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www.souzipolitolog.ru
E-mail: voprospolitolog@yandex.ru,
souzipolitolog@yandex.ru

Executive Secretary
Shkurina S.S.

Computer-aided makeup by
Antsiferova A.S.

Translated by
Chernyshova E.V.

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A. A. KRUT'KO
*Ambassador of the Russian Federation
in Kyrgyz Republic,
working for the Doctor's degree at the Kyrgyz-Russian
Slavic University,
Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic*

RUSSIA AND KYRGYZSTAN AIM TO DEEPEN EURASIAN INTEGRATION

The article considers the dynamics and perspective directions of development of Russian-Kyrgyz relations in the new conditions of Kyrgyzstan's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as possibilities for its participation in the project "One belt, one way."

Key words: *foreign policy, diplomatic relations, integration processes, the Eurasian Economic Union, "One belt, one way," a strategic partnership, the great Eurasian partnership.*

In the modern world, the foreign policy of the states is based on various ideological foundations: global leadership (USA), paternalism and protectionism (EU countries), equal partnership and regional integration based on it (SCO countries, EEU). Foreign policy approaches are fixed in the relevant doctrinal documents, such as the US National Security Strategy (2015), China's initiative "One belt, one way" (2013), the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (2016), the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2016), etc. Russia considers it a key task to deepen and expand integration within the EAEU in order to ensure stable development, comprehensive technological renewal, co-operation, increase the competitiveness of the economies of the EAEU member states and improve the living standards of their population¹. One of Russia's strategic partners is the Kyrgyz Republic, which shares this approach. Kyrgyzstan joined the EAEU in 2015 and considers membership in this Association as an opportunity to promote its national interests, which is reflected in the country's National Strategy for Sustainable Development for the Period from 2013 to 2017. This document names "reaching a new level of strategic cooperation with the Russian Federation as the main player in the growing range of integration processes within the CIS"² as a priority direction of the Kyrgyz foreign policy.

¹ Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. Approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin of Nov. 30, 2016. No. 640 // See – URL: http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news//asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2542248 (date: 15.06.2017).

² National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Kyrgyz Republic for the Period from 2013 to 2017. Adopted by the Decree of the President of Kyrgyz Republic of Jan. 21, 2013. No.11 // See – URL: <http://www.president.kg/ru/news/ukazy/1466> (date: 15.06.2017).

The consolidated position of Russia and Kyrgyzstan on the issue of integration is based on more than two hundred years of the history of the formation of strong mutual contacts and cooperation between the peoples, which was formed in the difficult historical conditions. In March 2017, Russia and Kyrgyzstan celebrated the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in the new historical conditions and confirmed the format of allied relations complemented by equal participation in the Eurasian Economic Union and prospects for other large-scale integration projects.

We wish to remind that the first diplomatic contacts between our countries were established 230 years ago, in the second half of the XIX century our peoples formed a single united state¹. The creative work of the two peoples was interrupted by the First World War and the tragic events in Semirechye in 1916. In 1917, the Provisional Government decided to allocate one million rubles for the restoration of destroyed farms and buildings in the Semirechensk region. Later, in 1921-1927, Soviet Russia took a number of organizational and financial measures to return life in Central Asia to normal. All criminal cases against participants of the 1916 revolt were stopped, the Red Army expelled all foreign aggressors engaged in slave trade and opium smuggling from the territory of Kyrgyzstan. With the active participation of Mikhail Frunze, a native of the city of Pishpek, the Soviet government has bought back and returned from China to homeland the Kirghiz refugees and slaves. Special points were organized where Kyrgyz returnees were provided with food and clothing at the state expense. All necessary supplies were sent to the region: food, grain, building materials for the restoration of destroyed farms, etc., everything that was necessary for the arrangement of normal life².

The uprising of 1916 is a common tragedy of our peoples, which cannot be crossed out of history. Therefore, it is symbolic that on the centenary of the event, in 2016, the presidents of Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia honored the victims by laying flowers at the memorial to the victims of the 1916 uprising in Ata-Beyit, national historic and memorial complex.

During the Soviet era, Kyrgyzstan began to gain its statehood. In the early 1920s, its territory was included in the Turkestan Republic, after the dissolution of which in 1924 it became an Autonomous Region of the RSFSR. As part of the Soviet Union, the Kyrgyz Autonomous Region received comprehensive assistance in the formation of the new Soviet state apparatus and strengthening of the Kyrgyz economy³. Special attention was paid to the creation and introduction of the Kyrgyz alphabet, based on the Cyrillic alphabet.

¹ Voropaeva V., Dzhunushaliev D., Ploskikh V. From the history of Kyrgyz-Russian relations (XVIII-XX centuries). – Bishkek, 2001.

² Frunze M. V. Unknown and forgotten: articles, memoirs, documents and letters. – M.: Nauka, 1991.

³ Russia – Kyrgyzstan: Stages of strategic partnership: from the beginning to sovereignty: Documents and materials / Compilers: Bedelbayev A. B., Voropaeva V. A., Karymsakova A. A. and other. – Bishkek: KRSU publishing house, 2011.

In 1936, the Kyrgyz SSR was formed. The most important national economic task of the young republic during that period was the development of agriculture and industry. Ambitious projects were implemented by the joint efforts of professionals arriving from Russia and the local population. It was then that the foundation was laid for further economic recovery. Reforms have been carried out aimed at the transition to a settled way of life for a large part of the nomadic population and at improving the welfare of population in general. In the area of agriculture, livestock and crop production were given priority. A separate difficult task was the development of the irrigation system of Kyrgyzstan. In the industry, the focus was on the sugar and coal industries. A striking result of two decades of cultural revolution was the Decade of Kyrgyz Art in Moscow, the capital of the USSR, in 1939.

However, the peaceful creative life was soon disrupted by the attack of Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union. The great Patriotic War became a serious test for all the peoples of the Soviet Union. Kyrgyzstan has made a significant contribution to the common cause of victory over the enemy. The Republic has accepted the evacuated population of the RSFSR, the Kirghiz mothers sheltered disadvantaged children of besieged Leningrad. More than 30 industrial enterprises were transferred to Kyrgyzstan, new plants and factories were built. Thanks to close cooperation with the local population it became possible in record time to resume the production of a wide range of civilian and military products, which ultimately allowed gaining victory over the formidable enemy.

More than 360 thousand Kyrgyzstanis side by side with other peoples of the Soviet Union fought against the world evil on all fronts of the war. They formed the legendary 316th Panfilov Division, then, the 8th Guards Division, the valiant soldiers of which gave their lives in the battle for Moscow. Six soldiers of the division were awarded the title of the Hero of the Soviet Union. In total, 74 Kyrgyzstanis got the Hero title and 21 veterans became full knights of the Order of Glory.

After the victory in that terrible war, the Soviet people were forced to re-raise the agriculture and industry of our common country, to develop science and culture, to build roads, power stations, hospitals, schools and theaters, to create parks. It was true for the Kyrgyz SSR, which in 1950-1960 made a big step forward in economic and socio-cultural life. On the basis of industrial facilities evacuated during the war, rapid industrialization began in the Republic. Coal and food industry developed successfully. Mechanization of agriculture along with significant investments of the Soviet Union's center in the irrigation system of Kyrgyzstan led to an increase in the volume of cotton production. In order to meet the increased needs of the national economy in electricity, new hydroelectric power stations, in particular Toktogul HPP, were built.

The 1970-1980s were marked by the manufacture of new high-tech products, some of which were exported abroad. Particular attention was paid to the preservation of the unique natural complex of the lake Issyk-Kul basin. Dur-

ing the ninth five-year plan, mining and processing of rare earth metals were launched in Kyrgyzstan.

During the time when Kyrgyziya was one of the USSR republics, the educational level of its population has increased significantly, thanks to the Soviet power, it made a civilizational leap. The Republic has developed a system of training of national scientists, the Kyrgyz state university and the Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz SSR were opened. The cultural traditions of the Kyrgyz people, enriched by cooperation with the creative intelligentsia of other Union republics, became the basis for the creation of new bright works of art. Books by Ch. Aitmatov gained world fame.

On August 31, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan adopted Declaration of Independence. On March 20, 1992, diplomatic relations between Russia and Kyrgyzstan were established and on June 10 of the same year Treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance was signed¹. The Treaty defined the status of the parties as friendly states, building relations among themselves on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, and enshrined the obligations of the parties to coordinate foreign policy, to cooperate in ensuring a joint defense policy, to develop equal and mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of economy, to coordinate actions in the field of economic reforms.

For more than 25 years, Russia and Kyrgyzstan have been living and developing in new political, social and economic conditions as sovereign states. Formation of statehood, sovereignty, independence and building a new society never go easily. On this way, there are difficulties, mistakes and crisis phenomena. All these years our states closely cooperated and built bilateral relations not only because of the common history and long life in one state, but also for achieving the common goal: construction of fair society and wellbeing of our people.

In 2000, the Declaration on Eternal Friendship, Alliance and Partnership between the Russian Federation and the Kyrgyz Republic was adopted, it reflected the intention of the two peoples to continue centuries-old cooperation in the new environment². With the coming to power of President Vladimir Putin and President of Kyrgyzstan Atambayev, cooperation between the two countries gained additional impetus for further rapprochement.

In the current world situation, the important factor which allows quickly and in a fiduciary manner resolve the emerging issues is the relationship of mutual respect and openness established between the President of Russia Vladimir Putin and President of Kyrgyzstan A. Sh. Atambayev. Of special interest is intensifica-

¹ Treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. June 10, 1992 // *Vedomosti SND and VS RF*. – 1992. – 22.10. – No.42. – Art. 2340.

² Declaration on Eternal Friendship, Alliance and Partnership between the Russian Federation and the Kyrgyz Republic // *Federal Legislation of Russia*. 2000 // See: URL: http://lawrussia.ru/texts/page29_russia_2000.htm (date: 15.06.2017).

tion of a comprehensive political dialogue, in 2017, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Bishkek twice. The Chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev also visited Kyrgyzstan and in April, 2017, negotiations of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the two states took place in Moscow. There is an active dialogue between other ministries and departments and also contacts within the framework of parliamentary diplomacy.

The ongoing level of political cooperation is quite understandable, as the issues of human and citizen's rights are of crucial importance. Suffice it to say that today more than 300 thousand Russians live in Kyrgyzstan and about 1 million Kyrgyz people live and work in Russia either temporarily or permanently.

The decision on Kyrgyzstan to join the Eurasian Economic Union "is the result of great joint integration work"¹. At the stage of understanding and preparation for accession to the EAEU, Russia provided the Kyrgyz partners with maximum assistance in matters of comfortable joining the Union. Russia proposed and all member countries of the EAEC agreed to provide Kyrgyzstan with economic preferences. The Kyrgyz Republic has joined the EEU on special transient conditions. From October 2015, it receives 1.9% of all amounts of import customs duties of the Eurasian Union, which is much greater than its economic weight in the Union².

The statement of the Eurasian Economic Commission notes that "accession to the EAEU opens new prospects for Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan's accession gives a new impetus to the development of the Union's potential. Integrated union strengthens its position in the global economic architecture"³.

At the end of 2016, the GDP growth of Kyrgyzstan amounted to 3.8% compared to the previous year and reached 458 billion soms. In the first quarter of 2017, the growth amounted to 7.8% compared to January-March 2016⁴. The 180-million consumer market of the EAEU has fully opened for the Republic. Kyrgyzstanis are realizing their opportunities to get higher education in the EAEU countries and work on equal terms with the citizens of these countries. Kyrgyzstanis working in Russia today have equal rights with Russians without any discrimination. They do not have to obtain a work permit or patents of the Russian Federation, a major achievement was the introduction of the rules on the mutual recognition of diplomas in almost all professions. In addition, the national regime in the field of social security, including medical care, is applied to labor

¹ Kyrgyzstan joined Eurasian Economic Union (12.08.2015) // See: – URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/12-08-2015-1.aspx>(date: 20.06.2017).

² What can the EAEU give to small and medium-sized businesses? (24.02.2017) // See: – URL: http://www.region.kg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2259 (date: 20.06.2017).

³ Kyrgyzstan joined Eurasian Economic Union (12.08.2015) // See: – URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/12-08-2015-1.aspx>(date: 20.06.2017).

⁴ EDB forecasts growth of Kyrgyzstan GDP in the 2017-2019 (12.04.2017) // See: – URL: <http://www.aenkg.info/news/view/2796.html> (date: 22.06.2017).

migrants, work is underway to harmonize the pension legislation of the EAEU member states.

The Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund with an authorized capital of US\$ 500 million is an effective tool for promoting mutually beneficial projects. The Fund was established in order to promote economic cooperation between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation, modernization and development of the economy of the Kyrgyz Republic and an effective use of opportunities arising from the participation of the parties in the Eurasian economic integration. "The main objective of the Fund is to finance, on preferential terms, projects aimed at the development of new high-tech products, technical re-equipment and creation of competitive industries based on the best available technologies, as well as support for import-substituting and export-oriented industries. The advent of the Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund created in the country such conditions for the development that do not exist in any post-Soviet country"¹. As of 17 March 2017, 681 projects worth US\$ 211 million have been approved. The funds are directed to the development of the food industry, transport, logistics, construction and agro-industrial complex throughout Kyrgyzstan².

There are additional opportunities for the development of mutual trade and investment cooperation provided by the export and investment development institutes established in Russia, such as Vnesheconombank, the Russian export center, the Russian Agency for export credit insurance and Roseximbank.

With the support of Russia, within the framework of the allocated US\$ 200 million, measures are being taken to equip customs posts, checkpoints and laboratories with the necessary equipment.

In the framework of bilateral cooperation and participation in the work of integration associations, Russia provides Kyrgyzstan with comprehensive assistance. Many projects have been and are being implemented. As an example, the Russian Gazprom operates under the gasification program of Kyrgyzstan and plans to invest in this business about 100 billion rubles until 2030. As part of the program "Gazprom for children," the Russian company has already put into operation five sports and recreation complexes in the Republic and plans to build eleven more³.

Russia also supports the Kyrgyz state budget. From 2009 to 2016, US\$ 375 million was allocated for this purpose. Debts of KR are written off, in 2012 a lumpsum of US\$ 300 million was written off. During the upcoming state visit of

¹ Head of the Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund: we do not break the banks' business, but develop it: Interview (14.02.2017) // See – URL: <http://www.interfax.ru/interview/549815> (date: 22.06.2017).

² Russian-Kyrgyz Development Fund (information on the activities of the RFKRDF) // See: – URL: http://www.rkdf.org/ru/o_nas (date: 22.06.2017).

³ Gazprom will allocate 100 billion rubles for the program of gasification of Kyrgyzstan (28.02.2017) // See: – URL: <http://www.tatar-inform.ru/news/2017/02/28/541402/> (date: 22.06.2017).

the President of Kyrgyzstan A. Sh. Atambayev to Russia on June 20, 2017, it is planned to sign an agreement on cancellation of another US \$240 of debt, which will reduce the amount of foreign debt of the Kyrgyz Republic to 53% of its GDP¹.

Kyrgyzstan acquires Russian oil products at domestic prices because they are supplied on a duty free basis. Since 2010 only, the savings for the Kyrgyz Republic amounted to US\$ 1.8 billion.

Many-sided assistance is also provided through international organizations. Thus, the integrated development project of Naryn region worth US\$ 3.5 million has been completed with Russian funding through UNDP, which launched hundreds of small industrial, agricultural and irrigation projects, as a result of which the villagers received jobs and specialties and improved their welfare. Through the same international organization, Russia allocated US\$ 3.5 million for a similar project in the Osh region. Russia provided US\$ 1.5 million for a project to strengthen the tourism cluster in the Issyk-Kul region. Through UNICEF, Russia is financing a project to improve access to water, sanitation and hygiene, which covers 90 schools with 22 thousand pupils. A grant of US\$ 450 thousand was provided to UNDP for a project to train Kyrgyz specialists in the field of cattle identification.

Kyrgyzstan receives great assistance from the UN world food program. Only through this international organization, Russia has allocated more than US\$ 50 million for projects in the Kyrgyz Republic, of which US\$ 12 million was provided within the framework of the UN project to improve school meals. Today, 114 thousand schoolchildren in 266 schools receive free daily hot breakfasts made from Russian products on Russian equipment. This has significantly reduced the incidence of intestinal infections in children. In 2017, 67 more schools in different regions of Kyrgyzstan will join this project.

In order to improve the efficiency of social protection of vulnerable segments of the population since 2014, about a thousand projects have been implemented in 54 rural districts, food aid was provided to 197 thousand villagers, 572 km of irrigation networks have been restored, 47 thousand hectares of agricultural land have been put into operation.

During the official visit of the President of the Russian Federation V. V. Putin to Bishkek on February 28, 2017, the Federal service for supervision of consumer rights protection and the Ministry of health of the Kyrgyz Republic signed a Memorandum, according to which Kyrgyzstan will be provided with material and technical assistance in countering the spread of infectious diseases and their prevention and training of Kyrgyz personnel in this sphere.

The priority direction of humanitarian cooperation is the expansion of cooperation between Russian educational institutions and educational organizations of

¹ Kyrgyzstan expects Russia to write off a lumpsum of US\$ 240 million of its debt (24.04.2017) // See: – URL: <https://ria.ru/economy/20170424/1493012661.html> (date: 22.06.2017).

Kyrgyzstan, increasing the level of teaching in Russian, ensuring the availability of Russian educational resources. In this regard, training courses are organized annually for teachers of Russian language and literature, as well as teachers of other subjects. Last year, more than one thousand Kyrgyz teachers raised their professional qualifications at the courses of various formats. In 2016, the Kyrgyz side received more than three thousand copies of educational, methodological and fiction books, multimedia and visual AIDS. The leadership of Kyrgyzstan shows constant and close attention to the problem of preserving and expanding the position of the Russian language.

Annually more than 400 budget places are allocated on the state line for Kyrgyz students, and the total number of Kyrgyz students in Russia exceeds 16 thousand people, of which 5 thousand are trained at the expense of the Russian budget.

Interregional relations with Kyrgyzstan are supported by more than 60 regions of the Russian Federation, more than a dozen agreements on trade, economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation. The most active cooperation is developing with Moscow, Tatarstan, Altai Krai, Orenburg, Chelyabinsk, Sverdlovsk, Samara, Novosibirsk and Volgograd regions¹.

This year, the Kyrgyz Republic chairs in the EAEU, which will allow our Kyrgyz partners to continue their work on the constructive strengthening of their position in the organization. After the entry of the Kyrgyz Republic in the EEU, the President of the KR Almazbek Atambayev said: "Kyrgyzstan has joined the Eurasian Economic Union, and the first steps taken as a full member in this organization indicate that we've made the right choice"².

Today we are sure to say that Russia and Kyrgyzstan are unequivocally interested in further deepening the Eurasian integration and in the possibility of expanding its scope. The idea of pairing the EAEU projects with the economic belt of the Silk Road and transferring it into practice is consistently supported by both countries. Speaking on May 14, 2017 in Beijing at the opening ceremony of the international forum "One belt, one way", Russian President Vladimir Putin said: "... I believe that the addition of the potential of such integration formats as the EAEU, "One belt, one way", the Shanghai cooperation organization, the Association of South-east Asian Nations, can become the basis for the formation of a large Eurasian partnership"³. He stressed that Russia sees the future of the Eurasian partnership not just as the establishment of new ties between states and economies, "it must change the political and economic landscape of the continent, bring Eurasia peace,

¹ Russian-Kyrgyz economic relations: a dossier (28.02.2017) // See: – URL: <http://tass.ru/info/4056105> (date: 24.06.2017).

² Address by President Almazbek Atambayev to the participants of the IV Kyrgyz-Russian Interregional Conference. 22 September 2015 // See: – URL: <http://www.president.kg/ru/news> (date: 24.06.2017).

³ International Forum «One belt, one way» (14.05.2017) // See: – URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54491> (date: 24.06.2017).

stability, prosperity and a fundamentally new quality of life. And in this respect, greater Eurasia is not an abstract geopolitical scheme, but, without any exaggeration, a truly civilizational project looking forward to the future”¹.

President of the Kyrgyz Republic A. Sh. Atambayev agreed with this view and noted in particular that “the spread of globalization and intensification of integration processes carry great hopes, long-term prospects and at the same time difficult problems”². It is obvious that further successful strengthening of the strategic partnership established between Russia and Kyrgyzstan is the key to solving these problems.

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10. International Forum «One belt, one way» (14.05.2017) // See. – URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54491>

¹ See above.

² The President of the Kyrgyz Republic expressed readiness to mate the concept of “One belt, one way” with “Taza coom.” (15.05.2017) // See: – URL: <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/28489191.html> (date: 24.06.2017).

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