KYRGYZSTAN AFTER AKAEV: WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY, WHAT NEXT?

Zurab TODUA

Expert on Central Asia and the Caucasus
(Moscow, Russian Federation)

No one expected the fall of Askar Akaev's regime, a major political sensation in March 2005, to be so sudden and swift. Like everyone else, the opposition was taken by surprise. Just a few days later, Felix Kulov had to admit: "It was all more or less spontaneous. A

crowd gathered for an open-ended rally. Then some people started chasing others, who ran to the 'White House' for shelter, and those pursuing them burst into the office building after them."[1]

This appears to be a pretty accurate description. The "White House" security, militia and special forces were obviously at a loss and acted haphazardly; taken by surprise, the republic's leaders and President Akaev seemed unable to make up their minds. Defeat was imminent. The myth about Kyrgyzstan, an "island of democracy" in Central Asia, dissipated; the head of the republic fled the country in the manner of a Latin American dictator. The country's future is dim.

[1] *Komsomolskaia pravda,* 29 March, 2005.

All this, however, was no accident. For the past 15 years, President Akaev and his supporters have been marching toward their fall: their foreign and, especially, domestic policies abounded in errors and miscalculations. Over time, historians and political analysts will undoubtedly acquire new facts and new eyewitness accounts to complete the picture of the Kyrgyz "revolution."

Here I will analyze certain facts of the republic's recent past to provide answers to the following questions:

- What made the political crisis possible?
- Why was official power defeated?
- Could the crisis have been avoided altogether?
- How will the "revolution" affect the Kyrgyz Republic, its Central Asian neighbors, and the region as a whole?

The Early 1990s

As distinct from its Central Asian neighbors, independent Kyrgyzstan opted for the Western variant of political and economic development. The republic did not waste much time pondering the alternatives before adhering to the monetarist model of reform, probably under the influence of the liberal reformers in Russia and Western advisors. The West appreciated the country's absolute devotion to the recommendations of the IMF and other international institutions. Between 1993 and 1996, the republic regularly received credits, the per capita amounts of which were much larger than in any of the CIS countries. In 1996, the IMF granted the republic most-favored nation treatment and increased its aid to allow it, the first among the Central Asian countries, to acquire its own national currency (the som). Every year the West poured up to $100 million into the republic to keep it afloat.

In 1993, then U.S. President's advisor Stroub Talbott visited the country to praise its achievements and pointed out: "Today, Kirghizia gets much more per capita aid than other countries."[2] He encouraged the country's leaders and hinted that the West would continue supporting them. The media in the West and in Russia spoke of the Kyrgyz president as an enlightened ruler devoted to the ideas of market economy; his reforms were offered as an example to be followed in all other Central Asian countries.

The West, absolutely convinced that democracy is a perfect state order suitable for every country, looked at Bishkek as a shop window of its ideas. In Russia, the rulers and the liberal media alike went out of their way to present the Kyrgyz experience as the only correct way to carry out economic reforms. In fact, reforms Kyrgyz-style dealt a heavy blow to the nation, which was duped and robbed. The republic came to be known as "an island of democracy and stability" in Central Asia. The compliments went to the heads of the people at the helm; they became convinced that democracy, a perfect political order, "could be borrowed and inserted at home, like an electric light bulb."[3]

[2] *Res publica* (Bishkek), 22 November, 1994.
[3] I. Efimov, "Demokraticheskaia otmychka," *Ekspert,* No. 38, 11 October, 1999, p. 50.

The reforms, however, triggered deep-cutting negative processes in the economy inherited from the Soviet Union and in the republic's social structure. In 1995, for example, the manufacture of 31 out of 32 main industrial products was on the steady decline; only the baking industry was flourishing. The republic was hit by a chronic deficit of capital investments: in 1993 they barely reached 10 percent of the 1989 level.[4] In 1992, the rate of industrial decline was 26.4 percent; in 1993, 24.6 percent; in 1994, 27.9 percent (an alternative figure, about 50 percent).

The already weak economy was further undermined by low solvent demand, slackened production cooperation, the low quality of certain products, the lack of material and financial resources, and a growing number of accounts receivable and payable.[5] By 1996, 121 industrial enterprises, or one out of five, were idling.[6] Over half of them were underloaded; home-grown businessmen were exporting everything that could be sold at a profit: non-ferrous metals, machines and machine tools, all kinds of equipment, raw material, wool, hides, etc.

In addition, deep property stratification occurred in Kyrgyzstan. By the fifth anniversary of the republic's independence, 97 percent of its population were living below the poverty level.[7] Kirghizia was not rich in Soviet times, while in democratic times it became a pauper. There was not enough cash: it was replaced by sheep, with which people paid for goods and services everywhere, especially in the remote areas. Over time, there were no longer enough sheep either: the reforms hit cattle breeding hard, and cattle stock decreased several-fold. It should be said that for a large part of the titular nation who descended from nomadic cattle-breeders, cattle was a sign of wealth and source of livelihood. Deprived of it, thousands of countryside dwellers and their children were doomed to eternal poverty.

This was the backdrop against which a handful of highly placed officials and their callous business friends openly divided the country's riches among themselves in complete disregard of their sinking reputations and public opinion. In October 1991, Askar Akaev personally participated in setting up the Siabeko-Kirghizia JV. Boris Birshtein, a notorious businessman well known in certain circles, who owned Siabeko, was appointed Chairman of the Committee for the Republic's Restoration and Development (!). Much time passed before the country's leaders discovered that the chairman was doing nothing to restore the republic. He was fired, yet nobody bothered to calculate the damage he had done. In the fall of 1993, another scandal, this time around the gold mining industry, shook the republic: in the absence of strict control, a closely-knit group of the country's top officials (which included several of the highest officials and President Akaev) appropriated hard currency incomes earned by mining gold.

The country became completely dependent on foreign loans—this was the worst possible result of the economic reforms. The West never hesitated to extend loans under the pledge of the country's natural riches (gold, silver, antimony, mercury, etc.). Foreign creditors preferred to invest in infrastructure related to mining and exporting local resources. A large part of foreign credits was embezzled. By the mid-1990s, the country had accumulated a foreign debt of about $1.5 billion, which made Bishkek completely dependent on its foreign advisors when it came to important foreign and even domestic policy decisions. Early in 1994, foreign experts decided that the reforms were stalling: disregarding the power abuses and embezzlement at all levels, they recommended accelerated privatization, which amounted to criminal privatization under Kyrgyz conditions. The parliament objected and

[4] See: *Istoria kyrgyzov i Kyrgyzstana,* Bishkek, 1995, p. 284.

[5] See: *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki v 1995 g.,* Natsional'ny statisticheskiy komitet KR, Bishkek, 1996, pp. 13-14.

[6] See: *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki v ianvare 1996 g.,* Natsional'ny statisticheskiy komitet KR, Bishkek, 1996, p. 11.

[7] See: *Res publica,* 15 December, 1995.

was disbanded in 1994 at the suggestion of the same experts. This caused an acute political crisis in the republic.

Along with the parliament, President Akaev disbanded a special commission set up to look into all sorts of violations of the privatization process. Its members had amassed enough facts about the criminal sources of wealth certain deputies and heads of local administrations (akims) amassed by abusing their official positions. With a population of barely 4.5 million, the republic is too small to conceal anything. The public watched how top-level bureaucrats and their business friends plundered the country. The authorities remained indifferent.

President Akaev, too, completely abandoned all caution: in 1998, his son married President Nazarbaev's daughter. The destitute nation was invited to watch two presidents dressed up for the wedding, guests arrayed in finery, and an abundance of food on the tables. The people were probably even more irritated by the official propaganda which described the "wedding of the century" with gusto and enthusiasm.

The president of Kyrgyzstan lost all sense of proportion; his cronies and his close and distant relatives followed his example. I should say that President Karimov of Uzbekistan wedded his two daughters without much ado, TV programs, and excitement in the press. What is more, a top-level official responsible for a wedding in Tashkent at which $100 bills were thrown at the feet of the newly weds received a severe dressing down from the president before being fired. This had a positive and educative effect across the country: flaunting of wealth in a poor country is immoral.

The official media of Kyrgyzstan spoke of achievements: production was going up, inflation was going down, agriculture was stable, structural reforms were unfolding, administration and management improving, etc. In the summer of 2000, however, President Akaev suddenly said in one of his interviews: "To tell the truth, we have just started reforming the social institutions and our economic system. Many of the changes have not yet become irreversible."[8] It was an indirect admission that ten years of his rule had been wasted. One result, however, was obvious.

The efforts to plant a Western model of reforms in disregard of the local realities and traditions exacerbated all the domestic problems, regionalism being the most dangerous of them.

The Local Clans

From time immemorial the political and economic elite of Kyrgyzstan has been divided into two clans—the Northern and the Southern. They differ geographically, ethnically, economically, and even historically (the South joined Russia later than the North).

The Ferghana Range divides the country into the southern and northern parts connected by the only road. The Issyk Kul, Talas, Naryn, and Chu regions belong to the North; the Osh, Dzhalal-Abad, and the recently formed Batken regions, to the South. The Northern clan includes several families: Sary Bagysh, Bugu, Solto, Tynay, Kushchu, and Sayak. The Southern consists of only one family—the Ichkiliks.

The industrial North is sparsely populated by Kyrgyz, Russians, Ukrainians, Kazakhs, Uighurs, and Dungans, who follow the European lifestyle. All higher educational establishments are found in the North too. From the mid-20th century onwards, the Kyrgyz Republic was ruled by Northerners (with the exception of a short period when Absamat Masaliev from the South was in power). The Northern clans became Russian subjects in 1855; the Ichkiliks remained part of the Kokand Khanate until 1876.

[8] An interview with *Kommersant* newspaper, 26 July, 2000.

The South is a densely populated predominantly agricultural area plagued by land and water shortages. There is no industry to speak of here; the Russian culture and language are not as prominent as in the North: most of the local people (mainly Uzbeks and Tajiks) can barely speak Russian. The South is much more religious than the North, while the Osh and Dzhalal-Abad regions are described as Islamic strongholds.

For historical reasons, the South was barely represented in the republic's ruling structures; this and many other signs of inequality bred jealousy of the North. No wonder the "revolution" of March 2005 was launched by discontented masses in the republic's South. According to the information available today, the so-called "Osh detachments" played a key role in the Bishkek developments. It is still unclear who formed them, what they did, and how they contributed to the looting in the capital that followed the capture of the "White House." Under Akaev, official ideology insisted that economic reforms would diminish the clans' influence and social role. The Central Asian hearings in the U.S. Senate, which took place on 27 July, 2002, shared this opinion.

This proved to be wrong: in Kyrgyzstan, the clans have always been involved in political rivalry (in recent history, too, they fought for power and influence). Normally the struggle is latent and positional; from time to time it flares up or almost disappears. In the 1970s-1980s, for example, the situation was relatively balanced: the spheres of influence were strictly delineated to the sides' mutual satisfaction. In the 1990s, however, tension returned: the reforms brought about redistribution of property and lucrative posts, which upset the old balance.

When Akaev came to power, the Northern clan gained a lot of weight.[9] In the past, too, the Northerners were more numerous and more influential. In the 1990s, they became even stronger, because until March 2005 they dominated in the upper echelons of power where people from the South were few and far between. The 1994 crisis was largely born by the South-North standoff. It was then that some of the media warned against the "Tajik variant" repeating itself in the RK. The public at large believed that the fears were imaginary or fanned deliberately. (Today, however, nobody would sign to this.) At that time, the powers that be cut short all the attempts by certain politicians and businessmen to change the rules the top crust had established. For example, ambitious Felix Kulov, former vice-president of the RK, former governor of the Chu Region, and the Mayor of Bishkek, was relieved of his rank of Lieutenant General and sent to prison for 10 years. According to local observers, he lost the struggle against the president, because he underestimated the clan factor and failed to draw prominent Northerners to his side. Zhalgap Kazakbaev, former director of the Kara-Baltinskiy ore dressing combine and a deputy in the country's parliament, found himself locked up for 14 years for the excessive zeal with which he objected to the way Akaev and his circle dealt with the gold mines in the republic. In 2002, the rulers took pity on him and he was amnestied.

Several businessmen who failed to conform to the "clan ethics" of doing business and earning money lost their wealth and freedom. The fates of the first "liquor kings," Muhammed Ibragimov and Boris Vorobiov, are the best example. The authorities took away their businesses and property. Ibragimov remained free, while Vorobiov spent four years behind the bars. Their distilleries and shops went to the ruling group, of which the Akaevs were a prominent part.

By the early 21st century, the top posts in the law enforcement bodies, the cabinet's economic bloc, the key posts in the president's administration, and the lucrative businesses belonged to Northerners, who sided with Akaev. His closest circle consisted of Bolot Jankuzov, head of the republic's National Security Council, who later became the president's advisor; Temirbek Akmataliev, former finance minister and the most obvious presidential candidate (he and Akaev both belonged to the Sary

[9] Askar Akaev belongs to the Sary Bagysh family of the Chu Region; his wife Mayram to the Kushchu family of the Talas Region.

Bagysh family); Misir Ashirkulov, head of the presidential administration (known across the country as the "gray eminence"); Il'ias Bekbolotov, the president's press secretary and Ashirkulov's nephew (both from the Solto family); and Chubak Abyshkaev, the republic's public prosecutor (the Tynay family). The Akaevs, who had climbed to the very top of the power pyramid, controlled gold mining and the sale of gold, as well as the mining of nearly every other mineral. The family owned numerous enterprises and a great number of expensive shops, boutiques and supermarkets in Bishkek, the country's capital. Kazakh Adil Taygonbaev, who is married to the president's oldest daughter Bermet, had all distilleries under his control; he also patronized his friends from Kazakhstan. A school-friend from Kazakhstan, Igor Zabara, won all the tenders in which his firm took part. The president's son, Aydar Akaev, monopolized trade in oil products.

It looks as if President Akaev was trying to create a secure future for his family. In any case, people are convinced that the Alga Kyrgyzstan party headed by Bermet Akaeva was set up to create a political niche for the president's oldest daughter and her brother Aydar. Askar Akaev was probably toying with the idea of transferring power to them.

The positions of the Southerners were much weaker: by tradition they could count on the post of prime minister. In May 2002, Premier Kurmanbek Bakiev from the South was forced to resign when the way the mass rallies in the Aksy District (Dzhalal-Abad Region) had been dealt with on 20 March, 2002 became known: five killed and about 80 wounded. In 2000, Southerner Omurbek Tekebaev ran against Askar Akaev for president. There were several Southerners among the deputies and the opposition; Tursunbay Bakir-Ulu, a Kypchak from the Ichkilik family, even headed the Human Rights Committee under the president.

The Southerners refused to be satisfied with insignificant posts in the republic's administrative structures, which brought no real power; their discontent kept tension at a high level and created the danger of mass actions against the ruling elite. In the mid-1990s, there was a lot of talk in the South about an independent South Kyrgyz state; it seemed to be about to happen, when the separatist leader, Governor of the Dzhalal-Abad Region Bekmamat Osmonov, suddenly died in 1997. The trend stalled.

The president was warned on all sides that the interests of the Southerners and of other Northern families should not be ignored, that he had to share power, reach compromises, and smooth out regional contradictions. Akaev preferred to turn a deaf ear to these warnings: during his 15 years in power he did nothing to remedy the situation or to liquidate, even partially, the southern regions' appalling backwardness.

Religious Extremism

In the 1990s, the Osh and Dzhalal-Abad regions became part of the drugs route which began in Afghanistan and crossed Tajikistan before it reached Kyrgyzstan. It was then that religious extremists, particularly the Hizb ut-Tahrir party, came to the fore in the republic's south. Local businessmen, active people, and even some politicians could finally realize their ambitions by being involved in drug trafficking and religious extremism.

Osh became a transshipment point where heroin and opium from Afghanistan and marihuana and hashish from Tajikistan met. Very soon the South acquired drug barons of its own with a lot of political influence. Religious extremists also became gradually involved in the far-flung drug network. They used drug money to enlist supporters and set up new cells. In fact, the South proved to be an ideal breeding ground for extremist ideas: widespread and strong religious feelings of the local people; high density of the extremely poor population; urgent economic and social problems that the authorities preferred to ignore; drug money; and slackened control of the central power, including law

enforcement bodies. This all helped Hizb ut-Tahrir to create a ramified clandestine network in the Osh and Dzhalal-Abad regions.

It was for the same reasons that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) with an international membership—there were Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, North Caucasians, and even Arab mercenaries among its members—was also attracted by the republic's South.

Islamists created several bases up in the mountains of the Osh Region, on the Tajik border. On the other side of it, in the village of Khoit in the Iasman Gorge, there was a large base, which was in fact the headquarters of Juma Namangoni, one of the IMU's most prominent leaders. The Islamists kept an eye on the developments in the Osh Region before they decided it could be used for an Islamist enclave similar to those which existed in Chechnia in 1996-1999, in the Kadar zone of Daghestan, and the Tavildar District of Tajikistan. They planned to gain a foothold in the South to move further on to the Ferghana Valley and create a theocratic state, the Caliphate, in the south of Kyrgyzstan and the valley.

In the spring of 1999, Mullah Omar, one of the Taliban leaders, and Tahir Yoldosh, one of the IMU leaders, met in Kandahar to discuss a possible breakthrough of IMU fighters into Uzbekistan across the mountainous regions of Kyrgyzstan. In the summer of the same year, the Taliban and IMU brought the leaders of 14 extremist religious groups together in Kandahar and Karachi, in Pakistan. The result was a plan called Kyrgyzia-South, according to which the IMU fighters were expected to invade the Batken District of the RK from Tajik territory, gain a foothold there, beat off the government troops, and declare a Caliphate.

The operation began in July; fighters crossed from Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan and invaded the Batken District, where they took General Shamkeev, four Japanese geologists, and their interpreter hostages. One of the leaders, Zubair ibn Abdurahman, who called himself chairman of the IMU political council, faxed a document to the presidential administration, in which he announced a jihad.

It took the army and the law enforcement bodies of the RK two months to beat off the extremist attack and free the hostages. The operation revealed that the Kyrgyz army was badly trained and poorly equipped; it had no fighting equipment and aviation (in any case they could not be used in the adverse mountainous terrain where the fighters were entrenched). There were no mountain troops either. To help the extremist vanguard, the IMU allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan dispatched a detachment of about 40 people under bin Laden's two close associates, Abu Suhaib Al-Ansari and Abu Jandal. On 26 August, Afghan and Pakistani officers instructed them in Kandahar. At the very beginning, there were only 15 fighters who crossed over to the Batken area; later 20 more fighters joined the original group, some time later, 45 mercenaries from Afghanistan arrived.

The extremists were localized and destroyed with the help of Russia and Uzbekistan; later it turned out that some of the killed fighters carried passports of the citizens of the RK issued illegally by the Batken regional department of internal affairs. Before the attack, these people used the documents to move around the country. The law enforcement bodies learned that more than 100 Kyrgyz, mainly from the South, were being trained in terrorist camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the summer of 2000, extremists repeated the raid. Two IMU detachments simultaneously invaded the Surkhandaria and Tashkent regions of Uzbekistan. This time Kyrgyzstan was much better prepared: the fighters were defeated in both sectors. New inroads were expected in 2001 and 2002, yet they never happened because of the important events in Russia and the United States. The separatist regime in Chechnia was defeated in 1999-2000; in 2001 the counterterrorist operation began in Afghanistan. The IMU lost interest in Kyrgyzstan.

Today it is very important to establish the degree to which the drug mafia-controlled detachments from the South were involved in the "revolution" and the aims the extremists set for themselves. According to eyewitness accounts, "the faces of Osh fighters were bluish—the color of habitual opi-

um users."[10] It seems that in the small hours of 25 March, they started plundering the capital; later the local mob joined them. Those who sent these units to Bishkek probably wanted to pave the way to the top for the Southerners, to begin redistribution of property, and to weaken the already weak control of the central structures over the South. This is what is going on. Kurmanbek Bakiev from the South is the acting president; property is being actively redistributed. To be more exact, it is being taken from the Akaev family, but also from other people who had nothing to do with the ruling clan at all.

Today, with the election battle for the main post in the country in full swing, central power cannot tighten its control over the South: the elections scheduled for June 2005 are just around the corner. There is general confusion in the country, with several big and a multitude of little leaders representing all sorts of political forces, groups, clans, and families; the people's minds are full of all sorts of ideas and of bright and naïve hopes of a better future. Unexpected people and forces might come to the fore. There is a very important question that requires an answer: What are the religious extremists in the South up to? They too might exploit the situation to claim power.

In the past the democratic opposition maintained contacts with the Islamists; late in the 1990s some of its leaders met Namangoni and Yoldosh, two notorious personalities, to discuss the situation in the RK. It looks as if some of them planned to use the Islamists as a battering-ram against the Akaev regime. If the Islamists and the drug mafia start manipulating the sentiments of the poorest sections in the South, the opposition will have no hope of keeping intact its authority among the southern poor.

Conclusion

The above analysis of the post-Akaev situation in the country suggests that the regime fell because the social and economic problems were neglected far too long; the nation was poor, while the South and the North could not resolve their contradictions; the South and its problems did not receive adequate attention, while religious extremists gained authority with the local people; foreign foundations and other foreign structures represented in the republic were not adequately controlled. In addition, Askar Akaev proved to be ill prepared for the role of the country's ruler. It turned out that power, the law enforcement structures, and the army were caught unawares; they were not ready to rebuff the domestic and foreign threats. This, and the fact that Akaev was unequal to the task he had shouldered, brought the regime down at a critical moment. It is only partly true that America also contributed to Akaev's downfall through its embassy and the American NGOs working in Kyrgyzstan. True, American diplomats maintained close ties with the opposition, yet there is information that they did not plan a coup, at least in the context of the recent parliamentary elections. It seems that the events in Kyrgyzstan cannot be likened to the change of power in Georgia and Ukraine. There was outside influence in the RK, yet it cannot be described as decisive. The crisis was rooted mainly in the country's domestic developments.

Determination could have helped Akaev to remain in power. First, he should have closed the road between the North and South to stop the "Osh detachments." Second, he should have used force to cut short the mass rallies in the capital. Third, he should have remained in the country. His behavior in the days of the crisis can be described as strange at least. Rather than shouldering the burden as befitted the nation's leader, he shirked responsibility, moved away from his presidential duties, and allowed his press secretary, who demonstrated a lot of courage, act instead of him.

It was Akaev's duty as president to make decisions in the name of the state or even use force to maintain security of the country and its citizens. The leader should not explain his passivity by his fear

[10] *Komsomolskaia pravda,* 31 March, 2005.

of bloodshed; in fact, by refusing to lead the country he caused bloodshed and two days of plundering in the capital.

As president, he was either unaware of the true state of affairs in the republic or avoided sober assessments of it. It is common knowledge that the presidents of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, Karimov and Nazarbaev, repeatedly warned him about the danger and pointed out the critical situation in the South. Akaev obviously preferred to ignore these warnings. He was living amid illusions. This is best confirmed by the title of his book published in Moscow in the summer of 2004: *Gliadia v budushchee s optimizmom* (An Optimistic View of the Future).

Other Central Asian leaders should learn from the sad experience of their Kyrgyz colleague. In Kazakhstan, in particular, there is a ruling clan, the members of which reached top posts and are prominent in big business. This means that there is still clan inequality and rivalry; the political and business elites are increasingly dissatisfied with the ruling group. The "market reforms" drove the larger part of the nation below the poverty level; there is a religious extremist clandestine network in the republic's South while the legal secular opposition is getting ready for the presidential elections of December 2005. Several years ago, Nazarbaev wisely moved the country's capital up north, to Astana. To capture it in the Kyrgyz style, the opposition will have to cover over 1,000 km of practically uninhabited land. If the authorities fail to take necessary measures, however, and let the country drift into a grave crisis, neither the distance nor other factors will save it.

The international community should also learn a lesson from the Kyrgyz situation. It is unwise to impose Western standards of state and social life on regions without taking into account their past, specific features, customs, and traditions. What can we expect of countries like Iraq and Afghanistan if the Akaev regime, propped up from all sides with funds and grants, finally collapsed?

It will soon become clear whether the new authorities can cope with the avalanche of problems and steer the country through the crisis. Today, while the trail is still warm, we can draw preliminary conclusions: as long as the "revolutionary disorder" continues, the threat of separatism in the South will remain; the Islamists might move into politics to claim power and to elbow the so-called democrats from the helm; the graver danger is that the country may hit a long period of instability abounding in conflicts and coups, and this will negatively affect its Central Asian neighbors.

Today, the country needs support and aid to stabilize the situation. This is clearly understood in Russia, which acted as a guarantor between the former president (who resigned on 4 April) and the new authorities; America and all other interested states are fully aware of their responsibility too. This gives grounds for cautious optimism about the near future of Kyrgyzstan.