

## Lecture of the Kyrgyz official at Utah Valley University



Mr. Kurmanbek Dyikanbaev, the deputy chief of staff and representative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament of Kyrgyzstan) visited my class on comparative politics of Central Asia at Utah Valley University on August 23, 2019 and shared some of his insights and experiences about reforms in his country. Kurmanbek Dyiakanbaev is known for his advocacy of decentralization and within his political career is considered an authority on the subject.

He started his lecture with the history of the Kyrgyz Republic sharing that it had been a part of the Soviet Union for over 70 years. There were 15 republics with Moscow being the top. In January 1991, President of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akayev pushed for new government structures and appointed reform-oriented politicians. He briefly mentioned the chaos and coups that occurred to consolidate power after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Kurmanbek Dyikanbaev was proud to state that currently the Kyrgyz Republic has a parliament, as well as a judicial and executive branches. The President of the country is elected for 6 years (1 term) and is elected by popular vote. It should be noted that anyone can be elected, and the Kyrgyz Republic has had a female president who had also been an Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to the U.S. and Britain. There are 120 deputies in the Kyrgyz Parliament who are elected for a 5-year term. These deputies work in over 13 different committees and according to their constitution the speaker is elected from one of the parties. It was very interesting to hear how the Kyrgyz people structured their government and we had the opportunity to ask questions.

A question that was asked was how and why a 1 term was (6 year) presidency of the country chosen. Kurmanbek Dyikanbaev answered that experience had taught them that when they had multiple terms for elected presidents, the president would always want to stay longer. Their solution was 1 term for 6 years in order for the president to have some continuity but not too long to where they try to stay in power.

Another question that stood out was how Kurmanbek Dyikanbaev felt about the collapse of the Soviet Union. He shared his experience of the mandatory service in the Soviet Army and how he was able to see and influence the current structure of the government. He feels that decentralization must be on the radar because power is tempting.

It was a great opportunity to hear him speak and even ask questions. It made the topics in class and the leaders that we learn about seem more real and relevant. I now have a face and a name to put to a government and country that I learn about. Also hearing his lecture made me not only curious about the language and culture of the Kyrgyz but the current political and historical events that are happening.

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