

KYRGYZSTAN'S SECURITY PROBLEMS TODAY

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Regional stability and security consist of two levels—the external security of each country at the regional level and the internal security of each of them individually. A state's external and internal security are closely interrelated concepts.

It stands to reason that ensuring internal security and stability is the primary and most important task. But the external aspect also requires attention. This article takes a look at the most important problems of ensuring Kyrgyzstan's security.

Kyrgyzstan's Economic Problems

The economic aspect occupies a central place in the academic discussions about national security. The keen attention to this problem is primarily provoked by the fact that a country's security hinges on the state of its economy.

Kyrgyzstan is a country with a low level of economic development. During the Soviet era it depended wholly on the economy of the entire country. The budget was replenished from the common union fund, a practice that could not continue after the state acquired its independence.

The young state did not have enough funds and the necessary resources to meet its own needs. The breakdown in economic ties after the collapse of the Soviet Union generated negative changes in the economy, although internal reasons, such as the hastily and thoughtlessly conducted economic policy, de-centralization and privatization of state property in particular, wreaked greater havoc in the context of the economic crisis. Trade, industrial, and transportation enterprises were sold and resold in a short period of time to private organizations. The thrifless and careless attitude led to enterprises with immense economic possibilities and potential being broken down, parceled out, and essentially destroyed. Business management and free price formation, the functioning of a new fiscal and monetary system, and the development of new foreign economic relations have met with immense difficulties. Economic crisis is a consistent and legitimate phenomenon that inevitably occurs when the old order collapses and a new one is created.

Economic crisis usually leads to a cutback in the budget, an increase in non-payments, and a drop in the standard of living.¹ The economic reforms being carried out in the country did not yield the desired results. The world economic crisis, which the post-Soviet countries are also enduring, cannot help but have an effect on the situation in Kyrgyzstan. Today, solving the republic's most important task—ongoing economic reforms—is accompanied by accumulation of the external debt, which is creating a dangerous trend that is leading to an increase in poverty.

An analysis of the socioeconomic situation in Kyrgyzstan carried out by a group of international experts shows that irrational state management is the main obstacle hindering the reforms. Economic growth cannot be achieved or the level of poverty lowered without raising the quality of state management. In addition, if management is not improved, it will not yield the preferred results or encourage foreign sponsors to render assistance.²

The inefficient activity of the republic's state management structures has led directly to an increase in criminalization of the economy and the shadow sector's greater involvement in it.

The criminal sphere is interfering in the distribution of the gross domestic product and national income and economic crimes, smuggling, and corruption are becoming more prevalent. Representatives of the criminal structures are attempting to have some influence on the executive and legislative power structures or to directly infiltrate them.

Practice shows that the following economic crimes are the most predominant: embezzlement of state property and the untargeted use of loans, non-payment of taxes, and smuggling of various types of semi-finished and finished products, to name a few.

According to preliminary estimates, the country's shadow sector currently covers approximately 30% of Kyrgyzstan's entire economy.³

¹ See: A. Akunova, "O nekotorykh predposylkakh i sostoianii ekonomicheskogo krizisa v Kyrgyzstane," *Politika i obshchestvo*, No. 1(22), 2006.

² See: T. Koichumanov, "Corruption Fighting and Preventive Measures in Kyrgyzstan: Today and Tomorrow," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (37), 2006.

³ See: *Ibidem*.

The Problem of Water Apportioning as a Threat to National and Regional Security

Kyrgyzstan's water resources are unbalanced. Irrational water use has recently led to an imbalance in this resource in Central Asia. Only up to 80% of irrigation water reaches the fields due to the underdeveloped state of the irrigation systems, on the one hand, while the former united system of water use regulation has been destroyed as a result of uncoordinated economic relations among the region's countries, on the other.

Hydraulic engineering installations in Central Asia in the Soviet period were built by collective efforts in order to boost the development of agriculture and the hydropower industry. In so doing, water was accumulated in the reservoirs during the winter months and released through the hydropower plant dams during the vegetation period to irrigate farm land, at the same time generating electricity, which went into the united energy system. So the use of water in the region in Soviet times was based on a rational and fair principle of compensation, something that cannot be said of the present.

After they gained their independence, the Central Asian states divided into two groups: one of them comprises Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where 86.4% of the region's water resources are formed, and the other includes Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan ranks fifth in the world with more than 50% of Central Asia's water supplies. Tajikistan's repositories rank eighth in the world. And this is strategic raw material and national wealth.

The states of the first group tried to develop their economy by generating cheap electricity, while those in the second group concentrated on developing agriculture and industry. This in turn presumes entirely different water supply schedules. The water shortage problem is aggravated by the fact that there is no efficient water metering system in the region.

The past two years, particularly 2008, were characterized by a low water level, as the result of which the Toktogul reservoir, which has been regulating the water supply for many years, was unable to provide for full operation of the hydraulic installations. Without oil and gas resources, Kyrgyzstan is unable to operate hydropower plants in the energy regime due to the irrigation needs of the republics downstream.

So Kyrgyzstan is paying great attention to the rational, mutually advantageous, and efficient use of hydropower resources and deems it important for the Central Asian countries to transfer to a fair, rational, and efficient mechanism in this sphere.

Throughout its sovereignty, Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy has been focused on ensuring that water does not become a cause of conflict between close neighbors in Central Asia. The Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers, which flow through the entire territory of Central Asia, are the main source of agricultural prosperity in the Aral Sea basin and have immense hydropower potential. Interstate tension, which is threatening the political and economic development of the entire region, is primarily generated by the absence or inefficiency of cooperation among the Central Asian countries—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—in managing a joint water system.

Energy Security

Kyrgyzstan's security is made vulnerable by its almost complete dependence on energy deliveries from other countries. At present, the republic is able to provide itself with less than 5%

of its oil and gas needs, and it depends almost entirely on their export from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

As of today, 90% of the gasoline and diesel fuel consumed in Kyrgyzstan is supplied by the Russian Gazprom Neft Asia company. A total of 97% of the fuel consumption structure is formed from imported fuel at prices close to those in the world market. Whereby in the prospective development plan for the fuel and energy sector until 2025 drawn up by the Kyrgyzstan ministries and departments, the country's economy will remain dependent on imported fuel until the end of this period.⁴

At a recent meeting in Bishkek, the Russian and Kyrgyz leaders, Dmitri Medvedev and Kurmanbek Bakiev, discussed the delivery of Russian energy resources in exchange for cheap electricity for the cities of Siberia. The Russian side will also assist in the construction of new energy complexes in Kyrgyzstan, and the Russian Gazprom concern will provide Kyrgyzstan with the necessary amount of natural gas from Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan, in turn, agreed to make the prepayment for deliveries of electricity from Kyrgyzstan. Deliveries of oil and fuel oil necessary for the Bishkek thermal power plant will be carried out using this prepayment. A solution was found, even if only for one year. Longer term agreements are needed for the stable functioning of the energy complex.

Environmental Threats to Security

Kyrgyzstan's natural and territorial complex belongs to the particularly vulnerable high-altitude environmental systems with powerful natural and anthropogenic influencing factors. Its subsurface contains a large amount of radioactive elements, arsenic, antimony, mercury, fluorine, thorium, cyanide, and so on. This situation is particularly threatening in that these elements imperceptibly seep into the environment and penetrate the human body over a long period of time, subsequently causing irreversible changes in the environment and in the health of hundreds of people.

Kyrgyzstan's specific natural and climatic conditions as well as the state's ill-conceived economic activity are adding to the environmental problems. Extremely unfavorable demographic changes have been noted in areas close to former and currently operating mining and metallurgical enterprises, which are expressed in an increase in radiation sicknesses and deterioration of the human gene pool.

Particular concern is aroused by the regions near the town of Mailuu-Suu, where there is a cluster of 23 tailing ponds totaling 1,374,000 cu m and 18 dumping sites of off-grade ores totaling 845.6 thousand cu m, by the uranium tailing ponds totaling 150,000 cu m near the village of Kaji-Sai in the Issyk-Kul Region, which is located 1.5 km from the unique lake, Issyk-Kul, and by several tailing ponds near the village of Min-Kush which are located in a flood plain. The level of radiation in the local zones of these territories fluctuates between 100 microrentgen/hr and 1,800 microrentgen/hr.⁵

Technical servicing of these enterprises came to a halt after the U.S.S.R. collapsed. The situation is also aggravated by the fact that these dumping sites and tailing ponds are located in a seismic

⁴ See: M. Omarov, "Opasnaia bezopasnost malenkogo Kyrgyzstana," *Analitika. Tsentralnaia Aziia*, available at [www.easttime.ru].

⁵ See: Ch. Abdykaporov, "Ekologicheskoe vozdeistvie na okruzhaiushchuiu sredu khvostokhranilishch i otvalov uranovykh i polimetallicheskikh rud v Kyrgyzskoi Respublike," *Polisfera*, No. 3, 2000.

zone. This problem is becoming particularly urgent due to the increased seismic activity forecast for the entire Asian continent.

Another factor aggravating the situation is the fact that the soil cover of these tailing ponds and dumping sites is being gradually eroded by rain and mud slides. Mud slides destroy an enormous number of houses and buildings in the republic. Earthquakes also facilitate landslides and soil slips. As a rule, all earthquakes measuring 7 points on the Richter scale or higher are accompanied by catastrophic landslide and soil slip phenomena.

Tectonic movements today mainly lead to erosion, which subsequently causes landslides. This is a dangerous situation since it encroaches without warning and could have catastrophic consequences.

Threats to environmental safety have become more virulent because of the crisis phenomena in the state's economic sphere. This is due to the degradation in environmental protection activity, an increase in the negative environmental impact on human health, and insufficient legal support of environmental protection measures.

Migration and Ethnic Relations

Another issue that affects Kyrgyzstan's security is migration. A large number of citizens, ethnic Slavs, have already emigrated and are continuing to leave Kyrgyzstan. The main reasons for emigration are the steps being taken to raise the status of the national language and concern that this may place the Slavic minority in a less advantageous position.

According to the official statistics, as of today ethnic Russians in Kyrgyzstan account for about only 11% of its population. During the years of independence (1990-2005), the migration outflow from the republic amounted to a total of 490,600 people, 293,300 of whom (or 59.8% of the total) were Russians.⁶ It stands to reason that those citizens who left the country took a certain amount of knowledge and managerial experience with them.

As for institutional reform, the state's ethnic policy had a negative effect on the human resource potential in state management. The outflow of the Russian-speaking and other population from the regions where the titular nation lives is leading to a change in the ethnic composition of the population, particularly in the zones of social and ethnic tension, and to the gradual formation of mononational, so-called ethnically pure states and separate enclaves of closed national communities within them where the indigenous, titular nation predominates, instead of multinational states. The formation of mononational states in conditions of a change in political regimes and particularly economic systems and social management principles inevitably gives rise to instability and social conflicts, while disputes over the use of land, water, and other resources prompt their emergence. Examples of this are the Uzbek-Kyrgyz conflict in Osh, as well as the dispute between the residents of the Isfara Region of Tajikistan and the Batken Region of Kyrgyzstan. The situation could become more complicated if the religious extremist and separatist trends in the region become more virulent.

Ensuring the State's Territorial Integrity

Ensuring territorial integrity is one of the state's most important tasks. The need to define state borders arises from the desire to ensure state sovereignty, national security, and jurisdiction with re-

⁶ See: *Countries at the Crossroads 2006. Country Reports*, available at [www.freedomhouse.hu/nit.html].

spect to the country's territory and citizens, economic interests, and many other issues. The state should coordinate delimitation of the state border with neighboring countries, carry out its demarcation, create a widespread infrastructure of monitoring structures, and define and demarcate their powers.

The measures taken to delimit and set up the borders ultimately boil down to organizing the legal cross-border movement of citizens, transportation vehicles, freight, and goods, which is particularly pertinent for democratic states during liberalization of the state border crossing regime and expansion of political, economic, cultural, and humanitarian contacts with neighbors. On the whole, borders should promote cross-border movement and open up new possibilities for cooperation with neighboring countries rather than hinder this process.⁷

But today an agreement on delimitation has been reached for only half of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border, whereby the other half is more complicated and conflict-prone since it passes through population settlements or is of great economic, transportation, or other significance to both countries.

Talks with Uzbekistan have been underway since 2000. There have been significant advances in individual sections so far, but many serious problems must still be resolved in order to complete demarcation of the borders with neighbors.

The total length of the borders between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan amounts to 1,375 kilometers, 993 kilometers of which have already been coordinated at the delegation level, while the rest are at the discussion stage. The remaining 400 kilometers cover 58 separate sections. These sections still require serious negotiations to iron out the lingering discrepancies.

The unresolved border issues with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the country's south are aggravating ethnic relations. In particular, there are about 80 controversial sections in the Jalal-Abad Region. Uzbeks and Tajiks account for 20-25 percent of the population living in the regions where they are located. There are 15 controversial water and land sections in the Osh Region. This provides opportunities to artificially incite ethnic conflicts at the grassroots level, particularly in areas where national diasporas are densely concentrated.

Just a few years ago the Kyrgyz-Tajik border was semi-transparent and essentially unprotected. The question of delimitation was not raised until 1999 when militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) moved into southern Kyrgyzstan. In the summer they repeated their raids throughout Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. These inroads by the IMU compelled the states of the region to take steps to ensure more reliable protection of their borders. The Kyrgyz and Tajik authorities increased the number of customs posts and deployed additional military contingents on the border in order to prevent Islamists from entering their countries and to toughen up the fight against drugs and arms trade.

The security measures and new border regulations have also seriously complicated life for the local population: they impede trade, depriving many farmers of their main source of income. Mine laying in areas adjacent to the border has become a serious problem for peaceful citizens.⁸

Religious Extremism

Religious extremism poses a serious threat to Kyrgyzstan's security. The representatives of many extremist organizations have greatly stepped up their activity on its territory in recent years.

⁷ See: M. Omarov, *K voprosu o transgranichnom peredvizhenii cherez granitsy Kyrgyzstana*, Information Analytical Center, Institute of Strategic Analysis and Planning, Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University.

⁸ See: A. Krylov, "Religion in the Social and Political Life of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (42), 2006.

During its independence the republic has become an arena for the activity of foreign missionaries of the most diverse trends. The difficult socioeconomic situation and mass impoverishment of the population have provided fertile ground for new religious teachings and made rich foreign sects and religious associations socially attractive for a large number of local residents. In contrast to other confessions, Islamic radicals are using religion primarily as a political ideology for creating an Islamic state in the region. This activity is aggravating the religious situation and posing a real threat to the country's successful development.

The activity of Islamic radicals has complicated interstate relations among the Central Asian republics and led to an increase in ethnic tension. Today experts are concerned about the practice of direct foreign donations to some mosques and Muslim communities aimed at boosting their religious activity, as well as to building new religious facilities, which is making the clergy dependent to some extent on foreign investors. This is creating conditions among the local Muslims for unprecedented propaganda of all kinds of religious views and ideas, as well as confessional elements (madh'habs), which are not characteristic of the followers of Islam in the republic. These trends include Akromiy-lar, the Wahhabis, Islom lashkarlari (Warriors of Islam), and the most influential party in the religious community, Hizb ut-Tahrir.⁹

The State's Internal Political Stability

Internal political instability is the main threat to the internal component of Kyrgyzstan's national security at present and in the near future. Instability is caused by the absence of real political pluralism, since political stability largely depends on how the interests of different social groups are structured.

Since March 2005, Kyrgyz society has been discussing what political system and what state structure are best suited to the republic. Whereby this discussion has been going on in different forms—conferences, articles, seminars, mass meetings, and so on. The inefficiency and lack of professionalism of the current leadership have only intensified the crisis in every way so that now it threatens the state's security.

The party opposition is the main channel through which the people can express their discontent with the current regime and the most efficient way for the official authorities and society to acquaint everyone with their views. In Kyrgyzstan, institutionalized forms of political opposition, such as parties, the parliament, and blocs, are still at the embryonic stage. There are also extremely developed non-institutionalized forms of activity of the political opposition in the form of meetings, manifestations, and uprisings. People still remember the tragic example of the inefficient action of the political opposition institutions that led to the Aksy events of 2002.

- At this stage of development, there are three opposition camps—the For Justice public parliament and movement, the leaders of which are O. Tekebaev and A. Jekshenkulov. They believe that the main mechanism for reviving the country is political competition carried out through the legal independence of the power structures and ensuring constitutional

⁹ See: *O religioznoi obstanovke v Kyrgyzskoi Respublike i zadachakh organov vlasti po formirovaniu gosudarstvennoi politiki v religioznoi sfere* (Resolutions of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan No. 345 of 10 August, 1995; No. 20 of 17 January, 1997; No. 83 of 19 February, 1998; No. 442 of 7 July, 1998; No. 107 of 28 February, 2000; No. 510 of 22 August, 2000; and No. 155 of 5 April, 2001).

guarantees of the opposition's activity. They are also in favor of re-examining the functions and powers of the president, parliament, and power structures at the regional and provincial levels.

- The second is the People's Revolutionary Movement of Kyrgyzstan (PRMK). Its leaders, K. Beknazarov and T. Turgunaliyev, have more radical goals—overturning Bakiev's regime as the source of the crisis in the country. The revolutionary committee plans to hold a kurultai in all the regions of the republic.
- The third opposition movement, Zhany Kyrgyzstan, is ready to form a new government and take responsibility for it. For that it demands that the government resign and be made answerable for the crisis in the energy sector.

All three opposition camps have their own views on the situation in the country, as well as their own ideas and ambitions. But if we proceed from the functional approach for determining party effectiveness, we can see that the Kyrgyz parties only become active when the matter concerns the activity of the president, government, or with respect to some other major events, and even then only in the form of statements and addresses. Almost all political parties criticize the state of the economy and the people's material plight, but fail to define their own position or ways to improve the socio-economic sphere.

Possible Ways to Raise the Level of Security

1. At a meeting of the National Council on strategic development chaired by Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev in June 2008, he noted that the economy is growing and that the real increase in the GDP in 2007 amounted to more than 8%. The income part of the state budget has significantly increased. The amount of foreign debt with respect to the GDP has dropped to a safe level and the stability of the financial and banking sectors has been retained.¹⁰

But according to the president the state should develop efficient mechanisms for retaining macroeconomic stability and ensuring sustainable development in the context of the inconsistency of the world markets. Kurmanbek Bakiev posed the government and National Bank the task of re-examining the macroeconomic foundations of development in the mid term and drawing up an action plan in view of the sharp fluctuations in the price of food and energy resources.

Specialists believe that progressive development of the economic sector can be achieved by creating as favorable an investment climate as possible by eliminating the administrative barriers for investors. Lowering taxes under the new Tax Code is an important step in this direction. But it is only the first step.

Effectively fighting corruption could greatly boost economic development. This requires drawing up and introducing effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and a system of measures for combating corruption.

2. Water is acquiring ever greater socioeconomic significance. But water quotas for each country have not been determined, which is leading to irrational use of water resources in the region.

¹⁰ [www.tazar.kg], 25 June, 2008.

In order to deflate interstate tension, which is threatening the region's political and economic prosperity, a set of measures must be carried out to create a single economic mechanism for ensuring the rational use of national resources based on mutual benefit which meets the interests of all the region's states located on both the upper and the lower reaches of the rivers. Agreements must be reached on economic mechanisms for managing the region's water resources.

3. The arrangements in effect until recently regarding the functioning and interaction of the fuel and energy and water engineering infrastructures require significant adjustment in order to adapt them to contemporary conditions or execute a return to the regime of full exchange of water and energy resources that operated during Soviet times.
4. Greater efforts must be made to attract resources from international organizations such as the UN and IAEA in order to resolve the environmental problems, a situation which is exacerbated due to lack of funds.

However, since Kyrgyzstan's tailing ponds and dumping sites threaten the region's environment along the entire length of the cross-border rivers it would be expedient to initiate bi- and multilateral agreements with neighboring countries on the joint financing of measures to carry out fortification work at these tailing ponds and dumping sites.

5. Incorporating the potential of the SCO and CSTO, of which the region's states are members, would help to efficiently resolve border problems with neighboring states. It would be expedient to expand the terms stipulated by the 1996 Shanghai and 1997 Moscow agreements on interstate borders in the region.
6. Ongoing emigration is having a debilitating effect on the state's economic development since many emigrating citizens of the non-titular nation are highly qualified workers or specialists. The policy to prevent emigration should be directed, in addition to everything else, toward creating conditions in the country that encourage cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity.
7. Preventing ethnic conflicts requires carrying out a well-thought-out and balanced policy regarding national minorities that excludes infringement of their rights at citizens of Kyrgyzstan.
8. Extremism based on ideological, especially religious, convictions and the political goals and objectives concealed by them is more complicated and dangerous. The activity of extremist organizations is formed on strong organizational and managerial techniques.

The republic's authorities and Spiritual Administration of Muslims must draw up their own alternative to the radical views of the Islamic fundamentalists by explaining to Muslims the impermissibility of using Islam for political aims in a multi-confessional society.¹¹

9. The existing political system, which is permitting the upper echelons of power to shirk their responsibility and remain unpunished, is the main source of the crisis and is promoting all the other problems and diseases in society. The people, Kyrgyzstan's ordinary citizens, have been pushed to the periphery of the political process.

This problem can only be resolved if a set of measures is adopted by the legislative and executive power structures. They should be aimed at ensuring conditions for continuing the country's democratic and safe development within the framework of the law. But this will be

¹¹ See: A. Krylov, op. cit.

very difficult to achieve without continuous coordination of the efforts of all the state structures.

The quality of power and the politics pursued, on which the fate of states and their people depends, is determined by the mechanisms used to guarantee their security. These mechanisms are extremely important for the advanced development of society and democratic renewal of the political system. The essence of domestic political security is assessed by the extent to which it promotes the development and prosperity of the country in the difficult conditions of democracy-building. Political security is a system of measures used to identify, prevent, and remove the threats and dangers that could destabilize the situation in the country and be detrimental to society.

The absence of real pluralism could lead to extreme ways of expressing public interests—strikes, mass disorder, or armed uprisings. “Meeting democracy”¹² is becoming characteristic of our day and age, thus feeding political tension.

Political competition, independence of the power branches, and constitutional guarantee of the opposition’s activity are the main ways to revive the country.

Political parties are the main link between the government and society. Parties should play an active role in political life at all stages of this process. They largely define its nature, direction, stability, and civilizational element, as well as the strategy and tactics of the power struggle.

When there is pluralism, the representation of different interests and alternative solutions to the problems that arise are ensured. And it goes without saying that pluralism always leads to rivalry and competition, without which democracy makes no sense. Party opposition is a necessary element of the democratic mechanism that ensures society’s political stability. In Western political science, the opposition is a permanently active institution.¹³

Without political rivalry, competitiveness, opposition, and informal organizations there can be no talk of actual democracy. The principle of checks and balances, the mechanism of a political power struggle, and the institution of opposition are all natural regulations of political life. But we should also remember that the quality of democracy is not determined by an increase in the number of parties. Kyrgyzstan must create a healthy political expanse for those parties that are indeed capable of expressing and defending the interests of broad social groups.

The government must be able to talk to the people not only in the form of the institutionalized opposition and the parliament, but also through forums, round table talks, congresses, and, of course, kurultais. For we know that non-institutionalized public opinion leads to an instable balance. The existence of political channels for releasing public energy is one of the main ways to ensure systemic consent.

¹² See: E. Karin, “Vnutripoliticheskie aspekty natsionalnoi bezopasnosti Kazakhstana,” *Tsentrainaia Aziia i Kavkaz*, No. 3 (4), 1999.

¹³ See: M. Duverger, *Political Parties. Their Organization and Activity in Modern State*, New York, 1964; R. Dahl, *Political Opposition in Western Democracies*, Yale University Press, 1966.