

THE KYRGYZ MEDIA ON THE NATO AND OTHER  
ORGANISATIONS EXPANSION IN CENTRAL ASIA

**Final report**

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## **PART 1.**

### **KYRGYZSTAN'S MEDIA IN A SOVERIGN DEMOCRATIC STATE**

The systematic and idea-creative approach applied in this study defines the efficiency of a political system through a series of technologies used to convert public opinions and claims to a finished public product for decision-making and implementation.

The scopes of official power and media overlap. Public opinion is the major cross-interest area where activities can be controlled. Media act in the political sphere as one of its basic constituents.

Kyrgyzstan's press originated in the 1991 breakthrough to sovereignty. It varies a lot from what it had been in the Soviet era with its "gear" function in political activities.

According to F.Sybert, T.Paterson and U. Shramm media fall into 4 groups: totalitarian, Soviet, libertarian and socially responsible. The typological classification bases on the interaction criteria. The informative and communicative functions of media affect the basic freedoms and its legal status.

The 1992 Law "On Media in the Kyrgyz Republic" meant the libertarian pattern for the country's media to follow. Regrettably, very soon power started encroach on the media's democratic gains. Post-totalitarian state structures found it uncomfortable to function in a free press atmosphere. After many encounters with the local media in court, the Parliamentarians come up with annual amendments to the existing legislation. According to V. Kozlinsky "On Media in the Kyrgyz Republic" all the improvements and innovations are in fact the attempts at making clearly cut and direct legal postulates of a free democratic press vague and obscure.

Kyrgyzstan has officially accepted plurality of opinion as the media's strategy in terms of information.

Pluralism in media is viewed as the multiple choice for the consumer who is free to choose channels as information-and communicative partners, stick to certain public opinion; also, the consumer is meant to get access to true information.

The CIS countries tend to separate state from media. The Law "On Media in the Kyrgyz Republic" prohibits divestiture in press or. It means a paper or a radio and TV channel cannot exist as a self-sufficient entity. The result was the split of the local media into "dependant", or state-run and "independent" media JSC owned by the work collectives/

"Vechernyi Bishkek", for one, was the paper that promptly and unanimously separated from the former rulers, the municipality, the other papers and journals were rather slow. Still, the official budget-allocated media retains its position as the major form of media existence.

Apparently, the Kyrgyz press today are two distinct groups: "news" and "views". The differentiation is language-based. The Russian language editions survived in the capital city only, yet they have the largest circulation and the greatest influence both with the authorities and the public. These are "news" publications. The Kyrgyz language editions are politically biased papers mirroring corporate or regional views.

The considerable migration of the Russian speaking population from the country did not affect the status of Russian as an unofficial language of inter-nation communication and public events. So far all the official meetings, conferences, briefings are being held in Russian, not in Kyrgyz, the official state language. The reasons are 70 year long precedence and cultural traditions combined with the low proficiency of local top management in the native language who leave Kyrgyz to speak at home and switch to Russian in work hours. These facts account for the pertaining influence of Russian sustained in and inspired by the press in Russian. The Russian Federation media are also retaining their share in the total media consumption. According to the sociological made by Inforex Company, 90,8% of the respondents- Bishkek residents read Russia's press regularly. The regular readers of Russian and Kyrgyz press in Kyrgyzstan form 25% and 17% of the respondents, respectively.

The recent years saw a new type of media presented in English. However, the papers like "Kyrgyzstan Chronicle", "The Central Asia", etc. have reduced to mere translations of the articles from the mainstream press done with the purpose to inform the foreigners in Kyrgyzstan of the domestic news, hence their influence is low.

Neither TV nor radio can compete with the printed media now. The new commercial channels, with their insufficient capacities, keep broadcasting Russia's programs and retelling the stale news.

The yellow press, unbelievable and unprecedented a decade before, was intensively employing the themes of violence and pornography. A year ago the KR Ministry of Justice had to cancel some of these papers ("Lemon", Paishamba").

The flippant stuff and one-day long leaflets attributed to the wide choice in publications. The fashion is for a successful business to run a paper of its own. The experience show that the feeble bulletins endure in the tough conditions of the [printing industry for less than six months.

The legislation commits the media to be registered by the Ministry of justice. Thus all the media available is legitimate in the Kyrgyz Republic. Yet the papers with a smaller circulation (up to 100 copies) can go unlicensed. These are mainly donor-sponsored publications issued by NGOs

Structurally, newspapers represent the press in the Kyrgyz Republic, dally editions of a newspaper type, a few magazines and digests. As of 1 January 1999 the Ministry of Justice registered more than 400 editions to have increased to 50 by now. The audiovisual media: the state and private TV channels (90% of which broadcast in Russian)/ Among the private we can quote "Eyrope+Bishkek", "Vosst", "Almaz", "Pyramid", "Max Ts N", "Delta", "Echo of Moscow". The information service units are available with the state-run "Kabar" Telegraph Agency and the private bureaus with the newspapers "Asaba" and "Vechernyi Bishkek". Adminttantly, the foreign information services of Russia -ITAR-TASS, Interfax- and a few US and European Information Services o are more efficient. The new players on the information market are professional journalists' associations (the former trade are creative unions are not there any longer).

The former division of media into the Republican, regional and towns' newspapers is invalid since the circulation spread in a different way. The traditionally urban "Vechernyi Bishkek" became a regional edition while the formerly national "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" is read in Bishkek only. The private papers with the national coverage are "Asaba"? "Delo". The topography differs, though, for instance, in some parts of the country Russian newspapers are not demanded, the nation-wide circulation's of government's documentation are no longer popular either.

In the 4.5 million strong country the circulation rates as follows:

"Vechernyi Bishkek –(R.)	80-100,000 copies
Legal-crime covering "Delo" ®	60-75,000 copies
Yellow "Paishamba" (K)	45-55,000 copies
Politically biased daily "Asaba"(K)	30-40,000 copies
"Aalam"(K)	25,000 copies
Governmental "Ktegyz Tuusu" (K)	15,000 copies.
Oppositional "Res Publica"(K. and R.)	10,000 copies
Municipality-run "Utro Bishkeka"®	8,000 copies
National daily "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" ®	5,000 copies

In August-September 1996 the project "Media Concept for a Democratic State" made a public survey of the attitudes to the press. The preferences in the printed media varied from region to region. The residents of Bigger Bishkek chose "Vechernyi Bishkek" (92,5%), "Delo" (73,7%), "Asaba" (71,0, %), "Res Publica"(51,8%). The rural population favours "Asaba" (88,7%), "Aalam" (36,1%), "Syrduu dyino' (27%), 1 "Res Publica"(24,6%).

When asked whether the Kyrgyz Republic has free media, the residents gave both positive (49,5%) and negative (42,7%) answers with 7,8% abstainees.

## **PART 2**

### **KYRGYZSTAN'S DEVELOPMENT VECTORS AS SEEN BY THE MEDIA**

The current state of methodological research in the CIS countries allows a researcher to get a better insight into phenomena when enriching the diachronic (historic) approach with the natural and artefacts management.

It is the domain of scholars to give answers to the How questions, policy-makers are more inclined to answer the 'What is to be done?' questions. The activity vehicles seem to be never discussed, at least on a par with the two basic questions. Modern methodology treats objective phenomena as specific forms of individual; thinking and activities, as objectivised ontological entities.

The idea of Sustainable Development as a cultural paradigm emerged in the last years of the XX century when the mankind realised that the evolution had brought it into a deadlock with:

- Natural resources utilised higher than reproduced;
- Inequitable access to the resources (the poor countries as a destabilisation force);
- Environmental deterioration and unrecoverable negative processes;
- Lack of constructive proposals to rectify the situation/

As a global notion, the idea of development might replace the ever-dominant idea of evolution. This theory is not new (see V.I. Vernadsky and his noosphere where the human mind and activity are the driving force).

The newly sovereign states that emerged after the USSR collapse have encountered the problem of choice in terms of policies orientation. The formerly vague notions of "strategy development", "concept", "tactical goal", "policy framing" have put on flesh. The transfer from the policy of interests to that of development was accompanied with the range in the methodological assumptions and the switch from passive observation to operational activities and from the monologue to a dialogue interaction mode. ( J.Delez, K.Popper, Y. Habermas).

The locally accepted notion of Central Asia dramatically differs from the Western terminology. In Western analysts' view it embraces the former Soviet Republics and Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and other countries. The Central Asian polytologists speak of five states only: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenia and Tajikistan. All the adjunct countries do not belong here. The view upon the five Central Asian countries as a kind of monolith roots back in the 70 year-old history of the deadlocked countries devoid of any other contacts but with Russia. Extremely scarce were contacts with the eastern neighbour countries.

The Soviet times brought in an integrated economic, informational, political and social space that made the Central Asian Republics homogeneous. Even today the Soviet past here is a more unifying factor compared to historical or linguistic proximity.

The major politilogies in Central Asia ( U.Kasenov, Central Asian Studies Foundation President, M.Usenov, and Ph.D. in polytology) appraise the current situation in the region as the start of another Big Game, with the players' team reshuffled and the international links restricted.

The Soviet Union crash opened up new prospective for the Central Asian countries. All of them gained the status of independent international actors. The polices naturally based on the new economic relations the region witnessed: SEATO growing influence, US and EU efforts to keep up their hold of the things. These were the realia the newly born sovereignties faced.

The analysts dealing with the Central Asian region are apt to consider the problems from the point of view of development. Thus the notions of "growth" and "development" are opposed. (See: the Rome Club and its "Growth Limits"). It is limited resources and growth restrictions that drive the mankind to development. Development is based in thinking, not in riches and stability. A country's development is not a mere sum of higher production and consumption but is a social development, the development of an individual and s community). By resources we do not mean natural gifts but the know-how of activity. Oil and uranium in the previous century were not considered resources despite their material origin.

Thus resources are not natural but artifacts. In this context, development is not what we used to call *resources allocation*. These are the new technologies of their utilization and consumption. Wealth here is just a by-product.

The notion of resources accepted in the Central Asian region differs. Here they are traditionally described mineral deposits and labour pertaining to a particular territory. Incidentally, this is the view shared by the world community when the CAIS reserves are discussed, the fact stressed by both the political figures in this region and the media.

The pragmatic and specialized approach to the regional resources results in the swiping conclusion that the CAIS countries are material sources only. The pro arguments are:

Central Asia is rich in natural resources and has developed economic and technological capacities. Kazakhstan, for one, rated first in the USSR for copper, lead and zinc production. Its role in grain production was also considerable. Kyrgyzstan held a monopoly for alimony production; Turkmenistan led celestine ores processing which gave it strontium. The Central Asian resources could not but attract the countries like Turkey and Pakistan with their scarce reserves but also relatively prospering China and India, and the developed countries of Europe, also USA, Japan, and Southern Korea.

The former Soviet Republics in the region have mined a huge amount of uranium, the main raw material for nuclear weapons and atomic energy. Kazakhstan is viewed as the owner of 25% of the world's explored uranium deposits. Uzbekistan is also known for large uranium deposits ( UchKuduk, Zeravshan, and Navoyi). Kyrgyzstan hosts a big hydro metallurgic plant specialising in uranium concentrates. Adrasman and Taboshir mines in Tajikistan gave rise to the first USSR uranium plant built in 1946.

Nuclear arms non-proliferation has been greatly dependent on the Central Asian uranium deposits and its nuclear technological potential.

The international nuclear safety has been reinforced with the Kazakhstan having removed all the missiles the USSR had based there. Kazakhstan and its Central Asian counterparts have signed the Nuclear Arms Non-Proliferation Treaty and the appropriate IAEA agreements. The 28 February, 1997 Central Asian Summit in Almaty has adopted the Almaty Declaration. All the parties concerned supported the idea of turning Central Asia to a nuclear-free area. This intention is understandable, more so with the dangerous proximity of India and Pakistan with their nuclear arsenals and the "threshold states" like Iraq, Iran with their considerable nuclear capacities.

Another factor that accounts for the region's new geopolitical status is its energy resources, mainly Kazakhstan's oil and Turkmenistan's natural gas. The year 2000 oil production on Kazakhstan is estimated at 100 million tons with the exports increase. Turkmenia has enough gas to export more than 20 million cu.m. The construction of large-scale gas pipe lines to Europe via Iran and Turkey, to Pakistan via Afghanistan and to China via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan will bring about cardinal changes in the Eurasian gas supply routes.

The construction of South and East - oriented gas pipe lines in the oil-rich countries of Central Asia will leave Russia divested of its political influence in the region and will open the way to US and other investing countries, like China, Turkey, Iran.

The demographic factor cannot be neglected either. The UN forecast envisages higher population growth in the region to meet the double size in 2050. In 1994 53,900,000 people inhabited the region, by 2015 and 2050 the number will amount to 75,500,000 and 103,400,000, respectively. Thus the birth rate in the Muslim East will be much higher. The UN demographic forecasts estimate the region's population twofold by 2050. Cf.: 53,9 M in 1994, 75,5 M in 2015 and 103,4 M in 2050.

Central Asia's new geopolitics is definitely dependent on the so-called Islamic factor since the indigenous population is Islam-believers. The 70 years of aggressive atheism were followed by Islam intensive resurrection, with the secular state mode retained. Islam lies in the interest Central Asia reveals in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Iran. The threat of extreme Islamism known as *tailbhan* movement to reign in Northern Afghanistan is evident. Such is the case; the former Soviet republics will find themselves in a different religious and political environment. The next 10-10 years will show whether Central Asia will rejoin the Islamic world and whether the CIAS states will retain the secular nature. The most influential actors in the region will make the crucial decisions.

The CAIS phenomenon is peculiar in the sense that they are member-countries of both the European (OSCE, EBRD) and Eastern (ECO, ADB, IDB, Islamic Conference) alliances, regional and international institutions and banks.

The three factors determine the political situation in the region now: US and EU influence, Russia's role and the interest the Eastern-Asian Tigers keep showing in the Central Asian region. The influence here is not measured by military force but by the size of investments and the ideological frameworks.

### **Factor 1: Kyrgyzstan- Russia**

The diplomatic relations between the countries were set on 20 March 1992.

The Kyrgyz Republic is sharing the political and information space with Russia. Russia's TV and radio channels attract larger audience than the local programs do. The press in the Russian language is predominant. The "Russian" language traditions in the country are strong by virtue of its marginal character. The shared experience of co-existence in the FSU made the feudal Kirgizia an industrial country. The first negative reaction coupled with the surge of sovereignty was replaced by a positive assessment of the Soviet period both in the Kyrgyz and Russian press.

The situation when the Russian press is influential in a Muslim country is accounted for by tradition when the Russian language in a socialist republic was an official one, the language of commands and directives coming from Moscow, the centre. Also it signals of the weakness in the sovereignty tailored according to Russia's pattern.

Hence the strong Russia's presence and influence in the CAIS countries remains the predominant factor. The question is: will it tend to increase or reduce? The local analysts think that Russia is using 10% of its presence potential. (see: the 1998 Russian Federation Embassy Analytical Note).

The relations between Russia and the Kyrgyz republic base on mutual understanding and similarity of views. The top-level contacts are being preserved; the note exchange is common practice/

Kyrgyzstan's Government publicly declared its acceptance of Russia as a strategic partner and the priority of the synergy in this relation.

In its turn, Russia treats Kyrgyzstan with its 750,000 native Russian residents (16,2% of the total) as an important strategic partner in Central Asia.

The military co-operation is a part of the bilateral Agreement, which sets the rules of using military objects, defines the status of the Russian troops in Kyrgyzstan. However, the economic co-operation is encountering difficulties, the trade turnover has considerably reduced. The Russian frontier guards stationed on Kyrgyzstan's border with Tajikistan are gradually being withdrawn.

The external debt of \$1,5 bln and 19 credit lines includes \$132,7 M Kyrgyzstan owes Russia. The financial difficulties account for a reduced scientific, technological, informational and cultural co-operation between the countries.

The currently drafted Agreement will transfer the shares of Kyrgyzstan's industrial enterprises to the Russian Federation as a repayment of the credits. Also, the RF will take over 30 plants, including the Mining Combinnate and the Semiconductor Plant that had supplied their products to Russia before.

The major foreign trade partners of the Kyrgyz Republic are Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The Kyrgyzstan-Russia relations are covered on the plane of official visits.

The RF representative, Deputy Chairman A.A. Bolshakov's visit to Bishkek in 1995 resulted in agreements aimed at prioritising the Kyrgyz Republic needs in terms of investments and concessions.

The Kyrgyz Republic leaders positively accepted the proposals concerning regulating some social and humanitarian issues related to the status of the Russian-speaking population. The Agreement on juridical assistance and legal relations in civil and criminal cases and the Agreement on the legal status of the KR and RF residents were signed. The other important documents signed were the Consular Convention, the Agreement on simplified procedures for acquiring citizenship and the Agreement on regulating migration and the displaced persons' rights.

The analysis of articles published in Kyrgyz, Russian and English in the Kyrgyz Republic in 1998 shows the average assessment of the above-described factors.

From the media focus, Russia's main goal in Central Asia is to bring the former Soviet Republics back to the geopolitical space governed by the Russian Federation. Hence the assessment of the Russian frontier guards withdrawal in January 1999 from the Kyrgyzstani-Chinese border as a partial rejection of the former intentions. According to the "Vechernyi Bishkek",

*"The reason for the withdrawal of Russia's soldiers is not political only – how can Russia justify the fact of controlling the borders of another sovereign state? -but also economic: the country can no longer afford the military presence on the outskirts of the ex-empire. Russia had covered 80% of the costs the 3000 men-strong presence incurred, with the remaining 20% covered by Kyrgyzstan. Then 19 August came...According to Bolot Janyzakov, the head of the Defense&Security Division in the President's Administration, Kyrgyzstan's new expenditures will comprise 60 M som to be allocated via cuts in the civil service and administrative staff.*

*In its turn, Russia retains the responsibility for officer training, equipment and ammunition.*

*Kyrgyzstan declared a military reform aimed at improving the defence structures and ensure rapid response to safety infringements."*

The conclusion is that within the next few years Russia will rake a geopolitical defence or even retreat, to frame its priorities and interests. Russia is keen on creating a favourable international milieu, which is a pledge of democratic changes in the country.

Of all the post-Soviet neighbour areas Russia values Central Asia in the least. Yet Central Asia is considered as a potential hot bed. On a par with the CAIS countries, Russia is concerned with the stability in this region .It cannot just leave the situation as it is, though some of the die-hards prefer it this way.

The possible merge of Afghani and Tajiki conflicts threatens with turmoil and a large-scale instability in the area of "the Islamic Loop".

Any conflicts, either confessional or ethnic, will revive the idea of ethnic boundaries. The response will be exodus of the non-indigenous population (and some of the native Kyrgyz to Russia, millions of refugees will illegally migrate to Europe.

Russia cannot afford losing the control over the global peace in Central Asia, otherwise nuclear materials and military know-how will leak, the powerful drug traffik will sustain, the territorial disputes and clashes will occur.

All the media in the Kyrgyz Republic are unanimous in assessing Russia's presence in the neighbouring country, Tajikistan, as a relief of the region's main concern.

*"The reason for it is that not a single state in the region can feel secure in the vicinity of the intensive hot bed. The CAIS countries lack military and political protection from attacks from the outside and inside. The Afghani hot bed is spreading northward, the Islamic Loop is creeping inside the post-Soviet space.*

*The spread of the Afghani conflict onto the frontier lands (presumably, of Tajikistan) might explode the stability all over the region/ Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are the countries who stand for action for the sake of stability since disintegration of Tajikistan is fraught with refugees and guns penetration and, which is worse, with ethnic boundaries re-demarcation and ethnic purges.*

*The existing drug traffik through the CAIS countries to the West is a menace to the stability in the region. Russia's borders with the countries in the region are not that strong for it to neglect the possibility. The FSU is not interested in wider drug trade, guns smuggling and Fundamentalism creeping. The Big Eastern Neighbour, China, is another concern of Russia and the Central Asian states: the mighty neighbour might have its global ambitions."*

"Nacho Gazette" writes:

*Just like Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan has been devoid of sovereignty and now is vulnerable in the face of threatening regional dissolution and ethnic clashes. The neighbours in Tajikistan are having war on their hands. The more cautious Kyrgyz nation, with its centuries-long bitter history, succeeded in crashing the wave of extremism in the bud, though the North-South cleavage is more than often visible. The numerous problems of population are still there.*

*Obviously, the Russian-speaking residents of Kyrgyzstan will serve as a stabilising factor and guarantor of the country's integrity. They are the windows to world civilisation Kyrgyzstan opened two centuries ago. The window is still being used.*

*President Akaev keeps stressing that Russia has been and is Kyrgyzstan's major strategic partner/ Most of the politicians, businessmen and rank-and-file people are sharing his opinion. "We are urged to cooperage with Russia and Kazakhstan within the framework of the Customs Union at any costs", said the President in Parliament. He stressed the fact that 65% of Kyrgyzstan's foreign trade is connected with the Customs Union.*

Kyrgyzstan as a partner in the military treaty with the Russian Federation had to spell out its position related to NATO. Being involved in the Partnership for Peace Program, Kyrgyzstan was in a predicament: it was to be loyal to Russia and support its violent resistance against the bloc's expansion and, later, against the Kosovo bombings.

Russia is known to have strongly objected to its former friends- Hungary, Checia and Poland-joining the NATO. Guided by the unwillingness to take sides, Kyrgyzstan's Government has reserved the comment. The local papers went as far as reprinting the official reports from Russian press. The latter has been employing the idea that

*“The NATO is undoubtedly neglecting the Europe-proposed security model, the one that focuses on the strong economic strategies, political and legislative co-operation in the face of conflicts rather than on defending themselves from a mythical enemy and military power. Also, potential enemy threatening Europe with a military conflict is not existent. The logical conclusion is: we witness the projection of military force beyond the West European boundaries. Nato's infrastructure close to the Russia's borders is a threat, indeed. The comparison of Nato's total military potential speared to the centre of Eastern Europe with that of Russia is discouraging. The disbalance will increase with the NATO expanding.”*

The Kosovo events opened a second round of tension. Moscow's attempts at forced blame of NATO on the part of Russia's former dominions failed. The Kyrgyzstan Government responded with a neutral note of Muratbek Imanaliev, the Minister of Foreign Affairs:

*“Kyrgyzstan is pursuing a neutral position the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had repeatedly announced: the conflict is to be resolved by peaceful means; Kyrgyzstan is definitely accusing the ethnic purges in Kosovo: an end should be put to the bloodshedding and deaths of civil citizens in the Balkans. I am pleased with the changes on the diplomatic arena: it us thanks to Russia that the Balkan crisis is now under the NATO “umbrella”. Things go slowly and with difficulties, yet all is done to stop the war. On its part, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic is exchanging opinions on the situation with Russia, China and Washington”.*

In this respect the point of view expressed by “Utro Bishkeka”, the municipal paper, might be of interest (15.05.99):

*“The Balkan crisis is a crucible from above. The post-Soviet republics, sovereignty euphoric and empire-free, hurried “to enter”, to sign,” to agree” and join the most prestigious and promising alliances, blocs and institutions. Kyrgyzstan is no exception. The question is how will the interests of Islamic countries, ESCATO, ECO members, comply with membership in NATO (Kyrgyzstan's participation in the Partnership for Peace Program)? The Islamic countries are appalled with the ethnic purges and genocide against Moslems, the other countries are bombing Kosovo – exclusively civil objects and residents) ...as an act of vengeance for this genocide?*

*Three years ago the face-lifted NATO through its impressive generals was recruiting new clients and promising to keep its temper. Instead all the O potential would go for peaceful, non-military programs: natural disasters mitigation, technical assistance, training – not a word about war. Our*

*mountainous country, peaceful and poor, swallowed the bait and entered the Program. Easily. One of the first in the CIS. Gladly. Kyrgyzstan has signed a few international conventions related to human and child rights, peace, eternal friendship, partnership and non-interference.*

*The fix is here: Russia, China. Both are states of power and moods... ”*

KABAR Information Agency came up with an overview for “Pyatnitsa (Friday)” newspaper, where it featured the discrepancies in the positions of Russia and the CIS countries in views on NATO.

*“Moscow, in its present opposition to NATO” aggression, cannot possibly count on the absolute solidarity on the part of Georgia. Also, Baku has officially proposed a NATO military base be located in Apheron, near Azerbaijan’s capital city. This is where the future victories of US-NATO alliance will be forged, in the region called the ex-Soviet Empire’s soft belly”. The US and the allies’ presence will be purely military and political with an evident anti-Russia bias/ The purpose is to squeeze Russia out of the region and cut it from the traffic corridor connecting Asia, Caucasus and Europe where Georgia and Azerbaijan are taking leading positions. Noticeably, the position of Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan’s President tends to decline Moscow and the CIS and join the non-CIS alliances.”*

Another well-employed topic was the one that is not Kyrgyzstan’s immediate concern. It was the gas pipe routes from Turkmenia and the possible demarcation lines in the Caspian. As Vechernyi Bishkek put it (February 1998, *“the struggle related to the Caspian split and Turkmenia gas pipes has touched the geopolitical interests of Russia and the USA. However, unlike the Russian party, the USA are pursuing its interest by funding rather than by official visiting, negotiating and top level declarations.”*)/ Actually, the decision-makers will set the future policies of the Central Asian states- whether they turn to Iran or Turkey.

“Slovo Kyrgyzstana” reports:

*The Project Leader of the Transcaspian gas line was officially announced. The gas pipeline will carry Turkmeni gas down the Caspian bottom through Azerbaijan and Georgia to Erzurum, Turkey. The logic of the last two years brought a US corporation at the head of the Transcaspian consortium. The 1997 transit cancellation of the Turkmen “blue gold ”through Russia’s pipelines provoked Turkmenia’s Government search for world markets. The US companies made the most of it and, Foreign Department-supported, ousted Russia from the region. Hence the US Government funding of the Transcaspian Project feasibility studies performed by the US company Enron”.*

Another turn in the Kyrgyzstan-Russia relations was marked by the 1998 crisis in Russia. The crisis has had a great impact on the CIS countries and again proved Russia’s economic position as a donor. Dependence on Russia was the pretext for “rehabilitating” the poor indicators the national economy demonstrated in 1998.

The national currency (Som) rate has devaluated by 54,46% with the reserves cut by 12% only (Cf.: Russia devaluated the currency by 161,4% and used 25% of the reserves, Kazakhstan has devaluated *tenge* by 8,5% with the reserves decreased by 25%; Ukraine –by 80,5% and 61%, Moldova by 556,4% and 45%, respectively).

According to the estimates made by the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic, the maximal interventions might total \$36 M; as to date \$24 M were used. (The National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic is restricted to use its reserves since the IMF recommends a three-month import reserve or \$150 M).

Instead, the media supported a different opinion expressed by M.P. Daniyar Usenov, the Chairman of the Parliamentary committee on taxes, customs dues, banks and banking. According to D. Usenov, “the present situation is the Doom’s Day for the mistakes made in the national economy of the last 8 years”.

The focus in perceiving term “Community” has shifted, both with the public and the media. The notion of Community transferred to Russia, these are considered identical. This trend became more vivid with Yeltsin’s decline and the arrest of the main music-maker, Boris Berezovsky.

Formerly Kyrgyzstan’s press was discussing the status of Community and its functions. Since 1998 the stress is on the inertness and slide in the CIS structures.

“Slovo Kyrgyzstana”:

*“After Uzbekistan refused to participate in the Collective Security Treaty signed in Tashkent on 15 May 1992, it was evident that the attempts at reforming and reanimating the CIS had failed. The Community is losing energies, turning into a political discussion club where the member countries make believe they are friendly. The CIS collapse is pending. Yet the escapade on the part of Uzbekistan rearranged the attitudes. Now a new alliance, CIS-based, is promoted. It will be West rather than Russia-oriented.*

*One should not be clever to guess what countries will form the future bloc: they are the CIS outsiders or CIS leavers. As is known 9 of the CIS member-countries signed the Treaty, or a military bloc agreement. Moldova and Ukraine refused outright. Turkmenia as a neutral state, abstained. At the session of the CIS Foreign Ministers Council in Moscow only 6 of 9 states confirmed their membership in view of the Security Treaty expiration in May 1999. Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan were the first to say no; the justification was Russia’s advances in Tajikistan and Armenia. Georgia moved forward a few conditions, practically impossible to follow. The Southern belt of Uzbekistan, Turkmenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova are the outsiders. All of these countries see eye to eye on many problems (excepting the Turkmenia-Azerbaijan dispute over the oilfields.*

*The conclusion is the fate of the Community is not in the hands of the insiders but up to the Big Six. The Washington-sponsored new alliance will eventually kill the CIS and will give a new military, economic and political picture in the Southern part of the ex-Empire.*

*Azerbaijan with its attitude to the CIS collective security and the would-be US military base will considerably change the geopolitical situation in the Caucasus and the Caspian region. According to general Safar Abiev, the Defense Minister, who expressed the official point of view of the Azerbaijan’s leaders, the country will accept military presence of turkey, the USA or NATO “to restore the Armenia-impaired military and strategic balance.*

*Baku hints it will not ratify the Security Treaty for another 5 years ahead, the reason being the Armenia- Azerbaijan clashes when “Armenia occupied 20% of the Azerbaijani land supported with the Russia-supplied S-300 missiles and MiG-29 aircraft.”*

The question “How strong is the CIS alliance?” has a different supposition:

*‘Within the last few years Kazakhstan’s leader has repeatedly expressed the idea of the CIS conversion to Eurasian Union with softer customs control and double taxation avoided. The press was not explicit, yet it seems Boris Yeltsin and Alexander Lukashenko were far from being happy. The independent observes noted certain hostility when the presidents of Kazakhstan and Belarus were leaving the Kremlin.*

The press in Kyrgyzstan is unanimous in calling Askar Akaev the greatest optimist in relations to the prospects of the CIS and the Customs Union.

*“President Akaev believes that political issues could be solved through economic decisions only. Moreover, the uncertain policies of the Customs Union resulted in a 30% cut in the trade turnover.*

The press in the Russian Federation treats the topic in a different way. “IS Community” newspaper, for one, assess the situation in the post Soviet Asia as a drift away from Russia.

*The attempts of the CAIS countries to distance from the Russian Federation are more than evident. The personal friendships on the presidential level and the pro-Russia assurances cannot conceal the fact. Today’s political establishment will have to comply with the thought that Russian influence stops in Orenburg and never goes beyond. The geopolitical field of the Russian Federation in Central Asia is shrinking.*

*Russia’s military presence is still noticeable in Kazakhstan (Baikonur testing grounds)and Tajikistan (frontier guards). The recent peace making talks on Tajikistan follow the Russian scenario which separated Tashkent with its pro-Uzbek ambitions from the situation in the Pamiers.*

*The western and southern countries are taking over the economies if the CAIS countries (even in pro-Russia Tajikistan). The crisis due to the split of the technological links in the FSU is gradually over; the new Asian states increase raw material exports (the mineral resources supply miss Russia). The Asian elite in the prime of power sets its own economic targets.*

*The recent privatization of the CAIS economic potential resulted in the merged interests of civil servants and foreign capital, mainly Western. There is no pretence to hide the fact that the future spit of the Caspian resources will overlook Russia, despite the Turkmenia-Azerbaijan friction on gas fields and pipelines G.Aliev, E.Shevarnadze, L.Kuchma and others have repeatedly voiced the decision to send Big Oil southward rather than through Russia. The leaders of Ukraine, Georgian and Azerbaijan visited Astana and Ashgabad, the decision to update the Caucasian gas and oil pipelines was taken.*

*As for integration, we can state that neither the Big Four, nor the Customs Union, nor the bilateral agreements work. All the parties but Russia feel happy with the previous arrangements reconsidered. For instance, Kazakhstan has unilaterally introduced additional taxes on Russia's imports. The unsuccessful trip V. Chernomyrdin made to Alma-Aty proved the fact that Russia is being downsized in Central Asia.*

*Cultural and informational presence of the Russian Federation in the CAIS countries is minimized to be replaced by that of Turkey, Iran, China et al. The new legislation on state languages is being amended, the nation-oriented curricula are being readjusted. The migration of Russian-speaking residents is still high.*

*The power structures in "the new Asia" proved their viability in the survival on the territories of the post-Soviet Empire. Unlike the Russia's counterparts they are more consolidated. Guided by national leaders they are staunch believers in independent policies in relation to Russia.*

*Democracy and market reforms have vanished: even the Europe-like Administration of Nazarbaev with Akejan Kazhegeldin's retirement turned into a "family despotism of the Middle East type.*

*The transfer of the country's capital to Akmola stressed Nazarbaev's intention to "swallow" the northern part of Kazakhstan where Russian population prevails.*

*Slowly Kazakhstan is removing its former assets from Russia. Kazakhstan is negative when Russia tries to prolong the Baikonur rental.*

*In the eyes of Russia the hostile "Kazakhi bars" is still a strategic partner, or the story with Ukraine repeats itself. As to Ukraine, the agreement on space cooperation was signed and L.Kuchma declared the future participation in what is happening in Baikonur.*

*Tashkent had broken all the Russian links and is strengthening its economic and military potential (assisted by the US State Department, EC and NATO who keep mum of the "democracy" in I. Karimov's country).*

*The projects of transit and export corridors evading Russia's territory are being launched. The new regional centers are being formed to counterbalance Russia. The Ukraine-Georgia-Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Axis with its anti-Russia bias is active in constructing the median line in Eurasia while "democratic Russia" will stay uninvolved.*

*Yet there are possibilities to change the scenario, but every passing month makes them feebler. We think that the cardinal change in the attitudes towards Russia could come from power structures. Russia should replace its tactics of "delayed response" to the challenges sent by the CAIS countries by a closer view on the weakness of the "new Asia". Despite the growing anti-Russia feelings, the CAIS countries are threatened with social and ethnic unrest. A time may come when they will face the dilemma: to make friends with Russia or stop the existence". Now that Russia has no clear vision of what is happening "Southward", its political will is feeble; thus our only hope is that the anti-Russia vector will be changed under the pressure of Taliban threat, overpopulated China and the passionate Islamic fundamentalism.*

Nonetheless,

*The prospects for Russia to come close to the Central Asian countries seem weak. According to V. Kremenyuk, the USA and Canada Institute Deputy Director, “Kyrgyzstan with its stable democracy and the friendly president will find it easier. Yet Turkmenia and Uzbekistan are more important, though the Russian leadership are reluctant to approach them.” D. Yefstafyev, a polytologist in the Russian Institute for Strategic Research, thinks that Russia will not come close to any of the CAIS countries, both military and economically, now that the integration is at stake.*

*The 1999 events confirmed this opinion: Russia is restricted in its military cooperation with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. “As for Turkmenia, V. Kremenyuk stresses, “the cooperation here is very limited unless the Taliban threat is looming”. On the eve of the CIS summit Uzbekistan approved the law “On the Main Principles for Foreign Policies”, broke the Security Treaty: “In pursuit of its military doctrine, Uzbekistan stays away from military blocs”. In the case transnational alliances convert to military blocs Uzbekistan is sure to leave them.*

The CIS disintegration, very close in Kyrgyzstan’s observers’ estimates, will signal of Russia’s inability to retain the former boundaries; also, it is a sign of new actors on the arena.

Russia is in ideological stupor when it comes to policies in relation to the Central Asian countries. The practical interest roots in this uncertainty. Yet , if Russia makes its mind to regain the former influence in the region, it will be much easier rather if the new vectors try to penetrate into the niche of Central Asia.

## **b) Kyrgyzstan- West**

The new vector Kyrgyzstan has gained together with the sovereignty is growing day by day. The paradigms are three: political, economic and cultural. The first paradigm will develop on a par with the US-Kyrgyzstan relations. The USA is an acknowledged world leader, this is how it is treated in the Kyrgyz Republic.

A small developing country will inevitably find it difficult to make partners with a large superpower. Hence the general implication of the related articles is : Were we cautious enough not spoil the relations? How far will the Big Brother's assistance go?

In the report presented by Nasha Gazetta and describing the accrediting of B. Abdrisaev, Kyrgyzstan's ambassador in the USA,

*“The ambassador stressed the fact that Kyrgyzstan views the USA as not only one of the major powers with the key roles in peace and stability making, democracy and human rights, but also as one of sovereign Kyrgyzstan's major and secure partners and allies. “*

*The economic aspect of the US-Kyrgyzi cooperation is vitally important. The Kyrgyz Republic's interests lie in establishing close and mutually advantageous relations in trade and investments; the country will do its utmost to attract US capital”.*

The papers published the answer by US President B..Clinton:

*We here in the USA are applauding to the publicly expressed adherence of Kyrgyzstan to democracy and civil society where human rights are totally respected. Kyrgyzstan acts as the first Central Asian country that had free and transparent general Presidential election. A lot of friends of your country, including myself, are expecting great development of democracy in Kyrgyzstan”.*

M. Usenov expressed his point of view in the “Central Asia” journal. According to him, the interest of the USA as a global power, in Kyrgyzstan is heated by the following considerations:

- The former Soviet Central Asian republics have gained sovereignty and are pursuing independent foreign policies;
- The CAIS countries are located between Russia, China and the Islamic world, who are the US major partners;
- The region's energy and mineral resources potential is enormous;
- The region has world-rate uranium deposits and nuclear technologies.

M. Usenov is apt to think that the USA is scared by the possible expansion of fundamentalism which denies the Western world; hence the USA would rather have the CAIS countries follow the secular way of development rather than the Irani type of a Moslem state.

In his interview for ”Nasha Gazetta”(#64, 1997) professor R. Sagdeev, the polytologist, stated that the USA views the Central Asian region as a buffer area for the future cooperation between the USA and Russia.

The US assistance to the CAIS countries in 1992-1995 (fiscal years) totaled: \$532,110,000 to Kazakhstan, \$306,530,000 to Kyrgyzstan, \$152,430,000 to Tajikistan, \$139,820,000 to Turkmenistan, \$99,510,000 to Uzbekistan. The 1999 (fiscal year) assistance was: \$94,245,000 to Kazakhstan, \$48,738,000 to Kyrgyzstan, \$34,690,000 to Tajikistan, \$14,255,000 to Turkmenistan, \$30,965,000 to Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan does not rate as the most US-assisted country, yet the common opinion in the region is that it is Uzbekistan that the USA considers the core country in the CAIS, the one that will lead in the 21 century. Kyrgyzstan's press repeatedly voices this opinion, with sly rather than envious presuppositions. Kazakhstan is also known to claim superiority in the region and is sensitive to the attention the USA is paying Uzbekistan. A small country like Kyrgyzstan will benefit by maneuvering between the two major opponents.

In the period under analysis Kyrgyzstan's press was citing James Collins' inauguration speech at opening Central Asia Institute under the John Hopkins Higher School of International Research on 21 October 1996:

*“One of the main tasks was to help these countries integrate in the world community... The common future for Russia and Central Asia is at least problematic. What is evident is that CIS-orientation, or rather Russia-orientation is not the only priority, it's just a possible model. The other model is an integrative PanTurkish model with the related ideology. A third model can be a PanIslamic one that attracts Central Asia to the main centers of the Moslem world. Theoretically, we cannot exclude a scenario when the region's countries will fall under Chinese influence, especially while the East-Asian giant is maturing both economically and politically.”*

According to Paul F. Goble, Svoboda/Free Europe Radio Deputy Director (“Central Asia” journal, # 2 (8)),

*“Russia's policies concerning Iran, China's policies in Xynjan and the US policies in Pakistan root in a special interest in Central Asia; the interest stresses how important is the role of this region in the mind-scheming of other powers, despite its geographical remoteness”.*

*Res Publica*, the oppositional newspaper, was critical of Akaev reform and the foreign expertise, yet it was the first to publish USIA report:

*“The Clinton Administration is willing to increase foreign aid to the Caucasian and the CAIS countries by 40%, Strobe Talbot, Deputy State Secretary, stated in his speech at Central Asia Institute under the John Hopkins University.*

*He said: “Today they are facing an opportunity to shake off the roles of chess soldiers in the big game of large powers where wealth and influence are at stake – at the expense of the countries in these regions. For them actual freedom, prosperity and security are interlined now.*

*The reforms in the Caucasian and Central Asian countries are on and will eventually succeed. They will result in a stability in the important area bordering on China, Iran and Afghanistan, the area with developing economic and social interaction that embraces the territory from the Black Sea to the Pamiers; thus the valuable trade and transit corridor along the Silk Way will connect Europe and Asia.*

*Also, we expect an adverse tendency. In the case the economic and political reforms in the Caucasian and Central Asian countries fail, the hotbeds sustain and threaten with terrorism, religious and political extremism and evident wars.”*

The local press widely covered the 5th anniversary of Kyrgyzstan's joining the UNO and establishing contacts with the USA. The topics were the visit Kyrgyzstan's President Akaev paid to the USA and his meetings with B. Clinton and A. Gore. In his speech at the Carnegie Fund the President of Kyrgyzstan stressed that he did not think the theory of civilizations clash was that true. The east and the West seem to become close and converge.

*“Any national culture, the way of thinking and behavior should fit the process of the world's globalization. Our Republic' ideal structure is democracy of the Western type plus Kyrgyz national traditions plus specifics of a multiethnic society”.*

Also, in his speech at the Issyk-Kul Forum a few days later, President Akaev focused on the conjunction of the regional and the universal, Christian traditions with the Eastern-Asian cultures and called Kyrgyzstan “a unity testing ground” in the area. The visit of Kyrgyzstan's President to Washington was followed by an unofficial visit of Hillary Clinton who came with a humanitarian mission. Soon after her departure the Kyrgyz Republic received considerable humanitarian aid sent by Russia's first lady Naina Yeltsin. Then the then RF Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin attended the wedding party of President Akaev's daughter.

The “Navigator” (#5, 1997) goes as far as giving the USA all the external governance over the economic and social development in the CAIS area. The agreement is only foreign specialists and institutes can serve as a “third party” that will be able to bring together the clashing interests of the regional countries and lead their efforts for people's well being.

NATO takes a special place in the Kyrgyzstan-West political paradigm. The Kyrgyzstan-NATO links have increased, in particular with the “Partnership for Peace” Program. Back in 1994 the Russian Information Agency INFOREX made a reference to a presidential staff who mentioned Kyrgyzstan's plans to negotiate with the USA or NATO for a military base on its territory. The sharp reprimand from Moscow followed, the Bishkek officials brought their apologies. All the further action and the NATO staff visit to the Kyrgyz Republic are in the limelight of RF press and authorities.

The information the local authorities supplied the media stressed the peace-making function of NATO.

*“On 15 January 1997 the KR Government discussed the results of the “Partnership for Peace” Program, the other topic was “Status and Means of ensuring of Regional Security”. The head of the country called upon the participants to wider implement NATO's experience of rescue teams and natural disasters prognosis.”*

The major event in this line was NATO Secretary General Mr. Solane's visit and further peace-making battalion stationed under the NATO auspices. (March 1997) for military exercise purposes. The NATO Secretary General arrival started a new era in Kyrgyzstan-NATO relations. Since 1994 the Kyrgyz Republic, together with other 25 countries, participates in the North Atlantic Co-operation Council Program called Partnership for Peace. The GOK newspaper "Slovo Kyrgyzstana" came up with the following: "Long-term interests of our country with its small experience of international interaction lie with the balanced policies and more consideration of NATO as a real opportunity to adjunct to the well-proven Western modes of security."

A few days later, General A. Nikolaev of the Russian Federal Force came to Kyrgyzstan to survey Russia's border guards. Extraordinarily, the General paid three (!) successive visits to Kyrgyzstan, with his second trip coinciding with the TSENTAZBAT - 97 exercise launched on 14 September. A few more days later the Chinese Defence Minister was there.

NATO Secretary General Mr. Solane's visit to Kyrgyzstan evoked a wide coverage in the local press. Thus, in "Nasha Gazetta" we read:

*"Mr. Solane's trip to Central Asia is a token of NATO strategies. The bloc is probing into what will it get from Kyrgyzstan. Supposedly, Mr. Solane started adjusting the attunes in the bloc towards the CAIS countries in the light of new situation and special terms of collaboration with Russia. The closer relations of NATO and the RF are sure to strengthen the relations of NATO with the CIAS countries. So, Mr. Solane's trip should be viewed as a political event.*

*The visit occurred in the time when the co-operation between the RF and the CA region has reduced to a minimum, the cultural links have thinned, the military links have weakened, hopefully, the RF will separate itself from the region. The purpose of the visit then is to acquire information on the state of things, briefing the CAIS countries on NASTO new targets in the post-Soviet period and involvement of the CA countries into the "Partnership for Peace" Program.*

*Things did not always go smooth. The meetings were not completely transparent: the talk with Uzbekistan's President was behind the closed doors. Uzbekistan with its most viable army has a special opinion concerning NATO's spread eastwards. Karimov had declared he did not object to NATO's possible merge with the former Warsaw Pact. Yet not all the regional presidents share this point of view. Kyrgyzstan's President Akaev with the mild persistency of born politician said that Moscow was concerned with the potential expansion of NATO and Moscow's stand should not be overlooked by the candidates to NATO.*

*Kazakhstan's President N. Nazarbaev was straightforward: "I do not understand the urgent necessity for NATO to move to the East. I do not think it is a positive decision". A day after Mr. Solane's departure N. Nazarbaev was more outspoken:" Globally, Kazakhstan has never had and will have a closer friend than Russia and the Russian people are, our Republic would like to have better contacts with Russia". Nazarbaev could not but say these words*

*since the RF is its military ally right on the country's border. Their relations matter a lot, especially in the context of the Afghani conflict.*

*All Kazakhstan's ammunition has been supplied from Russia; all the officers have been also trained there. Russia's guards are protecting Kazakhstan's border as a CIS southern border. Without Russia's shield one could not have predicted the impact of the Afghani conflict on the CAIS region.*

*Also, Nazarbaev is a strong supporter for the regional peace-making troops to be formed under the UN aegis. Yet the military force of a battalion like this is incomparable with the Talibhans. Nazarbaev calls Talibhans a well-structures and aggressive power. This makes the CIAS countries reconsider the attitude to co-operation with the RF. The talks aimed at forming two CIS divisions to oppose the threat from Afghanistan are not incidental.*

*The "Partnership for Peace" Program ensured an All-European military alliance; in the present situation NATO can plan serious activities in Asia.*

*Mr. Solane's tour is closely related to the necessity NATO faces to adjust to new military and political realia as the NATO Secretary General explicitly put it.*

*The first official visit to Kyrgyzstan of the NATO Secretary General Dr. Xavier Solane as a part of his Central Asian tour was an event. The head of the alliance met President A.Akaev, Prime Minister A. Jumagulov, the Foreign Minister R. Otunbaeva, the Defense minister M.Subanov and the Jogorku Kenesh deputies. Dr. Solane also observed demo exercise of the rapid reaction force under the Ministry of Emergency and Civil Service in the Ala-Archa national park.*

*Before the negotiations with the NATO head President Akaev informed the journalists that Kyrgyzstan's co-operation with NATO under the "Partnership for Peace" Program opens up new and further prospects for strengthening the national security, training the military staff in accordance with modern requirements and transfer the NATO know-how of military cooperation with other countries.*

*After the negotiations with Dr. Xavier Solane the head of the Kyrgyz Republic made a statement to the RF journalists concerning Kyrgyzstan's stand on NATO's expansion eastwards."Kyrgyzstan, for whom Russia has been a traditional strategic ally, cannot but share the RF concern about the NATO expansion", said A.Akaev. According to the President, the theme of the negotiations was NATO's expansion. The head of the Kyrgyz Republic gave his guest to know that he was supporting Russia's negative attitude to NATO's plans of expanding. "NATO expansion should not make any inconveniences for Russian citizens and the allies of the Russian Federation", A.Akaev stressed. The President concluded that in the negotiations Dr. Xavier Solane stated his firm determination to achieve understanding with both the parties, Russia and NATO."*

(See attitude of Kyrgyzstan to NATO expansion and the Kosovo operation in Chapter 2, part 2 "Kyrgyzstan-Russia").

Kyrgyzstan's media is paying inconsiderable attention to the Kyrgyzstan-Europe relations, the reason being Kyrgyzstan's insufficient presence in Europe. Here Germany leads cultural and educational support, mainly to the German Diaspora, still numerous in the country.

The world-known Kyrgyz writer Chyngyz Aitmatov, Kyrgyzstan's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in Benelux and the Resident representative in European Union and NATO, the one who consults all the crucial political decisions, said:

*“Paradoxically, after the USSR collapse it was the EU who is trying to soften the terrible impact of the collapse. There is another side of the medal in these world-changing events: I am convinced that our small Kyrgyzstan's interests the united Europe as a part of the geopolitical heritage of the FSU. In this line our heritage is more interesting and important than that of China, India < Pakistan...”*

The economic paradigm of Kyrgyzstan's interaction with the Western institutions has been adjusted. In 1991-1996 Kyrgyzstan fully welcomed foreign aid, foreign partners and economic advisers. In 1996-1998 Kyrgyzstan reviewed all the details of the co-operation with a view to find weak links. Why are the reforms with all the money they consumed ineffective? The mood was to decline assistance at all...

In the last six months of 1998 and in 1999 the prevailing idea is: Kyrgyzstan will never repay the credits and it makes sense to take them more and declare ourselves bankrupt, like some of the African countries did.

Kyrgyzstan's media denounced Kazakhstan's rejection of the IMF services. This institution proved to be operational in the Kyrgyz Republic and the recent International Conference in commemoration of the Kyrgyz national currency (Som) confirmed the fact. Local experts find Kazakhstan President Nazarbaev's decision premature (Nasha Gazetta, 14 May, 1997). With Turkmenia - IMF friction, Kyrgyzstan's readiness to fulfil all the IMF requirements looks very promising. The media was zealously attentive to the neighboring countries in terms of their success in procuring credits and loans.

For a few recent years Kyrgyzstan was considered a country most advanced in economic reform.

*“Kyrgyzstan with its 5 M population and scarce mineral resources (compared with his neighbors), should be more obliging to itself”, said Marcelo Selowsy, the WB Chief economist for Europe and Central Asia. The aggressively liberal policies pursued by Kyrgyzstan's President Akaev, former physicist, turned Kyrgyzstan into the first CIS country to have shown conspicuous economic growth with the 5% rate.*

*The Kyrgyz Republic keeps getting about \$60 M a year from the World Bank, mainly, in the form of rehabilitation credits that go straight to the budget. Regrettably, the World Bank is shifting its interests onto a more viable Kazakhstan. Kazaki's cautious president Nazarbaev had kept his nose in the wind before he launched fundamental economic reforms. Last year saw*

*considerable changes when most of Kazakhstan's oilfields were transferred to strategic foreign investors. Some of these contracts were shadowy; including those signed with "young Canadian "companies bearing a striking similarity to the gold-mining company Bre-X. Also, the magnate like Samsung got involved. The Korean conglomerate is governing the copper-mining sector.*

*At the same time both Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic tends to follow the way of western liberalism. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are on the way to a totalitarian state mixed with a bit of Islamic nationalism. The World Bank cut its credits to Uzbekistan from \$226 M in 1993 to \$5M in 1998; the IMF has completely rejected Tashkent's requests for assistance. Turkmenistan is still on the way to constructive negotiations with multiparty agencies, as officials put it, while the war-trodden Tajikistan is in need of stability to restore its economy.*

The recent tendency in Kyrgyzstan's press of 1999 is to accuse the IMF for "wrong advice", yet the official authorities vigilantly rebuff the accusations. On the eve of the Presidential election in Kyrgyzstan, the Republic has delineated its future policies: gradual donor-assisted and world community-controlled reforms/ This is one of the main postulates which is hard to oppose; the only critics being the oppositional "Asaba" and "Res Publica".

### **c) Kyrgyzstan –East**

With the USSR collapse the Central Asia have used their proximity to the Asian Moslem community to the full, which was unbelievable in the former days. The official authorities and media in Kyrgyzstan stand that the eastern way of development could be employed. In reality all of the CAIS countries follow the Western, industrial, way of development.

In 1992 Turkey took the lead in the Turkish world which it reigned for the next two years. 1993 saw slackening this position. The Central Asian new sovereignties soon realised Turkey was not in power to govern the situation in the region. The existing Turkish presence is strong in education only. The fact is a long-range strategy: the intellectual elite is being taught in Turkish universities to later (in some 25-30 years) determine the Central Asian policies tinged with Pan- Turkish trends.

"Vechernyi Bishkek "wrote:

*The orientation to this country might mean for the small Republic the eventual orientation to Europe and the USA. It is indicative that one of the first agreements with Turkey presupposed gradual and stage –by- stage transfer of Kyrgyz written language to Latin alphabet.*

However, "Our Newspaper" stresses,

*"Turkey is not successful in spreading its influence and economic interests onto the CAIS countries with the ethnically close population. The global idea of common Turk roots and the statements the leaders of Central Asian countries made back in 1991 in favour of the secular state model tailored by Turkey have lost their zeal by now.*

The fact that Turkey with all its claims, is still not the center of the Asian world is explained by absence of joint borderlines with Central Asia. Hence Turkey's role as a distant adviser.

*Unlike the semi-atheistic Turkey, Iran is coming in Central Asia supported by a surge of Islam resurrection and driven by the idea of the world's Islamic revolution. Iran claims influence in Afghanistan and Pakistan which will open the way to Uzbekistan's and Tajikistan's borders (the border with Turkmenia is physical). Azerbaijan and partly Kazakhstan are known to become close to Iran. The small sovereign Kyrgyzstan will present a minor interest for Iran, yet it pays to think of it globally. Some of Kyrgyzstan's clergy are conductors of pro-Irani ideas. Yet, the Turks are traditional sunnits and Iranis are shiits, the two clans being severely opposed at times.*

Uzbekistan has proven the fact: In answer to terrorist acts at his territory President Islam Karimov accused the Khezbollakh Movement.

*"It is common knowledge that Khezbollakh is openly supported by Irani authorities; it needs their approval to any action they are planning. That gives Tashkent the right to put the blame for the tragedy on Teheran.*

"Slovo Kyrgyzstana", the governmental paper writes:

*After the USSR collapse Teheran has increased its activities in Central Asia. Teheran in its foreign policies is pursuing two strategic goals: Islamization of the CAIS countries in Irani way and support to the Turk-surrounded Tajiks who are the only representatives of the Persian language family in the region. These two goals run counter to the external policies of Tashkent where the claims for superiority in the region are strong. Islam Karimov is consistently advocating the secular mode of state power and intensively fighting the Islamist beyond Uzbekistan – in Tajikistan. At the same time Tashkent is trying to unite Turc nationalities of Central Asia. Noteworthy, the Tashkent-initiated alliances of Central Asian ethnicities (CIS replicas) tend to exclude Tajikistan speaking a different language.*

Pakistan also witnessed the emergence of new Central Asia. When the new geopolitical space opened northward of Pakistan, new prospects for national security opened up for Islamabad.

With a view to get access to "The Moslem heart of Asia" and to find new roads India will not control, Pakistan sent a top-level delegation headed by the Foreign Minister Sardar Asef Akhmed Ali to all the CAIS countries in December 1981. The visit concluded with establishing diplomatic relations with all the five Republics and the "Memorandum of mutual understanding" and the exchange agreement in the sphere of culture, education and economy. Also, Pakistan offered each long-term credits of \$10,000-\$30,000.

Despite the financial difficulties Pakistan established its embassies in all the CAIS countries and by April 1992 launched a host of projects with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan with a view to combine their potential resources with Pakistani experience and capital.

Only a few of these projects saw the light. Evidently< Pakistan is having other problems to see to.

The confronting India and Pakistan are Central Asian other concern. Pakistan tries to use Kyrgyzstan's media for advocating its stand in the Casmir issue. Fortunately, geopolitical claims of Pakistan do not particularly interest the regional community: the 1996 sampling has revealed only 5,6% of the press coverage.

According to our data, Saudi Arabia events are covered by Kyrgyz language media only, and in a very positive light at that. The publication types speak for themselves, these are religious topics. The amount of mosques and medreses Saudi Arabia is erecting in Kyrgyzstan will total two thousand before the year 2000. Yet in 1998-1999 Saudi Arabia was rebuked for the attempts to destabilise the situation in connection with the growing in strength Vakkhabism movement.

The spread of Islamic fundamentalism onto Kyrgyzstan has never been discussed until mid-1997 when the theme took all the front pages. The prior official says was Kyrgyzstan had been put of it. Yet the Vackhabist missionaries are there to preach extreme Islam. Vechernyi Bishkek published the National Security Ministry data on foreign missionaries recruiting Uygur young men as rangers. The recruits were found as far as Pakistan and were deported home. The Muslim clergy were unhappy with the articles published. The KR President's press service confirmed the fact.

*Vladimir Radugin, Moscow, 7 June:*

*The former Soviet Republics are aware of the growing threat on the part of Islamic fundamentalists and are calling upon to overcome them.*

*The Foreign Ministers of Russia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan declared that their countries are seriously threatened with Vakkhabists, the Islamic sunnits. Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Zakir Almatov stated that the Vakkhabists in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are in closed touch with the extremist groups Russia and Georgia, Chechnya included. He reported that within the last 18 months 5 gangster groups were crashed in Uzbekistan.*

*Kyrgyzstan's Foreign Minister declared that his Government is soon making a political decision and will join the tripartite union of Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.*

*Vakkhabism is becoming a headache for the post-Soviet leaders.*

*The leaders of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan accuse Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran of the support the latter render to the illegitimate Islamic centers, the turmoil centers rather.*

*Last month the Namangan raion court, Uzbekistan, convicted 12 members of a Pakistani-based extremist vakkhabist organization for disrupting the Constitutional order and uniting into a criminal group. Uzbekistan's Supreme Court sentenced 7 vakkhabists –fundamentalists to 7-12 year imprisonment for the attempt to destabilize the power and race and religion hatred propaganda.*

The terrorist blasts in Tashkent and the attempted assassination of Uzbekistan's President have moved the problem from the point of discussions to the plane of political action. The incident has seriously damaged the relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan was accused for hosting the vakkhabists and giving them a shelter from where they are creeping all over.

The Information Service of the KR Ministry of Defense reported:

*The KR Ministry of National Security has acquired data concerning terrorist plans of some Kyrgyzstan's residents.*

*Speaking of their relation to proIslamic religious extremist movement, we would like to stress that some of the detainees had been trained in a military opposition camps in Tajikistan and Chechnya. The purpose of their arrival in Kyrgyzstan was to get Kyrgyzstan's passports and legalize them here. By the way, Uzbekistan's Security Service is checking their participation in the military opposition in Uzbekistan, the one with pronounced vakkhabist trends following the Khezbollah postulates.*

*Note: Khezbollah (Arabic "Alah's Party") was set up in 1981, is the most extremist organization of Shiites. More than 10,000 members.*

*The targets are citizens and institutions of Israel, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and some West European countries, all the individuals and states opposing the Islamic religious extremism. Khezbollah has its own army and funding sources; its guru is sheik Khasan Nasrulla. Khezbollah interacts with "Khamas" and "Jigihad Islami" from Pakistan. In 1991-1996 Khezbollah made a series of terrorist acts – in the embassies of Israel, Argentina and Great Britain, murdered the Bulgarian ambassador in the USA, exploded a passenger bus in Jerusalem,*

*Khezbollah views Central Asia as the potential ground to spread their influence on. It is interested in setting up its bases all throughout Central Asia. ProIslamic vakkhabism is implementing its policies under the mask of public and cultural exchange.*

*In view of the active aggression on the part of militant Islam Kyrgyzstan is taking steps to stop their activities on the country's territory.*

The growth of vakkhabism in the Kyrgyz Republic is being aggravated with the acute rise in drugs and weapon trade. The 1998 scandal originated in Osh, Southern Kyrgyzstan, where an Iranian train carrying ammunition for Afghani groupings was detained.

Drugs trade and Kyrgyzstan's conversion to a transit country for Afghani drugs traffik are in the limelight, too. The related UNDP-funded project is very transparent at that. Drugs come to this country not only from Tajikistan but also through the China- the Kyrgyzstan border.

*"The present space of the CIS countries is a huge uncontrolled drug plantation and a vast free market of narcotics. Cynibus takes 4 million hectares of Kazakhstan's land. In Russia it grows on 1,5 million hectares. Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan are favourable soil for opium and cannabis, too. In the FSU troops were used to detain drugs-growers in the Chui valley, Kyrgyzstan. No more now. The local population had despised the drugs mongers, now they are supportive and understanding. The messengers from Russia are no longer collecting the grass, they bring suitcases of cash and take ready-made opium and marijuana. One rouble in narcobusiness gives a 1000 rouble profit, or 100,000% income.*

Surprisingly, the enormous China is inert when it comes to CAIS countries; the role of the leader in their foreign trade turnover seems to suit China.

China would prefer a peaceful neighbour, hence the boundary limitation and demarcation lines agreements signed with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. China-Central Asian co-operation is also expanding. Yet China is cautious about crediting any of the Central Asian countries.

Consequently, its political influence in the region is low. The Uyghur factor cannot but destabilise the situation in the Xinjiang autonomy, right on the Kazakh and Kyrgyz border. The Uyghur diasporas, rich and strong as they are, fail to impose themselves upon the leaders of these countries. The officials are reserved when it comes to the Uyghur problem. It is treated as China's internal affair. Two protesting marches were reported in 1997 (Vechernyi Bishkek and the oppositional Res Publica, Kyrgyzstan).

The media point out that

*“The Chinese ideology remained as it was. Nobody was imposing it on us. In return, we have never publicly touched one of the sensitive issues in China—the Yigur problem. Though the 50,000 strong Yigurs in Kyrgyzstan, or 1% of the total, accept this silence inadequately”.*

*“The Yigur diasporas are numerous in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. According to Merkhata Sharipjan, a “Radio Svoboda” Kazakh editor, the local authorities make believe that they are not in the least are concerned with the idea of a sovereign Yigur Republic, and Islamic Republic in Eastern Turkestan. Yigurs as a population stratum are wholeheartedly with their blood kin across the border, in Xinjiang. In compliance with the agreement Kazakhstan has also distanced from problem. It has never been supporting Yigur extremists.*

*The Yigur activists use Kazakhstan the state bordering on Xinjiang-Yigur autonomous raion of China as their base, yet the Government is not encouraging the dissidents and is keen on developing economic ties with China since China is an alternative of Kazakhstan's dependence on Russia.”* Almaty assured Beijing that it would never support the separatists.

Kyrgyzstan's press writes:

*The evident non-involvement of Kyrgyzstan prompts that our Government is not concerned with the situation in the neighboring countries. Even more than that. The non-supporter of separatism, Kyrgyzstan has refused a legal registration to an organization, which could impair the difficult relations with China. Germany, Turkey, Austria, the USA host Yigur immigrants but they will never legalize their organizations. The freedom fighters choose various methods to achieve their aims.*

1999 witnessed the first articles admitting the superior role of China both in the region elsewhere. Notably, Kyrgyzstan's media judge that it is the USA not Russia that will counterbalance the new world center, China. The oppositional newspaper “Res Publica” published an appeal addressed to B. Clinton:

*The territorial claims of proMao China are not there yet. Yet the “one child family” policy with the Japanese technology regulating the sex of a future Chinese will dramatically increase the male population in China who, in search of wives and jobs will leak throughout the world with the Government*

*funding the interventions in someone else's economies and reduplication of Chinese. The US nuclear "umbrella" is necessity for the Kyrgyz Republic and in this respect there is no time to lose since the time is for China."*

To counterbalance the contradicting influence from the East and the inter CIS system, the Central Asian republics joined in a Union of their own and more viable, too. Within the last three years 53 projects were developed, with 20 implemented, another 17 cost-sharing projects were signed, 2 multilateral and 18 bilateral treaties concluded." Late 1997 and early 1998 saw the Customs Union failure and further CIS disintegration. The Central Asian Presidents more often voice appeals to regional integration.

As is shown in the report presented by the Central Asian School for Cultural Policies,  
*"Squeezed between Russia and China until the [presidencies expire, the five Central Asian Presidents are seeking for an outlet: in consolidation, on the one hand, and in constructing Western corridors, on the other hand. Last December a fourth member- Tajikistan- joined the Central Asian alliance. Turkmen-Bash's refusal to join is rather a demonstration of political influence and economic self-sufficiency and neutrality. Yet the idea and clan-based union is the further consolidation on the presidential level. The slowgo Central Asian Union is typically oriental. What is the use to show all your strength at once? Today Emomali Rakhmonov is with us, tomorrow; Saparmurat Niyazov will do the same, if needed... The Central Asian Union may some day accept the weak and war-exhausted Tajikistan. The Central Asian will is a counterbalance for Russia's presence in Tajikistan. This will be used slowly, better to save it by 2000. The Central Asian will is trump card in the uncertain system of the CIS.*

*Tension in the ethnic problems roots in Akaev's radical policies and the evident opposition to the actions taken by his neighbours (unilateral introduction of the national currency, a referendum replaced by election, etc.). Yet in the last 6 months of 1996 the tension subsided since A.Akaev revealed his Asian loyalty and solidarity in a number of cases (energy resources, pastures, and agreed views under the CIS) and involved the national elite in the dialogue with the regional leaders.*

However, today the Central Asian alliance is questionable. The Kyrgyz-Uzbek relations have seriously aggravated. To such an extent that Islam Karimov in his live air address made rude personal remarks concerning the Kyrgyz President's appearance and ways. Uzbekistan closed its borders with Kyrgyzstan and suspended the trade. The reason lies in Kyrgyzstan's liberal attitude to *vakkhabism*, the thing the Big Partner dislikes.

"Delo" newspapers is treating the topic:

*Uzbekistan has blocked its interstate highways, -long before the Tashkent explosions. Along the entire frontier line Uzbekistan verges into our territory by small sized peninsula. All of them are military zones where Kyrgyzstan's citizens could be searched stopped and arrested. The Laylak-Osh line is concrete fire point manned with snipers. Kyrgyzstan's authorities do not have*

*the guts to take similar steps. "Kyrgyzstan's deputy .D. Sadyrbaev went on site and saw for himself how strangers in military uniform leak into Kyrgyzstani territory. Uzbekistan's residents are renting dozen thousands of Kyrgyz land. The houses are constructed there, the guards are stationed and a Kyrgyz is an alien on his native land."*

Kyrgyzstan's authorities that are Uzbek gas-dependent are trying to smooth the things.

So, the analysis showed that the inner policies' coverage takes only 5,6% of the media activities. The West has been in the focus due to the Western organizations' intensive presence. The view of the US and NATO (the two entities are often referenced to as similar) boils down to the recognition of the actual existence of the global power and strength. Though the Kyrgyz Republic is following Russia's attitude to NATO, yet the recent estrangement between the KR and FR prompted Kyrgyzstan's own point of view. The expected approval of Russia's stand on NATO expansion was not there. This indicates of the choice Kyrgyzstan is making between the RF and NATO and inclining to cling to the latter as a more feasible source of power.

Western influence is being acknowledged as beneficial in a situation Kyrgyzstan is facing Russia' empire-oriented policies, the pending threat of China and the Islamic fundamentalism with the religious terrorist bias looming.

It is common to acknowledge the role of the USA as the most active agent on the regional scene. The US-sponsored development of NGOs forms the basis of its social influence. The resultant strong lobbyism will eventually be employed in the 2000 election. West-oriented policies tend to form the basis of Kyrgyzstan's political concept. The small, resource-scare and neighbor-dependant Kyrgyzstan has to be flexible with the West.

In this light the KR-US relations and participation in NATO acquire more and more significance. The notion of NATO as "a shield" against the shaky neighbours and the potential wider conflicts is maturing.

On the whole, Kyrgyzstan's media is to a great extent detached from the general political processes. It is rather more concerned with the domestic issues viewed from a regionally restricted position and it greatly dependent on Russia's information sources. One should admit that the conceptual boundaries of the media in Kyrgyzstan are set in Moscow. The ideological influence of both Western and Islamic institutions in this process are not discernable.

### PART 3 CONCLUSIONS

The Central Asian region remains the area of opposition for the three subjects: Russia, the West, represented by the USA and NATO, and the East, represented by China, Turkey and Iran.

*“Kyrgyzstan found itself in a frontier area at the junction of the three worlds-Islamic, Chinese and Russian,”* states Andronic Mygranyan, Chairman of the Scientific Council at the Moscow Institute of Diaspora and Integration.” *Kyrgyzstan seems to be in an unrivaled situation when the country is choosing its model for the development. The Russian world has given Kyrgyzstan an opportunity to upgrade itself and arrive at a much higher level of culture and education than the other two worlds can offer.*

*Now it is time to make a decision where to go: backwards and lose all that had been acquired, to be come an object of upgrading again, or just stick to the old way and advance? To adopt an Islamic model to further experience the Western influence and to oppose it in the union with the other Eastern world? Or to be involved in the sphere of China’ interests and dissolve in its human abyss?”*

The choice is still there. In this respect the publications by the popular Kyrgyz politician Daniyar Usenov, M.P., are indicative (Vechernyi Bishkek, 19 March 1999):

*“Today I cannot entirely believe my President as I did yesterday. This is because today he allows the double standards to exist.*

*Where are we? In the WTO or in the Customs Union? Are we in the CIS Collective Security Treaty or are in NATO with its “Partnership for Peace”? Recall the scandalous Irani train, which our Government sent back instead of confiscating the contraband. The notorious train was robbed by Colonel Khudoiberfdiev (of the rebels in Tajikistan). Whom is Askar Akaev supporting-Iran or the USA?”*

It is the reality that Kyrgyzstan is perceived as a subsidiary of either Soviet or Moslem worlds. Fortunately, Kyrgyzstan finds some other links, either political, or economic. A third way of cooperation is through culture. Within the framework of the counterbalancing tendencies Kyrgyzstan has a chance of making its own choice.

Ten years of sovereignty passed before Kyrgyzstan appeared on the map as a fully-fledged country. Nacha Gazetta “has treated this topic in a most outwardly way: “Turkey’s claim of the early 50s to influence the region was a flop. In terms of investments, Turkey rates third or fourth, especially in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The relations with Iran are difficult: **In 1996-1997 Kyrgyzstan’s press** Iran is more interested in Tajikistan which is ethnically close to Iran, hence the strengthening of their political partnership. Yet economically Iran’s main partner is Turkmenia to be rivalled by Uzbekistan in the next century.”

In 1996 - early 1998 Kyrgyzstan’s press mirrored the changes in the orientation and the new trends in the country’s policies, namely, pro-western democracy type as a priority after the painful probing into ‘Malaysian’, “Korean”, “Turkish” models, Turkey’s regional weakness and lower influence of Eastern-Asian countries in early 1998.

Russia's regional strength based on the large Russian diasporas support, the economic dependence from Russian suppliers and the military presence on the Central Asian borders. The growing regional integration will make a dangerous alternative to CIS, with its formal links.

The Muslim bloc so far was not influential officially, yet, talking in practical terms, it is getting stronger when spread through religious channels. The recent developments in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan can act as catalysts for Central Asia to finally disperse into new blocs.

The Central Asian countries' strife for unity, both political and economic, makes these more stable and policy-predictable.

The CISA media reflect the existing uncertainty in the region. Yet, despite the frequent change in vectors, priorities, models and attitude, the West-orientation prevails.

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## Abstract

Olga Pozdnyakova

### **“MASS MEDIA OF KYRGYZSTAN ON NATO AND OTHER WESTERN INSTITUTIONS EXPANSION IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION”**

The survey treats Kyrgyzstan's media featuring the three factors in the Central Asia's development: those of the West, Russia and the Islamic (Eastern) world.

The report submitted analyses the main tendencies observed in Central Asian development in general and Kyrgyzstan's media in particular. The data was provided by 1996-1999 publications in Kyrgyz, English and Russian.

The share of international coverage in Kyrgyzstan's press totals 5,6%, the main information source being the Russian Federation media, with its large circulation and great influence. Kyrgyzstan's journalists are apt to size up the world's events and the country's place in the new geopolitical system through the eyes of Moscow specialists.

The local press admits that a small country like the Kyrgyz Republic might prefer the Western factor of fast industrial and informational advancement rather than a typical “Asiatic” scenario.

The implicit US presence in the region and Kyrgyzstan's growing participation in NATO are considered restraining inputs in the picture aggravated by Russia's influence, China's growing interest, the aggressive creep of Islamic fundamentalism and the drugs and weapon traffik.

Russia's frontier troops withdrawal will open Kyrgyzstan's border. Hence NATO is viewed as the future guarantor against a potential intervention.

Negligent of Russia's dissatisfaction, Kyrgyzstan is increasing its co-operation with NATO. Wisely enough, Kyrgyzstan is carefully weighing its deliberate signs of adherence to NATO.

When NATO's expansion eastwards was discussed, the Kyrgyz Republic took Russia's side yet it demonstrated praise-worthy reserve when accessing the Kosovo events and sent a large delegation to the NATO 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.