

GLOBALIZATION CHALLENGES IN CENTRAL ASIA AND CERTAIN ASPECTS OF CHINA'S CENTRAL ASIAN POLICIES

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Recently countries and continents have become aware, to different degrees, of common globalization problems. More than that: political and academic communities of various parties, academic schools, and trends have been busying themselves with investigations into the nature of these problems. This explains the variety of approaches to the current globalization problems. The too complex and too ambiguous processes permit convincing arguments in favor of widely diverse approaches. At the same time, when talking about globalization and its impact on specific countries and regions (in the developing world in particular), it is wise to discuss it in the context of two key trends: the world's increasingly universal nature and its growing diversity. Their interaction and confrontation determines the world's development, its highly ambiguous nature and, most important, the alternatives for each nation and each state.¹

It looks as though, in the last decades of the 20th century, mankind reconciled itself to the inevitable—immersion into globalization, its positive and negative sides notwithstanding. The forecasts of the development vectors of world civilization are as varied as ever. This is also determined by the fact that any country or group of countries that offers mankind a conception or vision of the future claims a privileged position for itself over others in an effort to protect its future interests. The futu-

¹ See: S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Touchstone Books, New York, 1996, pp. 50-66.

rologists and political scientists agree that all spheres of human and state activities will undergo radical changes. This is true, first and foremost, of politics, the economy, culture, the environment, and the relations between countries, regions, religions, races, etc. On the other hand, we have to admit that globalization (particularly its international political aspect) requires tighter control and regulation on an increasingly wider scale. In fact, this is developing into an imperative. Globalization of science, technology, and communication in the crowded world with its highly concentrated capital and economy and against the background of potentially destructive ecological processes and military might demands that the risks of further evolution of world economy and international relations be reduced to the minimum.

In short, globalization requires greater regulation of the ever-widening spheres of human endeavor.²

In view of the above, the developing countries should treat accelerated, or “catching-up,” development to uproot poverty and improve the standard of living while cooperating as much as possible with the developed countries as a priority. Conflicts with them over all sorts of problems of contemporary world order should be avoided.

The emerging globalization structures give rise to the following questions: Which processes will emerge as the most promising and dynamic? To what extent will most states be involved in them? Will these countries and nations be able to affect the course of these processes and become their active participants to ensure a dignified life for their citizens, or will they remain forever at history’s curbside?

We mentioned above that the contemporary world has to cope with the problem created by two intertwining key trends: toward unification and deeper interdependence of states and nations, on the one hand, and their increasing diversity, on the other.³ Today, as at turning points in the past, the way world civilization further advances and its changing image will be determined not so much by economic, as by political and subjective reasons and, quite often, by the personal will of the leaders.

The above is directly related to the Central Asian states: will they and particularly their leaders be able to face the globalization challenges and launch the very much-needed coordinated shifts from which the region and all countries will profit? The region’s political leaders should primarily pool their efforts to create three real images of their region acceptable to the world community:

1. Central Asia as a single developing region. There are objective historical, political, and economic prerequisites for this.
2. Central Asia as a united geopolitical and geo-economic intermediary between the East and the West, the North and the South. There are real prerequisites for this as well. It should be said that in the historical and cultural respect, the region long remained a meeting place of world cultures: Russian, Persian, Chinese, and Arabic (through Islam). The area is also a meeting place of the world religions.
3. Central Asia as a united front of struggle against transborder threats, the list of which regrettably grows longer every day.⁴
 - First, the above is not easily achieved: there are too many state, political, and economic barriers, as well as ethnic, psychological, and cultural prejudices inherited from the past; the recent history of the independent states is responsible for the new prejudices of this sort.

² See: N.A. Kosolapov, “Legitimnost v mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniakh: evoliutsia i sovremennoe sostoianie problema,” *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia*, No. 2, 2005, pp. 4-6.

³ See: S. Huntington, *op. cit.*

⁴ See: M. Imanaliev, *Ocherki o vneshney politike Kyrgyzstana*, Sabyr Publishers, Bishkek, 2002, p. 115.

- Second, the Central Asian states should start (or re-start) a historical process better described as restoration of the Great Silk Route. It should not be interpreted as simple restoration of transport communications and the exchange of cultural achievements (which is important in its own way). Restoration should develop into a long-term historical process covering the vast expanse between the Atlantic and the Pacific. It should be developed as a Eurasian process—without the unions or alliances on which certain politicians insist.

It is appropriate here to say that all Central Asian republics are demonstrating an urge to build national states as quickly as possible. Today, after several years of independent development and despite the nostalgia certain political forces are striving to keep on the front burner, the local political elites are growing more and more convinced that history cannot be reversed and that national states should be built as quickly as possible.

The Central Asian countries and their neighbors are developing against a very specific historical background in a very specific context.

Two historic moments of the recent past are highly important for a more or less adequate idea of current and possible developments. First, the Soviet Union, the world's second mightiest power (of which the Central Asian republics were part), all of a sudden collapsed into a heap of unstable states, most of which are still struggling with economic and political crises; in the list of the world's most successful states, they rank below sixtieth or even hundredth place. Second, in fifteen years the Central Asian republics have made an arduous journey from the "imperial outskirts" to the center of attraction of the main powers' varying interests. This opens wider prospects but is fraught with certain threats.⁵

The choice of development path was highly personalized, but certain individual historical, cultural, geographic, ethnic, and psychological specifics and descriptions of the nations and countries could not be excluded either. This explains why the key conceptions of progress of all five Central Asian republics differ to a certain extent from one another and are radically different in certain respects. They do not clash, which means that there are no objective reasons for mutual rejection.

The countries have not yet freed themselves from indiscriminate copying of foreign (or Soviet) socioeconomic patterns and experience. It should be said, however, that they have developed certain outlines of their own conceptual elements. So far, the low level and fragmentary economic integration into the world economy remain a serious problem. The East and the West are mainly interested in regional energy resources—this is an obvious fact nobody tries to play down. Who will "reach Central Asia's oil and gas reservoir ahead of the others" remains to be seen.⁶

The Central Asian countries' foreign policy landmarks changed many times during the short period of their sovereign development. This is explained by lack of experience, inability to build up realistic foreign policy projects and elaborate adequate technologies, as well as the foreign policy discussions of Central Asia's main partners.

Not without foreign influence, the Central Asian countries tried to set up economic or even military-political alliances, but the idea was stillborn. The terrorist acts of 9/11 and the events that followed changed the general situation in Central Asia to a great extent and affected their foreign political preferences.⁷ The military actions of the counterterrorist coalition in Afghanistan defused tension in the region to a certain degree, but did not remove it altogether.

The Central Asian countries hailed the unity of the leading powers in the joint struggle against international terrorism on a global scale, but deployment of American troops in the Central Asian

⁵ See: K. Tokaev, *Pod stiagom nezavisimosti*, Almaty, 1997, pp. 17-35.

⁶ See: K. Sultanov, *Reformy v Kazakhstane i Kitae*, Elorda Publishers, Astana, 2000, pp. 102-107.

⁷ See: Xu Jinhua, "Istoricheskie izmeneniya geopoliticheskoy situatsii v Tsentral'noy Azii," *Obzor Azii i Afriki*, No. 3, 2006, pp. 63-65.

states called for far from simple adjustments of foreign policy schemes and created new relations among the key players on the Central Asian field. In this context, the local states believe it extremely important to prevent a conflict of interests in the region among the key world powers and among certain local leaders.

The barriers between the Central Asian countries and their southern neighbors are gradually disappearing; this is a recent process accelerated by the counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan. These countries are not only described by one blanket term on increasingly frequent occasions—they are united in common U.S.-promoted programs. This will undoubtedly alter the local countries' political course in the foreseeable future. The historical and geographic descriptions of the region cover not only five former Soviet republics, but also Afghanistan, Iran, and Mongolia, as well as part of Pakistan, India, China, and Russia. In the Soviet Union, the term Central Asia (*Sredniaia Azia*) was limited to Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. The Soviet tradition described Afghanistan and other states as the Middle East, South Asia, etc. This explains why the West's consistent attempts to unite the former Soviet republics and their southern neighbors are of fundamental importance for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan: they are creating far-reaching repercussions in the sphere of politics, the economy and, most important, worldview ideas.

We have already written above that different states have tried and are still trying, with varying degrees of intensity, to build relationships with their neighbors (as part of the region and individually) that would meet their interests and allow them to create zones of their political and economic influence in Central Asia. Here are several examples.

Turkey's Central Asian strategy hinged on the following highly attractive aspects: (1) development model; (2) ethnolinguistic closeness, and (3) shared religious identity. Turkey posed itself the task of forming "Turkish groups of influence" in the Central Asian countries to be assured of its presence in the region in the short- and long-term perspective. To achieve this, Turkey is enrolling thousands of Central Asian students in its higher educational establishments.

Turkey's plans for cementing its influence through local cultural figures, businessmen, etc. failed due to rivaling players in the same field and certain miscalculations of Turkish politicians. The Central Asian countries rejected the idea of Turkey as an "older brother."

Iran placed its stakes on Islam and the Islamic culture, but all the Central Asian countries, with the exception of Tajikistan, rejected the Iranian version of Islam and Iranian business practices. Its influence is felt among small groups of experts in Iran and small business teams.

It should be borne in mind that the Iranian, Pakistani, and Indian experience was never studied in depth in Central Asia and was not popular with the so-called interest groups. In common terms this means that Central Asia rejected their experience and potential. Neither Iran, nor Pakistan, nor India exerts any considerable influence on the Central Asian countries: it is limited to individual projects.

Western Europe (Germany, the U.K., France, Switzerland, and others) at first tried to promote democratization of the local countries' domestic policy through the EU, OSCE, and within bilateral relations. On some occasions they hinged material and economic assistance on democratization. It seems that the Europeans intended to put pressure on the local leaders and build a civil society through humanitarian and human rights activities. Their reliance on individuals proved to be an insurmountable barrier on the road to democracy.

The mounting threat of Islamic extremism, al-Qa'eda, and other international terrorist organizations, which became obvious at the turn of the 21st century, forced the Europeans and Americans to concentrate on cooperation with the Central Asian countries in the security sphere and antiterrorist efforts. They had to play down (or discontinue) criticism of these countries' human rights records and stalling democratization. Many experts believe, however, that this is explained by the fierce rivalry among the world powers over the region's mineral and raw material riches.

Russia, the United States, and China are the three most influential countries when it comes to Central Asia's domestic developments.

As distinct from the two other powers, the Russian Federation not only has highly justified interests in the region—for historical reasons it is partly responsible for its future.

Its still strong cultural and humanitarian presence is a serious factor of influence; Russia controls nearly all transport and communication lines that link Central Asia with the outside world.⁸

The "pro-Russian interest groups" especially strong in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan provide Russia with great advantages over other countries.

The United States spares no effort to influence the leaders and the "interest groups," as well as exploit the republic's financial and economic dependence to create a new "pro-Western" system of state governance, civil society, democratic institutions, and the basic elements of a market economy. America's rapidly increasing interest in Central Asia is geopolitically conditioned not only by the U.S.'s desire to gain domination over raw material resources, but also by the region's geographic location. Domination in Central Asia means control of this vast territory and, more important, of the main regional and global rivals (Russia and China). Over the course of time, America will become even more attracted by the region's geopolitical advantages; Central Asia could remain the world's "hot spot" for many years to come.

It should be said here that in the wake of 9/11 and due to America's and Russia's active involvement in Central Asia (not limited to military bases), local foreign policy became reduced to the relations between these two powers. Russia does not want to compete for spheres of influence (with America and partly with China); it wants to identify the most efficient forms of extensive foreign policy coordination for the sake of Central Asian security and stability, as well as economic progress, in full conformity with the new formula "security through development."

So far the conflict of interests between the United States and Russia in Central Asia has not yet reached one of open confrontation; it is limited to common antiterrorist and anti-extremist aims. If it comes to the fore, all the Central Asian leaders will face a very hard choice indeed.

Stronger American and Russian influence on the region's domestic developments has been spurred on by the change in political elites, a process that has already begun in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

There is another very specific feature. The Baltic countries, which have no alternative to European integration, should be envied: they can pursue a more or less consistent foreign policy supported by their populations (with the exception of the Russian-speaking residents of Latvia and Estonia). The Russian speakers, on the other hand, do not object to Europeanization, which they probably accept; in the case of the Baltics, there are tenacious obsolete ideas about the world and just as obsolete interests of the ethnolinguistic groups. Central Asia, on the other hand, is pulled between several geopolitical factors: Western, Russian, Islamic and, partly, Chinese.

On the domestic scene, the geopolitical factors are represented to different degrees by various groups inside the emerging political and business elites. China, one of the largest neighbors, is the only exception: so far there are no pro-Chinese groups in the Central Asian countries, but the developing trade and economic relations will sooner or later create a pro-Chinese business elite. In turn, China is eager to demonstrate its peaceful and predictable intentions and its readiness to extend assistance when needed.

For their part, the Central Asian republics should work hard to prevent a conflict of interests among the key players: indeed, each of them can operate within its own sector without encroaching on the sectors of others. This is a dream—yet a partly achievable dream. Broad and open cooperation (individual or collective) between the Central Asian states and the leading powers could contribute to

⁸ See: Zhu Zhenghong, "Regional Security in Central Asia and Russia after 9/11," *Far Eastern Affairs*, No. 1, 2005.

the local countries' stability, push them toward real integration, and revive the efforts to restore the Great Silk Route.

In view of the above, it has become extremely important to analyze China's Central Asian policy, a "new old player" that has just outlined its interests in the region and is "trying on" the role of regional leader. No adequate assessment of the Central Asian context and prospects is possible without an analysis of the Chinese factor, its role in the antiterrorist struggle, China's perception of the threats to its own security, and Beijing's true interests and policy in the region. Central Asia, regarded for many centuries as a more or less secure "rear area," is developing into one of the main factors of China's foreign policy.

Beijing has already included post-Soviet Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan), with a population of over 60 million, in the so-called "external" strategic area directly related to its national interests. The common border (over 3,700 km long) is attracting the particular attention of the Chinese leaders. In fact, together with "separatist-minded" Taiwan, the Chinese western provinces are seen as threats to the country's stability and territorial integrity. This explains China's active diplomatic efforts in this respect.

In the first half of the 1990s, immediately after the Soviet Union disintegrated and during the first years of the Central Asian countries' independence, China showed no interest in the region. It established diplomatic relations with the newly independent states and continued to be concerned mainly with political stability in XUAR and more extensive trade and economic contacts with the Central Asian republics. The program speech Premier of the PRC State Council Li Peng made in April 1994 in Tashkent during his first Central Asian tour deserves special mention in this context. The Chinese leader identified four main trends of his country's relations with the new states: (1) good-neighborly relations, friendship and peaceful coexistence; (2) mutually advantageous cooperation for the sake of prosperity for all; (3) mutual respect of the choice of the people; non-interference in domestic affairs; (4) mutual respect of independence and sovereignty, promotion of regional stability.⁹ On the whole, China demonstrated restraint, largely due to the instability in the region; the statement reflected Beijing's real interests and real concerns of the time.

Unfavorable Central Asian developments, however, the post-Soviet foreign influence vacuum, the mounting threat of Islamic fundamentalism, the accelerating rivalry over the region's oil, gas, and mineral resources, the persistent efforts of the Central Asian states to find partners outside the region, etc. forced China to be more active. The decision was prompted by the country's economic, social, and cultural progress at home. The PRC, which badly needed energy resources (in which the Central Asian countries are very rich), had to work hard to achieve agreements on more extensive cooperation in this sphere: investments in oil and gas fields and pipelines to move energy resources from Central Asia to China across XUAR. On the other hand, to implement these plans, China needed stability and security on its own territory and in XUAR to ensure stable transportation of energy resources and uninterrupted railway communication. It is no wonder that Beijing is resolved to prevent any serious collisions in Central Asia, the most dangerous of them being radical Islam and ethnic separatism. These threats, and the need to oppose greater foreign influence (particularly American), are responsible for China's decision to intensify its cooperation with Russia and the Central Asian republics, first within the Shanghai Five and later the SCO.

China's post-9/11 position is determined by the following factors. In the context of the counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan, China acquired certain advantages, on the one hand, and several new security challenges, on the other. The international operation as such, removal of the Taliban regime and relative stability in Afghanistan, was in line with China's struggle against terrorism and separatism in XUAR: the Taliban and the XUAR extremist groups established close contacts. Experts know

⁹ See: Li Peng's Speech in Tashkent, *Xinhua Agency*, 18 April, 1994.

of over 20 organizations operating in XUAR, their methods ranging from mass actions to terrorist acts. Some of the Xinjiang separatist groups maintained close ties with the Taliban. The situation in the autonomous region improved when the threat of extremism was weakened and Afghanistan received a new government. By the same token, the extremist groups in XUAR were deprived of the Taliban's strategic support.

At the same time, it became clear that the Afghan campaign had another side related to China's interests. We have in mind the military bases America and its allies deployed in two SCO members: Kyrgyzstan (which borders on China) and Uzbekistan (which has no common border with China). (Later the base in Khankala was evacuated.) In this way, America became a de facto neighbor of the Central Asian countries, a fact that directly affects decision-making in domestic and foreign policy. The American presence in Central Asia affects the Central Asian policy of other states that hold traditionally strong positions in the region.

China was cautious about the changes: in the long-term perspective, these bases looked like a threat to its security. Some of the Chinese experts went as far as saying that in the future they could be used against China and that the operation in Afghanistan was nothing more than an opportunity to move America's military infrastructure closer to the western borders of the Celestial Empire.

The bases caused headaches: for several years China has been setting up a zone of stability and security along its borders expected to promote reforms at home. Today, "secure neighborhood," one of the key principles of China's Eurasian policy, is under strain. The bases and the changes in the political elites in Central Asia forced Beijing to readjust its main foreign policy tasks.

This adds special significance to the program speech Hu Jintao, Chinese leader of the fourth generation, delivered in 2004 in Tashkent, in which he outlined China's priorities in Central Asia. This speech demonstrated the continuity and stability of Beijing's foreign policy course. China still treats security, trade, and economic relations as a priority with a special emphasis on the energy and raw material sectors. To achieve this, China plans to extend and deepen bilateral relations with the key regional countries and use the SCO as a tool.

China's Central Asian strategy also included border delimitation with the Central Asian republics. Between 1994 and 2002, it signed border agreements with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and teamed with Russia in the process. Today, this very sensitive issue, which burdened bilateral relations, has been removed from the agenda.

The United States is the only superpower; Russia has traditional relations with Central Asia, while China is obviously trying to close the gap between itself and its main rivals through the SCO.

Historically, the SCO appeared because Russia, China, and its Central Asian neighbors wanted to settle the border problems and gain confidence in the military sphere in the border area. They sought security and greater stability in Central Asia, a region into which terrorists from Afghanistan penetrated in greater numbers and in which extremist and separatist sentiments were rapidly gaining momentum. In 1996, these countries deemed it wise to unite into the Shanghai Five, which gradually developed into an important tool of regional security.

The agreements on confidence-building measures and trimming the armed forces deployed in the border areas created a favorable atmosphere, led to the settlement of border issues, and extended cooperation. In 2001, when Uzbekistan joined it, the Shanghai Five was transformed into the SCO. The key principles of the new structure envisaged in its documents are mutual trust, mutual advantages, equality, respect for the interests of all sides, mutual consultations, decisions by consensus, and voluntary obligation to fulfill the agreements.¹⁰

¹⁰ See: I.N. Komissina, A.A. Kurtov, *Shanghaiskaia organizatsia sotrudnichestva: stanovlenie novoy real'nosti*, ed. by Doctor of History E.M. Kozhokin, Russian Institute of Strategic Research, Moscow, 2005, pp. 34-35.

The PRC was instrumental in setting up the structure: this was its way of demonstrating its interests in Central Asia. While actively promoting the SCO, Beijing proceeded from the assumption that its stronger Central Asian position would add to the stability and security of a region dangerously close to its borders. The settlement of the border issues made the borders more secure. Not only that: it turned the borders into a channel of active contacts with the Central Asian neighbors. The ethnic, religious, cultural, and historical closeness of the Central Asian nations and the Xinjiang national minorities, which share many everyday customs, is another favorable factor.

Beijing counts on Central Asia's positive contribution to its efforts to develop the country's west in the form of energy and raw materials badly needed for the fast-growing Chinese economy.

China is convinced that the SCO is a powerful diplomatic tool to be used in Central Asia.

It supplied the PRC with a mechanism through which security, involvement in the region's development, and all-round cooperation with the Central Asian republics can be achieved. On the other hand, for Chinese experts, the SCO is visible proof of a strategic compromise and balance between Russia and China in Central Asia; their mutual recognition of each other's interests and realization of strategic partnership in the region. This was reflected in practically all the SCO documents, including those signed at the Shanghai anniversary summit.

The SCO's international contacts deserve special mention; the same applies to the procedures for enrolling new members and granting observer status, which are coming to the fore. During the five years of its existence, the SCO has not enrolled any new members; it granted observer status to Mongolia, Iran, India, and Pakistan. Some of them wanted to become SCO members. The Organization set up a "Contact SCO-Afghanistan Group." For several years now, the leaders of neighboring countries have been invited to SCO events. The SCO has partnership relations with ASEAN, CIS, and EurAsEC and an U.N. observer status.

The SCO members never tire of repeating that their organization is open to new members and is not aimed against third countries and organizations. Speaking at the 2006 SCO summit in Shanghai, PRC Chairman Hu Jintao confirmed: "The SCO is not a military-political bloc closed to new members; it is against geopolitical confrontation and is not aimed against any other country or organization. We should ensure security and stability in the world through the broadest possible international cooperation and active exchanges with other countries." President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin has pointed out: "The SCO is an open organization. It is not isolated from the world and has no intention of becoming a closed alliance ... or bloc. The SCO acts with the firm conviction that Central Asia should not develop into an arena of confrontation—either external or internal. We should concentrate on the things that unite us; we should respect the right of every country to develop according to individual models and promote democracy in the context of national history and national traditions. The SCO has no intention of competing with anyone." According to experts, the statements made by the Chinese and Russian leaders differed from the previous Astana summit that demanded the United States limit its military presence in the region. The Shanghai summit invited all the world centers (particularly the U.S., which after 9/11 and deployment of its military bases in the region became a factor of real politics there) to seek common and mutually acceptable solutions. It seems that in the near future, the SCO might put a SCO-U.S. or a SCO-NATO contact group on the agenda to maintain working contacts, develop joint projects, and work together toward security and stability in Central Asia and Afghanistan, fight terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal arms trade, and other transborder crimes. This might prove to be the first step toward broader cooperation, which would take into account the regional interests of the major powers and the local countries.

Recently, the SCO has been promoting closer trade and economic, cultural, and humanitarian contacts among its members. So far trade and economic cooperation is obviously undeveloped, which is explained by the local countries' fairly low economic development level and the different economic interests of the PRC and Russia. The organization, however, has posed itself the task of achiev-

ing an economic upsurge and extending trade and economic relations. China, with its strong economy and increasing impact on the region ensured by its involvement in the energy and transport projects in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, is obviously claiming the role of the SCO's economic leader.

In their bilateral relations the Chinese leaders are as cautious as ever; they never speed up developments, being in favor of gradual yet steady growth of their country's economic presence in the region. China, aware of the imminent radical political changes in the Central Asian republics (which have already taken place in some countries that acquired new leaders and new political elites), is working hard to cement its position through political, financial, economic, and other tools. The case of Kyrgyzstan is very illustrative in this respect.

The events of 24 March, 2005 in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, which brought the opposition to power, and later developments caused tension in the relations between the two countries and made Beijing very cautious. An upsurge of opposition activities in the spring of 2005 in Kyrgyzstan failed to prepare the Chinese leaders for the revolutionary events. It seems that Beijing's position was caused by several factors, the main ones being:

- Internal instability in Kyrgyzstan, lack of unity not only among the power branches, but also inside the government team on the key strategic issues;
- The advent to power of some opposition leaders previously known for their anti-Chinese sentiments;
- The new leaders' obviously shaky foreign policy priorities, lack of continuity, coordinated approaches and policy in relations with China on the issues Beijing treats as priorities;
- Criticism by individual politicians of the achieved agreements and treaties signed by the previous leaders in 1992-2005;
- The increased risk of destabilization in Xinjiang, which borders on Kyrgyzstan;
- Stronger foreign (particularly American) influence on Kyrgyzstan.

In view of the above, Beijing stepped aside to wait and see and to allow the Kyrgyz side to make the first move. The dearth of political contacts limited to the meetings between Kurmanbek Bakiev and Hu Jintao at the SCO summit in Astana, Felix Kulov and Wen Jiabao in Moscow, and two visits of foreign ministers R. Otunbaeva and A. Jekshenkulov to China failed to completely restore the relations: the Kyrgyz side was too vague and ambiguous on a number of issues. Some members of the political community, including those who held official posts, still insisted on a revision of the border settlements.

In this context, the sides deemed it wise to concentrate on President Bakiev's visit to Beijing, which took place on 9-10 June, 2006. It was expected to remove all the disagreements and problems; each of the sides set itself specific aims and expected to achieve favorable results. Beijing probably expected that the political side of bilateral cooperation would be clarified; the Chinese leaders tried hard to acquire a clear idea of the Kyrgyz president's position on the key bilateral issues and on regional and international policy. They needed to know whether the course was steady enough in the long-term perspective. On the whole, Beijing sought to restore an atmosphere of political confidence between the two countries. The level of political confidence in the relations between the two leaders in the security sphere has been instrumental and will remain instrumental in other spheres (trade and the economy in particular); it will set the pace for implementing large-scale energy projects. Beijing's readiness to fully restore cooperation depended on the Kyrgyz leadership's position on the following issues:

- Taiwan and Tibet;

- The joint struggle against separatism in Xinjiang, extremism, and terrorism;
- Continuity of the country's political course and continued adherence to the earlier bilateral agreements and treaties, particularly those of a political nature;
- Border settlement;
- America's military presence in Kyrgyzstan;
- Reform of the U.N. Security Council.

The above issues appeared in one form or another on President Bakiev's agenda and in the Joint Declaration that summed up the visit.

President Bakiev's Chinese visit was intended to confirm the country's continued adherence to the earlier agreements and treaties (particularly those of a political nature) and to border settlement. There were fears that Beijing might interpret the fairly vague position of the new Kyrgyz leader on the above issues as the new regime's weakness and double standards, which could potentially freeze the relations between the countries at the lowest level Beijing would find adequate. The Kyrgyz president's official statement of his country's continued support of the earlier treaties and agreements (despite the domestic disagreements over them) was interpreted as an advance toward restoring an atmosphere of mutual political trust.

The Joint Declaration confirmed continued adherence to the principles registered in the documents signed and published during the preceding 14 years; it also expressed satisfaction with the achievements in the political, trade and economic, humanitarian, and security spheres during the entire period of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The leaders agreed that friendship between their countries meets the basic interests of their nations and promotes peace in the world and regional development.

The statements about continued adherence to the Treaty on Good-Neighborly Relations, Friendship, and Cooperation between the Kyrgyz Republic and the People's Republic of China and the Program of Cooperation Between the Kyrgyz Republic and the People's Republic of China for 2004-2014 were of fundamental importance. The sides recognized the great historic importance of the Protocol between the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Demarcation of the Chinese-Kyrgyz State Border and the Map of the State Border between the Kyrgyz Republic and the People's Republic of China (as an appendix to the Protocol). The documents finally resolved the border disputes between the two countries. The sides pledged to adhere to the signed agreements and border-related documents and actively work toward turning the border area into a zone of perpetual peace and friendship to be inherited by future generations.

Bishkek confirmed its former adherence to the "one China" policy; it declared that it was against any forms of "independence for Taiwan," including "legalization of Taiwan's independence," against any attempts at setting up "two Chinas," "one China, one Taiwan;" and against Taiwan's involvement in any international organizations, membership in which is limited to sovereign states. The Kyrgyz side confirmed that it was not going to establish official relations or official contacts with Taiwan.

In turn, Beijing confirmed its support of the Kyrgyz Republic's efforts to preserve its independence, state sovereignty, and territorial integrity; ensure stability at home and economic development. China highly assessed Kyrgyzstan's contribution to Central Asia's security, stability, and cooperation.

The leaders of the two countries confirmed their willingness to fight terrorism, extremism, and separatism; they intended to promote coordination and interaction between the two countries' law-enforcement and security structures. They were resolved to go on, within the SCO, with effective measures to fight together against all types of terrorism (including the Eastern Turkestan terrorist forces) to ensure peace and security in both countries and in the region. The heads of both states confirmed

that struggle against the Eastern Turkestan terrorist structure remains one of the important parts of the international antiterrorist struggle. Kyrgyzstan and China will develop contacts between their defense structures.

America's military presence in Kyrgyzstan and the U.N. reform were also important items in the bilateral negotiations.

China repeatedly stated that it shared Kyrgyzstan's position on America's military presence in the republic, which rented its airbase to the armed forces of the counterterrorist coalition. Kyrgyzstan's previous leaders coordinated this decision with the CSTO and SCO partners. At the same time, the PRC is very resolute about the time-limits for the American airbase at Manas airport and is against extending its mandate beyond the framework of the counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan. It seems that the Chinese leaders convinced President Bakiev that their position was completely justified and acquired his support. The Joint Declaration says that Kyrgyzstan and China will "not permit the use of their territories by third countries to the detriment of their state sovereignty. They will not permit organizations and alliances that threaten the sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity of the other side to operate on their territories."

With respect to reforming the U.N., the joint document set forth a position very close to the one held by Beijing, which means that the sides probably agreed on this issue as well.

Economic issues were not prominent on the negotiation agenda and, contrary to the statements of some Kyrgyz politicians, no breakthrough decisions were reached. From the Chinese viewpoint, Kyrgyzstan is not a promising economic partner; therefore it limited itself to the usual grant of \$70 million to help keep the Kyrgyz economy afloat and, after insistent requests by the Kyrgyz leaders, a government loan for building a cement works in Kyzyl-Kia in the south of Kyrgyzstan was granted. Experts are convinced, however, that in the absence of adequate management and financial and economic estimations, the work may repeat the sad fate of the Kyrgyz-Chinese paper mill. As was expected, the Chinese leaders suggested that the economic projects Kyrgyzstan regarded as a priority (a China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway and export of energy to China), which have been studied and discussed for several years now, should be further investigated. This means that Beijing is not interested in them. Both are economically dubious and very expensive (over \$2 billion). Even more important is the fact that, if implemented, both projects will directly affect the social-economic situation in Xinjiang. The Chinese leaders remain unconvinced that political stability in Kyrgyzstan will continue; they are unwilling to link their own volatile autonomous region with Kyrgyzstan, in which political fashions change too often for their taste.

On the whole, President Bakiev's Chinese visit was intended to merely cut short the post-24 March, 2005 hiatus in bilateral relations, which had been going on too long. In the absence of "breakthrough" decisions in the economic sphere (which could not be expected too soon anyway), working contacts with the Chinese leadership were revived; confidence in the political sphere was also restored to a certain extent. This was the most important result of President Bakiev's visit to Beijing.

By and large, China's interests in Central Asia are not limited to energy, transport, communications, and markets for its products. There are also political interests suggested by the "American factor" in Central Asia.

The Central Asian context suggests that without China's active involvement (or, at least, without taking into account its interests in ensuring stability and security), none of the possible regional security systems will be reliable or effective. The opposite is also true: for the sake of a favorable situation in Central Asia, China should pursue a balanced policy.