

"Growth pains" of Kyrgyz democracy (of the Kyrgyz "Democracy project")

The **memory of the people in Kyrgyzstan seems surprisingly short**. Authoritarian Presidents' families angered the people until the fall of the first and second Presidents. Parliamentarism failed to convince them for the next decade. And now again back to the political system which ended before with ousted president Bakijew in 2010. But it is also the fate of developing countries to swing from one extreme to the other.

The new **President Japarov actually has no specific political programme**. He only emphasizes the fight against corruption (the evil). He portrays the country's previous political class to the ordinary people as all corrupt, while knowingly concealing the fact that he too was a representative of it: From 2005 to 2010 as a deputy of the Ak-Jol party and close confidant of then-President Bakiyev, and then as a deputy of the conservative Ata-Jurt party (follower of Ak-Jol).

But his **meteoric rise** was made possible by the fact that he appears to people as a **bearer of hope** and was also able to fully **activate his voter potential**.

But he **will have a hard time living up to the hopes** that many associate with him: A state whose fundamentals/substance have been attacked after three people's revolutions, with high foreign debts and a state budget that can hardly find funds for urgently needed public investments. Besides a public health system that was overburdened in the time of intensive Corona virus, and an education sector where the private facilities continue to grow, and public schools are losing educational quality.

That the **often praised Kyrgyz democracy will fall years behind** should not be feared. The people of the small Central Asian country experience that the path to a real lived democracy can often be painful. The young generation is well-informed and critical. They will not stand by and watch the country fall back into old authoritarian structures. They love their freedom and the liberality of their country. There were volunteers who provided most of the social and medical care during intensive COVID-19 period. Also 10,000 volunteers subsequently saved Bishkek from looting after the riots on October 5.

And the newly elected President Japarov also seems to have understood this, when he affirms in a recent **interview for The Economist**: "The people can put up with certain things for a year or two or three, but then they can also expel any president. You cannot establish a dictatorship in our country".