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Paper 3: Kyrgyzstan's Place in the World

Dr. Tom Wood
IFES*

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tomacbyg@hotmail.com

In this paper I explore three interrelated themes. First, I will argue that there IS such a beastie as a Kyrgyz Foreign policy, and describe it a little bit. Given the institutional focus of this panel, I stress a simultaneously young and innovative institution that somehow manages to be very traditional. Then, secondly, we might inquire how this foreign policy relates to the independent-nation-building phase that all of the Central Asian states have been gripped by since 1991. Finally, I will wrap up by attempting to illuminate, in light of the first two issues, how Kyrgyz foreign policy might be altered by the exodus of Akayev in March 2005. My focus here is to relate the evolution of the institutions and policies underpinning bilateral diplomacy and geo-strategic thinking as opposed to concentrating purely on examining Kyrgyzstan's foreign relations with respective bilateral partners or through the prism of foreign aid. Although important for Kyrgyz foreign policy behavior, an over-focus on non-traditional trans boundary threats such as public health and terrorism, as sole causation blur our understanding of how more traditional concerns shape policy, so I do not consider them here.

Very few Kyrgyz themselves know very much about their own foreign policy establishment and therefore commonly ignore it or assume it is non-existent. At the same time, as with other governments in Central Asia, Bishkek is content to reap prestige from control of foreign relations without commensurate accountability to citizens. Kyrgyzstan's sovereign status and participation in the international community is sometimes used to build up legitimacy and foster an impression of unqualified external support. This assignation of a role enmeshed in propaganda leads a skeptical public, and also many Western commentators, to view the reality underlying this as a mish-mash of dithering government reactions to a series of crises beyond its competence to address. The impression is reinforced that Kyrgyzstan does not have a well-defined national interest or foreign policy that informs its international behavior; indeed that its

"foreign policy" consists of randomly inviting various states to meddle in its internal affairs.[1] Alternatively, other writers on Kyrgyzstan have viewed its international behavior entirely through the prism of the political economy of foreign aid dependency. The idea that a national interest might inform Kyrgyz international behavior is still unfamiliar territory for many Kyrgyzstanis today. Finally, as part of the Soviet legacy and the authoritarian context of Kyrgyz politics, foreign policy is generally perceived as the narrow purview of elites trained as experts in the field and a function that is the exclusive right of the executive to conduct and act within. Conversely, wider civil society has little to say about foreign policy, and is in any case arguably overburdened with an essentially domestic agenda. Political parties and opposition have sparse original foreign policy views or platforms challenging the regime, except where foreign policy issues have obvious implications such as in the case of frontier negotiations. Because of this policy resulting from the healthy tension between public debate and political opposition is still absent in Kyrgyzstan.

Meanwhile, after fifteen years of independence, the Kyrgyz foreign policy establishment has in fact formulated a broad consensus on Kyrgyzstan and the world, a *weltanschauung*. This is influenced by interrelated factors such as personnel rooted in the Soviet era absorbing the style and traditions of Soviet diplomatic practice and geo-strategy, the experience that they have had with independence, and the power vacuum that became apparent in the regional state system in the 1990s. It is highly mistaken to think that the foreign relations of Kyrgyzstan occur inside a conceptual vacuum or that Kyrgyz foreign policy is essentially reactive without being informed by an overall strategy or prioritization.

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[1] For a good example of the numerous genres of op. ed. articles from Western commentators arguing for directionless or non-existent Kyrgyz geo-strategy and foreign policy, see James Purcell Smith, *Is Foreign Presence in Kyrgyzstan Negatively Affecting Regional Cooperation in Central Asia? Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, May 05, 2004 (accessed May 06, 2004); available from http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=2339.

Kyrgyz foreign policy actors have been moderately successful in constructing this by deploying the methods most familiar to them from the Soviet experience. They have used bilateral relations and balance of power politics to surmount the collapse of the regional state system in Central Asia, meaning the collapse of the USSR and subsequent non-coalescing of an alternative regional system, to address small state sovereignty and security concerns. A legacy of the USSR is a strong integrationist approach; an intuitive preference for supra-nationalism that is found, to a greater or lesser degree, in all post-Soviet small state foreign policy behavior. The new foreign policy is, arguably, imperfect for a small impoverished state and betrays its traditional Soviet origins in many ways.

Policy has evolved and shifted from its zero hour in August 1991 with the declaration of sovereignty that led to independence up until the March 2005 ejection of the Akayev regime. For the sake of convenience, we could divide the various shifts and broad developments into three phases. However, we must take into account that these are rough dividers whose characteristics crop up in or influence subsequent eras. The period from 1991 to about 1995-96 represented a period of institutional formation and boundless optimism. Independence was by definition seen as heralding the path to prosperity and the novelty of joining the plethora of international organizations that are the purview of the sovereign states - from the UN to the International Postal Union - was rendered more delicious by the employment options opened up for various Kyrgyzstanis serving in, liaising with, or employed in local field offices, thereof. International organizations such as the UN, the World Bank, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and numerous other groups opened large offices with local staff in Kyrgyzstan.

Many new embassies and consulates opened shop in Bishkek flying, for many Kyrgyzstanis, exotic foreign flags reinforcing the image of their country’s independence. Underpinning all of this in the early 1990s was the genuine popularity of the elected government

that appeared to be breaking the mould of post-Soviet politics and aggressively liberalizing society and economy. Major foreign policy initiatives in this phase were directed at joining new international organizations, acceding to treaties, and simultaneously trying to preserve the crucial old inter-republican agreements by which the bulk of the interdependent energy supply systems, water usage, and local trade were regulated. Kyrgyzstan enthusiastically joined the CIS and all successor regional organizations in an effort to stall or defray confronting the absence of Soviet precursor institutions.

During this period an unwritten, procedural geo-strategic approach, almost a rule of thumb, evolved.[2] Unelaborated as a doctrine, it demonstrated the preoccupation of Kyrgyz with triangulating their security and the application of Soviet foreign policy conceptions of regional systems in international affairs. This approach envisioned three concentric circles of states crucial to security and stability around Kyrgyzstan. The first circle consisted of the immediately contiguous Central Asian neighbors and more broadly the rest of the former Soviet space. This represented the most immediate challenge in the construction of a stable regional state system. The second concentric circle was composed of Turkey, China, Iran and other non-Soviet states that Kyrgyzstan regarded as key to its regional security interests and potential anchors for a new post-Soviet regional state system. The third circle comprised the EU and North America; able to exercise influence through provision of foreign aid principally, although the importance of the United States changed as its geo-strategic engagement in the region changed dramatically after 2001. The three concentric circles, a conceptual hierarchy of proximity and strategic importance for Kyrgyz foreign policy actors, could be well compared to the Soviet template from which it is ultimately derived, of the Soviet East European satellite and allied states, nonaligned sympathetic states and the rest of the world.

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[2] Ambassador Muratbek Imanaliev, interview by author, 15 August 2002, Bishkek.

The priority of Kyrgyz foreign policy towards the inner circle of CIS countries was to develop remaining cultural ties and a common cultural space. This bestowed special prominence on the CIS as a forum for maintaining close links with all former Soviet States and especially Russia, the *primes inter pares*. The key objective was for the preservation of Russian language and culture in a common area.[3] This conceptual geography in Kyrgyz official thinking on foreign policy was geared to proximities. Priorities consisted vaguely of "securing good relationships with the closest states;" or put another way, hurriedly improvising regional stability.

By 1996 and 1997, however, independence fatigue began to set in. This characterizes the second era of the decade. The regime became less popular the more it created a track record and grew distant from its promises in the 1991 elections. The panacea of foreign aid and membership of numerous international organizations and accession to countless treaties yielded chimerical results. Large tranches of donor investment did not solve the country's dire economic situation, but instead substituted the side-payment capabilities of the Soviet center with that of the international community. Kyrgyz officials replaced discontinued subsidies from Moscow with those of the international donor and lending system to developing countries. With decades of experience in bargaining for subsidization and side payments with a distant center, Kyrgyz elites were very comfortable with this familiar process.

Alarmingly, it became clear that attempts to extend or revitalize Soviet inter-republican agreements as international institutions among sovereign regional states were not going to work. One customs union, economic cooperation area and water-energy sharing organization after the other failed to get off the ground, and the dynamic of imperial collapse continued to send shockwaves into the immediate future. The Tajik civil war, growing Uzbek hostility and intransigence over frontier delimitation, water sharing and trade issues brought into stark relief

[3] Ibid.

the painful reality that Kyrgyzstan was going to have to build its international position from scratch. It was one thing to have a plethora of cooperation agreements, multilateral treaties and a busy schedule of state visits; and yet another entirely to have a strategic map against which to understand and better chart the direction of the orphan ship of state floating rudderless in a sea of sovereignty.

The failure of the CIS to create a ruble zone or a proxy ruble zone similar to French efforts in Africa put Kyrgyzstan in the vanguard of states to introduce an independent currency in 1993. While this had nation-building consequences, it also hastened the construction of frontiers and customs barriers. Suddenly many Kyrgyz discovered that independence and sovereignty could usher forth isolation and hostility from previously benign neighbors, with unpleasant economic results.

By the late 1990s the Akayev regime worried about sorting through this Gordian Knot, and for the first time needed to assure the public that it had a foreign policy vision for the country. This ushered in the third phase of Kyrgyz foreign policy from 1998 to 2004: the Russian financial collapse and onward. The Russian financial and banking crisis of 1998 was a key psychological turning point. Until 1998 it seemed that massive injections of foreign aid, combined with robust investment from and trade with Russia, offset the collapse of the local Central Asian Soviet intra-republican system and the failure to find alternative replacements. The Russian financial collapse however caused massive inflation and unemployment in Kyrgyzstan, and forced many to question dependence on Russia. Particularly hard hit were numerous petty businessmen, known as suitcase traders, reliant on importing consumer goods from there.

Several years on, there has been rapid Russian economic recovery and a commensurate solid return of Russian investment in Kyrgyzstan. But in 1998 the dramatic and sudden nature of Russia's crisis presaged to many in Kyrgyzstan, and the West, the failure of the Kremlin's

privatization program and the end of Russia as an economic force in Eurasia. At around the same time, increased tension with the United States concerning the regime's supposed backsliding on democratization and elections after 1998 gave greater impetus for Kyrgyzstan to develop closer relations with China. Against this background, Bishkek's trilateral initiatives to great powers began to cement into a policy.

In 1999 the official regime response was delivered on an ideological level with the guiding *Silk Road Doctrine*. Practically, the institutional nexus of the expanded Foreign Ministry and the President's Security Council developed an outlook that sought to normalize relations with neighbors, and court great power protection. An important dimension in the crystallization of Kyrgyz independent foreign policy thinking was also seen in the government's commitment to courting secondary power protection including Iran, Turkey and latterly Pakistan and India throughout the 1990s. Later Japan too emerged as an important player in this category, with its considerable international lender support and direct foreign aid. A major strategic threat for Kyrgyz policy makers necessitating these initiatives was tense relations with Uzbekistan throughout the decade from independence. They were also to a lesser extent motivated by attempts to find counterweights to Russia and Kazakhstan, and bolster an independent Kyrgyz sphere of action. Other sources of insecurity in the decade since independence were grounded in violent developments within Tajikistan and Afghanistan to the south. The Tajik civil war spilled over into Kyrgyz territory, and the Afghan conflict that cast a long shadow over the Pamir Mountains.

As well as overtures to secondary, medium Eurasian powers outside the former USSR, the Akayev regime also tried to stabilize these internal and external challenges with security commitments from all three great powers who have traditionally defined Central Asia as an area of competition. These traditionally consisted of China, Russia and Britain. In the post-colonial

era, the informal inheritor of Britain's global imperial mantle was the USA. Yet Central Asia in the 1991 was virtually the only area of the globe that was *terra incognita* for the American foreign policy establishment. It would take over a decade from the collapse of the USSR for the US to define its interests in the region and act.

Initially Russia and China were the mainstays of Kyrgyz great power support; however by 2002 this was expanded to a *troika* including the United States. The Akayev regime saw fresh geopolitical vistas in the re-engagement of the US in Central Asia following the terrorist attacks in the US of September 2001. For the first time, the US viewed the region not just as a hydrocarbon repository or potential democracy experiment, but also as geo-strategically vital alternate base to the Persian Gulf and to control events in Afghanistan. Its perceived potential role as an incubator for radical Islamic movements also underscored Washington's new-found fascination with the area. Kyrgyzstan is an excellent example of a small state response to the Great Game paradigm of superpower competition in the region via proxy states. In a sense it has tried to shape the game as well as construct its own answers to the challenges.

The institutional context

During his tenure Akayev's handling of foreign policy acquired him the public reputation of being a 'loose cannon.' Criticism from within the state bureaucracy and political opposition portrayed his conduct of foreign policy as impulsive, vacillating and over conciliatory thus damaging the national interest.[4] As elsewhere in the region it is challenging to separate the idiosyncratic presidential impact on foreign policy from the constitutional presidential role in foreign policy as shaped by the system itself. Regime change without orchestration by Moscow

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[4] A consistent theme that emerged when interviewing senior opposition leaders, although suggestions of alternate policies tended to be skimpy.

is an entirely new precedent in Kyrgyzstan, and the new interim presidency that took over in 2005 has yet to establish a sufficient track record.

Yet within the Presidential Administration there is an advisory apparatus to guide the President on foreign relations issues, consisting of a national security advisor together with a small team of between five and eight advisors and assistants, grouped within a unit known as the Foreign Policy Department, coordinating foreign policy matters with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).[5] Askar Aitmatov headed this department before he became Foreign Minister in 2002. His successor after March 2005, Alikbek Djekshenkulov, was previously Kyrgyzstan's ambassador to the OSCE. The proximity to the president and role in guiding policy make this an attractive position for those whose careers seem in the ascendant.

The 1999 Presidential Decree endorsing the primacy of the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry in conducting foreign policy represented an effort to smooth ruffled feathers between the Foreign Ministry and the Presidential Administration over primary responsibility for foreign policy. In wider comparative perspective, Rafis Abazov has argued that such tensions are common among the administrations and independent foreign ministries in Central Asia due to their rapid expansion from small preexisting protocol departments.[6] In the Kyrgyz case, these fissures have been papered over, but it is notable that they have surfaced here too.

Presidential domination of foreign policy is not unusual in states with strong presidencies. However for Kyrgyzstan, a country building a foreign policy from scratch, the drawback is that a limited, small circle of elites in the foreign ministry and presidential apparatus continue to guide, advise and set policy. The interim foreign minister of the post-Akayev 2005 government, one of the leaders of the coup that overthrew him, was also foreign minister for a

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[5] The Prime Minister also has a smaller unit that is similar in function, the *Otdel Mezhdunarodnovo Sotrudnichestva* (Department of International Cooperation).

[6] Rafis Abazov, *The Formation of Post-Soviet International Politics in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan*, The Donald W. Treadgold Papers no. 21, (University of Washington: The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, 1999), 39.

long period in the 1990s. There is little room in this establishment for other views or voices, creating the impression of a lack of transparency. The template for Kyrgyz foreign policy since independence was decisively shaped by the Presidency of Akayev in tandem with a bureaucracy that was tightly controlled by the regime. It will be hard for the new government to alter radically foreign policy institutions and traditions instilled during his tenure.

The Kyrgyz Parliament (*Jogorku Kengesh*) has been sidetracked in its foreign policy power since independence.[7] Parliament has had its authority undermined and circumvented not only by the Akayev regime, but also the bureaucracy. Potential Parliamentary power in foreign affairs diminished as a result of constitutional amendments in 1996 which removed the consultative policy-making role and also extinguished its right to oversee ministerial appointments. The current post-revolutionary debate on undoing much of Akayev's constitutional gerrymandering has yet to address Parliamentary oversight of foreign policy, not a priority area.

The direct foreign policy powers of Parliament under the current constitution limit its role essentially to declaring war and peace. Additional areas that are clearly meant to be under Parliamentary supervision, and that remained unaltered by subsequent amendments under the terms of the 1993 Constitution, include ratification of treaties and, crucially, approval for border changes. Parliament also retains influence upon foreign economic treaties via supervision of the public budget. The Akayev government pushed through a revised constitution in 2003 that tried to create a greater fig leaf of Parliamentary involvement in foreign affairs, for instance by creating a confirmatory role in the appointment of Kyrgyz ambassadors abroad.

Despite truncated powers, after 1996 the *Jogorku Kengesh* made tentative progress in asserting its authority in the foreign policy process, contradicting its image as the rubber-stamp

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[7] *Jogorku Kengesh*, (Kyrgyz), literally 'supreme council.'

body of an authoritarian regime. During the past decade Parliament would occasionally protest when improperly consulted. One contentious area was the right of Parliament to consider and debate treaties prior to Presidential signature. The tendency of Akayev's government to present treaties for endorsement as an afterthought irritated deputies. For instance, Parliamentary ratification of International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans in February 2000 was ex post facto, and the same went for the memorandum of the same year between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan over the Sokh enclave.

The principle forum for review of international affairs in Parliament is the Foreign Relations Committee. Its purview includes accession to new organizations and treaties and watching over the budget of the Foreign Ministry. It also devotes time to forging inter-Parliamentary relations with sister Parliaments of other countries. In this last guise, giving the Kyrgyz Parliament something in common with Parliamentary democracies, it organizes junkets and fact-finding trips abroad for deputies. The *Jorgorku Kengesh* has few sources of advice on foreign policy and the vast majority of deputies have little foreign relations experience. Supporting the Committee is a tiny research unit consisting of three people. In the absence of meaningful independent sources of information for policy debate in the context of weak university departments and think tanks in Kyrgyzstan, Parliament has few alternate sources of advice to seek out other than Russian language media content and literature from the Russian Federation.[8] As debate continues in 2006 as to whether a parliamentary or presidential system of government would better suit Kyrgyzstan in the post-revolutionary context, certainly Parliamentary capacity in foreign affairs would have to be substantially enhanced if taking a more assertive role in directing the country's foreign policy.

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[8] Nurjan Shaildybekova, Research Assistant to the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, interview by author, 12 August 2002, Bishkek.

Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Opened in February 1992, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is central to the fledgling foreign policy establishment navigating the rearrangement of the old order and the arrival of new political institutional arrangements.[9] Dealing with a vastly different series of challenges from the Soviet Foreign Ministry, the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry relies heavily upon tradition in the shape of the organization and in its general approach to policymaking and outlook. In that regard, the MFA may be viewed as a bastion of the old order and somewhat of a paradox. The ministry owing its very existence or at least institutional autonomy to Kyrgyz sovereignty and independence is the institution least-influenced by the post-independence nationalist discourse. The only exception, perhaps, is the ethnic make up of its personnel who are overwhelmingly Kyrgyz.[10]

Unlike many institutions in independent Kyrgyzstan that stress their novelty and innovation, the MFA and its personnel prefer to invoke the past. In an official history the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry emphasized its pedigree as part of the old Soviet Foreign Ministry going back to the 1920s and 1930s.[11] In interviews with Kyrgyz diplomats, 1944 was usually mentioned as the 'real' beginning of a Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry. One diplomat even suggested that the 2003 Government proclamation of 2,200 years of Kyrgyz statehood imbued the organization with an even longer collective memory. The nation-building historiography augments the imperial legacy; the MFA can simultaneously be the incarnation of two millennia of statehood and also partake of the prestigious Soviet heritance.[12]

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[9] In Russian it is the *Ministerstvo Inostranniah Del* (*MID*), in Kyrgyz *Tishki Ishter Ministri, (TIM).*

[10] Efforts to gauge minority representation in the Foreign Ministry were unsuccessful – interviewees either ducked the question or assured me that minorities were well-represented.

[11] Ministerstvo Inostranniah Del, *Istoria Obrazovania Ministerstva Inostranniah Del Kirgizskoi Respublikii, Portal Gosudarstvennix Slujb* (accessed December 10, 2003); available from http://www.gov.kg/cgi-bin/page.pl?id=1129.

[12] Muratbek Azymbekiev, Counselor, Policy Planning Department Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview by author, 04 February 2004, Bishkek.

The Kyrgyz stake their claim to a share of the Soviet diplomatic heritage as much as that of the Russian Federation, and thus draw upon a rich vein of legitimacy, a commodity in short supply in post-Soviet Central Asia. Most other Soviet successors, by contrast, are keen to distance themselves from the past. The Kyrgyz historical synthesis here is interesting to note. The MFA's view is that intermittent Kyrgyz independence of great antiquity was finally submerged in the nineteenth century following annexation by Russia. However the 1917 and 1918 Soviet grants of autonomy to sovereign peoples, beginning with Ukraine and Finland, laid the basis for the subsequent *restoration* of Kyrgyz sovereignty in the 1920s and 1930s.[13] Rather than being an artificial institution for an invented nation, the Foreign Ministry sees itself as part of a statehood renaissance enabled by the Soviets.

The Kyrgyz are absolutely correct in asserting that their Foreign Ministry predates 1991. In 1944 Stalin's lobbying to have all twelve Union Republics included in the United Nations (UN) as a gambit for weighting the nascent supranational entity in its favor led to the creation of mini-foreign ministries in all republics. As with so many Soviet innovations relating to the sovereignty of the republics, a legal-rational precedent created by an authoritarian state as a negotiation chip, and to shape international appearances, would linger in hibernation until 1991.

As a result, local foreign minister positions appeared in all five Central Asian Soviet republics. The Kirghiz SSR Supreme Soviet adopted a law proclaiming the right of the Kirghiz SSR to enter into diplomatic relations, appoint diplomatic representatives and present credentials. Several staff journeyed to Moscow to take courses from Bolshevik diplomatic luminaries such as Maxim Litvinov, showing the seriousness with which the endeavor was regarded in the context of Soviet ideas about training. In spite of these developments, the KSSR Foreign Ministry, lingering until 1991, remained purely ceremonial and without executive

[13] Ministerstvo Inostranniah Del, *Istoria Sozdania MID KR,* 1.

authority. The tiny Foreign Ministry, at most ever consisting of the titular Foreign Minister plus a couple of assistants, was mainly concerned with protocol and visible only on the rare occasions that delegations from developing countries passed through.[14]

The importance of the mini-ministry experiment is that after independence a small but adequate coterie of Kyrgyz bureaucrats trained in the Soviet Foreign Ministry apparatus and exposed to international affairs was available to staff the upper echelons of the independent and expanded foreign ministry. Examples of this handful of not more than a dozen individuals include Muratbek Imanaliev, previously First Secretary of the USSR Embassy in Beijing, and Ishenbay Abdyrazzakov, who was based in the Embassy of the USSR in Tokyo for over a decade. Not all chose to work with the new state. Several Kyrgyz diplomats in the USSR foreign ministry elected to stay on with the Russian Foreign Ministry. The Russian diplomatic service is far bigger, with commensurately more opportunities for advancement. Some preferred not to stay in a CIS bureaucracy at all.

Structure of the Foreign Ministry

The MFA, one of the smaller ministries, is six times smaller than, for instance, the Ministry of the Interior. Including overseas embassies its staff comprises almost three hundred of whom about one third are based abroad in consulates and embassies.[15] Structurally it has evolved along a basic organizational model followed by many foreign ministries worldwide with a division between the home ministry and foreign missions. Departments within the home ministry further subdivide into territorial and functional units.

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[14] Ibid., 11.

[15] This view of the structure of the MFA is based on author interviews with Muratbek Azymbekiev, Counselor, Policy Planning Department, Bishkek, 4 February 2004, and Deputy Foreign Minister Lydia Imanalieva, 6 February 2004, Bishkek.

Functional departments include a Diplomatic Training Academy, a Legal Department, a frontier demarcation and delineation unit, protocol department, department for UN and UN organizations and the Policy Planning Unit. The small Policy Planning Unit is one of the few offices devoted to research and advice, supplying policy recommendations to the Foreign Minister. Territorial departments comprise three main bureaus. One department is devoted to Russia and the CIS. Of the other two, the Western Section is subdivided into desks for North and South America, Western Europe and Africa. An Eastern Department covers China, the Southeast Asian states, Australia and Japan. Personnel within these departments specializing in thematic country groups are small in number. For the entire Middle East there is one desk officer, the same for Southeast Asia. The largest sections are for Russia and also the CIS, itself subdivided into a section focusing on bilateral relations among CIS countries, and another for multilateral relations and the CIS secretariat.

In the late 1990s spurred by a feeling that post-independence Kyrgyz diplomats suffered from a lack of familiarity with the international system, the MFA began modest efforts to offer instruction to Kyrgyz diplomatic personnel in international affairs. In 2000 the Center for the Training and Retraining of Diplomatic Personnel opened as an in-house school offering workshops on regional studies and international relations. The Center is headed by Nurgazy Kemelbaev, a career diplomat and formerly Soviet consul in Nigeria in the 1980s.[16] It struggles with inadequate resources in terms of teaching staff, books and language training.

Overseas Embassies and Consulates

In the early 1990s, Kyrgyzstan's foreign representation was limited to Washington, Moscow and Brussels. The Embassy in Beijing opened in 1993 and, since then, postings

[16] Kemalbaev also has a modest literary reputation for his translations of the Scottish poet Robert Burns into Kyrgyz. Ambassador Nurgazy Kemalbaev, interview by author, February 08 2002, Bishkek.

encompass twenty one cities globally including New Delhi, Kuala Lumpur, Tehran and Tokyo. Significantly, Bishkek has also opened embassies in many CIS and former Soviet States, symptomatic of the shift to bilateralism within the CIS framework rather then relying on the supranational nature of the CIS as an organization itself. Existing representation in Ukraine and Belarus was augmented in the late 1990s by embassies opened in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. This expansion of representation to CIS countries, particularly nearby states, reflected Kyrgyzstan's gradual acceptance that relations with its neighbors would, after all, require a strong bilateral component given the inadequacy of successor multilateral institutions.[17] Labor migration and the need to defend the interests of Kyrgyz workers abroad became an additional reason for expansion of CIS missions. For instance, copious Kyrgyz migrant labor to Russia influenced the decision to open a consulate in the Siberian city of Yekaterinberg in 2000.

Foreign Ministers

Since independence, Kyrgyzstan has witnessed remarkable longevity in foreign minister appointments. The slow turnover has seen policy shifts mirroring the Russian tension between 'Atlanticists,' who view the future of former Soviet States as part of the web of West European, Transatlantic alliances; and 'Eurasianists' who see their foreign policy future as being defined by Russia's gravitational pull toward Asia. Fortunately for Kyrgyzstan, two very talented and experienced individuals have dominated the office since independence: Roza Otunbayeva (1992, 1994-1997, 2005) and Muratbek Imanaliev (1991-1992, 1997-2003) with brief interregna by acting ministers punctuating their succession and alternation in the early years of independence.

[17] This reluctance to establish formal, visible diplomatic missions to near neighbors was mirrored in the tardiness of neighboring countries opening embassies too. The Uzbek embassy in Bishkek finally opened its doors in 2002.

Otunbayeva previously served as the nominal Kirghiz SSR Foreign Minister and was eventually appointed USSR Ambassador to UNESCO. Widely seen as a liberal and a protégé of the Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, she is viewed as having steered Kyrgyz foreign policy in a Western, 'Atlanticist' direction during a tenure that emphasized membership of international organizations and promotion of Kyrgyzstan in the West. Domestically Otunbayeva became identified.with opposition-leaning journalists and intellectuals, provoking the ire of the regime. Otunbayeva was eventually exiled to the ambassadorship in London in 1997, where she remained for several years. Following a brief spell as a senior UN official in the Caucasus she returned to Kyrgyzstan and immersed herself in opposition politics and was prominent in the opposition coalition that overthrew the Akayev regime in 2005. Returning to the Ministry, she again filled the foreign minister position in an acting capacity the post-Akayev interim government; although in September 2005 her confirmation was refused by Parliament. She ignominiously lost her bid for a parliamentary seat in December to a local businessman, proving the post-revolutionary shift in Kyrgyz politics whereby respected technicians could no longer compete with local economic interests; thereby remaining in opposition politics as co-chair of the centrist, southern nationalist Asaba party.

Muratbek Imanaliev was the first Foreign Minister of independent Kyrgyzstan, and returned for a long period in the late 1990s following a spell abroad as Kyrgyzstan's first ambassador to China. Imanaliev's orientation during his second period in office was more firmly inclined to the former Soviet space and to China. While no reactionary, and indeed a Gorbachevian liberal in his political views as well as a major strategist on Kyrgyzstan's geopolitical orientation, he was not pro-Western by inclination. He was one of the few Kyrgyz ministers to voice objections in cabinet to the invitation to American forces into Kyrgyzstan in

2002. He worried that the US presence would upset the delicate great-power balance Kyrgyzstan was trying to forge with Russia and China.[18]

Imanaliev specialized in Chinese studies at university in Moscow and wrote a postgraduate thesis on the history of eighteenth century Kyrgyz-Chinese relations. He speaks fluent Chinese. As a member of the Soviet diplomatic service he was posted to Beijing in the 1980s.[19] This extensive experience led Akayev to ask him to quit the Foreign Minister position to open the Kyrgyz Embassy in Beijing and lay the broad foundations of independent Kyrgyz-Chinese relations, a major preoccupation of the Government since 1991. In 2002 Imanaliev left power along with the rest of the Cabinet in the wake of Aksy. His departure resonated with public opinion angry over the outcome of the Chinese border negotiations and ensuing scandal. His conduct as Foreign Minister was widely portrayed in the media as clouded by Sinophilia. Subsequent to his ouster Imanaliev pursued the time-honored retired diplomat's path of teaching college, founding a think-tank, and dabbling in politics. He also wrote one of the few books on Kyrgyz foreign relations, *Ocherke o Vneshney Politike Kyrgyzstana*, a slim collection of previous newspaper interviews and essays.[20] In 2003 he started a moderate, centrist opposition political party and entered the fray for the 2005 elections. In terms of the evolution of a stated, coherent Kyrgyz foreign policy position Imanaliev has undoubtedly contributed most to the conceptual development of the geopolitics of independent Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy and also to the *Silk Road Doctrine* (discussed below).

[18] Ambassador Muratbek Imanaliev, interview by author, 12 August 2002, Bishkek.

[19] Imanaliev related an anecdote about his being mistaken for a member of the home team due to his fluency in Chinese at state banquets in Beijing when he was Soviet diplomat in the 1980s (ibid., interview by author).

[20] Muratbek Imanaliev, *Ocherki o Vneshney Politike Kirgizstani* (Bishkek: Sabir, 2002).

Foreign Minister from 2002-2005, Askar Aitmatov had been Soviet attaché in the Bonn embassy before 1991.[21] Like Otunbayeva and Imanaliev he was also one of the cadres inherited from the Soviet Foreign Ministry, despite his being no more then a few steps into a Soviet diplomatic career at the time of independence. Prior to becoming Foreign Minister in 2002, he was Akayev's principle advisor on foreign affairs within the Presidential Administration from 1996. Despite differences in policy orientation, they could both be described as career diplomats; civil servants who were essentially apolitical in terms of traditional power structures. Neither Otunbayeva nor Imanaliev possess a real power base in Kyrgyz society due to their clan connections, although both are Northerners like Aitmatov. Their authority rests on their prestigious career reputations forged during the Soviet era as international civil servants. Aitmatov, by contrast, was simply a clan politician and a power broker within an authoritarian regime. His appointment was symptomatic of the weakened Akayev regime's increasing dependence on a small circle of northern notables who lacked the connections and influence to forge broader coalitions with southern and central Kyrgyz political patronage networks. His family had publicly backed the Akayev regime despite a period of fence-sitting in the mid-1990s.

His background in the Presidential Administration might suggest that he would have managed competition with the Foreign Ministry more effectively, since he had the necessary experience in both bureaucracies. Even so, Aitmatov was accused of purging his opponents in the Foreign Ministry who resented his rival influence in foreign policy decision-making while he was acting as Akayev's advisor on foreign policy. An anonymous and vitriolic attack on his Foreign Minister tenure came from the "Letter from a Group of Diplomats" circulated anonymously to, and gleefully reproduced by, several Bishkek newspapers in 2003. It purported to be from unemployed junior cadres who had not been offered assignments following their

[21] The son of Chingiz Aitmatov, a famous Soviet author noted for his novel condemning the de-traditionalization of Central Asian society, *The Day Lasts Longer Than a Thousand Years.*

recall from abroad. The letter alleged that he had engaged in the sale of offices, cut back key positions, including his own father's assistant in Belgium, and pursued vendettas against Foreign Ministry staff opposed to him while he was working in the presidential administration.[22] Other attacks in a similar vein surfaced in the media since then, including a controversy in 2003 over the appointment of his wife as head of the newly-established OSCE Academy in Bishkek.

The attacks were partially a response to budget cutbacks from a nervous bureaucracy as Aitmatov struggled with a shrinking budget and increasing demands. Yet this was also the response of professional diplomats to having a clan politician lead the foreign ministry establishment as opposed to a career diplomat, as well as symptomatic of the weakening control of the regime in its latter phase. Aitmatov junior was certainly a controversial figure. His essentially authoritarian outlook was suspicious of US democratization efforts in the region and he viewed foreign relations in pragmatic *realpolitik* terms.[23] While firmly in the Eurasianist school of preferring close links with Russia and China over the United States, the opportunity to divert the US from an ideologically-motivated democratization campaign in Kyrgyzstan largely determined his pragmatic support for the 2002 establishment of the American airbase.

A quondam member of Akayevs's inner circle, Alikbek Jekshenkulov, became next foreign minister in 2006. He was formerly a close advisor to Akayev and even his ambassador to the OSCE, and is widely known as an influential player in Kyrgyz politics with wide-ranging northern clan connections to draw upon. Jekshenkulov confirmed the pre-revolutionary trend of the politicization of the foreign minister position, contrasting the 'civil servant' model of Imanaliev and Otunbayeva. Despite revolution this trend looks set to continue and might be symptomatic of the growing political value of the foreign ministry and thus, hopefully, eventually sparking political debate about foreign policy.

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[22] Letter from Group of Diplomats, Pismo Gruppi Diplomatov Napravlennoe Na Dnyax v Dom Pravitelistva (Bishkek: 10 February 2003).

[23] Ambassador Askar Aitmatov, interview by author, 11 December 1999, Bishkek.

Ambassadors

There were several trends visible in ambassadorial appointments abroad during the Akayev regime. One particular direction was the appointment of people from the arts or literature as ambassadors, clearly with the aim of profile-raising and publicizing Kyrgyzstan. An example was the former Ambassador to Turkey, a film-director of international repute, Tolomush Okeev. Another is the continued assignment of the Soviet literary giant, Chingiz Aitmatov, as Ambassador to Luxembourg, Belgium and the EU. As one of the more obscure countries to emerge from the USSR, Kyrgyz elites keenly feel the need to popularize Kyrgyzstan and so appoint celebrities prominent in the old Soviet cultural elite who may be internationally known. This trend looks set to continue, as the new Kyrgyz ambassador-designate to the US in 2005, Zamira Sadykova, is a prominent opposition newspaper editor – although an old associate of Otunbayeva.

Aside from career diplomats, the Kyrgyz ambassador corps has many members with academic or technocratic backgrounds outside of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Kyrgyz successor. They were sometimes connected to the previous regime through acquaintance with Akayev in his academic career in the 1980s. The connection to academia is accentuated by the Kyrgyz political tradition for rising politicians, civil servants and senior public figures to become university rectors or department/institute chairs during career lacuna. Bakytbek Abdrisaev, Ambassador to the US from 1994-2005, was a physicist and colleague of Akayev during his university years. Following the revolution he fled into internal exile in the USA becoming an instructor at a community college in Iowa. Another example of this species would be Askar Sarigulov, the previous Ambassador to Germany. An economist with a background in *Gosplan* and working in 1989 at Kyrgyz State University, he became an advisor on foreign investment to the President in 1992. He then joined the EBRD in the mid 1990s, before his

subsequent appointment as Ambassador to Germany in 2003. Omurbek Sultanov, a history professor at Moscow State University from 1984-1990, after a spell on the Presidential Administration Foreign Policy Department became Ambassador to Germany, Austria and finally the Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the UN in Geneva.

The ambassadorship was also used by the Akayev regime quite often as an oubliette to distance people beginning to present an inconvenient potential or actual challenge to the regime, but too powerful or popular against whom to deploy the usual mechanism of judicial persecution. As we saw, Otunbayeva, following her ouster as Foreign Minister in 1997, was posted to London, a safe distance from an official Bishkek increasingly vexed by her fashionably liberal anti-establishment connections and outspoken views on human rights issues. The prior ambassador to India, Bakyt Beshimov, formerly a popular and highly respected Rector of Osh State University, was forced into exile in 1999 because the regime felt he was engaged in building a power base in Osh. A less-talented placeman was appointed in his stead at Osh State.

In November 2004, with politicking for the elections planned in February 2005 heating up, the ancien regime attempted to exclude former ambassadors from running as presidential and Parliamentary candidates. The problem with the ambassadorship as oubliette is that individuals eventually return. The government asserted that several ex-diplomats prominent in opposition politics, including Roza Otunbayeva and two other former ambassadors, could not stand as candidates in elections because their absence from the country for an extended period prior to running invoked an obscure constitutional provision that candidates must be resident of Kyrgyzstan. Imanaliev, himself running for office, led the counter-attack with the crushing retort that, as far as he was aware, Kyrgyz embassies abroad were Kyrgyz territory. The Kyrgyz Supreme Court, in a rare burst of judicial independence, overturned the government move on appeal. Despite this the Akayev regime excluded irksome ambassadorial candidates from the

February 2005 Parliamentary elections by various creative technicalities in the electoral registration process.

The generation gap

While the upper echelons of the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry are shaped by cadres forged in the smithy of the Soviet foreign affairs apparatus, the middle levels and junior staff present an interesting institutional change illustrative of bureaucratic evolution in the newly independent small states in the former Soviet Union. In the MFA there is a widening gulf separating those senior people whose careers were largely spent working in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, those with a foot both in the Soviet era and independence, and finally most junior cadres entering the Ministry from an entirely Kyrgyzstani educational background. The average age of a foreign ministry employee, according to Muratbek Azymbakiev, Counselor in the Policy Planning Department, is just thirty.[24]

Another aspect is that the career experience of those inherited from the *ancien regime* was essentially meritocratic and competitive. In the climate of rent-seeking and clan politics predominating in contemporary Kyrgyzstan, it is difficult to see how meritocratic access to a Foreign Ministry career can be maintained. Junior staff are shaped by a very different educational experience from their elders. Some have had privileged access to training at western colleges due to foreign exchange programs or wealthy family connections. Others have influential connections but substandard educations obtained locally. Although the MFA is a very young institution in human resource terms, youth does not always translate into superior qualifications or a more liberal outlook then that of the old guard. Cholponkulova, for instance,

[24] Azymbakiev interview. Azymbakiev is a good example of those with a foot in both eras – graduating from Moscow State University, he left graduate studies there in 1991 to join the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry, subsequently working in various postings from the UN Mission in New York to the Embassy in Moscow and now heads the Policy Planning Unit.

has critiqued the absence of open public exams for entry to the Foreign Service and, although entry and subsequent promotion is supposedly based on merit, the lack of formal structures could negatively affect the MFA in future.[25]

The sources of Kyrgyz foreign policy

By the late 1990s the Akayev regime began to systematize thinking on foreign policy in a more strategic manner then simply putting efforts into maintaining Soviet era international agreements, forging numerous bilateral relationships or relying on the coordinating role of the Foreign Ministry in foreign policy matters. The period immediately after independence focused on institution-building and reliance upon breathing life into regional institutions essentially as a stop gap measure to buy time while nursing the MFA and policy apparatus to a stage where they could manage the challenges of rebuilding a regional state system. Since then however, there were several attempts by the Akayev regime to articulate the broad parameters of foreign policy in Kyrgyzstan.

It can be argued that these codifications were largely symbolic, given the pragmatic inclination of many foreign policy actors in Kyrgyzstan. On the other hand, specific declarations and sources were frequently referred to by Akayevite foreign policy actors, and are often quoted in public discourse. In that sense they can be seen has having a genuine impact on the thinking of contemporary external affairs officials in Kyrgyzstan. At the very least, they form the backdrop of consciousness even if they are too inchoate to support a well-fleshed out road map. Officially the established founding documents of Kyrgyz foreign policy include the Declaration of Sovereignty, the 1993 Constitution, the 1997 Presidential Decree confirming the coordinating

[25] Aynura Cholponkulova, *Kontitutsionnye Osnovi Bneshepolitichesni Deyatl'nosti Kyrgyzskoi Republiki (Bishkek: Biyiktik, 2000)*, 144.

role of the MFA in foreign policy and the 1999 *Diplomacy of the Silk Road Doctrine*.[26] The 2002 Presidential Speech on Foreign Affairs is a key foreign policy statement. The Bakiev regime has distanced itself from the marketing of these ideas – the *Sik Road Doctrine* as a label has been rapidly ditched due to its identification with the Akayev years, but the substance remains largely unaltered, at least yet, although it is too soon to assess how far this might change.

The most publicized and oft-cited foreign policy statement in Kyrgyzstan is the *Doctrine of Silk Road Diplomacy* (*Jibek Jolu Diplomatiasi Jonundo Doktrinasi)*. It was been translated in several languages, including English, and is widely accessible on several Kyrgyz government and related web sites as the official foreign policy doctrine of the country.[27] The Silk Road Doctrine, most probably a collective effort worked on by Imanaliev and Aitmatov as well as Akayev himself, sets forth a series of guiding principles around which Kyrgyz foreign policy is conducted. Since it was closely identified with the personage of Akayev himself, it will doubtless be revamped by the new regime, although it is unlikely, for reasons we have discussed above, to be completely abandoned. Broadly speaking this brief statement, no more than thirteen pages, argued for the restoration of the Silk Road as a mechanism to bind Kyrgyzstan regionally to other parts of Eurasia and the former Soviet Union. It also committed the country to a multilateral foreign policy founded on regional cooperation and collective action. Kyrgyzstan is a microcosm of the Silk Road, the Doctrine argued, due its peaceful multi ethnic character; at once European and Asian. This imbued it with: "the rich spiritual heritage of the East and the West." [28] The *Silk Road Doctrine* was held up by the Akayev regime as the international equivalent of the "Kyrgyzstan – Our Common Home" Doctrine (*Nash Obshii Dom*). The

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[26] Lidya Imanalieva, "Tishki Siyasat", in *Kyrgyzstan Entsiklopediasi*, (Bishkek: Mamlakettik Til jana Entsiklopedia Borboru, 2001), 252.

[27] The version I consulted for the purposes of this discussion is a print edition available in English: Askar Akayev, *the Diplomacy of the Silk Road (A Foreign Policy Doctrine)*, (New York: Global Scholarly Publications, 2004).

[28] Akayev, *Silk Road Doctrine*, 4.

interethnic harmony flowing from this policy, it was argued, renders Kyrgyzstan a keystone in the Silk Road mosaic.[29]

Kyrgyzstan's commitment to collective action, the Doctrine further advocated, was necessitated by the common cultural heritage with its immediate neighbors, but also by a shared stance against "extremism," narcotics trafficking and terrorism.[30] Kyrgyz potential to forge linkages with South East Asia on one side and Europe, broadly defined, on the other made it a valuable bridge. In the Doctrine, the nation's disadvantages yielded only positive possibilities. As a poor country Kyrgyzstan could contribute to collective diplomacy in the wider bloc of developing nations. As a land-locked developing country it even had an imperative to try and connect to the maritime Asian periphery, echoing Mongolian efforts in the 1990s to find a secure route to the sea. From a security perspective, the Silk Road Doctrine committed Kyrgyzstan to dismantle defense-related industries and the legacy of uranium production and processing.[31]

These broad ideas articulated the driving force behind Kyrgyz foreign policy efforts to 2005. Regional stability was necessary to reintegrate Kyrgyzstan and her neighbors into the Eurasian economic system, more broadly imagined here than simply the former Soviet space. Only this could help Kyrgyzstan and the region overcome the litany of transnational challenges facing them such as narcotic and human trafficking, terrorism and natural disasters. At the same time, the Doctrine recognized that the "single whole" that used to characterize the "common historical, political, economic…links" with neighboring countries now had to be replaced by a fresh network of bilateral and multilateral relations. This engendered the document's firm ongoing commitment to the CIS and search for regional integration.[32]

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[29] Ibid., 4.

[30] Ibid., 3.

[31] Ibid., 6.

[32] Ibid., 7. This was contradicted by Kyrgyz moves in 2003 and 2004 to resume uranium processing in partnership with Russia and Germany, and its overtures to reopen mothballed defense plants in tandem with the Russian Ministry of Defense in 2004.

The *Doctrine of the Silk Road* is unlikely to be much-remembered outside of Kyrgyzstan as a key foreign policy statement of the late twentieth century, couched as it is in the platitudinous and turgid language of Soviet diplomatic statements. However, it represented an effort by the Akayev regime to try to articulate the broader philosophical framework behind a foreign policy, the perceived absence of which had attracted domestic criticism. In a sense the government riposte was that broad regional goals are exactly what Kyrgyz policy strived for. Certainly, appealing to a common regional heritage via invoking the glories of the ancient Silk Road seem more likely to motivate and conciliate her near neighbors than appeals to other commonalities such as their Soviet, Islamic or Turco-Persian heritage. Simultaneously it also conveniently allowed for the inclusion of non-Soviet neighbors who were also more-or-less part of the ancient trade route; China, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and India.

Along with the rallying cry of reconstructing the Silk Road went a firm commitment in the Doctrine to the maintenance of sovereignty. One plank in particular emphasized equitable partnership and the idea of territorial integrity and the sanctity of borders – a frank expression of Kyrgyzstan's concern at being enmeshed in complex border disputes with all of her neighbors simultaneously since 1991. Underlying this stress on sovereignty was an old fashioned balance-of-power argument; that stated a regional subsystem needed to be kept in some form of equilibrium. In the Kyrgyz foreign policy view, this was to be supplied by economic interdependence and in mutual security and diplomacy.

The *Silk Road Doctrine* was oft trumpeted by the Akayev regime and prefaced most official foreign policy pronouncements, but it is not alone. Published in Russian and Kyrgyz and unnoticed by foreign analysts was Akayev's *Address to Parliament*, 7 May 2002. This was a long foreign policy speech outlining the justification for Kyrgyztsan's participation in the Anti-

terrorist coalition in 2002 and the subsequent leasing of an airbase to the American military.[33] There the regime presented a well-thought out exposition of how its admission of US and Anti-Terror Coalition forces in 2002 was, from its viewpoint, a logical continuation of previous foreign policy. It clarified that these recent events did not, in fact, indicate a Kyrgyz move away from the orbit of Russia and the CIS. Furthermore, the speech deftly tried to tie Kyrgyzstan's involvement in the Coalition directly with relations with China, and present all as part of the same coherent package.

The timing of the speech is highly significant. In May of 2002 the regime was facing an intense domestic scandal played out in the press, political demonstrations and protests, due to revelations concerning border transfers to China following a secret deal unapproved by Parliament. This had become further wrapped up in a domestic political conflict wherein the leader of the opposition Asaba Party, Beknazarov, led protests regarding the territorial settlement supported by his southern constituents. The supposed cession to China of parcels of territory in the east of the country was thought by many to foreshadow possible further concessions to Uzbekistan.

Many discontented Kyrgyz agreed with this sentiment that the government was not being aggressive enough in border negotiations. In 2002 in allowing the US to lease an airbase, the regime needed to counter the popular perception in Kyrgyzstan that this represented a major foreign policy shift. Yet it also had to cope with the consequences that this other major foreign policy crisis might have on relations with China and the recent frontier agreements. The two crises seemed set to bring down the government, who feared common cause between opponents of the US airbase and those protesting cession of territory.

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[33] Askar Akayev, *Kyrgyzstan Özgörülgön Düynödö: Kyrgyz Respublikasının Prezidenti Askar Akayevdin Kyrgyz Respublikasının Jogorku Kengeshinin Kosh Palatasının Birgeleshken Jıyınında Süylögön Sözü (7 Mai 2002 Jil)*, (Bishkek: Uchkun, 2002).

The speech attempted to clarify Kyrgyzstan's role in the Afghanistan Coalition, and ventured to address Government action over the 2002 Aksy massacre, where demonstrators protested the arrest of a deputy who had spearheaded the opposition response to regime evasion frontier negotiation details. Akayev argued that his handling of relations with China over the border agreements had been an integral part of an emerging foreign policy strategy. As such this claim illustrates very well how the trends discussed above were beginning to gel into a roadmap for Kyrgyz foreign policy elites for handling major international crises that impinged directly on Kyrgyzstan's security. The speech advanced several important thematic arguments for Kyrgyzstan's participation in the coalition.

The address stressed that Kyrgyzstan's membership in the Coalition occurred in full consultation with, and assent of, Russia and her regional partners. Akayev noted that even prior to the September 2001 events that struck the US, Russia and Kyrgyzstan were already struggling against terrorism from an unstable south. Russia had grappled with Chechnya, and Kyrgyzstan combated terror that emanated from Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan would continue to be a "reliable regional partner" for Russia, holding fast to strategic declarations of friendship and partnership.[34] The speech carefully implied the timing of Kyrgyzstan's decision to join the coalition as being in lockstep with Russian encouragement to do so.

Russia aside, Akayev argued that Kyrgyzstan's participation in the Coalition represented a logical continuation of her lone anti-terror efforts that had been pointedly ignored by the international community before the events of September 2001.[35] This is symptomatic of the bitter memories Kyrgyz leaders had of the lukewarm international response garnered from the West, as well as the CIS, following their appeals for aid when they were battling southern incursions from elements of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in 1999 and 2000 from

[34] Akayev, *Kyrgyzstan B Izmeniyshemsia Mire,* 18.
[35] Ibid., 17.

Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The next strand interpolated through the sixteen page speech was that an active Kyrgyzstan would serve as a conduit to involve her new friend and strategic great power partner China in the Afghan Coalition. Akayev argued that China was the missing piece in two existing vectors of Kyrgyz foreign policy. Bishkek's good offices and partnership with China would in turn help the Coalition enlist China, contiguous to Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan, in balancing the Afghan equation.[36]

Lending substance to these foreign policy initiatives with reference to the *Silk Road Doctrine*, Akayev argued that the pre-existing doctrine perfectly suited the new international circumstances. This further validated Kyrgyzstan's decision to become part of the Coalition.[37] The speech represented a remarkable effort to lend coherency to the twists and turns of Kyrgyz foreign policy in the 1990s. It rationalized the decision to join the Coalition as a logical continuation of, rather than a massive shift in, Kyrgyz foreign policy direction. The *Silk Road Doctrine* could soldier on unchallenged as the lodestar of the Kyrgyz foreign policy map. Its agenda would be all the better served for the increased amount of foreign aid that Kyrgyzstan would receive and her improved international profile in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy.

The immense significance of this speech lay in the elements mustered in the argument. The idea of a great power triage of the US, Russia and China as the necessary world power triangulation in Kyrgyz affairs is a frank statement of the use of great power involvement in order to underpin Kyrgyz sovereignty and rebuild the regional state system. The assertion that the *Diplomacy of the Silk Road Doctrine* supplied a pre-existing framework for addressing the emergent security landscape in Central Asia showed an effort to view Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy challenges in the context of some sort of roadmap. The opportunities for Kyrgyzstan to

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[36] Ibid., 20.
[37] Ibid., 20.

raise its international profile as a prominent regional small state presaged her aims as become a small but important part of a regional security area stabilized by great power involvement.

The external ethnie and nation building

As we have seen, Kyrgyz foreign policy relies heavily on Soviet and small state views of the world, but rare is the content that is overtly ‘nationalist’ in Kyrgyz foreign policy behavior. An exception may be seen in foreign policy toward ethnic Kyrgyz historically sited outside of the state. Another very recent development, sited in the labor migrant diaspora, is the growth of a muscular diaspora group, *Zamandash* perhaps the best-organized of any of the Central Asian communities, and which, given its intrinsically external nature, has been a novel source of Kyrgyzstan viewed by Kyrgyz from the outside in – in other words, the first faltering steps to public discourse on foreign policy.

Out of the three Central Asian states built on a nomadic titular nationality Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan both opted during the 1990s to encourage expatriates to relocate in the nation state since independence albeit with differing degrees of intensity.[38] As a foreign policy it had the strongest connection to nation-building efforts short of irredentism, the reverse action. In the Kyrgyz case the policy stayed in the background of nation building efforts and can be traced back to the optimistic phase of independence back in the early 1990s.

Since 1991 Kazakhstan followed an unofficial policy of resettling ethnic Kazakhs, particularly from western Mongolia, in north Kazakhstan. This policy was a very overt act of nation-building designed to do two things. One aim was simply to increase the number of ethnic Kazakhs in the north of the country, the main area where Kazakhs are a minority. The other, ancillary, objective was to expose the Kazakhs to authentic “outside” Kazakhs untainted by the

[38] Turkmenistan, the third nomadic state, followed the Uzbek capsule state pattern of discouraging in-migration from ethnic Turkmen in surrounding states.

Soviet experience. These tended to maintain a very traditional lifestyle, and speak only Kazakh. This has been done in other countries at other times. An example is the resettlement of Gaelic speakers from western Ireland into the central midland counties under De Valera in the 1930s. Thus the "pure" strain of the ethnie would rekindle the use of the Kazakh language and pre-Soviet customs. Large numbers of ethnic Kazakhs did resettle in Kazakhstan, particularly from Mongolia (and China, where a sudden population exchange had left many ethnic Kazakhs on the wrong side of the border in the 1960s). But the resettlement policy was unsuccessful. In-comers were viewed with hostility by all parts of the local communities. The minorities correctly saw through the demographic game played by the government thus intensifying pressure on Astana to repackage itself as a net defender of non-titular rights. Resident Kazakhs also viewed their repatriated kin as odd throwbacks with rural mannerisms suitable for inclusion in museums and cultural events but not as neighbors.

The Akayev regime flirted with exactly the same sort of policy but in a very limited fashion and only sporadically since 1991. In part this can be explained by the fact that resettlement and relocation requires economic resources that the cash-strapped Kyrgyz state simply does not have. More broadly though, the soft-pedaling of Kyrgyz initiatives in this regard were consistent with the government's general approach of maintaining its credentials with Kyrgyz nationalists while in reality not wanting to upset minorities. For this reason the government allowed in ethnic Kyrgyz caught in political instability in nearby states yet shied clear of explicitly promoting in-migration from ethnic Kyrgyz from elsewhere as a nation-building initiative, despite a department within the MFA devoted to diaspora affairs. Kyrgyz outside of Kyrgyzstan elsewhere in Central Asia are principally found in Xinjiang (c. 200,000), Afghanistan (c. 1500), and Eastern Uzbekistan (60,000 according to the Uzbek government,

160,000 according to the Kyrgyz government), and finally the Ngorno-Badakhshan oblast of Tajikistan (c. 80,000).[39]

While a government immigration fund was set up in 2001 to help ethnic Kyrgyz coming to Kyrgyzstan as a result of the Tajik civil war, there have been virtually no efforts made by Bishkek to promote relocation from Kyrgyz populations in China or Uzbekistan. In both cases, these are powerful neighbors who would be very threatened by such a policy. Uzbekistan pursues a policy of assimilation with its ethnic Kyrgyz; possible given the proximity of Uzbek to Kyrgyz culture and language. China, with a minority nationalities policy not dissimilar to the former Soviet Union, assigned the main pocket of Kyrgyz habitation its own territorially-based oblast. Any encouragement of Chinese Kyrgyz to join Kyrgyzstan would be uncomfortably close to a territorial demand, unthinkable for Bishkek.

The Akayev government focused on resettling Kyrgyz Tajik and Afghan Kyrgyz refugees (c. 13,000 in total) in Kyrgyzstan. Since 1991 it naturalized over 5,000 of the 12,000 or so ethnic Kyrgyz seeking refuge.[40] In 2002 the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry distributed guidebooks about migration to Kyrgyzstan among ethnic Kyrgyz in northern Tajikistan. This was probably aimed as a reassurance to them that they had the option in event of deteriorating conditions locally. Kyrgyz resident in Tajikistan also have special privileges in crossing the border and have the right to attend Kyrgyz schools and universities. While approximately 12,400 Kyrgyz entered Kyrgyzstan as refugees during the Tajik Civil War, the Akayev government did not encourage blanket resettlement of all and gave assistance for the repatriation of some back to the Gnorno-Badakhshan border districts. Kyrgyz villages in disputed regions of the Uzbek Ferghana have petitioned to be allowed to join Kyrgyzstan, providing ammunition to offset Uzbek counter

[39] Figures are usually imprecise given the politicization of the figures. See for example International Organization on Migration, *Return and Reintegration of Ethnic Kyrgyz* (accessed May 10 2004); available from http://www.iom.elcat.kg/ethnickyrgyz.htm

[40] Times of Central Asia, "Kyrgyzstan: Repatriated Kyrgyz Counted," *Times of Central Asia* February 24, 2005 and IRIN, "Tajik Refugees Celebrate Naturalization," *IRINnews* June 21, 2004.

claims and making it desirable for the state to encourage the external group to remain in situ in the case of bordering states.

The Kyrgyz in China by contrast became a motif in nation-building that drew upon the legacy of the 1916 uprising and the flight of many Kyrgyz to China at that time. Among nationalists it was popularly supposed that the Kyrgyz émigré community in Xinjiang, unexposed to Russification and Sovietization after 1922, constituted a purer time capsule of the ethnos. That the Kyrgyz community in China was itself exposed to a vigorous Chinese equivalent of Soviet nationality policy from 1958 seems not to have occurred to the purists. Various words that continued to exist in Xinjiang Kyrgyz were readopted in Kyrgyzstan. For instance the names of the month, (e.g. *Birdin ay* instead of the Russian *Fevral*). The (re) introductions were never popular though, and have not caught on outside of the official lexicon. Kyrgyz officials have been publicly careful to stress the satisfactory situation of the Kyrgyz in Xinjiang and China's respect and encouragement for their cultural rights.[41]

Afghan Kyrgyz surface in media discussions of resettlement initiatives from time to time, but only a few dozen families have been relocated in the Osh oblast. A large portion of the Kyrgyz in Afghanistan are thought to have resettled in Turkey in the early 1980s.[42] Continued political instability in Afghanistan keeps the subject of the remaining 2,000 or so Afghan Kyrgyz of peripatetic interest to the Kyrgyz press.[43] In a limited way the Akayev government tried to act on their behalf. Kuban Mambetaliev recounted the Kyrgyz UN Delegation in Geneva working

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[41] For instance, Imanaliev in an interview while he was serving as Ambassador to China, was careful to extol the way in which Xinjiang Kyrgyz had high administrative office, and also that China had recognized the Manas epos as one of its national literary treasures. Muratbek Imanaliev, *Ocherki o Vneshney Politike Kirgizstani* (Bishkek: Sabir, 2002), 50.

[42] 3,000 were displaced by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, fleeing to Pakistan, and were relocated to Turkey in 1983 after a scheme to settle them in Alaska fell through. M.N. Shahrani, "Afghanistan's Kirghiz in Turkey," *Cultural Survival* 8, no. 1 (1983).

[43] See for example Kuban Membetaliev, "Afgan Kyrgyzdarinin Tagdiri," in *Kyrgyz Tuusu*, 7-10 April 2000, 13.

behind the scenes for their amelioration.[44] Their resettlement in Osh, as opposed to the northern Chuy location for most Tajik Kyrgyz, might have indicated an attempt to change the delicate ethnic balance in the Osh oblast. Yet the numbers of Afghan Kyrgyz resettled were simply too few to have a serious impact.[45]

Overall, it is hard to find instances in Kyrgyz foreign policy that directly assist a nation-building agenda that is much more visible in areas of domestic policy such as education. The repatriation of ethnic kin in the Kyrgyz case is illustrative of reluctant efforts, motivated probably by genuine curiosity about and concern for the external Kyrgyz but not consciously part of a strategy as in neighboring Kazakhstan. I suggest that this is partially due to the small state agenda that Kyrgyzstan has adopted, but also crucially that the source of legitimacy and inspiration for the Kyrgyz foreign policy establishment is firmly in the old order. Language policy, education, and access to jobs were all arenas open to acquisition with the empowerment of the titular nationality in 1991, but they already owned the foreign ministry.

Foreign Policy in the post Akayev era

In the near decade and half after independence we see the formation of a foreign policy establishment that strongly resembles its Soviet precursor in miniature with some concessions to the needs of a small state template and Kyrgyzstan's continuing imperative to contain Uzbekistan. The unexpected early ejection of Akayev by an ill-prepared opposition that had, as we have seen, little in the way of independent foreign policy views anyway and certainly not enough time to improvise a platform in the shocking celerity of their ascent to office. Opposition movements that sweep authoritarian regimes from power are soon judged by the standards they

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[44] Ibid.

[45] For instance Imanaliev, the former foreign minister, was skeptical saying that most vacant land happened to be in the south. Ambassador Muratbek Imanaliev, interview by author, 15 August 2002, Bishkek.

were protesting against. In foreign policy the opposition, such as it was, because of this vacuum had actually voiced little dissent with Akayev's initiatives such as for example establishing the Coalition airbase at Manas and its Russian twin at Kant. Foreign contacts with the United States and Russia before the March Risorgimento were aimed to reassure each that there would be NO changes in external orientation if the opposition took power.

In this sense there are few public expectations about the implementation of a radically different foreign policy waiting to be fulfilled, and an opposition took power whose laissez faire approach to foreign policy gelled nicely with the conservatism of the foreign policy establishment. Foreign policy issues played little role in the post-revolutionary debates during the presidential elections in July 2005. A campaign leaflet for Bakiev picked up by the author in Osh at the time typified the debate on policy by its few skimpy references to increasing foreign aid under a foreign economic relations section. There have been few post-revolutionary departures from the Kyrgyz foreign policy toolkit as evolved during the Akayev years. The growing proximity of Bishkek to Russia in military and economic terms has in fact been intensifying since the late 1990s, and it could even be argued that the admission of American forces in 2002 was partially attractive to Bishkek in the hope that it would act as a catalyst to greater Russian commitment to Kyrgyzstan, reversing their military withdrawal from the country of the previous decade. The altered strategic situation in Uzbekistan following the American eviction from Termez has certainly tempted Bishkek to exert greater rent for the Manas airbase, as evidenced by the hundredfold increase suggested by the government in January 2006, but a definite rift in US-Kyrgyz relations has yet to occur.

The Uzbek government slaughter of protestors in the city of Andijan in May 2005 led to many survivors fleeing on foot to the supposed safety of the Osh and Jalalabat oblasts of nearby Kyrgyzstan, where many ended up in a hurriedly improvised refugee camp. Even before an

election, the interim government found itself sandwiched between the ire of Tashkent, apoplectic at Kyrgyz succor to a group they characterized as terrorists and extremists, and mounting concern of the international community. American and European admonishments to Bishkek to respect international law became sterner, even to the point where Washington threatened Bishkek with reprisals, allowing Bishkek in turn to blame international pressure for defying Tashkent's wishes. The dictate of the Kyrgyz foreign policy template, to appease Uzbekistan while practically strengthening international commitment to contain the Tashkent regime was followed to the letter. Several token hapless refugees were returned, and eventually Bishkek skillfully brokered the transfer of the remainder to third parties under UN auspices, something that had been done before in the case of Tajik and Afghan refugees.

The interim government following the revolution was also challenged by the need to find something to legitimize itself other than its obviously sketchy revolutionary Initially, Bakiev dumped much of the Akaevite nationalist sloganeering in favor of neutral messages about the beauty of Kyrgyzstan. In disassociating itself form the Akayev precursor, it had to distance itself from the "Common Homeland" ideology along with the complimentary foreign policy 'Silkroad Doctrine." Yet what would step forward to plug the gap? Many of the southerners in Bakiev's new government were more openly 'nationalist' than had been the previous regime, and were unlikely to be satisfied with civic nationalism, especially since civic nationalism had been associated with the northern rule of Akayev who was supported by minorities in the Chuy and Issik Kul oblasts. While the Bakiev regime had definite impulses to bring Kyrgyzstan closer to Russia and discussed the possibility of allowing dual nationality with Russia, a CIS directed neo-Sovietism might alienate key southern supporters.

Later in December 2005 an official working group formed to begin reworking national ideology, chaired by State Secretary Dastan Sarygulov, an eccentric adherent of an elemental

vision of pre-Islamic Kyrgyz identity known as "Tengrianity." Although Saryguolv's voice is one of many in the council, he is seen as influential, and the ideology of his foundation, *Tengir Ordo,* may well influence the final recommendations of the state committee replacing Akayev's Soviet-inspired pseudo-civic nationalism and its external component. The working group also includes more moderate voices such as Edil Basailov and Muratbek Imanaliev, but plenty of radicals too, such as Topchubek Turganaliev as well as Abdygany Erkebaev of the National Academy of Sciences.[46]

Tengrianity is rooted in a shamanistic mysticism that promotes the idea of an overarching deity.[47] An ancient belief system rather than a religion, it centers on spiritual power of nature and the natural world, perhaps reflected in the new government's promotion of national unity through appreciation of Kyrgyzstan's natural landscape in billboards around Bishkek over the summer of 2005. It advances the supposed nomadic, Turkic idea of electing leaders, although there is also a definite anti-parliamentarian critique inherent in rejecting the 'cult of law.'[48] As with the Akayevite enumeration of lists of inspiring Manas virtues for the Kyrgyz side of the civic nationalist coin, Tengrianity suggests a list of ten vices to be avoided, all the antithesis of tolerance and inclusion.[49]

As with Akaevite attempts to sell civic nationalism it is loosely suggested enough to really accommodate any viewpoint without specifically espousing any. None of the ideas of Tenrgrianity would really offend the Moslem community, although discussions of Islam remain largely absent from the discourse. In that way, Tengrianity is safe, and a preferred discourse of post-Soviet elite fears about the lurking danger of Islam in society. While rooted in ideas about

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[46] As reported by AKIpress, *A new concept of state and national ideology should be prepared by February*, Akipress, January 06 2006.

[47] Dastan Sarygulov, *Tengrianity as a Worldview and Lifestyle of the Altaic People in the Context of Global Problems of Modernity*, paper presented at the 46th meeting of the permanent international Altaic conference, Ankara Turkey, June 22-27 2003.

[48] Ibid., 7.

[49] Ibid., 5.

the pre-modern Kyrgyz and Kazakhs nomads, it is only "Pan Turkist," in the sense of claiming broad Turkic and Altaic unity with ancient cultures such as the Sumerians and Etruscans – a direction more reminiscent of Kemalism in Turkey and its attempt to anchor itself in place than in other Pan-Turkist discourses.[50] Ultimately, while the suggestion of Tengrianity sounds very mild one danger might lie in perceptions anyway of the ideology as Pan-Turkist or Pan-Turanianist, especially in terms of its reception by Russia. Sarygulov has also attempted to suggest a development path based on Tengrianity.[51] In general, whatever replaces the first Akayevite articulation of the national idea, the Bakiev regime is, potentially, no less nationalistic than its predecessor. A commitment to the civic nationalist-inspired Silk Road Doctrine by another name has yet to emerge.

Policy aside, personnel were more affected by the collapse of the regime. Foreign affairs jobs, an elite proposition anywhere, were staffed by many with close links to the Akayev political establishment. Such positions are in any case traditional spoils of the victor and it was inevitable that the new government would want trusted people in senior positions. Several Ambassadors noted for their proximity to the inner Akayev circles were quickly replaced or did not linger – most notably the Akayevite Ambassadors to the US and to Germany.[52] In the US Abdrisaev was replaced by Zamira Sadykova, a close associate of Otunbayeva and a newspaper editor sympathetically already known to the few in Washington Kyrgyzstan cognizant as martyred at the hands of Akayev. A draw back was that Sadykova did not speak English well and had little foreign affairs experience, but appointments of public figures from other sectors as ambassadors was in any case hardly unprecedented since 1991. Punitive reshuffles did not spare the lower echelons – for example in July 2005 a junior staffer at a western embassy was recalled

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[50] Ibid,.6.

[51] See Ulut Ordo Soviet Starayshii, *Programma Duxovnovo, Napravstbennovo, Sotsialinovo i Ekonomiichovo Vozrodjeyniya i Obnovleniya Narodna Kirgizstana i Kirgizskoi Respubliki,* Bishkek: TAS, 2005.

[52] Abdrisaev, with exquisite timing, defended Akayev in a speech to the National Press Club, Washington DC on March 25 2005.

two years early with no reason given. The individual concerned believes this is due to a previous assignment with, and thus unwelcome association with, Meerim Akayeva, the former President's wife. At the same time, arguably these purges have been limited by the small number of realistic alternates with the experience necessary to run the foreign ministry.

Will we see any challenges from outside the establishment to the direction of policy? Two areas might be more public participation in the shape of Kyrgyz diplomacy, and the explosiveness in domestic politics of frontier issues. Frontiers will remain a tendentious issue for a new Government that contains several opposition figures well-known for their denunciation of the previous regime for weakness or lack of transparency related to frontier negotiation issues. The Akayev regime tried to circumvent Parliament regarding the negotiations with China yet compared to the deals struck with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Russia in their own bilateral negotiations with Beijing (conducted in roughly the same timeframe), Kyrgyzstan actually emerges as one of the stronger negotiators. While the Bakiev government might draw valuable lessons from the Akayev experience in this area and approach frontier issues as requiring greater political sensitivity, it is unlikely that the outcome of bilateral agreements would be any more favorable to Kyrgyzstan than those of the previous regime. Negotiations have now moved from China and Kazakhstan, to focus on the trickiest area – demarcation with Uzbekistan. The Bakiev Government has already underscored that it will not revisit the Chinese frontier issue and moved quickly to reassure Beijing on that score.

As mentioned above, *Zamandash* ("Contemporary") and more loosely a large Kyrgyz diaspora, not simply of blue-collar workers but also from the middle classes, are now on the outside looking in, and seeing their home country from the viewpoint of an expatriate. A feature of the independent Kyrgyzstan experience has been the largest wave of migration ever, probably far more than ever migrated internally during the USSR era. There are now substantial Kyrgyz

communities in many Russian cities, not to mention far smaller but influential groups in Western Europe and the USA. In late 2004 *Zamandash* began to publish the nearest thing that Kyrgyzstan has to a sophisticated current affairs magazine, *Zamandash Jurnal* to articulate their views. In the post-revolutionary phase, it is too soon to tell if the third sector will develop more robust foreign policy views. The Kel Kel critique of a new embassy building purchase in Washington DC by the Government, from a youth activist organization prominent in the organization of student resistance to the outgoing regime might signal greater engagement in Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy. The criticism however was in service of an essentially internal point that spending $2.5 million on foreign embassy buildings was questionable given greater needs at home.[53]

Conclusion

We have surveyed institutional formation and strategic thinking that contributed to foreign policy formation in Kyrgyzstan during the Akayev era. It was characterized by a presidential and minister-driven policy reliant on minor input from ancillary players such as Parliament. The whole was underpinned by skimpy but important policy-guiding statements. All contributed to a foreign policy reliant on a traditional Soviet balance of power view, wherein bilateral relations are foremost. International organizations were viewed mainly for their value of representing a chance to improve relations with whichever state is ascendant in the organization, be it Russia in the CIS, or China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, (SCO). The traditional Soviet origins of Kyrgyz geopolitical thinking also contributed to weaknesses in effectively exploiting the membership of regional groupings, although this is slowly beginning to change as Kyrgyz leaders saw possibilities for small state band-wagoning. Examples are the Kyrgyz rapprochement with Tajikistan from 2002-2004 or the behind-the-scenes promotion of

[53] AKIpress, "Molodej iz 'Kel Kel' vistupila protiv novovo zdanya dlyia Posolstva KR v CShA," in *AkIpress,* 19 September 2005.

Mongolian membership of the SCO in order to increase the number of Eurasian small states represented.[54] The post-Soviet nationalism advanced in independent Kyrgyzstan has had little impact on foreign policy,

Soviet elites at the tiller are oft characterized by Central Asia commentators as a burden.[55] This view is contradicted by the competent and knowledgeable personnel Kyrgyzstan inherited in the foreign policy sphere able to siphon from their prior experience with Soviet diplomacy and international affairs a predilection for symmetry and hierarchy as well as a deep yearning for stability. The first generation of independence established a foreign policy framework that will certainly influence future Kyrgyz regimes, whether democratic or autocratic after 2005 at least in the near future. Longer term, the populism that shook Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 may yet begin to impact foreign policy. A Parliament more sensitive to the political power of appointees refused to confirm Otunbayeva as Foreign Minister. In that sense the tenure of the consummate political insider Aitmatov might be more symptomatic of future trends than the Soviet-informed contributions of Imanaliev and Otunbayeva – even foreign ministers, hitherto sheltered in the mandarin world of a rarified bureaucracy, will have to be part of the political tumult and fray, and need genuine popular support to contribute to cabinet. Another force for possible change, as discussed above, is that much in independent foreign policy thinking is identified with Akayev and his era, and Bakiev's government may yet feel the need to reformulate its own vision.

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[54] Deputy Foreign Minister Lydia Imanalieva, interview by author, 5 February 2004, Bishkek.

[55] See for instance Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 3.