

# GEOPOLITICAL LANDMARKS OF KYRGYZSTAN

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## I. Introduction

The 21st century is an age of new technologies, geopolitical decisions that echo across the world, and an unprecedented pace of globalization synchronously felt in all corners of the world. The size of a country is no longer all-important; its economic and political might alone is not enough to claim geopolitical influence—history has become another geopolitical factor. The Kyrgyz statehood rooted in a

millennium-long history of the nation has been recognized by the U.N. as a sign of its ancient history that started at the time when the genetic roots of the Chinese, Indians, Jews, Armenians, Turkmens and Tajiks were formed.

Without the Soviet Union the superpower confrontation came to an end, yet we are still facing other no less acute contradictions and challenges. The world remains divided into the great powers' spheres of influence; the struggle among them is accelerating. These processes are not limited to the great powers themselves—the developing nations are also affected. Regional cooperation is coming to the fore, while the states are looking for worthy partners and new markets.

The new doctrines, ideological schemes and development conceptions can be equally applied to large and small countries; the struggle between the maritime powers and the heartland and their allies determined the geopolitical landmarks of each entity of international law. The role of individual in history is increasing again. The nation cannot remain indifferent when its country is turning into an arena of geopolitical games and struggle for resources. The system of its relations with other states depends on its domestic political climate and the state course. The classical geopolitical concepts—soil, relief, climate, national character, political regime, East or West orientation—have acquired new meaning.

## II. About the Country

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked mountainous country with the extreme continental climate. Today, people of over 80 nationalities are living side by side in the republic, the core being formed by the Kyrgyz (about two-thirds of the total population). The country belongs to the Eurasian social type where its culture, history and the nature of state order are concerned; the system of social relations is mainly traditionalist.

The range of common consciousness varies from the feudal clan and relict communist ideas to virtual post-modernism. On the one hand, the nation favors the authoritarian system, on the other, the democratic ideas are very popular. This explains why certain groups of the political elite and common people still miss Stalin and his methods and why the bourgeois ideas (the market, capital, business, financial and industrial groups) are still defective. The layer of right liberals is very thin indeed. Contrary to what can be expected the nation has acquired a solid foundation of its new statehood rooted in the liberal-democratic principles of the relations between power and society. This patchy picture is determining the nature of new ethnogenesis and the country's future geopolitical aims.

Kyrgyzstan is the place where three world religions—Islam, Buddhism and Christianity—meet; therefore, correct development strategies will turn the country into a link between the West and the East. The 2200th anniversary of the Kyrgyz statehood widely celebrated on the basis of a U.N. decision in 2003 is directly related to the best achievements of contemporary political and social thought. Each nation should be aware of its origins, of its historic nature, its ethnogenetic roots in order to create an integral picture of the present and acquire a clear idea of the future.

Everybody concerned with the future of his country knows that it is highly ambiguous, patchy, multisided and varied. We cannot escape the coming shock of new reality and possible struggle for survival. At the same time, reliance on tradition with the aim of preserving national identity cannot help the nation to move toward a new national identity.

Kyrgyzstan has identified three main shells (atomic orbits) of its state policies on the international and domestic scene. The outer (outside) shell is strategic orientation toward three forces: the U.S., Russia and China. We should bear in mind that the multi-vector foreign policy of our republic is closely connected with domestic developments. Kyrgyzstan was the first among the CIS countries to join the WTO; it was one of the first to join the U.N. We are members of other international structures and are actively cooperating with the IMF, WB, EBRD, and the IDB. The international financial foundations have created a dense network of efficient structures in the republic, thus helping us develop a civil society. The country has a favorable investment climate in tourism, industry, agriculture, telecommunication and technologies. USAID helped us develop a marketing strategy designed to attract direct foreign investments (DFI) and realize the Investment Matrix. It has been calculated that in 2004 alone foreign investments will reach

\$200 million. The trade turnover with China, Southeast and Central Asia, and the West is growing, yet it cannot cover the local needs in capital investments in economy and the services. Kyrgyzstan is developing a favorable investment climate to attract more private and state investments: this is a clear sign that the country is devoted to democracy, the market, and human rights.

The second shell is the Eurasian one. In a broad sense Eurasia is a semicircle formed by Turkey, the South Caucasian states, Ukraine, Russia's regions, Europe, Central Asia and Mongolia. This is a fascinating and unpredictable territory especially attractive for small countries, such as Kyrgyzstan. The vast Eurasian cultural-historical expanse contains important world civilizations: Turkism, Sino-ism, Slavism, Hinduism, Europe-ism, and Atlanticism. Its historical transfers from one formation to another have taught Kyrgyzstan to adequately respond to the most unpredictable developments. This left its imprint on the nation's political behavior; the recent social and political transformations are obviously changing the nation's psychology.

The Eurasianism understood as a synthesis of cultures, historical destinies, and as a geoeconomic system is one of the post-Soviet achievements. Very soon Bishkek will host an international forum "Eurasia in the 21st Century: A Dialog of Cultures or a Clash of Civilizations?" aimed at generalizing all contemporary conceptions of and approaches to Eurasianism as the cornerstone of geopolitical efforts of the tellurian countries in the face of the preeminence of the thalassic states, of which America is the leader. The forum is expected to discuss once more and assess the Russian, Kazakhstani, Iranian, Turkish and European variants of the Eurasian conception as applied to our country's democratic future as a Eurasian country. For the Central Asian nations Eurasianism is a new and highly interesting subject, one of the aspects of their regional development: they are all involved in building up their regional geopolitics.

Regional orientation is the third shell: Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Turkey, some of the Caspian states, as well as Mongolia and Russia represented by Tyva serve as our regional landmarks. Life has shown that economy cannot develop as an autarchic and purely regional structure or be oriented toward one "eternal friend" or "comrade." For example, Iran's geopolitical initiatives to set up peaceful regional security system deserve special attention. Our republic should have a closer look at the Iranian and Indian experience in the field of economy. It should be said that the Central Asian countries, especially Kyrgyzstan, would have profited from Ukrainian presence in the region: I have in mind further development of civil short-range aviation that could help us improve our transportation system. Civil short-range aviation is especially effective in a mountainous country.

The materials of the Mountainous Summit held in Bishkek in the fall of 2002 demonstrated that all mountain civilizations share several features: their economies are of a mixed type and they have a common special sociocultural type of relationships. Their transport infrastructure belongs to new geoeconomics. This will be taken into account. On the other hand, cooperation with China in the agricultural and industrial spheres (in the form of using Chinese experts as advisors) will help us boost these economic branches. We can profit from the experience accumulated in the northwestern corner of China and its mountainous areas, in the first place.

### III. Landed Property—New Type of Property

People in Kyrgyzstan have acquired the right to own property; the republic is switching to market economy and this proved to be the test of the nation's humanity. People have realized that in real democracy and social liberalism it is not the state that sets the rules but the economic entities themselves. Certain novel democratic institutions (some of them appeared in the country for the first time)—the ombudsman, local self-administrations, free elections and new election rules, NGOs, courts of elders, independent media, and political parties—played an important role in the new processes. In the new conditions the traditional family and the state have acquired new dimensions.

The country acquired its national currency (som) in 1993 that bridled galloping inflation (reaching 1000 percent) and prevented a complete ruin of national economy. The som was supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Later when Kyrgyzstan joined the WTO it acquired excellent

perspectives because the world market is supervised by international trade and financial institutions. At the same time, the country was confronted with another problem of national genesis: how the real economic sector should be developed in order to find a niche in the highly competitive market of commodities and intellectual property. President Akaev spoke about the process of forming a single Kyrgyz nation in one of his addresses to the nation and the parliament. It was another angle of the country's geopolitical self-determination as a sovereign state.

The law that turned land into private property changed people's ideas about themselves: a landowner is a key entity of a novel approach to man as a creator of new values. The state stops being the omnipotent structure ordering passive and obedient vassals about—it becomes a real partner of property owners. It starts regulating the relations between the authorities and citizens and ensures the right of ownership for all without exception. This was entered into the republic's constitution after the referendum of 2 February, 2003.

In the philosophical context land is a multisided and universal category; it has concentrated economic, political and spiritual traditions; the nation is interested in it as the repository of its historic memories and its hopes for the future. Happiness today and in future is possible only when people live on their native land. The land makes man a true master of his future and an equal citizen of his country; the land is the guarantor of social stability and consolidation for the sake of unity.

## IV. New Doctrines

Democracy begins when human rights are reliably protected, when man has an opportunity to vote so as to decide the future of his country and society. Kyrgyzstan was declared to be a country of human rights—a geopolitical decision for the sake of the country's future. The human dimension in the state's policy comprises human rights; people's involvement in decision-making through voting; health and education. The human dimension of geopolitics means that people are looked at as the main instrument of the country's international influence. This, in turn, molds individuals into citizens. The natural laws of social development begin where freedom begins. This is a difficult ethical, psychological and political task for all post-Soviet states and nations. Our future depends on how well we can use our newly acquired freedom today.

It has been said many times that in politics there are no eternal allies—there are only eternal interests. If countries share interests one may hope that they will establish stable and reliable allied relations. Geopolitics is rooted in the profound knowledge of the country's nature and ethnic specifics; it takes account of ethnic psychology that reflects the main trends of novel ethnic features and the country's geographic location.

Those who refuse to treat geopolitics seriously will be inevitably caught unawares by barely perceptible shifts of big politics and sudden moves of partners. Unreliable partners are not a cause but a result of inadequate attention to political and economic relationships. The Central Asian and Caucasian countries are being gradually drawn into rapidly unfolding events and are developing into the entities of the international distribution of ideological doctrines. Adequate attention to geopolitics will bring success but in a region devoid of a single economic expanse the countries are limited in their geopolitical moves. In such regions it is signally important to prevent (or overcome) the threat of "Afghanization" or "Balkanization" prescribed by the "world grand masters" of mondialism and the great powers' "spheres of interest."

We should say that Academician and President of the Kyrgyz Republic Askar Akaev, one of the prominent politicians of the world, is also a successful geopolitician. The Great Silk Road doctrine he formulated back in 1998 is a document of worldwide importance. Peacekeeping and counter-terrorist efforts closely connected with the ideology of integration have become part and parcel of our country's diplomacy and geopolitical efforts. Supported by Russia, Japan, Turkey and China this doctrine determined the long-term perspectives of cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and other countries.

There is another no less important doctrine of the president of Kyrgyzstan. This is the "And-And" doctrine, which means that the interests of all countries that coincide with the interests of our country are equally important and needed. This is an alternative to the traditional "Either-Or" idea ("if I have this country for an ally there is no place for others in our alliance"). This is best illustrated by two military bases—an airbase at the international airport Manas used by the counter-terrorist coalition, and the Rus-

sian airbase in the town of Kant, close to the Chinese border—a unique phenomenon in international practice because the interests of the three giants do not clash there. They are mutually complementary. In this way the “And-And” doctrine supplied the multi-vector foreign policy of our country with an ideological and conceptual foundation in the form of a communicative “know-how,” it added several more layers to it and can serve as a graphic example of political synergism.

## V. Hard Roads Leading to Integration

Social and political transformations of the post-Cold War period are changing, to a great extent, the development patterns of the post-Soviet nations by offering people unexpected thinking patterns and economic coordinates. Sometimes people are carried away by their own enthusiasm only to be shocked by hardships these new patterns and coordinates cause. Yet nothing is unexpected—everything is predetermined, both joy and grief. They are all caused by people themselves. This is why the seemingly close aim suddenly disappears: more often than not reality pushes us back to the original positions. Politics and dreams are unlikely bedfellows.

Dialog and integration have at least several stages to cover before the conditions for a genuine dialog and genuine integration are ripe. The levels can be described in the following way: (1) optimism at the level of emotional contacts (eternal friendship agreements and fraternal feelings); (2) different assessments of reality (interests of states are rarely identical); (3) conflict of interests (caused, for example, by different national laws on customs and transborder procedures, legal aspects of cooperation and security issues); (4) realization that the sides need each other and that their positions should inevitably be drawn closer; (5) a dialog developing into integration. At the fifth, highest, level of mutual understanding a system of practical decisions between states is formed. Having lost their euphoria, having lived through numerous hardships they themselves create, people surmount these artificial obstacles to finally grasp the science of state-by-stage development; gradualness and consistency of social and political reforms. This is rooted in Oriental wisdom and all reforms should follow this pattern.

Askar Akaev's definitive work *Perekhodnaia ekonomika glazami fizika* (A Physicist's View of Transitional Economy) has added to the world's treasure-trove of management skills. Its practical importance is obvious today when all possible forecasts of future developments are obviously needed. On the ruins of the Soviet empire (that was keeping the union republics under pressure) the choice of the most rational variant of our relations with the closest neighbors and the world as a whole is intimately connected with our country's choice of domestic policies. The geopolitical value of the ideas our leaders and civil society have been recently offering is rooted in the past of the Kyrgyz statehood; in the economic theories of the past two centuries, the philosophy of nation formation (a single nation of Kyrgyzstan), as well as in the communications projects (transborder roads, technological breakthroughs in various fields, satellite communication, in particular).

The country's national development strategy depends, to a great extent, for its realization on the republic's geopolitical landmarks in the multi-vector and multi-level contexts. For example, the Integrated Development program for 2001-2010 envisages active cooperation with large and small states; we have selected the trade, economic, information, technological and humanitarian priorities and preferable vectors of such cooperation—the EU, U.N., the SCO, the EurAsEc, the Collective Security Treaty—that are developing together with the NATO Partnership for Peace program. On the whole, the geostrategy of the future looks like a foreign policy system the realization of which will depend on the degree of involvement of small and large nations in regional relationships.

Despite our relatively small territory and the present economic situation described as “geopolitical dualism” (some people believe that Kyrgyzstan is locked in a transportation cul-de-sac, while others are convinced that our mountainous country is a crossroads of civilizations and cultures where communication routes meet) some of the leaders of large political parties of Russia believe that our republic is developing into a geopolitical center and a “key partner” of the Russian Federation.

There is the expert opinion that if the country manages to escape from the “transportation cul-de-sac” mentioned above and if it acquires state-of-the-art communication means it will become a transcontinental country. Bishkek has already scored several foreign policy victories by establishing good-neighborly relations with Beijing, Tashkent and Astana. Its liberal-democratic principles and its Eurasian location create freedom of geopolitical maneuvering that uses the entire range of contemporary means—people’s diplomacy, flexible foreign policy and political psychology—to identify its priorities and describe them to the world community.

The Central Asian states now living through a period of disintegration objectively need a common market and, hence, new regional economy and new regional politics. The five states should pool together their production potential. This process will be a gradual one and will probably be completed by the mid-2030s. By that time they will probably create the Central Asian Common Market.

To be able to achieve this the Central Asian republics have to create a formula of their future unity: so far they have not yet reached an adequate level of democratic thinking and management. This is the task for the intellectuals who are expected to develop into the “conscience of the nation” and help the leaders of the five republics to find the genuinely democratic road. The futurological congress “Asia-2050” that is being convened with the help of the intellectual elite of the Central Asian countries is expected to contribute to their democratic choice. The epoch of globalization calls for unity—not disunity. The centrifugal tendencies of disintegrated policies are a temporary phenomenon. There is still hope for the region’s better future. The five integration stages described above can be speedily negotiated to alleviate possible negative consequences. To achieve this the local politicians and all those concerned with the region’s future should demonstrate their political will.

Deep-cutting economic and social reforms cannot be partial reforms. It has become abundantly clear that half-measures will never bring the desired results because the contemporary challenges are of an integral, global and cardinal nature. For example, the Integrated Development program mentioned above should receive a logical continuation in the form of a long-term national strategy to cover several next decades. Without this power will stagnate, while the state programs lacking concrete achievements will prove unreal. The absence of any component or a link from the system of transformations or, worse still, tactical errors will never let us progress—they will trigger economic losses.

## VI. The Democratic Code: Quo Vadis?

In March 2003, our republic acquired a Public Democratic Security Council (PDSC) made of the most respected academics and public figures. It had elaborated a Democratic Code (Social Contract) of the nation of Kyrgyzstan adopted in August 2003 by the World Kurultay of the Kyrgyz. The document, which is essentially a code of moral principles, is intended as a source of the global rules of democracy to be applied in this country and all over the world. Kyrgyzstan is developing into a model state in which the democratic principles are strictly observed and in which power is completely accountable to the nation.

I have already written that in the globalizing world the country’s size is no longer all-important; at the same time, the importance of the country’s choice of its position in the world is increasing. The role of the individual in history is more important than ever. At the same time, globalization favors economically and politically strong countries that have enough money to control others. The world hegemony’s monetary policies became the decisive factor any more or less developing country has to bear in mind when choosing partners and friends. The global game at democracy knows no victors and no losers, since democracy itself is an enigma for a rank-and-file analyst.

Indeed, democracy today is in trouble: large states that have made it their business to teach others democracy do not demonstrate their devotion to its principles. The mondialists look like dictators, while globalization sometimes produces more totalitarianism than we could see in the Soviet Union. In fact, upon the downfall of this most aggressive empire the world, no longer threatened with a global clash of two systems, has become more united than before. The Atlantists who are seeking a unipolar world are

destroying this unity. Hence international terrorism and its aggressive response to progress that shock the civilized world community. International terrorism is a product of the world religions' different philosophical worldviews responsible for civilization's development pace and its quality. The inadequate philosophical assessment by the developing countries with strong religious traditions of themselves and their place in the world caused by their ideological opposition to the industrial-information powers are responsible for international terrorism and domestic extremism.

The religions are complementing each other; they teach societies tolerance and wisdom, yet one tends to agree with certain contemporary thinkers who say that the confessions are no longer a universal means of moral transformation of man and society and that they should transform themselves. Like national chauvinism, religious chauvinism and pan-confessionalism are fraught with more troubles. Religious pluralism is preached in Kyrgyzstan: each of the confessions can prove its worth, while competing for the minds and hearts by peaceful means. For example, there are two opposite opinions about Hizb ut-Tahrir: some people say that this party should be banned, while others are convinced that its noble ideas should be widely promoted.

Extreme domestic phenomena—political confrontation, religious and ethnic intolerance—will spread abroad to cause regional instability. Stability in one country strengthens stability in its neighbors, therefore explosive situation in one country causes social instability in others. I regret to say that such explosions are inevitable in the countries in which power tries to put a lid on democracy: popular pressure is building up under the lid. The self-styled dictators who try to rule with fear under the guise of democracy have chosen a dangerous road. Popular discontent cannot be kept in check for long. If certain Central Asian republics fail to follow the road of true democracy, their leaders will find themselves in hot water despite their countries' huge natural riches.

International community supports Kyrgyzstan's democratic initiatives at all important global forums. The Democratic Code of our country has registered: "The public of Kyrgyzstan believes that, by way of an international, moral and legal initiative, it should invite the world community to elaborate the International Democratic Code the cornerstone of which was laid at the World Parliamentary Congress in Santiago (Chili)." In July 2003 the Kyrgyz Press information agency reported that the members of the parliament of Kyrgyzstan formulated an idea of an International Democratic Security Council approved by the World Parliamentary Congress. As soon as a new ideology—Kyrgyzstan is the Human Rights Country—had been formulated the country acquired a Public Democratic Security Council. It discussed the Democratic Code in detail. The new structure is designed to coordinate the efforts of all parliaments to monitor potential violations of the principles of democracy, to supply information about such violations, to assess what the political institutions of power are doing, and provide recommendations on conflict prevention and settlement (the Democratic Code of the People of Kyrgyzstan). In April 2004 the participants in the international conference "Importance of the Democratic Code of the People of the Kyrgyz Republic for Democratic Developments and Human Rights" invited the president of Kyrgyzstan, international organizations and the neighboring states to start working on the Central Asian Democratic Code.

The republic moved further on the road of democracy and market reforms by setting up the Council of Conscientious Management, an anti-corruption structure that attracted a lot of attention. There are first positive results: 2004 was announced the Year of Conscientious Management and Social Mobilization that increases the state's responsibility for its actions. The republic's public politics was reflected in some other documents related to suffrage, judicial reform, and the nation's involvement in decision-making. Kyrgyzstan has openly declared that it was prepared to face the contemporary challenges in the sphere of national self-organization and nation-formation while relying on worldwide democratic experience.

## VII. On Terralogy and Global Federation

Political integration of Eurasia is a quest for *terra communa*—there is no place for the struggle of tellurian against thalassic states (according to A. Dugin) in it. A new discipline is developing in contemporary geopolitics—it is called terralogy and studies regional problems in the geopolitical context. The

chance of enlisting Europe as its ally that the Soviet political leaders let to slip between their fingers should be recovered in the form of the new democratic order built along the lines of the International Democratic Code (Global Social Contract).

The nation-state is interpreted in Kyrgyzstan as an embodiment of traditionalism and modernism. We are watching a new national entity appearing in Eurasia in the melting pot of a single geopolitical expanse. The Bishkek forum mentioned above is expected to create a new conception of Eurasianism. The conference will be attended by leaders of many countries, a great number of former foreign ministers and political scientists. We can expect that they will produce a conception of terrapolitics, a promised land politics for each country. Globalization has given rise to "geopolitical instincts" of even small states guided by ideocratic development ideas. I should say that our republic, for example, possesses huge amounts of fresh water and that it is ruled by an idea. The market-oriented organizations are capable of promptly responding to any change in the most adequate way. Kyrgyzstan has found its own method of interacting with the world.

Since the Kyrgyz land is described as the source of fresh water (Ala-Too), ideas and water are two factors that go hand in hand with dynamic progress. They can help the country overcome its economic difficulties and join the ranks of stronger states. Having overcome its present dubious positions our republic will be able to influence Eurasian geopolitical strategies by contributing to regional stability and being guided by the ideas of domestic consolidation. With regional contradictions removed Kyrgyzstan stands a good chance of becoming a country of average development by the 2050s. We cannot cope with the task on our own. An intellectual club The Futurological Congress Asia-2050 based on the Bishkek Institute of Social and Political Studies set up in the Kyrgyz capital is designed to comprehend the region's prospects if its countries acquire equal opportunities for their dynamic development (by this I mean that the nations of the region should do away with material- and labor-consuming production methods and discontinue the large states' habit of using force when confronted with international problems). The government of our republic should more actively look for alternative energy sources; it should create and offer the world original information technologies; tap the nature's healing potential and organize water marketing.

The water and climatic resources of Ala-Too, the mountainous region with unique ecology rich in mineral and energy resources, is one of the republic's geopolitical and geoeconomic development factors. The main water resources of the region are concentrated in Kyrgyzstan; this gives us the opportunity to strengthen our international positions by creating a bilateral or multilateral water and energy consortium. These strategic aims go far beyond the limits of one country: Kyrgyzstan will be able not only to supply its neighbors (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and China) with ecologically pure water but also to sell it to other countries (the Middle Eastern states, Pakistan, Turkey and Israel). As the number of sources of fresh water will be diminishing the price will go up. Very soon, by the middle of the 2020s, it will become much more expensive than oil. Today, Bishkek could sign contracts on building water pipelines to export fresh water to water-deficit countries.

The road from an empire to a global federation lies through the International Democratic Code that should teach democracy to all Eurasian nations. Much time will be required to adapt to democracy: traditionalist societies find it hard to embrace democratic principles. Kyrgyzstan's initiative to create the Democratic Code (Social Contract) has translated into reality the ideas of the great thinkers of the past: Confucius, Socrates, Empedocles, ibn Rushd, Hugo Grotius, Bacon, Spinoza, Rousseau, Marx, Popper and others. Kyrgyzstan has a good chance of becoming the ideological trailblazer for the sake of the United Democratic Flag of the World.