Foreign Policy of Kyrgyzstan Between Russia and the United States

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Abstract---The relevance of the research topic is due to a number of factors. Studying the Central Asian region as a whole, as well as the individual states within it, it is necessary to take into account that this space is a place of intersection of the interests of major world political, economic players, as well as regional powers. The influence of these countries and large multinational corporations can be expressed in a variety of ways, both military and economic, which will be discussed in this article. In addition, it is necessary to take into account a number of challenges to regional (and in the future, global) security, which were either thrown in the past or remain relevant to the present. The purpose of the article is to create a descriptive description of the foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan, which is currently being implemented by the current leadership of the state, in addition, to build a forecast regarding the further steps of the Kyrgyz leadership to build a system of strategic and mutually beneficial cooperation primarily with the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

Keywords---Central Asia, foreign policy, geopolitics, Kyrgyzstan, regional security, Russian Federation, USA.

Introduction

As mentioned above, the Central Asian region means five states - Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which are considered in the framework of the study (Alekseeva, 2019). This region has strategic importance due to its location in the center of Asia (as its name suggests), as a result of which it can be called a "frontier", border location at the intersection of the most important political and cultural systems of the continent, which should be understood as Russia, Iran, India and China. Thus, control over the region of...
interest offers the opportunity to control the important and most rational for use (due to their short length) land communications between the systems outlined above, and therefore provides key geopolitical, economic, and military advantages (Dunayev, 2018). Thus, it is difficult to overestimate the strategic importance of the Central Asian region, which determines both the existing research interest in the Central Asian countries and the need for their further careful study. To date, the region can be characterised as, on the one hand, having significant development potential, on the other - having challenges in the way of its (potential) implementation. In the presence of significant reserves of mineral resources, both demographic resources and prospects, as well as the transit potential mentioned above, they coexist with often poorly designed and fragile social and political institutions (which is especially characteristic of Kyrgyzstan), as well as a high degree of dependence of the economic systems of these states on energy resources and their poor financing (Karasayev et al., 2021). The immediate proximity to unstable Afghanistan is also a threat (especially in light of recent events, namely the withdrawal of the US military contingent and the transfer of power and management functions to the Taliban).

When analysing the available literature on this topic, it should be noted that due to, on the one hand, the openness of Kyrgyzstan both in the political sphere Alekseeva (2019), and in the economic sphere, on the other hand, very frequent periods of political instability (and the so-called “colour revolutions” taking place, among others), the topic of Kyrgyzstan and its foreign policy has gained sufficient popularity in domestic historiography and very often becomes relevant for the information agenda. A number of important and interesting issues for us have found their consideration in the publications of researchers – for example, the work of Candidate of Historical Sciences, Head of the Department of Central Asia and Kazakhstan of the Institute of CIS Countries, senior researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences A.V. Grozin is of interest, in particular, the article "Russian-Kyrgyz economic relations and the fuel and energy sector of the economy of Kyrgyzstan" (Grozin, 2019). In addition, the dissertation of the Candidate of Historical Sciences A.A. Ormonova "The role of Russia in the formation of modern Kyrgyz statehood (1991-2015)" Ormonova (2016), and the article "Russian-Kyrgyz economic cooperation: problems and solutions (1999-2013)" Ormonova (2017), are very interesting. The work of Professor, Doctor of Political Sciences, Head of the Research Center for National Security Problems I. V. Bocharkinov is also considered (for example, "Kyrgyzstan after the pandemic: the main development trends" (Ovsyannikova et al., 2020).

The works of foreign researchers, whose research interest lies in the study of the foreign policies of external states in the Central Asian region we are considering, have also been reviewed. These include Turkish researchers K. Sancak ("The concept of power and soft power in international relations" (2016) and E. Aydemir ("Soft power and the media in politics" (2016). In addition, the works of the Candidate of Historical Sciences of Osh Technological University C. B. Tobakalov "Relations of sovereign Kyrgyzstan in the economic and social spheres" Tobakalov (2020), Harvard researcher S. Menelly "Geographical axis of Central Asia" (2016), British researchers Keith B. Payne and John S. Foster "The Russian Strategy of Expansion, crisis and conflict" Payne & Foster (2017), as well as the American researcher M. Klare "From Scarcity to Abundance: the New Geopolitics of Energy"
(2017). In addition, a number of international legal acts were studied, which significantly influence the economic and political processes taking place in this region (Klare, 2017; Menelly, 2016). The purpose of this study is to analyse the current foreign policy strategy of Kyrgyzstan in the field of establishing partnerships with major global players, in particular the Russian Federation and the United States of America. In addition, it is necessary to form the key tasks facing the leadership of the state considered in the framework of this study in the field of solving the most pressing economic problems. The subject of the study, therefore, is the foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan.

**Materials and Methods**

In the process of reviewing the current operating system of political cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and the leading world powers, a number of general scientific and special methods of studying international relations were used. Due to the use of a set of methods, the study was able to identify key aspects that influence the current position of Kyrgyzstan in the international arena, as well as to identify the current directions of its foreign policy, which is aimed at building mutually beneficial cooperation with other states. For example, the deduction method was used to describe Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy from the moment of the proclamation of independence in the early 1990s to the early 2020s, the use of the induction method made it possible to generalise the available body of information, characterise the key features of Kyrgyzstan’s foreign policy and form conclusions about the degree of influence of both global and regional processes on the country’s foreign policy. Historical research methods have made it possible to identify the key preconditions and motivations of the state leadership for certain political acts and to recreate a chronologically determined picture of Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy during the period of its independent existence. In addition, when writing this study, such research methods as content analysis and event analysis were also used. The use of event analysis in the framework of the study allowed identifying a number of elements of the political processes under the study, which, in particular, include historically determined features of Kyrgyzstan’s currently implemented foreign policy, ambitions and claims of third-party players in the international arena in terms of strengthening their positions in this republic (Gepu et al., 2018; Rinartha & Suryasa, 2017).

The use of content analysis in the framework of the study made it possible to identify important conclusions regarding Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy, while the basis was the systematisation of extensive material (which, in particular, includes publications in the media, official speeches of the establishment and the top leadership of the state). A synthesis of the methodology used in the framework of this study made it possible to create a holistic picture, which, firstly, states the current (at the beginning of the 2020s) situation in the foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan, and secondly, allows conclusions to be drawn regarding the future foreign policy steps of the Kyrgyz leadership. The research was carried out in three stages:

- At the first stage, the collection and analysis of the available body of information were carried out, which includes historical sources and those materials that make it possible to highlight the most interesting and
important features of both the Central Asian region in general and Kyrgyzstan in particular. In addition, at this stage, the historical prerequisites are determined, as well as the origins of the political processes taking place in modern times, the role of third-party countries in these processes, as well as the political, economic, geographical and cultural characteristics of this state.

- At the second stage, using content and event analysis, a picture of the currently implemented foreign policy architecture of Kyrgyzstan is formed based on the analysis of foreign and domestic political events in the republic in the context of global trends.

- At the third stage, a forecast is formed regarding the further steps of the leadership of Kyrgyzstan in the field of building cooperation with other states, in addition, relevant conclusions were drawn, and the theses obtained as a result of the study were summarised and systematised.

**Results and Discussion**

**Historical background and prospects for the development of Kyrgyz-Russian relations**

When analysing the existing system of relations between small states (to which Kyrgyzstan also belongs), it is necessary to take into account the fact that, often, the leadership of the considered state was forced to take into account the interests of the world’s largest players with whom it interacted. The basis of Russia’s interests in the Central Asian region considered in this study is to maintain and strengthen special relations between the Russian Federation and the republics of the region in the political and economic spheres, national defence and security, as well as in the cultural sphere (Akimov et al., 2020). Russia pursues a long-term policy of economic and political integration, while ensuring security has always been a priority (Derevyanko et al., 2018). These countries are an integral part of Russia’s diplomatic neighbours and the most priority direction of Russia’s foreign policy (Karasayev et al., 2021). Currently, Russia maintains very close relations with most Central Asian countries, including the Kyrgyz Republic. Among the most important aspects of cooperation between Russia and Kyrgyzstan, it is worth noting that the security of Kyrgyzstan and the entire region is protected from terrorist threats and any external aggression. In this case, the "Afghan factor" is one of the decisive reasons for Moscow's decision to fully support regional security (Tesfahuney, 1998; Koopman, 2011).

Today, Russia occupies a strong position in almost all sectors of Kyrgyz society. The Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China are the "locomotives" that steadily push the Kyrgyz Republic on the path of gradual and consistent development. The largest Russian investments in Kyrgyzstan relate to the sphere of mining, provision (supply) of electricity, gas, due to its (this sphere) greatest attractiveness and profitability. This is due to the fact that the hydropower potential of the Kyrgyz Republic can significantly increase electricity production through the construction of cascade hydroelectric power plants. Subsequently, this economic sphere is able not only to provide the republic with electricity, but also to export it abroad, which will increase revenues to the state budget (Probyshhevich, 2021; Adinkrah, 2021).
Some important events in the economic life of Kyrgyzstan are directly related to Russian investments. For example, Kyrgyzstan’s accession to the Eurasian Economic Union has created favourable conditions for the formation of an investment environment in the country within the framework of the single Eurasian Economic Space. A key role in this process is played by extensive economic opportunities, political influence, as well as cultural and historical ties of this state with Russia. One of the important advantages is that Russia can provide a healthy, capable, but unclaimed population of the CIS countries with work. The United States, the European Union, China and India do not have the opportunity to provide this republic with the opportunity to solve the most serious regional socio-economic problem, namely the problem of employment (Garnov et al., 2021; Fatikhova & Ziiatdinova, 2021).

The characteristic features of relations between Russia and Kyrgyzstan during the post-Soviet period are, on the one hand, loyalty, on the other hand, periods of maintaining the distance of the Kyrgyz leadership from Russia during the so-called “colour revolutions” (2005 and 2010). This trait is characteristic of both K. Bakiev and A. Atambaev. For example, during Atambaev’s presidency, he set a course for the development of Kyrgyz-Chinese relations, which, in turn, led to a situation in which a number of important projects – the construction of highways and motorways, the modernisation of thermal power plants, the laying of power lines and other infrastructure works were implemented by investors from China (Chunxia, 2018). The downside of such cooperation is that Kyrgyzstan has accumulated significant debt to China, having received financing in the amount of more than $1 billion for the implementation of certain projects (Liuying, 2020).

The absence of Russian banks and Russian business in Kyrgyzstan to some extent weakened Russia’s position in the considered region (especially in finance and economics). In turn, Turkish, Chinese, and Swiss banks operate in Kyrgyzstan (Zuenko & Zuban, 2017). Inaugurated as President of Kyrgyzstan on November 24, 2017 (and dismissed due to protests in January 2021), Soronbai Jeenbekov openly proclaimed the country’s pro-Russian foreign policy and embarked on the development of a strategic partnership. As of the end of the first year of the presidential term (2018), the volume of trade between the Russian Federation and the Kyrgyz Republic increased by more than 17%, and exports from Kyrgyzstan to Russia increased by 22% (Bakhramzhanova, 2020).

The main trading partners of the Kyrgyz Republic in 2020 were Russia, with a trade turnover of USD 1,557.6 million or 27.6 per cent of total trade turnover, China - USD 780.1 million (13.8 per cent), Kazakhstan - USD 794.0 million (14.1 per cent). The largest import trading partners were Russia (35.7 per cent of total imports), China (20.0 per cent), Kazakhstan (13.6 per cent), Turkey (5.3 per cent), Uzbekistan (5.1 per cent) and the USA (3.3 per cent). Summing up the above, the leadership of Kyrgyzstan today has very ambitious goals. In particular, the republic should shift its focus from politics to the economy. Years of a certain stagnation have created the need to find sources of financing for the implementation of priority national tasks and the correction of long-standing economic problems. It is obvious that without the help of the Russian Federation, which acts as a strategic partner of the Kyrgyz Republic, it is very difficult to take
measures to normalise the economy as a whole and ensure the security of the state (Rozman, 2011; Daneykin et al., 2015).

**Historical background and prospects for the development of Kyrgyz-American relations**

The United States of America (USA) recognised the independence of Kyrgyzstan on 27.12.1991, followed by the provision of economic and political support to the country through the Agency for International Cooperation. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, along with the Central Asian region, Kyrgyzstan acted as a sphere of geostrategic interests of both the European Union and the United States of America. One of the manifestations of this policy is the affiliation of all post-Soviet countries to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). For the United States, if economic and political relations between China and the United States deteriorate, the value of Kyrgyzstan, which directly borders the PRC and thus serves as a springboard for the United States to enter the Chinese border, increases dramatically. Since the early 1990s, both the US and the EU have viewed political transformations in Kyrgyzstan as the main driving force behind democratic reforms in Central Asia. Thus, the initial bilateral and multilateral agreements between Bishkek and the US State Department, as well as the European Commission (the highest executive authority of the EU, whose responsibilities include the development of draft laws, as well as the implementation of decisions of the European Parliament) were mainly aimed at assisting in the creation of new social movements, political parties, as well as the modification of the existing legislative framework and judicial system (Degtyarev & Kurylev, 2017).

The presence of the EU and the USA in the Kyrgyz Republic before the events of September 11, 2001, was characterised as partial, limited, due to the remote geographical location, as a result of which the EU and the USA very passively promoted certain economic or political reforms in Kyrgyzstan. After September 11, Washington used the territories of both the Central Asian states as a whole and Kyrgyzstan as a logistics centre for the counter-terrorism operation in Afghanistan conducted by the United States through NATO, which were supported by the Central Asian countries, China, and Russia due to their common position regarding the activities of the Al-Qaeda organisation, which poses a common threat to regional stability and security (Oganesyan et al., 2013; Ermakova et al., 2014).

At the same time, with the American military presence in the republic, a serious influence on the political process in the state began. An extensive network of non-governmental organisations has been established in Kyrgyzstan, including the Soros-Kyrgyzstan Foundation, as well as the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society and a number of others. These organisations are funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the Freedom House Foundation, whose activities consist in active interference in government decision-making processes, including by creating pro-Western (including anti-Russian) organisations (De la Sablonnière et al., 2009; Jalilova et al., 2012).
For example, in March 2005, it was NGOs that played an important role in preparing for the overthrow of President Akaev (Sancak, 2016). At a press conference on February 3, 2009, Kyrgyz President K.S. Bakiev announced that the Kyrgyz government had decided to close the US military base at Manas airport. Unresolved financial issues were mentioned among the reasons, as well as the precedent of the murder of a Kyrgyz citizen by an American serviceman. A new round of aggravation of the American-Kyrgyz relations occurred against the background of the life sentence of the Uzbek human rights activist, who was accused of inciting ethnic hatred in Kyrgyzstan and killing a policeman during the interethnic conflict in 2010 in the south of the country. Askarov’s case attracted the attention of a number of human rights organisations (including the UN Human Rights Committee), which called on Kyrgyzstan to release Askarov, as well as to review the trial of a number of provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Kyrgyzstan is a party. On July 16, 2015, the US State Department awarded Askarov the Human Rights Defender Award. This event caused an extremely negative reaction of President Atambaev and the public, and was regarded as an unfriendly act of the United States against Kyrgyzstan. The President called the decision of the US State Department an attempt to create "controlled chaos" in the republic (Namatbekova, 2018).

Nevertheless, the next President of Kyrgyzstan took steps to establish relations with the United States. For example, during a working visit to the United States in September 2018, Jeenbekov recalled the fact that the rupture of the cooperation agreement between the two countries was made unilaterally under the previous government. The United States is interested in cooperation with Kyrgyzstan (as well as with other states of the Central Asian region) in order to create transport routes bypassing Russia for the supply of hydrocarbons to Western countries (Shlykov, 2009). Thus, at this stage, the stated goal of the United States in Kyrgyzstan is being implemented through the realisation of projects and plans in the field of security, economic development and culture by the US government, the US Agency for International Development, the International Monetary Fund and structural units of the World Bank in the form of grants, short-term projects and loans. Undoubtedly, the United States is a global actor in international relations, so Kyrgyzstan maintains multilateral diplomatic relations. In turn, the United States maintains its presence in the region in the status of a global power (Amirbek & Ydyrys, 2014; Yanık, 2011).

Conclusions

Summing up the results, as well as based on the body of studied and analysed material, a number of relevant provisions can be noted. Central Asia is a buffer region, as a result, it is in the zone of attention of the leading powers of the world. Here, the parchment-like divergence of the foreign policy of the Central Asian countries does not contribute to stability and the desire to solve problems together. Kyrgyzstan today has a number of characteristics that are of interest to a number of researchers. Such features, for example, include the political dynamics of democratic processes, which are very often conditioned (when compared with the post-Soviet space and with the countries of the Central Asian region). However, this dynamic has a downside (Rybkin, 2018). The development of the domestic and foreign policy situation in Kyrgyzstan can be characterised as
unstable and subject to external influences (i.e. capable of abrupt changes in the political course under the influence of a number of factors). This factor must be taken into account when building relations with Kyrgyzstan and when implementing various military, political, social, economic projects and programs of a different nature on the territory of this state. Within the framework of this study, Kyrgyzstan was characterised as a state that, due to the peculiarities of its region, attracts the foreign policy activity of a number of world and regional powers. The main events of both global and regional scale that affected Kyrgyzstan's relations with world powers, primarily with the Russian Federation and the United States, were analysed. Kyrgyzstan strives to build the architecture of its foreign policy relations with world and regional powers in such a way that they retain such properties as strength and focus on long-term and mutually beneficial cooperation, taking into account the geopolitical interests of all interested parties (Reigber et al., 2001; Pirajno et al., 2009).

The material presented in this article may be of interest to experts in geopolitics and international relations. In addition, it will also be of interest to political consultants, due to the specifics of their work and their position, who directly influence the adoption of certain decisions by public authorities. In addition, the research materials will be of interest to a wide range of readers who are interested in the states located in the Central Asian region. It should be noted that in the course of the study, a number of questions and problems arose, the solution of which researchers should pay attention to in the future. Therefore, a more thorough detailed study of methods is needed that would allow building a holistic picture of the economic and political situation of Kyrgyzstan, in addition, using the data thus obtained as a basis, to build the most holistic and realistic forecast of further development of Kyrgyzstan.

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