 snap parliamentary elections provided Japarov "the opportunity to subjugate parliament once and for all" because they took place under a revised electoral framework, passed by parliament in April 2025 and signed into law by Japarov in June 2025, that reduced the power of political parties.[38] Another described the 2025 elections as potentially "the last nail in the coffin of the Kyrgyz parliamentary or mixed parliamentary-presidential system."[39] Only one political party fielded candidates, and over 80% of deputies in the new parliament are Japarov supporters who ran as independents.[40] In the lead-up to the elections, several prominent opposition figures were arrested for an alleged coup attempt.[41] Kyrgyzstan is scheduled to hold its next presidential election in January 2027; Japarov intends to seek a second term.[42]

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[33] Aigerim Turgunbaeva, "Kyrgyzstan Under the Khanstitution: 5 Years On," *The Diplomat*, January 10, 2026.

[34] Human Rights Watch, "Kyrgyzstan: Withdraw Problematic Draft Constitution," March 5, 2021; Klara Sooronkulova et al., *Analysis of the Draft Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic*, Freedom for Eurasia, April 2021.

[35] See, for example, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "Kyrgyzstan's Constitutional Referendum: Another Step Backward?," event held on April 9, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tw5jjrXiFH8; Georgy Mamedov, "'Japarov Is Our Trump': Why Kyrgyzstan Is the Future of Global Politics," Open Democracy, January 6, 2021.

[36] Georgy Mamedov, "'Japarov Is Our Trump': Why Kyrgyzstan Is the Future of Global Politics," Open Democracy, January 6, 2021.

[37] See, for example, Alexander Thompson, "Kyrgyzstan Is Slouching Back toward Illiberalism," *Foreign Policy*, March 27, 2026; Aigerim Turgunbaeva and Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska, "In Kyrgyzstan, an 'Unprecedented Crackdown' on Free Press Raises Alarm," *Al Jazeera*, July 18, 2024; Jasmine Cameron et al., "From 'Island of Democracy' to 'Consolidated Authoritarian Regime': The Need to Reverse Kyrgyzstan's Slide," Just Security, July 25, 2023.

[38] Galiya Ibragimova, "What's Behind Electoral Reform in Kyrgyzstan?," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 28, 2025. See also President of the Kyrgyz Republic, "Vneseny izmeneniia v konstitutsionnyi Zakon 'O vyborakh Prezidenta Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki i deputatov Zkogorku Kenesha Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki'" [Amendments have been made to the constitutional Law "On elections of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and Deputies of the *Jogorku Kenesh* of the Kyrgyz Republic"], June 9, 20205; International IDEA, "New Electoral System to Advantage Japarov Loyalists," June 2025; Norwegian Helsinki Committee, "Kyrgyzstan: Snap Elections amid Deterioration of Human Rights," November 28, 2025.

[39] Aijan Sharshenova, "Is Politics Dead in Kyrgyzstan?," *The Diplomat*, November 21, 2021.

[40] Felix Light and Aigerim Turgunbaeva, "Allies of Kyrgyzstan's Strongman President Sweep Snap Parliamentary Election," Reuters, November 30, 2025; Daria Zielinska, "Parliamentary Elections in Kyrgyzstan: Consolidating the Presidential System," Centre for Eastern Studies, December 5, 2025.

[41] Catherine Putz, "Kyrgyz Authorities Arrest Alleged Protest Plotters Ahead of Election," *The Diplomat*, November 24, 2025.

[42] "Kyrgyz President to Seek Second Five-Year Term in 2026," *RFE/RL*, January 30, 2024; Aigerim Turgunbaeva, "Kyrgyz Leader Japarov Gets Parliament to Reset Election Date," Reuters, April 16, 2025.

Japarov has overseen a period of strong economic growth and progress on major development projects, and he enjoys widespread popularity.[43] One expert argues that, "even if the country is no longer as democratic [under Japarov] as it once was, it has been, arguably, more stable than at any time in its nearly 35-year history as an independent state."[44] According to Kyrgyzstan's ambassador to the United States, "since 2021, tax revenues have almost quadrupled and customs revenues have increased nearly sixfold" as a result of "restoring the capacity of the state and bringing much more of the economy into the legal and transparent sphere."[45] Following violent border clashes with Tajikistan in 2021 and 2022, the Japarov government and its Tajik counterpart finalized the delimitation and demarcation of the 600-mile border between the two countries, a site of recurrent tensions, in March 2025.[46] The Trump Administration praised the agreement as "reflect[ing] the commitment of [these] governments to diplomacy and regional stability."[47] Japarov's government also has resolved long-standing border issues with Uzbekistan.[48] Some analysts argue that Kyrgyzstan is vulnerable to political instability sparked by intra-elite tensions or public discontent over standards of living, power shortages, and corruption.[49] Others contend that Japarov has successfully consolidated power in a manner that makes short-term political upheaval unlikely.[50]

Economy

Kyrgyzstan is a lower-middle-income country whose economy is heavily dependent on remittances and mining. Gold, Kyrgyzstan's main export commodity, is primarily produced by the Kumtor mine, which accounted for 11% of Kyrgyzstan's GDP in 2020.[51] In 2021, the government of Kyrgyzstan nationalized the mine, which previously had been operated by a Canadian company.[52] Kyrgyzstan is one of the most remittance-dependent economies in the world; remittances, which come predominantly from Russia, were equivalent to 17.6% of GDP in

[43] Bruce Pannier, *Shifting Power Dynamics in Kyrgyzstan: The End of the Japarov-Tashiev Era*; Alexander Thompson, "Kyrgyzstan Is Slouching Back Toward Illiberalism," March 27, 2026. Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI Transformation Index 2026: Kyrgyzstan*, 2026, p. 14; Aigerim Turgunbaeva, "From Nomad Festival to National Showcase: Kyrgyzstan Takes Center Stage," *The Diplomat*, September 16, 2026; International Republican Institute, "National Poll of Kyrgyzstan: December 2023-January 2024," February 29, 2024.

[44] Bruce Pannier, *Shifting Power Dynamics in Kyrgyzstan: The End of the Japarov-Tashiev Era*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, April 2026.

[45] Edil Baisalov, post on X.com, September 15, 2026, https://x.com/baisalov/status/2099849996719788261.

[46] "Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Sign Deal to End Long-Running Border Dispute," Reuters, March 13, 2025.

[47] U.S. Department of State, "Border Agreement Between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan," March 14, 2025.

[48] Burak Caliskan, "How Land Swaps Are Reshaping Border Politics Between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan," *The Diplomat*, June 29, 2026; Catherine Putz, "Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan Foreign Ministers Sign Water, Border Agreements," *The Diplomat*, November 3, 2022.

[49] Bruce Pannier, *Shifting Power Dynamics in Kyrgyzstan: The End of the Japarov-Tashiev Era*; Sam Jones, "Japarov Moves to Consolidate Power Vertical," Eurasia Daily Monitor, February 17, 2026; Catherine Putz, "Tashiev Convicted in Coup Plot, Granted Probation Instead of Prison," *The Diplomat*, July 6, 2026; Economist Intelligence Unit, "Kyrgyz Republic: Political and Economic Outlook," August 4, 2026.

[50] See, for example, Catherine Putz, "Aijan Sharshenova on the Japarov-Tashiev Political Divorce in Kyrgyzstan," *The Diplomat*, April 1, 2026; Economist Intelligence Unit, "Former Kyrgyz Security Chief on Trial," June 12, 2026.

[51] World Bank, *Mining Sector Diagnostic—Kyrgyz Republic*, March 2023, p. 10.

[52] Agnieszka Pikulicka-Wilczewska, "Kyrgyzstan Moves to Nationalise Gold Mine Run by Canadian Company," *Al Jazeera*, July 9, 2021. The nationalization of Kumtor was finalized in 2022. See Sullivan and Cromwell, "S&C Leads Centerra Gold to Successful Resolution of Dispute with Kyrgyz Republic," August 12, 2022.

2024.[53] China is Kyrgyzstan's largest trading partner, followed by Russia. Kyrgyzstan's 1998 accession to the WTO helped establish the country as a hub for the reexport of goods from China.[54] Kyrgyzstan has been a member of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union since 2015 and depends on Russia for over 90% of its gasoline. The ongoing fuel crisis in Russia resulting from Ukrainian strikes on Russian energy infrastructure has constrained fuel supplies in Kyrgyzstan.[55]

According to the World Bank, Kyrgyzstan's GDP grew by 9% in 2023, 11.5% in 2024, and 11.1% in 2025, with growth projected to moderate to 6.1% in 2026.[56] Experts ascribe Kyrgyzstan's rapid economic growth to factors including the increased trade volumes due to the war in Ukraine (see "Relations with Russia," below), improved tax and customs administration, increased gold exports, and strong growth in the construction sector.[57] Increased state revenues have translated to higher government spending on infrastructure and development projects.[58] According to official figures, the country's poverty rate fell from 33.2% in 2022 to 24% in 2025.[59] At the same time, Kyrgyzstan faces high inflation, and some observers argue that the benefits of economic growth have been unevenly distributed.[60] According to official figures, the consumer price index increased by 12.2% year-over-year in September 2026.[61]

Relations with Russia

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Kyrgyzstan has maintained political, economic, and security ties with Russia but has not endorsed Russian aggression in Ukraine. While Russia remains the primary destination for Kyrgyz labor migration, some analysts observe that Kyrgyz labor migrants have increasingly sought alternative destinations in light of the war.[62] Since 2022, overall imports to Kyrgyzstan have surged, and Kyrgyzstan has served as a "key

[53] World Bank, "Personal Remittances, Received (% of GDP)—Kyrgyz Republic," https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=KG.

[54] Philipp Schroeder and Elina Schroeder, *Entrepreneurship in Kyrgyzstan: Adjustments to a Changing Economic Environment* (Bishkek: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2017); Roman Mogilevskii, "Re-export Activities in Kyrgyzstan: Issues and Prospects," University of Central Asia, Institute of Public Policy and Administration, Working Paper no. 9 (2012); Bartlomej Kaminski and Gael Raballand, "Entrepot for Chinese Consumer Goods in Central Asia: The Puzzle of Re-exports Through Kyrgyz Bazaars," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 50, no. 5 (2009): pp. 581-590.

[55] Oliver Fisk, "Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Grit Their Teeth Amid Growing Central Asian Fuel Crisis," *The Diplomat*, July 15, 2026; Galiya Ibragimova, "Russia Is Exporting Its Fuel Crisis to Central Asia," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 6, 2026; Anna Arkhangelskaya, "Kyrgyzstan Faces Hard Choices on A Half-Empty Fuel Tank," East Asia Forum, September 26, 2026.

[56] World Bank, "Overview: Kyrgyz Republic," https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/country/kyrgyzrepublic#tab-economy.

[57] Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI Transformation Index 2026: Kyrgyzstan*, 2026, p. 3; Paul Sonne and Aigerim Turgunbaeva, "It's Boom Time in Kyrgyzstan, Courtesy in Part of the War in Ukraine," *New York Times*, September 15, 2026.

[58] Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI Transformation Index 2026: Kyrgyzstan*, 2026, p. 23; Paul Sonne and Aigerim Turgunbaeva, "It's Boom Time in Kyrgyzstan, Courtesy in Part of the War in Ukraine," *New York Times*, September 15, 2026.

[59] National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, "Poverty Rate," https://stat.gov.kg/ru/statistics/download/dynamic/807/.

[60] Aigerim Turgunbaeva, "Explaining Kyrgyzstan's Economic Leap," *The National Interest*, January 6, 2026.

[61] National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, "Price Monitoring," https://stat.gov.kg/en/daily-prices/.

[62] Sergey Kwan, "Russia Remains Top Destination for 600,000 Kyrgyz Migrant Workers," *The Times of Central Asia*, March 17, 2025; Galiya Ibragimova, "Why Are Central Asian Migrant Workers Spurning Russia?," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 1, 2023.

conduit" for Western and Chinese goods into Russia.[63] Some observers, including some Members of Congress, have expressed concern that Kyrgyzstan is functioning as a "back door" for restricted goods, including dual-use technologies for Russia's defense sector.[64] According to press reporting, Kyrgyzstan has served as "a beachhead in the global financial system" for Russian sanctions evasions schemes.[65] The U.S. Department of the Treasury has sanctioned multiple Kyrgyz entities for exporting dual-use technologies to Russia and supporting Russia's military-industrial base.[66] In April 2026, the European Union restricted exports of some high-tech goods to Kyrgyzstan, citing "systematic and persistent failure" by the Kyrgyz government to prevent the transit to Russia of tools and equipment used in the manufacture of drones and missiles.[67] According to one expert, "Kyrgyzstan's experience underscores the limits of sanctions" and "highlights persistent loopholes."[68] In October 2026, the Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Economy and Commerce announced a range of actions intended to mitigate sanctions risks and stated, "our position is unequivocal: the territory, jurisdiction, and banking and payment infrastructure of the Kyrgyz Republic must not be used for transactions intended to circumvent sanctions."[69]

Relations with China

The PRC has supported several large-scale infrastructure projects in Kyrgyzstan, financed primarily through China's state-owned financial institutions. China's Export-Import Bank owns about $1.4 billion of Kyrgyzstan's foreign debt, accounting for about 20% of the total.[70] The expanding PRC economic presence in Kyrgyzstan has sparked controversy and protests. In February 2020, for example, a joint PRC-Kyrgyz project to build a $280 million logistics center in Kyrgyzstan's Naryn province was cancelled after protests by local residents, who criticized the

[63] Paul Sonne and Aigerim Turgunbaeva, "It's Boom Time in Kyrgyzstan, Courtesy in Part of the War in Ukraine," *New York Times*, September 15, 2026.

[64] See, for example, "Senate Foreign Relations Committee Holds Hearing on Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Request for the State Department," *CQ Congressional Transcripts*, March 22, 2023; "Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation Holds Hearing on Europe's Future," *CQ Congressional Transcripts*, July 30, 2024; "Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Permanent Investigations Holds Hearing on Russian Technology Machine," *CQ Congressional Transcripts*, September 10, 2024.

[65] Aaron Krolik, "The 'Monster Behind Russia's Global Effort to Evade Western Sanctions," *New York Times*, September 24, 2036. See also Anne-Sylvaine Chassany et al., "Kremlin-Backed Forgery Scheme Moved $6.9bn through Global Banks," *Financial Times*, September 21, 2026.

[66] U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Sanctions Impede Russian Access to Battlefield Supplies and Target Revenue Generators," July 20, 2023; U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Imposes Sanctions on More Than 150 Individuals and Entities Supplying Russia's Military-Industrial Base," December 12, 2023; U.S. Department of the Treasury, "On Second Anniversary of Russia's Further Invasion of Ukraine and Following the Death of Aleksey Navalny, Treasury Sanctions Hundreds of Targets in Russia and Globally," February 23, 2024; U.S. Department of the Treasury, "As Russia Completes Transition to a Full War Economy, Treasury Takes Sweeping Aim at Foundational Financial Infrastructure and Access to Third Country Support," June 12, 2024; U.S. Department of the Treasury, "Treasury Disrupts Russia's Sanctions Evasion Schemes," January 15, 2025.

[67] European Commission, "EU Adopts 20th Package of Sanctions Against Russia," April 22, 2026.

[68] Aigerim Turgunbaeva, "Explaining Kyrgyzstan's Economic Leap," *The National Interest*, January 6, 2026.

[69] Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, "OFFICIAL STATEMENT by the Special Representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic for Special Assignments on Sanctions Policy and the Mitigation of Sanctions Risks," October 27, 2026.

[70] "Kyrgyzstan's External Debt to China Falls to $1.4 Billion," Kabar, August 4, 2026.

investment as a PRC land grab.[71] A long-planned railroad connecting Uzbekistan to China via Kyrgyzstan began construction in 2025 and is slated for completion by 2030.[72]

Author Information

Maria A. Blackwood
Analyst in Asian Policy

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[71] "China-Led $280 Million Kyrgyzstan Project Abandoned After Protests," Reuters, February 18, 2020.

[72] Jildiz Nicharapova, "Progress on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway, Some Challenges Remain," *The Diplomat*, July 17, 2026.