

# Central Asia sees first parliamentary democracy

Nearly 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan votes in an election intended to create a parliamentary democracy – the first in a region whose nations have been ruled for years by powerful presidents with no apparent plans to step down



**UZBEKISTAN**  
Population: 27.6 million  
GDP\*: \$2,800  
Main ethnic group: Uzbek 80%

**Islam Karimov:** Communist Party leader in Soviet Uzbekistan, becomes president after independence in 1991

Re-elected in 2007 poll dismissed as sham by opposition. Karimov does not tolerate dissent



**TURKMENISTAN**  
Pop: 4.9m  
GDP: \$6,700  
Ethnic: Turkmen 85%, Uzbek 5%, Russian 4%

**Kurbanuly Berdimukhamedov:** Becomes acting president after authoritarian leader **Saparmurat Niyazov** – in power since Soviet times – dies in 2006

Sworn in as president after winning 2007 elections, condemned by rights groups as rigged

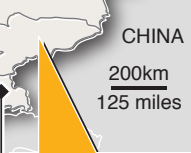


**KAZAKHSTAN**  
Pop: 15.4m  
GDP: \$11,800  
Main ethnic groups: Kazakh 53% Russian 30%

**Nursultan Nazarbayev:** First secretary of Communist Party of Kazakhstan – elected president in 1990

Re-elected for further seven-year term in 2005 polls, declared by observers to have been flawed

**KYRGYZSTAN**  
Pop: 5.4m  
GDP: \$2,200  
Ethnic: Kyrgyz 65%, Uzbek 14%, Russian 12%



Under plans of interim president **Roza Otunbayeva** – supported overwhelmingly in referendum in June – new prime minister will have more power than president



**TAJIKISTAN**  
Pop: 7.3m  
GDP: \$1,900  
Ethnic groups: Tajik 80%, Uzbek 15%,

**Emomali Sharipovich Rahmon:** Elected chairman of Supreme Council in 1992 after first post-Soviet leader, **Rahmon Nabiye**, is forced to resign

Elected president in 1994, wins third term in office in 2006 after elections boycotted by opposition parties